

ON FORMING THE PROFESSIONS SPECIFICATIONS UNDER THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW QUALIFICATIONS SYSTEM

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Abstract. Introduction. The article reveals the features of description of secondary vocational education (SVE) graduates' qualifications. New approaches are proposed for describing the SVE graduates' qualifications, which take into account the existing traditions and the new aspects related to the changes in the normative regulation of labor market. *Objective.* To develop the methodology of updating the specifications of manual workers' occupations and majors of SVE, taking into account the existence of constantly filled up registers of vocational standards and qualifications. *Research methodology and methods.* Analysis of the retrospective transformations of "qualification" definitions, compared to modern conceptions of this term. *Results.* Recommendations are offered, which refer to the description of

qualifications when forming the updated professions classification in SVE sphere. The recommendations take into account that, for several years to come, the normative documents and all-Russian classifiers will act, which regulate the existing qualifications system. At the same time, the new, currently forming, qualifications system cannot be ignored. In the article, three alternative approaches to the description for SVE graduates' qualifications are offered for this difficult situation. To make the final decision, the results of this work are supposed to be discussed with representatives of educational community (educational and methodological associations of SVE) and employers (represented by Councils for professional qualifications). *Scientific novelty.* The proposed recommendations take into account the

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increasing influence of the new, currently forming Russian system of qualifications on the labor market. *Practical significance.* The proposed approaches will promote establishment of compliance between the qualification within the educational system and the qualification apparent for the labor market.

Keywords: qualification, national qualifications framework, profession, vocational standard, secondary vocational education.

1. Introduction.

Specifications of manual workers' occupations and majors of secondary vocational education (SVE) are essential documents which determine the structure of training of qualified manual workers and specialists for the labor market. The specifications serve as the basis for elaborating the national educational standards and professional educational programs of secondary vocational education. Till 2013, the list of occupations and majors, included into the specifications, was rather stable. The minor corrections made in them did not take into account the intense

technological development of the Russian Federation, and did not enhance the efficiency of the personnel potential exploitation.

Since 2013, with a view of improving the personnel infrastructure, the country started to elaborate and implement the professional standards. By now, the professional standards, included into the register of the Russian Ministry of Labor, rather clearly express the position of professional associations and employers as for the modern professional-qualification structure of employment in the labor market. Comparison of the elements of the professional standards' register and the specifications of occupations and majors of SVE reveals significant inconsistencies. Some occupations and majors of SVE have no professional standards, and it seems most probable that they will never be elaborated. This fact may indicate that such occupations and majors are obsolete, and it may be appropriate to exclude them from the specifications. On the other hand, there are professional standards, for which there are no occupations and majors in the specifications; this fact may indicate

the need to include new occupations and majors.

On January 1, 2017, a Federal Law of 03.07.2016 N 238-Φ3 “On independent evaluation of qualification” came into effect, which stipulates forming of the register of information about the independent evaluation of qualification. The register includes a specification of the titles of qualifications and requirements to them. The analysis of the nomenclature of qualifications, included into the register, shows its inconsistency with the qualifications conferred upon the graduates of education institutions in compliance with the specifications of occupations and majors of SVE. This makes the information about which labour functions the college graduates are prepared for obscure for the labor market.

This article presents the materials of a research project “Methodology and methods of elaborating the modern specifications of occupations and majors of secondary vocational education, manual workers’ occupations and employees’ positions in the sphere of vocational education”. The research objectives were to elaborate the

conceptual and methodological foundations for actualization of specifications of occupations and majors of secondary vocational education, and to establish the matches between the qualification within the educational system and the qualification apparent for the labor market. The project is performed by the Center for Vocational Education and Qualifications Systems of Federal Institute for Education Development, within the frameworks of state order of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, N 28.10128.2017/5.1.

