

ENTREPRENEURIAL EDUCATION QUALITY MANAGEMENT TO IMPROVE UNIVERSITY COMPETITIVENESS

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ABSTRACT

The study models a university management system through the example of entrepreneurial education. The system includes two components: quality of education and university competitiveness. The purpose of the research is to study the correlation between the theoretical categories “quality of education” and “university competitiveness” and the competitiveness management methods applicable to entrepreneurial universities. This will help to determine the interaction between the education quality management subsystem and the university competitiveness management subsystem, which will solve the scientific problem of the theoretical understanding of the interdependence of these subsystems.

The comparative analysis of the theoretical approaches of American and Russian entrepreneurial universities revealed theoretical and methodological differences in the methods of managing university competitiveness and the quality of education.

As a result, it was determined that quality and/or competitiveness should be developed only after laying out clear priorities, taking into account the threats and opportunities arising from the current development stage of the university. If there are no threats to the vital university interests, the priority should be given to the quality of education. If the university has not achieved its sustainable development goals, the priority should be the university competitiveness development.

Keywords: Competition Theory, Competitiveness of University, University Rating, Quality of Higher Education, Higher Professional Education Systems, Entrepreneurial Education.

INTRODUCTION

The study of entrepreneurship is still relevant. The number of young people is increasing along with the youth unemployment in many countries. According to the European Commission, entrepreneurship education has a positive effect on labor markets and the country's economy (Ivanova, 2020). Therefore, the development of entrepreneurship should be given special attention. A high-performance education system requires a properly structured and effective management system (Panfilova et al., 2019). There are two strategic components that should be distinguished in the university management system: the quality of education and university competitiveness. These components are constantly assessed and analyzed (Sallis, 2002).

For example, the quality of education is determined by the totality of features and characteristics of higher education services that bear on their ability to deliver value through fulfilling stated or implied needs and expectations, specifying worthwhile learning goals and enabling students to achieve them. Specifying worthwhile goals involves paying attention to academic standards, the expectations of society, students' aspirations, the demands of industry and other employers, the requirements of professional institutions, as well as to the fundamental

principles of the subject, etc. (Sparkes, 1999). It is also important to develop the skills and qualities of graduates that are valued by employers (Dicker et al., 2019; Tsalikova & Pakhotina, 2019).

The theoretical approaches used in scientific research to understand the “*quality of education*” are not applicable to Russian universities as the “*quality of education*” is legalized in 273-FZ of December 29, 2012 “*On Education in the Russian Federation.*” According to paragraph 29 to Article 2 of this law “*the quality of education is a complex description of student educational activities and training which demonstrates the degree of their compliance with federal state educational standards, educational standards, federal state requirements and (or) the needs of an individual or legal entity for the benefit of whom the educational activities, including the achievement of the planned educational program results are performed.*”

Competitiveness is the assessment of the results of university educational activities. It has its own conceptual significance that does not coincide with the education quality management system (Dennis et al., 2016; David et al., 2017).

Nowadays, organization dynamic capabilities are the key source of the unbeatable competitive advantage of economic entities in the theory of competition (Pisano, 2017; Burke et al., 2018). The competitive approach is actively used in higher education, especially in entrepreneurship education (Redondo et al., 2018; Musselin, 2018; Muravyeva et al., 2019).

Guerrero et al. (2016) emphasize that in the new socio-economic conditions, the main task is not to transfer knowledge, but also to stimulate the development of leadership qualities and skills of entrepreneurial thinking and activity.

Budzinskaya (2018) notes that one of the key criteria for assessing university competitiveness is the commercialization of developments and the export of educational services.

Many scientific publications do not focus on the competitiveness of universities and consider individual factors to ensure it or specific tools to enhance it, for example: benchmarking (Khan & Matlay, 2009); entrepreneurship (Nabi et al., 2017); knowledge management (Naser et al., 2016); educational innovation (Vera et al., 2006), reputation (Plewa et al., 2016); university brand and status (Hemsley-Brown et al., 2016); graduate competency (Bikse et al., 2013). At the same time, the term “*university competitiveness*” is used intuitively.

The Russian scientific community is aware of the university competitiveness concept; it is widely discussed in scientific research in the field of economics and management. Despite the big number of scientific studies, articles and monographs on university competitiveness, the vast majority of such works do not contain a clear definition of the concept. Scientists often focus on determining the competitiveness of education and do not reveal the connection between education and the university.

