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## 10. THE IMPACT OF UNIVERSITY ACADEMIC CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP ON THE SYMPTOMS OF “GLOBAL RANKING FEVER”

*The Case of One Russian University in a Particular Institutional Context<sup>1</sup>*

*Plunge we in Time's tumultuous dance,  
In the rush and roll of Circumstance.  
Then may delight and distress,  
And worry and success,  
Alternately follow, as best they can:  
Restless activity proves the man!*

– Goethe, *Faust*

In this chapter we discuss how institutional culture of the academic system affects university's response to global rankings pressure. Rankings as strong public measures determine the process of organizational change at the university level. At the same time, the nature and degree of change depends on whether university is driven by a market-based or state-based logic of accountability. It has been shown that rankings get their power in a competitive environment when they represent students' choice, reputation scores, and donation rates. External market pressure enforces universities to deal with rankings at the organizational level. Very few attempts were made to investigate university's response to rankings in a state-dominated academic system. How does a university with a 'blunted feeling of competition' organize changes in order to enter the world-class league? To address this issue we conducted a case study of one Russian university which has recently entered the race for global academic excellence. We emphasize the significant role of academic culture and leadership as driving forces for a radical internal change on the one side and for coping with the symptoms of “global ranking fever” on the other.

### INTRODUCTION

Rankings' ability to influence and even to change global higher education landscape makes them influential tools. More and more countries and individual universities are involved today in 'ranking games,' spending impressive amount of resources

I. PAVLYUTKIN & M. YUDKEVICH

on special programs for academic excellence and applying ranking measures and positions as major indicators of advancement and object of national pride (Yudkevich et al., 2015). The movement for becoming 'world-class' enforces institutional changes to strengthen leading national universities and to put them on the foreground of global academic field. Since rankings have been presented as exceptional public measures for national academic competitiveness, one could argue that individual universities or even higher education systems are fevered by the aspiration of becoming ranked. Although less than 7% of all universities are present in major international rankings, many more higher education institutions in the world are involved today in the activities aimed at 'joining the club'. At the same time, 'ranking fever' in different countries may be driven and coordinated through a market-based (as in US and UK) or state-based (as in China or Russia) logic of accountability. Moreover, considering the implementation of global ranking measures as the process of institutional adoption from one kind of academic system to another questions the process of translation from an abstract idea of 'ranked university' into a management and academic practice.

Recent studies on the impact of rankings have shown that universities from different academic systems transform themselves under the pressure of 'ranking games' (Hazelkorn, 2011). They enforce universities as corporate actors to provide high performance rates—highly cited scientific publications, international students and faculty, high reputational scores from students and alumni. Although universities have traditionally been oriented towards teaching and research, the idea of being part of a global academic field means structural, institutional and even cultural shifts for hundreds of them all over the world. With that we can observe different reactions of universities whose strategies and decision making process were imposed by the fact of being ranked. Reaction differs not only between universities of high and low ranks (Hazelkorn, 2007) but between universities embedded in different academic systems. Following Clarks' triangle (Clark, 1983) we can still divide academic systems into those governed by market, state authority or academic oligarchy. It means, for example, that environmental pressure which determines the university behavior could be ordered by a competitive or bureaucratic logic. It has been discussed through various studies that rankings get their power in a competitive environment when they represent students' choice, reputation scores, and donation rates and so on. External market pressure enforces universities to deal with rankings at the organizational level (Locke, 2011). In spite of the fact that numeric rankings are presented as market devices which facilitate a competitive environment and value the logic of efficiency in academic work and governance, university is also embedded in an institutional field that forms the relevant logic of accountability. It means that rankings as calculative devices function differently under the market- or state-dominated institutional culture. What is the university response to rankings in a state-dominated academic system? How does a university with a 'blunted feeling of competition' organize and manage changes in order to respond to a rankings pressure?

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#### THE SYMPTOMS OF “GLOBAL RANKING FEVER”

To answer these questions we conducted a case study of one Russian university which has recently entered the race for global academic excellence. While many policy-makers as well as academics in the Anglo-Saxon world take the competitive model and its institutional consequences for granted, we explain how an alternative model with no competition between universities themselves but rather direct relationship between universities and the state, may affect university decisions and effectiveness in the global ranking game.

