

## TO THE PROBLEM OF STRATEGIC PLANNING OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Key words and phrases:** educational activity; quality of education; specialist marketing; strategic priorities; strategic planning; quality assurance system.

**Abstract:** Some approaches to the solution of educational activities strategic planning problems aroused due to the Russia joining of Bologna Agreement are discussed. Role of specialist marketing complex both in the system of strategic planning and in the quality assurance system is shown. Interpretation of documents defining the content of strategic development plan of university educational activity is given.

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For successful strategic planning the analysis of the current situation is required.

For more than 10 years in Russia we observe some considerable social and economical changes, which also influence the system of higher education in Tambov State Technical university (TSTU): we have commercial student enrollment, enlarge the student enrollment, open new specialities, there is no occupational distribution of our graduates. But the most important fact is that there are some new requirements to the university graduate, that is why TSTU main task is to train high-qualified competitive specialist.

At a time in EU higher education systems there are some considerable changes, aimed at the integration of these systems into the world educational environment. Being (in geographical and economical aspects) a part of Europe, Russia is interested in the positive integration results, that is why the Bologna declaration was signed in 2003.

We think that the Bologna process is not the kind of activity to violate our education system, but the information resource, which expresses the most effective and adequate to the current conditions ways of higher education development.

The integration of Russia into the Bologna process puts some additional goals to the system of higher education, which request the appropriate decisions. We emphasize 3 base components of the Bologna process:

- adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate;
- establishment of a credit system - such as in the ECTS system;
- development of a quality management system of the educational services.

In spite of all technical details and requirements, resulting from the Russia integration into the Bologna process, the most important indicator of the International educational market is quality of the Russian education. The term “quality of education” means, to our mind, respond to all people’s education demands and this term should be interpreted as social usefulness.

The Bologna Declaration signing, in spite of a laconic description of the education quality, allows participating in the European discussion about the higher education quality and further formulation of adequate recommendations.

To achieve the high quality of the Russian education we have the base principals of the Total Quality Management, which have the successful results in economy. We want to achieve our goals by means of quality system introduction and at first by introduction of process approach, which includes:

- systematic assessment of activities, necessary for result achievement;
- introduction of strict responsibility and accountability for all activities;
- main activities analysis and measurement;
- stressing such points as resources, methods and materials, which will improve main activities.

The main aspect of the quality management in the field of specialists training are strategy and control, based on the combination of external control and internal motivation. Now the university has the set of documents, which is the base for our quality system management certification at the international environment.

We think, that the Bologna process orientation shouldn't propose some changes into Russian education system but it should support its evolution and fitting to the European criteria and standards. It is not possible to solve the emerging problems without the strategic planning of educational activities, which means, at first, remedial action.

Now there is a need to overcome the constraints, which influence the quality of specialists training:

- the most attention is set on the Ministry of Education programs but not on the customers' demands, there is no marketing complex;
- there is no such an independent subdivision as the quality department, realising quality monitoring, self-evaluation processes, teachers' activities control;
- imperfect centralization of information resources in the university management complicates strategic planning process and integration of administrators and teachers' interests;
- lack of quality system projects for specialists training;
- resource limited for the educational process, for example, while organizing some new courses, new educational services, management structures optimization;
- lack of strategic planning regulated procedures;
- some contradictions in the system of information-analytical interaction between the university administration, teachers, students and the university staff;
- educational departments regulations have local character, there are no corporate components.

Strategic planning of educational activities, main goal of which is the elimination of the mentioned before drawbacks, which presupposes the marketing complex development as the base of his vocational training quality assurance system [1].

Under the term "marketing complex" we mean a kind of activity, which main task is to analyze the perspective market demands and develop the adequate organizational – pedagogical conditions for its satisfaction.

Marketing complex (monitoring, system of marketing communications with the customers, analytical mechanisms) is a set of a specialist's quality requirements (methodical, didactic, technological, organizational and informational).

The use of the marketing complex means:

- analysis of the current and perspective labour market demands;
- evaluation of the educational services value use;
- organization of the pedagogical monitoring as a base of educational process quality measurement;

– development and introduction of new educational services to the regional market;

– educational projects management.

So, the marketing complex determines, on the one hand, the system of requirements and the structure of the educational service value in use and on the other hand – the complex of organizational, pedagogical resources for the organization the specialist's training quality assurance system.

