











“Policy of managing the educational activities of the university in the context of the russian-Ukrainian war”

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SPECIAL ISSUE: ACADEMIC MANAGEMENT IN THE CONDITIONS OF WAR

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POLICY OF MANAGING THE EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNIVERSITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

Abstract

The purpose of the study is to identify the peculiarities of the activities of a higher education institution during a full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army. On the example of the Higher Educational Establishment of Ukoopspilka "Poltava University of Economics and Trade", the paper considers ways to search for and identify internal capabilities of the educational institution that would allow compensation and overcoming the negative impact of the aggressive external environment on the educational process, creating synergy between teaching, student education and youth involvement in volunteer activities. The paper describes the existing practices of partnership support in terms of interest in the learning process through the continuation of international cooperation, the application of analytical approaches to solving problems in matters of financial instability, the continuation of scientific and stabilization of the educational component, and the identification of existing experience in educational work at the university through involving young people in various career guidance and student activities. An important issue in the paper is the question of the volunteer activities of the university, which has implemented several projects to support war refugees and internally displaced persons from the temporarily occupied territories and the zone of active hostilities. Achieving such goals is possible only through a deep understanding of and adherence to the mission of Poltava University of Economics and Trade, which is so deeply perceived by the entire team of its employees.

Keywords

educational management, sustainability, volunteer activities, crisis management, university sustainability

JEL Classification

I23, I25, M14

INTRODUCTION

Higher educational institutions of Ukraine have always been a center for the formation of creative and innovative youth, who lead an active lifestyle and have sufficient professional skills to carry out their professional activities. Achieving the set goals during the implementation of the educational process is ensured by the synergy of highly qualified professors and the perfect management system of higher education institutions. Such synergy makes it possible to involve student youth in the educational process as active participants, who independently, under the guidance of teachers, form their own vision of professional development. In times of stability and sustainable development, achieving such results does not encounter problems on its way. But as soon as the external environment is a source of threats and negative influence, such synergy becomes difficult to achieve.

The full-scale invasion of the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 became precisely such a challenge for the Ukrainian educational community. Most Ukrainian universities have developed their own strategy for ensuring the educational process during the military aggression of the Russian Federation.

Using the example of an economic university, the paper examines the features of management policy aimed at forming a stable center to support the livelihoods of its employees, students, *internally displaced persons* (IDPs), the Ukrainian military, and ensure the sustainability of the country's economic development during active hostilities.

1. RESULTS

Poltava University of Economics and Trade (PUET) was founded in 1961 in Poltava. It is located in the central part of Ukraine. PUET has a private form of ownership and is subordinated to the Central Union of Consumer Societies.

The internal quality management of educational activities operates on the principles of human-centeredness and ensuring the personal development of all participants in the educational process. For more than 60 years of educational activity, the Poltava University of Economics and Trade has chosen for professional training more than 100 thousand students and received education in the fields of economics, trade, marketing, management, law, food technologies, the field of hotel, restaurant and tourist services, translation and international economic relations.

PUET is a member of the Magna Charta Universitatum, maintains mutually beneficial relations with more than 80 higher education institutions from around the world.

Until February 24, 2022, PUET actively implemented international projects within the framework of the European Union's Erasmus+ program, "MEET UP! German-Ukrainian Youth Meetings" program, in partnership with the British Council in Ukraine, the EU Delegation to Ukraine, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, DVV International, the Canadian Foundation for Local Initiatives, the International Organization for Migration, the German Society for International Cooperation GIZ, the Fulbright Program Office, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), etc.

The teaching staff includes 49 doctors of sciences and professors, 162 candidates of sciences and associate professors.

As of January 1, 2022, PUET enrolled 1,734 full-time students and 278 international students. After February 24, 2022, all foreign students left Ukraine and continued their studies in a distance learning program. As of May 31, 2022, there were 1,729 full-time students and 142 foreign students at PUET.

From the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war in 2014, PUET has become a refuge for an internally displaced university from the Luhansk city – Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University – consisting of two faculties. After the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army the 24 of February, 2022, the university was completely relocated. As of March 1, 2023, 36 professors and more than 300 students from Luhansk live in PUET dormitories and study in university classrooms as an independent division.

Considering the implementation of activities in PUET after February 24, 2022, it should be divided into educational, financial, internationalization and volunteer activities, which most accurately characterize the success of the implementation of the educational institution's management system.

1.1. PUET's educational process during the full-scale invasion

On September 1, 2023, in accordance with the orders of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Poltava Regional Military Administration, PUET began the academic year offline.