The course on internationalization and enhancing academic performance taken by the Russian government in the last five years was accompanied by such initiatives or special programs as ‘National Research Universities’ and ‘5-100’. These programs were aimed at stimulating leading universities to improve their academic achievements in terms of high-quality research and make them more visible on the global academic scene. In exchange for additional funding and resources, participating universities were obliged to take measures from global academic rankings as key performance indicators. They were asked to elaborate new long-term strategies (till 2020) of internal and external excellence to organize the process of getting into the world top-100 according to at least one of the recognized global rankings. For most of the universities that became agents of these programs, embarking on the road to academic internationalization meant a deep and fast internal reorganization that went alongside mergers they were experiencing. Moreover, to force an entrance on the global academic scene, Russian universities should embark on a new track to match new standards of academic and administrative work. Academics have to publish their papers and teach their courses in English, enter new academic networks through international conferences, journals, reviewers, workshops and so on. Administrators have to (re)organize universities according to the new patterns of work, structures, goal setting and performance assessment. Over the first three years of the ‘5-100’ program, several universities improved their positions in global academic rankings entering the top-500 of QS World University Ranking. Russian universities have shown good results and entered the top-100 of QS and Times HE ‘subject,’ ‘young universities’ and the so-called ‘BRICS and Emerging Economies’ rankings.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, along with some progress in global rankings Russian universities have also demonstrated an increasing number of publications in the so-called ‘predatory journals,’ which has grown several times in three years (Sterligov, Savina, 2016). Such contradictory results of rankings implementation strategies raise several questions about university response to global ranking pressures. Since universities are obliged to put ranking measures at the heart of their developmental strategies and demonstrate ‘immediate victories,’ university organizational response should be discussed not only in terms of effectiveness and excellence but also in terms of academic ethics and culture.

Simultaneously, to explain the reaction of universities to global rankings, the role of leadership should be disclosed too. The degree of internalization and institutionalization of performance metrics into university organization depends on

I. PAVLYUTKIN & M. YUDKEVICH

the interpretation provided by academic administrators to university dynamics in rankings measures and to the process of ongoing organizational change.

#### ORGANIZATIONAL RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITIES TO RANKINGS PRESSURE

Since global rankings have become a powerful instrument for institutional change in higher education systems more studies that reveal their influence at the organizational level of universities appear (Martins, 2005; Sauder & Espeland, 2009; Locke, 2011; Colyvas, 2012). Rankings have been already discussed in terms of student choice and selection (Monks & Ehrenberg, 1999; Meredith, 2004; Bowman & Bastedo, 2009), resource dependence and financial strategies (Bastedo & Bowman, 2011), institutional strategies and leadership (Hazelkorn, 2008; Hazelkorn, 2011), organizational identity and reputation (Espeland & Sauder, 2007; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Sauder & Fine, 2008; Bastedo & Bowman, 2010), power and disciplinary effects (Sauder & Espeland, 2009; Pusser & Marginson, 2013). Research on the impact of rankings conducted through various methods—from quantitative surveys of university administration to individual cases of universities—highlights the importance of knowing about how these public measures shape and perform the organizational reality of higher education.

Rankings change academic organization based on the relationship between external environment and internal organizational order. Reputational rankings are presented as powerful devices that enforce organizational changes inside universities to respond to external demands from those who use performance metrics as a decision-making tool. Internalization and institutionalization of public measures inside universities occurs through changes in organizational structure and identity, as their image should correspond to that imposed by rankings. The linear logic of governance (as if goals are measured outcomes which should be achieved within a certain period of time and with a given amount of resources) differs from the in-linear logic of shared academic governance, which was expressed by many organizational theorists as a specific ‘paradigm of academic organization’ (Birnbaum, 1991; Colyvas, 2012). Presented as an example of key performance metrics which put end on the place of goals, rankings question the simple idea (or the ‘old paradigm’) of academic organization as a loosely coupled system.

