

MANAGEMENT IN EDUCATION

**CRISIS MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER
EDUCATION IN RUSSIA**

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ABSTRACT: The article describes approaches to designing crisis management programs for inefficient universities. As a result of research work we present a concept of systematic approach to university crisis management based on implementation of collaborative processes at macro, meso- and micro- levels, different degrees of state participation in crisis management: supervision, recovery, external management, reorganization and liquidation; development of a portfolio of crisis management programs, consisting of standard models for the most probable situations of inefficiency at universities.

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Introduction

The development of higher education in Russia in the post-Soviet period was characterized by the 84% increase in the number of universities and 1.8 times growth in the number of students. Market reforms and deep changes in society as a whole resulted in the outrunning growth of private sector in education. The number of private universities increased by almost 6 times and the number of students in them - by 17 times. These processes have led to changes in the balance of students in public and private universities (FSSS, 2015).

The fast extensive development of higher education and its structure changes due to the rapid development of the private sector require assessment of qualitative changes in the sphere of Russian education. There is a lot of evidence of the negative trends: overproduction of certain types of specialists with a shortage of others, the deterioration of the leading Russian universities' position in international rankings, reduction of the prestige of Russian education among foreign students, general decline in the quality of training of Russian specialists. It should also be noted that there is a gap in training of teachers: university teachers' quantity increased by only

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40% and significantly lags behind the growth rate of the number of students (FSSS, 2015). There is also a sharp increase in the average age of teachers, it is approaching to the critical.

These negative trends led to the fact that such notions as “crisis in education” and “inefficient universities” appeared in legal documents, scientific and methodological literature on higher education management. Today some ways out of crisis by introducing new higher education reform models, new methods of management and control in education are proposed and tested (MES RF, 2013; Burkovskaja and Sergeeva, 2012, pp.57-58; Arakeljan, 2012).

At the same time several problems remain unexamined. In particular, there is Nuclear understanding of how to define the crisis in relation to higher education, what is effective and ineffective university, how to carry out systematic monitoring of the universities’ performance and how to take into account the monitoring results. The pendency of these problems, the lack of research in the field of crisis management programs of inefficient universities defined a range of issues requiring urgent study. Therefore our main research goals include the following: specification of terminology and formation of the conceptual apparatus of the study; designing the concept of an inefficient university management programs and programs for increasing the overall higher education efficiency.

Interpretation of some key concepts in the field of designing crisis management programs in higher education

Crisis and crisis situations in education

The crisis in the education system *at the macro-level* can have the following attributes: high proportion of unemployment among graduates, lower wages of academic staff in public universities compared to the average wage in the country and region, high percentage of academic staff in the oldest age group, the lack of inflow of young teachers, loss of competitiveness of the national education system in comparison with other countries, low position and (or) a steady decline in position of universities in international rankings, the absence or low proportion of innovative research in universities.

Recovery from the crisis can occur relatively quickly if there is sufficient margin of stability of the economy and understanding of the strategic importance of education for the development of a country. However, there is another option, when the crisis develops into a long depression.

Using the terminology of the Balanced Scorecard concept (Kaplan and Norton, 2003), we can determine that *the crisis in a particular University* may be caused by following reasons: changes in the demand for educational services of the university or its specific educational programs, while the demand for the same services in other universities remains stable (this is so called “customer base”); functioning of non-professional management team which led to destruction of internal business processes; lack of highly qualified academic staff; financial reasons.

The deepest point of the crisis in a university can be characterized by: shortage of students in comparison with state assignment (in public universities), steady decline in the number of students for several years, while maintaining a high demand for educational services in other universities, inability to provide educational process and conduct research because of the lack of qualified academic staff and equipment

From our point of view it is important to distinguish the terms “*crisis*” and “*crisis situation*”. Specific features of a crisis situation are locality, structural homogeneity (appears in the isolated area or in a limited number of spheres), suddenness while the

crisis develops relatively slowly and has a multi-component structure. For example, a crisis situation in a university can manifest itself in the refusal of companies to hire graduates, in large number of students with low passing grade of Russian Unified State Exam, in low average score of students in the final exams, lack of classrooms and equipment, etc. In contrast to crisis situation full-scale crisis usually involves failures of several directions at once over several terms.

