

MANAGEMENT OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS (MODERN UNIVERSITY IN THE SYSTEM OF “NEW MEDIA”)

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Abstract

All-round spreading of information technologies, a rapid growth of information, globalization of socio-economic and cultural life, availability of all facilities offered by Internet for most people – all these dramatically changed the society structure as a whole and its social institution as a university in particular. The article leads with consideration of the context of modern university activity, special features of its electronic communications management. Responding to the challenges of the time, a higher educational establishment should already today reconsider its attitude to the presence in the communicative space of the Internet. Exploring new media becomes important and relevant in the context of the emergence of "digital natives", distribution of inclusive education, globalization of higher education, and growing popularity of mass public online courses, etc.

Observing the principles of openness, self-organization and systemacy, a university obtains a real opportunity to influence the formation of a positive attitude of students and scientific expert community, the media and the authorities, partners and potential employers, etc.

Key words: *a modern university, new media, communication space of the Internet, management of electronic communications*

1. INTRODUCTION

First of all I would like to specify the context within which a modern Russian university lives and operates. According to various research companies and the international corporation TNS [1] in particular, in 2013 the monthly number of Russian Internet users was 53% or 76.5 million people (including people over 12). Almost 80 % of Runet users (Russian-speaking users of the Internet) are men and women under the age of 34, and users of 20-24 years old is the most active segment (27.6%). In this case we should understand by “activity” not only being online for a few hours a day, but also implementation of a number of online formats: e-mailing, information retrieval, social network Websites, creating unique content in the Internet chat rooms, forums, blogs, free encyclopedia; online shopping and online gaming, etc. It’s easy to assume that “tomorrow” the number of active Internet users will only increase.

All these give us understanding of the uniqueness of the present stage of the society characterized by coming and expansion of the new media – electronic mass communication media: various Internet technologies, social networks, mobile communication, etc. In this case a “new media” will mean:

- New (electronic) forms of communication of institutions, organizations with their target audiences (corporate and personal sites, online shopping);
- Interactive electronic editions (online versions of traditional media, Internet news portals, specialized electronic magazines);
- “civil journalism” (blogging);
- Various social services (retrieval systems and navigation systems, applications to mobile devices);
- Social networks (VKontakte, My World, Facebook, Twitter, etc).

Here is how researchers from the Kocaeli University (Turkey) E. Karagoc and G. Silisocel evaluate the role of the present changes [2]: “One of the key factors of the 21st century is the development of technology and the media – namely the opportunities they create together. These opportunities are so

valuable and significant that they are catalysts for social change, essentially influence the nature of various relevant processes in the society.

Awareness of special features and abilities of the new media is necessary for effective work with the “electronic” public – partners, investors, the media, various government organizations, etc. – all who are in the Internet communicative space. With regard to educational institutions, particularly universities, they didn’t stay away from these tendencies either.

2. NEW MEDIA: THE VIEW OF UNIVERSITY EXPERTS

Understanding of the changes currently happening to higher educational establishments is what worries researchers around the world. The Professor A. Teslenko (Kazakh Humanitarian Law University, Kazakhstan) accentuates the contradiction, characteristic for Kazakh universities [3]: “Rapid growth of information value necessitates its thorough step-by-step analysis and optimal selection. The contradiction between mass flow of new information and the scope of the educational process creates a problem of basic education and the need for learning minimum of knowledge. Does the Kazakh University meet the requirement? Is this a continuation of school? Or is this a systematic scientific research? Or a translator of culture?

The professional teachers M. Kaledzha and E. Zezulko (the University of Ostrava, Czech Republic) note [4] that these days, when universities are making every effort to join a single information space also using the potential of new media, the issues of integrative inclusive education are becoming especially urgent for people with medical disabilities. They suppose that currently we can expect a constant growth of number of such active students with certain educational needs. Therefore it is necessary to search for the mechanisms of disabled students’ joining the educational process that can be possible only under coordination of all agencies, university staff, directly or indirectly involved in educational work.

