HERB

Higher Education in Russia and Beyond

Reputation Management in Higher Education:
the New Challenge for Universities

Dear colleagues,

This issue of Higher Education in Russia and Beyond focuses on university reputation from different perspectives. Reputation is an intangible asset which, for a university, is at the intersection of communication, education, and management. The articles included in this issue briefly try to answer questions like what is reputation? What happens when a university does not care about cultivating it? Why is it even necessary to manage the reputation of the institution? How does it work? Why do national and international rankings matter and what use should be made of them?

We cover issues from conceptualization to crisis management in pandemics, the logic of international rankings to reputation building in non-metropolitan universities, and the healthy relationship between the third mission of the university and reputation to the role of alumni, and the accreditations.

The authors from universities in Spain, Kazakhstan and Russia are academics and practitioners with experience in higher education management, who share their research and understandings on a topic that is sometimes slippery. Although reputation may seem obvious when analyzing it and especially when managing it, we find ourselves juggling the complexity of interpersonal relationships with stakeholders, and different ways of understanding excellence and quality.

Wishing you an insightful reading,

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Cover: Lighthouse and the Sun
by Dmitriyev Georgiy

National Research University Higher School of Economics

National Research University Higher School of Economics is the largest center of socio-economic studies and one of the top-ranked higher education institutions in Eastern Europe. The University efficiently carries out fundamental and applied research projects in such fields as computer science, management, sociology, political science, philosophy, international relations, mathematics, Oriental studies, and journalism, which all come together on grounds of basic principles of modern economics.

HSE professors and researchers contribute to the elaboration of social and economic reforms in Russia as experts. The University transmits up-to-date economic knowledge to the government, business community and civil society through system analysis and complex interdisciplinary research.

Higher School of Economics incorporates 97 research centers and 32 international laboratories, which are involved in fundamental and applied research. Higher education studies are one of the University's key priorities. According to recent QS World University Ranking, HSE is now among the top 150 universities in the subject of "Education". This research field consolidates intellectual efforts of several research groups, whose work fully complies highest world standards. Experts in economics, sociology, psychology and management from Russia and other countries work together on comparative projects. The main research spheres include: analysis of global and Russian higher education system development, transformation of the academic profession, effective contract in higher education, developing educational standards and HEI evaluation models, etc.

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The Center for Institutional Studies is one of HSE's research centers. CInSt focuses on fundamental and applied interdisciplinary researches in the field of institutional analysis, economics and sociology of science and higher education. Researchers are working in the center strictly adhere to the world's top academic standards.

The Center for Institutional Studies is integrated into international higher education research networks. The center cooperates with foreign experts through joint comparative projects that cover the problems of higher education development and education policy. As part of our long-term cooperation with the Boston College Center for International Higher Education, CInSt has taken up the publication of the Russian version of the "International Higher Education" newsletter.

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Cultivating a University's Reputation beyond the Rankings

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A good university reputation attracts students, professors and donors, and strengthens wider society's support and interest in what it does. In the corporate world, reputation adds value. But what is reputation? The Oxford Dictionary says that it is "the beliefs or opinions that are generally held about someone or something". A good reputation implies good opinions of an organization or person, and it implies prestige.

It has been more than ten years since world university rankings such as QS, THE, ARWU, US News Best Global Universities become a permanent fixture of reputation. Several universities in the world saw their prestige rise by being ranked among the 1000 universities included in the ratings.

For instance, in Russia, Project 5-100 was a turning point for Russian higher education (HE). Although the goal of 5 universities entering the Top 100 universities in the international rankings by 2020, was not reached, the positive consequences for HE in Russia have been remarkable. In particular, the increased visibility of Russian HE internationally.

This article focuses on university reputation, on the fact that the prestige of a university is not only measured by international rankings (although they must be considered), but by the quality of the tangible and intangible assets of the university and by the perceptions of its stakeholders, and how these perceptions are communicated.

To understand and manage university reputation, it is necessary to understand how reputation is formed, and to track the elements that together comprise prestige.

Reputation: inside out

Reputation is formed in three spheres: within the organization; in the minds of stakeholders; and in the minds of the broader public.

The first sphere of reputation is shaped inside the university, through identity (Who I am), organizational culture (What I do), and narrative (What I say). Identity is formed by the organization's history, mission, vision, values, purpose, and projects. Culture is the collective behavior that includes policies, common practices, the way employees and clients are treated, and the way the organization interacts with its environment. An institution's narrative provides the reason and meaning of what the organization does. Coherence is required between Who I am, What I do, and What I say. Reputational problems often arise because of the inconsistency between these three dimensions.

The second sphere of influence of reputation creation takes place in the minds of the stakeholders—those who are affected by the university's purpose and objectives. In some ways, the quality of an organization depends on the quality and strength of its relationship with each stakeholder: information, context and values are conveyed by websites, newsletters, and meetings, among others. These channels need to have an element of feedback; organizations need to listen to their stakeholders and understand their demands and expectations. This is what is called "creating architecture of listening in an organization".

Contact with a university leads to perceptions in the minds of its stakeholders, but different stakeholders have different expectations, which affects their perceptions. For instance, students are interested in the teaching and learning resources which give them the tools to develop their talents; professors need a good research environment. It is difficult to meet (and to finance) all the expectations of all stakeholders but having a 360-degree perspective from all stakeholders will support the organization in making the best decisions on how to prioritize which is a key part of delivering and aligning the USP of a university.

Finally, the third sphere of reputation forms in the mind of the public, that is, those who do not already have a relationship with the organization. If a member of the public is aware of an organization, they will have an image associated with it in their minds. Universities must be known if they want to be chosen, therefore great efforts are made by organizations to achieve visibility, through events, advertising, and many other initiatives. This is as true for a university, as it is for a product. Reputation will ideally reinforce this knowledge of the organization, through positive assessments and recommendations.

Prestige in higher education

We are faced with the reality that the reputation of universities is not as widely developed as the reputation of businesses. When we talk about reputation, we mainly look outside the university or to the rankings.

Charles Fombrun, one of the fathers of modern reputation studies, has been studying corporate reputation since 1996. He analyzed the common behaviors of the 500 most admired companies in the US, according to Fortune magazine, and identified seven elements of a good reputation. These intangible assets include the quality of the product or service, the place of work, financial stability, and innovation. This "reputation track" model allows reputation management by analyzing and comparing these intangibles.

This model of reputation is useful for HE, although the listing is different from the one used in the corporate sector. Twelve elements that are frequently quoted for universities and that we think could be the components of universities reputation are:

1. Quality of teaching
2. Quality of research
3. Impact on society
4. Quality of the workplace
5. Student experience
6. Employability
7. Access to resources
8. Financial stability
9. Ethics, social responsibility, and citizenship
10. Internationalization and networking
11. Innovation
12. Leadership, communication, and governance.

Monitoring these elements is beneficial to understanding the prestige of universities, and how their performance in those areas can influence their reputation. Without data, the strategy of the university is blind; but when a university is eager to understand and improve in all these areas, then the image presented to their stakeholders is enhanced.

The distinctiveness of a university is its performance in all these areas and its attractiveness mean that innovation in scholarship, in the facilities, entrepreneurship and in other aspects will be perceived by students and by other stakeholders: this is the appeal of the institution.

Who has a role in cultivating reputation?

When observing Russian universities, it appears that in most of them, the administration does not have a strategic management model which includes reputation as an element of governance. As mentioned, reputation is influenced by perceptions but can be improved by demonstrable improvements in the 12 elements highlighted above.

Cultivating a university's reputation therefore depends on the cultivation of quality and everyone who is a part of the organization has a role in that. All staff create the internal culture, maintain relationships, and listen to external stakeholders. Therefore, all staff are participants in and ambassadors for the reputation of the organization.