Institutional vision of university organization shows that effective changes could be replaced by ceremonial ones as long as they are perceived in the logic of bureaucratic pressure (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Czarniawska & Genell, 2002). The idea of ‘loose coupling’ (Weick, 1976) in education contained the image of parallel or reciprocal relations between academic and administrative worlds that function to protect the core academic activity and respond to external pressures. The notion of organizations as ‘coupled systems,’ or ‘coupling structures,’ offers a fruitful image of how this relationship between identity and structure is mediating inside different types of organizations and—mainly—universities. K. Weick defined ‘loose coupling’ as a situation in which elements are responsive but retain evidence of separateness

THE SYMPTOMS OF “GLOBAL RANKING FEVER”

and identity (Weick, 1976: 3). Later, in Orton and Weick’s paper on loosely coupled reconceptualization authors brought a wider perspective on this concept discussing its dialectical interpretation. As long as the degree of coupling depends on the ‘responsiveness’ of elements on the one side and their ‘distinctiveness’ on the other, we can observe and classify different types of organizations or their temporal regimes according to the relationship between structure and identity. ‘If there is neither responsiveness nor distinctiveness, the system is not really a system, and it can be defined as a noncoupled system. If there is responsiveness without distinctiveness, the system is tightly coupled. If there is distinctiveness without responsiveness, the system is decoupled. If there is both distinctiveness and responsiveness, the system is loosely coupled’ (Orton & Weick 1990: 205).

Rankings question the idea of loose coupling as they work as disciplinary devices and bring the notion of tight coupling to university, which means the ‘reciprocity gap’. As long as markets value reputational signals and competitive choice as important conditions of academic regulation, they force universities to tight coupling between administrative goals and academic outcomes. Institutional vision of university organization as a loose coupling system puts legitimacy as a key organizational variable that could explain the logic of change in its formal structure and identity. Rankings question the ‘old paradigm’ of academic organization, which relates goals and technological ambiguity, organizational anarchy, non-linear governance to substantial or natural elements of universities as organizations. Practical usage of rankings as key performance measures assumes that goals are measured outcomes which should be achieved within a certain period of time and with a given amount of resources (Colyvas, 2012).

We emphasize the significant role of academic culture and university leadership as driving forces for radical internal change on the one side and for coping with the symptoms of ‘global ranking fever’ on the other. Taking part in the global academic race means tremendous institutional and cultural shift for those universities that are embedded in local patterns of academic work and organization. Whether university change means formal or substantial transformations depends on the degree of buffering between structures and their activities. For example, Sauder and Espeland studying US law schools have noted that, ‘decoupling is not determined solely by the external enforcement of institutional pressures or the capacity of organizational actors to buffer or hide some activities. Members’ tendency to internalize these pressures, to become self-disciplining, is also salient. Internalization is fostered by the anxiety that rankings produce, by their allure for the administrators who try to manipulate them, and by the resistance they provoke’ (Sauder & Espeland, 2009: 63). Simultaneously, internalization of rankings occurs through various interpretations by university administrators and academicians who make sense of changes.

Further in the chapter we demonstrate how radical change in one Russian university which assumed a cultural shift in the notions of academic work and university governance questioned the role of university administrators in the moral discussion about the impact of rankings.

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I. PAVLYUTKIN & M. YUDKEVICH

#### CASE STUDY: DATA AND METHODS

It has already been emphasized that despite being a country with a strong system of education and science, Russia has very low representation in academic rankings. Awareness of this fact prompted the Russian government to initiate a special program in order to stimulate universities to get into the top-100 of global rankings. Fifteen universities highly ranked at the national level (very low or even not ranked at the global level) were selected on a competitive basis and joined the program. While these universities are in most cases still quite far from reaching the program's goal, they all now use performance measures associated with global rankings as decision-making tools.

At the institutional level, Russian system of higher education is still characterized by the teaching-research separation between university sector and institutions of the Academy of Sciences, the so-called inbreeding modes of academic and administrative staff, dominance of the Russian language in publications and academic courses, and statist economy of the academic sector in terms of funding and quality assurance (Pavlyutkin & Yudkevich, 2016). This means that institutional conditions for 'ranked universities' are different and the consequences of rankings' influence will be different for universities embedded in a competitive or state-monopolized environment. Besides that, university age and the stage of involvement in the ranking game are also important in a reaction to the excellence race. Most leading universities in Russia joined the global rankings game less than five years ago. Some of them are comparatively young.