Crisis management may not be successful if we mix the terms “crisis” and “crisis situation” - we may select incorrect type of measures. There can be several types of errors:

1. University's management goes on risky, expensive strategic measures corresponding to full-scale crisis while in reality short-term measures are sufficient
2. There is a need for strategic reorganization in crisis, while university's management conducts operational reorganization, affecting only separate symptoms of the crisis in the university. In that case short-term emergency measures can only deepen the crisis.

Crisis management

We regard crisis management in the broad sense and this approach allows us to consider not only measures to manage the crisis but also the design and implementation of crisis warning and prevention steps by series of soft corrective measures capable to stabilize the situation.

Most universities as well as other organizations pass through the phases of start-up, growth, stability, decline, and possibly crisis. From our point of view each phase of the life cycle is characterized by the dominant direction of crisis management. For example the main goal of crisis management during the phase of start-up is to determine correctly its area of specialty or its own “niche”. The phase of start-up supposes: verifying of the possibility and feasibility to conduct educational activities in selected areas, in a specific region, e.g. learning the demand on education market; evaluation of financial, material, human resources; collection of documents for the registration and licensing educational activities; recruiting students, academic staff, establishing partnerships, looking for funding sources, etc.

Underestimation of any of these areas can prevent a university to go to the phase of growth; can lead to the development of crisis, reorganization or liquidation of the university. Thus, during the first phase of life cycle the main direction of universities' crisis management is to overcome the “disease of start-up”, that usually appears in underestimation of emerging issues, reassessing its own capabilities, impossibility to make decisions under uncertainty and risky circumstances, revise plans in changing environment.

The phase of growth in life cycle of an university includes: increase of number of students and educational programs; expansion of R & D; access to the international arena; increase of the demand for university's graduates in the labor market.

In the phase of growth the main goal of a university's crisis management is to provide sustainable development. It should be noted that currently there is a huge variation in the interpretation of the concept of sustainable development. The most common definition belongs to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED): “Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (IISD, 2015).

Taking into consideration that the WCED definition includes two key concepts: the concept of needs and the idea of limitations we can define the essence of *sustainable*

development in education as satisfaction of needs of the state, society and individuals in the field of education and creation of conditions for future generations to receive educational services taking into account the limitations imposed by the economy and society.

In relation to a particular university sustainable development can be viewed as maintaining and growth of the number of undergraduate, graduate, postgraduate students, improvement of educational and research programs nowadays without reduction of the quality of the main activities of the university in the future. The quality can be measured by the share of Russian and foreign students with a high score on the learning outcomes, employed in their field in accordance with the current and long-term needs of the country's economy, its social, political, cultural goals. Outward sign of sustainable development of a university can be a continuous improvement of the position in universities' rankings.

The necessity to clarify the concept of sustainable development of a university arises because in practice there may be situations in which the high enrollment of students at first glance shows the growth, but it may be accompanied by a shortage of highly qualified academic staff, lack of equipment and lead to a decrease in the quality of education and in financial difficulties. Such type of growth is contrary to the notion "sustainable". At the same time conservative universities with the slow growth rates may remain behind their more vigorous competitors and are also candidates for inefficiency and unsustainable growth.

Thus, the goal of crisis management in the phase of growth is to ensure sustainable growth rate. For fast-growing universities it is crucial to be able to determine when to cut the growth to remain sustainable. For universities with negative or slow-growing rates it is important to be able to make strategic decisions about further development.