**Figure 1.** Stakeholders of universities
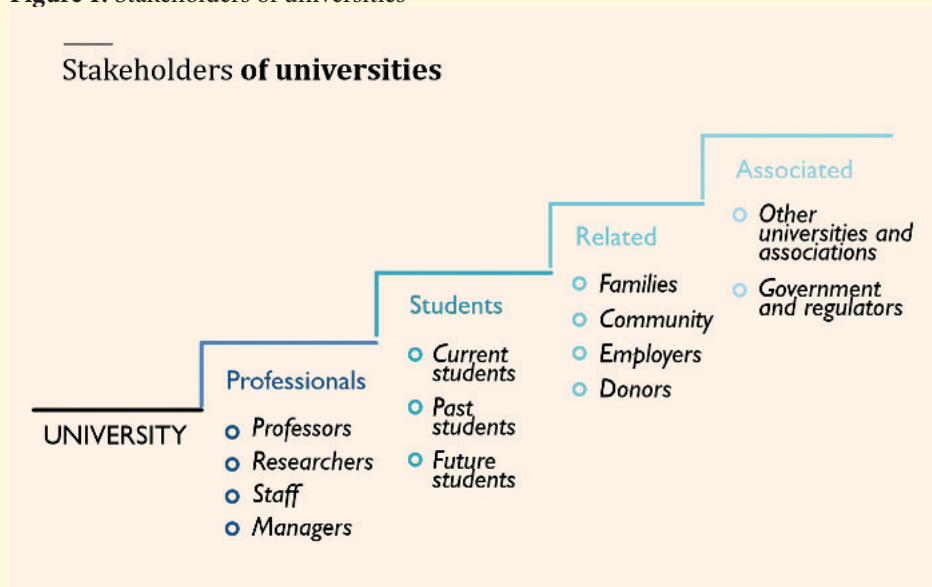
Ultimately, responsibility for reputation belongs primarily to the governing board of the university. Only they can take the critical decisions that are needed to innovate, be transparent, tell the truth, hold dialogues, foster staff, establish strong relationships, and understand the need to take care of the tangible and the intangible assets in a way that is distinctive and consistent.

The department that must help to manage reputation is communications. Professor Paul Argenti of Tuck Business School has written that strategic communication is "one of the few functions able to provide boards with a comprehensive look at the entire organization; a function that looks beyond the short term and is able to identify risks and opportunities that will boost the ongoing transformation of the company on a path of excellence".

Each university should outline its identity, culture and narrative, and together these form a distinctive brand. Building reputation, however, also requires a particular style of senior management: it must be transformational because to improve reputation, universities have to improve, perhaps even transform reality, and it has to be strategic in its approach to communication, not simply seeing it as a technical task, but as a central function of senior management.

Figure 2. Iceberg model for formation of reputation
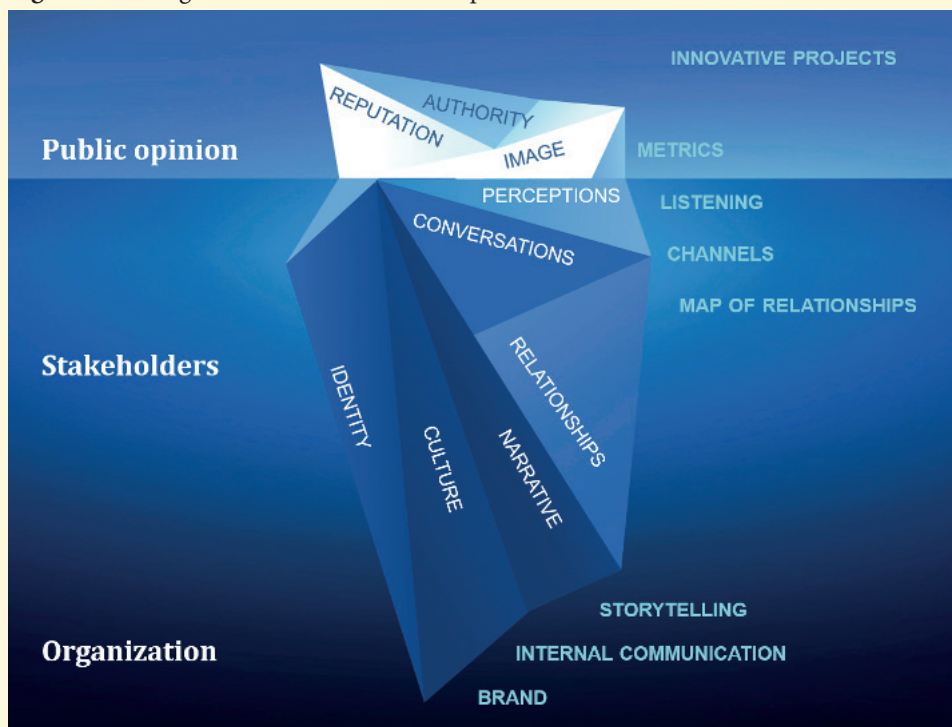
Finally, the reputation of each university cannot stand in isolation from the broader reputation of the HE system. Improving reputations requires the adoption of a collaborative approach between universities and public authorities, to create strong systems that enable universities to provide the service that society deserves and expects of them. As the saying goes "all boats rise with the tide".

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The Virtuous Circle of Working with International Rankings: Why Russian Project 5-100 was Efficient

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Introduction

The launch, in 2012, of the Russian Academic Excellence Project (Project 5-100) implemented the President's Decree "On measures of implementation of state policy in education and science (yes)" under which, by 2020, at least five Russian universities would be in the top 100 world universities. Although none of the 21 universities participating in Project 5-100 made it into the top 100 in the university rankings ARWU, THE or QS, the number of Russian universities in those rankings overall tripled from 15 to 51.

The best results were achieved at the level of subject ratings. At the end of 2020, eight universities were included in the top 100 of individual subject rankings, holding 16 top #100 positions.

Audit of the Russian Accounts Chamber

In February 2021, the Russian Accounts Chamber released the report "Analysis of the effectiveness of measures of state support of Russian universities aimed at increasing their competitiveness among the world's leading research and educational centers". This assessed the impact on the development of individual universities and on the Russian higher education system as a whole.

One of the conclusions of the review was that even though not all Project 5-100 performance indicators of individual participating universities were achieved, the initiative led to significant shifts in the Russian university ecosystem. The main ones are associated with a fundamental rethinking of university roles, functions and tasks, an awareness of the need to integrate Russian educational programs and research into the international context, and the search for a

balance between effective competition in the international arena and meeting the challenges of national development.

The report implies that the execution of Project 5-100 was accompanied by an increase in the scale and role of Russian university research: the share of Project 5-100 university publications in the total number of Russian publications indexed in Web of Science increased from 17.4% in 2012 to 33.3% in 2019, and these universities in the nationwide volume of publications in first quartile journals increased from 19.7% to 47.7% over the same period.

Strengthening the quality of higher education

In general, Project 5-100 set new strategic development benchmarks for Russian universities; formed a group of leading universities which were integrated into global academic excellence programs; reinforced university research; and started universities on a path to develop their reputations, which they had not previously considered, and without which a move up in the global rankings was impossible.

Project 5-100 was a short-term development tool, such programs have been implemented in Germany, Japan, China, and other countries, but as a rule, they are designed for the long-term and require serious funding. In Russia, Project 5-100 lasted eight years, and the experience showed that different universities approached the implementation in different ways: some developed a whole ecosystem of internationalization, others organized "article factories", many improved their student-orientated services (career services, student experience, housing, etc.), and for many Project 5-100 allowed them to show

the world the achievements of Russian researchers and an increase of the publications without precedent [1]. For all the participants, the program created an opportunity for the sustainable development of the professional university community.

The 21 universities that participated in Project 5-100 were in the spotlight, especially their development and communication plans. Russia has more than 700 universities, which had the opportunity to witness and learn from the best practices of the universities of Project 5-100.

The participants of the 5-100 program became the benchmark and a lift for the Russian HE system. The participating universities had to develop and modernize their organization and attract the competencies missing from their institutions, such as change-driven management, reputation management, human resources, talent management, and fundraising. They also had to engage with the best international research institutions to grow the research competencies necessary for successful international competition.

The program was a catalyst for very important processes in domestic higher education. These processes have forced a shift to strategic goal setting and an evaluation of Russian universities in the global marketplace. In accordance with international benchmarks, it was necessary not only to conduct diagnostics, get rid of non-core assets, work to diminish inefficiencies, implement sometimes painful mergers and acquisitions. This movement and purging contributed to a more active orientation meeting world educational standards, fulfilling roadmap requirements, and striving to achieve the KPIs required to get into the "all-star leagues".