Ours is the case of one leading Russian university, National Research University – Higher School of Economics (HSE). This case allows us to demonstrate several perspectives reflecting the impact of global rankings on universities.

HSE is now already the largest center for the study of social sciences and economics in Russia and is actively improving its positions in humanities and hard sciences. The university was established in 1992 as a new specialized higher education institution (initially focused on economics only). Now, HSE has four campuses, located in Moscow (established in 1992), Saint-Petersburg (1998), Nizhniy Novgorod (1996) and Perm (1998). HSE runs bachelor's, specialist's, master's, and advanced postgraduate programs, and at the beginning of 2014/2015, HSE had about 25,000 students (the largest campus being in Moscow, with more than 16,000 students) (for more information and history of HSE see Pavlyutkin and Yudkevich (2016), Froumin (2011)). HSE has diversified sources of funding (including tuition fees and consulting money earned at the market) substantial part of its budget comes from the State in the form of per-student head funding for teaching students at educational programs of all levels and support for HSE basic research. While HSE is an established national leader as a teaching institution, research center and think-tank, it still is not very visible internationally and is undertaking its first attempt to improve visibility at the global academic market for academics, employers and prospective students.

THE SYMPTOMS OF “GLOBAL RANKING FEVER”

Until 2014, HSE had approximately 30 faculties and schools. However, the university is now in the process of a major structural reform aiming to combine faculties and schools in disciplinary clusters (so-called ‘mega-faculties’). Eleven mega-faculties were recently created at the Moscow campus; they are supposed to have more autonomy in financial issues and decision-making than the smaller faculties they replaced, but they are also expected to be more accountable. Deans of these new structures are supposed to be more powerful but also more responsible for the performance of their schools.

HSE involvement in the ‘5-100’ program encouraged critical discussions among different groups on what is valued in a university. Global rankings were assigned various meanings and marked different things—from being important measures of university progress and reputation to a damaging instrument. Being involved in new national program of global competitiveness, HSE central administration committed to achieving high positions in global rankings. Taking this new frame into account, changes in organizational rules and implementation of new institutional solutions regarding academic contract and university governance were initiated. Besides, HSE leaders took the role of sense-givers for the middle-level management and academic staff, translating these innovations and embedding them in a continuous organizational history of HSE.

This chapter builds upon a series of in-depth focused interviews with faculty and administrators at the top and departmental level of HSE. 17 interviews took place in 2014 with academics and administration at several departments: Economics, Psychology, Philosophy, Sociology, Media and Communications, Political Sciences. In spite of its young age, HSE consists of departments of different age. Three of them were founded more than 15 years ago at an earlier stage of university development and the others—less than 10 years when HSE had already become large and reputable. In 2015 all these departments were merged with others, and four mega-faculties (out of 10) were founded: Faculty of Economic Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, and Faculty of Communications, Media and Design. The administrators we interviewed were either responsible for academic development at their faculties (deans, deputy deans) or coordinated these activities for the university in whole.

Interviews were identically guided and consisted of three major parts: professional trajectory and personal career at HSE; working conditions, workload and major changes academic and administrative work; attitudes to changes in the university and to the initiative aimed at entering global academic rankings. Interview discussions were focused on understanding major prospects of university development and current changes in academic workload and working conditions. Besides, the respondents were asked questions that characterized the change in the nature of the relationships between academics and administrators. In particular, we asked them about how the ongoing organizational changes affected collective decision-making inside their departments and communication with central administration.

I. PAVLYUTKIN & M. YUDKEVICH

The interviews were semi-structured and lasted between 60 and 100 minutes. The respondents could digress for their own reasons.