In addition to the educational process, students do volunteer work, went to a sorting center to

collect aid packages for IDPs, and together with their teachers created a shelter where they are now staying during air raids and where conditions for classes are created. For moral support of students in PUET during the first semester, the following was held: traditional Freshman Debut Showcase, St. Nicholas Day, International Student Day, the Traditional Science Night at PUET, and the Spring Shevchenko Science Night. Each of the events was also aimed at raising additional funds to support the needs of the military units under PUET's care. During the summer holidays, PUET organized a summer camp for school graduates, during which about 20 professional trainings were conducted by university professors.

For the period from February 24, 2022, the Educational and Research Center for Higher Education Quality Assurance of PUET held 16 accreditations of educational programs in various specialties at different levels of higher education. The departments and structural subdivisions initiated and successfully conducted scientific events of various formats with the participation of scientific and pedagogical and practical workers, students, graduate students, in particular, round tables, seminars, trainings, etc. A number of scientific events were held within the framework of cooperation agreements with higher education institutions, institutions, organizations of Poltava, Ukraine, and abroad.

1.2. PUET's financial policy during the full-scale invasion

At the end of 2022, PUET has a total capital of UAH 82,042.0 thousand. Thus, in 2021 compared to 2020, the capital increased by UAH 1,128.0 thousand, and in 2022 compared to 2021 it decreased by UAH 7,356.0 thousand. In general, this resulted in a decrease in funding by UAH 6,228.0 thousand. The analysis of the use of labor resources for 2020–2022 shows that there are some problematic processes regarding the overall decrease in the average number of employees from 481 people in 2020 to 348 people in 2022. On April 1, 2022, with the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army and the decrease in students' ability to pay, the university management decided to cancel the additional payments to academic

staff, and all other employees were transferred to 0.75 rates. This also led to a reduction in the number of employees.

The martial law has influenced changes in the structure of expenses, namely, the largest share in the structure of expenses is occupied by salaries, utility expenses are growing, business trips are decreasing, and scholarships are growing steadily. Due to the full-scale invasion, another item was added to the expenditures – expenses for assistance to the Armed Forces and support for IDPs, totaling about UAH 500 thousand.

1.3. PUET's internationalization policy during the full-scale invasion

After February 24, PUET continued close cooperation with higher education institutions and institutions abroad: two new cooperation agreements were concluded with higher education institutions and institutions from the Republic of Lithuania (Vilnius College/University of Applied Sciences); Republic of Cyprus (Cyprus Institute of Marketing). During this period, academic staff and management of the University provided cooperation on 11 grant projects, and 15 representatives of the University were on 20 scientific, creative and business trips abroad in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Republic of Cyprus, the Republic of Lithuania, the Republic of Slovenia, the Republic of Latvia, and the Kingdom of Spain (Poltava University of Economics and Trade, 2022).

From September 1, 2023, the implementation of the Erasmus+ international credit mobility projects supported in the 2020 and 2019 competitions continues. This academic year, only female students and teachers (more than 20 people) are involved, who will travel outside Ukraine to gain European experience in their respective specialties.

1.4. PUET's volunteering during the full-scale invasion

Volunteering is one of the main processes for PUET today. Therefore, in 2018, the NGO "IT Development", which was created with the support and participation of Luhansk Taras Shevchenko National University, was reorgan-

ized into the non-government organization (NGO) “Adult Education Center of Poltava Region” (NGO “AECPR”). Its founders included PUET alumni and staff.

The synergy of the NGO “AECPR” and the University gave good results. Thus, in 2018, the “University of the Third Age” project was launched. In September 2021, more than 700 people of retirement age started classes there.

In 2019, with the support of DVV International, the NGO “AECPR” opened the “Adult Education Center – an environment for personal professional development of the city of Poltava” on the basis of PUET. During almost four years of the Center’s activity, hundreds of *internally displaced persons*, veterans of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and representatives of socially vulnerable categories of the population of the region have become its trainees.

The Poltava City Council supported the initiatives of the NGO “AECPR” and in 2021 adopted the target Program “Development of Adult Education in the Poltava City Territorial Community for 2021–2025”. The budget for 2022 provided funds for its financing. Unfortunately, after the start of Russia’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine, the financing of the Program was stopped. Nevertheless, on September 2, 2022, in Paris, the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities accepted the city of Poltava as a member.

After February 24, 2022, the NGO “AECPR”, like PUET, did not stop implementing educational projects and programs. At the same time, the work for supporting war refugees and IDPs from temporarily occupied territories and zones of active hostilities became of primary importance in its activities.