Figure 1. Virtuous circle of Project 5-100 increasing reputation of Russia HEI
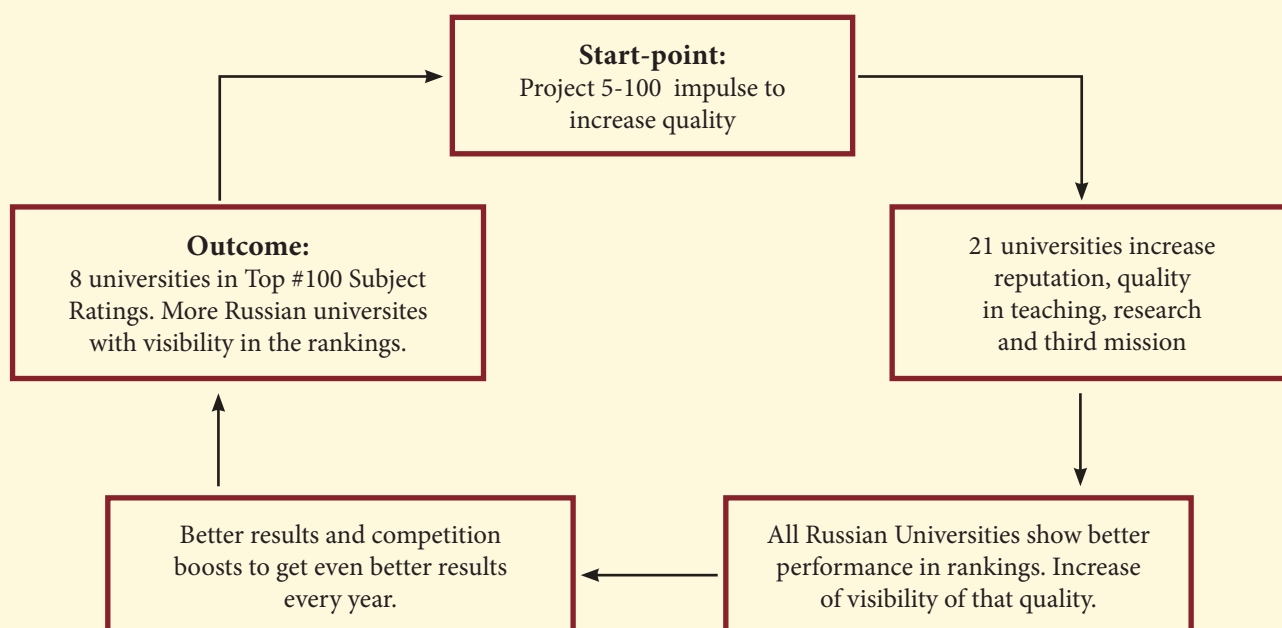
From rankings to reputation

The question arises whether the rankings have served to improve the reputation of Russian universities. "Reputation is a set of intangible assets shared by the general public associated to an organization by the stakeholders as a result off their positive perceptions based on knowledge and experiences and implies a decision of recommendation [2]". It is measured at the intersection of the quality of the university, and the perceptions of their stakeholders. In this sense, Project 5-100 had formal clear KPIs, which helped to improve the quality of the participating universities at different levels, but all of them raised their quality in some way. Reputation also responds to the expectations of different stakeholders and how they rate the university.

From the parameters measured by the two international rankings THE and QS, we see that "reputation" is important. In the THE ranking, this item accounts for 33% of the total audited parameters. THE measures reputation through two surveys, one of students on teaching environment, and the second of academics on research. In the QS ranking, reputation represents 50% of the total. Forty percent is based on a survey of research peers, and 10% on employer reputation.

When reviewing the scores of the universities in the project, in the last year of the program's existence, in the QS 2020 ranking, the best employer reputation university is HSE with a score of 33, while in academic reputation, Novosibirsk State University stands out with a score of 30. The Russian university that leads the ranking in all metrics is Moscow State University, which has a score of 73.6 in academic reputation and an 84.9 in employer reputation. In the THE ranking 2020, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology (MIPT) leads in teaching reputation with 53.3 points and in research with a score of 45.6.

We believe that the rankings have improved the reputation of Russian universities. They have been a springboard for Russian HEIs, which, in trying to improve their quality at different levels, have been perceived by their internal and external stakeholders as having a better reputation than they had before the 5-100 project. Is crucial to remember that premier international universities have good reputations and that their reputations are synonymous with excellence.

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University Academic Reputation in BRICS

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In 2013, the BRICS Universities League was created as a consortium of leading universities from BRICS. Initiated in Shanghai, the League had the aim of becoming a platform for academic and expert cooperation, comparative research, and international educational projects. A year later, THE launched the BRICS & Emerging Economies Rankings and the year after that the QS University Rankings: BRICS 2015 started.

There are a number of reasons why the most popular rankings were specifically interested in the universities of these countries. First, it could be said that the decision to form an alliance of such different countries had a global impact, which goes down to the university level. Emerging economies from different continents joined together to break away from traditional international alliances. Since the beginning of the relations between BRICS universities, there has been a constant exchange of academic experience, and closer relations between the 56 universities that make up the BRICS Network University.

The second reason may be that these 5 countries alone account for almost 30% of the world's universities, with some 10,334 HEIs out of the 31,142 HEIs worldwide, according to Ranking Web of Universities (webometrics).

Since 2014 these universities, although they do not have a collective reputation, have been considered by international rankings a block worthy of study. To ensure quick wins in the international arena was more expedient for BRICS to maintain the individual reputation of their universities and thus strengthen the quality of education and academic excellence among a small group of leading universities [1]. This would help create the conditions under which group reputations at the level of national HE systems could be rebuilt [2]. A major challenge for BRICS universities is to find a common strategy for improving their reputations which would suit each one of their five cultures while maintaining the distinctiveness of each country.

BRICS are implementing long-term strategies including the creation and development of non-Anglo-Saxon reputation rankings, as their own competitive instruments

protecting national interests. The Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) was first published in June 2003 by the Center for World-Class Universities (CWCU) of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China, and is updated on an annual basis, and since 2009 ARWU has been published by Shanghai Ranking Consultancy. From 2017, Russia's development of the ranking "The Three University Missions Ranking" (known briefly as the Moscow Ranking), a global ranking of universities developed by the Russian Association of Raters, with the participation of the international association IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence. The ranking evaluates the quality of education, scientific work and the contribution of universities to society.

BRICS are also developing new tools that allow them to achieve quick wins in rankings and integrate themselves into the international arena, increasing their academic reputation.

The soft power of higher education

The effect of the soft power of HE—the strengthening global leadership in international affairs, an expanding presence and leverage in the international space, attracting global human resources, and achieving economic sustainability and success in the BRICS' economies—is enhanced through international students. In obtaining HE, international students assimilate the cultural values, ideals, and social norms of the country of study. Taking care of these stakeholders while they are studying is one method that an HEI can enhance its reputation. That is, by providing more than just an educational experience and thereby making the perceptions of international students so high that they will recommend others to study at these universities.

Global university rankings are important "resources of soft power that have the potential, as a governance tool, to reshape the global higher education landscape" [3]. The popularity of rankings is due to increased HE exports and the growing competition for talented students. The promotion of universities in international rankings is the return on investment in university development.

The scale of representation in ratings

The authors analyzed two significant quantitative parameters to determine the representation of BRICS universities in the world university rankings: (1) the number of universities in the QS, THE and ARWU (top 500 institutional or top 200 by subject and faculty rankings); (2) the sum of BRICS universities' entries in the QS, THE and ARWU (institutional, subject and faculty) rankings published in 2020 [4]. The choice of this framework is based on the case of Russian universities.

According to the draft concept of the new Russian federal program of strategic academic leadership "Priority-2030", participating universities should ensure higher education export growth by attracting talented applicants and students, studying within university networks, or having diplomas from international universities, included those in

the top 500 institutional and/or top 200 subject and faculty rankings of ARWU, QS or THE. Despite the increasing mobility of foreign students, this approach implies that leading Russian HEIs will cooperate mainly with the leaders of the global higher education market, which increases the quality of the contingent.

The representation of BRICS universities in the rankings is heterogeneous. In total, QS, THE and ARWU (top 500 institutional or top 200 subject and faculty rankings) include 226 BRICS universities (142 universities from China, 26 from India, 25 from Brazil, 22 from Russia, and 11 from South Africa). China is the undisputed leader in terms of the number of universities ranked (63% of BRICS universities in the rankings), and the sum of entries of the universities in the rankings (1,563 positions, 74%).

The top 3 universities in China by the sum of entries in the rankings are Peking University (80 positions), University of Hong Kong (79 positions), and Tsinghua University (71 positions). Tsinghua University is a leader in Chinese higher education (it ranks 15th in QS, 20th in THE, 29th in ARWU in 2020), so many BRICS universities include it in their core list of benchmarks.

Half of the foreign students at BRICS universities are from Chinese universities (89,204 out of 170,197 according to QS World University Rankings 2019). The share of foreign students at China universities is not large (7%) in comparison with Russia (15%). This indicator ultimately demonstrates the university's worldwide recognition: the closer to the top 100, the higher the indicators of internationalization within the country, and the higher the reputation those HEI have.

