

MODERNIZATION OF THE INSTITUTE GRANTING ACADEMIC TITLES TO SCIENTIFIC AND PEDAGOGICAL STAFF OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION ¹

EL DESARROLLO DE LA INSTITUCIÓN DEL NOMBRAMIENTO PARA LOS RANGOS CIENTÍFICOS DE LA FACULTAD DE ENSEÑANZA CIENTÍFICA EN LA FEDERACIÓN DE RUSIA

O DESENVOLVIMENTO DA INSTITUIÇÃO DE NOMEAÇÃO PARA AS FILEIRAS CIENTÍFICAS DO CORPO DOCENTE DE ENSINO CIENTÍFICO DA FEDERAÇÃO RUSSA

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Abstract: Taking into account, that science and education in Russia are related to certain priority areas designated by the State and the social development policy, this article is focused on the issues related to the modernization of the academic degrees' system in Russia. This system is characterized by multiple imperfections that particularly influence the motivation of high-education teaching personnel. In this paper, the authors study several recent problems encountered in the current legal regulation governing the attribution of academic degrees in Russia while observing its inconsistencies and legal contradictions. The paper also contains an analysis of suggested proposals that could be added to the current legal texts, regulating the institution responsible for academic degree attribution. In general, the authors suggest a conceptual approach to modernize the mechanisms of normative legal regulation which organizes the attribution of academic ranks. It is suggested to improve the evaluation system of scientific publications used to evaluate applicants for an academic degree, and to establish a transition towards a point-based evaluation system based on the quality of scientific and educational work. The thesis formulated expresses the need to develop a system of social and material guarantees for the benefit of scientific and educational staff and the implementation of effective means to motivate their educational and research activity.

Keywords: Docent. Education. Professor

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Resumen: Teniendo en cuenta que la educación y la ciencia en Rusia se relacionan con el número de direcciones prioritarias de la política estatal y el desarrollo comunitario, este artículo se centra en la discusión sobre el tema de la modernización del sistema de filas científicas en Rusia. Este sistema se caracteriza por la imperfección, lo que influye particularmente en la motivación del personal docente de educación superior en la actividad educativa. Los autores consideran los problemas más actuales de la condición actual de la reglamentación legal del nombramiento a filas científicas en Rusia y realizan el monitoreo sobre la inconsistencia y las contradicciones legales. El artículo contiene el análisis de la serie de sugerencias para las enmiendas a los actos jurídicos vigentes, que regulan la institución de la designación a filas científicas. Los autores generalmente cubren el tema de la formación del enfoque conceptual para la modernización del mecanismo de reglamentación legal de la designación de rangos científicos y sugieren la mejora del sistema de evaluación de las actividades de publicación de los candidatos a la designación de rangos científicos, y su transformación. a través de la contabilidad de la calidad de los logros científicos y docentes utilizando el sistema de puntos El artículo lleva a la tesis de la necesidad del desarrollo del sistema de garantías sociales y materiales para la facultad científica-docente y científica y la implementación de instrumentos eficientes para estimular su actividad docente e investigadora.

Palabras clave: Docent. Educación. Profesor

Resumo: Considerando que a educação e a ciência na Rússia se relacionam com o número de direções prioritárias da política estatal e do desenvolvimento da comunidade, este artigo se concentra na discussão da questão da modernização do sistema de fileiras científicas na Rússia. Esse sistema é caracterizado pela imperfeição, o que influencia particularmente a motivação do corpo docente do ensino superior na atividade educacional. Os autores consideram os problemas mais reais da condição atual de reglamentação legal da nomeação para postos científicos na Rússia e fazem o monitoramento referente à inconsistência e contradições legais. O artigo contém a análise da série de sugestões de alterações aos atos jurídicos vigentes, regulamentando a instituição da nomeação para as fileiras científicas. Os autores geralmente abordam a questão da formação da abordagem conceitual para a modernização do mecanismo de regulamentação legal da nomeação de postos científicos e sugerem a melhoria do sistema de avaliação das atividades de publicação de candidatos à nomeação para postos científicos e sua transformação através da contabilidade da qualidade das realizações científicas e de ensino usando o sistema de pontos. O artigo traz à tese a necessidade de desenvolvimento do sistema de garantias sociais e materiais para o ensino científico-docente e científico e a implementação de instrumentos eficientes de estímulo à atividade de ensino e pesquisa.