The so-called "effective universities" are in the phase of *stability*. The phase of stability should contain the following components of crisis management: monitoring of key processes and performance quality of universities; evaluation of provided educational services, results of research, international activities, organizational management system, legality of all processes occurring in a university; forecast of changes in the external and internal environment; design and implementation of a set of preventive measures which provide margin of safety, risk reduction, construction of organizational behavior standard models for the deteriorating situation.

In the phase of *decline* it is important: to keep the decline in the permissible range for a particular university; to conduct an operational restructuring. Its goal is to shorten the duration of the recession, eliminate failures notable to external environment, reduce the impact of internal factors which prevent the growth; to identify areas of growth for the future.

According to the currently accepted Russian classification universities at this stage are "in need of reorganization" (according to the previous classification - universities with "signs of inefficiency")¹.

Management directly *in the crisis phase* involves strategic restructuring (reorganization), i.e. complete reformation, providing a margin of safety for a long period. As a rule, in the educational sphere strategic reorganization is carried out with assistance and under state control.

¹ The term was excluded by the decision of the Interdepartmental Commission for monitoring the effectiveness of universities 18 February, 2014.

The basis for the strategic reorganization of ineffective universities can be the answers to the following questions: what kind of activities of this university is the most promising; whether it is reasonable to diversify the university's activities or, alternatively, to provide a more narrow specialization in particular areas; whether it is rational to merge the university to another institution, and what new opportunities this option will provide; whether it makes sense to close this university.

Thus, from our point of view the crisis management is not an exit-strategy from the crisis, it is *a model to respond to negative changes*. Crisis management in the broad sense assumes that in the crisis phase active management prevails, while in the other phases of the cycle it is planned or reactive management. So all universities, whether having "signs of inefficiency" or not, should have integrated crisis management programs. The design of crisis measures in each case must be preceded by the definition and systematization of factors affecting the efficiency of universities. Factors can be divided into two categories: external factors for all universities and factors associated with a particular university. We assume that different types of external factors associated with changes in the environment can lead to crises. These objective factors include the following: underfunding of science and education sphere; decline of the prestige of academic profession; low real incomes in the country and the inability of parents to support students until they receive higher education, the necessity to integrate learning and part-time employment for students; so on. Internal factors may be associated with university management failure, corruption component, etc.

This classification allows us to predict the development of the situation in a first approximation. To overcome the objective causes of the crisis it may be necessary to change government priorities. As a rule it takes relatively long time and requires additional investments. Internal factors can be overcome by changing the university management, reorganization, etc.

The efficiency of universities

Despite the fact that the notions "efficient" and "inefficient" university are widely used, the definition of these terms in legal documents is not available, it is substituted by a set of specific indicators (MES RF, 2013). But the other approach is methodically correct: the definition of universities' performance indicators should be based on the fundamental definition of the university efficiency. The importance of this approach stems from the fact that there is no generally accepted definition of efficiency not only in education but also in business management as a whole. The efficiency can manifest itself in productivity, profitability, social significance, effectiveness, innovation activity, etc. (RG, 2004; Romanov and Jarskaya-Smirnova, 2007, p.41). However, the most scientific sources interpret efficiency as the comparison of the results of operations and the cost of its implementation.

In Russian regulations the idea of comparing the costs and benefits of university's performance is missing. In fact "efficiency" is usually understood as a generalized characteristic of the quality of university's activities, the indicator of success. Such approach allows different interpretations of the term and does not help to develop evaluation criteria for implementation of management actions.

In our opinion, the definition of "efficient university" should take into account the economic, social, cultural, scientific, educational efficiency. In this regard, we propose the following definition: *an efficient university is the university that successfully performs its basic functions: educational, cultural, research, social, economic, knowledge transfer and commercialization while using the least amount of financial, material, human resources.*

In this connection it is necessary to divide the concept of effectiveness and efficiency of university management. From our point of view, the criteria used for government monitoring (assessment of educational activities of university on applicants' passing grade of Russian Unified State Exam, research activities - in terms of R&D per employee, international activities - on the share of foreign students, and others (MES RF, 2013)) make it possible to assess the effectiveness mainly, but not the efficiency of university. For efficiency evaluation indicators of human, financial and material resources must be taken into consideration.

