

THE MECHANISM OF STRATEGIC, POLITICAL AND PROCESS MANAGEMENT OF THE QUALITY OF UNIVERSITY SERVICES

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Abstract. The purpose of this work is to justify the need to develop and implement a mechanism for managing the quality of higher education services, which will solve a number of pressing problems that have arisen at the national level, at the level of the higher education system and the level of individual higher education institutions. **Methodology.** This study is based on the use of ENQA standards and recommendations, as well as modern general methods and practice of quality management. **Results.** The functioning of the mechanism for managing the quality of higher education services should be considered at three levels of decision-making (three hierarchically subordinate components of the mechanism), which are as follows: strategic, political and process. It is determined that the management of a higher education institution, like any organization, is carried out at three levels of decision-making: strategic, tactical, and operational. The paper substantiated the content and features of the implementation of the functions of each component of the quality management mechanism. **Practical implications.** The work determined the components of strategic management of the quality of higher education institutions' services, which include: strategic analysis of the external environment and self-assessment of the educational institution, development of strategic plans, management of the implementation of the higher educational institution strategy. **Value/originality.** It is determined that the political management of the quality of higher education services includes a broad setting of goals of the higher education institution, which in turn is determined by senior management, set forth in written, formally announced (published) and communicated to all staff and units of the higher education institution. The political goals of the education institution regarding quality are structured by functional and administrative management areas.

Key words: higher education, quality management, university management, development, educational services, strategy.

JEL Classification: I21, I23, I25, I28

1. Introduction

The results of an analytical research of the state and development of the quality management processes of higher education in post-soviet countries determine the loss of functioning efficiency of the higher education institute, which does not fully comply with its fundamental functions. Evidence of this are the low levels of socio-economic, humanitarian, scientific, technical and innovative development of a country. At the same time, these trends are accompanied by the rapid growth of the higher education system, which manifests itself in the sequential formation of a large network of universities with three times more large contingent of students, post-graduate students and doctoral candidates, compared to the 1990 year.

A serial analysis of quality control processes on the level of the entire higher education system and individual universities found that in modern

conditions, the solution of the issue of higher education quality improvement and the performance of its basic functions, as a public institution, is largely due to the improvement of internal management systems in universities. Experience with bureaucratic licensing and accreditation procedures shows that the quality of governance of higher education in terms of a network of accredited universities, which count more than 1000 institutions, is quite an effective mechanism in terms of the minimum requirements and the formation of formal obstacles to the entry way to the educational services market for everyone (which may ultimately discredit the public institution of higher education). At the same time, the European experience of higher education management and doctrinal documents of the Bologna process determine that the main link in the process of quality assurance in higher education are universities that are directly the operators of the education market.

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Stimulating factor for the development of activity in the sphere of quality management on the level of universities is the fact that the dynamics of the contingent of entrants each year is reduced and the network operators of the higher education services market for a long period of time will operate in the market, which shows a decrease of its capacity. However, the main fundamental factor that determines the need for intensification at the institutional level of higher education quality management is the lack of a positive effect of the functioning of the higher education system on the country's economic development, its social, innovation and humanitarian components. Such trends are a fundamental factor in the reduction of financial resources that government can spend on the functioning of higher education.

Thus, there is a situation where universities are facing two strategic threats. The first lies in the fact that customer base is reduced with an unchanged number of participants in a competitive market. Another threat is that high schools network, which is the core of a public institution of the higher education in the long term will feel a decrease in public funding, due to the lack of appropriate filling the state budget due to the effect from the functioning of higher education.

It should also be noted that the substitution of a lack of Russian matriculates by foreign students, which can be considered as one of the solutions to the problem of customer base and capacity of the higher education market increasing, is also an issue, mainly due to the quality management. In the context of the functioning of the international education market, which is characterized as a high-tech and modern type of service production, the importance of acquiring competitive advantages of individual universities and the recognition of documents on education in other countries. In this case, there is the issue of compliance with international standards of quality and availability of relevant certificates in high school. As a consequence, the quality of governance is becoming one of the most important in this case but, in this direction, it acquires a distinct utilitarian character.

2. Methodological aspects and methodological approaches to quality management in higher education

The economy of the sphere of higher education is an object of numerous researches. Scientists devoted their attention to the question of higher education quality in general (Bagirov, 2005), European integration processes in the field of educational services (Gayrapetyan, 2006), socio-economic development of the education market (Kasyanov, 2004; Kratt, 2003). A separate science stream was formed in the sphere of university management (Popov, 2002) and internal quality control systems of higher education (Sobolev, Stepanov, 2004).