Palavras chave: Docent. Educação. Professor

INTRODUCTION

The first appearance of academic titles has historically been linked to the need of building a system of certifications for scientific and educational staff, motivating them to improve their professional level and, therefore, to develop their career. The attribution of an academic title to teachers in higher educational institutions and employees of scientific organizations is determined by their level of ability to perform complex research and pedagogical tasks. One of the necessary conditions to the deserve a scientific rank is to be a holder of a previous academic degree or a doctor's degree. At the same time, the academic degree on its own cannot be a sufficient condition to obtain the scientific rank of docent or

professor. It is necessary to “take into consideration the functions expected from a holder of a certain scientific diploma and the duties expected at this level of the educational or scientific hierarchy claimed by the applicant [...]” (SENASHENKO, 2017, p. 42), which is a component of prestige for a university professor or a researcher, a means of having their professional merits recognized in the scientific and educational environment. In particular, the attribution of the academic title of “Associate Professor” obliges the applicant to aim for good results in his educational and scientific activities, including publishing of educational papers and scientific articles (manuals, and teaching materials, monographs, articles in scientific journals and conference proceedings); give lectures or conduct other courses at a high professional level, etc.

Recently, discussions have focused more and more on the modernization of the institute attributing academic degrees, within the framework of the State’s scientific and educational certification system. While studying the development of the academic degree system from a pedagogical point of view, NA Ivanischeva notes that it is necessary to take international experiences into account especially after the entry of Russia into the Bologna process, which in its turn, requires further educational understanding (IVANISHCHEVA, 2012, p. 106). Considering the importance of education management at the present moment, L.V. Vesnina, points out the need to solve the educational problems found in the State policy and in the education system as a whole. The strong participation of the State in the education modernization process reflects its historical predominant role in the management of education over the role of individuals and society (VESNINA, 2010, p. 17).

However, the gradual formation of state and public institutions requires the implementation of several changes in the educational management process, ensuring the expansion of their participation in this process. This statement is accurate, since the educational system in Russia is predominantly owned by the state, which is the main (but not the only) initiator of the modernization processes and the source of funds for education. However, it would be wrong to consider the State (represented by its educational management bodies) as the sole initiator of reforms and process evaluation in the education system. (VESNINA, 2010, p. 17).

We must note, that the above mentioned statements are relevant not only for the educational system as a whole, but also for the modernization of educational and scientific certification mechanism in Russia. In the present conditions of constant changes in the Russian scientific and educational organs, reforms are often carried out without seeking an agreement between the different layers of the scientific and educational community, which negatively impacts the quality of activities in this sphere.

Several experts gave very critical assessments of current Russian legislation on public administration of education and science. However, not all of them are ready to offer constructive solutions to the complex situation encountered in the scientific and educational staff certification system. In this context, we note the importance of scientific and theoretical justification when implementing reforms in this system of certification in order to have a conceptual, strategic modernization. The importance of such certification is, according to I.E. Bibik,

[...] a means to ensure the control of concordance between a researcher's professional level and his scientific rank. The certification system creates the necessary conditions for an efficient rotation of scientific executives and contributes to their professional development (BIBIK, 2012, p. 49).

In several sources, a radical restructuring and even the abolition of the institution granting academic titles in Russia is increasingly demanded, and is often justified by the low efficiency both in terms of assessing the qualifications of individuals and its weak capacity to induce the motivation necessary to improve the professional skills of researchers and teachers. According to S.A. Vasiliev, "[...] the academic title has become a formal point of reference to which one must strive, but which in reality does not yield anything substantial" (VASILIEV, 2017, p. 33). In this regard, we are interested in quantitative indicators that reflect the numbers of high academic degree holders in the Russian higher educational institutions. According to the data of the National Research University "Higher School of Economy", the number of lecturers (holders of a scientific degree) practicing a teaching activity according to the bachelor's and master's programs; are decreasing since 2017. In 2017-2018 25,9 thousand had the professor rank (24,9 thousand in 2018-2019, 23,7 thousand in 2019-2020). The analogue situation is also relevant for the provision of docents: within the previously noted periods their number decreased from 90,3 thousand to 88,0 thousand and 86,8 thousand (GOHBERG, OZEROVA, SAUTINA, SHUGAL, 2020, p. 84). The mentioned statistical data shows a decrease of lecturer's interest to acquire certain scientific ranks, which brings us not only to the impossibility of recruiting new employees of high qualifications, but also to the decrease of their numbers in universities.

