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The Motives for Corporate Identification of the Contemporary Russian University

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Abstract

The paper addresses the problem of reexamining the identification of the contemporary Russian university in connection with its new corporate tendencies. We propose to see in corporatism and corporate culture of the university its value-oriented, spiritually-moral meaning that ensures ethical norms of human behavior in the network society. Seen from this perspective, corporate culture does not contradict the professional university culture, and appears to be necessary for training graduates and professionals who are capable of answering the challenges of the contemporary professional world.

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1. Introduction

The university transformations, which nowadays lead to such prognostications as “the university education is dying” (Slavin), “the decline of the university” (Smith & Webster, 1997; Kwiek, 2001 etc.), “the university is a relic (Drucker, 1994) that is in ruins” (Readings, 1996) etc., necessitate the identification of the university that is relevant to contemporary conditions. Indeed, one cannot fail to note the criticism leveled against the university, which foretells its final decline in the epoch of globalization. The “decline”, of course, concerns the national university model, which was the product of the period of Enlightenment that awoke, according to Wilhelm von Humboldt, the “Nationalcharakter” (Menze, 2003) and national identification. The model was created by the German philosophical thought, the lofty spiritual movement of German idealism, which emerged as an answer to the atmosphere of the

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rigid times, when the pragmatism of the bourgeois class had established itself and when, in connection with that, the question arose about a possible replacement of the university with professional schools. It would have been tantamount to depriving the nation of abilities for theoretical thinking, scientific and intellectual contemplation and education (Fichte, 2000). Immanuel Kant (1992), Johann G. Fichte (2000), Georg W.F. Hegel (1972, pp.417-426, pp.563-574) worked out the foundations of the classical university concept, which was embodied into the educational practice by Wilhelm von Humboldt. The classical university was a great “German story” (Lyotard, 1984) about its Idea – the universalizing reason and specific spiritual atmosphere that rejected any pragmatism, mercantilism and utilitarianism. This tradition was taken over by the Russian university, and it was maintained for a long time since Mikhail Lomonosov, the founder of Moscow State University.

However, the present-day globalization processes bring about profound changes both in the economic and sociocultural configuration of the world. The university is entering the world economic, educational and cultural area, and can no longer be associated as a means of cultural identity of a single nation. Besides, in the world higher education area, the Russian university is encountering problems that it has never come across in the past: competitiveness, survival, and rating measurement among the world universities (Petrova et al., 2014, pp. 245-249). The new conditions in which the university finds itself make some researchers arrive at a conclusion that “the traditional university has completely exhausted itself” (Minenkov) and it must be transformed. But the paper’s problem is not in arguing against or, on the contrary, supporting this thesis. The transformations mentioned above are absolutely necessary. The problem is in comprehending deep-laid foundations which motivate it to solve the problem of its own identification in a new way when adopting the present-day laws of world existence.

2. Scope and methods of research

2.1. *The fundamental contradiction of the contemporary Russian university*

The entry of the Russian university into the world higher education area entails adopting all its laws. Having adopted these laws, it has come across a difficult and contradictory situation. On the one hand, the Russian university emerged and developed throughout its history on the basis of the culture that was defined as the lofty professional culture of the university professor. On the other hand, the university, having found itself in the realities of the world market and the pragmatic nature of intercultural communications, is facing nowadays the necessity of developing one more type of culture: the corporate one. Posing the question about corporation and corporate culture is the prerogative of mainly economic communities. Russian business structures were the first to realize that the contemporaneity demanded from organizations to be competitive, and they turned to forming corporate culture, having set the solution of this problem as a chief condition for the realization of this demand. The tradition started by business circles was passed to other organizations, the classical university among them, and at present, the notion of corporate culture has entered the vocabulary of economics and has become part of the university life. Thus, two types of culture have met in the contemporary university: the professional culture that is oriented to spiritual-humanitarian values, and the corporate one that offers economic values as its basic values.

Corporatism as a fact of culture arrives not just as a demand that is relevant to the present time, but as a sign of the university acquiring essential characteristics of an economic corporation. What are the motives of the corporate, i.e. economic identification of the university? How legitimate is such identification? What relations are formed between the professional and corporate cultures in the contemporary university? All these questions are vital, and the answers to these questions must show possibilities of solving the given problem.

The aim of the paper is to find the motives of the corporate identification of the university and demonstrate the possible character of interrelations between two university identification paradigms – the professional (the professor’s) and the corporate ones. A hypothetic solution of the problem and achieving the aim set in the research consist in substantiating the thesis that the presence of corporate culture in the university in case of its domination over professional culture will lead to a transformation of the university into an economic corporation. Therefore, it becomes necessary to work out conditions, limitations and restrictions that would not allow the given transformation to take place.

The method to be used when arguing in favor of this hypothesis is defined as comparative-historical. We should address the history of the university in order to show its traditions and its essence. The situation of the presence in

the university of two cultures must be validated as problematic not just for the preservation of the classical legacy of the university, which may change over time, but for the preservation of the very essence of the university.