On average, the share of foreign students is 13% in the top 100 universities in China, and 7% and 5% in the second echelon of Chinese universities for those ranked 101-500 and 501 or lower, respectively (for comparison, in Russia, 19% in the top 100, 18% 101-500, 10% 501 or lower). Thus, it can be assumed that Chinese universities are gradually reorienting toward the domestic market, and attracting fewer foreign students.

Return on investment

The investment of BRICS in science and education over the last ten years has accelerated the development of universities and their rankings promotion. According to data from The World Bank from 2000 to 2017, government expenditure on education, total increased in China by 119% (4.1% of GDP in 2017), in Brazil by 60% (6.3% of GDP), in Russia by 60% (4.7% of GDP), and in South Africa by 12% (6.1% of GDP).

The situation is similar in R&D expenditure: in China it grew by 140% (2.1% of GDP), in Brazil 21% (1.3% of GDP), in South Africa 16% (0.8% of GDP), and in Russia 5% (1.1% of GDP). In India, the expenditure on education and R&D has declined over the last 17 years by 11% and 12% (3.8% and 0.7% of GDP), respectively. Nevertheless, due to significant investments earlier in the 2000s, Indian universities have maintained their positions in the rankings [5].

BRICS universities follow the global higher education agenda of "accelerated universities", combining ideas and money to build academic excellence [6], but the inadequate funding of universities in Brazil, India, Russia, and South Africa, compared to China, remains.

Conclusions

The BRICS Universities League was formed to improve the collective reputation of universities in BRICS. Their development within each country, however, has not been uniform due to different levels of investment, therefore, it is too early to talk about any average achievements of BRICS universities.

Taking into account the increasing competition for talent and the priorities for Russian HE, a key approach to improving academic reputation and positions in the global rankings for the BRICS universities is likely to be cooperation and collaboration based on networks of education programs and joint research. The creation of international consortia with the leading universities will contribute to greater penetration of BRICS universities into the global higher education landscape. This will maximize the return on investment in their development supporting BRICS national economic interests.

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Keep the Flame Lit: Graduate Interests and University Needs

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The establishment of lifelong relations between an alma mater and its alumni is an issue for Russian universities. One of the most challenging matters in this process is to appreciate both perspectives. Only a few universities in the country work with their alumni, and of those, few have a clear understanding of the university's interest in encouraging their alumni to "never stop growing", as Stanford University encourages. Oxford University states that they "work with key internal and external constituencies building awareness, engagement and support for the University of Oxford by offering programs of value to alumni throughout their lives".

University alumni offices have to find mutual benefit in the services that alumni receive and the advantages of this relationship for the institution. We have witnessed in the last 5 years how Russian universities of Project 5-100 and others, such as MGIMO and NES, have grown in their engagement with their alumni, many of them have started endowment funds, yet when reviewing the web pages of the alumni associations of these universities, one could infer that there is still much to be developed in the relationship between the universities and these stakeholders.

The model of the relationship between alumni and the university comes from Anglo-Saxon cultures. In the past, they were often considered to be the university's old boys' network. Universities such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Princeton have long histories of such networks. Williams College (with one of the oldest alumni associations in the US) describe theirs as a society "for the promotion of literature and good fellowship among ourselves and the better to advance the reputation and interests of our Alma Mater".

Is university reputation a plus for graduate employability? The simple answer is: Yes. Graduating from a university with a strong reputation will almost certainly help a graduate gain credibility with future employers. A university like Oxford has an unparalleled reputation and in some parts of the world, it will not matter what was studied, but

graduating from Oxford will be enough to open doors. The reputation is so high that employers may not look closely to see whether this was a true Oxford degree, or one issued by the affiliated Department of Continuing Education.

On the other hand, it is well known that universities gain their reputation from the results of their graduates. Each year, universities producing the most employable graduates are ranked by companies around the world in university employability rankings.

The mutual benefits of alumni associations

The mutual benefits include what the university offers their alumni: invitations to graduation ceremonies, jubilee events, career events, mentor programs, job bank, alumni meeting places, continuing education offers, library resources, or discounts. It also includes the engagement opportunities that universities use to connect with their alumni, for instance, donations or funding, mentor programs, guest speakers (for recruitment or at career or graduation events), company cases/internships etc., surveys (related to education or research), event planning, advisory boards/sounding boards, information about interests.

Taking into account both groups are key to finding the mutual benefit that lies in the overlapping area of the offer and the engagement opportunities for alumni at different life stages. For any university, is useful to have a framework to work with alumni to be able to differentiate them by group: young alumni (25-34), mid-career alumni (35-54) and senior alumni (55+) or by generation or by educational level, interests, gender, geography.

The Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) in a white paper "Alumni Engagement Metrics Task Force" in August 2018, wrote that there are four categories of engagement:

- Volunteer: Formally defined roles that are endorsed and valued by the institution and support its mission and strategic goals.

- Philanthropic: Diverse opportunities for alumni to make philanthropic investments that are meaningful to the donor and support the institution's mission and strategic goals.

- Experiential: Meaningful experiences that inspire alumni, are valued by the institution, promote its mission, celebrate its achievements, and strengthen its reputation.

- Communication: Interactive, meaningful, and informative communication with alumni that supports the institution's mission, strategic goals, and reputation.

These categories are used by the most prestigious universities, and with revenues from their good practices, just notice how Harvard, Oxford or Cambridge replenish their endowment funds for research each year with the support of their alumni.

Some trends towards alumni cooperation

One Russian university that started moving towards building an alumni network some years ago is HSE University. The university sees the role of alumni as part of its mission and strategy 2030. The key task with respect to the alumni "is to foster beneficial conditions for the success of each student and alumnus, encourage professional and civil ethics and understanding, provide support for nationwide and corporate interests and values, as well as promote value of mutual support and assistance, expanding alumni participation in university life, mentoring and loyalty programs" [1]. The goal is to expand the engagement of alumni through providing them with opportunities to take part in education, research and projects, promoting the mentoring program "alumnus–student", and implementing various loyalty programs. Alumni will become instrumental in promoting the brand, marketing educational programs, and disseminating developments, through such associations as the HSE Alumni Ambassadors Club.

We highlight four trends that demonstrate the results in the interaction between alumni and HSE university. One of the trends that unites both interests is lifelong learning—access to high-quality programs for retraining and complementary education, masterclasses, conferences, seminars, and business meetings. In a 2020 survey, about 40% of HSE graduates note the attendance of events as a priority format for interaction with the university, while more than 70% say lectures or master classes are crucial, which indicates the interest in ongoing education. As an incentive, HSE has a loyalty program, in which graduates receive discounts for the next level of their educational programs.

Due to the constant reeducation needed to cope with the digital transformation, the issue of employability remains relevant throughout life with the formation of horizontal and vertical careers, and changes in places of work and professional fields. In this sense, Career Services Centers are opening their doors not only to students, but also to graduates. While some graduates might benefit, others are already employers or representatives of firms, contributing to the successful employment of other graduates. Therefore, tools are being developed that allow alumni to be present on campus as representatives of the labor market. At the HSE Saint-Petersburg Campus Career Week 2020, 16 graduates participated posting vacancies on university career platforms and hiring students for internships. Alumni who have been successful in their careers are a resource for the career development of students.

Last year, HSE Saint-Petersburg invited their alumni to be mentors in the "Freshmen Mentoring Program". The program now has 200 undergraduate and 30 master students, lasts for three semesters and involves a minimum of 6 meetings and internship opportunities for master's students. In the first run of the program, about 40% of the mentors were alumni. In addition to these programs, at the four HSE University campuses, there is a mentorship program where any student has the opportunity to talk to a mentor from their

area of interest, in a free format where the frequency and number of meetings are determined by the pair.

A basis for the relationship with alumni is well structured communication; systematic and with the tools and topics that are required for the target audience and that will increase loyalty. At HSE University, the main platforms for communication with alumni are HSE Alumni groups in social networks in VK (11,130 people), Facebook (6,300 followers), Instagram (960 followers). In addition, HSE is actively developing a networking platform on Telegram, where nearly 7,000 alumni communicate in 16 professional and 18 regional chat rooms. The main information channels are the HSE Alumni Channel (3,600 subscribers) and the newsletter (7,000 subscribers).

HSE Saint-Petersburg with more than 6,500 graduate students, has also created Campus Alumni Community profiles on social media. Even though the largest platform is VK (1,152 members), it was decided to give priority to the Instagram profile, which was created in August 2020 and since then it has become the most active platform in terms of audience engagement with 2,481 followers. The quarterly information digest of HSE Saint-Petersburg is received by 40% of alumni.

One of the conclusions that can be drawn from the evolution of the relationship with alumni is that it is necessary to start from the students' first day at university, so that from that moment on they feel they are already a part of their alma mater.

