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**MODERN DEVELOPMENT OF THE EDUCATIONAL  
ENVIRONMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

T. I. Melnik (a)\*, N. S. Mushketova (b), O. A. Maletina (c)

\*Corresponding author

(a) Volgograd State University, Prospekt Universitetskiy, 100, Volgograd, Russia, melnikti@list.ru

(b) Volgograd State University, Volgograd, Russia, nmushketova@yandex.ru

(c) Volgograd State University, Volgograd, Russia, o.maletina@volsu.ru

**Abstract**

The authors carried out a full-scale analytical study of macroeconomic trends that will influence the development of education systems around the world. We refer to the basic trends: total digitalization and accelerated pace of introducing innovations into the daily life of society, globalization of markets, increased competition, higher education costs, internationalization of education and research, increased mobility and expansion of human opportunities, increased accessibility of education and continuity of education, cognitive revolution, decrease in the growth rate of the quality of education and the benefits that it brings to the student. According to the results of the situational analysis the authors propose marketing tools for solving the identified problems which are dialectically determined by the current stage of the development of the society. The necessity of branding implementation at universities is justified. The hybrid education is supposed to be a suitable variant of education under the pandemic because it allows to form a graduate with skills and abilities which are in demand on the market (firstly, soft skills and emotional intelligence).

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## **1. Introduction**

Any changes taking place in the higher education system are always conditioned by the need to correspond to the current stage of development of society and a dynamically changing environment. Society at each stage of the development forms needs, abilities and norms of behavior of all groups and members of society including teachers and students, and also determines the main perspectives of the development of the education system, focusing on those tasks that are most relevant at a given time. According to the evolutionary approach the focus of the educational process on the connection with life allowing to form knowledge, skills and abilities in the chosen direction of training in the learning process, as well as to ensure the assimilation of social norms, is a necessary condition for the preservation and development of the higher education system. Moreover, each new generation begins with the assimilation of those achievements of society that it already has and develops them further (elements of the variability of the education system at different stages of historical development include, for example, universalization or specialization of education). The elements of adaptability of the higher education system are formed as a result of changes in the external conditions of the environmental functioning. To identify them the authors of the article conducted a research of the marketing environment of the implementation of educational products of universities, determined trends that have the greatest impact on the development of the higher education system at the present stage of evolution. The authors' interpretation of the information collected for the situational analysis allows to complement the system of elements' variability of the higher education system (traditionally, they include the improvement and development of existing and new educational methods and techniques, training qualities which person needs mostly at the current stage of society development: for example, soft skills and emotional intelligence) with relevant tools for the strategic development of universities in the national and global educational environment.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Modern macroeconomic trends have highlighted the problem of interaction between all participants in the educational process under the crisis and uncertainty including the educational services' market; performing urgent tasks of the development and implementation of new digital technologies; system reassessment of existing and applied approaches to teaching, tools of organizing the educational process, teaching methods as well as promoting educational services of universities on the market under the crisis and uncertainty.

## **3. Research Questions**

The current crisis offers new options to answer the question concerning changes which would be appropriate for the national education system taking into account the analyzed trends and the position of an educational institution in a dynamically changing and uncertain marketing environment characterized by increased competition for both applicants and highly qualified professors.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to determine and maintain the balance of universities' efforts for forming and developing soft and hard skills of students as the most demanded at the current stage of the development of the society and opportunities of combining flexibility and decentralization of the higher education, the merger of new and old educational technologies through the search of answers on current environmental challenges and modern education.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The methodological basis of the research conducted by the authors was developments, concepts and hypotheses substantiated and presented in the works of domestic and foreign scientists in the field of strategic marketing. In this article the authors also rely on works of Clarke (2006), Salovey and Mayer (2005), Goleman (1998), Goleman and Bradbury (1995), Guilford (1967) dedicated to the emotional intelligence. The development and substantiation of practical recommendations is carried out on the basis of the implementation of general scientific approaches: dialectical and historical-logical; under a system approach the methods of comparative and logical analysis are used.

The information and empirical basis for the situational analysis of the external marketing environment of educational institutions was the research results presented in modern periodicals reflecting the theory and practice of functioning of universities under market conditions; statistical data on the official website of the Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation; expert opinions of the scientific community dedicated to problems of the system of higher education in modern conditions. Thus, according to the results of the analysis the authors identify the following global trends that determine the development of the system of higher education at the present stage of the development of the society:

##### **5.1. Total digitalization and accelerated pace of introducing innovations into the daily life of society**

This trend leads to the expansion of the use of computing, multimedia, information and communication and other digital technologies in production, social and cultural spheres of human life and activities as well as in his private (personal) life.

