

A Practically-Oriented Approach in Preparation of University Specialists as a Medium for the Development of Digital Economy

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ABSTRACT

The gist of this article boils down to the problems of practice-oriented training of university marketing specialists in the context of the development of the digital economy. In modern market conditions, in the context of digital economy only those higher education institutions that pay close attention to the organization of student work practices can successfully function and develop dynamically. The role of production practice is wide and diverse. It is not only testing the theoretical knowledge of students obtained at the university when working at the enterprise, but also establishing long-term and mutually beneficial relations with employers. This is the development of practical skills and abilities of a future specialist with higher education, the formation of an actively creative personality that is able to constantly develop and improve.

Industrial practice is an integral part of the educational process for the training of marketing specialists and in the context of the transition to a multi-level education system. It becomes clear that work is required to improve approaches to organizing industrial practice and the system of interaction with employers at the university. The article shows various forms of interaction with employers and student involvement in socially significant projects in the city of Yekaterinburg, aimed at improving the competitiveness of the university.

Based on the selected target segment, positioning was carried out based on three points of differentiation: the result for everyone, the simplicity and uniqueness of the methodology and the learning speed. Final positioning concept is formulated in the paper.

Keywords: *production practice, student, university, base of practice, place of practice, employer, interaction, cooperation, practice-oriented approach, marketologist, career guidance, human resources*

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of production practice is wide and diverse. It is not only testing the theoretical knowledge of students obtained at the university when working at the enterprise, but also establishing long-term and mutually beneficial relations with employers. It is the development of practical skills and abilities of a future specialist with higher education, the formation of an actively creative personality that is able to constantly develop and improve.

Today the goal of modern higher education is the formation of a graduate as an integrated person, capable of not only gaining extensive theoretical knowledge, but also those who are able to put this knowledge into practice.

The transition of Russia to the Bologna education system [1] in 2003 led to the fact that, despite its versatility and the ability to acquire knowledge in various universities, the period of theoretical education in undergraduate studies was reduced. Earlier, according to the outdated education system, such training was considered incomplete. One of the main problems of modern graduates with employment in Russia is the mistrust of employers that the bachelor is a full-fledged, qualified specialist.

To solve this problem, it is necessary that theoretical knowledge is constantly reinforced by practical experience, which students can get in the framework of educational and industrial practice.

During the planned economy in the Russian Federation, the production practice of students at the university was organized at the highest professional level, both in terms of its organization and its control. First of all, universities concluded the necessary list of practice contracts, fixed by bilateral obligations for a long period of time. As a rule, large industrial enterprises, ministries and departments of various levels acted as production bases of practice. All students, without exception, were sent to enterprises subject to existing agreements.

It should be noted that the concept of “contract for practice” can exist in such areas as “base of practice” and “place of practice”. Both of these concepts carry different loads, therefore they cannot be identified. The main differences lie in the technology of the contract for industrial practice. In the system of higher education, the “base of practice” does not only provide the student with a place of practice and the appointment of a leader, but also establishes long-term, mutually beneficial relations

between the university and the enterprise, which includes classes by specialist practitioners, advanced training of the faculty, field defense of graduates qualification works, conducting scientific and practical seminars, research projects, master classes and many other forms of cooperation, important both for the university and for the enterprise [2]. Nowadays this form of cooperation is considered to be one of the most progressive. It is called the "Basic Chair". Maintaining such relations, enterprises, without fail, appointed mentors from among the top management of the enterprise, taking into account the student's training area, and universities paid for such responsible work on the basis of a contract.

Everything changed in the 1990s, when special difficulties began with the search for a place of practice. Many large enterprises ceased to exist, and those that still managed to rebuild and find their niche in the market were not always ready to provide the trainee with the necessary information (sales data, balance sheet, etc.). Crisis phenomena in the economy still do not allow parts of enterprises accept untrained personnel requiring increased attention. Such a situation could have developed: having previously secured support, and having received a letter of guarantee, the student at the time of the practice period found out about the company's closure. That is, in the transition period in universities, students were given the right, on their own, to search for an organization that could provide them with practical training conditions.