Notes

[1] https://www.hse.ru/en/prog2030/prog6

Reputation and the Fulfillment of the University's Third Mission

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Introduction

By exploring the new contexts and the realities that universities have gone through in recent decades, we would like to review the state of higher education institutions (HEIs) at the light of their third mission (TM) and the impact it has on their reputation.

The TM of a university is structured around three main axes: lifelong learning, entrepreneurship and innovation,

and social commitment. The entrepreneurial university approach claims that universities facilitate, mobilize, and incentivize the creation of new technology-based companies (university spin-offs) and other actions that generate new intra-agent relationships, which also generates additional income for the university [1]. In the same sense, the innovative university approach includes in its mission the responsibility of promoting and generating R&D projects.

Universities' TM have always had these three axes, nevertheless the emphasis on sustainability and the impact of students, including on innovation, entrepreneurship and social responsibility address the need to deliver professionals with leadership skills, trained for the challenges of the digital transformation and the pandemic that the world is experiencing. Students of universities which have excellent "Career Services" have better employability of their students and Alumni and as a consequence their universities have better employability rankings.

The fourth industrial revolution, where data science, artificial inteligence and the internet become central, requires a series of adjustments to traditional education. For this reason, several HEIs are increasingly adopting experiential learning methods beyond lectures, such as challenge-based learning [2] or project-based learning, service learning or career learning. The adoption of these new approaches helps universities to align themselves more intentionally with the expectations of their students and other stakeholders, to generate multiple benefits for the institution and its environment, improving its reputation.

Universities around the globe are creating transversal projects to promote entrepreneurship. One project that supports student ideas in Russia is the HSE Business Incubator (HSE Inc), a division of HSE University which has been supporting student-entrepreneurs since 2006. The incubator works with early-stage startups, from the idea to the scale-up stage.

Other trend in HE is the systematic inclusion of real problems in teaching with a regional emphasis, interacting with society and preparing "T-shaped professionals", who can collaborate with professionals from other disciplines. It is necessary to provide students with complete disciplinary training and with interdisciplinary learning, and to encourage the development of their abilities to cope with constantly changing problems in a globalized world.

Sustainable development and university reputation

Openness to entrepreneurship and innovation has been important for universities trying to connect with their millennial students. For a socially responsible university, holistically integrating social and environmental concerns into ordinary teaching and research activities is an everyday challenge. The participation of students and university staff in voluntary and charitable activities is one of the mechanisms for realizing its TM and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development goals.

Since the declaration "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" was signed by the United Nations, universities all over the world have taken on the challenge of realizing its 17 goals (SDG). Since 2019, the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking has encouraged university communities to view their work in the light of these principles. Its second, 2020 edition, it included 768 universities from 85 countries, of those 47 were Russian and three of them in the top 100: Peter the Great St Petersburg Polytechnic University #37, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics #91, and Altai State University #95. In the latest edition of that ranking (2021), 75 Russian HEI are listed, although none of them in Top 100, three are in #101–200, Altai State University, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, and Plekhanov Russian University of Economics.

The THE Impact Ranking gives universities that are not in the top tier of international rankings a chance to demonstrate that they have other qualities worth highlighting, such as sustainability, and this is an incentive for and reputational recognition of HEIs that develop their TM.

Increasing reputation by doing good in society

Participating and creating activities related to the TM is an opportunity for students to solve problems that have a real impact on society, to grow and to acquire the skills necessary for their future employment, and to build human relationships and networks. For students, teamwork and the competences related to it entail the recognition of the university and, consequently, of society.

To illustrate, we chose the case of the student expeditions "Discovering Russia anew", which HSE University has been conducting for several years. This is a unique program in which students of all faculties are granted the opportunity to work on real cases and participate in field research in different regions of the country, to bridge the fundamental gap between the theory assimilated in the course of study and the reality of Russian life. Each expedition is a field trip of a group of 12–15 students under the direction of at least 2 professors or research assistants for 10–14 days to one Russian region. Expeditions can be one-off or continuous (a series of expeditions linked by a common framework or place of stay). Expeditions are carried out according to a thematic plan determined by the leader, to use expedition for the collection of materials by the students for their academic work.

These expeditions can be devoted to project work commissioned by regional or municipal authorities (for example, a strategy for the development of cultural institutions), scientific research on certain topics (for example, the study of the history of a certain zone or the problem of employment for vulnerable youth in a region) or combine different formats of work (projects and research).

Reputation management and the TM

Reputation management is determined by four actions: knowing, deciding, innovating, and communicating and reputation will not be cultivated if it is not governed correctly. The factors that form reputation, can be divided into two categories: the objective aspects that reflect the reality of an HEI and the subjective factors that regulate the interests, expectations and perceptions of those who make the judgments [3]. If it seeks to raise the level of stakeholder support and acceptance, university reputation management should include issues of social responsibility, communication, how to manage engagement with students, and how to integrate their perspectives when making decisions at the executive level.

Listening in an organization is an important large-scale activity which requires an "architecture of listening", as Jim MacNamara described the system for including all stakeholders in building a strategy for success. The participation of students in interactive systems, such as websites, social networks or other media used by universities, helps the university become innovative. Social media platforms empower students to have opinions and organize movements for improving the quality of life around them in the university and in its environment.

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Building the Reputation of Non-Metropolitan Universities

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Centripetal and centrifugal forces in higher education

Universities are undoubtedly seen as vital drivers of regional development, delivering a high-skilled labor force to the market, affecting the social environment, maintaining a good balance of age cohorts. These consequences may be

substantially expanded especially when it comes to non-metropolitan or peripheral universities. Hence, policy makers at all levels and local businesses have always been concerned about attracting and retaining talented young people with the quality of education provided by universities there.

However, there is a specific challenge for higher education (HE) outside large cities to build its national and international reputation and overcome prejudices about the excellence and advanced competencies of peripheral HE. One could even say that a reputation which is often assumed for universities in large cities requires large investments and efforts for non-metropolitan universities.

Some HE systems worldwide have been implementing policies to assure a balanced distribution of students and graduates across their territories, mitigating potential social and economic inequality. Other systems have leaned on the self-regulatory power of the academic market allowing stronger universities, regardless their location and status, to outperform their rivals. Among those approaches there have been successes and failures. An example of large-scale European experiments in the middle of the 20th century was when several new universities were established on the peripheries in Spain, Italy, and Germany. Notably, some demonstrate sound results overtaking historically leading universities in large cities, attracting students and demonstrating worldwide visibility and reputation. A considerable number of those universities gained top positions in QS and THE special rankings for young universities and entered the main rankings.

Russian HE inherited geographically distributed universities and infrastructure, which used to serve large manufacturing clusters. Non-metropolitan centers have even received a special status as "regional universities". Many peripherical universities during the Soviet era were strong, especially as graduate labor market mobility was restricted. After USSR collapsed, the quality of most of these universities and their reputation among potential students and academics fell. Moreover, centripetal forces in HE were enhanced by the growing labor markets in Moscow and St. Petersburg. In trying to overcome this growing inequality, Russian universities were exposed to substantial reforms starting from the beginning of the 2000s. Examining the starting conditions, the discrepancy of the policy outcomes could be associated with their deep historical roots. Solid academic traditions and the reputations of leading research and educational centers in Siberia and the Urals allowed a rapid recovery and reboot. Several regional universities in Russia have, over time, successfully participated in the excellence program "5-100" aimed at getting top positions in the worldwide university rankings. However, in the late 1990s, there was still a long way to go.

Intramural transfer of university reputations in Russia: early decentralization

One of the noticeable effects of the early reforms in Russian HE was the creation of regional branches of leading metropolitan universities. This idea was in response to their strong academic reputations, which allowed the establishment of peripheral institutions employing the competencies and standards of central universities, expanding their market and academic impact. Regional branches would bring the expertise to the students. This idea has been implemented in different ways. Many universities launched branches which represented the main campus in the regions. There were several cases of well-reputed regional centers which gained strong competitive positions in a region with a significant dependency from the parent university. However, over time, many regional branches fell short of their stakeholders' expectations and were closed.

Another alternative was to establish "distributed universities" where branches were meant to be stand-alone entities with their own strategic vision and relative financial autonomy. That would lead to an independent academic reputation reinforced by the brand of the entire university. This model was explored by HSE University, which is developing regional branches to ensure their competitive position and to enhance their reputation.

The branches of universities from large cities are perceived ambiguously. A crucial criticism is whether this measure actually accomplishes decentralization and creates reputable universities. The role of regional subsidiaries has always been surrounded by heated debates advocating either a high level of autonomy or a strong subordination and common standards. This issue remains unresolved.