Interview data were also complemented by university statistics and results of special university surveys that were relevant for the discussion of rankings and university changes.<sup>4</sup>

One of the hypotheses that emerged in HSE case is that university change provided by institutional pressure of global ranking depends on the type of administrators who organize coupling between academic and administrative worlds. Academic administrators are at the forefront of organizational changes. They are in between academic and administrative worlds. At HSE, we can distinguish two types of administrators. First, there are professional administrators who neither teach nor do research but are just responsible for administrative processes. Some of them might have an academic background but in general, they are not the part of the ‘academic tribe’. Second, there are administrators who have an academic background and who still combine administrative and academic responsibilities. The latter may include project managers, deans and deputy deans, and even vice-rectors. For some of them administrative part of the job is the primary one, for others—secondary, but in any case, it takes a considerable amount of their time and efforts. At the same time, a university administrator who stands at the forefront of changes has an impact on whether the university is tightly or loosely coupled in response to global rankings pressure. It means that to explain the logic and consequences of change we need to understand their identity, values, vision and interests (Kezar, 2012).

#### RADICAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE AT HSE: RULES, STRUCTURES, IDENTITIES

HSE case can be determined as a specific type of university at the crossroads. Since its foundation, the university was oriented towards international standards of education and research through various forms of activities and cooperation with various partners (LSE, Paris-I Sorbonne and Erasmus University as first key ones). At the same time, it was functioning in a specific type of institutional culture that is to a certain extent indifferent to or even repels the values of competition and selection, faculty turnover, external hiring, Anglo-Saxon standards and routines of professionalism and performance in academic and administrative work. Such a contradiction was not recognized as a problem until the day HSE was obliged to become a ‘ranked university’. It means that to make progress in the rankings, HSE should match the image imposed by them.

One strategy to achieve that was to intensify the outputs important for ranking calculations within the same ‘production function’ with no substantial changes in the governance model. Such a strategy assumes, among other things, shifting resources toward ‘market purchases’ of required outputs (e.g., publications via short-term contracts with people from other organizations who add a second affiliation to their work in exchange for generous remuneration) and also diminishing them within the



disciplines that produce relatively less important results (e.g., humanities or social sciences).

However, another strategy has been chosen by HSE administration: to become a highly-ranked world-class university, HSE started a frame-bending change.

At the organizational level, HSE leaders started by implementing a new governance model. The new status of faculty deans appointed by the rector was accompanied by the introduction of key performance measures directly and indirectly reflecting the global ranking measures (number of faculty publications in Scopus and Web of Science, citation indexes, number of international students and faculty, external research funding, etc.). Success or failure in KPI achievements in a given year is then related to the volume of financial resources for strategic and academic activities faculties will receive from the university's central budget the following year. ‘The worst don't get anything’ maxima was promoted by the strategic planning office and governing board in order to stimulate faculty management teams to become more active in the realization of HSE road map on global competitiveness. It is hard to objectify the intended and unintended consequences of these changes at the early stage of transformation, although we have witnessed a negative reaction of academicians to the introduced measures. Nevertheless, the new approach questions the idea of an academic organization as a loosely coupled system where academicians could organizationally protect their distinctiveness in the whole system and offer an alternative understanding of university goals, for example not definitely measured but communicated goals.

One of the radical shifts in the established social order was the transformation of the existing notion of university academic work. The meaning of this transformation could be explained in the following statement: *from the university as a team of associates to the university as a corporation of high performance employees*. Change occurs through several mechanisms: a) professional socialization and retraining of teaching and administrative staff (courses in general and academic English, data analysis, academic writing); b) implementation of new professional standards and principles of academic contract including a reward system based on research productivity; c) start of an open recruitment policy with lower long-term employment warranties and increasing turnover rates. These elements should work as mechanisms for increasing performance rates.

The ‘publish or perish’ principle was implemented into the academic contract and distribution of internal research grants even before HSE began to care about rankings. The first step was to introduce a new salary system (merit pay) which stimulates academic performance (mainly publications) in exchange for extra 50–200% of average teacher's salary (it is important to mention that the average level of teacher's salary at HSE is still one of the highest among Russian universities and can be called good in comparison with other European universities). Besides, the internal grants competition for research funds first took quantity into account but now, at the next step, quality of publications has become one of key performance indicators too. Between 2005 and 2010 academic rewards or bonuses didn't include international