Rubin (2011) was the first to address the problem of the relationship between university competitiveness and the quality of education: “*Sometimes the term competitiveness is used in contradistinction to quality of education; competitiveness is interpreted as a criterion of business activity that is assessed on the basis of determining business financial results while the quality of education is regarded outside the market format of production processes and the provision of educational services and the legitimate interests of the market parties*”

According to Parakhina et al. (2017) the problem of competitive ability in Russia is due to the lack of strategic management flexibility. A certain management crisis affecting the entire

system of higher education can be mentioned here. This emphasizes the relevance of our research.

In this regard, there is a scientific problem of understanding the interdependence of higher education quality management systems and university competitiveness. It is especially important to develop a high ranking of entrepreneurial universities as they contribute to the economic and social development of the country. The relevance of the study is also associated with assessing the results of the reform of the Russian higher education system over the past three years and aimed at improving the quality of higher education in Russia.

Until this problem is solved, there may be a conflict between the values and methods of managing university competitiveness and the quality of higher education.

The purpose of the research is to study the correlation between the theoretical categories “*quality of education*” and “*university competitiveness*” and the competitiveness management methods applicable to entrepreneurial universities. This will help to determine the interaction between the education quality management subsystem and the university competitiveness management subsystem, which will solve the scientific problem of the theoretical understanding of the interdependence of these subsystems.

METHODS

The object of the research is the education quality management subsystem and university competitiveness. The subject of the study is the theoretical and methodological differences in the methods of assessing and managing university competitiveness and the quality of education of Russian and American universities.

The scientific problem of understanding the interdependence of the quality management system of higher education and the university competitiveness management system was solved using general scientific research methods, methods for collecting information from different sources, methods for checking the information obtained, methods for processing and storing data, quantitative and qualitative methods for presenting data.

We used systematization and modeling methods; comparative, logical and structural analysis methods; the methods of synthesis, grouping and classification of objects. Retrospective and historical methods were used in order to obtain individual research results. Deductive and inductive methods, generalization and abstraction methods, logical methods for determining the content and volume of concepts, as well as interpretation and hypothesis construction methods were used at certain research stages.

The research is based on the results of Russian and foreign scientific studies and the statutory provision of the Russian Federation federal legislation (273-FZ of December 29, 2012 “*On Education in the Russian Federation.*”).

The scientific problem of understanding the interdependence of the quality management system of higher education and university competitiveness management system can be solved by answering the following questions:

1. In what cases the functions and methods of the departments that manage the quality of education and university competitiveness can be duplicated?
2. In what cases may there be a conflict between the decisions and actions of the departments that manage the quality of education and university competitiveness; how should this conflict be solved?

RESULTS

The Quality of Education Concept

The quality of education is a means of achieving the goals of competition in the university competitiveness management system. Thus, we have identified the ways to manage university competitiveness through high quality education.

University competitiveness is often managed through high quality education. The quality of education can be a criterion for product vertical differentiation of education as a sold product; it can also be a source of value and competitive advantage in the educational process or a barrier to entry into the market. Improving the quality of education comes at a price. It inevitably requires higher costs for achieving learning outcomes. The university, which made a strategic decision to improve the quality of education, kicks off cost and price leadership strategies and is differentiated by product quality.

By improving the quality of education is meant adding economic value and increasing consumer value of education. It should be noted that it is more difficult for a university to raise the level of education quality than to ensure the previously achieved one. In some regional education markets, the vertical differentiation of universities by the quality of education can be quickly implemented and well received by consumers; in other regional education markets, quality improvement may be slow and not noticeable to consumers; it may encounter the resistance from the strategic group of universities which the university under consideration seeks to enter.

If the university does not improve the quality of education and use it as a source of value and growth, the confirmed level of the quality of education to manage the university competitiveness can be used as a barrier for a newcomer to enter the market to protect its strategic group.

Thus, in the general theory of competition, the quality of education is a necessary but not sufficient condition for ensuring university competitiveness. In addition, the quality of education has different relevance for the university competitiveness management system depending on the region or the field of study.

When conducting a comparative analysis of the theoretical approaches to understanding the quality of education by Russian and foreign universities, it was found that most of them do not take into account the trusting nature of educational relations. For example, “*the needs and expectations*” are always subjective. They may be inflated or distorted. In addition, there may be no needs and expectations at all.

Secondly, education refers to credence goods. Their quality is not directly perceived by the consumer during the educational process; it cannot be determined after the achievement of learning outcomes. Therefore, the student and the customer are not able to accurately determine the extent to which their needs and expectations have been met by the university based on their subjective feelings.