In the course of the project, which has great practical significance, we will analyze, supplement and clarify the tables of correspondence between the elements of SVE specifications and professional standards; bring the specifications to compliance with the register of professional standards of the Russian Ministry of Labor; decide on the opening new professions and majors, training for which will be performed under the increased technological level of the modern economy; exclude from the specifications the obsolete professions and majors which are not demanded by the labor market and the

consumers of educational services. Actualization of the specifications of SVE occupations and majors is to be performed with the participation of a wide range of representatives of educational community and employers.

The objective of this article is to describe the academic approaches to solving one of the most important tasks of the performed research, namely, the tasks of elaborating recommendations for describing the graduates' qualifications in the renewed specifications of occupations and majors of secondary vocational education.

2. Literature review.

In the Russian Federation, qualification is interpreted differently in the spheres of labor and education. The lack of common terminology hinders harmonization of the educational services market and the labor market.

In the sphere of labor, qualification is a certified set of individual features, professional skills and knowledge, required for fulfilling the tasks at a certain working place [1]. The Federal Law of 3 December 2012 N 236-Φ3 “On alterations in the Labor Code of the Russian Federation and

331
Article 1 of the Federal Law “On technical regulation” stipulates that “an employee’s qualification is the level of knowledge, skills, professional mastery and working experience of the employee”. The “Standard requirements to the Center for qualifications estimation”, adopted by the decision of National Council under the President of the Russian Federation on professional qualifications, introduce the notion of professional qualification “as the knowledge, skills, professional mastery and working experience of a physical person, necessary for fulfilling a certain labor function”.

In the sphere of education, qualification is usually defined as the level of learning, preparedness for the competent fulfillment of a certain type of activity within the acquired profession (major); it is the key component of a vocational education standard [2, 3]. The laws regulating the sphere of education do not give the definition of a term “qualification”. Nevertheless, clause 3 of Article 14 of the Federal Law “On education”, which acted up to 1 January 2013, contained the provision that “Vocational education of any level must ensure that the student acquires

profession and relevant qualification” [4]. This legal norm inherited from the practice of the Soviet educational system, under which the university, technical school and technical college graduates acquired vocational qualifications, like “an engineer”, “an architect”, “a technician”, “a turner”, etc. The graduates of the Soviet, and later Russian, vocational education institutions acquired vocational qualifications due to the good material-technical and laboratory equipment of the education institutions, the well-developed and reliably functioning institutions of practical training.

After introducing the two-level system of training (Bachelor – Master) in Russia in the beginning of the 1990s, there appeared three different academic qualifications of higher education (Bachelor, certified specialist, Master), differing by the type of the state document (diploma). In two cases (Bachelor and Master) the professional qualification, characteristic of a certified specialist only, was substituted for a degree, for example, “Degree – Bachelor in Economics with the major in Statistics” [4]. Since then, the Russian educational sphere faced a more distinct

trend of dividing the qualifications into the academic and applied (professional). The practice of the recent years showed that the employers, who got used to receiving the professionally well-trained graduates from the education institutions, are very skeptical towards academic qualifications of the job applicants. That is why, currently both the educational system and the employing organizations search for compromises, the aim of which is to bring the level of the graduates’ professional training and means of certifying their qualifications closer to the demands of the employers.

Outside Russia, the term “qualification” is interpreted differently, too. The Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997) defines of higher education qualification as “any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme” [4]. In the European Union the term “qualification” may mean: its formal recognition in the form of a certificate or diploma; the ability to perform the specific job or satisfy specific requirements, demanded at a certain working place; the level of

education or ability of a person to manage professional tasks (which is also described by the term “competency”) [5].

In the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED-2013) [6], qualification is defined as an official certification, usually documentary, of successful completion of an education programme or a stage of program. Qualifications can be acquired as a result of: successful completion of a programme; successful completion of a stage of a programme (intermediate qualifications); checking of the acquired knowledge, skills and competences regardless of the participation in such programmes. In the context of identification of education programmes orientation at the level of tertiary education, ISCED uses the terms “academic education” and “professional education”. Professional education includes education programmes designed for acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences by the students for fulfilling a certain type or types of professional activity. These programs may include such components as training at enterprises (for example, practical training/probation period). Successful

completion of such programs results in acquiring professional qualifications demanded in the labor market which are recognized by the appropriate national authorities and/or labor market as professionally-oriented.