I. PAVLYUTKIN & M. YUDKEVICH

publications as a distinct criterion. As this mechanism of performance-based payment was institutionalized in the academic environment, the need to increase productivity was realized annually through lowering the value of each publication in the system of rewards and creating the hierarchy between different types of publications according to their relevance for global rankings measures. For example publications in Russian 'cost' less than in English; working papers, book chapters or teaching materials less than journal articles, articles in lower-impact journal less than in high-impact one. Of course such a system brought negative comments from those who valued other patterns of academic work, e.g., preferred books too articles (like sociologists), French or German to English (like philosophers), national journals to international ones (like faculty at law department). As a reaction, in many cases this system was modified according to disciplinary and faculty needs, although increasing demand for publications was untouchable (e.g., the system takes into account that in the field of computer science presentations at some major conferences may mean far more than journal publications). It was an effective demand. Moreover, there is a need for constant changes in performance criteria (*faster, higher, stronger!*) in order to enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

The implementation of this system and its regular modification since 2005 have contributed to higher publication rates not only by newcomers (mainly from the international job market), who were expected to perform according to new university standards, but also from old-timers and especially young academicians who started their career after graduating from HSE master and PhD programs. At the same time, our respondents mentioned some negative consequences of such progress in terms of higher workload, endless administrative changes, and increased requirements to observed quantity and quality of outputs. Many faculty members mention that they are 'tired of constant change of the rules of the game' and feel stressed because of uncertainty caused by these changes.

In the case of HSE, rankings strengthen institutional or administrative cohesion, as a 'university as a whole' should be mobilized in order to succeed in reaching clear and objectified goals. At the same time they question the university's symbolic integrity. This process has two consequences. First, university internal governance under rankings creates symbolic borders between departments/employees that are most compatible within these settings and those on the periphery. For example, mathematicians, philosophers, journalists, lawyers in different universities around the world will have their own visions and positions in rankings considered as important metrics of performance. But in an administrative setting they are similarly ranked under universal organizational rules. Second, rankings constitute a symbolic border between different administrators and academic staff. Administrators find more sense in ranking games as they give clear signals, operational, fruitful for the theory of university management. Being tools for administrators, they create distance from teachers, who do not want to be observed and controlled. Academicians organize their activities according to their own notions about work, reputation and professionalism. It seems that it is the administrators who, by establishing common

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#### THE SYMPTOMS OF “GLOBAL RANKING FEVER”

rules and standards, contribute to maintaining an organization’s institutional integrity. However, it has the opposite effect, as in response to changes faculty members seek to express and localize their disciplinary specificity.

#### INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE AND THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP

As long as strong performance measures are embedded in university governance, the following problematic question may arise: will global rankings translated for a university embedded in a specific institutional culture provide the transition from loose to tight coupling, as we observed in the competitive US system (Sauder & Espeland, 2009), or should we expect other reactions in a system with strong state domination?

Institutional changes were characterized as dramatic at the oldest faculties as they consist from people engaged in the historical formation of the young university. In the interviews HSE was presented as a university that was founded and developed by a team of associates who shared common values of academic work in economics and social sciences. Those who were devoted to HSE development at the early stages and were described as associates were emotionally upset.

When I came in the early 1990s, HSE was a team of associates. Everyone knew each other: administration, teachers, workers of different services, accounting. They shared the same values regarding the changes in the post-soviet economy and education. There was no division between administrators and academicians. Indeed the university consisted of people who knew each other and had good relations. Nowadays this university is completely different. (Male, former dean, professor, 22 years at HSE)

In the 2000s, the university chose a poaching strategy of recruitment and invited leading academicians from various universities based in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Kazan, as well as some other major universities and research centers. Besides that, HSE hires its own graduates for academic and administrative positions. Till the end of 2010 these professionals could be determined as the academic core of the university and its faculties. The introduction of the new strategy and road map changed the idea of academic core and brought a new classification based on academic productivity. Some academicians, who had been classified as core members a decade earlier, went to the periphery because of the ‘publish or perish’ principle.

The ambitious goal of getting into global rankings should be reached through a system of administrative rules and acts that can lead to unpleasant consequences for teaching staff not only in terms of resources but dismissals too. The situation is recognized as a new trend in university development. Faculty administrators work under pressure because they are both colleagues and administrators at the same time. They are expected to take a buffer role between central administration and teaching staff, collecting and translating information about occurring changes and accumulating reaction from both sides. Such an organizational ‘double movement’

I. PAVLYUTKIN & M. YUDKEVICH

coupled by faculty administrators creates specific dilemmas related to university governance.

