

Export of higher education VS Internalization of a university:

a view of sub-center universities in Russia

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Abstract—The RF focuses now on export services development, in particular, in the field of higher education and life long learning. The priority project “Development of export potential of Russian education system” set serious goals for domestic universities to increase the number of foreign students and the income from export activities. Achieving the goals set and ensuring their sustainable development in the long term period is only possible by adapting universities’ internal environment to the requirements of internationalization. The goal of the research is to develop specific recommendations to manage internal internationalization of a university, including organizational, structural, and functional transformation. To this end, theoretical approaches and good practices were analyzed, representatives of Russian universities’ international offices were interviewed, and a review of universities’ internationalization strategies was carried out. It was concluded that internationalization activities of Russian universities are focused primarily on developing external relations, and not on changing their internal environment. Practical recommendations were developed to manage organizational changes at an internationalizing university depending on internationalization stage and degree of immersion into foreign marketing. The presented recommendations may be used by universities that are at the beginning of international activities, in particular, when developing internationalization strategies

Keywords—*university internationalization; export of education; internationalization strategy; international activities; foreign marketing*

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I. INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

The key goal of implementing the RF priority project “Development of export potential of Russian education system” is to increase attractiveness of Russian universities for foreign students, scholars and teachers. This goal may be

achieved only through internationalization of higher education institutions in Russia. If 5-10 years ago, a phenomenon of a university internationalization surprised, but today it is a pressing issue for most universities in Russia, the emergence of which is associated with both global and national trends. Internal factors pushing Russian universities to export educational services include the tasks of the Government for increasing the number of foreign students, as well as reducing governmental funding and an unfavorable demographic situation. [1, p. 138].

The research [2, p. 25] notes that in Russia, until now, a coordinated approach to internationalization was used when the RF Government provided financial support to attract foreign citizens to study. However, accepting the priority project shifted this tendency towards the strategy of earning income (a fivefold increase in income from foreign students’ training is expected). This is explained by the fact that foreign students are more active consumers, spending 25% more than their Russian counterparts [3, p. 104].

Nowadays a number of research and methodological materials on higher education internationalization is being developed, advanced training programs for university staff are being implemented. However, the majority of such programs and research do not consider specifics of work at sub-center universities in peripheral regions of our country possessing limited resources. As a result, international departments’ staff at such universities is wondering: how to implement the proposed activities in the existing strictly regulated and bureaucratic organizational culture that is not flexible and adaptable?

This study is focused on transformation of approaches to university management in the context of internationalization. A hypothesis of the research is that export of education services cannot be sustainably developed without internationalizing an internal environment of a university. The notion internationalization is understood by most authors as integration of an international dimension into a process of

providing educational services [4, p. 21] and single out internal and external internationalization [5]. The object of this study is precisely the internal internationalization, that is, a transformation of a university management system. External internationalization is aimed at developing international relations of a higher education institution.

II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Do Russian sub-center Universities manage their internationalization?
- What are the internal barriers of internationalization at Russian Universities?
- Do other countries manage export or internationalization? What are the best world practices of internationalization management?
- What relation exists between stages of internationalization and models of university export activities?
- What are the conditions of university successful export development?
- Is it possible to provide these conditions at a Russian sub-center university?

III. RESEARCH METHODS

The vast majority of Russian research literature is related to issues of external internationalization [6-12], while insufficient attention is paid to adapting university internal environment to export development requirements. This thesis was proved by analyzing internationalization strategies of 33 Flagship Russian universities, as well as their Development programs for the presence of an international component. The internationalization strategy was approved only at one university; another university had a section on internationalization in its Development program. Six universities presented special internal regulations governing international activities (most often, rules for academic exchanges of students, teachers and researchers) on their web sites.

Similar results were achieved in the framework of the Erasmus + project “Developing Approaches to Harmonizing Internationalization Strategies in the Field of Higher Education, Science and Innovations in the EU and Russia, Belarus, Armenia”¹. The results of the research at 119 Russian universities showed that in the vast majority of universities there is no separate internationalization strategy. It means that no integrated internationalization management is provided at such universities.

The following problems of developing and implementing internationalization strategies at Flagship (sub-center) universities were revealed within the frame of the expert survey with the international departments’ staff:

- university top management does not have a clear viewpoint on internationalization (internationalization is understood as a separate process, but not as a state of a university);
- a need to implement organizational changes in horizontal units to introduce international component in their activities is underestimated;
- functions of international offices are constantly changing as international activities are developing;
- university internal environment is not ready for internationalization (teachers do not speak foreign languages, do not want to change their approaches to learning, adapting to the needs of foreign citizens; a motivation system is not built in the context of internationalization; a corporate culture is not cross-cultural and tolerant);
- inactivity of university “ambassadors” at international events (lack of competence and experience of intercultural communications, poor professional spoken English, etc.);
- universities’ support departments are not ready for international operations (HR department, passport officer, accountant department, etc.);
- decision-makers are not flexible in the context of internationalization (for example, on implementing international component into educational process, or on international collaborations in science, etc.).