Studying the experience of organizing practice at a university of the past years [3-14], it is necessary to recall one more important detail, forming an order for practice, graduating departments developed schedules for weekly visits and control by teachers responsible for the practice of students at the enterprise. Control of students ensured compliance with the schedule of practical training and, as a result, greatly increased the level of students' responsibility, helped to increase their practical knowledge and skills. Today, taking into account the low consciousness and weak responsibility of some students, it is necessary, first of all, to make efforts to increase the discipline of the student's presence in the enterprise and the quality performance of the work entrusted to the student.

Sometimes, for lack of opportunity (and, perhaps, reluctance), some universities send students 1-2 courses during practice, not to enterprises, but to schools in order to form a flow of applicants for future periods. There is no practical benefit for the student from this process, but time is lost!

There are also such organizations that, having concluded an agreement on a commonwealth, invite students to practice, and as a result do not fulfill the conditions of the agreement on providing the appropriate workplace and the necessary information for preparing a scientific report. And students are used as free labor for low-skilled work, not related to his future profession. It is also necessary to note the wide geography of students who came to study at the Ural State University of Economics from various parts of the Ural and Siberian regions and even from the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Region. It becomes clear that

it is difficult to organize the employment process: there is no special knowledge and experience.

Previously, the process of organizing practice at a university was simplified by the fact that only 20% of students turn to the department (university) for assistance in providing a place of practice, 80% of students, as a rule, practice at the place of work, as they combine work and study at the same time or have a close acquaintance with the employer. This is understandable, since most of the students are not economically protected and are forced to work in parallel. This, in turn, makes it impossible to conduct an objective assessment of the quality of the student's practical skills, in terms of the shortcomings of the organization and practice.

2. BODY OF PAPER

The modern competency-based approach to training a student, a future specialist in the field of marketing, gives special attention to the need of improving theoretical knowledge. In the curricula, according to educational standards, practice is given a special role. The complexity of the tasks increases every year. If in the first year a student learns to work with the simplest documents, then by the last year of study he should already draw conclusions and offer concrete recommendations for improving the enterprise. As a result of passing all types of practice, the student should:

- be able to find organizational and managerial decisions and is ready to bear responsibility for them;
- analyze socially significant problems and processes;
- carry out paperwork and business communication: public speaking, negotiations, meetings, business correspondence, electronic communications, etc. ;
- evaluate the conditions and consequences of organizational and managerial decisions;
- analyze the operating activities of the organization and use its results to prepare management decisions;
- develop business plans for the creation and development of new organizations (lines of activity, products, etc.);
- own the basic methods of marketing research, be able to use modern technical means and information technologies to solve analytical and research marketing problems, and develop strategic plans for the development of the enterprise.

A student always acts as a consumer (as an internal link in the chain "university - student - employer"), his knowledge is the end product of the university. But we must not forget that the quality of student preparation, the degree of adaptation to market conditions, its competitiveness in the market, is ultimately evaluated by the market and the specific employer.

These examples clearly demonstrate that careful coordination of the activities of the heads of production practices of the university and organization is required to ensure better training for future graduates.

Firstly, it was the inclusion in the academic plan of the direction "Management" the profile "Marketing" of the discipline for career guidance of students in 2014, instead of academic practice. Not every student, entering a university and choosing a future profession, is fully aware of his work in the future and what functions he will perform. The student is not aware of the result of his work and the benefit to society.

Today, universities are able to develop and apply in their activities various forms of organization of students' work experience.

The discipline "Professional Adaptation" for the first year students brought a lot of benefits. As a result of studying this discipline students could form competencies aimed at solving the issue of employment and minimizing the risk of non-employment, updating personal potential in order to find work and further develop their own career. Along with the ability to search for information, technology for compiling resumes, portfolios, etc., students visited organizations, enterprises (in the form of excursions), held master classes for them, organized meetings with employers, most often university graduates in senior positions in services, first marketing, and then the organization as a whole.

Secondly, active cooperation with enterprises, in terms of obtaining the student's initial experience in his future professional activity, if the practice at the university starts already from the 1st year, can be a modern form of organizing practice. Close cooperation with the employer can develop not only in terms of admitting students to practice, but also in such areas: meeting with junior courses as an introduction to a specialty, field trips to enterprises, conducting competitions both within the university and at the enterprise.

