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Corporate culture of contemporary research university in search of complementarity of humanitarian and commercial principles in education (Russian context)

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Abstract

Background: In the paper the formation of world-class research universities is analysed. The paper studies the history of the research university, prerequisites of its appearance, formation and its development toward modern research university. The modern research university is being cautiously viewed nowadays. The crisis of the university is its reality. The question of the corporate culture formation is now considered to be a topical matter in connection with globalization process,

Methods: The authors implemented comparative analysis by comparing Humboldt's model of the research university and the modern one.

Results: The comparison is made in regard to the idea of university, its criteria and mission. Special emphasis is laid on the analysis and comparison of corporate culture systems.

Conclusions: Corporate culture is a novel criterion of the classical university that has recently arisen in the information society and now characterizes the university in a complementary way: on the one hand, as a competitive market entity, and on the other hand, as a guardian of its traditional, historically formed humanitarian criteria, ideas and mission. The following conclusion has been reached: the updated parameters have the identical form to those found by W. von Humboldt, only essence has changed.

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1. Introduction

As the title implies the article describes the results of understanding of the overall situation in the world, which a classical university has found itself in. The current situation is worrying because the society has recently been called the knowledge society, but the university began to lose the idea that had always created its identity –

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the idea of knowledge. The current situation states the problem of looking for ways of its further development: if a university has any prospects of preserving itself as a classical, or is it passing away as such? As to responses there are different attitudes, up to the apocalyptic, when ‘the end of the university’ is stated, “Western university died” (Barnett, R.), or is “in ruins” (Barnett, R.) as it has “outlived” and is a “splinter of era” (Fuller, S., 2004).

Some authors see the reason of the crisis in the paradigm of knowledge, implemented in the educational activities, itself, which is relevant neither to the state of the science nor the state of sociality now. For example, Professor of Psychology of Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania, the USA, Kenneth J. Gergen believes, that existing philosophical cognitive ‘endogenous’ (rationalist) and ‘exogenous’ (sensationalist) traditions cannot express the specificity of post-modern society, the network society, ‘the constructed social reality’ (Berger, Peter L., Luckmann, T., 1995).

The other side of the indicated in the title theme is related to the concept of corporate culture of the university. The question of the corporate culture formation is now considered to be a topical matter in connection with globalization process, which has taken the form of the significant, extremely mobile and communicative ‘space of flows’ (Castells, M.). In these circumstances, “people around the world are becoming increasingly interdependent”, but at the same time “they get the opportunity to exterminate each other (with weapons or pollution), so ideology of self-sufficient individualism puts the very existence of the human at threat” (Gergen, Kenneth J). Under the new conditions, K.J. Gergen states, knowledge is a product of ‘community relations’ and for its implementation not individualistic attitudes, but corporate and designed for cooperation and culture ones are required. Actualization of corporatization processes responds to the growing individualism.

Primarily, the question of the nature, essence and the basic principles of corporate culture formation is raised. In Western literature, the phenomenon of corporate culture is developed in the context and connection with the theories of control and management. Typically the corporate culture is thought of as the system of values, norms and ideals of development, which reveal themselves in behaviour and professional activity of all employees. In the first place, the question of corporate culture is placed in relation to business activities, when it is understood that all employees of the organization have a common goal and one vector to achieve competitive success. Such a definition may be considered in terms of the university, but it cannot be regarded as absolutely relevant to it, a university is a social educational institute, and economic commercial activity does not seem to be essential for it.

The aspect of the corporate culture value (A.I. Prigozhin, V.S. Zuckerman, A. Naumov, V.P. Shihirev, V.V. Tomilov, V.S. Sherbina and others) aroused certain interest in literature. It is believed that corporate culture is, above all, corporate values, that are expressed in the type of behaviour general among employees, in their value orientation, beliefs, ideology (T.Yu. Bazarov). G.L. Tulchinski stresses the responsibility of the corporate culture for the corporate common cause.

