

Efficiency of international cooperation for the provision of academic mobility as a significant tool for the creation of a single educational environment

Eficiencia de la cooperación internacional para la provisión de movilidad académica como una herramienta importante para la creación de un entorno educativo único

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ABSTRACT:

In this article, academic mobility is reviewed as a significant tool for the creation of a single educational environment in the global community. The notion of academic mobility is specified and its key characteristics are described. The authors analyze effective international legal documents for the recognition of foreign education and assurance of education quality, which have been approved since 2003. It is noted that the implementation of academic mobility programs allows member states to see positive socio-economic and demographic effects.

Keywords: Academic mobility, single educational environment, development of education quality

RESUMEN:

En este artículo, la movilidad académica se revisa como una herramienta importante para la creación de un entorno educativo único en la comunidad global. Se especifica la noción de movilidad académica y se describen sus características clave. Los autores analizan documentos legales internacionales efectivos para el reconocimiento de la educación extranjera y la garantía de la calidad de la educación, que han sido aprobados desde 2003. Se observa que la implementación de programas de movilidad académica permite a los estados miembros ver efectos socioeconómicos y demográficos positivos.

Palabras clave: movilidad académica, entorno educativo único, desarrollo de la calidad de la educación.

1. Introduction

An important tool for the creation of a single educational environment is academic mobility

(Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016; Polyakova and Rostovskaya, 2015).

It is necessary to emphasize that in Russian Law No. 273-FZ "On Education in the Russian Federation" dated December 29, 2012 (hereinafter referred to as the Federal Law on Education), a fundamental legislative document which sets the "legal, organizational and economic basis of education in the Russian Federation, main principles of the Russian state policy in education", has not included the notion of academic mobility until now. This hinders the approval of required education bylaws.

At the state level, the notion of academic mobility, which is determined as an "international movement of researchers and teachers aimed at conducting research and teaching, exchanging experience, providing results of research, and for other professional purposes", was formalized in the previous version of the Concept for the State Migration Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2025 (approved in February 2013 and declared invalid in October 2018), and referred only to teachers disregarding the more active mobility of students.

In a broader sense, the term "academic mobility" means the potential for higher education participants to move from one to another research or educational institution to exchange experience and acquire additional education possibilities.

Indeed, academic mobility is the most widespread form of internationalization of education, which is a political goal pursued by the leaders of interested countries. According to OECD data, foreign students will reach 8 million (OECD, 2017) by 2025 and Russia has been making a substantial contribution.

At the beginning of the academic year 2016-2017, foreign students in Russia totaled 282,921 (5% of total students, in all forms of education), most of them come from the CIS (over 70%). The incorporation of quantitative indicators of international activities, including the number of foreign students and teachers, into the performance criteria of higher education institutions played a big role in the attraction of foreign students (Polyakova and Rostovskaya, 2015).

It should be noted that the academic mobility of foreigners is provided in accordance with the requirements of the Federal Laws "On the Procedure for Leaving the Russian Federation and Entering the Russian Federation", "On the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens in the Russian Federation", "On the Procedure for Keeping Migration Records of Foreign Citizens and Stateless Persons", etc. Specific issues in relation to the academic mobility are governed by some bylaws (Order No. 1391 "On the Approval of the Administrative Regulations for the Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science to Provide the State Service of Recognition of Education and (or) Qualification Obtained in a Foreign Country" issued by the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia on December 24, 2013) and departmental statutory documents.

2. Materials and methods

For the research, we applied general logical and general theoretical scientific methods (analysis, systematic method, structural-functional method). The theoretical basis of the research is works compiled by Russian authors.

3. Results

The efficiency of cooperation with regard to providing academic mobility and recognizing foreign education and/or foreign qualification is measured by the extent to which a country's actions and used resources meet the country's priorities and help it achieve internal and external goals.

In this connection, the brief analysis of the effective international legal documentation with regard to recognizing foreign education and providing a high-quality education, which have been approved since 2003, is of interest. The year 2003 was taken as a reference point when the Russian Federation signed the Bologna Declaration, and since 2003 international documents have been signed to set priority objectives in the assessment of education

quality and recognition of foreign education, which are reviewed in this article (Table 1).