The discussed key concepts are the basis for designing integrated programs of crisis management and reformation of inefficient universities.

Roadmap for designing integrated programs of crisis management and reformation of inefficient universities

The development of methodology of system approach allows us to allocate its modern basic principles: integrity, hierarchy, structural properties, multiplicity (Williamson, 1995; Druker, 2012; Parsons, 1998). With regard to higher education system crisis management affects the following elements:

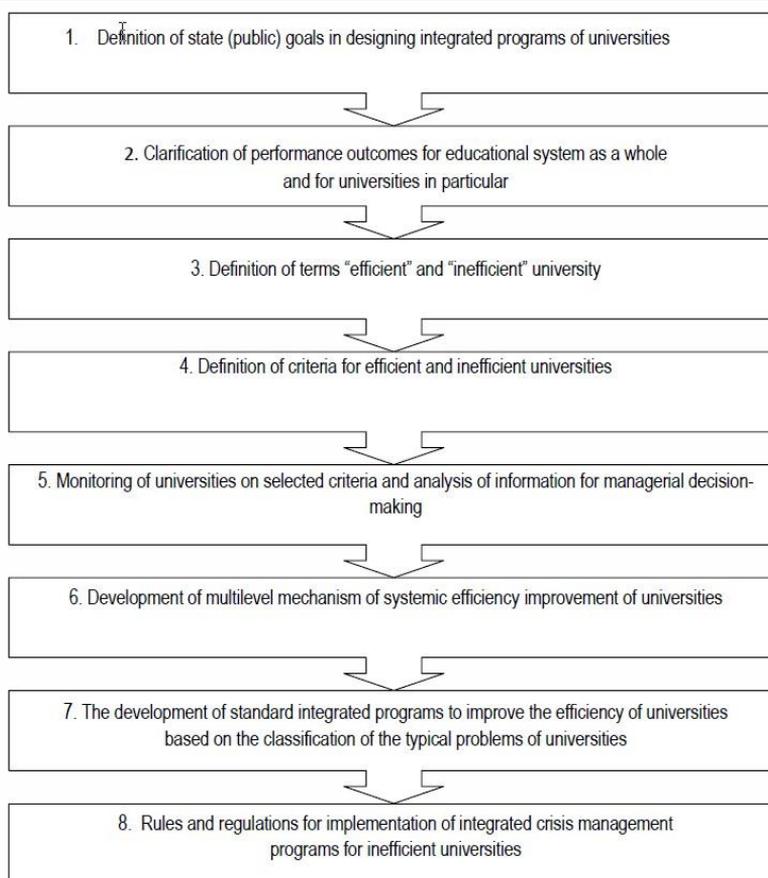
- Universities that require evaluation of the efficiency and possibly correction of managerial actions
- Applicants (potential consumers of educational services)
- Students (consumers of educational services in the time period from 1 to 6 years)
- Graduates
- Labor market (the companies that employ graduates, employment agencies)
- Academic staff, administration of the universities
- Content of education (educational standards, curricula, programs)
- Training facilities - equipment, educational and information resources, etc.
- Legislative and executive authorities at all levels, international organizations.

The content of a systematic approach to the management of inefficient universities can be specified as follows:

- Determination of significance of the university in the region, the country, the world, among the universities of similar specialization (determination is based on ratings, such indicators as share of graduates in the labor market, the proportion of students enrolled in comparison with other universities in the region, etc.)
- Reviewing the structure of the university (faculties, research laboratories, administrative and economic arrangement, etc), functions of units in the system, evaluation of the success of each division - both educational and concomitant, taking into account the positive or negative synergy of their interaction
- Assessment of conformity of university's activities to the federal and regional legal regulating documents, as well as to normative documents of the university itself
- Identification of the external factors that affect the success of the university (competition level, availability of similar educational services in the region, demographic decline, falling living standards, low demand in the labor market, underfunding, etc.) And internal factors: current and strategic management failures, corruption, low quality of teaching, lack of diversification of activities, outdated equipment, low business activity in the development of partnerships, etc.
- Identification of the specific features of the university compared with other universities and other educational programs in the region, as well as common features that allow to apply typical management models to the university
- Definition of management goals for the inefficient university: recovery through self-empowerment, restructuring through merger with another institution, liquidation