##### **5.2. Globalization of markets**

This tendency key is markets of knowledge, technologies, innovations, education, consulting and R & D (Research & Development), expansion of the network partnership of universities (including virtual space).

##### **5.3. Increased competition**

There is an acute competition in education, in the field of R & D, in the production of innovations, etc. between universities of different countries and regions, between universities and other cognitive institutions (research centers, innovative companies, digital media, etc.), in redistribution of the markets of

educational services, knowledge, technologies, innovations, consulting and R & D for the benefit of universities recognized world leaders. There is an increase of competition between global universities and consortia of the world's leading universities for talented students, promising researchers and professors.

#### **5.4. Higher education costs**

Due to the constant growth of the cost of education the concept 'elitism' is returning to the modern education system. Thus, in the United States between 2000 and 2012 the cost of education increased by 62%, and in 2019 the total amount of students' loans in the country was more than 1.56 trillion dollars (Turazashvili, 2021). The current macroeconomic reality will also contribute to an increase of the cost of education caused by the necessity to increase the cost of high-quality transfer of curricula into digital format.

#### **5.5. Internationalization of education and research**

There is the necessity to teach in English (or in another foreign language), to ensure an international accreditation of programmes, compliance of tolerance norms in a multicultural environment, and to master the practice of cooperation with representatives of other cultures and lifestyles.

#### **5.6. Increased mobility and expansion of human opportunities**

The growth of person's opportunities including the choice of places, ways and content of one's life, the sphere of professional interests and education, determines the lack of attachment to a specific region, country or continent, and, consequently, to the place of study, work and residence in general. This contributes significantly to expansion of person's opportunities to define his identity, to build individual educational and professional perspective (including frequent transitions from one institution to another and change of speciality), using the resources of different universities, educational online platforms and others.

#### **5.7. Increased accessibility of education and continuity of education**

This includes an increase in the proportion of students receiving vocational education in different age groups and with different levels of initial training, as well as an increase in the number of students in additional education programs, in vocational retraining courses, advanced training, etc. (Federal State Statistic Service, 2019), increasing admission to universities of foreigners, people with disabilities and other groups of students.

#### **5.8. Cognitive revolution**

The transition of modern society to the post-industrial stage of civilization development has led to an increase in the scale and significance of intellectual and creative activity; the formation of new types of collective and hybrid intelligence; new ways and formats of production and reproduction of knowledge; changes in human cognitive abilities; mass introduction of 'smart' technologies for automating various

processes ('smart industries', 'smart networks', 'smart cities', etc.) and artificial intelligence (Melnik et al., 2020a).

### **5.9. Decrease in the growth rate of the quality of education and the benefits that it brings to the student**

The diploma of higher education, a high level of knowledge, skills and abilities of a graduate often does not guarantee his employment on the labour market, a high level of wages and life success in general. According to the survey of British students in 2017/18 32% believed that they received 'low' or 'very low' value for the money they paid for their education (in 2011/12 this figure was 18%) (Turazashvili, 2021).

It should be noted that since the spring of 2020 digitalization has become the most relevant trend for education systems in various countries of the world including Russia. Educational institutions around the world have experienced massive, often formal and violent digitalization of the educational process, significantly accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic came as a shock to the education industry: according to experts about 1.6 billion people or 94% of the total number of students in the world were also affected by quarantine. At the same time, all considered trends had been formed even before the pandemic, it only strengthened those trends that began to take shape earlier.

## **6. Findings**

The pandemic has adjusted the domestic system of higher education and scientific research, in a few days 5 million students, 300,000 professors and teachers began to work remotely (Federal State Statistic Service, 2020). In such conditions, undoubtedly, the leading trend determining the development of the education system is digitalization. The changes affected the education system at different levels and made it possible to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the considered process. Thus, we distinguish the following advantages:

- opportunity to optimize professor and assistant labour education resources (including the solution of personnel shortage problems) as well as temporary organizational and financial resources of educational institutions,
- the availability of training programs regardless of the location of the student, the time of access to educational content, etc.,
- creation of psychologically comfortable learning conditions, the possibility of implementing the concept 'pedagogy of cooperation' with the involvement of employers, leading practitioners in a particular field and others as participants in the learning process, as well as providing opportunities for education for persons with disabilities,
- 'individualization of education', a more creative and active role of the student allowing him to set his own perspective of development, to receive basic and additional education, including persons who have not previously had the opportunity to attend educational institutions (for example, due to a busy work schedule, disabilities etc.).

