С. В. ЛОБОВА

Угрозы и уязвимость академической профессии vs развитие кадрового потенциала университета

Формирование и развитие кадрового потенциала является одним из условий для вхождения университета в анонсированный Министерством образования и науки Российской Федерации в июне 2020 года проект поддержки организаций высшего образования – Программу стратегического академического лидерства. Однако, выполнение этого условия не может осуществляться без преодоления ограничений и эффективных ответов на вызовы, которые связаны с академической профессией.

Целью статьи является исследование угроз и барьеров для развития кадрового потенциала университета. Показано, что в качестве внутренних угроз следует рассматривать высокую стрессогенность деятельности преподавателей, нарушение их персональной безопасности и низкую лояльность, барьером является уязвимость академической профессии. В фокусе исследования – условия деятельности и занятости преподавателей российских университетов, которые определяют их кадровый потенциал. Основные методы исследования: анализ и синтез релевантной научной периодической литературы.

Основные результаты исследования сводятся к идее о том, что наличие угроз и уязвимостей в академической профессии влечет последствия, имеющие разрушающее воздействие не только на личность преподавателя, университет, академическое сообщество, но и на систему высшего образования в целом, катализируют уход преподавателей из академической профессии, и, безусловно, препятствует сохранению и развитию кадрового потенциала университета, обеспечению его конкурентоспособности.

Ключевые слова: кадровый потенциал университета, академическая профессия, уязвимость занятости, прекаризация, лояльность

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S. V. LOBOVA

Threats and vulnerabilities of the academic profession vs university personnel potential development

The formation and development of the university's personnel potential is one of the conditions for joining the project to support higher education organizations announced by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation in June 2020. The project is called the Strategic Academic Leadership Program. The fulfillment of this condition cannot be carried out without overcoming the limitations and effective responses to the challenges that are associated with the academic profession.

The article is a review. Its purpose is to study threats and barriers to the development of the university's personnel potential. It is shown that as internal threats one should consider the high stressfulness of faculty activities, violation of their personal safety and low loyalty; the barrier is the vulnerability of the academic profession. The research focuses on the current staff of Russian universities. The main research methods are analysis and synthesis of relevant scientific periodical literature.

The main result of the study is the position that the presence of threats and vulnerabilities in the academic profession entails consequences that have a devastating effect not only on the personality of the teacher, the university, the academic community, but also on the higher education system as a whole, catalyze the departure of teachers from the academic profession, and prevent the preservation of and the development of the university personnel potential, ensuring the competitiveness and attractiveness of the university.

Keywords: faculty, university personnel potential, academic profession, employment vulnerability, precarization, loyalty

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Introduction

In June 2020, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation announced a new program to support Russian universities. This program is the Strategic Academic Leadership Program. The opportunity for universities to participate in it involves a competitive assessment of development strategies until 2030. An important place in the assessment of strategies is given to the analysis of the personnel potential of universities, as well as the conditions, intentions, and opportunities for its development. In a modern university, human capital is more important than new technologies, financial and material resources. Retention and provision of conditions for faculty productive activity is becoming an essential topic for study and consideration today.

This paper examines the impact of threats and vulnerabilities that are currently characteristic of the academic profession on the preservation and development of the human resources potential of universities. The article has the following structure: firstly, the content of the concept of "personnel potential" is determined, then the impact of such threats to the academic profession as high stress, violation of personal safety, faculty disloyalty on the personnel potential of the university is discussed, and, finally, the presence of vulnerabilities in the academic profession and their relationship with development of human resources. The author examines threats and vulnerabilities for current university professors.

Methods and Materials

The integration of actual scientific results in the subject field of the article is required to solve the set of tasks. I used methods of analysis and synthesis of scientific periodical literature on the topics of formation of personnel potential in universities, threats to personnel potential, the well-being of professors when performing educational, research and organizational tasks, and evaluating changes in the conditions of being in the academic profession. As a result of their application, a thematic overview is presented. It can be useful for studying the development of personnel potential.