Table 1

The list of international legal documents with regard to recognizing foreign education and assuring education quality (approved from 2003 until 2017)

#	Document	Date of approval	Approving authority
1.	Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education	December 2005	Approved by the UNESCO Executive Board/OECD in Paris
2.	Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (revised)	2007	Adopted at the 4th meeting of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (Bucharest)
3.	Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (revised)	June 23, 2010	Approved at the 5th meeting of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (Sevres)
4.	Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualification in Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific	November 26, 2011	Approved by the UNESCO (Tokyo, November 26, 2011)
5.	Recommendations on the use of qualification frameworks in the recognition of foreign qualifications	June 19, 2013	Adopted at the 6th meeting of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (Paris)
6.	European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs	May 14-15, 2015	Approved at the Ministerial Conference of the European Higher Education Area (Armenia, Yerevan)
7.	Yerevan Communiqué	May 14-15, 2015	Approved at the Ministerial Conference of the European Higher Education Area (Armenia, Yerevan)
8.	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)	May 14-15, 2015	Approved at the Ministerial Conference of the European Higher Education Area (Armenia, Yerevan)
9.	Guidelines for the Use of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)	May 14-15, 2015	Approved at the Ministerial Conference of the European Higher Education Area (Armenia, Yerevan)
10.	Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (revised)	February 29, 2016	Adopted at the 7th meeting of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (Paris)
11.	Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees in accordance with the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications and Explanatory Memorandum	November 2017	Adopted at the extraordinary meeting of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (Strasbourg)

Source: The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration, 2015; Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016; Budapest-Vienna Declaration ..., 2010; The National Framework of Qualifications ..., 2015; The Convention on the Recognition ..., 1997; Results of the 5th ASEM education ...; Adoption of the HRDWG Annual Work Plan 2016; The Asia-Pacific Regional Conference ..., 2011; Draft Preliminary Report Concerning..., 2015.

Some documents are presented by documentation from the latest conference of Bologna Process education ministers that was held in Yerevan in 2015 (The Education 2030 Incheon Declaration, 2015). Prior to the review of these documents in detail, it is reasonable to look at the path of Bologna Process goals and priorities for the whole period of its existence as given in Table 2.

Table 2
Achievement of the Bologna Process goals

1999	2003	2005	2009	2012	2015
Bologna Declaration	Berlin Communiqué	Bergen Communiqué	Leuven Communiqué	Bucharest Communiqué	Yerevan Communiqué
Mobility of students and teachers	The use of grants and loans, improvement of statistical records of the academic mobility	Elimination of hurdles in obtaining visas and work permits	By 2020 at least 20% of students should complete academic and practical courses abroad	The search for solutions for the automatic recognition of academic qualifications	Ministers approved the revised version of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs, recommendations were made to guarantee automatic recognition of qualifications within the EHEA
General two-level degree system	The inclusion of a doctoral degree as the third cycle of higher education, development of joint degrees and equitable recognition	The adoption of QF-EHEA, development of national qualification frameworks	The adoption of national qualification frameworks by 2012	New roadmaps for the countries that did not develop any national qualification frameworks	The revision of national qualification frameworks for the adequate recognition of prior learning
	Lifelong learning	Flexible learning trajectories in higher education, coordination of state lifelong learning strategies, recognition of prior learning	Recognition of prior learning based on the results of learning that include flexible forms	Higher employment of graduates, constant learning and increase of the entrepreneurial potential of students by deepening cooperation with employers	Assistance to graduates in finding jobs throughout their career based on constant learning, assurance of mobility in taking an internship

Introduction of the ECTS-like credit system	To use the ECTS as a system to accumulate credits and of the Diploma Supplement (DS)		To continue the introduction of Bologna Process tools such as the ECTS and the European Diploma Supplement (EDS)	To ensure the application of Bologna Process tools on the basis of education results	The revised version of the ECTS User's Guide was approved as a public document
European Cooperation for Quality Assurance in Education	To assure quality at the level of organizations, at national and European levels	To introduce European standards and guidelines for quality assurance	Quality is a main focus of the EHEA	To allow EQAR-registered agencies to operate in the entire EHEA	Revised standards and recommendations for quality assurance in the EHEA

The 10th anniversary conference of education ministers of the Bologna Process member states, which unites 70 countries of the world, was held on May 23-24, 2018 in Paris. The Communiqué, which was approved at the Ministerial Conference in Paris, emphasized a key role of the quality of higher education in accordance with the European Standards and Recommendations on Quality Assurance, the development of digital technologies, the compliance with the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and the increase of the social aspect of higher education (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016).

