

Artículo de investigación

## Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Russian Peculiarities and International Experience

Обеспечение Качества Высшего Образования: Российские Особенности И Международный Опыт

Aseguramiento de la calidad de la educación superior: características rusas y experiencia internacional

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Written by:

**Alexey Nikolaevich Kuraev**<sup>231</sup>

[https://elibrary.ru/author\\_items.asp](https://elibrary.ru/author_items.asp)

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7771-3701

**Igor Vladimirovich Sokolov**<sup>232</sup>

[https://elibrary.ru/author\\_refs.asp](https://elibrary.ru/author_refs.asp)

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6686-5096

**Tatyana Aleksandrovna Gordeeva**<sup>233</sup>

[https://elibrary.ru/author\\_items.asp?authorid=690158](https://elibrary.ru/author_items.asp?authorid=690158)

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2489-4654

**Zhanna Dmitrievna Egorova**<sup>234</sup>

ORCID ID: 0000-0001-7732-0342

[https://elibrary.ru/author\\_items.asp?authorid=944566&show\\_refs=1&show\\_option=1](https://elibrary.ru/author_items.asp?authorid=944566&show_refs=1&show_option=1)

**Elena Aleksandrovna Klimakina**<sup>235</sup>

<https://elibrary.ru/authors.asp>

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2015-0594

### Abstract

The development of trends in modern society (with its fast expansion of innovative technologies and scientific-technical progress) requires education to be more efficient when training highly qualified specialists. It has become relevant to provide high-quality educational services in order to ensure that the training of personnel complies with the labor market's requirements and needs. In the article, the authors have determined factors influencing the quality of educational services in a university and the goals for which university students get a higher education. Moreover, the authors have identified students' satisfaction with the quality of education in higher education institutions. The authors have analyzed the assessment of educational services provided to university students. In the article, the authors characterize the meaning and functions of institutions at

### Аннотации

Развитие трендов в современном обществе (с его быстрым развитием инновационных технологий, научно-техническим прогрессом) требует от образования повышение эффективности в подготовке высококвалифицированных специалистов. Актуальным становится вопрос предоставления качественных образовательных услуг с целью соответствия уровня подготовки кадров требованиям и потребностям рынка труда. В статье определены факторы, влияющие на качество образовательных услуг в университете, цель получения высшего образования студентами и слушателями университета, выяснен уровень их удовлетворенности качеством образования и учебным процессом в учреждении высшего образования. Проведен анализ оценки образовательных услуг,

<sup>231</sup> K.G. Razumovsky Moscow State University of Technologies and Management (The First Cossack University), Zemlyanoy Val Street, 73, Moscow, 109004, Russia. [mtrushin@mail.ru](mailto:mtrushin@mail.ru)

<sup>232</sup> K.G. Razumovsky Moscow State University of Technologies and Management (The First Cossack University), Zemlyanoy Val Street, 73, Moscow, 109004, Russia

<sup>233</sup> Russian International Academy for Tourism, Khimki, Moscow Region, Russia.

<sup>234</sup> K.G. Razumovsky Moscow State University of Technologies and Management (The First Cossack University), Zemlyanoy Val Street, 73, Moscow, 109004, Russia

<sup>235</sup> K.G. Razumovsky Moscow State University of Technologies and Management (The First Cossack University), Zemlyanoy Val Street, 73, Moscow, 109004, Russia

various levels in assuring the quality of higher education. Special attention has been paid to European institutions involved in the assessment and quality assurance of higher education.

**Keywords:** quality of education, higher education, university, assessment of quality, educational services, sociological survey.

которые получают студенты и слушатели университета. В статье дана характеристика значения и функций институтов разного уровня в обеспечении качества высшего образования. Отдельное внимание уделено европейским институтам оценки и обеспечения качества высшего образования.

**Ключевые слова:** качество образования, высшее образование, университет, оценка качества, образовательные услуги, социологический опрос.