The review does not claim to be complete. The author tried to include in it a wide range of publications on modern approaches to university management and the characteristics of labor relations in the field of higher education. References include both Russian and foreign publications.

Results and Discussions

1 A personnel potential of a modern university

One of the key concepts of this work is "university personnel potential". The term "potential" is etymologically derived from the Latin "potentia". This term means force, or latent opportunity, or power, that can be used to solve a problem, achieve a certain goal, the ability of an individual society state [1]. Thus, potential is a characteristic of the organization's resources in a specific place and in a specific period.

The university personnel potential is associated with the concept of "personnel", but includes "not only the actual personnel, but also a certain level of their joint capabilities to

achieve the set goals of the organization” [2]. Personnel potential is the main component of the university potential. It identifies the personnel potential in the long term [3]. Qualitative and quantitative characteristics of human resources form a conclusion about the potential of the university as a whole. A personnel potential is determined by quantitative “qualification and competence characteristics of personnel” [1]. The age structure of faculty has a significant impact on the personnel potential [4].

The success of a university development depends on how quickly it overcomes inertia by introducing modern tools and methods for developing human resources in personnel policy. Surovitskaya divides the forms of personnel potential development into intra-university (corporate) and non-university [4]. Intra-university forms are mainly used in Russian universities. These forms include the functioning and development of a system of effective contracts, the attraction and retention of young faculty, the improvement of the system of continuous education of university employees, the formation and development of a personnel reserve, an increase in the attractiveness of the university as a place of career development [4], and the involvement of graduates in the academic profession.

The tools for the development of personnel potential are: (i) a periodically updated system of requirements for the competitive selection of faculty, (ii) improvement of the personnel certification system, the implementation of personalized programs for the professional and personal growth of scientific and pedagogical workers, (iii) faculty portfolios and ratings, (iv) competitive tools to support their scientific initiatives, (v) retraining and advanced training programs for scientific and pedagogical workers, and (vi) plans and reports in the field of personnel potential development, information systems to support this type of activity [4]. The HR management system of a modern Russian university is diversifying through the introduction of personal development methods that have proven themselves in business: mentoring, secondment, shadowing, buddying [4].

The preservation and development of personnel potential as a prerequisite for the success and competitiveness of the university depend on the number of involved scientific and pedagogical workers, their competence and qualification characteristics. The volume and content of these characteristics depend on many factors, including the self-identity and quality of life of the staff, motivational factors and loyalty to the profession, the configuration of the academic community [5].

2 Threats to the preservation of the university human resources

The quantity and quality of university personnel potential are determined by faculty quantity and quality. The threats to the development of personnel potential directly correlate with the threats to the faculty that arise during their professional activity. The result of the analysis of the definition of “threat” allows to say that it expresses real intentions to harm or violate security and is conditioned by the presence of factors for the possibility of their causing. The appearance or absence of security threats is determined by the presence of subject-object relations. There are several threats: (1) high stressfulness due to changes in the structure of employment in the academic profession, as well as imbalance in work and personal life; (2) violation of the faculty personal safety; (3) low faculty loyalty to the university.

Abramov and co-authors declare that “professional activity in the academic sphere is becoming more and more stressful: the idea of a relaxed work regime of university teachers and scientists is becoming a thing of the past under the pressure of the managerial principles of managing higher education and science” [6]. Further the main components of stressfulness in academic activity are demonstrated.

There are three main components in the academic profession: teaching, research, service [7]. The content of the employment of a faculty is distinguished by multitasking, when it is necessary to perform simultaneously a number of multidirectional functions related to teaching, research, administrative work, and expert activities.

The research component dominates in the structure of the academic profession at leading Russian universities. The research component is also the main factor at the forefront of the Strategic Academic Leadership Program, which will become the main project to support universities in the next 10 years. This situation leads to the erasure of the traditional differences between teachers and researchers, formation of new academic subidentities which are manifested in the difference of the structures of working time [8; 9]. However, the majority of university professors (from 60 to 70 percent in various studies [10; 11]) prefer teaching, although they consider science to be a necessary component of their activity.

