

Higher Education System Management (Sociological Aspect)

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Abstract: Today a large-scale modernization of the higher vocational education (HVE) system is being implemented in Kazakhstan. As for any of the controlled system, a necessary condition for the successful implementation of the scheduled reforms (changes in the controlled object) is an adequate restructuring of the management system in a particular sphere (the subject of control). That is why in the documents regulating the implementation of reforms, improvement of management is recognized as one of the key areas in modernization of HVE. The paper analyzes the features of the higher education system management in the current economic conditions, which are determined by the role that the higher education plays in social development, namely, the fact that education has become one of the most extensive and important spheres of human activity, which is closely intertwined with other spheres of public life: politics, economics, material production and spiritual life. The author shows the features of the higher education system management, which are determined by the current status of the higher education, accompanied by certain crises phenomena and search for the ways of getting out of slump. The paper presents materials of an empirical study conducted by applying the research methods on problematic situations in management using testing of the subjects involved.

Key words: Educational process % Higher vocational education % The competitive educational environment % The structure of university management % The problems in higher education management

INTRODUCTION

As it is noted in the communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers, responsible for Education, held in 2009: "... the management and financing of higher education require the development of appropriate potentials and strategies of policy planning and analysis, based on partnerships in order to ensure in a proper manner an ordered management and the use of resources to meet the "cost-effectiveness" criterion" [1].

However, at the Anniversary Conference of ministers responsible for higher education of the European countries participating in the Bologna process held on March 11, 2010 in Budapest (Hungary), the new President of ENQA Akim Hopbach (Germany) reiterated the basic principles of the development of quality assurance in higher education. They are:

- C Higher education institutions have the primary responsibility for the quality of higher education;
- C All forms and quality assurance procedures should be focused on further improvement of the quality of education;

- C The diversity of approaches is encouraged, if common principles of evaluation and quality assurance are used;
- C All members of the educational process and especially students, participate in the procedures and the work of quality assurance agencies;
- C The quality assurance agencies must be independent [2].

Under current conditions the main feature of the higher education system management is that the solution to the problems of higher education becomes a part of the national policy. Implementation of a unified state policy in higher education is a particular challenge in education management of today's Kazakh society. At that, the leading role of education should be stated and consistently implemented in public practice.

At the level of state administration, the challenges in the development of higher education strategy and control of the strategy implementation still remain the responsibility of the state education authorities. From the standpoint of M.M. Kudinova [3], the reorganization of the higher education system management at the national level should pursue two main objectives:

C Proper adaptation to the ongoing reforms in the field;

Creating favorable conditions for further development of the HVE according to the constantly changing human needs, as well as business and society.

Let us consider the changes that advisably should be done to achieve these goals in the modernization of higher education in Kazakhstan.

C Adaptation of the HVE system management to the implemented reforms. Implementation of reforms in higher education will lead to forming a new system of management objects.

First, in connection with the transition to a two-tier higher education system we will get a new control object - an educational program. The selection of different types of programs (undergraduate and master's programs) would require changes to the system of state educational standards (development of specific standards for each level of higher education), the use of education quality control tools to each of these levels, as well as the requirements for accreditation and licensing of higher education institutions implementing these programs.

Second, the extension of the higher education project management and accordingly, restructuring of the HVE management system towards full integration of a given type of control into the system and its implementation together with the institutional and functional control, are required.

Implementation of the above mentioned key reforms in higher education will require the most significant changes in the HVE system management. However, this system is to be adapted to other reforms implemented at present in this area.

In particular, the trend in the development of international cooperation and international activities in the field of higher education makes it necessary to expand this functional approach in the activities of the education authorities, including the increasing efforts of the state to promote the export of educational services, harmonization with European HVE systems and implementation of the Bologna Declaration, as well as securing Kazakhstan to join the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

Creation of Favorable Conditions for Further Development of the HVE: The restructuring of the functional and organizational structures of the education management authorities and their subordinate organizations in order to adapt them to the ongoing

reforms in HVE will provide effectiveness in the development management of the given sphere for just a limited period of time. In the absence of mechanisms insuring flexible response of control system to rapidly changing today's world needs, imposed to higher education by an individuals, businesses and society, the management system and hence the higher education itself will no longer meet these needs and will require new large-scale reforms in this area over the course of time.