At the same time, a complex of questions that concern concrete aspects of the implementation of universities quality management conception is still unsolved and demands attention within the current condition of universities services market.

In these conditions, the development and implementation of higher education quality management mechanism is an important issue, which has a high potential for solving the problems that arise on the national level, the level of the higher education system and individual universities level. The most important feature of this trend of improvements and modernization of education is that the development and implementation of the control mechanism are largely associated with organizational measures and are not capital intensive. In this case, we are talking about the fact that the higher education system development is not associated with an increase in the budget or private financing (although the fundamental factors and possibilities of such an increase in current conditions are absent), and a more efficient use of existing resources, the volume of which in the tactical and strategic perspective will decrease. The lack of progressive changes in the individual university management system, in particular, the quality of the management of their services, has promising implications of a negative character, which are to eliminate institutions and radical institutional changes.

University management, as well as management of any other organization, carries out at three levels of decision-making: strategic, tactical, operational. On the basis of standards and guidelines of the ENQA, as well as modern common methodology and quality management practices, the functioning of the higher education services quality management mechanism is appropriate to consider in the plane of the three levels of decision-making (three hierarchically subordinate components of the mechanism): strategic, political and process. Strategic management of universities quality services is not a separate area of strategic planning and overall long-term institution management philosophy. The quality of services should be considered as the primary target setting in general tree university purposes. Medium-term planning is interpreted as a political level of the implementation of management functions, due to the fact that, despite the overall strategic direction of the university management quality, implementation of the strategy requires the implementation of decomposition of certain tasks and functions, with the result that there is a certain organizational structure with functional and linear units.

Positioning quality as the main and target goal of universities functioning, quality management, along with other functional areas also requires an appropriate selection (along with marketing, finance, administration and PR-accompaniment) providing a certain functional status and the corresponding organizational support (formation of separate organizational units). In turn,

the operational level of management is considered as a kind of process control due to the fact that the modern methodology of quality management and the relevant international standards require the use of a process approach to quality management. As a consequence, the individual functional areas of management and linear units in the short term are treated as institutional units, mediating systematic set of specific processes that occur at the output of university to provide services with a certain level of quality. Thus, short-term planning, organization, management and control are based on the actual results and forecasts of individual processes implementation.

3. The main stages of the formation and conceptual provisions of the quality management mechanism of university services

The initial conditions for a construction of the university strategic management system are some of the objective tendencies, which are formed in the external environment, which simultaneously serve as strategic guidelines that limit the scope and target arguments of control functions, threats and opportunities. The composition of these conditions includes the following:

- increase of the level of requirements for the quality of educational services from the part of consumers that is caused by the possibility of choosing from a number of similar training programs in a number of universities;
- emergence of a large number of logistics objects that can be used in the educational process, which consequently generates certain consumer expectations;
- simultaneous expanding the range of basic and additional services that are provided in one university (including regional higher education system) with increasing differentiation of consumer demand (quantitative and qualitative increase in the list of consumer needs);
- increased competition between universities on the educational services market, which is exacerbated by unfavourable demographic processes and the presence of sufficiently extensive (both in the regional and sectoral dimension) network of universities;
- significant differentiation of consumer demand and the state order for individual specialty, which is accompanied by fairly significant disparities in the labour market.

Objectivity of the demands of universities services strategic quality management development is caused by the fact that all the activities of universities should be focused on the achievement of clearly defined targets in terms of quality, thus an adaptability of universities to change character of the external environment, review the contents, directions and volumes of provided services become important.

One of the key requirements of ENQA and ISO standards is to have formulated strategic quality

objectives, which are specified by appropriate policies and procedures for quality assurance. The strategy, policy, and quality of assurance procedures should be publicly released and get an official status. The strategy, policy and procedures are conventionally combined in quality management doctrine, the development of which is based on a comprehensive study of the strategic perspectives of the labour market and educational services. Customer needs and expectations also require studying, so as needs and expectations of research staff, personal and other stakeholders. The structure of university quality doctrine should be put in this form:

- quality management policy of educational, scientific, methodical and educational activities of the university;
- strategic development targets of the university in the projection of quality service management;
- mechanisms, instruments, arrangements and implementation measures of the strategic targets achievement policy.

