

**LEASECON 2020**  
**International Conference «Land Economy and Rural Studies Essentials»****ASSESSMENT OF THE QUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN RUSSIA**

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**Abstract**

The article is devoted to the study of the problems of assessing the quality of educational services in higher education in the context of the transformation of the competitive environment. A comparative characteristic of interpretations of the essence and content of the concept of "quality of education" is given. The importance of assessing the quality of educational services for the effective functioning of the market for educational services of higher education and its constructive interaction with the labor market is substantiated. The conditions for increasing the competitiveness of the university from the point of view of beneficiaries and beneficiaries have been expanded and refined. It is shown that the demand for educational services from different groups of consumers is based on the satisfaction of differing requests and preferences. The reputation and image of the university are a priority integral criterion for all categories of consumers of educational services in the context of the transformation of the competitive environment. The competitiveness of a university is determined not only by the competitive advantages of an educational organization, but also by external factors and conditions of a specific market of educational services. The module for assessing the quality of educational services in the context of the transformation of the competitive environment has been built; the list of criteria for choosing a particular educational institution by owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries has been clarified and expanded.

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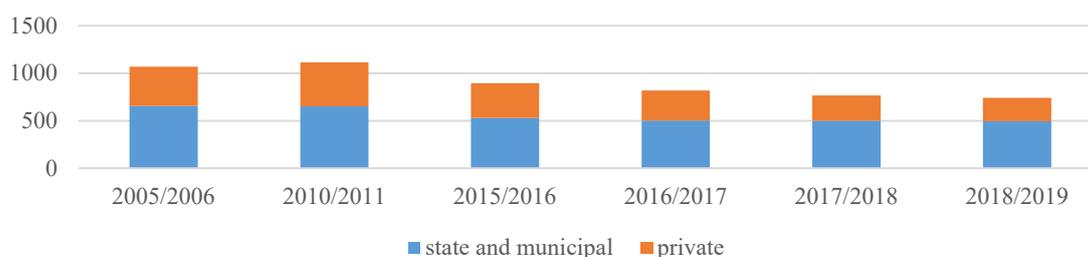
*Keywords:* Module for assessing, quality of education



## 1. Introduction

The issues of assessing the quality of higher education are acquiring special relevance these days, which is due to a number of factors: first, the growing demand of society for the digitalization of the educational environment (educational, methodological and scientific activities, educational technologies and learning outcomes, etc.); secondly, the emergence of a large number of indicators, criteria and methodological approaches to assessing the quality of education; thirdly, the transformation of the educational management process itself.

The optimization of the network of higher education institutions in Russia over the past three to four years has contributed to the quantitative reduction of universities and their branches by more than a thousand, that is, by almost half (Figure 1). The number of students in higher educational institutions during the same period decreased by about 40%. This circumstance, on the one hand, contributed to increased competition in the market of educational services for higher education, on the other hand, it made the problem of assessing the quality of education even more relevant.



**Figure 1.** Dynamics of the number of educational institutions of higher education and scientific organizations in Russia

According to the expert community, the Russian Federation, as a country participating in the Bologna process, requires a reform of control and supervisory activities and the development of a new system of rules and procedures for assessing the quality of higher education (Guba, 2019; Kameneva, 2019).

It should be emphasized that an objective assessment of the quality of education is necessary both for the subjects of the educational services market and for the subjects of the labor market.

## 2. Problem Statement

In the context of strengthening globalization processes and increasing competition in the educational space, growing public demand for quality educational services and a limited amount of public resources for the development of higher education, the existing system for assessing the quality of educational services in higher education needs some adjustment. It is necessary to develop conceptual and methodological provisions and improve the system for assessing the quality of educational services in higher education, taking into account the requirements of the subjects of the educational services market and subjects of the labor market.

### **3. Research Questions**

The subject of the research is socio-economic processes and phenomena that predetermine key trends and prospects for the formation and development of the market for educational services in higher education in the context of the transformation of the competitive environment. Based on this, the following issues require separate consideration.

Investigation of the specifics and identification of the prerequisites for the structural transformation of the competitive environment in the educational services market of higher education

Building a module for assessing the quality of educational services taking into account the changing requirements of all subjects of the educational services market and subjects of the labor market

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this work is to develop conceptual and methodological provisions and modernize the module for assessing the quality of educational services in the market for educational services of higher education in the context of the transformation of the competitive environment.

### **5. Research Methods**

The solution of the scientific problem was facilitated by the use of such general scientific methods and techniques as:

1. Monographic, abstract-logical, hypothetical-deductive method on the basis of which the fundamental aspects of such a complex and multifaceted concept as "quality of education" are logically analyzed and specified.