It seems, that the mission of the institution attributing scientific ranks should not be limited only to the assessment of scientific qualification and teaching abilities. Its missions are much broader, as it also affects a number of other important areas such as:

- Stimulate the activities of a designated category within the framework of writing and publishing scientific and educational literature;
- Development and improvement of skills, methods and teaching techniques, by participating in scientific conferences and events;

- Orientation procedure for scientific degree candidates until they achieve the highest title of "Professor";

- Evaluation and indirect development of the most advanced scientific journals on the basis of quality content. These scientific journals are the ideal tool for testing the results of a scientific research and the broadcast of its latest significant results which promotes the career paths of teachers and scientists.

It is advisable to consider the following axes as essential to improve the mechanism of scientific degrees' evaluation, used by the State's institute responsible for attributing academic titles:

- Revision of the current regulation that organizes the attribution of academic titles for its inconsistency and contradictions, as well as the evaluation of its effectiveness in order to identify the obstacles and execution defects that may be encountered by scientific and educational workers while applying for a desired title;

- Conceive strategic suggestions to reform the existing law articles organizing the practices of the institution granting academic titles and the development of new conceptual approaches to modernize the current regulatory legal framework;

- Improve the monitoring methodology used to supervise the system of academic titles' functioning by implementing automated information systems and special "artificial intelligence" software.

Furthermore, taking into account A.A Venediktov's position, it is advisable to digitize the process of academic degrees' attribution from the application phase until the issuance of a certificate, and to transform the relevant legal procedures into a digital form (VENEDIKTOV, 2018)

Digitization in today's educational and scientific system is the main development trend in the world. Taking into account the great transformations made on the higher educational pedagogy by digitization, M.P Prokhorov, A.A Shkunova, A.E Bulganin and K.M Grigoryan note that the

[...] objective process of shifting analog technologies to digital technologies, is a new characteristic of the social situation, which makes it possible to create, transmit, process and store information, as a new paradigm of thought and information transmission. The artificial intelligence technologies and neural networks have great potential applications in the digitization process, and allow us to build information systems with analytical and predictive functions, thus contributing to the development of decisions' management and reducing the occurrence of human errors. (PROKHOROVA; SHKUNOVA; BULGANINA; GRIGORYAN, 2020, p. 300).

For the purposes of our article, it is not possible to consider all of the recommendations suggested above to improve the state's certification system, which is why, the subject of our review will be only two of them:

- Monitoring of the current regulatory framework organizing the attribution of university degrees for its inconsistency and contradictions.
- Analysis of reform proposals aiming to modify the existing legal articles governing the attribution of academic titles.

The implementation of a conceptual modernization in the regulation ruling the attribution of academic degrees, will be approached only in its most general terms, because it constitutes in itself a very complex problem of an educational, legal and administrative nature, which requires a number of specialized studies.

The legal base of the reglamentation that organizes the institution attributing scientific ranks is the Federal Law dated on 23 August 1996 № 127-FL (edited on 26 July 2019) "On the Science and State's Scientific and Technical Policy" (RUSSIA, 1996). This law contains the starting point for assessing the scientific qualifications of individuals carrying out scientific activities, the assessment is performed out by the national scientific certification system who is responsible for attributing academic degrees to applicants as well as the attribution of the academic titles of "Doctor", "Associate Professor" and "Professor".

In addition, the law defines the rules to be respected in order to grant the academic titles of "Associate professor" and "Professor", including:

- The tasks to be fulfilled in order to obtain the corresponding academic title,
- The requirements to be met by the applicants for academic titles,
- The examination procedure to be followed in order to obtain an academic title,

The basis and procedure of forfeiture and academic titles restoration are established by the Government of the Russian Federation.