The authors of publications on the study of the academic profession (eg., [12; 13]) argue that the shift in time in favor of research on teaching is a conflict. The basis for the emergence of a conflict is the introduction of a scientometric assessment of the faculty activities. The implementation of the “publication load” in the academic profession is associated with affiliation with a specific university. The assessment of the performance of academic work at universities based on scientometric is explained by the predominance of managerial approaches in management based on the principles of NPM (New Public Management) and the intensification of competition for leading positions in university ranking. Kalgın and co-authors argues that “the use of quantitative assessment is a radical way to reduce management costs: many management decisions become simpler, rationalized, while the uncertainty faced by managers reduces” [14].

Attention to scientometrics in universities determines the negative trend, designated as “publish or perish”, which turns faculty into the academic proletariat and the scientific product into a commodity [14]. The answer to this challenge was the increasingly popular concept of the “slow university” [15]. In 2007, Treanor articulated the rise in stress among academics influenced by a culture of continuous performance assessment and published a statement “Slow University: A Manifesto” [16]. Later in 2010 the idea of a “slow university” was developed in the “Slow Science Manifestoby” by German scientists [17]. Recent works show that even a flexible working hour of a faculty ceases to play the role of a compensatory factor in the face of such demands [18; 19].

Abramov and co-authors [20] pointed out that the blurred boundaries between work and leisure, when work–life balance is violated [21], and the discrepancy in the time budget between scientific, teaching and personal life, are also a source of stress in the field of academic work. The options for the appearance of blur are:

- the hyperconnectivity as a result of the need to respond to online and e-mail requests of students on weekends and evenings, which was a consequence of the widespread introduction of digital technologies. It is expressed in the feeling of constantly waiting for letters and calls, fear of missing something urgent, break away from current events, this reduces the quality of personal and work life [22],
- the need to respond to the uncertainty of the emergence of tasks and the strict time frames for their implementation, their strict regulation, which forms a new perception of academic work – a faculty as office workers [21],
- the need for research, time for which is not allocated separately. Preparation of publications is often included in the so-called “second half of the day”, which means that it is carried out at the expense of the teacher's free time and time of

“doing nothing”, is a “home load”. This reduces the time to think about new ideas, reflect, communicate, and exchange opinions with colleagues, which is an important component of the academic profession.

Violation of the work–life balance of faculty leads to burnout which occurs when a large amount of energy is spent on one role. Burnout and, as a result, leaving the academy are more common among women, young employees, and those in low positions [23].

The indicated dissonances in the academic profession are stressful factors. In Russia the proportion of faculty experiencing severe stress in their professional activities is quite large and is about 20 per cent [21]. In “The Slow Professor: Challenging the Culture of Speed in the Academy” [24] Berg and Seeber argue that 22 percent of those employed in the academic profession are under constant stress. The reason for this stress is the constant feeling of lack of time to solve a large number of professional tasks, both research and organizational. In addition, professors need to be “informationally relevant” to know about current events and trends in science and education. Therefore, faculty spend all free time on maintaining their shape and fulfilling the requirements while constantly experiencing overwork.

Stressogenic factors reduce the level of assessment of professional well-being [25], lower the professional status of a faculty, reduce internal factors of motivation [12], “stimulate to leave this sphere of employment” [26].

Psychological terror at the workplace (mobbing, bullying, bossing) should also be identified as an important threat to personnel security. Heads of university departments often preach an undemocratic style of management in relations to faculty. The undemocratic style is manifested in rough treatment, insults, ridicule, outbursts of anger, “public flogging”, which are outwardly closer to the behavioral manifestations of an authoritarian management style. However, unlike voluntarism and authoritarianism, “hostile” behavior of managers is not aimed at better performance of work tasks, but is aimed at humiliating subordinates, demonstrating their superiority by the leader [27]. Sometimes “the abuser may outwardly behave quite “culturally”. However ... the demotivating effect on the subordinates of the deliberately admitted injustice is much stronger than individual outbursts of aggression on the part of the leader” [28]. As noted by Gatti and Fyodorova [29], the cause of psychological terror can be a simple managerial incompetence of the leadership, in particular, no efficient mechanism of communication “supervisor – subordinate”, no exhaust mechanism of conflict resolution, inability to find effective middle manager.