## Resumen

El desarrollo de tendencias en la sociedad moderna (con su rápido desarrollo de tecnologías innovadoras, progreso científico y técnico) requiere un aumento de la eficiencia en la educación de especialistas altamente calificados en educación. El tema de proporcionar servicios educativos de alta calidad con el objetivo de hacer coincidir el nivel de capacitación del personal con los requisitos y necesidades del mercado laboral se está convirtiendo en un tema de actualidad. El artículo identifica los factores que afectan la calidad de los servicios educativos en la universidad, el objetivo de obtener una educación superior para los estudiantes y los estudiantes universitarios, su nivel de satisfacción con la calidad de la educación y el proceso educativo en una institución de educación superior se ha aclarado. El análisis de la evaluación de los servicios educativos, que reciben los alumnos y universitarios. El artículo describe la importancia y las funciones de las instituciones de diferentes niveles para garantizar la calidad de la educación superior. Se presta especial atención a las instituciones europeas para la evaluación y el aseguramiento de la calidad de la educación superior.

**Palabras clave:** calidad de la educación, educación superior, universidad, evaluación de la calidad, servicios educativos, encuesta sociológica.

## Introduction

Higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a dynamic, innovation-oriented, humanized area of society's life. It is characterized by rapid internationalization, the development of new technologies and models of educational products, making the problem of their quality assurance relevant. The system of higher education quality assurance entails the following: resources and means required for productive educational activities; organization of learning given modern requirements, standards and tendencies in the development of national and international socioeconomic systems; control over activities carried out by universities and the quality of specialists' training at all stages. Not only universities are socially responsible for the quality of education but also state and international institutions that are designed to guarantee and control the quality of higher education. A wide network of stakeholders often makes it difficult to build a high-quality educational system and requires the coordination of national interests with the requirements of international standards (Rabadanova, 2011; 2012).

The following global tendencies are observed in the development of a current higher education institution: universities are more autonomous both in determining the content of education and managing the university's activities; a shift from the paternalistic model of state control over universities to the practice of independent expert assessment of their activities and the management of financial incentives for quality assurance; search for ways to diversify financial sources and develop entrepreneurial mentality under the influence of competition in the educational services market; higher public expectations about the social responsibility of universities; search for more efficient synthesis between education, research and innovation in universities (Lebedeva, Barabanov, 2012).

Universities are designed to be partners in the establishment of the most competitive, dynamic and knowledge-based economy in the world (Akhmetshin et al., 2018). They must help the society achieve stability in its economic growth, improve the availability of jobs and promote high

social solidarity. Criteria for the assessment of universities' activities change, with a focus on their ability to train professionals capable of reacting promptly to the changing labor market and adapting to the changing conditions in dynamic economies.

The quality of education as an object of management is one of the most important indicators, based on which, in the international practice, it is accepted to measure the effectiveness of the education system in any state and the efficiency of its management (Sergeyev, Kucherova, Balandin, 2017). The problem of assuring the quality of a university's activities is relevant in many developed countries for several reasons, the main of which are as follows: the transition from the industrial society to the knowledge society; the transition to mass higher education and later to universal higher education and the need for training of a lot of people for mastering classical academic programs at an acceptable level; the saturation of the labor market with university graduates, job competition among them; signs of international competition in the training of foreign students and the start of the formation of the global educational services market; mobility of students, academic teachers and scientists, the formation of the labor market for professionals with university degrees. An important tool for the monitoring of higher education quality is a sociological survey of students, which allows one to collect promptly estimates and proposals related to educational services directly from their consumer (Sokolov, 2018).

The study aims to analyze the assessment of the quality of a university's educational services based on the results of a survey conducted among students and to study international experience in creating the structure of national and international institutional environment for the quality assurance of higher education, as well as to examine functions and interrelations of the relevant institutions and organizations.

The study hypothesis is as follows: it is necessary to analyze the assessment of the quality of educational services in order to make efficient

decisions on the management and assessment of the current quality of professional training.

Upon receiving the study results, one can make a conclusion that the goal set in the study has been achieved.

### Methods

The survey method was used in the study. 210 students were surveyed.

The survey's main objectives were as follows:

1. To determine the goal of the respondents wanting to get a higher education and the factors influencing the quality of educational services;
2. To measure the satisfaction with the quality of the university's educational services and to analyze the assessment of educational services provided to the university's students;
3. To reveal which factors influence the possibility of finding a good job after graduation;
4. To identify students' satisfaction with training in the university and to determine factors that might improve the efficiency of the university's training.