The attribution of the academic titles of "Associate professor" and "professor", and the approval of forms and documents submitted for review, are carried out by the federal executive body who is responsible for formulating the state's policy and the legal regulation in the field of scientific and technical activities, which is currently the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

Based on the mentioned above, the Government of the Russian Federation and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (then the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation) have developed and adopted a number of

regulations to organize the procedure of awarding academic titles and. These regulations are still applied to this day, including:

- Regulations on the granting of academic titles, approved by Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 10, 2013 No. 1139 (as amended on June 6, 2019) “On the procedure for granting academic titles” (RUSSIA, 2013);
- The procedure for issuing academic titles’ certificates of “Professor” and “Associate Professor”, approved by order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation of August 16, 2019 No. 611 (RUSSIA, 2019);
- Administrative regulations approved by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation in order to provide public services for the attribution of academic titles of “Professor” and “Associate Professor”, approved by order of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation dated March 2, 2020 No.268 (RUSSIA, 2020).

The analysis of the regulatory framework adopted by the institute responsible for academic titles’ attribution and comparing it with other regulatory legal acts in the field of science and education, allows us to note the presence of several contradictions and inconsistencies as well as a number of legal gaps and inaccurate formulations. For the purposes of our article, we take into consideration the most obvious examples of such contradictions.

LEGAL GAPS IN THE SCIENCE AND EDUCATION REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

We find a contradiction between the articles of the Federal Law on Science and State Scientific and Technical Policy mentioned above and Federal Law No. 273-FZ of December 29, 2012 (as amended on May 25, 2020) on education in the Russian Federation "(RUSSIA, 2012), the essence of the contradiction is as follows:

In the Law “On Science and State Scientific and Technical Policy”, the attribution of university degrees and the achievement of academic ranks are uniquely defined as State’s instruments to assess the scientific qualifications of researchers and persons practicing scientific and technical activities. At the same time, the regulation ruling the attribution of university degrees unambiguously associates the attribution of academic ranks to the existence of scientific and educational papers published by the candidates, and to their high professional level as lecturers.

In this regard, it is fair to assume that the diplomas confirming the achievement of a university degree and the certificates conferring academic ranks are, respectively, documents of scientific and pedagogical qualifications. However, in the Law "On Education in the Russian

Federation" such diplomas and certificates do not appear in the list of documents that prove education and scientific qualifications.

If we start from the content of the current legislation, this contradiction creates unjustified obstacles in the teaching activity, especially for the individuals who are holders of a scientific degree and (or) an academic rank in their field, but do not have the required training corresponding to the discipline or the course they teach.

Based on the above, it should be concluded that the next legislative action of the federal legislator, should be the immediate correction of this contradiction, which will completely irradicate the reappearance of controversial situations during the application process of the relevant legal articles and avoid any unjustified obstacles that may encounter the highly qualified scientific and pedagogical staff while conducting educational duties.

DEFICIENCY OF THE REQUIREMENTS IMPOSED ON TEACHERS AND RESEARCHERS

There is an obvious imbalance in the requirements defined by the regulations on the attribution of academic titles to researchers and teachers.

First of all, unlike the previous regulations, the current one does not contain the academic title of "Senior Researcher", which expresses a certain neglect of the scientific researchers' merits. The legislator considered that it was possible and sufficient to create only two academic titles - "Associate Professor/Docent" and "Professor", equalizing the titles granted to both scientific researchers and teaching employees. At the same time, the nature and the specifics of the work conducted by scientific organizations carrying out scientific research are not taken into account, which gives priority to the educational activity and a lead for the employees of educational organizations.

In support of the above-mentioned thesis, we examine the requirements imposed on applicants for the title of associate professor, and which are established in the regulation on the attribution of academic titles, according to which the applicant must practice educational activities at a minimum rate of 25% (including under part-time employment conditions) following high-education programs, or complementary professional training programs in the same scientific specialty indicated on the application file. The educational activity takes place within the organization that submitted the file for the academic title attribution.

