

**THE DIFFERENTIATION OF RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES
IN THE CONDITIONS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION
INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS**

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Abstract. The problem of contemporary universities development is complicated, on the one hand, due to inability to respond to modern challenges of classical university models, on the other hand, due to the instability of new university models. It is also extremely acute in today's Russia. Permanent education system reform, which began in 1987, with more or less intensity is still ongoing. The more paradoxical and dramatic is the fact that the current state of this sphere is still qualified by experts as an acute crisis of higher education.

The starting hypothesis of the research is the assumption that Russian higher education is experiencing the institutional crisis and possibility and direction of development of universities depends on its depth. As the study objectives were chosen:

- 1) analysis of the current situation in Russian higher education in terms of possibility of its definition as an institutional crisis;
- 2) depth estimation of the crisis phenomena and identification of differences in adaptation strategies of universities;
- 3) analysis of educational field structure in terms of level of overcoming the institutional crisis by universities and their differentiation on this basis.

The assessment of the situation in Russian higher education in the present study was given on the basis of two methodological models:

- model of "crisis of the Institute of education" by Manfred Furman;
- model institutional crisis by Pitirim Sorokin.

Application of the M. Furman model gives grounds to state the existence of the institutional crisis of modern higher education in Russia. At the same time, it is difficult to make conclusions without drawing attention to the fact that the mortality of Russian universities – as a key sign of the institutional

crisis by Furman – is largely "artificial". The decision of power but not the refusal of society from a particular university, expressed primarily in the absence of students, was the reason for the termination of educational institutions. To explain this contradiction, we turned to the model of the institutional crisis by P. Sorokin.

As a result of the application of two models of the institutional crisis, the initial hypothesis of the study was confirmed. However, it is obvious that the crisis does not reach its peak in the form of complete degeneration as a social institution. The current crisis of the Russian higher school rather leads to the redistribution of usual institutional functions, which is caused by different initial conditions, adaptation strategies and integration practices of universities.

Crisis coping strategies differentiate universities. Among the groups formed during the crisis, the research interest was represented by "outsider" group of universities, "recognized" universities and universities - "hidden leaders". "Outsiders" get their name in connection with the discontent or indifference shown in their attitude by the state and employers, which indicates a low level of overcoming the institutional crisis. "Recognized" universities to the greatest extent, showing positive signs of getting a high agreed valuation of virtually all interested groups. A special place in the crisis structure is occupied by universities - "hidden leaders". Against the background of lack of choice of these universities by the state, they demonstrate great and steady success with employers and university entrants.

Research prospects of models of overcoming of institutional crisis by Russian higher education institutions are connected with the comparative analysis of changes in formal and informal structures, and also university corporate cultures of the described groups. Among the social transformations, the ones that require the most attention are those whose consequences lead to an increase in the viability of university. It can be assumed that the differences found in the actual implementation of the adaptation strategies of universities, which are most successful in overcoming the crisis, and the integration practices of these university communities are social guidelines for the development of higher education in Russia as a whole.

Keywords: Contemporary University, Higher Education Institutional Crisis, Coping Strategies for Universities, Differentiation of Universities, University Corporate Cultures

Introduction

The problem of universities development is complicated, on the one hand, due to inability to respond to modern challenges of classical university

models, on the other hand, due to the diversity and instability of new university models.

It is also extremely acute in today's Russia. Permanent education system reform, which began in 1987, with more or less intensity is still ongoing. The more paradoxical and dramatic is the fact that the current state of this sphere is still qualified by experts as an acute crisis of higher education.

Objectives / Purpose of the study

The starting hypothesis of the study is the assumption that Russian higher education is experiencing the institutional crisis and possibility and direction of development of universities depends on its depth. As the goals were chosen:

- 1) analysis of the current situation in Russian higher education in terms of possibility of its definition as an institutional crisis;
- 2) depth estimation of the crisis phenomena and identification of differences in adaptation strategies of universities;
- 3) analysis of educational field structure in terms of level of overcoming the institutional crisis by universities and their differentiation on this basis.

Methodology

The assessment of the situation in Russian higher education in the present study was given on the basis of two methodological models:

- model of "crisis of the Institute of education" by Manfred Furman;
- model institutional crisis by Pitirim Sorokin.

M. Furman have identified features of the universities institutional crisis: poor preparation and motivation of students to learning; the archaic forms of knowledge transfer; the weakness and a small amount of scientific research at the universities; increasing utilitarianism of university education; a sharp decline in university autonomy (Furman M., 2010: 35).