After the European Union was formed, the problem of mutual recognition of qualifications by the member countries aggravated [7]. In the common EU labor market there appeared specialists trained within sharply different national qualification systems. To ensure qualification comparability, the European qualifications framework was designed in 2006; it was actively developed for a number of years [8], and soon became the basic document used for elaborating educational programs [9, 10, 11]; it is this document that served as the basis for national qualifications frameworks of the EU countries and the countries which signed the Bologna declaration [12].

For all of the differences in particular definitions of the term “qualification”, they have something in common. An employee qualified for fulfilling a certain type of activity must possess the necessary knowledge, skills, abilities and competencies. More and

more often, the requirements to the working experience are put forward for official recognition of qualification. That means that the automatic recognition of a graduate's qualification, acquired as a result of study at an educational organization, can be denied on the grounds of the lack of experience. Our European colleagues in the sphere of engineering education came to the conclusion that the professional qualification of an "engineer" can be granted to an applicant not earlier than after two years after he/she started working in this sphere, under the condition that before that he/she was studying this major for not less than five years full time [4].

This corresponds with the opinion being adopted in the European countries that the document given to a graduate cannot be regarded as the document confirming the qualification acquired during the mastering of the educational program. The practice is being adopted all over the world, under which the evaluation and conferment of professional qualifications are made by independent organizations: centers for professional qualifications, professional associations, etc. The person applying

for conferment of a qualification must, as a rule, fulfill a number of conditions, sometimes rather complicated. For example, the applicant for the certificate of an engineer at the National Chamber of Engineers (USA) must comply with the following requirements: be a graduate of an engineering program; have practical experience of not less than four years; pass an exam in the fundamentals of engineering; pass an exam in the theory and practice of engineering [4]. In other words, to qualify for the certificate of a professional engineer, an applicant must submit an engineering school diploma (confirm his/her academic qualification) and prove the required practical experience in the field of engineering. This example illustrates the correlation, in which the academic and professional qualifications may exist, and how professional qualifications may supplement the academic qualifications acquired in the course of learning.

3. Materials and methods.

Within the research, we analyzed the practice and scientific-methodological approaches to describing qualifications in the specifications of

occupations and jobs in the Russian and foreign education. We revealed the connection between the approaches to descriptions implemented at various stages and the features of structures of the national qualification systems. We studied the composition of elements of the currently formed new qualification system of the Russian Federation and its correlation with characteristics of the SVE occupations and jobs, reflected in specifications, with the federal state standards, and with the issues of forming the comprehensive and adequate statistics in the sphere of education.

4. Research results.

Today, many countries establish centers for qualification evaluation and certification, independent from educational organizations [13, 14]; alongside with the national qualifications frameworks, these centers become the key elements of the national qualification systems. The new national qualification system, being created in the Russian Federation, has its peculiar features [15, 16], and, alongside with the actively created centers for independent qualification, includes:

- The National Qualifications Frameworks of the Russian Federation (NQF RF);

- The Register of professional standards of the Russian Ministry of Labor;

- The Register of titles of qualifications and requirements to them.

The project of the national qualifications frameworks was designed by Federal Institute for Education Development in 2007 [17]. The project remained negative for a long time, though immediately after its publication is started to be actively used both in the sphere of labor and in the sphere of education. The National Framework established nine levels of qualifications, conjugated with the levels of the European qualifications framework; it matched the qualification levels in the sphere of labor with the levels of professional education and specified the ways of achieving the qualification levels. The conceptual basis for elaborating the National Qualifications Frameworks of the Russian Federation is competency approach: the description of the qualifications levels was based on the description of differences in the training results, expressed in terms of

responsibility, independence and complexity level of the working situation. This rendered much assistance to the elaborators of the Federal state educational standards of the third generation. Largely due to the implementation of the universal descriptors of NQF RF, they managed, in the educational standards, to distinguish the requirements to training results between the levels of professional training, and to ensure their conjugation and continuity. At present, the National Qualifications Framework is adopted by the Order of the Russian Ministry of Labor of 12 April 2013 N 148H as a document “Qualification levels for the purposes of professional standards elaboration”.