Students- marketologists are always actively responding to trips to enterprises. Over the past 5 years, excursions took place to large industrial enterprises - Kalina Concern, MI Kalinin Plant, Coca-Cola, Pepsi, Sverdlovsk Refrigeration Plant No. 3, Delta Plan advertising agency, Hyundai car dealership, hotel Hyatt, Verny shopping center, Siemens official representative office, etc. Particularly friendly relations have developed with Sverdlovsk Refrigeration Plant No. 3, whose top manager was the head of the marketing department. In the autumn days of marketing and advertising, these are master classes, tasks and games with students, practical exercises, and our guide at the factory. By his personal example, the plant manager demonstrates to our students a love to marketing and profession, career growth. She always talks with enthusiasm about the development of the enterprise, the specifics of the production, storage and transportation of ice cream, the search for new ideas for the development and production of new products and tastes, access to the foreign market, the features of the promotion system, all that are connected with the activities of the marketologist.

An interesting experience of cooperation, in our opinion, has developed at the Department of Marketing and International Management of the Ural State University of Economics with the Administration of the city of Yekaterinburg. In 2006, a long-term agreement was concluded between the university and the Administration on mutual cooperation and the practice of students, with the right to prolong.

The process of admitting students to practice begins with a joint organizational meeting, which is attended by all heads of departments and divisions of the Administration and representatives of universities. This first acquaintance allows students to feel the importance of the situation, to perceive the goals and objectives of practical training, responsibility for assigned work areas, establish contact with their future mentors, learn the rules and dress code of the organization. Thus, each student or group of students is assigned to the head of the department, receives tasks, taking into account his direction of preparation. Interesting practice-oriented tasks: consumer surveys, Mystery Shopper and many others, as well as the systematic monitoring, approval and effectiveness of student activity, bring invaluable benefits both to himself and the organization itself. Report protection is held in the city administration at a meeting of leaders, where students receive feedback and characteristics, usually positive.

Thirdly, the practical work of students was launched in relation to specific programs conducted by the administrations of municipalities.

So, in 2014, on the initiative of the Commodity Market Committee of the Administration of the city of Yekaterinburg, with the aim of improving the condition of the consumer market of the city, students from the Ural State University conducted a "pilot" study in the management and profile Marketing in the framework of training and production practice [15]. The aim of the study was to study the degree of awareness of residents of the city of Yekaterinburg about the existence of the regional program "Yekaterinburg Quality". Students participated in marketing research - a survey of city residents in its various regions, systematization of information, analysis, conclusions and development of recommendations. Moreover, the budget for the development of the regional quality program was seriously limited and the students made every effort to find ways and methods of low-cost marketing that could increase the awareness of the population.

The practical result of practical training was embodied in the scientific projects of the promotion of the Ekaterinburg Quality Program. So, during the Marketing and International Management Week at the Department of Marketing and Advertising at the Ural State University of Economics, a competition was announced for the best project, which summarized the scientific activities of graduate students. Students-winners of the competition made a presentation of their report at a meeting of the Coordinating Council for Quality under the Administration of the city of Yekaterinburg and received awards. As a result of the work done, term papers, scientific articles were prepared and the results were reported at various

levels of student forums and conferences. The most distinguished students were offered employment in the Administration of the city of Yekaterinburg. The knowledge and work of marketing students of USUE and the department were highly appreciated. The development of research on this program continues today, i.e. in the framework of internships, students of the second and third courses are able to participate in serious regional trade and image projects.

It is also important that students- marketologists, within the framework of production practice, get acquainted with socially significant projects implemented in the city, begin

to understand the problems of territorial development and are involved in their solution, which contributes to the development of their thinking from the perspective of social and ethical marketing and responsible business. We single out several large-scale socially significant projects with the participation of students of the Ural State University of Economics on the order of the executive authorities of the city of Yekaterinburg and the Government of the Sverdlovsk Region (table 1).