Public displays of universities doctrine in the field of quality are formulated and promulgated: mission, vision, strategic goals and objectives of the university with the appropriate decomposition of the task in the organizational dimension (between different departments and organizational units). Consistent formulation of these provisions will ensure the understanding of the strategy and quality policy within the university and to reach the awareness of staff on certain key issues, in particular:

- vision (positioning) of universities in the education market and the wider society;
- key objectives of the university's functioning;
- key stakeholder groups and consumers, on the needs satisfaction of which university operates;
- Quality Management Objects (specific characteristics of educational services and the content of universities obligations concerning their long-term provision), and ways to ensure their future state.

At the same time, doctrine in the field of quality and its external manifestation in the form of a succinct mission is a means of identification and differentiation of university in the market. With the help of mission, there is an opportunity to highlight and demonstrate the uniqueness, identity and customer value of services of a particular university. Identification of high schools in the market environment can also be achieved by determining the value for schools: consumers of its services and society in general; Faculty and staff; image at the regional, national and international level; material and technical equipment and innovative teaching techniques.

All of the above provisions on the strategic positioning of universities fit quite well in the overall economic concept of the strategic management in the organization. Generalized, the process of strategic management of the higher education services quality should be divided into three components (a strategic

analysis of the environment and the university self-assessment, formulation of strategic plans, managing the implementation of the university strategy), the implementation of each of them determines reaching a certain higher level of service quality (Fig. 1).

A strategic analysis of the environment and the university self-assessment is the initial element of the strategic management of the university. The main purpose of the self-assessment is to identify opportunities and problematic issues at the stage of the development and implementation of quality management systems, as

well as the evaluation of the functioning of individual processes and needs in their improvement at the stage of development of the quality management system. In this case, the work explores the organizational units of universities in functional areas based on grounded index systems that identify problem areas, assesses the state of the internal and external environment.

On the basis of this formulation, there is carried out an analysis of strategic development priorities in the field of quality. The basis of this kind of analysis is methodical bases of strategic intra studies (SWOT, STEP, ABC,