This standard considerably complicates obtaining an academic title for a large number of researchers, given the existence of scientific organizations which do not carry out educational activities. As a result, researchers are often forced to work part-time at a university, sometimes far from their main place of work, devoting heavy additional energy out of their main activity

(research) in order to formally comply with regulations and requirements that cannot be respected within a single organization, which would be much easier in terms of organization, time consumption and moral ethics.

Of course, the defenders of this criticized regulation may note that a researcher can still apply for an academic title at the request of an educational institution in which he works part-time. However, the organizations with which the researcher is only linked by intermittent teaching activities, cannot form a complete and objective judgment of the scientific and educational qualifications of the nominee for the title. It seems that the institution responsible for issuing academic titles should be based on equal consideration and recognition of the scientific and educational merits of applicants within its regulatory and legal framework. At the same time, we believe that the abolition of the academic title in the form of “Senior Researcher” is a legislative error.

We can find the same criticized requirement also imposed on applicants for the title of "professor". As a result of adapting such standards, employees of scientific organizations and teachers of higher educational institutions are deliberately placed under unequal conditions, and the specificity of research activities is not fully detailed and is considered secondary compared to teaching practice. Such an inconsistent regulatory decision creates obstacles for scientists who want to acquire an academic title and minimizes the authority and prestige of scientific research.

It seems that, it would be possible to remove from the regulation the reference to scientific organizations, which execute educational programs of higher education and have state accreditation, and (or) programs of professional development programs or retraining programs on the base of higher education.

However, it seems that such a solution can only be considered for a near future, but at a strategic level, it seems necessary to return to the previous differentiation between academic titles, referring not only to the addition of the title of "senior researcher" to the state certification system, but by supplementing it with a sort of analogue for the title "professor" dedicated for researchers in the form, for example, of the title "chief researcher" or "professor of the RAS" (RAS - Russian Academy of Sciences). The use of the title "professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences" already exists in the activities of the Russian Academy of Sciences. At the same time, attention must be paid to the policies of foreign states, where the proposals outlined in this article have already been implemented. The Code of the Republic of Moldova on Science and Innovation dated July 15, 2004 No. 259 (as amended on September 21, 2017) provides separate academic titles for researchers - “professor-researcher” and “conference researcher”

(MOLDOVA, 2004). Such approach is also partially supported in Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian Law dated on 1 July 2014 № 1556-VII (edited by 21 June 2020) “On Higher Education” the scientific title “senior researcher” (Equal to Senior Scientific Employee) is attributed to individuals, who professionally practice scientific or technical activity, while the scientific titles of professor and docent are appointed to individuals, who professionally practice scientific or artistic teaching activity (UKRAINE, 2014).

The title "Professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences" was recently implemented by the Decree of the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences of September 29, 2015 No. 204 “On the creation of the title of professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences”, the corresponding regulations were approved, specifying the procedure and criteria of attribution of the title (RAS, 2015). At the same time, and as noted by M.I. Kleandrov, the current regulation of the Russian Academy of Sciences, does not mention such a title (KLEANDROV, 2019). Meanwhile, a whole body of RAS professors has been formed, and is organizing general assemblies during which a coordinating council has been elected as the governing body. This coordinating council actively participates in the activities of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

M.I. Kleandrov raises a number of questions analyzing in detail the nature of the academic title of “Professor” and its functional purpose. The mentioned author raises a number of important questions related to this particular academic title - what is the purpose of conferring the title of professor? for what specific achievements could it be attributed? Is it considered a double doctor degree? who can be subject of an evaluation expertise in order to achieve this academic title (KLEANDROV, 2019).

Among the proposals on the modernization of the university titles system in Russia, suggests entrusting to the thesis councils or a union of professors (non-profit association) the right of preliminary scientific examination of application files presented in order to obtain the academic title of “professor” (KLEANDROV, 2019). This innovation deserves special attention. However, in our opinion, it is necessary to define, as a first step, the approach to be followed in the academic titles attributing process, whether centralized (via the system of public education and science administration) or autonomous (via universities or non-profit organizations).

Each of these approaches has advantages and disadvantages. At the present time, a combined approach is applied - universities do assessments and apply for an academic title, subsequently, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation gives a final assessment of the certification case and deliberates a final decision on this matter. All of

the above conceptual approaches are used in the worldwide practice of scientific personnel certification.