Reception and provision with temporary shelter of transit refugees from areas of active hostilities in Kharkiv, Sumy, Luhansk, and Donetsk regions. The largest flow of such refugees was in March and May 2022. During this time, more than 3,000 people were accommodated in university dormitories for 1–4 days. The main expenses for their accommodation, food, help with medicines, clothes, and hygiene products were covered by charitable contributions and at the expense of volunteer initiatives of the NGO “AECPR”. From the funds provided by international charitable

funds, the indebtedness for the payment of communal services for the temporary accommodation of 2,650 refugees (an average of 3 days each) were covered in March (₴ 294,323.8 / € 7,875 – an average of € 2.97 per person) and 540 refugees in May (₴ 32096.7 / € 848.4 – € 1.57 per person).

Most of the refugees who survived the horrors of rocket and artillery shelling in March–May moved on: to Western Ukraine and the countries of the European Union. But some of them (mostly elderly people, mothers with children or those who had no savings, etc.) stayed in university dormitories for a long time, acquiring the status of IDPs. Already in March 2022, 80 such persons lived in PUET dormitories, in April – 343, in May – 378, in June – 374, in July – 396, and in August – 423.

Humanitarian aid in the form of clothing and footwear was provided immediately, as many refugees fled even without a change of underwear. And no one took clothes for the spring or summer seasons with them. Therefore, on the initiative of the NGO “AECPR”, a Humanitarian assistance point was organized in the sports complex of the university.

Arrangement of a bombproof shelter. It began functioning immediately after the large-scale invasion of Russia into Ukraine by the volunteers of the NGO “AECPR” and the university, as well as displaced refugees. The Red Cross Society of Ukraine provided material assistance for stocking the warehouse with medicines and warm blankets. On February 25, its employees already held the first class on providing first aid with members of the volunteer unit. Thanks to the efforts of volunteers, a two-day supply of foodstuffs, demanded by the regulations, has been created in the warehouse.

In the first two weeks of their mass arrival, this mission was undertaken by volunteers who collected food from the citizens of Poltava and supported the IDPs. The student canteen and cafe, which were provided by local entrepreneurs, stopped working. Since May, the regional military-civilian administration began to provide systematic assistance with basic foodstuffs for hot meals.

NGO “AECPR” and partner human rights non-government organizations helped displaced persons to acquire the status of IDPs, which gave them the right

to monthly financial support from the state in the amount of up to €60. In March-September 2022, 758 people who temporarily or for a long time lived in university dormitories received this status.

The initiative group of IDPs “Self-organization of PUET” created by NGO “AECF” and volunteers of the university and the Poltava organization of the Red Cross Society in Ukraine took part in the implementation of the project of financial assistance to IDPs of the International Committee of the Red Cross. As a result, more than 300 IDPs living in PUET dormitories received financial assistance of €60 per month for three months. According to the agreement of the NGO “AECF” with the Charitable Foundation “Right for Protection”, its team worked in the premises of PUET, collecting data for financial assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for 4 months. During this time, not only IDPs who lived in PUET dormitories, but also from all over Poltava were able to apply for financial assistance.

Medical support became relevant already in the first days of the war. It turned out that the staff of the uni-

versity’s medical center was not enough to provide medical care to those who sought it, as well as the medicines they needed. Therefore, they gratefully accepted the volunteer help of doctors of private clinics in Poltava and students of the Poltava Medical University, with the help of whose efforts a rotation of doctors at the university’s medical center was organized.

Dormitory residents were regularly informed about opportunities to receive psychological support from volunteer initiatives of public organizations of Poltava – partners of the University. The adult education center, created and operating on the basis of PUET with the support of the DVV International representative office in Ukraine, conducted targeted trainings.

Since there have always been quite a significant proportion of children among the IDPs, the volunteers of the NGO “AECF” and the university tried to give them moments of joy and warmth. At first, it was toys, candies, cookies that were given to children for the holidays. Later, hygiene products from charity funds were added to them.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study show the resilience of higher education in Ukraine, which faced a serious challenge from the external environment, such as full-scale military operations on the territory of Ukraine. The paper presents the facts of the implementation of an effective management system of PUET, which has become a center of steadfastness and support both for its students and employees, as well as for IDPs from active combat zones.

As a result of the successfully implemented crisis management strategy, the PUET leaders managed to rally the team of teaching staff and students, attract international charitable funds and, as a result, continue the successful implementation of the educational and scientific activities of the university during the full-scale invasion of the Russian army on the territory of Ukraine.

To succeed in the implementation of educational activities, universities need a clear definition of tactical goals and their gradual achievement by combining internal efforts. Understanding the importance of implementing educational activities, supporting the team and students, integration with external partners will strengthen the position of Ukraine in the conditions of war.

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