These features can be found today in Russian universities. Weak motivation to study is revealed at the stage of choosing a university, when the applicant makes a decision based not on the interest, but on the assessment of diploma prestige by employer, which certainly does not contribute to the engagement of students in learning. In addition, among the problems of modern higher education there is often reduced motivation to create new knowledge among young people and a passion for searching for information on the Internet. Simultaneously with these trends, there is a sense of intellectual powerlessness and a feeling that all the necessary knowledge already exists (Filonovich S., Konstantinov G., 2005).

Analysts also point to the insufficient development of competencies required by today's employer, and the reason, in their view, is outdated practice of teaching (Froumin I, Dobryakova M. 2012: 178-179). As another reason for their dissatisfaction employers mention small scientific and

practical experience of students, which, in turn, indirectly indicates the weakness of university science. Today, 93% of Russian universities hold student competitions of research works. However, a significant proportion of students do not participate in scientific work. In technical national research universities only about 1% of students participate in research projects with payment (Miletsky V., Strogetskaia E., etc., 2014). It is noteworthy that the students themselves, revealing the reasons for their reluctance to participate in university research, mention their outdated especially in terms of technical equipment.

The reduced motivation of students to study and research activities and the backlog of university science results in weakening of the perception of higher education as a transfer of traditions of producing new knowledge. The idea of education as a segment of the service sector comes in place of this image and it is strengthened in the public consciousness. The educational service, as well as the knowledge itself, is evaluated in the parameters of utility for the consumer, which reinforced the utilitarianism of higher education. The growing dependence on the consumer exacerbates the problem of the loss of the university its other institutional feature – autonomy.

Application of the Furman model gives grounds to state the existence of the institutional crisis of modern higher education in Russia. At the same time, it is difficult to make conclusions without drawing attention to the fact that the mortality of Russian universities – as a key sign of the institutional crisis by Furman – is largely "artificial". The decision of power but not the natural refusal of society from a particular university, expressed primarily in the absence of students, was the reason for the termination of educational institutions. To explain this contradiction, let us turn to the model of the institutional crisis by P. Sorokin.

Application of the methodological model by P. Sorokin. The reasons for the choice of this model are its exclusivity, as well as the ability to use it to assess the depth of the crisis. Without a doubt, the Sorokin's model is the only sociological model of its kind that elaborates in detail the concept of "institutional crisis". In addition, it allows us to assess whether the institute is on the verge of the emergence of new forms, or the crisis has not yet reached this level, and, consequently, the existing institutional forms are not exhausted opportunities for development.

According to p. Sorokin, the signs of the institutional crisis include: the inefficiency of the institution as a subsystem of society; the unattractiveness of institutional roles for individuals; the refusal of individuals to achieve their goals through this institution.

The effectiveness of a social institution can be understood as the most productive fulfilling its canonical role in society, as well as the most complete achievement of the goals of members of society through the institute. In the second case, effectiveness will be closely related to the satisfaction of groups and individuals. Focusing on the latter interpretation, let's rate the satisfaction levels of the following entities: the state, employers, the academic community, students and their families.

The modern Russian state, first of all, considers economic component of universities effectiveness and measures the invested funds with results. The value of financial investments in higher education is measurable but the evaluation of its results is characterized by high uncertainty. Nevertheless, the state clearly insists on defining the activities of universities as insufficiently effective, thereby demonstrating its dissatisfaction with work of higher education. The evidence is the decision to conduct an annual monitoring of universities effectiveness, the constant initiation of transformational projects, and, finally, legislative activity (Strogetskaia E., 2015).

The employers' satisfaction level of higher education work is primarily based on their evaluation of graduates. We can also see the obvious discontent. Today, companies hire university graduates less often than 4-5 years ago.

The evaluation of the higher education effectiveness by university community is largely determined by the satisfaction of the teaching staff with their own work. According to Russian studies, university professors are generally satisfied with their work (Higher vocational education, 2011: 186-189). However, most often these studies are about direct assessments of teachers. At the same time, indirect indicators show a different picture. First of all, such an indirect indicator is the dynamics of university staff. Analysis of its trends in recent years draws attention to the growing staff deficit against the background of the natural staff decline (Higher vocational education, 2011: 185). The sharp aggravation of the problem of personnel ageing, which occurred during the period of university reform, shows, firstly, the dissatisfaction of another interested subject – potential teachers, and, secondly, the decline in the attractiveness of one of the basic institutional roles - the role of the teacher.

