

CURRENT TRENDS IN STRATEGIC ANALYSIS AND PLANNING IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: This paper examines key trends in strategic analysis and planning applied in the management of higher educational institutions. Particular attention is paid to their role in the context of the transition to new models, digitalization of education, implementation of new technologies, increasing competitiveness at the international level and improving the quality of educational services that cannot be achieved without a well-thought-out strategic approach

Key words: strategic analysis, planning, transformation, management, University 4.0 concept, digital economy, SWOT analysis, PEST analysis, BI systems..



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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, modern society has demonstrated unprecedented rates of development. Information quickly becomes outdated, and the current educational environment is in constant motion. In the context of rapid technological progress, globalization and sustainable reforms, the traditional university model is increasingly faced with challenges that highlight its limitations. The world's leading universities are forced to reconsider their missions, implement new approaches and seek sustainable development models in order not only to meet the demands of the time, but also to predict future needs.

An analysis of existing research and practical experience will help to identify the most relevant methods, new approaches and practical recommendations that are effective in achieving strategic goals in the context of constant change.

One of the significant problems remains demographic changes: in a number of countries, a decrease in the number of young people leads to a decrease in the number of applicants, which forces universities to compete for each student. Technological progress requires a revision of teaching methods and the introduction of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence and big data, which can personalize the educational process, but require significant resources. Globalization, in turn, has changed the competitive environment: students and teachers increasingly choose universities located outside their countries. At the same time, economic pressure caused by a decrease in public funding forces educational institutions to look for alternative sources of income, which often leads to an increase in tuition fees and creates social barriers to obtaining higher education. These challenges make it obvious that traditional university models need to be transformed. Successful university transformation requires the use of modern strategic analysis and planning tools, such as SWOT analysis, PEST analysis and the introduction of BI systems. These tools allow you to identify strengths and risks, take into account macroeconomic factors and integrate data to build effective strategies. Existing approaches no longer meet the needs of society and the economy, which prompts leading educational institutions to identify promising development vectors. One of these vectors is the concept of universities 3.0, which proposes a rethinking of the role of higher education institutions in the context of global changes. This approach assumes that higher education institutions perform three key functions: education, research and commercialization of knowledge. Universities can become engines of economic growth through the implementation of innovative developments, the creation of startups and active cooperation with business. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is a shining example of such a university, successfully combining science, education and entrepreneurship. [6]

However, the evolution of universities did not stop there. The concept of universities 4.0 goes further, focusing on full integration with the digital economy. It implies the use of big data to personalize the educational process, create flexible

educational programs and models of interaction with external stakeholders. Such models become not just educational centers, but ecosystems capable of adapting to changes and creating new opportunities. [1]

However, the implementation of new models faces a number of challenges. Many universities still operate on outdated infrastructure and technology, which limits their competitiveness. Funding remains a key challenge, especially in resource-poor countries, where declining government support forces educational institutions to rely on tuition fees. This exacerbates social inequality, as not all students can afford higher education. In addition, there is a gap between educational programs and labor market needs. Employers increasingly require graduates to have interdisciplinary knowledge, analytical thinking skills, digital literacy, and the ability to communicate in an international environment. This forces universities to review educational programs, introduce new teaching formats, and pay more attention to the development of soft skills. Graduates often do not have sufficient practical skills to integrate into the professional environment. This is confirmed by the data of the 2020 World Economic Forum report, according to which 40% of employers believe that the training of graduates does not meet the requirements of the modern labor market. [9] The slow adaptation of traditional universities to changes makes them less attractive to students and partners. [8]

In such conditions, ensuring high quality education in higher education institutions requires not only adaptation, but also a proactive approach based on long-term planning and forecasting. In this regard, strategic analysis and planning are becoming integral elements of effective management of higher education organizations. In practice, the use of strategic analysis helps universities more accurately identify their strengths and weaknesses, as well as take into account external factors affecting development. For example, the use of SWOT methods allows you to identify key internal resources, such as the qualifications of teaching staff and the availability of research infrastructure, while simultaneously analyzing possible threats, including competition in the international educational arena. In turn, the use of PEST analysis makes it possible to take into account macroeconomic and social factors affecting the educational environment, which is especially important in the context of digital transformation. Moreover, modern universities increasingly use BI systems that integrate data from various processes — from student performance to interaction with business — which facilitates accurate forecasting and the development of long-term strategies. This approach allows universities not only to respond to changes, but also to shape the future of the organization, building a sustainable system capable of successfully solving modern challenges and training in-demand specialists. An effectively developed development strategy allows an educational institution to quickly and purposefully achieve its goals, which helps to increase its competitiveness in the market. In global practice, special attention is paid to strategic analysis and planning in education. For example, in 2018, the leaders of the European Union approved a package of measures to create the European Educational Arena. [3] This initiative is aimed at supporting EU member states in developing more sustainable and inclusive education and training systems. It is worth noting that this program is closely linked to the Bologna Agreement, as it is based on existing mechanisms for harmonizing higher education systems, such as the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the recognition of qualifications. [7] However, the European Education Arena expands the goals of the Bologna Process, covering not only higher education, but also other levels of the educational system, with an emphasis on digitalization, inclusion and sustainable development. The experience of the European Union emphasizes that strategic planning in education is not only a tool for responding to challenges, but also a way to proactively address them.

Uzbekistan is also following this approach, introducing foreign experience. In recent years, the higher education system of Uzbekistan has undergone significant changes. According to the Statistics Agency of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in the 2021/2022 academic year, there were 78 higher education institutions in the country, and by 2024 their number had increased to 210. [4] This rapid growth demonstrates the active efforts of the state to expand access to higher education and modernize it in accordance with international standards. In particular, such legislative acts as the Law on Education and the Concept of Development of the Education System of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030 [5] were adopted, which are aimed at identifying priority areas of systemic reform, introducing new technologies, and improving the quality of education. The adoption of such documents confirms the importance of strategic analysis and planning in the management of educational organizations. In his speech dedicated to the 33rd anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted: "The solution to all our problems, the answers to all questions are only in education. "The key that opens all doors is education and upbringing" [2]. This statement reflects the strategic vision of the role of education as a key factor in the development of the country. Thus, it is worth noting that changes in the higher education system are inevitable. The concepts of universities 3.0 and 4.0 allow educational institutions to adapt to the challenges of the modern world and become centers of innovation and economic progress. However, their successful implementation is impossible without thoughtful strategic planning. Only educational institutions that are able to quickly respond to changes and implement innovations will be able to maintain their relevance and play an important role in the development of society.

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