

Conference Paper

Educational Migration Management: "Responsive University" Strategy Prospects for Transitive University

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Abstract

This article considers a regional university management model in the light of its uncertain position in the hierarchy of Russian universities and a specific social and economic situation in Russia's regions. Such uncertainty leads to the decline in popularity of regional universities among high school graduates, increasing outgoing migration from the region. University becomes a transit education zone on the way to further educational mobility to central regions with better educational and career prospects. In order to strengthen the position of a university in the region and enhance its attractiveness for strong applicants, the transformation of university management strategies is needed. The concept of Responsive University has been analyzed as one of the solutions. Methodologically, the given research is based upon the concepts of transitive university and self-organization of complex social systems. Within the framework of the Responsive University concept, a regional university is considered as a self-organizing system, able to quickly respond to both individual and societal demands through internal structural changes and transformations of external links. The transit character of a regional university is viewed as a resource for its transitive transformations aimed at meeting the societal and individual needs in the means and conditions for multi-tiered transits. The research examines the features of continuing education as an organizational condition to meet university students' demands for educational and professional transits. The research has also analyzed the changes in a regional university management — from vertical configuration to horizontal one through transforming its organizational structure and involving the teaching staff into decision-making process. These transformations in management of a regional university are expected to increase its popularity among high school graduates, attract educational migrants, provide the regional labour market with qualified staff, and reduce migration outflow from the region.

Keywords: Responsive University, professional and educational transit, educational mobility, university management, transitive university

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1. Introduction

Russia's educational space can be characterized as highly heterogeneous. Due to the policy of the government, Russian universities are arranged into a vertical hierarchy, on top of which are well-established big-city universities enjoying substantial federal financing. Most of region-based universities lose their popularity among high school graduates, who move from their regions to high-status institutions and in the search of job opportunities in big cities. As the researches show [1], only 4 out of 85 Russian regions are attractive for education migrants. The rest are suffering substantial loss in population, partly due to the educational migration of young people [4]. In this context, it is necessary for regional universities to find effective organizational and management models of their transformation aimed at reducing outflow educational migration and stabilizing the demographic situation in Russia's regions.

2. Methodology and Methods

The following concepts were applied: Transitive University as a dynamic transformable system; Responsive University as a concept of university's transitive transformations management; the concept of self-organizing complex systems as a methodology for studying social systems under uncertainty and risks.

3. Results and Discussion

The socio-economic situation contributing to inter-regional migration of young people, educational mobility included, places regional universities under the threat of losing their position in the region [10].

This kind of youth mobility complicates the demographic situation, with a regional university losing its importance for the region.

The studies have shown [1, 6] that potential university applicants seeking to enter big city institutions are motivated by the desire to settle in dynamically developing areas with better career opportunities [3, 4].

Thanks to the developing system of continuing higher education, high school graduates applying for regional universities see them as an intermediary stage on their way to educational and professional transits [1].

For a regional university to retain its position in the region, its transit character should be turned into an advantage and a resource for transformations in its management strategies [9].

When determining the management strategy of transformations, such type of university should look to the demographic and economic situation in the region. The demographic conditions in most Russia's regions are characterized by the growing natural and migration decline in population. There are, however, regions with preferential production and economic conditions. These include: high-tech, strategically valuable production environment enjoying financial and technological support from the federal government; growing demand for highly qualified and quick to learn IT professionals; substantial state financing for the implementation of federal programs and projects, including the "Specialists for Digital Economy" programs.

Due to the specificities of the region, the task of a regional university management consists in transforming a university from transit to transitive state [2]. Such transformation implies constant changes both in the internal structure and external interactions in response to fluctuating individual's educational and professional needs and the regional labour market's demand for qualified staff with the prospects of high salary, professional development, labour and education mobility. Transformations of a regional university will affect the reduction of risks connected with educational migration from the region [1].

The concept of «Responsive University» proves to be the most appealing when formulating the management model of a regional university's transitive transformations [7]. Within the framework of this concept, university is understood as a self-organized entity responsive to external and internal changes, able to quickly react to disturbing impacts by its own transformations. Such university is characterized by a permanent transitive state, when simultaneously an entire range of possible effects of reactive transformations are potentially present.

The specificity of management within the «Responsive University» model lies in its orientation at meeting individual, regional and federal needs in means and conditions for transits at different levels.

At the individual transit level, students more than once change their educational paths throughout the whole period of study. This provides the transition of regional education space from vertically hierarchical to network arrangement.