To avoid such problems, M.M. Kudinova suggests building the following elements into the HVE system management:

C Ensuring the development of state and public administration mechanisms in higher education through the *establishment of several advisory boards* at the education management bodies. These advisory boards will be regular consultative bodies, whose operation would increase the participation of employers, universities and their associations, students, public and professional associations in decision-making process on major issues of higher education development.

C Improving the functioning efficiency of the state education system management through the establishment in the organizational structure of each education regulatory body the internal inspection unit and management systems, which would be responsible not only for the recruitment of personnel, but also for development of a methodology, risk management and improvement of management systems.

In a today's market system, the higher education creates a new management style which assumes the management within a competitive educational environment [4].

At that, the HVE segment in the educational environment of Kazakhstan remains the most competitive, as this is the field, where sometimes there is a tough struggle for the market of educational services and its potential customers between public and private HVE sectors. This market is characterized by high level of adjustment, variety and sufficient stability. Implementation of the market development principle of HVE system involves the development of new economic mechanisms in the field of education.

Thus, the main features of the today's higher education system management, determining its strategic guidelines, are the following:

- C The need for an active policy for the development and modernization of the HVE system, especially at the state level.
- C The management principle of HVE system at all levels (national, regional, municipal and university-level) should be based on systemic approach.
- C The HVE system management must meet the needs of society and provide availability of higher education.
- C The HVE system management efficiency should be provided based on a separation of competences of different vertical structural levels in relation to the development of the university autonomy principle in terms of the organization, provision and management of the educational process (selection of educational methods and technologies, determination of the academic teaching staff, funding sources, structure and composition of students, etc.)
- C Supporting competition between the universities with different legal status.
- C Securing the quality of education and organization of a quality control system in free market environment [5].

Ideally, each university must implement a specific type of management, which at optimal conditions will facilitate the introduction of innovative technologies in accordance with the socio-cultural environment of the university, as well as the use of existing and potential capabilities, based on the market economy, where the cost of education will enable a strategic advantage of the university at the education market [6].

Management structure fits well with the "management pyramid" that defines high school management. This pyramid includes top-management, middle-management and low-management, or first-management. At that, we refer rector and vice-rectors to the *top-management* level, heads of various departments and divisions - to the *middle-management* level, deans and department chairs, etc. - to the *low-management* level [7].

All levels of the management pyramid provide an educational process. As it is noted by N.D. Sorokina, the educational process in terms of its substantive nature is a derivative of the university educational activities. The educational process includes a number of elements, arranged in a certain hierarchy and interconnected by social binds. In addition, it is subject to certain governance laws, established at the university [8].

At that, the management operation should be aimed at developing a strategy of the university educational activities, the implementation of innovative educational

technologies and educational process organization forms; the development of regulatory, economic, methodological and organizational bases for improvement and modernization of the educational process; the coordination of the educational activities of departments, faculties and other university units, the monitoring of the educational process and the inspection of execution of training plans and regulatory documents for the preparation of future professionals; providing cooperation procedures between the university departments in order to improve training quality in accordance with the relevant requirements [9].

Thus, the management of higher education system in the particular university is both a systematic and a continuous process, which serves a significant factor in the active performance of the university and provides its development. This allows maintaining all basic life functions of the university, but at the same time contains a combination of integration and differentiation, including the diversity necessary for the university development.

According to E.A. Knyazev, a traditional type of university management is focused on preparation of graduates of a specific profile without accounting the real needs of the labor market, while innovation type aims at training of competitive graduates for the industries and the jobs specified in advance [10].

Analysis of problematic issues on the university management was part of conducted empirical research.