The experts from Belgrade College of Information and Communication Technologies (Serbia) V. Radosavljevic and A. Savic also agree [5] with such role of the new media in life of a modern educational institution. They confirm this by the impressive data of the empirical research. They carried out a survey of students to know their attitude to the use of Facebook in educational activities (by the example of the course "Digital telecommunications"). 81% of surveyed students expressed their positive attitude about it.

Let us consider the following: What kinds of changes have brought the new media in the life of modern Russian universities? At present, the Russian experts in the field of public management and strategic planning (for example, Andrei Volkov [6], until recently - Rector of Business School "Skolkovo", Adviser to the Minister of Education and Science of the Russian Federation) mark out "5 challenges" to the system of modern education:

1. changing of form,
2. focus shift in the structure of education,
3. “digital revolution”,
4. “modernization” of human biological essence,
5. changes of ontology, approaches to understanding of education as a phenomenon of spiritual sphere of society .

3. NEW FORMS OF EDUCATION IN RUSSIAN UNIVERSITY

Changing the form of the educational process primarily means all-round distribution of the following phenomena: students’ general gadget using, use a wide range of informational and communicative tools in the educational process (computers, multimedia, interactive board, etc.); development of distant education; availability of elite education.

3.1. GENERAL «GADGET MANIA» OF RUSSIAN PEOPLE

Sociologists of the Russian Foundation "Public Opinion" found out [7] that 67% of Russian people are convinced that in whole they get more good from electronic devices. Actions match the words: the most popular electronic device in Russia is a mobile phone. Most of Russian people (91%) use it. Nearly 50 % of young people under 30 have and actively use a laptop or netbook. One in four young Russian people have a smart phone, as many among them have a walkman. 7% have tablet computers or iPads. 10% young Russian citizens use electronic books.

3.2. ICT IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS

Information communication technologies (ICT) enable to equip almost 100% of classes at university. It is not only about equipping with a computer the working place of a lecturer and each student, who have access to the Internet, connected to common local university network. We consider here the use of electronic tutorials, multimedia presentations, interactive communication of teachers and students (for example, via a system MOODLE), and access to electronic resources, libraries, databases, and electronic monitoring of the educational process, and electronic testing of students, and electronic schedule etc.

3.3 DEVELOPMENT OF DISTANT EDUCATION

There are currently a lot of cases when college education can't be implemented by traditional pattern: a student must combine work and studying; a working professional needs a document, certifying his education at higher educational establishment which is far from the place of his location. Due to some circumstances (illness, departure) a student can't attend classes, etc. In such cases an option of distant learning is urgent need. A virtual office for lecturer can be created for organization of distant education that will enable to communicate at any part of the world, where there are computers and the Internet. Virtual Dean's offices are also created providing this educational format. Webinars, forums, chat, communication via Skype, use of MOODLE system, etc. – all these allow to organize lectures, seminars, practical training with students absent from lecture halls almost similar to offline.

3.4 AVAILABILITY OF ELITE EDUCATION

As one of the most striking examples I would like to mention is the MOOC (mass open online courses) phenomenon which is gaining popularity now. For example, Coursera is a project in the field of online education developed by the Professors of Stanford University. Apart from mentioned specialists other representatives of international university elite from Johns Hopkins University, Princeton University, California University, Pennsylvania University, Edinburgh and Colombia Universities (all in all more than 30) developed the course, which is available for anybody, capable to master it. Currently there are three Russian Universities in this list as well: Higher School of Economics, National Research Nuclear University "MIFI", Saint Petersburg State University.

4. SHIFT OF THE FOCUS IN THE SYSTEM OF RUSSIAN EDUCATION

"Yesterday" the establishment: school, college, higher educational establishment was in the center of educational structure. At present within the program of active reforming of educational system in Russia the focus is shifted to a student. First of all this is due to the Government guideline to innovative socially-oriented development of the state, to improving the quality of life by improving quality of education. There are a number of strategic documents of Russian Government to confirm this fact ("The concept of long-term socio-economic development of Russia until 2020"; The Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation dated 29 December 2012; new federal state educational standards of general and higher education).