In this perspective, and in terms of discussion, we propose to consider the introduction of four academic titles in the state certification system:

- Associate professor,
- Senior researcher,
- Professor,
- Chief researcher (or professor of RAS).

It should be noted that the point here is not only the name of the academic title, but also the conceptual approach used by the state legal policy in assessing the qualifications of scientists.

It seems that the requirements imposed upon researchers (applicants for academic titles) should be modified on a number of parameters, unlike the case for scientific and educational employees. The merits and qualifications of people who have chosen to work in research as their main activity should be assessed based on the specifics of this line of work, and not by referring it to educational activities, which for many researchers either exist as a secondary activity, or not at all. In this case, and according to the Russian legislation organizing the attribution of academic titles, a researcher does not receive any attention or consideration for his possible successes in scientific activity from the Russian State, which did not provide for such a group of workers special academic titles without reference to educational activity.

INCONSISTENCIES IN THE ASSESSMENT OF REASERCHERS AND TEACHERS' SIENTIFIC QUALIFICATION

The disproportion of quantitative factors and qualitative characteristics used in the State's qualification assessment system, is related to a number of significant gaps in the regulatory framework that governs the institute of academic qualifications.

The discussion concerns the conditions to be respected in order to obtain the academic titles of "Professor" and "Associate Professor" as determined by the regulations and according to the number of scientific and educational publications.

Thus, according to the above-mentioned regulation, the applicant for the title of "Associate Professor" is required to have published, at least, 20 educational publications and scientific articles (even as a co-author), including invention patents or other intellectual property used in the educational activity. At the same time, during the 3 previous years, the applicant must have published at least 2 educational publications and at least 3 scientific articles related to the scientific specialty indicated on the application file.

Regarding applicants for the academic title of "Professor", the quantitative indicators of publication activity are much higher, the applicant is expected to have at least 50 educational publications and scientific articles published (even as a co-author), including invention patents or other intellectual property used in the educational activity. At the same time, during the previous 5 years, the applicant must have published at least 3 educational publications and at least 5 scientific articles related to the scientific specialty indicated on the application file. For both types of academic titles, the regulations specify that, the scientific articles must be published in peer-reviewed scientific journals that comply with the regulations established by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

As we can see, quantitative indicators dominate over qualitative characteristics in the process of applicant's scientific and teaching achievements evaluation. This legal gap has been pointed out by both groups of the scientific and educational community who have suggested excellent proposals for its elimination.

The position taken by the Scientific Council of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (*The activities of this council were completed in 2018 following the establishment of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation*) is interesting. In 2015, the Scientific Council severely criticized the current regulations on the attribution of academic titles by stressing the need for a radical reform of the regulatory framework governing the attribution of academic titles, the council noted that the existing procedure

[...] not only does not contribute to the improvement of training quality for highly qualified scientific personnel in our country, but also unjustifiably complicates the attribution of the academic titles "Associate Professor" and "Professor" for Russian scientists who are actively involved in the training of scientific personnel, and at the same time facilitate the obtaining of these same titles for those who do not have the required qualifications. (Scientific Russia, 2015).

The Scientific Council has argued its position by mentioning the legal gap that we pointed earlier concerning the dominance of quantitative indicators over the qualitative indicators in the evaluation of scientific and teaching employees.

The Council considered that the requirements relating to quantitative indicators are overestimated, and stressed the absence of coherent requirements to objectively assess the qualitative aspect of scientific and educational activities. The experts also noted that "imitators and frauds" have a real opportunity to publish their fictitious articles - that do not meet minimum quality requirements - in scientific journals. At the same time, brilliant scientists working in the biggest scientific organizations of the country, and publishing the most reliable

and internationally recognized articles, do not have the total number of publications required by the current legislation.

These arguments can be considered reasonable and essential for the modernization of the current certification system, but the option of a radical solution proposed by the Council in 2015 raises some critical observations.

The Council underlined in its declaration several interdependent steps leading towards a radical modernization of the legal framework governing the institution of academic titles attribution.