- Determination of specific management tasks for the federal and regional legislative and executive authorities, for the particular university in accordance with the goals of inefficient university's management
- Definition of performance criteria for management goals and tasks implementation at each level of the hierarchy
- Development of mechanisms for the implementation of administrative goals at federal and regional level (legal regulation, financial support, systematic measures for academic staff training, standard models of selective measures for organizational support of universities in different situations), and for a particular inefficient university (changing ineffective management team, designing educational, scientific and practical activities based on the identification and extension of competitive advantages of this university, establishing partnerships, etc.)
- Creation of a multi-component system-based mechanism to achieve goals of inefficient university's management to improve the performance of russian education which involves managerial instruments of different levels of the hierarchy (federal, regional, within particular university).

FIGURE 1. THE STAGES OF DESIGNING INTEGRATED PROGRAMS OF CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND REFORMATION OF INEFFICIENT UNIVERSITIES



The main goal of a systematic approach of inefficient universities' management is to establish links between all the above mentioned elements of the system, adjusting the relationship between them and taking into account past failures of functioning. This is the basis for balanced improvement of the key activities of universities, bringing the performance indicators up to the benchmarks by a consistent set of interconnected measures within the competence of each level of management (macro-, meso-, micro-).

The importance of balanced improvement of key indicators may be explained by the fact that success in one area does not compensate failures in others and a university may stay inefficient. The need for a package of measures within the competence of each level of management occurs due to the fact that a university's efforts alone without the help of meso- and macro levels (organizational, informational, financial) are not enough to overcome the crisis. On the other hand, the support of meso- and macro levels may be ineffective with the university's inactivity.

Design of all types of crisis management integrated programs should contain a sequence of steps, starting with the specification of public goals in the field of higher education to the definition of the rules of implementing programs and monitoring their implementation - steps, timelines, responsibility for the failure, etc. (Figure 1).

Let us consider the content of the main stages.

Stage 1

Definition of state (public) goals in designing integrated programs of universities' efficiency improvement should be carried out by learning the trends of labor market needs in both short and long term, analysis of statistics for recent graduates and their future professional activities, clarifying the potential of scientific activities of universities, evaluation the promotion opportunities for Russian universities in the world market of educational services and possibilities for improving their material and technical base.

Stage 2

To clarify the outcome of crisis management programs' implementation we must look for information about the demand for particular specialists and their quantity (see point 1). Currently, despite the fact that the Education Act establishes the procedure for adjusting the plan for quantity of students at the expense of national budget (FL, 2012, Article 100), these figures have little to do with the real demand for specialists of a particular profession. From our point of view, independent outsourcing companies should perform the forecasting of needs for specialists, not structure of the Ministry of Education as it is at now. Such approach should increase the objectivity and independency of forecasts.

Stages 3-5

Program of inefficient universities' reform should contain a clear definition of efficiency (see above) and a set of indicators to assess the required level of efficiency of the system. The programs should include not only the instruments for improving efficiency in areas for which figures were below the thresholds of monitoring, they should also outline "efficient" zone for the future. Every university must have a clear vision of the future, which should be reflected in its crisis management program. In addition we'll emphasize several important points.