In the literature there is no unambiguous definition of corporate culture in general. And this refers to the corporate culture of the classical university in particular. This issue drew much attention due to the investigation of the University Mission and Idea (the research team of the Belarusian Education Research Centre under the leadership of M.A. Gusakovskaya, I.M. Elias, V.Ya. Nechayev and others). Meanwhile, the above mentioned transformations taking place in the classical university update this question, as the capabilities to meet the difficulties the university is facing at the moment lie in its corporate culture. This matter seems to be mostly pressing for those universities that have grown out of the classical model, acquiring a new quality and the name of the research university. Updating is primarily caused by the fact, that these universities enter the common education space, start working according to the laws of competition. It endangers the purely university function – its humanitarian and spiritual role. Are there any factors of modern life and culture that would allow the university to blend in with the new economic situation in the country and the whole world and at the same time maintain its essential humanistic specifics?

2. Scope and methods of research

This paper is devoted to the evaluation of the state and development prospects of the classical university in the non-classical conditions of postmodernity. There is an obvious contradiction. On the one hand, universities

are being transformed into commercial enterprises forced to improve their competitiveness constantly, and on the other hand, historically and traditionally they are meant to store, convey, reproduce and generate new values of education and culture, which cannot be subject to the laws of commerce and market. And the following questions are raised: how is the classical university developing, having found itself under the influence of the post-industrial information-based world circumstances? And what is the role of corporate culture concerning graduate training in the aspect of their professional and personal identity?

The hypothesis of the paper can be stated as follows: even in the context of the knowledge commercialization the classical university cannot be transformed into a socio-economic structure and is in a position to preserve traditional specifics in carrying out of educational activities in the professional training. The emphasis should be on maintaining and implementing of the spiritual and human development function of the individual. This is due to the fact that its specificity as a social and educational institution is in close orientation to the preservation and continuous reproduction of the spiritual and humanitarian components of social development. Transformation or destruction of the university results in breaking of one of the principal aspects of the society – its inwardness and as far as a person is “the nature enlivened by the spirit” (Scheler, M.), the disappearance of the spiritual side amounts to death, both the individual and the society. The university corporate culture is hypothetically proposed as a way to preserve the university. The corporate culture offers the mechanism that will allow the Russian university to combine and translate into action the commercialization possibilities and traditional spiritual and humanitarian essence. That is why the principle of complementarity was proposed as its organizing principle. On its basis the university can remain a classical one and at the same time be relevant to current environment.

Thus, regarding the problem and the hypothesis of the paper, we should investigate the university corporate culture as a criterion that previously existed in its history but now has a different formulation and new content. The novelty lies in the conscious orientation of corporate culture to give a complementary assessment to the university on both sides: as a competitive subject of the market, and as an establishment that is preserving its traditional humanitarian idea

The object of the paper is to demonstrate the possibility of saving a classical university on the basis of corporate culture formation, taking into account the new socio-cultural circumstances. The goals are the following:

- to prove the historical role of the spiritual content of the university corporate culture and to reveal social and epistemological contradictions in which a modern university exists
- to summarize the positions on the matter of contradictions concerning their solution
- to convey an idea of the “new corporate culture” of the university
- to prove the possibility of complementary unity of the classic criteria and new, postmodern characteristics in the university corporate culture

The methods, by which the hypothesis of the paper is justified as its theoretical principle, are adequate to goals and objectives. As the university is regarded in its historical forms and patterns, the method of comparative historical study has been chosen to be leading. It allowed to compare the models of the traditional classical and modern research universities. The same method was used for the content comparison of the university corporate culture at different historical stages of its development. Socio-cultural analysis was brought in to examine the cultural and historical background that should be necessarily taken into account while studying the state of the university. Moreover, the socio-cultural approach allows to carry out a comprehensive analysis, when the unity of social, epistemological, pedagogical and other factors served for justification of theoretical reasons and confirming facts. Hermeneutics as a method allowed to get accustomed to the specifics of university life in different eras and cultures. The socio-cultural approach allowed to summarize various lines of research.

