

CDSSES 2020**IV International Scientific Conference "Competitiveness and the development of socio-economic systems" dedicated to the memory of Alexander Tatarkin****COMPETITIVENESS OF UNIVERSITIES AS A PRIORITY OF
RUSSIAN STATE POLICY**

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Abstract

The introduction of competition in higher education is due to high rates of modern changes, which include the need for rapid and effective adaptation to the changing requirements of the labour market; to the compliance with the requirements of science and technology; to the digitalization of education; to the constant updating and development of human capital. The purpose of this research is to analyze the relationship between state policy in higher education and increase the competitiveness of the Ural Federal University. Methods of collecting empirical data (analysis of documents); method of secondary data analysis of sociological research on the problems of Russian higher education; analysis of educational statistics of higher education; data analysis monitoring the effectiveness of Russian universities, and reports of the results of performances of the Ural Federal University were used in this study. The results are: the sense of competition and competitiveness in higher education, namely the quality of education, learning technologies and teaching methods, which presents the spectra of science is identified; the necessity of the improvement of the material base and infrastructure of universities is explained; the directions of improving the competitiveness of Russian universities and the legal framework of the implementation of state policy in the higher education of the Russian Federation are found.

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1. Introduction

The concept of "competitiveness" is traditionally a market characteristic. Only recently, it has become one of the main principles of the existence of universities in Russia. Consumers of educational services tend to select the best University based on such criteria as the prestige and reputation of the higher school, its information technology equipment, the quality of education provided, the availability of interest and demand of some specialties in the labor market. Such a phenomenon as competition in higher education can be considered an incentive for improving and developing a modern University. However, competition can also be seen as a negative factor. Entering into a competitive struggle, initially, all educational organizations have different starting opportunities. This gap may lead to monopolizing the education market, some universities' disappearance that is not ready to participate in the competition due to technical and financial problems.

Educational services are essential for achieving each person's personal goals and objectives, economic development, and social welfare. In the era of scientific and technological progress, it is crucial to use the accumulated information and acquire new knowledge effectively, to improve the quality of human capital, thereby increasing the need to develop the higher education system and provide quality educational services. An educational service is not only an activity but also a product that requires promotion in the market. The educational services market refers to the interaction of the demand of individuals, organizations, and the state for the desired service in higher education with the supply provided by various educational organizations (Fursik, 2013; Grudzinsky & Chuprunov, 2016; Korchagova, 2007).

Public policy can be considered effective if it meets public needs (Baranova, 2016). Even Niccolò Machiavelli, an Italian political figure and thinker who lived in the XVI century, expressed the idea that the best state was the one whose subjects had fun and prosper. However, the state should not satisfy all the whims of the people, but it should monitor its citizens' current needs and strive to ensure their well-being and development (Kuznetsov, 2019). One of these needs of society is to receive higher education by its citizens.

At present, close links between public administration and management in the public and commercial environment are axioms. The new state management seeks to ensure budget accountability; to change the process of providing services through a quasi-market (an artificially created mechanism that ensures the reform of the social sector through competition between different organizations for state funding) (Baranov, 2012).

Universities are competing for applicants, receiving government funding and financial assistance from employers to train highly qualified teachers, scientists, and specialists. Hence, the main goal of the University is to identify the leading position in the market of educational services through the use of a specific strategy, identified through the application of new state management, increasing the quality of education, improving the training of specialists and providing innovative educational infrastructure, as well as the possibility of fully meeting the needs of customers in educational services. Other sources are focused on the prospects and development of teachers. However, they are considered in the aspect of marketing training in higher education, which is due to the digitalization of education and the economy,

as well as the problem of the quality of higher education (Gilmore et al., 2016; Krulikovskiy & Shor, 2019; Sizikova et al., 2019).

2. Problem Statement

In our opinion, one of the most urgent problems in improving the competitiveness of Russian universities as a priority area of state policy in the higher education system is to identify modern trends in it and reflect them in the decisions of state authorities. This problem is relevant because the requirements for the quality of educational services at universities have increased. Currently, it is becoming obvious that it is necessary to study the directions of state policy in higher education, which is due to several reasons.

These trends reflect the existing challenges and contradictions:

at the scientific and public level: there is a contradiction between the increased demands on the quality of higher education from civil society and the existing gaps in modern science in the field of studying the competitiveness of Russian universities and identifying current trends and challenges in this area;

at the socio-public level: there is a contradiction between the state's need for quality management of universities and the neglect in modern scientific works in the field of theory and practice of considering the effectiveness and efficiency of decisions made by public authorities in higher education;

at the scientific and methodological level: there is a contradiction between the tendency to focus research on complexity in the study of the competitiveness of Russian universities and the lack of scientifically based methodological support for the implementation of state policy in higher education, taking into account modern features and challenges in the market of educational services.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the article is the study of state policy and features in the field of increasing the competitiveness of Russian universities as a priority direction of state policy in higher education on the example of the Ural Federal University. The study takes into account the socio-political aspect and well-known scientific works in this area. The motivation for addressing this topic was the practical observation of modern citizens who enter universities and receive educational services there.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to analyze the relationship between state policy in higher education and increasing the competitiveness of the Ural Federal University (UrFU). This purpose is realized by solving the following research tasks:

1. to analyze measures for improving the competitiveness of Russian universities based on the study of regulatory documents and target programs.
2. to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of the program for improving the competitiveness of the Ural Federal University (UrFU).