- a. It is generally accepted that efficient university should conduct research. On the other hand, scientists are not always good lecturers, and the opportunities of

lecturers to conduct scientific work are limited by their current responsibilities. Ambiguous effect of overuse of the research activities in universities is supported by foreign experience: in some European countries, where the functions of lecturing and research have traditionally been combined within the university, now is bucking the trend (Kuzminykh, 2012, pp.18-19). The development of all types of university activities must be balanced with their key function - education. This balance can be achieved by giving different weight coefficients to various activities, and weight coefficients may depend upon the type of university (basic university, art school, etc.). Possibly weights will be able to defuse the internal conflict between different criteria.

- b. Performance criteria system, used in public monitoring, should be coordinated with indicators of the world's leading ratings because there is a goal for Russia to integrate into the global system of educational services. At present the performance indicators used to assess and compare the Russian universities stands behind the system used in developed countries: the disclosure of areas of assessment is not so deep and broad. On the other hand, it should be noted that the monitoring indicators as part of programs of inefficient universities' reformation has its own specific tasks aimed at identifying violations and deviations from the norm: for example, to identify not active universities. It is known that more than 100 universities in Russia have not provided their data and it is possible that they simply do not exist (Nikonov, 2013).
- c. The thresholds for determining the efficiency of universities is advisable to differentiate depending on the duration of the functioning of university. This will allow to support start-ups in the field of education and at the same time pay more attention to the problems of long-established universities.
- d. There should be established minimum thresholds on all parameters of the state monitoring to avoid recognition of the efficiency of universities in case of complete absence of activity on any of the criteria. The practice of monitoring shows that a university may be recognized as efficient if it reaches the thresholds for three indicators, while for the remaining indicators university may have zero values - the evidence of complete absence of this type of activity.

Stage 6

As it was shown above system approach in designing crisis management and reformation programs for inefficient universities involves the development of a set of interrelated processes at all levels. At the macro-level it is advisable: to define state goals in the field of education both in the short and long term, to establish a legal system for regulating educational activities, to clarify the concept of "efficient university", to formulate the criteria and performance indicators for universities' evaluation.

Programs aiming at turning inefficient university into efficient must include the possibility of different types of state involvement in the reform process of a particular university¹:

- *Supervision*. It supposes identification of the causes for the university's inefficiency and designing a system of measures to increase university's efficiency. The system of measures can be based on the standard models designed for all universities
- *Recovery*. It is carried out mainly by the University itself but under the control of a crisis manager appointed by the state

¹ Title of the procedures is borrowed from Russian Federal Law on Insolvency (Bankruptcy). However, we do not mean a direct analogy with the procedures of bankruptcy.

- *External Administration* to restore performance parameters
- *Reorganization and liquidation* of a university as an independent institution.

Procedures performed in accordance with the State Programs in education should be complemented with meso-level efforts - regional crisis management. It should be aimed at enabling the use of favorable local opportunities:

- Business can provide targeted funding for education, guarantee of employment, internships, part-time employment for students, so on;
- Regional administration can provide informational and other types of support, creation of new vacancies, career guidance and promotional activities to increase the motivation of graduates to stay in the region, provision of living space for graduates, r&d grants, etc.
- Universities can ensure transfer of knowledge and technologies by initiating innovative research, creating business incubators, so on. This opportunity gives, in particular, the Education Act: it provides the possibility for universities to establish commercial companies and economic partnerships, whose activity consists in practical implementation of results of intellectual activity.

Thus, the close relationship between universities, regional authorities and business improves the efficiency and performance indicators of universities, largely meets the needs of a particular region, saves budget due to additional financial capacity of regional business, allows to strengthen local capacities to overcome inefficiency of concrete higher education institution in the region and the regional system of higher education as a whole.

At the micro-level the key goal of the program should be integrated university's management in the main areas: educational activities, research activities, international activities, financial and economic activities, infrastructure, employment, law.

Stage 7

Integrated crisis management university program is better to be built on the basis of standard models for the most likely situations of inefficiency in different areas of university's activity: education, research, international activities, financial and economic activities, infrastructure and employment of graduates.