2. Economic and statistical research methods, the method of expert assessments, which made it possible to identify the specific features and prerequisites for the structural transformation of the competitive environment in the market for educational services of higher education.

3. Traditional content analysis of documents, generalization, using which the module for assessing the quality of educational services is built, taking into account the changing requirements of all subjects of the educational services market and subjects of the labor market.

### **6. Findings**

Much attention in Russian and international theory and practice is paid to the study of the essence and content of the concept of "quality of education", analysis of the rules and procedures for assessing the quality of educational services, assessment of the impact of the quality of education on the development of educational institutions and their position (rating) in the educational services market.

It should be noted that with all the numerous studies, there is still no single established approach to the interpretation of the essence and content of the concept of "quality of education" (Table 1). In assessing the quality of education, some authors place an emphasis on assessing the quality of the

learning process, others focus on assessing the quality of the educational outcome; some scientists in their research rely on the provisions of the systems approach, others use the process approach. In addition, when defining the essence and content of the concept of "quality of education", various scholars regard it as a social, socio-economic, economic, pedagogical, complex, etc. category. However, almost all researchers agree that different groups of owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries have different requirements for the quality of education. At the same time, the issues of an objective assessment of the quality of educational services and improving the efficiency of the educational services market are still relevant both for the subjects of the educational services market itself and for the subjects of the labor market.

**Table 1.** Comparative characteristics of interpretations of the essence and content of the concept of "quality of education"

Author name	Essence and content of concept interpretation	Main emphasis in concept interpretation
Korotkov (2007)	defines as a set of characteristics of the educational process that determine the consistent and practically effective formation of competence and professional consciousness It is characterized as an education system that reflects the degree of compliance of real educational results with regulatory requirements, social and personal expectations	quality of educational process
Novikov & Novikov (2012)	They consider as: firstly, a set of characteristics of educational conditions, the ability of an educational institution to provide a certain level of education, determined by the parameters: material and technical base; educational base and structure of faculty; secondly, compliance with the requirements of stakeholders: identified and potential; thirdly, the ratio: costs and the result obtained (cost of training, etc.); the expected and actual result of the training (the level of employment of graduates in the specialty, etc.)	quality of educational outcome
Ozemikova & Bratishchenko (2014)	Defines how the results of the educational process correspond to the interests and requirements of the modern labor market in highly qualified specialists in the relevant field, as well as the	quality of educational process and educational outcome
Dolya (2016)		quality of educational outcome

Tretyakova et al. (2017)	needs of future professional workers in terms of personal development and professional development Considers as a comprehensive characteristic of educational activities that ensures the quality of educational programs; faculty; students; educational technologies used; logistical support of the educational process; financial security; Process Management	quality of educational process
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The request regarding the quality of education on the part of the beneficiaries is due to personal expectations in the development of a set of basic and professional competencies that contribute to self-affirmation and self-development, as well as in the motivation on the labor market. However, the events of the last few months, the intensification of the introduction of digital technologies into the education system have contributed to an increase in the requirements on the part of beneficiaries regarding the digitalization of the educational environment (accessibility, openness, completeness of information, etc.), which predetermines not only the need for some adjustment of criteria and indicators for assessing the quality of higher education, but also revising the composition and content of the competencies mastered in the learning process. The level of digitalization of the educational environment is considered as one of the factors that determine the image of the university. It should be noted that one of the key points in choosing an educational institution is the reputation, image of the university, the prestige of the future profession.

The request regarding the quality of education on the part of buying beneficiaries is based on the expectation of quantitative and qualitative provision of labor resources with the necessary complex of knowledge and professional competencies. The development of digital technologies in all spheres of the economy contributes not only to the revision of the requested knowledge and professional competencies, but also to the increased requirements for the availability of information about an educational institution, its “openness” and “publicity”. It should be noted that a significant criterion for hiring is the prestige, the image of the educational institution of the graduate—the applicant for the vacant position.

The demand for the quality of education from the state is based on the need for expanded reproduction of the aggregate intellectual potential and human capital, contributing to the sustainable development of the national economy. Trends in recent years indicate an increase in requirements for the quality of higher education, the conditions for the functioning of universities and their use of new learning technologies.

The university, the parameters of the educational service of which to a greater extent correspond to the needs of owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries, has a high rating at the regional, national and international levels; characterized as prestigious among other educational institutions; is more competitive in the market for educational services of higher education.

The revealed differences in the essential nature of the request for high-quality educational services were taken as a basis for improving the module for assessing the quality of educational services by owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries, including the blocks “Market conditions”, “Social motivation”, “Additional product in human capital” (Figure 1).