### Results and Discussion

During the survey, a university's students were asked to determine what high-quality education means for them. Most of them believe that high-quality education is, above all, high-quality professional knowledge and skills that can be used in the future (75% of the respondents). Another part of the respondents points out that they view high-quality education as a possibility of finding a promising, good and prestigious job in the future (17%). Some believe that high-quality education also implies highly qualified professors and academic teachers (5%).

The respondents' main goals of obtaining higher education correspond to the above-mentioned (Table 1).

Table 1. The respondents' answers to the question "What is the purpose of obtaining a higher education?" (% of the respondents).

Answer	%
No answer	1
Other	2
Parents and relatives want me to do this	0
To get a diploma of higher education	5
Personal and intellectual development	11

Finding a well-paid job after graduation	31
Receiving high-quality professional knowledge and skills	50

The respondents believe that the main purpose of obtaining higher education is to receive high-quality professional knowledge and skills (50% of the respondents), to find a well-paid job after graduation (31%), to develop personally and intellectually (11%). Getting a diploma of higher education is not the goal of getting education for the respondents. Only 5% of the respondents chose this answer. Self-determination is also important in obtaining a high-quality education. None of the surveyed students obtain an education because their parents and families want them to (0%).

Most respondents think that the following factors influence the quality of educational services in a university: the possibility for students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice (75% of the respondents), the desire to obtain high-quality education, professors and lecturers (staffing)

(67% each) and the exchange of experience with the world's best universities (50%). The respondents point out that the quality of the university's educational services is influenced the least by such factors as the level of training of school graduates (6%), the inconsistency of training programs with the labor market's requirements (5%) and the formation and the publication of ratings for higher education seekers and lecturers (4%) (Table 2). The respondents think that corruption marginally influences the quality of educational services in a university. Only 7% chose this factor.

Table 2. The respondents' answers to the question "What factors influence the quality of educational services in a higher education institution?" (% the sum of answers exceeds 100% because it was possible to select several options).

Answer	%
Did not give an answer	1
Other	2
Formation and publication of ratings for higher education seekers and lecturers	4
Inconsistency of training programs with the labor market's requirements	5
Level of training in schools	6
Corruption	7
Lecturers' wages	13
Teaching must be more applied	18
Logistics support	26
Getting students involved in scientific activities	26
Innovative methods of training in a university	37
Modern quality academic books	42
Level of experience exchange with the world's best universities	50
Professors and lecturers (staffing)	67
Desire to obtain a high-quality education	67
Possibility for students to apply theoretical knowledge in practice	75

The positive factor is the fact that nearly all surveyed students are satisfied with the quality of educational services in the university (93% of the respondents) (Figure 1).

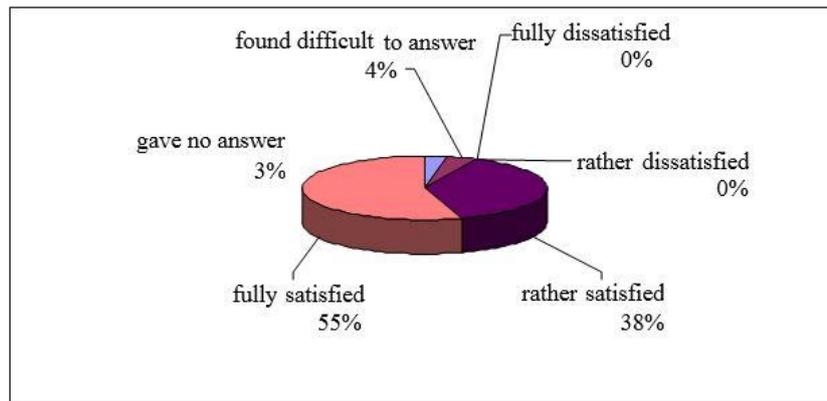


Figure 1. The respondents' answers to the question "Are you satisfied with the quality of educational services in the university?" (% of the respondents).