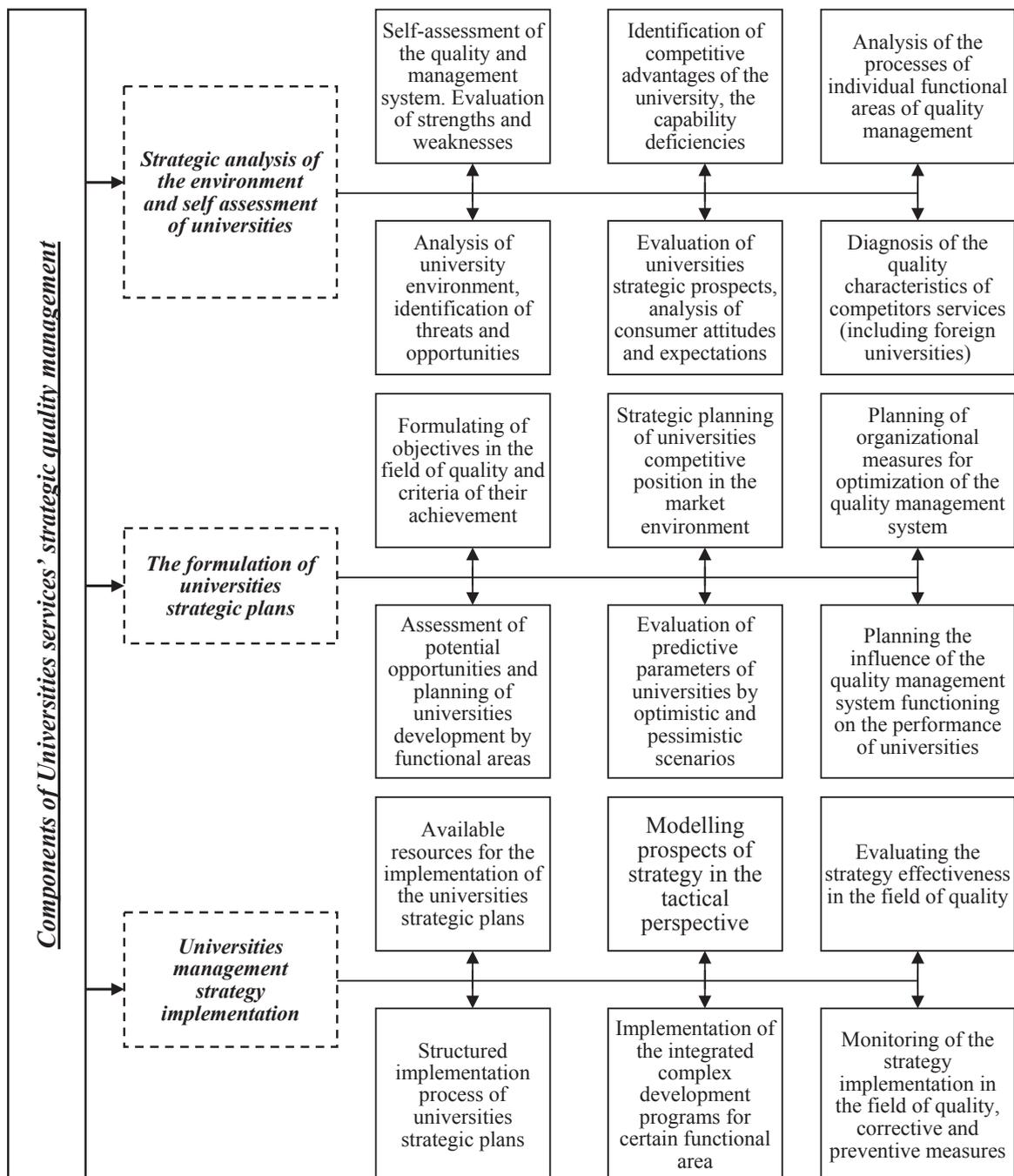


Fig. 1. Elements of Universities services strategic quality management

PEST analysis), systematic approach, method of expert assessments and sociological method (involving internal and, if necessary, external experts), economic analysis, graphical method, modelling method.

As a result of this kind of self-generated report documents, some of which are intended for internal use in the process of management decision-making, the other part is made as a report on the quality of self-assessment and is open to public access document that declared the status quo of a quality management system and the results of its operation (it is desirable that both of these parts of the report information as much as possible to match).

The strategic planning of a university in the field of quality is to develop a strategic plan designed to increase customer value and enhance the university educational services customer's satisfaction. This plan consists of a series of long-term university's objectives, set out specifying tasks and responsibilities aimed at their solution. Taken together, this is a strategic vision of the university in the field of quality. It is also necessary to note the importance of choosing the basic positioning strategies in the market and assess the effectiveness of planning and forecasting.

Strategic planning in the field of university's services quality management covers a number of important questions, the generalized sense of which is the following:

- formulation of development objectives and specifying aims in the field of quality, assessment monitoring and control parameters;
- scheduling of key indicators of university's work in functional (studying process, research activities, development of methodical support, educational activities and additional services for students) and administrative (finance, marketing, PR-support and international relations) directions;
- planning of the university's quality management system development and its impact on competitive position;
- evaluation of university's development forecast indicators according to optimistic and pessimistic scenarios.

The planning process of quality management strategies in the higher education is associated with a number of complications in its development. The main obstacle is connected with a problem of preliminary decisions making process that is dependent on the structure of authority in high school. A new strategy usually destroys a type of relationship, which was developed in an educational institution, and may enter into conflict with the policy guidance. The natural reaction on this is the fight against any innovation that breaks traditional relationships and structure of the authority. Another significant problem is that the introduction of strategic planning in general and in the field of quality management in particular, leads to a conflict between

the former activities (operational control), providing a profit, and the new, that carry strategic advantage in the future. In universities on the early stages of the implementation of strategic planning in the field of quality management is no corresponding motivation of personnel, there is any reliable information about the external environment of universities, and the available statistics on competitors is not sufficient to develop a strategy. Programme-oriented planning is an important method of forming the strategic objectives and criteria of quality management, as it allows formulating priorities for future development of the university in the field of quality. There is a possibility of adapting a standard set of goals and criteria specific to the university environment. The essence of this kind of adaptation is to analyse the existing objectives of the functional areas of the university quality control and selection of the most important management criteria, based on the specifics of the university, as well as the composition used endpoints of the educational and scientific sphere (Shapovalova, 2002).

Among the objects of university's strategic quality management planning, it is worth to distinguish the following:

- quantitative and qualitative composition of the teaching staff, its age and sex structure;
- logistical support (training and laboratory facilities, equipment, communications)
- procedure for the reception and the contingent of students stuff coming to study;
- development and improvement of methodical maintenance technology of the educational process;
- research and development work, innovation process;
- university's international relations, scientific cooperation, exchange programs;
- indicators of financial and economic activity, a situation in the education market, the competitive position of the university.