5. Research Methods

When implementing research tasks, the following methods of collecting empirical information were used:

method of secondary analysis of data from sociological research on the problems of Russian higher education;

analysis of higher school educational statistics;

analysis of data on monitoring the effectiveness of Russian universities, reports on the results of the Ural Federal University.

6. Findings

Currently, the state seeks to embark on an innovative development path that can lead to progressive economic growth, scientific and technological progress, and as a result, this path can lead the country to the leaders of the world economic and political community (Dementsura, 2017; Safiullin & Safiullin, 2012). The important role of education in the modern world and its connection with the economy is described in the directive of the Government of the Russian Federation No 1662-r of November 17, 2008 Concept of long-term socio-economic development of the Russian Federation until 2020, where the modernization of the education system, which is the basis for economic growth and social development of society in Russia was called as the necessary condition for the formation of an innovative economy. This leads to the conclusion that the competition in education has become a key element of the global competition, which requires the University to constantly update the technological and information environment, accelerate the development of innovations, improve the material base, and quickly adapt to the current needs of society. The state helps universities implement these requirements (Olshevskaya & Rezer, 2018; Rezer & Olshevskaya, 2019). Figure 1 shows Ural Federal University, it is one of the leaders in the Russian higher education system.



Figure 1. Ural Federal University

At the beginning of the XXI century, the integration of traditions and innovations is observed in society and education, which also affects the competitiveness of universities (Egorychev et al., 2016). When carrying out state policy in education, one of the main normative legal acts is the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation No 599 of May 07, 2012, On measures to implement the state policy in the field of education and science, and the Government Decree No 211 of March 16, 2013 On measures of government support for leading Russian universities to increase their competitiveness among the world's leading research and education centres. On the basis of these normative legal acts, as well as on the basis of competition documentation for an open competition to provide state support for leading universities of the Russian Federation to increase their competitiveness among the world's leading research and educational centers, the program for improving the competitiveness of the Ural Federal University named after the first President of Russia Yeltsin was developed. UrFU is the largest University in the Urals and one of the largest universities in the Russian Federation, a leading research and educational center in the Sverdlovsk region (Bolgova et al., 2016).

In a dynamic scientific and technical progress one of the indicators of competitiveness of the University is to check the competence of higher school teachers, which can be evaluated by the number of scientific publications, demonstrating their involvement in the actual research environment at the international level. Using the example of the Scopus bibliographic and abstract database and the Web of Science search platform, we compared the indicators of the number of publications of UrFU teachers (Table 1).

Table 1. Performance of UrFU according to the number of publications in international journals

Indicator	2018 plan	2018 real	2019 plan	2019 real
Number of Web of Science publications per 1 person	2,4	3,5	3,1	3,6
Number of Scopus publications per 1 person	4,1	4,0	5,1	3,9

UrFU is pursuing the idea of creating a center of excellence in the field of educational technologies that would ensure the improvement of e-learning, the creation of advanced technologies, involving the best teams of the University and other universities and businesses in the creation of electronic courses.

To designate UrFU as a leader of scientific, educational and innovation center, it is necessary to fulfill a number of tasks specified in the University's mission: increasing competitiveness and ensuring reindustrialization, building human and scientific and technical potential, balanced renewal of traditional and development of post-industrial sectors of the Russian economy, primarily in the Urals.

According to the results of monitoring the performance of higher education institutions in 2017, the main information and computing center of Russia, UrFU is the only educational organization in the Sverdlovsk region that provides almost the entire range of scientific branches. Due to the choice of various educational directions, the UrFU's student is able to implement fully his educational skills,

acquire the necessary and additional competencies, and become a successful specialist in the labor market. This is proved by a significant percentage of graduates (80 %) who were employed during the calendar year following the year of graduation, in the total number of graduates of an educational organization who studied in the main educational programs of higher education.

In UrFU, there is an increase in positions in international rankings for most of the main indicators, a significant increase in the research reputation of the University. Koksharov, who is the Rector of UrFU, has explained this growth by the participation of the University in the State Project 5 – 100, receiving funds from the state budget allocated for the program, which was aimed at the real development of the academic environment of the University, bringing socially useful results of the University as a whole (Demtzura, 2017; Koksharov, 2018; Zabaylovich, 2019).

7. Conclusion

As a result of the research, we came to the following conclusions:

UrFU's position among Russian universities in the World University Rankings – 2020, which is compiled by the British magazine Times Higher Education (THE), has improved, which allowed the University to be in the group of 1000+ with a total number of participants (1400).

In the QS World University Ranking 2020, the University rapidly rose from 412 to 364 places. Such a successful promotion in the rankings indicates the program's effectiveness to improve competitiveness implemented by UrFU and the state support provided to the University following the state policy. Therefore, the University's educational environment is being improved, and the number of international students and scientists attracted by the University from other countries has increased. These achievements of the University determine its visibility and significance in the international educational arena, and at the same time indicate the high competitiveness of the University in the market of educational services in the higher education system in Russia and abroad.

UrFU activities' success depends not only on the implementation of state policy in the higher education system but also on the correct and accurate formulation of the strategic goals set and the planned "Road Map" by the University itself. Following the plan for increasing competitiveness, UrFU improves the quality of education and teaching methods, develops the material base and infrastructure, and confirms a leading University in the Sverdlovsk region and Russia.

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The validity and reliability of the results and conclusions contained in the article are confirmed by the consistency of the results with the theoretical sources and empirical results of the author obtained earlier in the study of information openness of public administration, as well as a comprehensive level of analysis of the phenomenon under study.

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