Professional standards are the basic element of the currently developed new national system of qualifications of the Russian Federation [18]. The elaboration and introduction of the professional standards is coordinated by the National Council under the President of the Russian Federation on professional qualifications, created in compliance with the Presidential Order of 16 April 2014 N 249. The National Council performs the expertise of drafts

336

of legislative and other normative legal acts of the Russian Federation on the issues of the development of the national system of qualifications, considers the drafts of professional standards. Basing on the conclusions of the National Council, decisions are made on adopting the professional standards. The National Council creates councils on professional qualifications. The councils on professional qualifications are continuing bodies of the national system of qualifications, created for the purpose of forming and developing the systems of professional qualifications in particular types of professional activity.

After the National Council began functioning, the professional standards elaboration started to be financed and carried out according to the state plan. By now, the register of professional standards of the Russian Ministry of Labor includes over 1000 professional standards, comprising all the key spheres of professional activity.

Professional standard (PS) defines the characteristic of the qualification necessary to fulfill a certain type of professional activity. PS is a document identifying, from the standpoint of the labor sphere, the aims

and content of the certain type of professional activity through description of generalized labor functions, specific labor functions, labor actions, position in the system of qualification levels, requirements to education level, practical experience, necessary knowledge and skills of an employee. An essential feature of PS is that, describing the labor functions, it does not standardize the requirements to the personality and the job responsibilities of an employee. The latter are formulated with the account of the features of organization, level of preparedness, experience and other individual characteristics of an employee [19].

The main spheres of the professional standards application are: forming the personnel policy and personnel management; independent evaluation of qualifications; elaboration of federal state educational standards; elaboration of professional educational programs. Professional standards to a large extent determine the requirements to the content of professional training in SVE occupations and jobs. To use them as the basis for federal state educational standards and SVE professional educational programs, it is necessary to

establish the compliance of each SVE occupation and job with professional standards from the register of professional standards of the Russian Ministry of Labor. Councils on professional qualification compile such tables of compliance.

Through professional standards, the SVE occupations and jobs are linked to the register of independent qualification evaluation, which contains the specification of qualifications titles and requirements to them (<http://nok-nark.ru>). For each qualification, the register specifies: its title; the title and details of the professional standard, for the compliance to which the qualification undergoes independent evaluation; the level of qualification in compliance with the professional standard; the code of labor function; the title of labor function; the list of documents necessary for passing the professional examination for the relevant qualification; the validity term of the qualification certificate [19].

For instance, this is how the characteristics of an “Accountant” qualification are described in the register:

Title: *Accountant*

Title and details of the professional standard: *Accountant. Order of the Russian Ministry of Labor of 22.12.2014, N 1061H*

Level of qualification: 5

Codes and titles of labor functions: A/01.5 *Entry into the books the primary documents of the facts of economic activity of a business entity; A/02.5 monetary evaluation of the objects of accounting and current grouping of the facts of economic activity; A/03.5 Final summarizing of the facts of economic activity.*

List of necessary documents: *1. A document certifying the education not lower than secondary professional by the programs of middle-level specialists' training in the sphere of "Economics and management" OR 1. A document certifying the education not lower than secondary professional by the programs of middle-level specialists 2. A document certifying the supplementary professional education in the sphere of accounting.*

Validity term of the qualification certificate: *3 years*

This example gives a detailed description of the features of the new system of professional qualifications in

the Russian Federation and enables to judge whether and how the SVE graduates' qualifications can be described in the renewed specifications of occupations and majors.

It should be noted that the national system of qualifications is still under the stage of formation and has to function in interaction with the elements of the existing system of qualifications. When renewing the SVE specifications of occupations and majors, it should be taken into account that the Russian qualifications system faces a kind of "diarchy", when documents of completely different orientation are under effect simultaneously, sometimes contradicting each other. Introduction of professional standards in Russia does not imply the abatement of the documents regulating the previous qualification structures: Unified qualification reference book of managerial, specialists' and employees' positions (UQRB); Unified tariffs and qualifications reference book of works and occupations of manual workers (UTQRB), etc.