It should be clarified that the factor of reputation and prestige of the university and the profession, which the authors singled out as the main selection criterion, is essentially generalizing other criteria and interrelated with other parameters. The reputation and prestige of the university are made up of many criteria, including the university's rating (regional, national, international), the availability of qualified teaching staff and invited professors, a modern resource and technical base, a rating of applicants and students, guaranteed employment, etc. The reputation and prestige of the university depend on the success of its interaction with the authorities, the media, employers; amount of funding, etc. The prestige of the profession depends mainly on the demand for graduates in the labor market, their ability to receive a "high" income and take a "worthy" place in society, as well as other socio-psychological and socio-economic factors.

The need to improve the competitiveness of universities arises from new socio-economic realities (dynamics of the demographic situation in the country and changes in the labor market, transformation of demand for high-quality educational services and the emergence of new competencies, widespread introduction of online education, development and use of digital technologies, etc.), strengthening processes of globalization and the growing competition in the educational space.

Educational service quality assessment	
Owning beneficiaries	Owning beneficiaries
<b>Module 1. Market conditions</b>	
Reputation, prestige and image of university	
Rating of university (regional, national, international)	
Qualified teaching staff, invited professors	
Modern equipment and facilities	
No tuition fee/ affordable fees/ online learning	Civil contract (incl. non-repayable), Endowment Fund
Obtaining highly-paid profession	Certification of qualified competencies, development of WorldSkills Russia Association
CPE programs	Grant support for employers
	Any development programs
	Professional and social accreditation
	Share of financial support in small innovative enterprises
	Targeted recruitment
<b>Module 2. Social motivation</b>	
Average score of enrollees, rating of students	
Guaranteed employment	
Advice of parents/relatives/ acquaintance	
Awareness, publicity, openness of the educational institution	
<b>Module 3. Additional product in human capital</b>	
Availability of additional educational services (military training center, double diplomas, etc.)	
Other (learning/working relatives of acquaintances, advantages when enrolling, closeness to home, easy learning, could not enroll at another university)	

**Figure 2.** The module for assessing the quality of educational services by owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries (Slepneva & Tsyrempilova, 2015)

According to many scientists (Tretyakov & Udovichenko, 2015; Volchik et al., 2017), competition in the educational services market for higher education differs in a number of specific features both in management (self-government) and in the “educational product” produced, which has complex quality assurance and control mechanisms. It should be noted that the competitive environment of the modern market for educational services of higher education is characterized by high dynamism due to the variability of internal market and non-market conditions, the complexity and multidimensionality of the impact of external factors. The current stage (Tsyrempilova, 2018) can be characterized as a structural accelerating transformation of the competitive environment of the educational services market in higher education affecting some institutional conditions that determine the nature and relationship of competitive

relations between market participants. The strengthening of the competitive environment is due to both the narrowing of demand on the part of beneficiaries and beneficiaries, an increase in their requests for quality educational services, and an increase in supply due to the expansion of forms and types of provision of educational services by various educational organizations.

For sustainable and dynamic development in the context of a structural, increasing transformation of the competitive environment of the market for educational services of higher education, educational organizations require not only the formation of the necessary set of knowledge and professional competencies in students, but also adaptation to rapidly changing conditions, the choice and implementation of a strategy aimed at increasing image, rating and prestige of the university. According to the authors, for universities that do not have high competitive advantages, functioning in an increasingly competitive environment is significantly difficult (the competitive environment becomes "hostile"). And, conversely, the functioning of universities with high competitive advantages in an increasingly competitive environment is advantageous, since their positions in the educational services market are significantly enhanced (the competitive environment is "favorable" for such universities).

In an increasingly competitive environment, the emphasis in building a system of rules and procedures for assessing the quality of higher education should be shifted to taking into account the requests of owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the strengthening of globalization processes and the growth of competition in the educational space, the growing public demand for high-quality educational services on the part of owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries determine the need to shift priorities from satisfying public interests to satisfying the interests of an individual. In accordance with the provisions of Article 69 of the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation", the activities of universities should be aimed at "... meeting the needs of an individual in intellectual, cultural and moral development, deepening and expanding education, scientific and pedagogical qualifications."

The development of the Module for assessing the quality of educational services by owning beneficiaries and buying beneficiaries made it possible to group the criteria for choosing a particular educational institution and find out that the reputation and image of the university is a priority integral criterion for all categories of consumers of educational services in an increasingly competitive environment.

Determining the competitiveness of educational institutions, the effective functioning of the higher education market, the provision of high-quality educational services will maximize and accelerate the country's transition from a resource-based economy to an innovative economy, which is fundamental for the current stage of market development, education and globalization processes, where knowledge is capital and the driving force behind the development of the country and the world as a whole, while higher educational institutions are full-fledged structural links of all these systems.

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