Table 1 Projects implemented with the participation of students (profile Marketing) USUE from 2014 to 2019

Year	Name of the organization	Project name	Student participation form
2014	Yekaterinburg City Commodity Market Committee	Promotion of the municipal quality mark "Yekaterinburg quality"	Information gathering, method - interview
2015	Yekaterinburg City Commodity Market Committee	Promotion of the municipal quality mark "Yekaterinburg quality"	Method - interview, development of projects for the promotion of a municipal sign
2016	Yekaterinburg City Commodity Market Committee	Study of city shopping centers	Mystery Shopper method (mystery shopper)
2017	Yekaterinburg City Commodity Market Committee	Consumer Market Research: Domestic Services	Information gathering, method - interview
2018	Yekaterinburg City Commodity Market Committee	A study of the knowledge of consumer rights in Yekaterinburg	Information gathering, method - interview
2019	Yekaterinburg City Commodity Market Committee	Study of financial literacy of the population	Information gathering, method - interview, report preparation
2019	Ministry of the Sverdlovsk region for state property management	The study of outdoor advertising in the city of Yekaterinburg	Information gathering - observation method, report preparation

According to the authors, internship students, especially those in the Marketing profile, should be permanently involved in methodological developments and field marketing research, the knowledge gained in practice should help students become more successful and competitive marketers in the labor market of our region.

It is also necessary to develop international practice-oriented cooperation between universities and employers, for example, on November 7 and 8, 2017 at the site of the Ural State University of Economics, representatives of the scientific and business communities of Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Switzerland, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Iraq, Bulgaria and Russia hosted the first specialized scientific-practical conference "Marketing and Branding - Challenges of the 21st Century", where current issues and trends in the development of marketing in the digital economy were discussed. The moderator of the plenary meeting of the International Scientific and Practical Conference was Larisa Kapustina, Head of the Department of Marketing and International Management, USUE. She introduced the co-organizers of the conference and

partners of the university. This is the first specialized scientific conference on marketing. [16].

The events of the "Week of Marketing and Advertising" are attended by representatives of business, practitioners working in the field of marketing, advertising, communications and management. The attention of students and students is provided with exclusive first-hand information from owners, managers and specialists of different levels and company profiles.

In the educational block of the Week of Marketing and Advertising, students are offered more than 10 relevant master classes on various topics from leading experts in the field of marketing, management, advertising in the Ural region.

At the Department of Marketing and International Management, the traditional practice-oriented competition of the Eurasian Economic Youth Forum (EEFM) Trento Marketing Challenge - Marketing challenge of the University of Trento has been held for several years.

The competition of students' applied projects is carried out as part of the long-term cooperation of the Department of Marketing and International Management of USUE with the Department of Economics of the University of Trento (Italy), as well as the North Caucasus Federal University, the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia and the University of Cardenal Herrera (Spain).

The project provides students with unique opportunities:

- participation in a real consulting project commissioned by a foreign company from among the partners of the competition. Experience with practical business tasks is much appreciated by employers. Participation in the competition is documented - certificates of participants and diplomas of the winners of the competition;
- putting into practice knowledge and skills for analyzing the competitive positions of organizations and developing elements of a marketing strategy in the foreign market. Moreover, analytical materials can be used to write academic and scientific papers;
- The project is carried out by international teams uniting students from different countries. The official language of

the competition is English. Skills of working in a cross-cultural environment and the use of teleworking tools are in demand on the labor market;

- The University of Trento invites participants to visit Italy for a short internship with partial payment of expenses. As part of a visit to Trento, students have the opportunity to attend not only classroom studies in the Department of Economics of the University of Trento, but also the enterprise that is commissioned to conduct the study;
- The University of Trento is widely known in Italy and abroad due to its high positions in international rankings. Familiarity with the forms of training for undergraduates and the requirements for academic work can be an additional advantage of students when planning further studies.

Summarizing the many years of experience in training marketers at the university in the field of practical activity, one can imagine the classification of places of practice in the context of various sectors of the economy (Table 2):

Table 2 Industry division of practice bases for marketing students of the Ural State University of Economics for the period from 2014-2019

Industry Name	Number of students
Industrial enterprises:	
- industrial enterprises for the production of food, clothing, shoes;	22
-in the manufacture of machinery, equipment, tools, extraction of raw materials, production of materials, generation of electricity, etc.	15
- agricultural enterprises for growing grain, livestock, vegetables, industrial crops, etc.	-
- enterprises of the construction industry, transport, etc.	22
Services sector:	
- trade:	54
- wholesale	16
- retail	38
catering and accommodation services (hotels, restaurants, etc.);	19
transport;	5
communication and information services;	15
services for the supply, procurement and storage of material and technical resources;	2
credit, finance and insurance, real estate transactions and other services to ensure the functioning of the market;	14
education, culture and art;	7
science and scientific services;	-
health care, including physical education and sports;	5
household maintenance services (housing maintenance and repair services, household and utility services);	1
personal services (non-production household services, hairdressers, photo studio services, shoe shine, etc.);	18
public administration services.	78
Total	330