New configuration of higher education with regional pillars

The recent reforms introduced fundamentally new focuses within the Russian HE system. Depending on their role and potential contribution, universities were designated to work on the national or regional stage. This program has meant some universities became pillars for regional development as "centrifugal forces" in the system. Those universities were established by merging several institutions and receiving special status as federal educational institutions. These new integrated universities were expected to enroll most regional school graduates and to be attractive for applicants from neighboring territories.

Along with the extensive reforms on the federal level, several regional experiments have been run on the idea of fostering peripheral universities. As an example of such initiatives, Perm attempted to keep talented school graduates in the region by providing them with additional grants. The idea of gubernatorial scholarships has been explored in Samara, Tyumen, Krasnodar, and many other territories in Russia. Although the experience of leading regional universities has rapidly spread countrywide, shaping the specific agenda of regional HE development, there is still little evidence of the effectiveness of such policies due to the absence of a control group. However, the statistics produced by the Monitoring the Quality of Enrollment in Russian Universities show some regional centers have demonstrated evident improvements.

Old and new questions about regional universities

Past and present initiatives towards decentralization have substantially reshaped the HE system. As announced by the Russian ministry of higher education, the new strategy emphasizes the further development of regional universities. This strategy calls for the creation of regional ecosystems by integrating all stakeholders and involving leading central universities to support and contribute to regional initiatives. Meanwhile, the COVID-19 pandemic has made us revisit possible scenarios in HE, which has been substantially and, possibly irrevocably, pushed online. Several important issues should be addressed, even for a conservative development of regional universities. To what extend should regional universities respond to the industrial structure of their region? Can local stakeholders provide for the financial stability of the regional universities? How should regional centers cooperate to advance their educational markets? Given the new challenges, new questions must also be answered. Will geographical educational boundaries blur within countries and beyond? How will the decisions of future students be affected by new opportunities for distance learning? Can regional universities potentiate their cost advantages over universities in capitals under these conditions? How can the new advantages of non-metropolitan universities be supported by their reputation?

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The Reputation of Higher Education Institutions in Kazakhstan: the Creation and Development of a Paradigm

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Reputation: not what you say, but what your identity conveys

Recognition is important but it cannot be self-declared. The impact that institutions generate includes what they affirm about themselves, but it is first and foremost, what others say about them and how others perceive the organizations' behavior. Reputation has become a crucial aspect in evaluating the quality of organizations, including higher education institutions (HEIs). Even it is unclear or controversial from different perspectives, reputation is now widely considered an intangible asset of any organization.

These assets can be measured, enhanced, and managed as the organization evolves and impacts society.

HEIs have become market-oriented and many of their services can be evaluated according to mercantile criteria; there has also been a rise in their values commercially. Internationalization is also important for measuring and enhancing reputation. Reputation can be considered as a tool for promising good quality products and services to international customers using these two dimensions. In this article a brief overview of reputation in Kazakhstan is provided.

Kazakhstan HEIs discovering Reputation Management

In Kazakhstan, HEIs are showing a growing interest in reputation, as globalization, with all its opportunities and challenges, affects the institutions. International students, accreditation standards, global frameworks for common educational programs, and many other factors are driving a process whereby HEIs increasingly consider Reputation Management in their strategic plans.

Since independence in 1991, the entire educational system of Kazakhstan, including HEIs has undergone many changes. The process included many steps, many success stories and many actions taken by different agencies: government, private capital investors, researchers, educational agencies, and even international actors such as think tanks, accreditation organizations, international educational societies, and others. To respond to the growing interest in this perspective on reputation—although there has been little academic attention to its importance—this article focuses on some of these milestones, reviewing them and reflecting on how Reputation Management has emerged in Kazakhstan.

Internationalization and the Bologna process

The Bologna process represents a significant milestone in university education. As in other countries and cultural contexts, it gave HEIs a deeper perspective on quality and how it is recognized by different actors, that is, on reputation [1]. But for Kazakhstan, some preliminary steps need to be highlighted as they created the foundation for a better understanding of quality and reputation.

In October 2004, former President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the first State Program of Education Development (SPED) for 2005–2010. The importance of this measure can be summed up in two words: internationalization and accreditation. These two concepts shape the reputation of any HEI, but for Kazakhstan, as a young country adhering to new standards, their importance cannot be overstated.

In terms of internationalization, SPED 2005–2010 created an environment for the country's HEIs to incorporate international standards which made it easier for Kazakhstani HEIs to open up to the world. The same can be said in terms of accreditation: thanks to this measure, in 2007 accreditation was introduced into Education Law as a voluntary procedure allowing for the elaboration of standards by the government, and the possibility of establishing Quality Assurance agencies in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan signed the Lisbon Convention and joined the Bologna process on March 12, 2010, as the 47th member and the first Central Asian Republic. Quality assurance has gained importance with the development of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance. With these two factors, the way was opened for the incorporation of accreditation agencies in the country, and many HEIs are joining international accreditation processes, internal and external.

Another factor to consider in this solidification of the concept of reputation is the constant struggle to increase the autonomy of Kazakhstani universities. During the last decades, many different measures have been taken to provide the necessary independence of HEIs. Many of the advantages of this process were highlighted in the revision of Kazakhstan's education system proposed by the World Bank and the OECD in 2007, and in the "State Program for the Development of Education in the Republic of Kazakhstan" for 2010–2020. This new program also paid special attention to the development of independent accreditation and a new independent agency was created changing accreditation practices in the country.

In February 2021, in a move announced a few years earlier (in 2016 by the Minister of Education and Science of Kazakhstan), degrees are no longer issued by the state but are the responsibility of each HEI (with the sole exception of doctors, whose degrees must be standardized by law). This decision may be considered spurious from a reputational perspective, but for many experts it could lead to fairer efforts by each HEI to devote their attention to their stakeholders. Among the agents influenced by this measure are those that could affect reputation significantly more intensely, such as employees, students—local and international—and their families.

Conclusions

Many questions arise in this long (even when chronologically short) discovery process of Reputation Management in Kazakhstan. The challenge for HEIs seems to be in finding a way to transmit these internationalization, accreditation, and autonomy efforts to those actors hungry for reliable institutions. Further research could record communication efforts in Reputation Management. This holistic vision must consider all the previous milestones as a stable base to transform those desires to inspire confidence in concrete actions undertaken by different universities.

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The Reputation of Universities in Kazakhstan after the Appearance of the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating

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The "new reality" in higher education (HE) is based on digitalization, globalization, transparency in decision-making, student-centeredness, and student willingness to study independently. The globalization of society has influenced the growth of competition among universities for the best students and the best professors and researchers. Kazakhstani universities are no longer closed and partially isolated organizations, they have begun to actively interact with the local community, promote the Sustainable Development Goals, and form ethical socially-responsible citizens. The importance of informing society about the activities of the university has significantly increased. The student body is changing as lifelong learning has brought individuals with more mature critical thinking skills to universities.

In the last century, it was believed that the returns on investment in education have a multiplier effect, now universities in Kazakhstan realize that only lifelong learning can be the basis of individual competitiveness. Young Kazakhstanis still have the opinion that it is better to study at the best university and then improve your resume. Kazakhstani universities are slowly understanding that the value of a practice-oriented approach is growing, and that is a challenge for many professors at universities, who have had no practical experience in their fields.

Thus, universities are forced to defend their existence and attract prospective students; they are seeing that students are not tied to their country, since educational borders have become transparent. Digitalization has made online education accessible anywhere. The competition of world-class universities for the best students and teachers (according to J. Salmi) has led to the stratification of society and the emergence of critical gaps between all kinds of HE institutions.

Kazakhstan opted for accreditation as a value for reputation

Globalization has intensified the race for leadership among universities. Most likely due to the aggressive marketing of rating agencies, quality of education is assessed by indirect criteria (citation rate, publication activity, the number of foreign students and teachers, the ratio of students and teachers). Almost 10 years ago, the Independent Agency for Accreditation and Rating (IAAR), a nonprofit organization, was created in Kazakhstan to improve the competitiveness of HEI and to conduct external evaluation of universities in the country at the national and international level by institutional and specialized accreditation.

The direct expert independent assessment conducted during accreditation follow standards developed on the basis of guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area (ESG). These contain a special section "informing the public", which involves not only managing the reputation of the university, but also maintaining the reputation of the education system itself.