At the same time, the digitalization of the educational process also has significant drawbacks:

- the use of exclusively digital communications in the long-term prevents the formation and development of both vertical and horizontal connections between participants in the educational process, while in the course of live communication deeper connections are formed between people, there is a more effective transfer of information and knowledge,
- negative impact on the socialization of students in schools and universities which leads to the formation of underdeveloped soft skills and emotional intelligence among students, while they are mostly in demand on the modern labour market,
- poor development of learner's self-discipline, self-organization and self-control.

The distinguished drawbacks indicate that online education cannot replace traditional education in the long-term. Modern society needs specialists with developed soft skills and emotional intelligence: able to combine knowledge from different branches of science, to communicate with other people, to manage their emotions, to work both independently and in a team, to possess skills of quick switch from one type of activity to another, to solve non-traditional problems and to think non-standard in difficult situations, to work under pressure and in a stressful situation, able to improve their cultural, scientific and professional level, and, eventually, to realize themselves successfully in life (Melnik et al., 2019).

Meanwhile, modern graduates face the need of constant update of their knowledge, skills and abilities acquired at the university. Hence there is the increased demand for educational services that reflect the concept of lifelong education. The implementation of the latter, in turn, is possible with a hybrid form which combines online and offline education. For traditional educational institutions hybrid education is a modern perspective for the development of the educational services' market in the near future, an opportunity to win and / or strengthen their positions on the EdTech market (Educational technology) and T & D (Training and Development) after the end of the pandemic. On the market of educational services T & D distance learning already has a large share in all training programs which is due to possession of the target segment of consumers. The most striking example of the implementation of hybrid education in higher education is the international project Minerva Schools KGI (USA) for undergraduate and graduate programs, its peculiarity is a combination of a rich life in campus and predominantly online education (Minerva Schools at KGI, 2020). Traditional leaders on the educational market (for example, New York University and a number of other universities) are also successfully experimenting with various forms of online education.

This raises the problem of optimizing the organization of the educational process, combining various forms and methods of teaching taking into account the expanding opportunities of distance learning, as well as international accreditation and cooperation between educational institutions of different countries, positioning and distancing educational products of a traditional educational institution among variety of distance online courses. It seems possible to solve this problem with the help of branding and marketing tools of the university on the market as elements that ensure the adaptability of the subjects of the higher education system as a result of its evolution, acting as an adaptation mechanism that provides the optimization of the functioning of the system in changing environmental conditions, while maintaining the

main quality of the system – the general orientation of the educational process on the connection with life in the preparation of the main factor of the production process – the human one. These problems represent a necessary element in the development of the education system under the changed conditions of the external environment of activity (primarily socio-economic). The accumulated problems and contradictions serve as a tool for the evolutionary transformation of the higher education system in order to bring it in line with the time requirements, while preserving the best qualities accumulated by the system. Thus, the identified problems should be considered as a set of dialectically formed properties of tools for their solution providing homeostasis of the educational system. The named problems in terms of the totality of properties that the educational system needs in order to maintain stability in a changing world and at the same time to develop, make it possible to identify a marketing approach to work on the market which involves identifying the needs of target consumers with the subsequent development of an appropriate educational product and other elements of the marketing mix taking into account the goal and strategy of the educational institution in a highly competitive market environment of activity.

The authors use a marketing analysis tool ‘Brand Wheel’ to clarify and structure the needs and requirements of consumers of educational products (Azaryeva, 2004). Brand attributes describe an educational product as a physical object, this is a specific educational program, additional education program, postgraduate studies, research activities, etc., regarding various areas of training with a specific list of studied disciplines, the schedule of the educational process, used educational technologies and etc. Under general social distancing and quarantine measures the task of classical educational institutions is, on the one hand, to preserve the traditional approach to building the educational process, on the other hand, to understand and accept the fact that the digital component will become a more significant part of the modern education system. Consequently, the new reality of the education system consists in the need to complement the existing educational model with new distance forms of training, building the balance between them and the classical formats (full-time, part-time, evening) to satisfy consumers. Classical educational institutions have to show the ability to provide distance educational services at a high content level. Meanwhile, the benefits and strengths of classical educational institutions lie in the possibility of building versatile communications: even if programming or a foreign language can be learned independently or through online courses, as student surveys show, most of them value the interaction and communication of students with teachers, graduates, employers and other students, there is also a demand for student life and its special atmosphere, traditions and attributes (Na puti k obrazovaniyu buduschego: kluchevye trendy transformatsii obrazovaniya v usloviyakh pandemii, 2020). Under the pandemic face-to-face communication has become a luxury, and people are separated by real and digital boundaries. Traditional educational institutions have the advantage of personal communication. Moreover, education is the value created by the interaction of those who teach and those who study. The identified benefits lead to brand values.