These models may vary depending on: the level of inefficiency - for universities requiring "cosmetic" procedures or strategic reorganization; factors contributing to the deterioration of activity (exogenous / endogenous, operational, financial, etc.); the ability of carrying out the recovery procedures on their own or with the assistance of the state.

The literature describes a number of university management models with elements of system approach (Dorri, Yarmohammadian, and Ali Nadi, 2012). However, currently there is Nounified classification of university's business processes, Nocommon understanding on what value drivers should be allocated in the first place. These factors make design of standard programs very difficult. In this regard, while designing models of integrated programs to improve university's efficiency it is advisable to confine the general concept of the balanced scorecard (BSC), integrated with value-based management (VBM) (Bobyleva, 2014, p.74).

Such approach allows:

- Setting the vector for determination of the university's short-term and long-term goals and the mechanisms to achieve them, the tools for transformation goals of the university in specific tasks and indicators

- Linking reporting data for stakeholders with internal characteristics of the most important educational, research, and other processes
- Considering all key indicators as a measure of the university's value and as the contribution of various processes in value.

At the same time such model gives the freedom to take into account the university's specific features and its external environment, namely: allows to develop its own classification of educational, managerial, research processes; provides an opportunity to highlight the unique success factors, gives a possibility to add the recommended by higher authorities some specific indicators for monitoring and evaluation, forecasting trends, identifying threats at an early stage, increasing intrinsic motivation to reformation for improving efficiency.

Stage 8

Rules and regulations for implementation of integrated crisis management programs for inefficient universities involve the determination of:

- Universities' reform procedures for each management level (macro-, meso-, micro)
- Timing of reform
- Stages of reform and their duration
- Requirements for the intermediate results for the selected stages and the final result
- An official who should be responsible for compliance with regulations in general, and officials responsible for the reform at every level of management
- Set of measures being taken by the officials at detecting violations during supervision of program implementation, the procedures for imposing disciplinary sanctions
- List of exceptions - conditions under which there may be deviations from sequence of steps or violation of terms and brief description of the actions in these cases.

In an aggregated form the main stages of designing integrated crisis management and reformation programs for universities are as follows:

- Identification of key indicators (value drivers) of the university. A portion of indicators is set by the government, second portion can be set by regional authorities where the institution is located, the third portion is set by the university itself
- Establishing intervals of possible changes in performance indicators without negative consequences
- Designing a set of measures that could bring the system back into balance. The measures depend on the type of problems (educational, scientific, international activities, employment) and should be undertaken both by the university and the state
- Working out rules and regulations to implement concrete measures and to control its compliance.

It should be emphasized that measures taken by the state will not succeed if the employees of the university are not motivated to reformation, do not agree with its concept, are not ready to implement it. On the other hand, the efforts of university itself cannot give a result, if the causes of inefficiency are external, for example, they are connected with underfunding, despite the demand for graduates at labor market. It should also be emphasized that very often one tries to explain university's inefficiency by external factors - underfunding, lack of government attention to the

university's problems, etc. However, in practice the external and internal causes are usually closely interrelated: the low level of management and the absence of a timely response to the first signs of failure often lead to the escalation of the crisis.

Conclusion

Clarification of basic notions currently used in the university's management allowed us to formulate the concept of a systematic approach to crisis management and reformation of inefficient universities. It is shown in the article that:

- A systematic approach to university's crisis management is based on the design and implementation of collaborative processes at the macro-, meso- and micro-levels, aimed to achieve demanded values of indicators to ensure sustainable development of a university
- State participation may contain several procedures: supervision, recovery, external management, reorganization and liquidation of a university as an independent institution.

In general, the distribution of crisis management tasks among the management levels, the selection of stages of designing integrated crisis management programs for universities allows to develop a portfolio of crisis management programs, consisting of standard models for the most probable situations of inefficiency. Models may vary depending on the level of inefficiency, factors that influenced the deterioration of activity, phase of development of a university, the possibility of recovery procedures on its own or with the assistance of the state.

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