It should be noted that the initiatives for transition of the Russian education to innovative type of development were declared in the report of March, 2006 "Innovative development of education – the basis for improving competitiveness of Russia" at the meeting of the State Council [8]: "Russia urgently needs the educational system allowing adequately meet the challenges of the civilization of the XXI century, to preserve and strengthen our competitive position as one of the leading country in

the world, sovereign center of power.. Organizational capital is becoming the most effective source of added value: the ability to make managerial decisions, organize financial and work flows. Only the countries engaged in “industry of making decisions”, development of future critical technologies, production of goods and services, which cannot be imported from the countries of low-cost labour will perform the role of “Board of Directors” of the planet and it’s brain. ... education is widely regarded as the major instrument of social upgrading”.

Another confirmation of the necessity to change the emphasis in the structure of education is the society’s demand for a creative professional. The point of view of Yevgeny Yasin, research manager of the National Research University “Higher School of Economics” expressed at one of the panel discussions of St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (June, 2013) is interesting “...today not tangible products, but such product as education is gaining more and more significance. At present the skill to think, invent and find way out from the situation is very important for a specialist...” [9]. How to make a creative professional having “taste for creative work”, on the one hand and a set of applied competence on the other?” The emergence of “individual educational path” was a response to this social demand. Professor of the Tambov State University (Russia) P. Sysoev interprets [10] this path as a personal way to achieve an educational goal (or task) by a student in accordance with his abilities, motivation, interests and needs.

5. DIGITAL REVOLUTION

Modern socio-economic system is characterized by such features as technologism, informatization, computerization and digitalization; network type of communication; prevalence of service sector over other sectors of economics. We, states Professor of Tomsk State University I. Kuzheleva-Sagan (Russia), are witnessing the fact how the development of industries related to high creative activity and requiring perfect skill i.e. high-tech, information communicative and more – digital, financial eventually led to a radical reorganization of the whole society [11].

Our world is the time when the era of digital cottages (a house stuffed with all sorts of electronic devices) is coming to an end. Modern world is the world of “digital nomads” for whom a plane or a beach or a station and a hotel can be their office as they always have with them the main instruments of production – a computer and Internet. The generation born in 1998-2003 is called “digital natives”. The phrase entered the language by Marc Prensky’s comment for the children who mastered a computer earlier than they started to speak and can be experienced teachers for their parents.

Here are the opinions on the issue of L. Del Tutto, L. Giombini (Urbino University, Italy), E. Bogle (Federal Parana University, Brazil) [12]: “The problem is that the emergence of the Internet and sensor screens is accompanied by “digital children”. “These children grow up “in the “shade” of interactive screens, Internet technologies are, in fact, structural simbiots using “technological prosthesis” (any electronic device) as an integral part of their personal and social identity. The language of the younger generation is being developed in the context, in which knowledge is given and offered in a fragmented, chaotic manner, and in a constantly changing form; and mediator (gadget screen) as a “translator” between knowledge and children is becoming less active”.

6. «UPGRAING» OF HUMAN BIOLOGICAL ESSENCE

The foregoing has not passed worthless for human biological nature. “Digital natives” have another cerebral physiology, capable to assimilate huge amount of information, do not practice critical analysis. They do not attach importance to spelling and syntax rules, there are no recognized authorities for them (unless a pop star or a world-class athlete). If we add here genetic engineering, genetically modified food, sheep Dolly .. , - a challenge to the very essence of human physiology is obvious.

Only the most sensational inventions of recent decades, including attempts to reconstruct the human genome, put a lot of questions in front of the humanity, and universities in particular in the sphere of

physiology, anatomy, ethics, psychology, etc. Consequently, today the representatives of the educational system all over the world are focused at the problems associated with possible demand forecasts of various specialities; search for approaches to teaching a new generation of students; emergence of the entire branches of scientific knowledge requiring a deep inter-, trans-disciplinary research.