The main document concerning the recognition of foreign qualifications that assures academic and professional mobility was and is the C on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in the European Region, which was approved on April 11, 1997 in Lisbon (The Convention on the Recognition ..., 1997).

As of today, the Lisbon Convention is the fullest and most thoroughly developed international legal document aimed to solve problems of academic recognition. If measured by the number of key notions and terms defined, by its contents the Convention substantially exceeds all similar documents of the Council of Europe and the UNESCO put together. As of August 2017, member states of the Convention are 53 countries (Austria, Azerbaijan, Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Great Britain, Hungary, Germany, Georgia, Denmark, Ireland, Iceland, Spain, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine, Finland, France, Croatia, Montenegro, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Sweden, Estonia, Australia, Belarus, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand, the Holy See, and Tajikistan). The Russian Federation ratified the Lisbon Convention on July 1, 2000 (Subsidiary text to the convention ..., 2013).

In February 2016, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee approved the **Revised Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees**, which emphasized that Competent Recognition Authorities should recognize joint degrees except for cases when substantial differences can be identified between a joint degree that is presented for recognition and a comparable qualification in the national higher education system in which recognition is sought. It is advisable to consider joint degrees in accordance with those procedures that are applied to any other qualifications in the current higher education systems, to which they belong.

It was pointed out that in the absence of the unified cross-border process of quality assurance competent recognition authorities can recognize joint degrees provided that all components of an education program, upon completion of which a degree is granted, and/or education institutions that offer joint programs have been inspected using transparent quality assurance mechanisms pursuant to the regulations and laws of the countries in which

education institutions that award degrees are situated, and according to the European guidelines. The governments of the countries that signed the Lisbon Recognition Convention are recommended to incorporate provisions related to quality assurance of joint programs into legislation (Subsidiary text to the convention ..., 2013).

Particularly, close attention is paid to the information that higher education institutions, which award joint degrees, should provide concerning their joint programs and joint degrees. If necessary, for the ease of recognition of joint degrees people who are awarded the degrees should be provided with diploma supplements or other commensurable documents, and educational programs, upon completion of which a joint degree is awarded, which should be used by the ECTS or other credit systems that stipulate credits to be given to the results of education. A diploma supplement, which is given together with the degree awarded, should clearly indicate upon studies in what education institutions and/or under what education programs various components of this degree were credited.

The special place has recently been given to the social adaptation of refugees whose number has been rising on all continents. The Lisbon Recognition Convention gives a clear explanation of the actions taken by competent authorities in Article VII that runs as follows (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016):

“Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its educational system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfill the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence.”

The Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee approved at an extraordinary meeting in November 2017 ***the Recommendation on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation.***

This document became topical due to a sharp increase in the number of refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation who seek recognition of their qualifications in higher education. The Recommendation emphasizes that the right to education is one of the human rights, and that the ERIC-NARIC Networks play a leading role in the collection and distribution of information about current tools and leading practice in the area of recognition, the assistance provided to competent recognition authorities and the assistance in the development and the conduct of standard procedures for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons or persons in a refugee-like situation (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016).

For instance, in cases when refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation for good reason cannot confirm through relevant documentary evidence their qualifications or periods of study that are sought, competent recognition authorities are recommended to compile and use a ***certificate of education*** or a similar information document. This certificate of education should contain a reliable description of qualifications or periods of study which the applicant is supposed to be able to seek, with all available documents and confirming certificates attached. The certificate of education itself is not a document serving as recognition of qualifications. The certificate of education should at least include information about specialization, the level and the approximate academic load with regard to a qualification or the period of study. The certificate of education is designed to help:

- (a) competent recognition authorities describe, assess and/or recognize applicants' qualifications and periods of study;
- (b) refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation confirm their level of education in order to access further higher education programs or to employment activities;
- (c) competent recognition authorities, institutions, employers and other authorities, in which qualifications are shown, determine acceptability or recognition of qualifications that are not confirmed through documentary evidence and were assessed in other Parties.