Values are the characteristic of a higher order because at this level there is a description of emotions that consumers experience when they are in contact with the brand. Values also include high scientific potential, fundamental scientific research, traditions of personnel training, reliability of relationships with partners, and etc. Consumers appreciate when a product is an identification of their personality. Personality is a brand characteristic that includes a combination of professional and human qualities which are associated with a graduate of an educational institution and a brand owner. Marketing work of a brand value

creation for an educational institution in the minds of consumers should be aimed, first of all, at building multilateral communication with target audiences and creating favorable conditions for their interaction which will allow to overcome differences and form communities working for the benefit of the educational institution. The key value of the brand of an educational institution should be the formation of a comfortable environment for personal development, capable of flexibly adapting to changing labor market conditions, independently acquiring knowledge, skills and abilities, as well as teaching others, guided by one's own vision of the market situation and one's own values, preparing a graduate with a developed emotional intelligence and soft skills.

Thus, educational institutions face the primary task of creating opportunities for socialization, communication, discussion and dialogue not only between the student and the teacher, but also between students during the class, recognized practitioners in a particular field, contact audiences.

The interaction of the listed four elements of the brand wheel forms its essence (core) representing a concept that incorporates the key arguments for the consumer to choose a specific brand, a specific educational institution. The characteristic determines the perception of the university by the consumers. Under the pandemic and the accelerated digitalization of education it is fundamentally significant that a higher educational institution has always been perceived not only as a set of educational practices and the resulting diploma with a certain set of professional competencies, but also as a set of traditions, culture, atmosphere and students' lifestyle, the right of full participation in student's life. Using marketing communication tools (advertising, public relations, etc.), it is possible to create the desired position of the educational product in the minds of consumers which ultimately will form a certain brand of the educational institution for the consumer. A brand assumes the creation of a certain standard that is the image of a specialist (such characteristics of the Brand Wheel as values and personality) in the minds of consumers. The acquisition of educational services of a specific educational institution means a transition to the world of a brand and assimilation to an image, the acquisition of certain qualities.

## **7. Conclusion**

Thus, the partial digitalization of the educational process by traditional educational institutions and the accelerated rate of innovation in the education system caused by the pandemic will allow to resolve the contradiction which the educational systems faced around the world: on the one hand, the growth of the rate of unemployed graduates in regions due to inconsistencies of the demanded qualifications (for example, over-education of graduates), on the other hand, there is a lack of acquired knowledge and skills for integrating a graduate into regional and global economy and society, a quick response to the changes taking place on the regional labour market (Melnik et al., 2020b). The accelerated pace of innovation will consist in blurring the boundaries between full-time and online education, spreading hybrid education, allowing to combine the advantages of both forms of education; will make the acquisition and improvement of practical skills more accessible thanks to XR-technologies, working with human perception, creating a feeling of maximum presence. Active digitalization with the accelerated pace of introducing innovations into the learning process, the active use of smart technologies will allow to introduce elements of virtual reality into the educational process, to experiment with equipment that is not physically present in the place where the student lives and studies. The growth of these trends will mean an increase in the use of artificial intelligence



systems, BigData technologies, and cloud computing in universities. It is also possible to predict the active development of the system of adaptive, personalized education.

In turn, the trend towards globalization in the education system is becoming a driver of competition among universities for students including foreign ones. This, in turn, leads to the need to improve positions in international rankings. As a result, there is an increase in investments in the attraction of teachers, infrastructure, advertising, public relations and marketing communications in general, these will also contribute to the growth of the bureaucratic apparatus, and as a consequence, the strengthening of the trend towards an increase in the cost of higher education around the world. Traditional educational institutions can solve the problem associated with the increase in the cost of training, for example, through ISA (Income Share Agreement), which allows to link tuition fees to the future income of students (for example, the startup Lambda School (USA)), provides an opportunity to study for free with the condition that graduates will pay 17% of their earnings over two years if they receive more than \$ 50,000 (Lambda School, 2020).

Thus, at the present stage of development of the education system there is the search for the best combination of conservative and expensive traditional education and pragmatic digital education taking into account the considered trends. The pandemic gave rise to changes in technology, techniques and business models, and this can lead to progress which will be beneficial for students, to adaptation and effective strategic development of the education system that takes into account the challenges and prospects of complex socio-economic environment as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

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