The survey results allow us to make a conclusion that internal environment of flagship universities is not ready for exports of high quality educational services for a number of foreign students that leaders of the universities and the country plan to bring.

The reason for this trend is a problem of managing corporate cultures of Russian universities. According to the common expression of Peter Drucker “Culture eats strategy for breakfast” - it is useless to implement an internationalization strategy at a university whose corporate culture is characterized by closed nature, bureaucracy and conservatism. At Russian universities, especially at peripheral ones, or as they are called today - flagship – corporate culture models of organizational anarchy and resource dependence are common when goals are vague, decision-making process is irrational, and political basis for decision making is struggle for resources [13, 14]. In these conditions, educational exports development should begin with adaptation of a corporate culture to the requirements of internationalization.

Many foreign countries followed this path. Foreign studies on universities’ internationalization are concentrated mainly on research of internal environment and organizational changes taking place in it [15-20]. In a number of lead countries in terms of educational exports strategies for universities’ internationalization are adopted at national level (for example, in Finland², Sweden³, the Great

¹ Adam Martinez M.A., Akulshina A. Development of approaches to harmonization of a comprehensive internationalization strategies in higher education, research and innovation at EU and Partner countries, Thessaloniki and Gomel, 2019, 273 p. Available at: <http://harmonyproject.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/HARMONY-PROJECT-E-BOOK-.pdf> (accessed: 26.01.2019).

² Strategy for the internationalisation of higher education institutions in Finland 2009-2015. Available at: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/finland_higher_education_strategy.pdf (accessed: 26.01.2019).

Britain [21], France [22], Australia⁴, etc.). These strategies have recommendations how to rebuild organizational structure of a university and managing organizational changes, to increase attractiveness of a university on the global educational market, develop export activities and corporate culture changes. In addition, a number of universities' internationalization have being implemented abroad (for example, OECD Higher education programme IMHE [23], Modernization of institutional management of internationalization in south neighboring countries MIMI (Tempus) [24], Development of methods for internationalizing the research environment in Japan⁵, etc.).

Thus, internationalization management at Russian universities is predominantly external by nature, which, in our opinion, does not contribute to ensuring the sustainable development of this process in the long term. Introducing foreign experience and good practices in managing internal internationalization will create favorable conditions for a confident entry of Russian universities to foreign educational markets.

IV. RESULTS

Experts identify 3 stages of university internationalization: centralized, development stage and decentralized stage [24, p. 5]. From our point of view, at each stage certain goals of export activity are pursued and different types of foreign marketing are implemented. At the centralized stage, all international functions are concentrated at one department of a university, and it is possible to implement implicit and rare foreign marketing. It means that a university teaches foreign citizens on existing educational programs in Russian not adapting their internal environment to globalization. At the development stage, a university develops partnerships abroad, which results in implementation of double degree academic programs and programs in foreign languages. At that stage regular foreign marketing is implemented when a university position on the global educational market is to attract foreign students to study in academic programs specially tailored to their needs. At the decentralized stage universities consider export of education as one of the main activities (are oriented towards external, rather than domestic market). Institutional internationalization is a part of overall development strategy of a university. That is dominating foreign marketing, when internationalization is considered as the main source of university income.

In accordance with the considered stages of internationalization, we propose to distinguish three models of university export activities: a centralized model, a development model, and a decentralized one (Fig. 1). The

question arises - what are the conditions for transition from model to model?

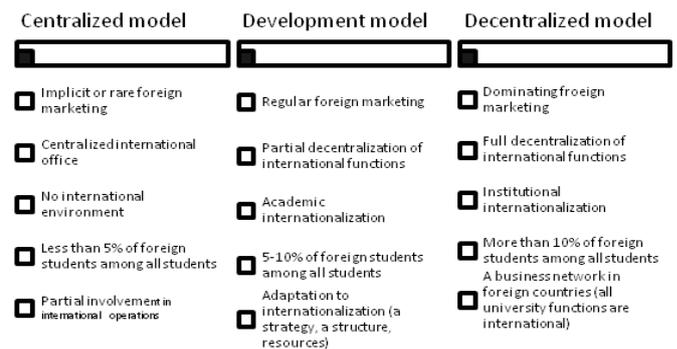


Fig. 1. University export activity models

University export activity development conditions

Condition 1: Internationalization strategy. Successful export of education is ensured by presence of university strategy of internationalization, as well as by clear-cut position of top-management regarding the priority of international activities. The problem of many Russian universities is that internationalization strategy is a separate document, whose implementation is provided by an international office. However, internationalization is not a process, but a state of a university, when all scopes of activity have an international component. In other words, this is not a working plan of an international office, but a development strategy of entire university.