Thirdly, higher education has educational, cultural, social and civilizational importance. The subjective needs and expectations of the student and the customer are secondary goals compared to the public function implemented in the process of higher education. Therefore, considering the quality of education through the lens of meeting customer educational needs is a theoretical inaccuracy. For example, the high satisfaction of the student with the educational

process and outcomes may be related to learning experience rather than satisfied needs or expectations.

Sparkes (1999) assumes that the university should not only cater to the customer by providing them with consumer utility, but also shape and adjust the student's educational need in order to ensure and guarantee the delayed effect of the utility and value of learning outcomes. The university provides the student with the educational goals which will meet their subjective educational needs. In this regard, the university can more efficiently determine student needs, expectations, goals and interests than the students themselves or employers. The university satisfies the interests of all interested parties and provides them with value and utility through high quality education.

It should be noted that in the proposed definition, when specifying worthwhile learning goals, the university pays attention to academic standards, society expectations, student aspirations, the demands of the industry and other employers, the requirements of professional institutions, the fundamental principles of the subject, etc. However, it does not guarantee their compliance. The university helps students to achieve their worthwhile learning goals, but it cannot force them or do this for them. Therefore, the measures to ensure the quality of education do not guarantee that the student will achieve the planned learning outcomes. The quality of education is determined by the extent to which the university helped the student to achieve their educational goals rather than by the goals achieved by the student.

The Russian approach to determining the quality of education differs significantly from the approach proposed by Sparkes (1999). According to the norms of the Federal Law of the Russian Federation, the quality of education characterizes both the educational process (educational activity) and its outcomes. The definition of the "*quality of education*" found in the Federal Law of the Russian Federation emphasizes the compliance of the educational process with the educational standards and requirements.

The Concept of Education Competitiveness

In English, the concept of "*competitiveness*" is usually described as "*competitive advantage*" (Rubin, 2017). "*Competitiveness*" is the ability of functioning in a competitive environment. Thus, "*university competitiveness*" is differently understood by Russian and American universities.

In order to develop and propose a theoretical approach to understanding "*university competitiveness*", it is important to determine whether this characteristic reflects the actual level of university competitiveness or its potential ability to compete in the education market. Henceforward, competitiveness will be defined as the competitiveness of the university, its ability to conduct business activities in a variety of forms of competition in higher education. An important feature of the competitiveness category is that it is applied both to subjects (universities) and objects (education).

University competitiveness is evaluated and managed by each individual educational program (program competitiveness). Thus, it is easy to confuse it with the quality of education as it has a programmatic nature. It is in this case that duplication of functions and methods of departments that manage the quality of education and the competitiveness of the university may occur.

In Russian entrepreneurial universities, the university competitiveness management department is completely focused on taking a high position in international rankings. The

problem is that Russian universities have not developed the methods to increase their competitiveness in individual educational programs. There is no division into institutional and program competitiveness, which helps large universities to conceal their low efficiency and competitiveness in individual educational programs through high institutional indicators.

Consequently, Russian universities believe that improving the quality of education is about meeting the educational standards and needs of students. The universities do not consider improving the quality of education as a way to increase consumer utility and economic value.

On the other hand, competitiveness is practically not considered as a line of development and is expressed exclusively in marketing ways to attract students.

American universities, especially entrepreneurial universities, initially considered competitiveness as a sensible priority for their existence and development. The quality of education is regarded as the main way to increase the utility and value of learning outcomes.

In Russian universities, the situation is complicated by the fact that the quality of education, its content and essential features are defined by the federal law in which there is no connection between the quality of education and the value and utility that are created for society.

The specific of the Russian higher education system is the administrative dependence of universities on the state education quality management system. Russian universities are regulated by a large number of standards and laws. On the one hand, this reduces the degree of uncertainty and risks of educational activities. But, on the other hand, the freedom of competitive actions is significantly limited and the possibility of implementing competitive strategies is excluded. The “*quality of education*” and “*university competitiveness*” are managed according to state laws and regulations.

Thus, the goal of Russian universities is to meet state standards or occupy a place in the ranking (this reflects the results of their educational activities). However, they have not developed the ways to achieve these goals. Russian universities do not understand that the quality of education is about increasing the utility and value of education rather than meeting standards and that competitiveness is about increasing the efficiency of educational activities compared to competitors rather than occupying a place in the ranking. The main differences in the definition of the concepts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 THE DIFFERENCES IN THE DEFINITION OF THE “QUALITY OF EDUCATION” AND “UNIVERSITY COMPETITIVENESS” IN RUSSIA AND THE USA		
	Quality	Competitiveness
Object	education (service), learning outcomes	education (service), university, graduate, industry, region, country
American universities	economic value and consumer utility received by all participants of the educational process	ability to conduct business activities in a variety of forms of competition in higher education
Russian universities	compliance with standards and interests of the participants of the educational activity	position in international rankings

The role of the “*quality of education*” and “*university competitiveness*” in the activities of educational departments.