The certificate of education can be used for various purposes and is a subsidiary document for both the applicant and competent recognition authorities. The recognition of the validity of the certificate of education that is issued in another country can help simplify the assessment and recognition of refugees' qualifications in order to apply to further higher education programs or to find a job. The main principle should be ensuring the collection of information about refugees' qualifications at the earliest possible stage so that the initial and often the most difficult period of their stay in a country as a refugee has practical benefits as well. The term "certificate of education" is general and does not imply any single format for the description of specific qualifications.

Several countries from the European region already have experience in assessing refugees' qualifications, and in assessing results in certificates of education in all various forms. These documents provide accurate and reliable information that is critical for the integration of refugees, and for them to be employed, to improve qualifications and to continue studies.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs of Greece and with the participation of national information centers in Greece, Italy, Norway and the United Kingdom, the Council of Europe developed the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees. It was prepared on the basis of a draft presented by the Norwegian and UK national information centers and tested on an experimental basis in 2017. The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees is a standard form of describing higher education qualifications that were assessed by qualified specialists for assessment of educational documents. This assessment is based on available documentation and a structured interview with specialists qualified in the assessment of educational documents. The qualifications passport also provides generalized information about the applicant's work experience and language proficiency. The passport is designed both for cases when refugees remain in the first receiving country and cases when later they move to other countries (Subsidiary text to the convention ..., 2013).

The recommendation on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons or persons in a refugee-like situation also orders member states to complete until the end of 2018 procedures for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons or persons in a refugee-like situation without documentary evidence of their qualifications and suggests that the Parties should ensure comprehensive fulfillment of the provisions in Article VII of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

4. Conclusions

The processes in the educational area can be characterized by one word – "diversification". The main driving force of these changes is the rising popularity of higher education and the development of advanced technologies. Primary incentives for political decisions to be made in the education area are as follows:

- *mass character of higher education*: according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the number of students in the three-level education system will reach 263 million by 2025;
- *distribution of flexible forms of education, including online education*;
- *changes in the paradigm of education*: much more attention have been paid not to those who teach, but to those who study. Evidence of this is the introduction of qualification frameworks in an increasing number of countries. Special attention is currently paid to knowledge, skills and competence that a student should acquire);
- *focus on the employment of graduates*. Growing concerns about the high unemployment rate among college graduates have prompted responsible parties to develop professional higher education and strengthen cooperation between educational institutions and employers.

education quality and quality assurance. Internationalization of guarantee of education quality has become a new tendency.

- *internationalization of higher education and higher academic mobility*. Internationalization of higher education is a political objective of the interested countries' governments.

Internationalization promotes the quality of education, diversity in education and free exchange of educational resources (Global Education Monitoring Report, 2016).

The analysis of international legal acts with regard to the recognition of foreign education and assurance of education quality, which have been approved in the past 15 years in various regions of the world, shows that political decisions made by education ministers from various regions and Bologna Process documentation meet the above challenges.

Documents are mainly focused on the assurance of education quality and the assessment of quality based on the new principles of student-centered education and the assessment of progress in studies, confidence in the national quality system of educational institutions and information management. The recognition of foreign education and qualifications is based on the system of confidence and use of universal quality tools such as the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), the National Framework of Qualifications, and the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS). The goal of automatic recognition has been set within the global educational space if there are universal tools which have been implemented in national legislation.

Special attention is paid to the social measurement of higher education and to the provision of vulnerable groups such as refugees with access to education. For this reason, both the Lisbon and Asia-Pacific Conventions put the education recognition of refugees and related persons into a separate chapter. For this reason, the implementation of this position in national legislation is a burning issue for Russia.

When solving recognition problems, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee's actual recommendations shift the focus in the applicant's favor. The applicant has the right for fair recognition of his/her qualification within a reasonable time limit in accordance with transparent, approved and reliable procedures. The applicant has the right to appeal against the decision, he/she should be provided with clear reasons for the refusal of recognition. The principle of substantial differences is introduced, under which recognition should be provided if there are no substantial differences. This principle also helps introduce transparency and mutual understanding between educational systems under the current and recognized differences. This helps both the applicant and other interested parties.

The flexible approach, the application of various models to assess qualification and the quality of education are modern tendencies that were set forth in the actual international legal documents.

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