Condition 2: Academic refocusing. Environmental factors necessitate a structural reorientation of academic process at an internationalized university. So, there is a tendency of spreading undergraduate level of higher education in developing countries, which determines refocusing of the demand of foreign citizens to master and postgraduate programs abroad. Other trends include a shift in focus from Russian to foreign-language academic programs, from autonomous academic programs and national diplomas to networking and double-degree programs, as well as shifting a final stage of the life cycle of foreign students' education from higher education programs to life long learning programs or professional training of foreign graduates of Russian universities. In addition, geography of foreign students is changing, experts point at the BRICS countries as the main source of demand for higher education programs in 2020–2030 [25, p. 19].

Condition 3: Organizational re-orientation. Structural reorientation of academic process requires a change in organizational structure of an internationalized university and transition from traditional to learning type of organization, from vertical to horizontal organizational structure. Some strategic goals of internationalization are simply impossible to achieve in the context of traditional bureaucratic system of a university management. One of the important conditions for a university internationalization is understanding the significance of this process by target groups: students, teachers, employers, graduates. This point of view is pointed by the expert community of international offices of Russian universities [26, p. 12; 27, p. 296].

³ Strategy for the internationalisation of higher education institutions in Finland 2009-2015. Available at: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/planipolis/files/ressources/finland_higher_education_strategy.pdf (accessed: 26.01.2019).

⁴ The National Strategy for International Education 2025 (2016) Australian Government. Available at: https://nsie.education.gov.au/sites/nsie/files/docs/national_strategy_for_international_education_2025.pdf (accessed: 26.01.2019).

⁵ University internationalization within global society (2010) Available at: https://www.jsps.go.jp/english/e-bilat/e-u-kokusen/program_org/finalreport/summary.pdf (accessed: 26.01.2019).

Condition 4: Functional re-orientation. Changing organizational structure requires redistribution of international functions among organizational units of a university. If at the stage of centralization all international functions are implemented by a separate international office, the transition to the next stage requires academic internationalization. The decentralized stage is characterized by institutional internationalization, when no structural unit makes a distinction between a Russian and a foreign citizen, including accounting, staff office, lawyers, etc. In this context, it is advisable to manage international business processes by developing regulations for their implementation and interaction of structural units.

Condition 5: Rethinking a role of international manager (Fig. 2). The centralized model require a talented project manager capable to serve all aspects of international activities. The development model requires a qualified administrator who is a professional manager and is able to manage organizational changes, train personnel in structural units and build business processes in context of internationalization. In a decentralized model, a strong strategist plays an important role, the main tasks of whom are building external relationships and developing portfolio and market strategies.

CENTRALIZED MODEL	DEVELOPMENT MODEL	DECENTRALIZED MODEL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talented project manager • Key competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn-key projects implementation • «International element» (servicing all international activities) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified administrator • Key competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organizational changes management • Staff training • Modelling business processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong leader • Key competencies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Startegy development • External relations establishing • Portfolio and market analysis

Fig. 2. The role of a manager responsible for international relations

Condition 6: International marketing management. Finally, a key condition for the transition between models of educational exports is international marketing. Current trends in demand on the global educational market are characterized by a high consumer culture. The problem of Russian universities is that international marketing or positioning of a university abroad is often carried out by international offices. Management of a university's brand and public relations in the context of internationalization must first be global, and - in particular, regional. In such circumstances, branding will be harmonious and balanced. Fundamental differences in presenting information for Russian and foreign target groups lead to the latter doubting the openness of the environment and its accessibility for foreign students and partners.

V. CONCLUSION

The proposed initiatives have been implemented at Pskov State University – a Flagship university of the Pskov region. It made possible to raise the position in the national ranking of universities on Internationalization from 191st in 2014 to 45th in 2017. To this end, in 2014, the Strategy for internationalization 2020 was developed, target indicators were established, as well as intermediate indicators for each year. In order to achieve intermediate indicators, the

university's structural units annually planned international activities, the effectiveness of which was assessed at the end of the year by compiling a ranking of departments according to the level of internationalization. Position in the ranking determined the budget for international activities of the next planning period. The positions of deputy deans for international activities were introduced, employees of administrative structural units responsible for international operations were appointed, and a corresponding system of motivation and training was created. Changing the approach to understanding the function of International office from the main operator of international activities to coordinator and organizer allowed all structural units to be involved in this process, sharply increasing the scale of internationalization. As a result, in 2018 representatives of the University joined the expert board of the priority project for the development of the export potential of the Russian education system. This enabled to hold the all-Russian seminar "Consolidation of efforts to develop the export potential of the Russian education system" at Pskov state university.

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