What can be said about other basic institutional role – the role of the student, as well as the effectiveness of the educational system in direct and indirect assessments by students and their families? According to statistics (Higher vocational education, 2011: 173-176), the prestige of higher education among the population is still high; individuals do not turn to other social institutions to meet their needs related to higher education.

After analyzing it is found the following. The Russian state, in spite of all its discontent with state universities, appeals to these educational institutions for the implementation of innovative economic development or obtaining qualified personnel for it. For these purposes, there are numerous administrative-initiated contests and projects but only specific public universities are allowed to participate. In addition to the open University SKOLKOVO, it is difficult to name new organizational forms of higher education created by the state.

Russian business is still significantly behind the world in the creation of corporate universities. Now the number of such corporate educational institutions in Russia is approaching 100, while, for example, in North America there are more than 2500. At the same time, both large and medium-sized businesses support cooperation with well-known state universities of the country. For example, Gazprom has identified 9 so-called "support" universities in its program of innovative development until 2020. All of them are state universities. This once again proves that Russian business is not ready to focus on any new organizational forms of higher education.

The most critical of the above subjects is young people-potential professors. To realize their career needs, they are rather reluctant to choose Russian higher school. Nevertheless, during the interview with graduates of universities focused on work abroad, you can hear that they are ready to teach at foreign universities (Gurtov V. A., Berezhnaya Yu. N., 2007: 121-134). According to indirect evidence, it can be assumed that young people rejection is not based on the content of the teacher's role but on the conditions of its implementation: the size of wages, career statics in comparison with business, etc.

The analysis, conducted by applying Sorokin's model principles, shows that none of the signs of the higher education institutional crisis is absolutely manifested, although each is the case.

Results / Findings

As a result of the application of two analytical models of the institutional crisis, the initial hypothesis of the study was confirmed. However, it is obvious that the crisis does not reach its peak in the form of complete degeneration as a social institution. In order to achieve its goals and satisfy its interests, the society continues to turn to the institute of higher education and its usual organizational forms, in particular universities. The current crisis of the Russian higher school rather leads to the redistribution of usual institutional functions, which is achieved by different initial conditions, adaptation strategies and integration practices of universities.

The adaptation of universities to new social requirements occurs in the course of various changes. Thus, in order to ensure the high social status of their graduates, universities apply into pedagogical practices the teaching popular ("fashionable") disciplines which make up the training in the now popular professional areas; and in the practice of management – the active use of forming image technologies and strengthening the reputation. Scientific and technological units of the full cycle are coming to develop the function of innovative service in the structures of universities.

The vector and effectiveness of changes in the conditions of institutional crisis associated with the redistribution of higher education social functions depend on the hierarchy of functional claims of a particular university; the value of relevant needs of the public target groups; as well as the ability of the university to implement the most successful practices to meet the actual needs of society or to form a particular "lost" need.

Adaptation strategies differentiate universities, revealing both those that cannot meet the dominant needs of society and are under serious threat of termination of autonomous work, and those which were chosen by several social groups to implement their interests. Differentiation of universities on the level of overcoming their institutional crisis allows us to assess the prospects of their organizational development and it sets another direction for their differentiation.

The level of overcoming the institutional crisis, which was measured by the degree of severity of the components of Sorokin's analytical model, became a decisive criterion for structuring the field of modern Russian universities. Among the groups formed during the crisis, the research interest was represented by "recognized" universities, universities - "hidden leaders" and conditionally "outsider" group of universities.

All of these groups in some way overcome the crisis, because their constituent universities maintain the health, integrity and independence (unlike, for example, from the group of "sequestered" universities, which became parts of the Federal universities), and also support private demand among families of students. At the same time, the stake holders, directly or indirectly pointing to the inefficiency of the higher education institution, especially the state and employers, evaluate the identified groups differently. "Outsiders" get their name in connection with the discontent or indifference shown in their attitude by the state and employers, which indicates a low level of overcoming the institutional crisis. "Recognized" universities to the greatest extent, showing positive signs of getting a high agreed valuation of virtually all interested groups. A special place in the crisis structure is occupied by universities - "hidden leaders". Against the

background of lack of choice of these universities by the state, they demonstrate great and steady success with employers.

Discussion

Research prospects of models of overcoming of institutional crisis by Russian higher education institutions are connected with the comparative analysis of changes in formal and informal structures, and also university corporate cultures of the described groups. Among the social transformations, the ones that require the most attention are those whose consequences lead to an increase in the viability of university. It can be assumed that the differences found in the actual implementation of the adaptation strategies of universities, which are most successful in overcoming the crisis, and the integration practices of these university communities are social guidelines for the development of higher education in Russia as a whole.

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