But, as time shows, it is difficult for university departments, for example, graduating departments, to deal with organizational issues alone and constantly keep in touch with employers. Today, there is a need to create a structure as a coordinator of all activities related to the organization and conduct of practical training for students to improve the effectiveness of the university.

Such a structure was created at the Ural State University of Economics in 2016, a department for interaction with employers and human resource development in line with the practice-oriented approach to training. The main tasks

of a single integrated system of interaction with employers and ensuring the development of human resources of trainers and employees are as follows:

- initiation and participation in the development and implementation of goals and development strategies of the university;
- coordination and facilitation of all types of practices, internships for students and employees, and employment of university graduates;
- the formation of external and internal personnel reserve of students and university staff, etc.

The department performs the function of a coordinating center for interaction with employers and the development of human resources, actively interacts with structural units that carry out educational activities and is equally responsible for solving the main task of managing human resources - increasing the efficiency of their use.

Table 3 The participation of marketing students in activities to interact with employers and develop human resources in 2019

Event title	Number of students-marketologists
Marketing and Advertising Days	48
Educational project "Academy" HeadHunter	15
Youth Forum "Professional Growth"	25
Test drive: employer - university - youth	20
Project "recruiter hour"	23
All-Russian action "Week without horizontal bars"	24

In 2019, the department organized and conducted a number of significant and interesting events, for example, as part of the department's activities, the University took an active part in the job and internship fair for students and graduates of the Professional Growth University. The forum was attended by 25 marketing students. Students took part in master classes, trainings and business games, underwent computer testing, wrote and checked their resume along with career coaches.

Large Russian and international companies representing various sectors of the economy spoke about open development programs for young professionals and answered questions about employment. This year the forum participants were awaited by a new form of activity - one-to-one CV-checking. In the mode of live communication with career development consultants, students could check their resume, correct errors, add information or remove unnecessary ones, and also adjust the structure.

Together with companies, self-presentation was organized by universities in Yekaterinburg. So, employees of the Department for Interaction with Employers and Human Resources Development of the Department for Human Resources of the Ural State University of Economics and students of the Ural State University of Economics not only participated in master classes and trainings, but also talked about studying at the university.

For future graduates, who will be determined in July, where and by whom to go to work, now the Department for Interaction with Employers and Human Resources Development of USUE and HeadHunter have launched a

Studying the functions of the department, it is necessary to highlight the main directions of its work: - establishing direct ties and maintaining interaction with employers and employment services, with enterprises and organizations, as well as with regional and local administrations;

- carrying out measures for the employment of graduates, information on the development of the labor market and the demand for professions;
- conducting vocational guidance work with students to increase their competitiveness in the labor market;
- conducting seminars, trainings with students.

Marketing students actively participate in events organized by the department for interaction with employers and human resource development (Table 3).

project with the aim of career guidance and increasing the competitiveness of future specialists in the labor market.

As future graduates of the Ural State University of Economics noted, having visited the "Academy" of HeadHunter, they felt much more confident, because now they know the motivation of the recruiter and the main issues that they will have to face at any interview and adequately pass it, getting a job.

The organizers noted that this event is being implemented within the framework of the existing cooperation agreement between USUE and HeadHunter, and it is far from the last, there are still many interesting meetings with HeadHunter experts ahead of USUE students.

3. CONCLUSION

Solving an important socially significant problem of organizing industrial practice and adapting students to future practical activities, increasing the competitiveness of a future graduate in the labor market, the university should develop practical programs, given:

- formation of long-term creative contracts with employers;
- the results of monitoring the assessment of the quality of training of future specialists, both from the point of view of the employer and the student;
- development of innovative forms of training of future specialists.

The result should be a real integration of the university with leading trade and production structures of various sectors of the economy.

And as A.V. Suvorov said: "A theory without practice is dead, practice without theory - is blind".

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