In the strategic planning process we use the following concept - quality assurance system of professional training is designed on the base of the system and complex analysis of the most important requirements to the specialist's professional competence and to the quality assurance system organization, taking into consideration all factors, influencing the quality.

Quality assurance complex approach means the organization of the appropriate system with the complex use of the following ideas: standardization, fundamentalization, informatization, total quality management, specialist's methodological orientation, objective quality measurement and considering points of all stakeholders, interested in the positive results of the educational process.

One of the most important ideas of the educational activities strategic planning is to determine the complex of means for educational process improvement by means of quality and to realize, in this case, the goal: to develop the quality assurance system for professional training which allows measuring the quality result of the educational process and predicting the expected education result and technology for its achievement.

While planning the organization of educational activity we consider that the specialist training quality at the university is determined by self-regulation of subjects, involved in the educational process. The realization of such approach requires the following actions:

1 Determination of functions for the university subdivisions such as: executive, diagnostic, organizational, methodical, research-experimental, consulting-prognostic, informational.

2 Determination of means for professional training goals which include:

- development of professional training goals hierarchy;
- development of the model training in the frame of some certain speciality;
- organization of educational complex which includes curricula, training programs adequate in the modern information environment;
- distribution of functions, power and responsibilities in the process of the specialist's training at the university;
- selection of the education materials according to the subjects and specialities to train high-qualified and competitive specialist.

3 Distribution of functions between the university subdivisions in the training process.

4 Study of different professional problem solutions in the current information environment.

5 Determination of the most important subjects in the training process.

The new university subdivision – quality department will be responsible for the solution of all these problems.

So to achieve the strategic priorities in accordance with our educational activities model we need the appropriate resources, such as:

1 State educational standard; some university regulations norms; quality handbook; evaluation indicators set.

2 University training and material base, financial assets, educational infrastructure, base for studying practices.

3 Intellectual products, databases, library funds, means of communication, control and evaluative funds, educational process design technologies.

4 Staff: teachers' staff, technical staff, managers.

We consider the resources to be the most important component of the professional training system. The important factor in the educational quality assurance system is that the part of these resources is taken from the other economic branches (financial resources), some part of these resources is formed in the educational environment (normative, methodical, informational, staff, intellectual resources, some scientific and pedagogical achievements). The central part in the strategic planning process is the description of its main steps and procedures.

The content of the strategic planning process is presented in the following form.

Quality planning is the detailed description of means and ways for quality assurance achievement. It means the content, structure of these means and ways, scheme of actions, all kinds of resources (staff, scientific-methodical, financial, technical, time, normative, motivational).

The planning process results in the quality assurance program, meeting the requirements of prognostics, rationality, reality, integrity and control.

The university quality department develops this program and after its discussion at the faculties the University Research Board approves it. After its approval educational department begins to realize it.

The most important strategic planning documents are the papers supporting quality assurance system. They are: quality policy, quality guidance, procedures, handbooks, quality accounting information [2].

This documentation development is organized to explain the quality policy, to distribute all responsibilities among the teachers and university staff.

While analyzing the university goals we've developed the informational and analytical model for cooperation of the educational process participants. This model has three levels:

1 administrative level (university administration) - here the management is carried out in the following chain "*forecasting-planning-organization-motivation-regulation-control-correction-analysis*". Managers of this level provide the unity of all quality activities, determine strategic directions of education process development and specialists training quality system.

2 technological level (teachers) –different applied problems are solved. The management of this level is carried out in the following chain "*reasons – goal- content-forms-methods-results*". Managers here integrate the quality activities according to the specific goals, programs, results.

3 activity level (students) – this level is characterized by the students self-regulation, which improves the educational process quality. The realization of the following actions takes place here "*reasons- cognitive activity-self-control-result*".

According to this model there are three subject-object information exchanges here: administrator- teacher-student (group of students). There is a constant information exchange between these objects. All the information is divided into two flows – vertical (administrative information) and horizontal (professional information). First flow – are the instructive materials and feedback. This kind of information is important for the system functioning; for the user (subject-object) it is not so important. Much more important for him is the access to the professional and educational information.