The low faculty loyalty to a specific university should be considered as a threat to the personnel potential development as well. Alaverdov and Gromova understand the faculty loyalty to the university as the only possible employer in the educational services market. This attitude is conditioned by adherence to moral and ethical standards, involvement in corporate goals, values, and traditions, the prevalence of university priorities over personal [30]. The options for the manifestation of disloyalty are: (a) an unconcealed limitation of labor efforts within the framework of an employment contract, (b) minimization of labor efforts behind an ostentatious demonstration of high loyalty, (c) opportunistic behavior, (d) a hidden desire to achieve their own pragmatic goals which are different from university ones. The presence of disloyal faculty at the university reduces the quality level of personnel potential. Balatsky convincingly argues that the decline in the attractiveness of academic work due to the “depletion of academic rent” impedes the quality reproduction of faculty and negatively affects the human resources of universities [31]. Ezrokh indicated a downward trend into the “faculty demographic hole” [32].

3 Faculty vulnerability as a barrier to the personnel potential development

The transformation of the institutional nature of universities and the position of faculty is a general global trend of transformation in the functioning of the higher education system [33]. It is accompanied by a change in the principles, rules, and structure of the academic environment. The transformation characteristics are:

- universities become customer-oriented organizations and university professors become ordinary employees. In such organizations the interests of the community are questioned [34],
- the established official and academic hierarchies change, the status differences between holders of candidate and doctoral degrees, professors and associate professors, heads of departments and employees are erased [9]. In many Russian universities the norms of teaching work per hour are not differentiated depending on the level of qualification and the position held and in fact amount to or are close to the maximum 900 hours per year [35],
- incentives based on academic standards and reputational control mechanisms are replaced by incentives based on quasi-market conditions [33].

Balatsky notes that “there is a large-scale inversion of the essence of teaching”, service is replaced by business [31].

The change in the status role position of the faculty, their subjectivity causes the emergence of various kinds of vulnerabilities, turns the faculty into a vulnerable employee. The authors [36] defined a vulnerable worker as “[...] someone working in an environment where the risk of being denied employment rights is high and who does not have the capacity or mean to protect themselves from that abuse.”

The faculty vulnerability has several manifestations. Allmer [37], who assessed the labor situation in Scottish universities, lists the following set of vulnerabilities for a modern faculty: feeling insecure about the position at the university, lack of career prospects, increasing competition for jobs, precarization of labor and instability of his own economic situation. The same vulnerabilities are inherent in Russian university professors.

Vulnerable employment places workers at greater risk of experiencing problems and mistreatment at work [36]. One of the vulnerability factors is the emergence of signs of precarization in faculty employment. The precarization of faculty employment is understood as a state of instability and uncertainty in social and labor relations for a given employee, accompanied by economic vulnerability, when work at the university cannot be the subject of medium- and long-term planning in terms of employment and income [38].

For more reliable identification, it is necessary to take into account the employee's subjective perception of his own position [39], such as the presence of fear of losing his job, self-esteem of his own life at the current moment and in the near future and assessment of the fairness of remuneration, social optimism associated with work, the frequency of uncomfortable well-being at work due to the imposition of the idea that it is easy for an employee to find a replacement, which allows “to take into account the subjective perception of his work as unstable, unstable, forced” [40]. Standing labeled the worker's moral and psychological suffering during precarization as “Four A”: anxiety, alienation, anomie, anger [41]. In this case, the “psychological cost” of faculty employment becomes too high. University professors who have these characteristics in their employment join the ranks of the “academic precariat” [42].

Russian researchers Kurbatova and Donova [43] note another problem which is the faculty vulnerability. This is a reduction in the number of faculty, the so-called “heavy

denominator”, and an increase in the workload of employees, which is a tool to achieve the indicator of growth in wages. According to Putin's May decree, university professors are to be paid at least 200 percent of the regional average.