Two specific facts about HSE governance help smoothen this possible antagonism. The first is that the university is still governed by administrators who value their academic identity but not professional managers. It means that they don't just express their values through talks but also demonstrate high academic performance, as they publish papers in good peer-reviewed journals. They themselves know from personal experience what it takes to become an international scholar. This fact gives them 'moral arguments' in hot and complicated discussions while implementing radical organizational transformations as long as they demonstrate high academic productivity expected from the rest of employees as well. They are still recognized as colleagues. As one of the vice-rectors commented:

This is like schizophrenia when you are a colleague and administrator at the same time but it is important as you can understand how academicians work and do their job. My belief is that key positions in university governance should be occupied by scholars but not pure managers. (Male, Vice Rector, professor, 16 years at HSE)

#### CONCLUSION

Leading Russian universities that have good chances of improving their positions in global rankings got financial support from the government to do that. The bureaucratic logic of accountability presumes permanent control over quick victories and formal indicators (such as the number of publications, citations, international students and faculty, etc.). There are no external incentives for university administration to make substantial efforts to implement profound changes and not substitute them for formal adjustment to government requirement and improvement of formal indicators without any control of research and teaching quality (e.g., via publications in predatory journals or by enrolling weak international students).

For many universities in Russia this serious top-down task of getting into the top-100 of global rankings means radical and deep change not only in existing institutional structures but in the classifications of academic employees and notions of academic work and performance.

We have already mentioned that HSE cannot be considered a typical Russian university because of the young age, academic profile, dynamics of growth and, of course, its positioning in the field of national higher education. Although the university has become a national leader and sought to become a phenomenon of the new age by excluding traditional, conservative Soviet-period patterns of teaching and research in economics, social sciences and humanities, the first year of experience with global rankings shows that it was nevertheless embedded in a specific institutional culture, which is not suitable to the patterns imposed by global ranking games. We have shown that rankings virtually impose such patterns of

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#### THE SYMPTOMS OF “GLOBAL RANKING FEVER”

objectified goals and organizational solutions that start the process of reflecting on organizational and academic identity. This is a reflection on whether HSE is still devoted to its initial mission or whether global rankings could strengthen or weaken its realization. How such an abstract thing as university mission is related to such an abstract thing as global rankings? How do academic employees and university administrators evaluate this or that thing in their special activities or daily routine? What price in terms of resources, dismissals, relations should a university pay for making progress in global rankings? All these questions were expressed by our respondents during the discussions around current changes, university transition and global rankings. They also pointed out to the existence of friction between such virtual groups as administrators and academicians, newcomers and old-timers, insiders (‘inbred faculty’) and outsiders.

As we have shown in our case study, those administrators who value academic identity call themselves ‘schizophrenics’ as they should push and pull what they value. One of the moral solutions to this ‘schizophrenia’ is to show that you yourself can fulfill the requirements imposed on the rest. This gives you moral arguments in the discussion on enforcement and shows that you are still in the same boat. This feeling of the academic world provides administrators with a moral right to radical change as long as they can maintain balance between the two parties. This idea does not correspond to the notion of professional management in higher education and the need for the division of academic and administrative labor (‘everybody should mind their own business’). The more administrators without academic experience a ‘ranked university’ hires, the more the distance between academic and administrative worlds inside the university will grow and the more the university will become a corporate actor without any ‘quasi’ definitions. As long as academic and administrative worlds are getting more and more alienated (‘rankings are games of administrators’), there is a question about what type of administrators could govern these ties and work not only for academic productivity but for university integration.

#### NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The study has been funded within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) and by the Russian Academic Excellence Project ‘5-100’.
- <sup>2</sup> For the case of China see for example Dunrong (2016).
- <sup>3</sup> <http://5top100.com/news/23247/>
- <sup>4</sup> For basic statistics on HSE see <http://www.hse.ru/en/figures>

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I. PAVLYUTKIN & M. YUDKEVICH

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