Below are the examples of descriptions of some occupations and

majors in the existing SVE specifications:

Examples of description of SVE majors:

1. Enlarged group: *38 Economy and management*

Code of major: *38.02.01*

Title of major: *Economy and accounting (by sectors)*

Qualification(s) of a middle-level specialist: *Accountant; Accountant, specialist in taxation.*

2. Enlarged group: *08 Technique and technology of construction*

Code of major: *08.02.01*

Title of major: *Construction and exploitation of buildings and structures*

Qualification(s) of a middle-level specialist: *Technician; Senior technician.*

Example of description of SVE occupation:

3. Enlarged group: *08 Technique and technology of construction*

Code of profession: *08.01.08*

Title of profession: *Master of finishing construction works*

Qualification(s) of a qualified manual worker and employee: *Construction painter; Moulder of frame-boarding constructions; Facing worker; Mosaic worker.*

4. Enlarged group: *15 Machine building*

Code of profession: *15.01.05*

Title of profession: *Welder (electric welding and gas welding)*

Qualification(s) of a qualified manual worker and employee: *Gas welder;*

Electric gas welder; Electric welder on automatic and semi-automatic equipment; Electric welder of manual welding; Flame cutting torch operator.

In the above examples, the titles of qualifications of the existing specifications are recorded in compliance with UTQRB and UQRB. Some of them coincide with the new titles of qualifications, included in the register of independent estimation of qualifications of the Russian Ministry of Labor, for example, the qualification of “Accountant”. Some of them do not coincide, for example, the register does not include – and, most likely, will not include – the qualification of “Accountant, specialist in taxation”. Similarly, the qualifications of “Technician” and “Senior technician” will not be included into the register, as they look like job titles rather than qualification titles; actually, they are the characteristics of the levels of

educational programs: “Technician” is the program of basic level of preparation, and “Senior technician” is the program of advanced level of preparation. Thus, which qualification specifications shall serve as the basis for elaboration of the renewed lists of SVE occupations and majors: UTQRB and UQRB or the qualification specification of the register for independent qualification evaluation? The Russian Ministry of Labor answers the employers’ questions in its circular of 4 April 2016 N 14-0/10/13-2253 as follows: “In future we plan to substitute UTQRB and UQRB for professional standards, as well as for certain sectoral requirements to the employees’ qualification, ascertained by legislative and other normative legal acts, some of which already exist (for example, in the transportation sphere, etc.). However, such substitution will take place during quite a long period of time”.

Thus, renewal of the SVE specifications of occupations and majors, projected for the 2018 – 2019, will take place under the conditions of the above-mentioned “diarchy”. In the authors’ opinion, in this situation the following approaches to descriptions of

SVE graduates’ qualifications can be proposed:

1. To divide the section “Qualification” into two subsections, one of which will contain the titles of qualification according to the current specifications (i.e. UTQRB and UQRB), the other – titles of qualification from the register of independent estimation of qualifications. As the second subsection fills with data, which may take several years, the first subsection will cease to be needed. The occupations and majors in the specification will be linked to professional standards through the qualifications listed in the register of professional standards of the Russian Ministry of Labor.

2. In the section “Qualification”, to state a title of qualification which will have the status of an “academic” qualification, or a “qualification according to education”. This can be “Technician (by major...)” or, for example, “Welder (by occupation...)”. This broad title of qualification can be stated in the document of graduation from an education institution. During the period of study, a student will have an opportunity to master and certify at

independent centers one or several qualifications from the UTQRB and UQRB specifications or from the register of professional standards of the Russian Ministry of Labor. For each acquired qualification, a graduate will receive a certificate. The document of education, supplemented with certificates of the acquired qualifications, constitute the documents confirming the results of education. Academic qualification of a graduate is a long-term one. Professional qualifications have a limited validity, after expiration of which they will have to be confirmed. The defect of this approach is the lack of direct explicit link between the occupations and majors from the specification and the professional standards.