Stem cells, synthesis of human mind and artificial intellect, the application of nanotechnologies in medicine, etc. – the world university elite is directly involved in the process of “upgrading” of the biological system of a modern person.

7. CHANGE OF ONTOLOGICAL STATUS

These days “being” is losing something that classical philosophy, metaphysics, defines as substantiality. It is no longer possible to describe the principles of being, development of society through the concept “ideal – material”, “industrial power – industrial relations”, etc. “Communicative reality”, “information society”, “society of knowledge economy” – such is the way how “being” is described today, in which a modern university lives and develops.

From our point of view one of the names - "virtual reality" - is very significant. This reality is based on virtual communication, which is determined by the channel of communicating information, and it is characterized by distance and high permeability: any user of the Internet located at any part of the world can be its participant. The characteristics of virtual reality are (N. Grigoreva, Russia) distance, interactivity, mediation, its global cross-cultural nature, in the most cases anonymity of participants, opportunities for building personal and social identity, lack of status hierarchy, open care, underdevelopment and ambiguity of social norms, marginalization and carnivalization of communication processes [13].

Thus, obliteration of national and territorial boundaries, the transformation of space and time characteristics (emergence of flow space and timeless time), network individualism, freedom, decentralization, etc. – all that Network has brought into human life, have become the features of modern information society. Now in this connection we have got a question of effective approaches to the management of electronic communication (for a modern university as well).

8. OBJECT OF MANAGEMENT – ONLINE COMMUNITY

First of all we should define the terms. According to the classical approach we should understand under internal target audience a group of people within the organizational structure of an enterprise and directly involved in its activities. Internal target audience of university will include: management, employees, teachers, students and their families. Accordingly, external target audience includes entities that are not part of the organization, but are connected with it. In this case external target audience of universities includes university applicants, graduates, authorities, traditional media, competitors, expert community, trustees.

Electronic community is the audience of the Internet sites, where there is offline community described above. Therefore the effective management of communication with these audiences in the Internet communicative space can provide favourable environment for a modern university. If you do not do it, then the audiences, originally neutral, will become hostile. If we do not manage our communicative space hence it is formed spontaneously or it is managed by our competitors and opponents.

A modern university needs to create a system of effective electronic communications to be attractive for students, interesting for professional community, to be a source of exclusive news for media and strategic partner of authorities in solving regional and national issues. In this case E. Romat (Ukraine) “...communication system may be defined in general as a single complex consolidating participants, channels, and types of activity through which organization communicates. It is aimed at establishing and maintaining certain planned interrelation with target audience in pursuit of its objectives” [14].

In the context of the present-day world management of electronic communications is gaining special significance. The researchers from the Sophia Medical University (I. Popova, P. Marinova, P. Dobrilova, Professor I. Mitev, a branch of Medical University in Vratsa) accentuate that [15]: "Our world is also the world of unified Europe where communication and cross-cultural contacts have become a good tradition. A cross-cultural dialogue can be defined as ... a process of open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups that differ in ethnic, cultural, religious, linguistic aspects and heritage. They are mainly young people whose major ambition is to build Europe by efforts of European nations. Cross-cultural dialogue is necessary more than ever before because of the growing impact of globalization which is both a chance to promote diversity, creativity and a challenge for Europe's capability to make small communities. A cross-cultural dialogue generates new ideas and a better understanding in the society. It allows people to realize the treasure of cultural diversity and its significance for their own development and for the society as a whole".

9. PRINCIPLES OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT

The specific character of education, its social nature defines one of the key tasks of a modern university – to build a positive public opinion about the institution, based on the management of its information field. A university has several objects for positioning and promotion: a university, its educational products and services, public (relevant, key) figures from teaching staff, and students.

Any modern university needs coordinated coverage of its activity by the media, proper positioning in cyberspace, and purposeful effort for creating a good image. It is impossible without establishing permanent and close cooperation with authorities; trustworthy and open informing the public about the guidelines for the university activities in the Internet communication space, since for most of its audiences this information source is crucial. Thus a university needs to observe a number of principles in the management of its electronic communications.

