

Using the results of the entrance examinations to the universities during the examinations to the master degree

Since 1997, Azerbaijan uses two-stage model of high education – bachelor and master. It was demands of the times, in order to advance existent model of education (ten years in school + five years at university + post-graduate course + doctor's degree) and make it more adaptable for education available in most of countries in the world.

Though a new model was a positive modification, realization of it was formal not worked of. So in most of universities structure of lectures not changed. Lecture hours were curtailed in order to pass the previous program of five years during now available four years. At second stage (master degree) most of lecture of first stage reviewed just in more extensive way.

Gradually universities obtained further insight into the process when new specialties appeared and some available specialties became not urgent and topical for present day. The problem of program modification at two stages became important especially when Azerbaijan entered Bolonian Process.

In most of universities, lecture's plans were changed taking into account experiences of foreign countries. Since unified standards for each specialty were not available, universities carried out modification on their own, so that programs of each specialty in different universities were also different. As each university determined different examination form and content, rules and examinations to master degree were also different.

In April 2005 by the Decree of President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, the State Student Admission Commission (SSAC) was charged responsible for organizing and conducting the examinations to the master degree of universities. SSAC need to establish new model of national examination in compliance with international standards. The board of working groups studied international experiences on entrance examinations to master degree, generalized experiences available in different universities in Azerbaijan. After that, the board of working groups presented several model of entrance examination to master degree. Two-stage model of entrance examination to master degree accepted as a transitional model.

At first stage, all specialties and directions were collected in 15 groups. In all groups was general block composed of 50 questions on mathematics and logical thinking, prepared by experts and psychologist and adapted to local conditions and 20 questions on foreign language, because most of materials and literature on new different specialties, especially on technical, engineering sciences, were in foreign

languages. Bachelor could choose one of different foreign languages (English, French, German and Russian).

Only bachelors who passed the first stage were admitted to the next stage.

At second stage, bachelors must write script on specialty as required by universities. Script themes and questions on specialty were announced and published by universities beforehand.

It was decided that each script would be checked by two experts in ten-point assessment on basis of unified standards. The standards were determined by university departments. In addition, if a specialty was in several universities, standards must be unified.

A special board assessed markers and in case of distinctions of two or more scores scripts were checked by other independent expert.

Just so many shortcomings of current education system were revealed by carrying out unified examinations in 2005. Until these examinations shortcomings were not obvious, because each university carried out examination on it's own.

Despite the fact that one specialty is available in several universities, transfer from one university to other, and even changing specialties to related one were prohibited during entrance examination to master degree, that contradict to Bolonian Process.

We must distinguish, that SSAC canceled limits concerning of applying to master degree (until 2005 only bachelors with average score in diploma over 4.0 could apply to master degree).

As tests at first stage to master degree checked basic knowledge, SSAC beforehand checked and analyzed bachelor scores in exams to bachelor degree four years ago. SSAC is organized and conducting examination to all universities in Azerbaijan during last 14 years. So SSAC has a data bank of all applicants, who entered universities during these years. Checking of basic knowledge of bachelors after four years study could give important material to determine the dynamics of knowledge changes during education years.

It was revealed that 93 percent of all applicants scored 500 points of 700 available in exams to bachelor degree applied now to master degree. This was a positive, because students with high scores are people who want to get best education.

SSAC before exams to master degree also revealed rating of universities on basis of average points of applicants scored at examination to bachelor degree. So SSAC had base of bachelor – graduated from each university separately, who as we expected could present high results at examinations to master degree.

But SSAC expecting didn't come true. It's enough to mark that only 5 000 bachelors (less than 50 percent of all applicants) passed the first stage of exams. Bachelors with high scores were 68 percent.

Many questions appeared also after checking scripts.

Plurality of specialties and limit number of experts on different subjects made another problem: expert often could suppose whose script they checked. So, exams at second stage couldn't be objectivity in some cases.

Some different appeared during revising formal (diploma's and school-leaving certificate's average scores and points scored at entrance examinations) and real (points scored at examination to master degree) base.

This became theme of debates. Students scored high points at entrance examinations presented mean results at university final exams. It was revealed, that universities were responsible for student's low results, because of negative moral and psychological environment, unqualified teacher staff and the like. So most of students scored high points four years ago on exams to bachelor degree, couldn't pass exams to master degree.

Another interesting fact was results of students obtained a distinction from university. Most of them presented low results at entrance examinations four years ago. Analysis of test examination at first stage displayed that over 80 percent of those who have low scores at entrance examination and obtained a distinction from university, couldn't pass the first stage of exams to master degree. The others were eliminated at second stage.

All aforesaid revealed that there is corruption in high education system, then student knowledge not appreciated at its true value. On the other hand examination to master degree showed that centralized entrance examination to bachelor degree four years ago assessed students equally and fairly and were impartial and unbiased.

The SSAC solved the problem of corruption at entrance examination to bachelor degree by carrying out unified and centralized examinations and hope that unified examinations to master degree will also extirpate all negative occurrences in student knowledge's assessment in high schools.

As a whole first centralized and unified exams to master degree revealed several problems. Successful advance and modification of education reform depends on solving all available problems.

First of all, we need

1. to co-ordinate programs of high schools at bachelor degree; teaching must be more on directions, not only on individual specialties;
2. to provide required environment in order student with can more successfully unveil their high potential;
3. to ensure real and objective system of knowledge assessment and etc.

All these facts became subject of investigation in all structures of education in Azerbaijan and quite possible give support to improvement sphere.