2.2. When the university can become an economic corporation

Close attention to the problem outlined in the title of the paragraph is explained by new economic conditions of the university's existence in the present-day world. Firstly, in contemporary conditions of the "knowledge-based economy" and knowledge society the university becomes an institution where the source of wealth of such a society is formed – "social capital" (Smokotin et al., 2014, pp. 229-232). The notion of social capital has been considered in the works of Pierre Bourdieu (2007), and Robert D. Putnam (2001). Peter F. Drucker holds that the chief social capital today is presented by the knowledge worker (Drucker, 1993), who is in demand not only in the sphere of high abstractions of the theoretical world of science, but in any applied activities. Training such a worker is, certainly, a prerogative, first of all, of the university. The new functions of the university and its new economic role issue a challenge to its traditional classical identification, i.e. focusing on research only in the field of fundamental knowledge. The attention of the university to the problems of forming a corporate culture can be regarded as an answer to this challenge.

Secondly, the arrival of corporate culture in the university is taking place parallel with the contemporary economic identifications of education that link it to the notion of a service or a commodity, and which, correspondingly, consider it as a subject of economic activity. The topic of education as a commodity is discussed in an article by N.V. Ignatov and A.P. Nikitin (2014). The authors express their opinion that a commodity must possess indications of useful properties as a result of the labor put in its production as well as due to its ability to satisfy human needs and because of the presence of a liquidation value of these properties (Ignatov & Nikitin, 2014, p. 82). Education has all the above-mentioned properties, and, therefore, a formal position admits that education may be a commodity which is realized as a service that can be sold and consumed. But Ignatov and Nikitin, following Max Weber, argue that an educational service is essentially different from the service provided by, for example, a barber or a seller of cabbage. The difference is in the value-oriented – normative and ethical - aspect of the educational activity: it is loaded with value-oriented relations that are traditional to this sphere. Education is not only a material but an ideal service, and it is intended for forming and satisfying not material, but spiritual needs. A school teacher and a university professor present a lofty activity of service having at its basis a sacral meaning in preserving and generating culture. It cannot be measured in value and commodity characteristics. In this case, is education a service that can be compared to any other economic service?

Thirdly, the economic characteristics of education contradict its essence and its specific nature as an activity in creating a personality. Education is, first of all, not an accumulation of a certain sum of professional and utilitarian knowledge; neither is it the encyclopedic assimilation of this knowledge. Education is forming a person as his or her coming into being. This aspect of education cannot be measured with purely economic categories; it does not yield to measurement in buying-selling terms. "To have education" ceases to mean "to be educated" (Ignatov, Nikitin, 2014, p.85).

Therefore, the corporate identification of the university as well as seeing it purely from an economic perspective is not relevant to its essence and its destination.

2.3. The university's corporate culture as a phenomenon not limited to economic aspects

However, a definitive conclusion about the impossibility of a corporate identification of the university due to a contradiction between its material-economic orientation and a spiritual essence of the professor's professional culture is not quite adequate. Corporatism is not exclusively a prerogative of economy. Corporate culture contains in itself a possibility, and, in conditions of the present-day network society, also a need for actualizing one's noneconomic trait. A network, the network society, "a space of flows", and their unpredictable, kaleidoscopically uncertain movement and sign character generate a specific subject, a new individuality that departs from traditional personal, spiritual national-cultural characteristics. A network interaction is impersonal. It is organized not as a response to a need for a spiritual communication, but for the sake of complete and effective human self-realization.

Cultural, spiritual, religious and other differences in such an interaction appear to be unimportant; they are leveled out by tolerance as the property which allows individuals to be together in the name of everyone's realization. Network individualism generates "loneliness in the network", which, undoubtedly, acts destructively and is economically ineffective.

That is why a corporate connection becomes necessary. It is needed for a productive interaction of disconnected and alienated people with different interests, values and world outlooks. As for a network, it links individualists, brings people together for the sake of "universal activity, for which all members of a corporation are responsible" (Malyavin, 2005). Network interaction, as it turns out, is measured not only by its economic effectiveness, but a value-oriented significance. The American psychologist, Kenneth Gergen, holds that in the conditions of a network society "a refusal from knowledge as an individual property" is necessary because it is not "value neutral". Gergen pointed out that when people in the entire world become ever more interdependent and when they receive a possibility of mutual destruction (with the help of weapons or pollution), the ideology of individual self-sufficiency threatens the very human existence. In such conditions, it is no longer possible to think about oneself as opposite to "you" and about us as opposite to "them". We speak not about an abstract and secret philosophy, but about a system of beliefs (Gergen, 1995). The subtle psychological remark by Kenneth Gergen finds sociological and philosophical justification. Francis Fukuyama in investigating social capital considers that its economic meaning can find itself only in a situation of trust as a "lubricant" of a concrete group or organization (Fukuyama, 2000, p.129). Cooperation, "lubricant" and "super glue" (Putnam, 2001) present that sacrality without which an economic effectiveness appears to be impossible today. Manuel Castells also writes about a special "spirit of informationalism" as an "ethical foundation" and "cultural dimension" of the corporate community (Castells, 2000, p.39).