3. Results

3.1 University corporate culture: a retrospective journey into the history

First of all, it should be pointed out that the classical university has always been remarkable for the “humanitarization” of education. Since the times of early medieval universities, where all four faculties were the faculties of humanitarian profile, the classical university declared about its humanitarian orientation. The very first faculties provided a humanitarian mood which remained unchanged throughout the entire university history. A university emerged as a corporation, and in the subsequent history the corporate culture, being caused by the necessities arisen from the historical and cultural conditions, accompanied it. Corporate culture contained rules ensuring separation of the university from other forms of urban life and the accoutrement, having been taken from the monasteries served the university as a genetic source. Considering the spiritual and humanitarian content of the university culture, it is very important to bear in mind that historically the monasteries exercised considerable influence on it. Corporate culture rested on the identification of the faculty with the clergy, adopted the idea of subordination (to rector and deans) and found it necessary to have its patron saint. Corporate culture took over some other external monastery attributes: general housekeeping, a shared meal, a specific form of clothing, prohibition to get married for professors (up to the 16th century). The culture is formed by Faculty of Theology. Immanuel Kant pointed out that Faculty of Philosophy conveyed the same content, but in the embodiment of rationalism. Both faculties were in dispute (Kant, I.).

New age declared itself by the Enlightenment project, and the university became ‘The Temple of Science’, ‘The Church of Education’. The concept of ‘temple of science’ contains the idea of an organic unity of rational knowledge and nonrational spirit. This unity of knowledge and truth, the genetically ideological categories of the university, became its corporate emblem that uplifted all those involved in university education. This specificity is assumed as a basis of a specially formulated (J. Newman and W. von Humboldt) idea of the university, and later of its mission and criteria. The unity of basic scientific research and their humanitarian (humanistic) value constituted universality. On the basis of this unity W. von Humboldt established one of the most important criteria of classical university – the criterion of the humanization of the education content.

Enlightenment project identifies the removal of alienation through the rise to universal knowledge with the help of Enlightenment, or education of the individual – the process of humanization, that is with the emergence of a man in the human form. The metaphor of ‘rise’ of a man might be regarded as the principle one in the humanistic Enlightenment project, having its historical roots in the religious knowledge in the Middle Ages. Rise to God as the Absolute transformed into a rise to the absolute, eternal and true knowledge now. W. von Humboldt found one of the main criteria for the classical university – the attitude to the research work. But now Rise was being conducted on rational grounds.

3.2 Transformation of humanitarian and spiritual content of the corporate culture in the modern university

Non-classical philosophy of the 20th century brought new philosophical reason. Deconstruction justified the emergence of new trends in philosophy (hermeneutics, phenomenology), insisted on the possibility of various forms of rationality that founded the emergence of different concepts of truth. The process of the formation and development of different ‘strategic’ (Habermas, J., 2000) and forms of rationality was going on. Changes in ontological and cultural structures affected the university greatly. Firstly, in the 90s of the 20th century the university had to face new rivals in the field of education, but also mass media, advertising, television, computer, and so on. Secondly, the knowledge in the form of information yielded easily to processes that transformed it into a monetary form. In the case of Russia, it affected such criterion for the classical university as fundamentalization of education. Commercialization became a source of survival. It brought money quickly.

With the decline of the Enlightenment project and its ideas of rise to the single absolute knowledge and its study, the university turns out to be a common social structure that is losing its autonomy, getting open to the society and entering everyday routine. No more sacredness, spiritual and humanitarian aura is melting.

At this time, noting significant changes occurring in the classical university, philosophy of university education applied to the study of the process of moving the university from its traditional national forms of existence to the world research universities. To give reasons for such a way out, it was stressed that the research dominance within the university raises it to the University of International Standard. Science is an international

phenomenon, which transforms the national form of the university [W. von Humboldt]. University enters the global stage and it becomes global. Higher education of the 21st century, according to Philip G. Altbach, is a combination of the global, the national and the local. World-class universities tend to cope with these challenges, and no country feels confident without such a university (Altbach, Philip G., 2006).