Competition between universities is no longer limited to geographic location. However, not all Kazakhstani universities are ready to consciously manage their reputation. For example, only some Kazakhstani universities have structures responsible for reputation management (Narxoz, KasGJuU, AlmaU).As one the cornerstones of reputation, strategic management is inseparable from the mission of the university and the management of the brand, transferring internal improvements and changes to the external ecosystem. The reputation of the university depends on the quality of educational programs, faculties and leadership, and the reputation of each student, teacher, and employee. The external reputation of a university, consisting of the set of perceptions and feelings which develops among consumers (real and potential) about the educational goods and services of the university, is formed with the help of deliberate communication and internal quality. On the other hand, internal reputation is determined by the quality of education, the understanding of the student as an equal partner in the educational process, organizational culture, staff management, the educational environment, and its socio-psychological climate.

Bearing these in mind, we can affirm that it was the accreditation standards developed based on ESG after 2015 that prompted Kazakhstani universities to start managing their reputations.

Adherence to the principles of the process has built a system of priorities for the modernization of the education system. The presence of the Bolashak program (a scholarship which is awarded to high-performing students from Kazakhstan to study overseas all-expenses paid, if they return to Kazakhstan to work for at least five years after graduation), influenced the development of Kazakhstani universities, defining the priorities of cooperation.

Among prospective Kazakhstani students, there is still the opinion that studying at a foreign university is more prestigious than at a Kazakhstani one, as it allows them to apply for better positions and earn a higher salary. In response, the government started some strategies to develop Kazakhstani universities; one example is the national competition for teachers and researchers, "Best University Lectures", that gives them a subscription to international scientific publications bases and free access to educational platforms. Among professors, there has been a decrease in demand for a permanent position at universities. In a sense, this is an opportunity to attract practitioners to universities, which also improves the reputation of educational programs, since they become more project and practice orientated.

Fierce competition, new ways of reaffirmation

Kazakhstani universities are in competition with nearby Russian universities. Over the past decade, about 30,000 Kazakhstani students apply for Russian HEI annually. The share of students studying abroad has steadily increased from 1.2% in 2014 to 1.5% at the present. In quantitative terms, the number of students increased from 43,039 in 2014 to 83,503 (according to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics). That is, 10–15% of the student population study at foreign universities.

The outflow of the best students negatively affects both the reputation of local universities and the state of the country's economy. This trend is likely to continue, despite the pandemic, as the number of state-funded places in Russian universities is increasing to attract foreign students, and grant programs at Kazakhstani universities have compulsory graduate work programs. Two Kazakhstani accreditation bodies, IAAR and NAOKO, are full members of the European Network for Quality Assurance. They are positively effecting universities and educational programs by accrediting the quality of their degrees and of the universities in general. There is also an interest in the assessment of HEI in Kazakhstan from the National Chamber of Entrepreneurs "Atameken", which recently started rating educational programs in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan. These ratings are based on the study of the university's professional reputation.

Conclusion

The factors that negatively affect the reputation of Kazakhstani universities can be attributed to the lack of systemic measures to manage the reputations of universities, and the low status of university professors. There is a clear movement in Kazakhstani universities to introduce innovations, support reforms, observe the principles of the Bologna process, participate in Erasmus+ projects, attract top foreign staff, and increase the availability of grant programs.

There is a need to develop a national project to inform the public, and promote the best universities, teachers and researchers. Another solution could be the creation of platforms for cooperation between universities at different levels. At the university level, we see a lack of structures for reputation management, and the absent of reputation management measures in university strategies.

University Reputation and the Pandemic Crisis

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Universities have been subject to a range of crises: acts of violence, fraud, abuse, even terrorism. However, the crisis caused by the pandemic is different, rendering it especially difficult to manage at all levels including the reputational. The pandemic struck from outside the university: its causes cannot be addressed; we can only work to protect ourselves from its effects and one of those is the loss of reputation with stakeholders. The virus is lethal and puts two primary personal and social goods at risk: health and safety. The pandemic is global, affecting all countries from Russia to the US, Germany to Korea. It has an impact on all aspects of academic life: teaching, research, knowledge transfer, public events, and relationships. It affects all stakeholders: current and prospective students, professors, researchers and other employees, businesses, and the local community as a whole. The evolution of the pandemic is unpredictable, which makes medium- to long-term response measures impossible to plan. It has been relatively long-lasting [1]. Finally, it is common to all organizations, public and private, companies and institutions.

Since this is a special crisis, it was and still is a reputational risk for all universities, given that for several months they were at risk of generating negative perceptions among all their stakeholders. Consequently, universities have had to react with their governing bodies, employees and communication departments working to maintain or at least not damage their prestige.

Uncertainty in higher education

For over a year now, universities have had to work in a climate of uncertainty. In times of ambiguity or confusion, more and more questions arise but answers take longer and longer to arrive, there are no clear solutions, and decisions may have to be delayed. In short, a pandemic may constitute the worst possible scenario for reputation management. The beginning of the pandemic was a threat to the reputation for fear of lowering the quality of education, because many families were afraid that the quality of education would drop drastically with distance learning.

For Russian universities, the period of distance learning started at the beginning of April 2020. Most of the management policies of Russian HEI were related to the safety of students and employees, and to fundamental issues of organizing the educational process under pandemic conditions. The largest Russian universities, on the basis of the Association of Global Universities, with experience in the global community, assisted students, faculty, and staff, in how to organize learning in the new conditions, where and how to adopt courses or online learning, how to use educational digital technologies, providing lists of online courses for free use by students.

When we look at the global picture, we can trace four stages in the first year of the coronavirus crisis. The first was closing facilities: from the end of February to mid-March 2020, awareness of the pandemic, increasing uncertainty and other concerns led to the shutting down of facilities. This step provided an initial sense of relief: the risk of infection among thousands of students and professors was contained. The second was maintaining activity: implementing processes to ensure university activities—especially teaching—could continue, and to enable students complete the academic year. Online teaching and full-time teleworking for all. This transformation saw varying degrees of success in different universities. In many institutions, professors proved sufficiently flexible, adaptable, and committed to investing much time in learning new techniques to meet student needs. For instance, the Russian media company RBC together with the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology produced a course of four video-lectures for university teachers on how to conduct lectures/seminars online. Moscow State University (MSU) used its own educational and training platform, "University Without Borders", and online platforms that were open and contain more than 300 unique courses with 6 000 video lectures by leading MSU teachers.

The third stage was preparing for the future: university authorities had to begin planning for the 2020/21 academic year in a climate of great uncertainty. This endeavor comprised three tasks: putting in place health and safety measures that would protect the university community on their return to on-campus activity; refining the technological tools and teaching skills required to deliver blended learning; and finally, in many universities, rolling out a promotion campaign to encourage students to enroll at university despite the ongoing uncertainty of the situation.

The fourth stage was starting again: the beginning of the fourth stage coincided with the start of 2020/21 academic year and the challenge to overcome all the obstacles relating to health, safety and mobility. Fears and concerns from the first stage resurfaced; everyone was keen to return to normality, but no one knew what the "new normal" would be like. Universities had to be cautious regarding the promises and commitments made to students.

Given that the pandemic is a different kind of crisis, with a set of specific features, a more detailed account of four aspects of university life may be worthwhile mentioning.

The first is Health, the primary good to be protected throughout the university community. The second is Teaching, many universities invested in their university community to ensure that teaching could continue uninterrupted. Digital transformation became an immediate priority. Universities that already delivered teaching online coped better under these circumstances; other universities had no alternative but to adapt. The third is Sustainability, this difficulty may have been less acute in the academic

world than in the business sector but retaining posts and positions has been and will continue to be a significant issue. The fourth aspect is Solidarity. The pandemic has provoked serious problems in the societies in which universities are based: the challenges that HEIs must endeavor to address have been met with a range of new initiatives in the fields of social support and voluntary work.

A case of success in overcoming the crisis

In many cases, the work described above led to successful outcomes, as in the case of the University of Navarra in Spain, a university that has been hit in its history by two bombs from radical groups of the Basque country and now a pandemic. The crises of this university clearly show the skill of the management and the communication teams that work side by side to take care of their university community and maintain the reputation of an institution that has a prestigious name in Latin America. We believe this case can help other universities to face different types of crises and maintain their reputation in the eyes of their stakeholders.

The University of Navarra aimed to apply lessons learned from previous crises which included the reputational axis to the pandemic situation, based on one key premise: a crisis requires extraordinary leadership; a leader must be clearly in charge. Only then can problems be defined, solutions identified, trust maintained with all internal and external stakeholders, and institutional reputation safeguarded.