Educational process quality assurance means organization of all documents according to the following sections "Planning and forecasting", "Standardization", "Education process", "Personality", "Personnel", "Motivations", "Control and analysis".

Document "Planning and forecasting" includes planned activities with its goals, content, volume, methods, terms and the university subdivision organization and

development. This document is supposed to be the most important one because specialist training result depends on the planning quality.

At the university level this document includes the enrollment plans, maintenance plans, university and departments activities, budget information. It also includes some predictable specialists' models.

Document "Standardization" includes education process information, relations between its members, some instructive-methodical materials (methodological and regulating instructions), databases: educational standards, testing materials.

Document "Education process" includes normative, maintenance, financial features of the education process, some statistics of its development and different information databases: pedagogical software, methodical problems, pedagogical experience, problem-orientated instrumental software, etc.

Document "Personality" has students' personal record: students' enrollment, circulation, quality characteristics (educational achievements, research achievements), some hobbies, olympiad participation, different personal qualities.

Document "Personnel" includes social passport of university (faculty) staff, employees number and personnel characteristics, teachers advanced training information.

Document "Motivations" has the quality stimulating information, concerning professional training: terms for professional development, image improvement.

Document "Control and analysis" expresses the goal achievement, quality assurance system effectiveness. This document has the certification results, professional education programs, activities of the state examiners board, teachers and educational subdivisions rating, employment services, employers' comments about the university (faculty) graduates.

We consider the university strategic planning process to be a very complex process which includes two stages: preliminary (analytical) stage and main stage (realization).

Analytical stage means the analysis of external and internal environment and conditions, necessary for the specialists training quality assurance.

Analysis of the external environment has the following structure:

- determination of occupations, required by the labour market;
- determination of the qualification level for labour market requirements;
- potential, possibilities for new speciality opening;
- education programs analysis and updating according to the customers demands;

Analysis of the internal environment has the following structure:

- university resources potential determination;
- university education system quality and results analysis;
- investigation of quality and effectiveness of all university management subdivisions functioning.

University education activity organization is a complex of techniques for professional training quality assurance by means of continuous interconnected actions to plan and predict the expected result and evaluate the current process and professional training result.

Educational activity strategic planning includes the development of following standards and technologies:

- educational process control and quality evaluation standards;
- teachers' qualification standards (qualification level requirements, professionalism requirements, training results);
- students' potential standards (students' training abilities diagnostics);
- expert evaluation of educational programs and curricula technologies;
- educational process management optimization;
- evaluation criteria introduction and its coordination;

- educational process and its participants' results analysis;
- expertise of pedagogical innovations leading to the quality improvement;
- methods for pedagogical process evaluation;
- educational process information support;
- university marketing activity expertise;
- procedures of management decision making.

Realization stage includes the following actions:

1 Complex evaluation of the higher education current situation in the region determines the qualification level and professions popular on the labour market. Labour market analysis is held not only by the university but also by regional and federal education management structures. The analysis and updating of the current educational programs, new programs, services and innovations development are carried out. The university administration provides organizational and technical interaction between different subjects, interested in educational process results. The stakeholders present input data for the development process, documenting process and analysis of all necessary information.

2 University activities (last 5 years) evaluation includes:

- University prestige on the labour market (graduates' employment level and students enrollment);
- Professional training quality (number of diplomas with honour; graduates' satisfaction with their qualification, employers' opinion about graduates; graduates' wish to continue education);
- University resource level.

3 General professional training is evaluated so that to determine specialities, activities which require renovations and development of new training-methodical materials; some outdated specialities; pedagogical technologies which don't fulfill educational standards requirements.

4 Different circumstances which led to contradictions between the planned and real result are analysed (financial, staff, maintenance, methodical reasons)

These four actions mentioned above form so-called university self-evaluation process (educational activities monitoring) which aims at determining its capabilities, faults and their causes.

Strategic planning realization stage includes [3, 4]:

1 Legal documents development and circulation. It means strict recording of all quality assurance procedures by means of Quality handbook, methodological and methodical instructions development. The most important documents are quality planning documents because quality of education and its results depend on different factors. Methodical and legal information, its renovation promotes effective conditions for university activity. Electronic documenting improves quality assurance system.

2 Staff training. Faculty staff and especially the managers who deal with educational activities should be responsible for the quality assurance. Staff training in the quality field means also to train new experts, quality auditors or information system and technologies specialists.