3. The section “Qualification” is not included into the SVE specifications. Instead, the section “Professional standards” is included; it enumerates the professional standards which correspond to the SVE occupations and majors. In this case, professional training can be aimed at mastering a wide range of labor functions (or a part of labor functions) of the appropriate level, enumerated in the professional standards which correspond to the SVE occupations and majors. The

341

Federal State Educational Standard, which determines the requirements to the content of education, may specify the minimal list of qualifications from the register of the Russian Ministry of Labor, obligatory for mastering during taking the course according to the educational program of a particular occupation or major. It can also stipulate the title of academic qualification given to a graduate as a result of study.

When renewing the current SVE specifications of occupations and majors, during the period of formation of a new qualification system, it is necessary to include the “level of qualification” indicator into the characteristics of the occupations and majors to which they refer according to the National Qualifications Frameworks of the Russian Federation: for qualified workers’ occupations it is level 4, for SVE majors – level 5.

Indicators of the levels of qualification and types of educational programs can be implemented through modernization of the existing coding system. The coding structure, used for specifications of occupations and majors in 2009, can be returned [20]. Then the code of “Welder” in the above example

(example 4) would be “15.43.08”, where 15 is the code of enlarged group “Machine building”, 43 – the code of level and type of educational program: 4 – the program of 4th qualification level by the National Qualifications Frameworks of the Russian Federation, 3 – the program implemented on the basis of secondary comprehensive education; 08 – number of the occupation in the enlarged group.

The code of major “Construction and exploitation of buildings and structures” (example 2) could be “08.52.01”, where 08 is the code of enlarged group “Technique and technology of construction”; 52 – the code of level and type of educational program: 5 – the program of 5th qualification level by the National Qualifications Frameworks of the Russian Federation, 2 – the program of advanced level of education; 01 – number of the major in the enlarged group.

When forming the codes of occupations and majors, it is advisable to divide the enlarged groups into groups of occupations and majors [21]. In the current specifications, some enlarged groups include up to several dozens of

342
occupations, referring to various professional spheres: for example, “geodesy” and “mining”; “zootechnics” and “veterinary”, etc. The absence of division of the enlarged groups into groups of occupations and majors hinders the formation of statistical data on the preparation of qualified personnel in these and other professional spheres.

5. Discussion.

It is supposed that the approaches proposed in the article will be discussed in broad public at target scientific-methodological seminars with participation of SVE Educational-methodological Councils, Councils on professional qualifications, with representatives of educational organizations and educational authorities. The participants of the public discussion are to specify the tables of compliance of the SVE occupations and majors to the register of professional standards, these tables being elaborated by the Councils on professional qualifications. The participants will also have to initiate the renewal of the content of occupations and majors included into specifications, the exclusion of obsolete elements from the specifications and

inclusion of new occupations and majors, corresponding to the increased technological level of the modern industry. The representatives of educational community and the employers will have to agree on the formats of the specifications, to approve the unified system of qualifications and coding of professional educational programs.

6. Conclusion.

In compliance with the stated objective, the article proposes the approaches to describing qualifications of SVE graduates under the forming of the new Russian systems of qualifications. The research results are of great practical significance as they provide the scientific, methodological and organizational bases for modernization of the current specifications of the SVE occupations and majors. In future, one of the significant scientific-practical tasks is actualization of the specifications of the occupations and majors in which professional training is carried out, and its conjugation with specifications of all types and levels of professional educational programs, including the

programs of higher education. An important direction of further research is the search for solutions which would enable to completely eliminate the occupations and majors specifications in the educational system. Under this approach, the education institutions could independently regulate and provide the necessary academic educational constituent for each professional sphere. In this case, the content of professional training of students would be regulated solely by the documents which regulate the labor sphere: professional standards, register of professional qualifications, provisions on independent evaluation of qualifications, etc.

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