Corporatism forms social rather than professional abilities of individuals. It ensures in an objective way a dialogue, respect, benevolence, participation and coordination of positions. All this is defined as tolerance, indulgence, an acceptance of the other in the name of a common aim of the corporation and for ensuring collaboration. It is also needed outside a separate corporation, in the world of continuous "culture generation" (Gusakovskiy, 1997) and the phenomena of multi-and-transculturalism legalized by neoclassical contemporaneity.

The contemporary university is called upon to train intellectual workers capable of collaboration. The value-oriented part of its mission is retained, although it is transformed in accordance with the new challenges of the postindustrial world, which demands a new, corporate, form of identity. Therefore, corporate culture enters the contemporary university in an objective and legitimate way, and it cannot contradict the professor's professional culture.

However, noncontradiction is achieved only in case when it reveals its noneconomic aspect. The corporate culture of the university, of course, has its exterior side – that is what creates its image and contributes to prestige. The exterior side includes specific rituals, an emblem, a logotype etc. But, the second, a deeper and more essential side of corporate culture is presented by its well-established spiritual-moral, legal and ethical norms and regulations, which ensure a professional activity. The values of the second type serve as an internal linchpin of any company, but for the university they become its philosophy that ensures its life as an educational and not economic corporation. In these conditions, the university acquires the main motive in its own corporate identification.

It is important, however, to point out that in working out guidelines on corporate culture in the contemporary Russian university the emphasis is placed on the economic factor. Modernization processes in the educational content are considered separately from the value-oriented characteristics of knowledge, and their leitmotif problem consists in bringing graduate training in line with the employer's needs. Therefore, corporate culture here is seen only in its economic aspect and its culturally oriented meaning is not stated. The theory and practice of setting and solving the question about the university's corporate structure do not coincide.

The main effort in the present-day theoretical developments of the university's corporate culture is directed by philosophy, pedagogics and psychology to the field of modernizing the educational process with the aim of bringing it into relevant interrelations not so much with the employer's needs but rather with the demands of the contemporary world of the profession. This work should be considered within the framework of creating the university as a specific corporation. The specific nature of this work consists in the all-round idea of substantiating its cultural-educational rather than economic status and purpose as well as in promoting the view of the university work as serving society. The university's corporate culture is in organizing this service.

The chief concern in forming a corporate culture of the university, therefore, consists not in creating one's own code, ways, behavioral norms, logotypes and slogans. Rather, it consists in looking for the ways of modernizing educational content, in a search for the theory and methodology of substantiating its contemporary specific nature. Thus, Kenneth Gergen holds that the character of the educational process depends on how we define or conceptualize knowledge (Gergen, 1995). As a methodology of its present-day conceptualization he proposes the position of social constructionism, arguing that the educational process today must orientate students to the ability to produce and reproduce knowledge, which has become the main factor in the development of society as a whole. The contemporary university finds itself in the production of the intellectual capital that is relevant to the present time and in training a new type of the intellectual worker – the knowledge worker, who does not simply have a certain sum of knowledge but can work with it, can construct it, change it, replenish it, and get rid of what has grown outdated. A culture of working with knowledge is the essential, deep-laid content of the university's corporate culture. The lofty mission of the contemporary university consists in training specialists capable of working with knowledge in the conditions of the emerging knowledge society. The university is a reflecting social structure which can observe social processes in a detached way, be aware of their present and future and see its place in them.

3. Conclusion

The question about the motives for corporate identification of the contemporary university has no unambiguous answer in contemporary literature. The logic lying at the base of reasoning here is substantiated by the views of the Idea and Mission of the university that traditionally have not been linked with the phenomenon of corporatism understood in purely economic sense. Even if the first (medieval) universities joined in corporations, such unifications, first of all, upheld traditions of monasteries, from which they emerged; secondly, as they appeared in medieval towns and cities, European universities did not fit into their structure and, therefore, they had to create their own, corporate, culture for “defensive” purposes. The history of universities knows of conflicts between students and town dwellers. Corporate relations in universities developed with the purpose of defense. However, the term “corporation” was not intended only for the university. The university borrowed it from other estate and professional organizations. At that time, there were already workshop corporations, trade guilds and professional art fraternities. The emerging corporate interrelations testified to the refusal of the medieval society from communal relations and the appearance of new norms of life. Those were the norms based on property and they were created in the name of economic prestige of workshops, guilds and fraternities. Such a tradition has established itself in corporations historically. In Russia, the question of corporations, corporate relations and corporate culture has come to the fore in the national economy in the post-Soviet times in connection with the emergence of the market.

Nowadays, the notion of corporatism has come to be associated not only with economic meanings. It has established itself as an expression of objective necessity for the new social order brought forth by the network society for limiting individualistic forms of life.

Here introduce the paper, and put a nomenclature if necessary, in a box with the same font size as the rest of the paper. The paragraphs continue from here and are only separated by headings, subheadings, images and formulae. The section headings are arranged by numbers, bold and 10 pt. Here follows further instructions for authors.

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