One of the reasons for the emergence of vulnerabilities is the imperfection of academic contracts concluded between the university and the faculty. An academic contract refers to specific legal or other agreements that govern the terms of academic employment. These conditions include the nature and duration of employment, salary and other types of remuneration, criteria for selection and career advancement, burdening with additional academic obligations [44]. A system of effective contracts is used in Russian universities.

The author of the concept of an effective contract with a faculty is Kuzminov, who is the rector of the Higher School of Economics [45]. In his opinion, the incentive system in an effective contract must ensure that two conditions are met:

(1) monetary and other material remuneration (including additional benefits) must be sufficient so that a person who has chosen a university career does not lack material and cultural benefits and can provide his family at the level he desires;

(2) both at the university and outside it, there should be professional communities of scientists and creative practitioners who are able and willing to assess the quality of scientific and teaching work of colleagues in their subject area, since the government, entrepreneurs, students and their parents are not able for nothing other than a formal assessment without participation of professional communities [45].

However, the practice of using effective contracts in the Russian academy shows that they generally infringe on faculty rights and opportunities. An effective contract at a university as a client-oriented organization has the following characteristics: (i) urgent in duration (for modern Russian practice, the contract term is up to 5 years, usually 3 or 2 years, and sometimes 1 year) [46], (ii) belongs not to the relational, but neoclassical type, (iii) does not perform the stimulating function, since the stimulation is carried out according to the results of individual productivity [43]. The urgency of the labor relationship between the university and the faculty limits the use of labor rights, the exercise of which is dependent on the uninterrupted employment time [47].

This situation allows some researchers to view vocational education as a “low-wage precarious work trap” [48], as a place for the overexploitation of women - “housewives in the academic field” who carry out the additional burden of caring for others outside the working hours [49; 50; 51] and, in general, the faculty “proletarianization” [52].

The presence and awareness of vulnerability on the part of the teaching community has the following consequences: growing alienation from the profession and even from the university community, status mismatch, a sense of social insecurity (the possibility of losing a job) [53], decrease in the level of loyalty to the profession, increase in opportunistic and imitative practitioner [54; 55]. The vulnerability of the academic profession is becoming a high barrier for the personnel potential development at the university.

In a changing environment, highly qualified university personnel potential is one of the tools for achieving competitiveness. The conducted research has shown that the stricter requirements for performance and productivity, the deterioration of the working conditions of teachers associated with changes in the employment structure are threats to the preservation and development of the human resources potential of universities. Research confirms the rise in academic stress. In the studied publications I found confirmation of my position that the modern university teacher's employment is becoming more dangerous, which violates the personal security, creates disloyalty to the academic profession and

worsens the quality of life. I believe that implementing the “slow university” concept can be the most effective way to counteract the stress of the academic profession.

Conclusion

An important task that must be solved by the management of a modern Russian university to develop human resources is to minimize threats and overcome the vulnerability of teachers as the main carriers of personnel potential. University, research and teaching staff can become a source of social, organizational, and intellectual capital only if conditions are created for creative, safe and free activities.

Based on scientific publications, the article shows that threats and vulnerabilities in the academic profession entail consequences that have a devastating effect not only on the personality of the teacher, the individual university, the academic community, but also on the higher education system as a whole.

Leaving the academic profession and the lack of an “influx” new young faculty due to the presence of threats and vulnerabilities in employment are the reason for the change in the age structure of the university staff (the effect of “aging” of the staff), a demotivating factor for the development of new competencies and improvement of academic qualifications. Therefore, the questions posed in this work require careful study and continuous attention from the management structures of universities and heads of education systems of all countries and continents. The lack of attention to internal threats and disregard for the structure and conditions of employment of teachers on the part of the university management corps can create insurmountable barriers to the effective implementation of the tasks of the national projects "Science" and "Education", as well as the Strategic academic leadership program. The author is sure that the issues raised in the article require additional study by all stakeholders of higher education in Russia.

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