3 Organizational structure and management control improvement. It means improvement of administration bodies responsibilities, this factor is the most important criterion of the quality assurance policy. The role of quality administrator is to organize unity of actions and efforts of all the participants of the educational process. Besides, he participates in the matrix organizational structure development and coordinates international cooperation.

4 Resources improvement. Resources are the most important factors in the university management system, so strategic planning includes resource analysis and some activities to organize support, financial, staff, methodical, informational and other kinds of resources.

5 Organizational processes improvement. Specialists training quality assurance system includes some certain processes, influencing the results quality. Processes management means to maintain all parameters (law, economical, pedagogical) according to the requirements and processes control. This stage also includes introduction of innovative elements into educational process.

6 Operational procedures introduction. Operational procedures introduction is necessary both for local and interconnected processes. Much attention is paid to the following procedures: internal quality control, corrective and preventive actions, inappropriate production management.

Internal quality control aims at analyzing all quality activities and results, quality assurance system effectiveness determination. The distinctive feature of the internal control is that it takes place on behalf of the university; information received as a result of this control is used on the initiated administrative level. It's very important for the university to use the rateable set of tools which could save all kinds of resources.

Corrective and preventive actions are used to prevent all contradictions between the university graduates and qualification requirements, educational programs and curriculum contradictions. For this purpose all discovered contradictions are registered and analyzed. As a result of this process corrective actions are defined and controlled.

Preventive actions are useful for quality control and quality decrease prevention because of some factors. For preventive actions some operative information is used, this information is obtained by students and teachers inquiry, planned control and staff evaluation.

Contradictions management is something like a guaranty against offgrade programs, technologies and methodical literature usage, so it prevents unqualified specialists graduation. These guaranties are provided by identification, documenting and evaluation procedures.

7. Control and evaluation complex development. Control is used for training quality checking, for educational standards requirements realization, planned events implementation. The particular control in the quality assurance system is that it is strictly documented and regulated. Control and evaluation activities are held on all specialist training stages including the stage when he (she) changes educational institution or graduates from the university. Control means are software, comparative indexes (university licensing and accreditation standards), testing computer programs.

All mentioned above elements of educational activity strategic planning, quite naturally, require some adaptation to each real university conditions.

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## **К вопросу стратегического планирования образовательной деятельности в вузе**

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**Ключевые слова и фразы:** образовательная деятельность; качество образования; маркетинг специалиста; стратегические приоритеты; стратегическое планирование; система обеспечения качества.

**Аннотация:** Рассмотрены некоторые подходы к решению задачи стратегического планирования образовательной деятельности в вузе, обусловленной присоединением России к Болонскому соглашению. Показана роль комплекса маркетинга специалиста как в системе стратегического планирования, так и в системе обеспечения качества профессионального образования. Дано описание основных документов, определяющих содержание стратегического плана развития образовательной деятельности в университете.

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### **Zur Frage der strategischen Planung der Ausbildungstätigkeit in der Hochschule**

**Zusammenfassung:** Es sind einige Standpunkte zur Lösung der Aufgabe der strategischen Planung der durch den Beitritt des Rußlands zum Bologna Abkommen determinierten Ausbildungstätigkeit in der Hochschule betrachtet. Es ist die Rolle des Komplexes des Fachmannmarketings sowohl im System der strategischen Planung als auch im System der Qualitätsversorgung der Berufsausbildung gezeigt. Es ist die Beschreibung der Hauptdokumenten, die den Inhalt des strategischen Plans der Entwicklung der Ausbildungstätigkeit in der Universität bestimmen, angeführt.

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### **Sur le problème de la planification stratégique de l'activité éducative dans un établissement de l'enseignement supérieur**

**Résumé:** Sont envisagées quelques approches pour la résolution du problème de la planification stratégique de l'activité éducative dans un établissement de l'enseignement supérieur qui est expliquée par l'adhésion de la Russie à l'accord de Bologne. Est montré le rôle du complexe du marketing des spécialistes dans le système de la planification stratégique ainsi que dans le système de l'assurance de la qualité de la formation professionnelle. Est donnée la description des documents de base déterminant le contenu du plan stratégique du développement de l'activité éducative dans un établissement de l'enseignement supérieur.

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