The university, operating in the region for quite a long time, was chosen as the research base. At this base an empirical study was carried out (in total 200 first-year students and 200 undergraduates were interviewed). The study allowed obtaining the information on main features of the educational process associated with the students' estimates concerning their university and their major, focusing on a specific career strategy and the university role in career implementation.

Results of the first phase of the study showed a high level of uncertainty of existing problems in terms of the following indicators: a fairly low level of demand for some majors, the lack of theoretical and practical knowledge acquired by the students in the course of their professional practice and the lack of definite plans for further employment among large number of undergraduates.

In subsequent phases of empirical research the following has been carried out:

- C Analysis of the university internal documents (resolution and the work plan of the Academic Board).

- C Analysis of university web-site materials.
- C Study of the university management problems.
- C Testing the relevant decision making persons.
- C Testing the university governance members.
- C The study of communicative relationships in the management process.

Initially, we hypothetically identified four levels of practical problems faced by the university under current conditions.

At the phase of internal documents analysis and study of the relevant university web site materials, it was established, that the university positions its transition to the new performance standards, including better training of graduates and accounting for requirements of the labor market, as one of the crucial areas of the work.

Diagnostic study has made it possible to determine the basic problems of the university related to the preparation of graduates. They are described by the following five problematic situations:

- C alumnae (undergraduates) anticipate significant difficulties with their employment within the received specialty (40% of graduates consider that their specialty is not high-demanded).
- C a large number of the graduates note the negative aspects of training at the university, not anticipating the requirements of the labor market. From 15% to 45% of different specialty alumnae noted the lack of theoretical knowledge and from 25% to 40% - insufficient practical knowledge.
- C just 6% of alumnae mentioned that they would like to find a job through the university and 11% of undergraduates reported that they have found a job thanks to the university assistance; in other cases the assistance of the university was not mentioned.
- C less than half of first-year students (43%) have an idea where they will be working and what they will be doing after graduation, this situation does not change for the students of final year of study (55% of the graduates do not have specific plans for employment).
- C according to our data, this university is focused mainly on the regional labor market; about 90% of alumnae consider their university diploma to be competitive in the region, while competitiveness of the university diploma outside the region considers less than 20% of graduates.

Description of problematic situations served the basis for the organization of subsequent research phases to study the university management system. They were

used for the development of a questionnaire to determine the social positions and communicative relations of the relevant management decision makers.

This part of the empirical study consisted of two phases. At the first phase, the relevant university management decision makers (in total 35 responding experts) were interrogated with the object to assess the problematic situations and to establish probable ways of their solution. Also they have formulated a short list of important control subjects, which ideally should be involved in solving the problems of university management. The lineup of this personified top bracket university management (rectorate) was questioned on the basis of generalized data obtained over the original survey.

The uplift technique to a higher level of control when collecting data on the problems that were obtained in the previous research stage in regard to the questioning of the decision-making persons, including the upper echelon of management, has provided the bulk effect in the university management system analysis.

According to the survey results, respondents recognized the importance of all identified situations. However, the distribution of responses was different. For example, the most stressful problem demanding vigorous actions was the one concerned to poor orientation of graduates for specific jobs, while the lowest value was given by respondents to the situation related to the university position at the regional and external labor markets.

Most of the representatives of upper university management level, when interpreting the responses of decision-making persons, joined the majority. It is worth noting that an active course of action has become the most popular answer among all members of the management system. In addition, university management representatives have ranked the identified problematic situations according to their importance.

The "rating of problematic situations", compiled on the basis of this survey, testifies the striving of the university for an accommodational development strategy, as the circumstances relating to the instrument level were considered as the most important, however, the problems of social and institutional levels were noted as less important.

CONCLUSION

According to the results of the conducted study, the conclusion was made about the relevance in using the investigative technique for problematic situations in management with application of testing the persons

(subjects) involved, as it provides an opportunity to move forward in the empirical study of the problems related to the regulation of relations arising in the social measurement of the university.

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