The contradiction between humanitarization and commercialization of education in Russia is complemented by specific national contexts. In particular, the nature of the economic relations of the market, the commercialization of education, and the acquisition of product characteristics by knowledge appear new phenomena for Russian university and do not always find understanding. In this situation the university can no longer exist as a classical one, and hence university corporate culture acquires different content too.

3.3. Corporate culture as a criterion for a research university: the role in maintaining the university education in modern environment

In today's pluralistic university model special attention is given to the model of a research university. What is a research university? According to Philip J. Altbach, the paradox of the world-class university observed is that "everyone wants one, no one knows what it is, and no one knows how to get one" (Salmi, Jamil, 2009).

In today's world, there are many 'flagship' universities, belonging to which is determined by a set of criteria, the most important and objective of which are international rankings. In the discussion on how to establish a world-class research university J. Salmi (Altbach, Philip G. and Salmi, Jamil, 2011) also identifies three major approaches to build world-class universities. The first consists of upgrading a few existing universities that have the potential to excel (picking winners). The second relies on encouraging several existing institutions to merge and transform into a new university that would achieve the type of synergies corresponding to a world-class institution (hybrid formula). Finally, governments can decide to build new world-class universities from scratch (clean-slate approach). Besides, the author outlines three features that encourage the formation of the world-class university: the capacity to attract a high concentration of talented faculty members and students, the availability of abundant resources, and the presence of a favourable governance. (Altbach, Philip G. and Salmi, Jamil. (2011).

To determine the content of the corporate culture of the modern research university, it is necessary to understand its mission and the focus on the training of a graduate, corresponding to the relevant specifics, should be seen as a necessary component of the mission of a research university. A modern graduate of the research university in his professional and personal identity differs greatly from the classical university graduate. The prospect of his educational environment is the network society, knowledge society, and his image is formed of the characteristics peculiar to 'knowledge workers' - a new social structure, which emerged in the time of information society. The main characteristic of a knowledge worker now is his ability to deal with information (collect, store, and produce). Therefore, the corporate culture of a research university is aimed at the pattern, which lies at the basis of modern professional identity of any specialist, whose central characteristic is the ability to produce knowledge. His professional identity is based on such traits as competitiveness, competence, ability to leave obsolete experience in his professional activities behind. Entrepreneurship, charisma, the ability to take risky decisions, to generate knowledge, creativity, and communication skills constitute the personal identity of the knowledge worker. All the above-mentioned characteristics center around the abilities and skills to generate self-knowledge.

The specificity of the university corporate culture lies in the fact that it trains specialists not only in their professional, but also in their personal identity. Consequently, humanitarian and spiritual basis should necessarily be designed in the content of the university corporate culture. The humanitarian component of the university education is developed on the traditional characteristics of morality, spiritual aristocracy, aesthetics in behaviour and communication, civic consciousness, inner culture and intelligence, and so on. These traits are traditionally brought by the classical university, and today they have become an integral part of the university corporate culture.

Conclusion

Thus, the paper is written in order to justify the conclusion which runs: modern society has not exhausted the pathos of the classical criteria of the university yet, as far as it sets high standards of quality concerning its consumer orientation (knowledge, education, professionalism). The research university trains specialists, whose gained qualifications are relevant to the specifics of the modern professional and sociocultural world. Analysing the reasons for the stability of the university as a social institution, it may be said that it is based on two factors: first, sustained commitment to the original value system of service to the society, the truth and the academic community, and second, high adaptability to changing conditions.

The research project, the description of which made the content of the given paper, found a place for the new criterion of the university in the system of the updated and reformed criteria. This criterion is the university corporate culture which is entrusted with the responsibility for the preservation of the classical university in modern non-classical conditions.

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