The social and professional transit level is connected with a worker's repeated changes of his/her professional trajectory during the entire period of working activity.

This insures transition of regional labour market from the state of qualified staff shortage to the state of saturation.

The level of regional transit is connected with the attraction of educational migrants for receiving education in a regional university with prospects of employment at region-based enterprises. Due to this, the regional demographic situation will transit from the state of growing population deficit to the stable reproduction of the population.

Continuity of education in a regional university is regarded as a resource for increasing its popularity among local high school graduates and attraction of educational migrants into the region.

This resource potential of transitivity is insured by increasing variety of educational programs, both vertical (between levels of education) and horizontal (between programs with different content or programs for different forms of education (basic and additional))[5].

The implementation of education continuity, firstly, brings to the formation of individual resources for educational transit to provide 'life-long learning'; secondly, insures continuity of development and renewal of staff for regional innovative high tech industries; thirdly, meets a global trend of inclusion of universities into the network of resource-exchange links. In this case, management impacts in the conditions of transitive regional university are directed at its transformation into a hub which produces and communicates individual and institutional resources for educational transit.

The aim of managing transformations in the structure of continuous education for simultaneous clustering and differentiation of educational programs at different levels of university education has been identified to provide students with conditions for vertical and horizontal educational mobility. Clusters are extracted according to the ratio of mono- and poly-disciplinarity of the education content. Depending on the cluster type, the issues of organizing external interactions and internal transformations of regional university structures are solved, providing conditions for educational transit as a resource of transitivity.

The internal transformation of regional university structures should be aimed at changes in the continuing education management. These could be as follows: forming conglomerates of departments, laboratories and other divisions for the implementation of a specific cluster of educational programs; working-out the system of faculty professional development; creating the centre of continuing education management.

Another resource of transitivity is transforming a regional university's teaching staff quality, their willingness to work under constant change, their commitment to educational outcome related to the students' achievements rather than to formal performance targets.

Faculty members' individual goals should correlate with the goals of transitive transformations of a regional university. For this end, alongside with the vertical system of educational programs management, a horizontal structure of making decisions concerning implementation of educational programs should be created. To achieve this, in addition to departments, or instead of them, other kinds of teachers' associations should appear which would be able to respond quickly to students' changing educational and professional demands. "Responsive membrane" in the decision-making structure of the management system will become a supplementary channel for outer impacts to penetrate into the internal environment of a university and reach the immediate actors of transitive university transformations. This will necessitate changes in administrative requirements made to faculty members as well as to formal job indicators, faculty qualifications, pedagogical and scientific achievements, effectiveness of their professional activity, the form and content of labour stimulation.

Challenges posed by regional economy, industry and labour market are also resources for transitive transformations of a regional university. A university's relationships with these institutions within the framework of the «Responsive University» concept are based on the principles of effective interaction and mutual support [8].

A university, catering to needs of regional institutions, in its turn, seeks their support: local industry and labour market are expected to create conditions for university graduates to enter intraregional secure high-paying careers with good prospects of professional growth [10]. This will make a regional university attractive both for applicants from the local region and from other Russia's regions; the fact that university graduates will have opportunity to find employment in the region will help reduce migration outflow of active, able to work young population.

The staffing needs at high tech enterprises are met through performing a management task of creating joint educational programs for training industry specialists, research and practical developments for generation and implementation of innovative knowledge and technology in integrated research and education centers. Management transformation of external links of a regional university aimed to meet regional demands for professionals has been examined. The expected result of such transformation would be the opening of integrated research-and-education centers in partnership with regionally based enterprises for preparing industry specialists.

Such centre turn into self-learning convergent organizations which reproduce their internal resources and preventively meet recruitment and resource needs of the region's external socio-economic and information environment.

4. Conclusions

The «Responsive University» management concept allowed us considering regional university as a source of conditions for transits at different levels, employing its resources of internal organization and external interaction to satisfy individual and regional demand for the means of transitive transformations.

One such resource is the system of continuing education in a regional university providing students with educational transits. The effectiveness of this resource can be achieved by means of substantive and organizational transformations of the teaching system through differentiation and clustering of educational programmes.

Another resource is the introduction of horizontal configuration of management system which will allow engaging the teaching staff into management decision-making as to the direction of a regional university's transitive transformations. Finally, educational cooperation of a regional university with high tech region-based enterprises will help balance migrational situation in the region, decreasing outflow educational migration and increasing the attractiveness of a regional university for prospective university students.

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