Let us reveal the key differences between the systems of assessment and audit of the “*quality of education*” and “*university competitiveness*.”

The assessment of the quality of education is the result of measuring and comparing its objective properties: specific characteristics of the educational process are compared with certain

basic values of the key industry indicators, which are set by standards and norms or benchmarks and rating rules.

University competitiveness is ensured by the institutional and market factors that do not depend on the properties and qualities of education, but increase its consumer value and utility. For example, brand strength, the efficiency of supply chains, the level of customer service, the system of additional services, the effectiveness of marketing communications and other factors can directly affect the university competitiveness in an individual educational program.

The assessment/audit of university competitiveness is reflected in a much bigger number of factors than a combination of price and quality of education. Generally, it is not necessary to evaluate university competitiveness in contrast to the quality of education, which is confirmed by internal and external evaluations.

There are also frequent controversial issues and conflicts due to the fact that the departments responsible for the quality of education and competitiveness are divided. They can occur when:

- Improved quality of education decreases the competitiveness of the university or the cost of education becomes higher than the market price.
- Increased competitiveness of the university decreases the quality of education; measures to reduce the cost of education reduce the quality of education.

In both cases, it is necessary to prioritize the values of conflicting management subsystems. The focus on the quality of education reflects the university commitment to long-term strategic goals and development; the focus on competitiveness demonstrates its commitment to ensuring business activities and the sustainability of everyday educational activities, as well as eliminating other shortcomings affecting development plans.

The quality of education is a source of growth and development of educational organizations. However, the development phase should be entered after achieving stable and uninterrupted functioning. The quality of education becomes strategically significant only after the university has reached a certain level of competitiveness and competitive stability of its educational activities. If the university has to increase its competitiveness and its activities are not sustainable, any measures to improve the quality of education will be premature and inappropriate. If the resource base and management processes do not ensure sustainability of the university educational activity, it is impossible to fully concentrate on the measures to develop and increase its indicators.

Therefore, the most optimal approach is to give priority to the quality of education if there are no threats to the vital university interests. If the university has not achieved its sustainable development goals, the priority should be the university competitiveness development.

In general, the university should determine the priority of conflicting management subsystems taking into account the threats and opportunities arising from its current development stage.

DISCUSSION

If there is no connection between the subject of competition and the competitiveness management system, the system loses the unity of purpose and action and can use approaches, principles, methods and values borrowed from other management systems (in particular, quality

management systems). This is enough for the control subsystems under consideration to duplicate each other.

The results of the study bring up the question whether the reform of the Russian higher education system is effective. It is focused on the compliance of education with the laws and regulations rather than on increasing the value and utility of education for the parties concerned. In fact, neither the compliance with the indicators nor the position in the ranking reflects the real competitiveness of the university, its economic value and consumer utility if a competitive approach is not used. In this regard, the issue of the effectiveness of managing the quality of education and the competitiveness of Russian universities without the development of competition in the education market is becoming relevant.

A separate research area may be the understanding of university competitiveness as a key university competency and the critical dynamic organizational ability.

CONCLUSIONS

The quality of education is a necessary but not sufficient condition for ensuring university competitiveness. The quality of entrepreneurial education is described as the economic value and consumer utility of education received by all participants of the educational process.

University competitiveness is defined as the competitiveness of the university, its ability to conduct business activities in a variety of forms of competition in higher education.

University competitiveness is evaluated and managed by each individual educational program (program competitiveness). Thus, it is easy to confuse it with the quality of education as it has a programmatic nature. It is in this case that duplication of functions and methods of departments that manage the quality of education and the competitiveness of the university may occur.

There may be conflicts between the decisions and actions of the departments responsible for the quality of education and competitiveness. They can arise when:

- Improved quality of education decreases the competitiveness of the university or the cost of education becomes higher than the market price;
- Increased competitiveness of the university decreases the quality of education; measures to reduce the cost of education reduce the quality of education.

In both cases, it is necessary to prioritize the values of conflicting management subsystems taking into account the threats and opportunities arising from the current development stage of the university. If there are no threats to the vital university interests, the priority should be given to the quality of education. If the university has not achieved its sustainable development goals, the priority should be the university competitiveness development.

The study is relevant for determining the priorities of managing the quality of education and university competitiveness, as well as their effect on the university organizational structure: what organizational departments are created and who manages them.

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