9.1 OPENNESS

The internet is an open system. So presence on the Web will demonstrate to all audiences the adherence of university to a principle of openness. It will allow a university to attract attention, to become an informing center, a source of necessary and useful information and a platform for a dialogue on the most urgent issues.

Modern researchers (F. Buari, France) define fundamental the interpretation of human as a social being, or "man of relations" [16]. The person does not restrict his behavior by exchanging labor for money or exchanging money for goods and services. He exchanges with like-minded" the things that rule the world: ideas, views and opinions. Through his contacts, he weaves a Web of relationships that form the basis of "social fabric, in which all public institutions are woven, and they determine the strength or fragility of the material." The principle of openness is implemented within the concept, when important for university people and organizations become its partners and due to the fact there appears trust giving consolidation and involvement [17] (J.-P. Boduan, France).

9.2 SELF-ORGANIZATION

The Internet is a territory of community, electronic communities. At present the attention on the Web is attracted to the subject, which organizes information flows around itself, when a Web resource becomes a system of self-regulation and self-replication, when the unique content (texts, images), pages on social network are placed not only by the editors of the university Websites but also by many volunteers – when there creates a network of users. The Websites of this very type will really work for an attractive, positive image of a modern university.

«A change of the role significance of an observer, characteristic of the Gutenberg galaxy, is radically implemented in the galaxy of the Internet: a passive observer becomes a creator of the observed reality. This is supposed to be circular relations with essential feedback among participants in the system (virtual community). From this point of view a man and his environment are a system of elements with a constant interacting and feedback. Therefore building a human interaction is essential.

This creates a recursive process that generates and anticipates itself, which builds, modifies the shapes, structure, content, dynamics of this virtual reality, "- emphasize the above-mentioned L. Del Tutto, L. Jiombini (University of Urbino, Italy), E. Bogle (Federal University of Paraná, Brazil) [18].

9.3 SYSTEMACY

Following Peter Green (UK) we repeat: make communication seriously, systematically, always, or don't do it at all. In this case we suggest the principle of systemacy in two aspects. On the one hand, it is necessary to interpret communication management of a modern university with its audience on a Web network considering all possible sites, own Web office, profiles in social networks, presence on the portals of relevant professional and expert communities; news available on online information lines; registration in respective catalogs, ratings, etc. On the other hand – organization of a continuous presence on all mentioned resources. The formation of the unique content on all the sites using semantic texts and expressive illustrations; providing interactive communication with visitors of the sites; constant promotion of university Web pages, community Web pages – all these is becoming essential. A choice of tools for positioning and promotion of a modern university in the Web communication space is noteworthy. In addition to the work with the new media it is necessary to use such a technology as "meme" (creating a virtual character), advergaming (using of persons, structures facts and phenomena of university life in creating guest games, online computer games); organization and conducting online events (contests, quiz, show, competitions, charity actions, initiated by university); exchanging of banners with partners, trustees, etc. Of course, there should be a constant practice of creating special mobile applications allowing different audiences to visit the university Website from any mobile device.

10. CONCLUSION

Maxim that "... if you have not told at least ten of your friends about what happened to you, it is unlikely that you believe it," - nowadays becomes an indisputable condition of an effective activity and organization. Management of electronic communications for a modern university from the category of desired things of life goes into the category of required ones. If the university is not on the news lines of the Internet media, in the review of current events on the electronic resources of expert communities, or not in the discussion of students on forums, blogs and social nets – Is there any? Will it be noticed by any applicants and potential trustees? Any academic mobility partners and co-developers of mass public online courses? Any potential customers of high technology products and the authorities? Undoubtedly the issues need detailed elaboration, definition of certain provisions, and aspects, analysis of the wide empirical evidence. However we can state now that presence of a university in the Internet "today" is a guarantee of its success "tomorrow".

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