Given this framing, communication is a vital dimension of leadership. As in all crises, which can turn into reputational crises, those impacted by the situation—in this case, the university community—expressed a greater need for information, otherwise they start losing trust in the institution. People need to know what is happening and why; what has happened, and what may happen; how they will be affected and how they can help. Communication with all the stakeholders of the HEI is a must to keep the reputation of and trust in the institution and should be a continuous activity throughout a crisis. "The most significant strategic challenge is to communicate certainty, clarity and a sense of calm in all our messages" (Juan Manuel Mora, Vice President for Communication and current Director of the Center for University Governance and Reputation, 2 July 2020, The World 100 Reputation Network).

Lessons in reputation management

Some lessons were learned in reputation management and crisis communication at the University of Navarra. Leadership goes hand in hand with communication. In uncertain times, decision-making may take longer, and communication actions and their publics may have to wait. The University of Navarra has had a Vice President for Communication for the last 15 years. In times of crisis, they assume the function of an institutional driver in decision-making, to identify the questions, concerns and fears people may have and to lobby for early-response actions: to close university facilities even before the government authorities so ordered;

to reassure university staff and students; to address financial concerns; and to raise awareness regarding healthcare issues. The second step, comprehensive communication, is interconnected. To address the many urgent concerns provoked by the crisis, the university set up seven special committees: (1) Health, (2) People, (3) Teaching, (4) Students, (5) Finance, (6) Promotion and (7) Communication. In the following stage, committees were reorganized into two (Health, People and Covid Follow-up). All the committees included a university vice president, a general coordinator and a communications coordinator, in addition to other professionals with specialist expertise in the corresponding field. The Communication Committee comprised the Vice President for Communication, a general planner, and the communications coordinators of the other committees. The Communications Department (responsible for the balance of crisis management, reputation and trust) had access to all the information, enabling the development of specific coordinated communications. Thus, the university's corporate messaging was clear and coherent and the perceptions of the internal and external stakeholders of the university were always based on accurate information.

The importance of listening to stakeholders (Macnamara, 2016) is a key aspect of reputation management, one which cannot be set aside in a time of crisis. The university listened to its students, professors, and other staff members. In a reasonable timeframe, questionnaires were administered among students and faculty members. The information generated by these surveys was factored into decision-making—especially in relation to the organization of teaching activities.

Communication has been crucial in dealing with the current pandemic, the tone of the messages keeps a sense of calm, and the presence and manner of the university's President has been approachable. Questions must be foreseen and answered as clearly as possible. Many ways of communication have been deployed: letters, bulletins, videos, tweets, blog posts, etc. Webinars were run, and interviews with managers, professors, other members of staff, students, formers students and journalists were published.

The crisis has highlighted the importance of science communication and, in turn, the effective communication of science. Over the past year, the positive impact of fact-checked, objective, disinterested and timely information has become clear. The negative effects of fake news, rumors and false assumptions have likewise been noted. Such dynamics affect society in general, and the university as the natural habitat of science, in particular.

There is no doubt that this crisis has challenged the reputation universities globally and will require in-depth analysis in the future. The purpose of this article was to offer a brief overview, summarizing a few preliminary considerations.

Notes

[1] cfr. Juan Manuel Mora, junio 2020, Docencia Rubic, Aprendizajes de la Enseñanza Universitaria en tiempos de la Covid-19

University Proposals for Post-Pandemic Reconstruction

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The world is witnessing the most dramatic period experienced by a generation. All over the planet, 113 million people have been infected by the coronavirus and 2.5 million have died in a matter of months [1]. Covid-19 has raised questions about the health and economic systems of the entire world and has revealed the educational and civic shortcomings of societies that can have issues with self-discipline and protecting the common good. Citizens' trust in institutions, including political, economic, health, educational and communication systems, must be rebuilt, and the paradigms of the current world order may need revising.

In this context, some have questioned the university leadership when non-degree holders were the ones who prevented economic collapse in the darkest hours of lockdown (Michael Sandel) [2]. Now that the initial crunch is over, a different approach may be expected from university leaders to the task of rebuilding a society whose conscience has been dealt a serious blow.

The perspective of reputation

To recover trust, a proposal would be a reconstruction approach based on the conceptual framework of corporate reputation. By applying this framework to the higher education (HE) context, we could say that a university's reputation is the set of perceptions which arise from its conduct with its different audiences, and which provide the motivation for its supportive or oppositional behavior in a specific context. In short, society trusts institutions that serve society.

These perceptions affect three areas: the conduct of the organization itself, along with the university identity, culture and performance; the relations the university establishes with stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students, alumni, companies and institutions); and the context, which is fluid, changing and capable of modifying relations and perceptions.

Reputation is a complex, interdisciplinary concept. Built inside an organization, it is manifested outward. In short, it is an intangible resource granted only to deserving institutions. Difficult to cultivate and very easy to lose, reputation must be carefully managed, especially with the rise of threats such as Covid-19 [3].

Analyzing the current situation in this conceptual framework

Some observations on the current university reality in the context of Covid-19, are from an organizational point of view. Teaching and research activity have been sharply affected. The challenge has been met with great effort, but with insufficient resources and technology. Forced to act quickly, universities adopted an introspective attitude of looking for solutions as they struggle with the present situation of remote teaching.

Another perspective is that of the stakeholders. The university is experiencing a moment of truth with stakeholders, including teachers, administrative and service personnel, students, and alumni. Has the university addressed their needs? Do they feel they got enough out of the university? Are they missing something? Or do they simply feel abandoned to their fate?

A third perspective is the context, the environment has become unsafe, unpredictable, and problematic. The pandemic has put the internationalization of higher education and the employability of its graduates at risk while it poses a threat to HE activities due to the impact of the economic recession on research, free access to education and equal opportunities

Five proposals for university leadership

Reputation as a multidimensional concept with a multi-stakeholder approach has consequences for the leadership and governance of HE institutions. With the aim of opening the discussion, we present five proposals that can help universities successfully handle post-pandemic reconstruction.

Adaptive Organizations. The university is an ecosystem in an environment that it must care for through its relations with other social organizations with which it collaborates. The relations must never be based on domination or a lack of interest [4]. This complex, vulnerable environment is in the process of transformation which calls for a university that is sensitive to openness and learning, whose decision-making structures and bodies are flexible and effective, and which uses its social intelligence to understand the demands of the ecosystem.

Meaningful Relations. The university is a community of relations based on learning, which means that its stakeholders are not a means, but an end. Cultivating and improving relations opens up many opportunities: it generates the satisfaction and loyalty of students, the commitment of professors and other employees, links with alumni, and legitimacy in the community. For relations to generate trust, there must be listening, integration, changes and, therefore, innovation.

Mission-Oriented Innovation. When an organization is familiar with and lives out its mission, it can use this mission to help interpret changes in the environment and connect its aspirations to the concerns of the world [5]. Taking a stakeholder-oriented approach leads to the pursuit of innovative teaching and research solutions based on a solid technological structure and geared toward entrepreneurship and the job market. It also involves embracing the university's mission of providing educational training for people who know they are vulnerable, dependent and have a sense of solidarity, as described by Paul Ashwin in his latest book Transforming University Education: A Manifesto.

Social Transformation. For a long time, the notion of the university as a driver of economic and social progress has been emphasized to the extent of being a cliché. So many years of pragmatic training may have lulled us into over-looking something we now realize we are missing: the ability to awaken students' intellectual interest and sense of purpose, and to protect the conscience of the community and preservation of the common heritage [6]. As suggested by Irene Vallejo in her celebrated essay El infinito en un junco, only when we share a common conscience do we stop being strangers. This is also a kind of social transformation.

Creative Leadership. Universities are called on to recover their intellectual and moral strength to provide society with encouragement in times of uncertainty. We need firm, calm voices that serve as references for an institution that is fully aware that tradition and knowledge have placed it at the forefront of the community. Its service-based leadership is creative because creativity is, in the words of José Antonio Marina, the ability to intentionally produce effective surprises [7].

A rise in reputation

The concepts discussed in this article has little to do with the reputation race driven by rankings [8]. A suggestion would be to abandon this competitive race and aspire to a new concept: a rise in universities' reputations. This would be less focused on results and more in line with the mission of transforming society in dialogue with stakeholders. The university needs support, a clear strategy, more resources and plenty of ambition.

As was said in the beginning, the purpose of this article is to excite your curiosity and propose a challenge. How we reinvent ourselves and help people with the task of reconstruction will determine our future. Let us finish with the hope to begin a discussion that returns the university to its rightful place.

References and notes

[1] As of 25 February 2021.
[2] Michael Sandel, joined Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1980, has written globally influential works on justice, ethics, democracy, and markets. His books, which include "What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets," "Justice: What's the Right Thing to Do?" and "The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering," have been translated into 29 languages.
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