One of the main goals of getting higher education for the respondents is to get a well-paid job after graduation. What is necessary to get a good job after graduation from university? As the survey's results show, above all, it is necessary to have a good, modern, high-quality education, a good command of knowledge, capabilities and skills. 85% of the respondents noted. The respondents also think that it is required to be goal-oriented (46%). A quarter of the respondents (25%) say that the relevant acquaintances and required connections are desirable. 10% of the respondents note that it is necessary to have a diploma from a prestigious university.

An overwhelming majority of the respondents are confident that they will manage to find jobs they want upon graduation from the university (81% of the respondents). It is important that none of the respondents said that it would be not possible to find jobs they want upon graduation from the university (0%).

The respondents point out that they get the knowledge required for further activities when attending the university (90% of the respondents) (Figure 2).

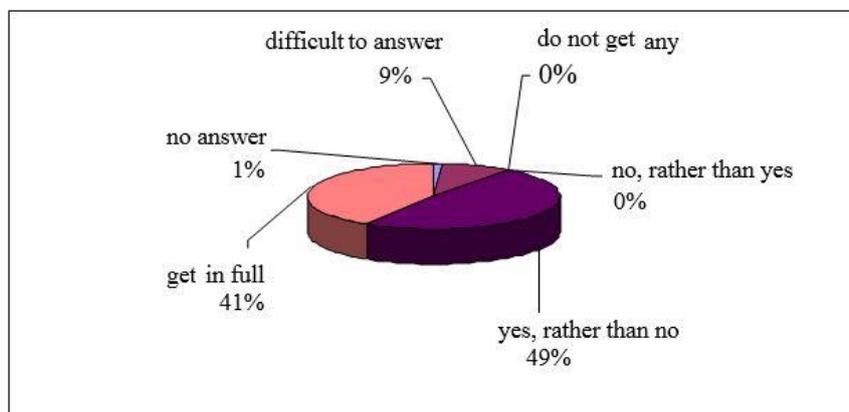


Figure 2. The respondents' answers to the question "While attending the university do you get the knowledge that you need for further activities?" (% of the respondents).

The respondents' answers to the question "What might improve the efficiency of training in the university?" are given in Table 3.

Table 3. The respondents' answers to the question "What might improve the efficiency of training in the university?" (% the sum of answers exceeds 100% because it was possible to select several options).

Answer	%
Hard to answer	0
Sufficient provision with required scientific books	1

Stricter control over knowledge of the university's students	4
Introduction of strict administrative measures against those who violate the discipline	5
Students' more active participation in the university's research activities	6
Sufficient provision with required academic books	7
Sufficient provision with required methodical materials/handouts	13
More practical training	25
Individual approach to training	25
Introduction of dual education	30
Use of various modern forms of training (conference lecture, roundtable lecture)	31
Getting practical lecturers involved in seminars and practical training	31
Constant update of information technologies applied in training	36
More opportunities for an internship abroad	46
Student practice in organizations and enterprises	58

Based on the survey results and given the respondents' opinion, the efficiency of training in the university can be improved by student practice in organizations and enterprises (58% of the respondents) and more opportunities for an internship abroad (46%). It is also important to constantly update information technologies which are used in training (36%). One-third of the respondents gave preference to such factors as getting practical lecturers involved in seminars and practical training and the use of diverse modern forms in training (conference lecture, a roundtable lecture, dispute, debate seminar, business games, etc.) (31% of the respondents each). In the modern higher education system, such form as dual education (a combination of training in educational institutions and professional training in enterprises, institutions and organizations in order to gain a certain qualification) has become popular. 30% of the respondents marked this form of education as an opportunity to improve the efficiency of training in the university. The respondents think that the possibility of guaranteed employment of university graduates can also improve the efficiency of training.

Such factors as the introduction of strict administrative measures against those who violate the discipline (reprimand to from the university's administration, expulsion from the university, etc.) (5%), stricter control over knowledge of the university's students (4%) and sufficient provision with required scientific books (1%), as epy respondents believe, have little impact on the efficiency of training in the university.