As a first step, it was suggested to consider as qualified publications, only those publications that appear in one of the international scientific articles databases - Web of Science, Scopus, PubMed, MathSciNet ... etc. and only monographs published under the stamp of the institutions: Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University and other Russian federal universities, as well as monographs published with the financial support of the state (Scientific Russia, 2015).

If we accept this suggestion in its radical form, the problem would not only be unsolved, but may become more complicated, especially when academic titles become reserved only for the capital's eminent personalities and high-education institutions. As a result, provincial scientists, due to low funding in their regional organizations, and in absence of authoritative scientific journals in their institutions, objectively cannot have a real opportunity to internationally assess their publications.

Practically, in the provinces, not all of the research and teaching teams have a real opportunity to receive a financial support to publish their monographs, since the lobbying centers for this type of funding are not located in the provinces, but in Moscow and St. Petersburg. The adoption of this proposal into the state certification system could adversely affect the provincial science and the Russian high-education, depriving many young provincial scientists from obtaining an academic title, for the simple reason of not having connections or financial opportunities to publish their work in the most reputable scientific journals. After all, it is known that most journals indexed in international databases do not publish articles free of charge, especially for authors who do not yet have an academic title. In this case we will find ourselves facing the following situation: If a provincial scientist prepares articles of very high quality but does not have great fame or scientific authority, he could only publish his work in periodicals mentioned on the list of the Regions' Higher attestation commission, but not in the capital.

This raises the questions: would it be possible to combine between the indicators used in the current evaluation of scientific personnel qualifications, and the suggestion of the Scientific Council? or is it worth to take one of the two extreme positions? It seems that in the current difficult situation, it will be necessary to take into account all the factors and conditions in which employees carry out their scientific and educational activities in order to extract a balanced solution.

Switching to a point-based evaluation model is one of the most balanced options that could be used to modernize the system of publication activity evaluation and the scientific and teaching employees' qualification. The classification of scientific and educational articles - as well as the editions in which they are published - according to predefined qualitative parameters and the association of each group with an expressive sum of points, can become a useful means of avoiding the state of quantitative and qualitative inconsistency of regulatory and legal criteria governing the state certification system.

Such a point-based system should be sufficiently detailed in order to classify the different scientific articles by separating the articles published in the Higher Attestation Commission journals from the others, attributing more points to those publications that appear in the international scientific articles databases (WoS, Scopus ... etc). We suggest assigning the maximum number of points to monographs published using public funds support.

The points scale and the score classification of the different categories of scientific works, should be the subject of an in-depth discussion before adding it as a part of the regulations governing academic titles attribution. In this case, it is necessary to have the consensus of all classes in the scientific and educational community, and it should also be debated in the expert councils of the Higher Attestation Commission, as well as in the leading structures of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

The second radical suggestion proposed by the Scientific Council is to delete the list of peer-reviewed scientific journals, in which the main scientific results of the dissertations should be published and approved by the Higher Attestation Commission, an action that we consider inappropriate in the modern circumstances. Despite all the shortcomings of the list, it still makes it possible to make a selection from the colossal number of scientific articles periodically published in Russia. It seems more reasonable and practically necessary to choose a less radical solution by improving the selection system of scientific journals, making the quality requirements stricter and excluding from the list those which do not meet the defined standards.

If we proceed to the complete abolition of this list of journals approved by the Higher Attestation Commission, the system granting academic titles will be compromised, because

young researchers who aspire to obtain their first university degree will not be able to publish their work in scientific journals, mainly because of their financial situation. We are talking here about simple graduate students, young researchers, and not officials of large scientific and educational organizations, who have appropriate financial and organizational resources.

For this reason, existing shortcomings found in the current list of scientific journals do not justify its complete abolition, but calls for an immediate improvement of the selection system by which journals are sorted. In our opinion, radical measures can only lead to an even greater inconsistency in the regulatory framework organizing the system of scientific and educational personnel certification, by destabilizing its practical application.