Based on the survey's results, one can draw a conclusion that the possibility of getting well-paid jobs after training and students' prosperity in the future, to a large extent, depend on modern, high-quality education, the high level of knowledge, capabilities and skills.

Speaking about the international experience of assessment and quality assurance of higher education, it should be noted that the organization of analytical and other functions in this aspect implies the availability of the relevant institutional environment. This environment is formed at two levels (national and international).

The national institutional environment for the quality assurance of higher education consists of, first and foremost, state authorities (national quality assurance agencies, accreditation commissions and methodical centers), public associations (employers' organizations, universities' unions, analytical centers, and educational associations), as well as universities that elaborate internal quality assurance systems and other bodies.

In the conditions of globalization, international regulation in higher education has become more important. This level is formed by international networks of quality assurance agencies, international associations and unions of students, accreditation consortiums and bodies providing the standards of global educational policy (UNESCO, OECD, World Bank) or acting as consulting organizations (International Union of Transnational Education).

At the global level, the main institution regulating the education system is a specialized institution of the United Nations Organization – UNESCO. Six institutes and two centers, activities of which are directly related to education, operate within UNESCO (History of the Education Sector, n.d.).

UNESCO's functional directions relate to the research of all levels of education; the elaboration of standards for the preparation and adoption of international legal acts related to education; monitoring of educational goals as agreed upon at the international level (annual

analytical publication, Global Education Monitoring Report).

Within UNESCO's institutional structure, the International Institute for Education Planning (IIEP) provides assistance to the quality of the educational policy. IIEP created a special learning portal (IIEP Learning Portal) in order to help education policy developers, assess the quality of programs and improve them, as well as exchange experience in educational management (case studies).

An international institution which at the global level forms the methodology of monitoring main trends in education development is the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS). The Institute provides open access to the database characterizing national, regional and global education systems and their competitiveness based on ratings. The UIS database is a unique tool for the analysis and international comparison of foreign student flows (Science Policy and Capacity-Building. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, n.d.).

An international institution that generates ideas for the improvement of the quality of education and gives the relevant recommendations to governments of various countries is the OECD Education Policy Committee. OECD analytical data on higher education problems and the formation of the relevant policy include a wide range of journals, reports, overviews and information messages.

At the initiative and support of OECD, the international monitoring of higher education quality was introduced, and the methodology designed to analyze strategies of higher education internationalization was developed. OECD's substantial contribution is "Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education" (Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education, 2005) which were developed jointly with UNESCO.

The Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence (IREG Observatory) is a public organization that provides at the international level methodological and organizational support to the quality in higher education through ranking tools. IREG is a global coordinator of university ratings (IREG Ranking Audit Manual/IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence, 2011).

The global higher education system's institutional environment evolves via a network of professional organizations in the area of

quality assurance and the monitoring of education policy efficiency. The International Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE), which had 265 members from 92 countries at the end of 2018, constantly expands. Main goals pursued by INQAAHE are to accomplish and share results related to the assessment and analysis of higher education quality management systems and their efficiency, to advise members of the network on the definition of standards for universities within national boundaries and inform about the recognition of international qualifications.

Separate groups of researchers and experts have united over the past few years, forming new institutional international bodies. The most famous of them are the Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER), the Center for Research in Higher Education Policies (CIPES) and the Center for International Higher Education (CIHE).

The European level is one of the powerful regional levels for quality assurance and social responsibility in higher education. In the Lisbon Strategy (Europe 2020, 2010), this region declared its intention to become the most dynamic and intellectual economy of the world. The improved efficiency and international attractiveness in higher education became one of the main tasks for the achievement of this goal.

Organizations which at various levels promote measures aimed to improve the competitiveness of the European educational space and its providers are the Council of Europe, EU education agencies, the International Association of University Presidents, the European Students' Union; the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and many others.

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) plays a leading role in the execution of EU educational programs. EACEA funds Erasmus +; Creative Europe, Europe for Citizens, European Voluntary and Eurydice. Within the Eurydice Network project, the Executive Agency provides comparative data and analyzes educational systems and policies in 38 European countries. Since 2011, EACEA has published thematic reports, special surveys and overviews, as well as other materials related to higher education and relevant policies (Structural Indicators for Monitoring Education and Training Systems in Europe, 2017).