The third suggestion proposed by the Scientific Council, is to hand the responsibility of academic titles' attribution to the jurisdiction of the Higher Attestation Commission, a suggestion that we also find controversial. Indeed, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation does not have a collective of experts capable of assessing the scientific level of applicants in all the various scientific fields. However, encouraging the Higher Attestation Commission to work on cases of academic title attribution leads to a number of difficulties. First, the Higher Attestation Commission is already overloaded with its mission to assess the quality of research theses, the number of which is constantly increasing. Second, it seems that a meaningful scientific assessment of the of the applicants' achievements could be justified - under current legislation - by the same organizations in which they work.

This problem can be solved in a slightly different way. It seems that in this case, it is better to opt towards improvement of the work carried out by the scientific councils included in scientific and educational organizations. These councils will be able to file academic title attribution petitions to the Ministry of Science and superior Education of the Russian Federation.

At the same time, we can work on the modernization of the regulations that organize the evaluation of scientific qualifications, while revising the requirements to be fulfilled by scientific journals in order to be approved in the journal list of the Higher Attestation Commission. Also, the introduction of a point-based evaluation system to assess the publication activity of applicants, this way, it would be possible to have a significant increase in the efficiency of the whole certification system, rather than to choose radical measures targeting existing mechanisms which have been functioning for many years despite their shortcomings.

A number of experts have proposed to temporarily suspend the use of the current regulation on academic certification until the adoption of a new one, which also seems inappropriate, given that a complete suspension of the certification mechanism even for a short

period, will have a very negative impact on young researchers, scientists and university academics who are currently in the process of fulfilling the conditions to obtain a university degree. This action will create a situation of uncertainty for them, and the new regulations can still considerably complicate the path to obtain the title "Associate professor" or "professor". This situation will be destructive for young researchers who currently do not have as much motivation to pursue scientific research.

The implementation of strict certification requirements must necessarily be preceded by an increase in the social and material guarantees, to ensure decent working conditions for young scientists and educators, which will allow them to objectively demonstrate their scientific qualifications, these guarantees could only be obtained through substantial state support. The increase in material guarantees should correspond to the scientific qualifications of the concerned individuals and their academic titles. The presence of the academic title indicates the state's recognition for their significant scientific achievements. In the states of Western Europe, considerable attention is paid to the material guarantees dedicated to the activities of teachers and scientists. In particular, according to the German law on remuneration of 23 May 1975 (as amended on 9 December 2019), the basic monthly salary for junior professors (Juniorprofessor) is set at 4,898.68 euros, and for professors (Professor) and university professors (Universitätsprofessor) it varies according to the level of scientific qualification between 6,085.88 to 7,756.53 euros (GERMANY, 1975), which is a considerably motivating to implement scientific and educational activities and to improve scientific skills.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The mechanism used by the institute attributing academic titles in the Russian state to assess scientific qualifications, is characterized in its regulatory and legal framework by the presence of significant gaps which require a progressive, verified and scientifically founded reform as part of a modernization program approved by different groups in the scientific and educational community, and not radical restructuring or complete suspension.

From a strategic point of view, the certification of scientific personnel should continue to be included in the public science and education administration system, in order to provide scientific personnel and scientific and educational workers with social and material guarantees as much as possible. At the same time, the evaluation of the scientific achievements - presented by applicants in order to obtain an academic title - must be preserved by the management body of the organization in which they carry out their scientific and (or) educational activities.

The main steps to improve the system of academic titles attribution in Russia should be:

- Equal recognition of the scientific and educational merits of applicants;
- Differentiate between the requirements that have be fulfilled by researchers and those that have to be fulfilled by educational employees in order to obtain a certain academic title, that can be done by taking into account the specifics of scientific research and the elimination of the direct link between the attribution of an academic title and educational activities;

- Reform the quantitative and qualitative inconsistency present in the criteria used to attribute academic titles, that can be achieved by applying a point-based evaluation system for scientific publications, as well as for the scientific journals in which they are published, which allows to sort them into groups according to their total score.

It is also necessary to significantly readjust the requirements that need to be met by scientific journals so that they can be approved on the list of the Higher Attestation Commission which is part of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

For an effective functioning of the scientific and educational personnel certification system, it would be necessary above all, to develop a structure of social and material guarantees for this category of employees and to put in place effective means to motivate the development of their scientific and educational activities.

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