The European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) performs an external assessment of the quality in higher education in Europe. One of the primary achievements made by ENQA is the approval of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). The second step in the practical implementation of the standards was the establishment of the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) in order to form a database of reliable quality assurance agencies operating in Europe and to increase confidence in higher education institutions.

The European University Association (EUA) is the largest organization by the number of participants that presents universities in Europe through a system of global partnership. The Association includes over 850 members (universities and national rectors' conferences) in 47 countries. EUA clearly defines the vision of future European universities – academic institutions with a broadly diversified profile and development strategies of their own.

Strengthening competitive positions of European universities in the global educational space is one of the tasks pursued by the European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE). The Association is an initiator/partner in many projects pertaining to university-business cooperation (WEXHE, SAPS, UBC, SEPHE), measures aimed to improve the quality of professional technical education (EUproVET, BEEHiVES, PROCSEE) and enhance students' progress in studies (CALOHEE, AHELO).

In addition to educational product providers, the system for the institutional provision of competitiveness in European higher education gives a wide view of consumers. The European Students' Union (ESU) was established in 1982. ESU aims to present students' social, economic and cultural interests at the European level (Europe 2020, 2010).

National quality assurance systems in higher education span a network of stakeholders who operate at the level of countries they present pursuant to the approved rules of law, standards, cultures and traditions. Every country in the European space has national peculiarities in the quality assurance in higher education while sticking to the ESG standards.

Having joined the Bologna Process in 2003, Russia is working to bring the quality of the Russian higher education system to comply with the European standards.

The national institutional area for quality assurance and competitiveness of the higher education system in Russia currently comprises a wide network of public organizations. However, despite the quick transformation of the institutional area of quality assurance and social responsibility of higher education and the deepening international cooperation in this area, some experts think that state interests in Russia have been prioritized as compared with public interests (Antonenkova, Vintova, Titov, 2017).

The system of requirements for the quality of higher education in the Russian Federation is governed by requirements of federal state educational standards and requirements for the licensing and state accreditation of higher education institutions. The main quality agents in the system of higher education are still public authorities that set quality requirements, control and assess activities carried out by participants in the educational services market. There is often a clash of stakeholders' interests because state management plays a decisive role in the construction of the quality assurance system and other participants' contribution is the smallest. As a consequence, a key setting for higher education institutions is the success in providing formal quality reports to state supervisory bodies.

Separate researchers (Rubin, 2016) believe that the introduction of an institute of independent educational auditors is one of the conceptual fundamentals for improved quality of higher education in Russia. Two methods are suggested to bring this idea to fruition. The first method is evolutionary when independent auditors operate in parallel with public authorities. The other method is revolutionary, with the state assigning all its duties relating to the licensing and the accreditation of universities to a public organization of independent educational auditors. The main task of both the evolutionary and revolutionary methods aimed to introduce an institution of independent educational auditors must be not the formation of a social class of educational auditors or even the fight against corruption but development of measures for the promotion of internal educational audit (Gadalova, Frolova, 2012). Only the introduction and the development of the internal system of quality assurance in higher education, and the development of the culture of quality will turn Russian universities into competitive centers of the global higher education area.

## Conclusion

It is necessary to study the assessment of the quality of educational services for the adoption of effective decisions on management, as well as the comparison and assessment of the current condition of quality of professionals' training. For this reason, we find it necessary to continue studies related to the assessment of the quality of educational services in a higher education institution by conducting surveys among all participants of the educational process.

We have found that the institutional area for the quality assurance in higher education is a complicated system of formal and informal institutions, national and international organizations, each of which represents a certain community (political, academic, scientific and student). These institutions interact for the execution of the most significant programs for quality assurance in higher education and the effectiveness of education policies as a whole. Their activities result in the formation of a new global higher education area and stakeholders' higher social responsibility for the quality.

In the conditions of globalization, the use of the potential provided by the international institutional space by a country is one of the determining factors for the improvement of its own higher education system. However, as international experience shows, the higher education system's main driver is the development of the internal quality assurance system by every provider of higher education.

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