Speaking about the implementation of strategic plans in the field of universities quality management services, we should note that this issue is largely related to the market positions of university within the framework of regional, sectoral and national higher education system. Despite the overall imperative of total quality management and continuous improvement, resource, market and human resource capacity of universities in a variety of situations are characterized by difference, which determines the need to choose different strategies for implementing long-term plans in the field of quality management. Among a sufficiently large number of standard strategies, in terms of planning and for a particular control object, we have identified four species strategies (strategy attack, defence, concentration diversify), which will be described below (Cherkasov, Radionov, 2013).

Universities quality policy is a common intention and the direction of the university in the field of quality

management, which manifest themselves in the medium-term goals and objectives, formally expressed by top management and appropriately disclosed. Publication of universities quality policy requires reporting to the public about the results of its implementation. Such statements should be formal and based on the results of self-assessment or the assessment carried out by third parties. In both cases, such an assessment must be made on the basis of clear diagnostic systems and indicators.

Based on the content, position in the structure of educational services governing quality management systems and features of the policy in universities, in the composition of its main characteristics should be included:

- compliance with the strategic goals and objectives of the university in the field of quality management;
- availability of the provisions governing the continuous improvement of individual processes of the university;
- ability to assess the validity of the provisions of the quality policy;
- provision of a quality policy should be communicated to all members of the faculty and staff of the university.

On this basis, it should be noted that the political control of the quality of higher education services includes a broad statement of intentions and objectives of the school. It is determined by the top management of universities, made in writing, shall be officially proclaimed (published) by management and communicated to all staff of the university (in particular its subdivisions). Mission, vision, and policy in the field of quality management should be understood and accepted by all. It is important to set goals to be a concrete expression in the form of some of the measured parameters and characteristics, which allows precise control of the degree of achievement of objectives. The goal in terms of quality is what achieves or aspires a university in the field of quality. It is necessary to develop achievable and measurable goals related to quality policy. The formulation of the objectives should be carried out so specifically that they can be understood, to put into practice and assess the extent of their achievement (Zhuravsky, 2003). Fig. 2 shows an example of the formulation of the political objectives of universities in the field of quality management system and political objectives with an appropriate assessment of their achievement criteria.

The main political goal of the university in the field of quality (one of its variants) is proposed to be determined as the provision of universities services of high customer value, satisfaction of all stakeholders (students, employers, faculty, university staff), as well as the fulfilment of all basic functions of universities in the regional (branch) socio-economic system. This kind of policy formulation takes into account the objectives of universities entrepreneurial component, which is to provide such services, which would be characterized

by relatively high consumer qualities and in the future given the option to convert the cost of training students in far exceeding their cash flows. The social component of the university is also important.

The thing is in provided services that are first of all designed on the base of the needs of satisfaction of all stakeholders, both in internal and external environment. Another important issue is a consideration of the need to ensure implementation of the role of universities, in the environment in which they operate (region, industry, professional sphere). In this case, we are talking about the fact that functioning of universities should act as a catalyst of scientific and technical, social, innovative development of the humanitarian sphere, which is defined as a priority target area of the university range of services.

The political objectives of the university in the field of quality are structured in functional and administrative areas of university management, or in other words, the key functional areas of quality management. In this kind of functional zones, there are marked educational process, scientific-technical and innovative activity, methodological support. Among the administrative functions of services quality assurance, allocated are universities administration, marketing and PR-support, finance, resources and logistical support.

For each of the functional areas of management and administration offered certain groups of performance indicators to be used as criteria of political goals achieving. These indicators are quantitative, relatively easily calculated internal services of universities and are quite informative.

Quality management of university services on the basis of the process approach is one of the key requirements of ISO standards, which are the basic and the most general methodological basis for the application of specific educational standards of quality management. ISO standards are documented and regulate secure expression of process-oriented management philosophy. At the same time within the said concept of the quality, this control is total (TQM, Total Quality Management), that is, the object of control is the whole system of services provision at all stages preceding their provision, and stages that occur after the end of the educational services providing process. Thus, the whole manufacturing process and service providing process are considered as a systematic collection of related processes, a more specific level, which in turn may also have an atomic structure.

In general, the term of a process is fundamental, as for modern management and quality management, in particular. The process in the broad sense means some sequence of interrelated or interacting activities (work, operations), whose aim is to turn the "inputs" of the process in its "outputs" in order to achieve a certain result, as a rule – the creation of certain products or provision of certain services to consumers (Kratt, 2003).

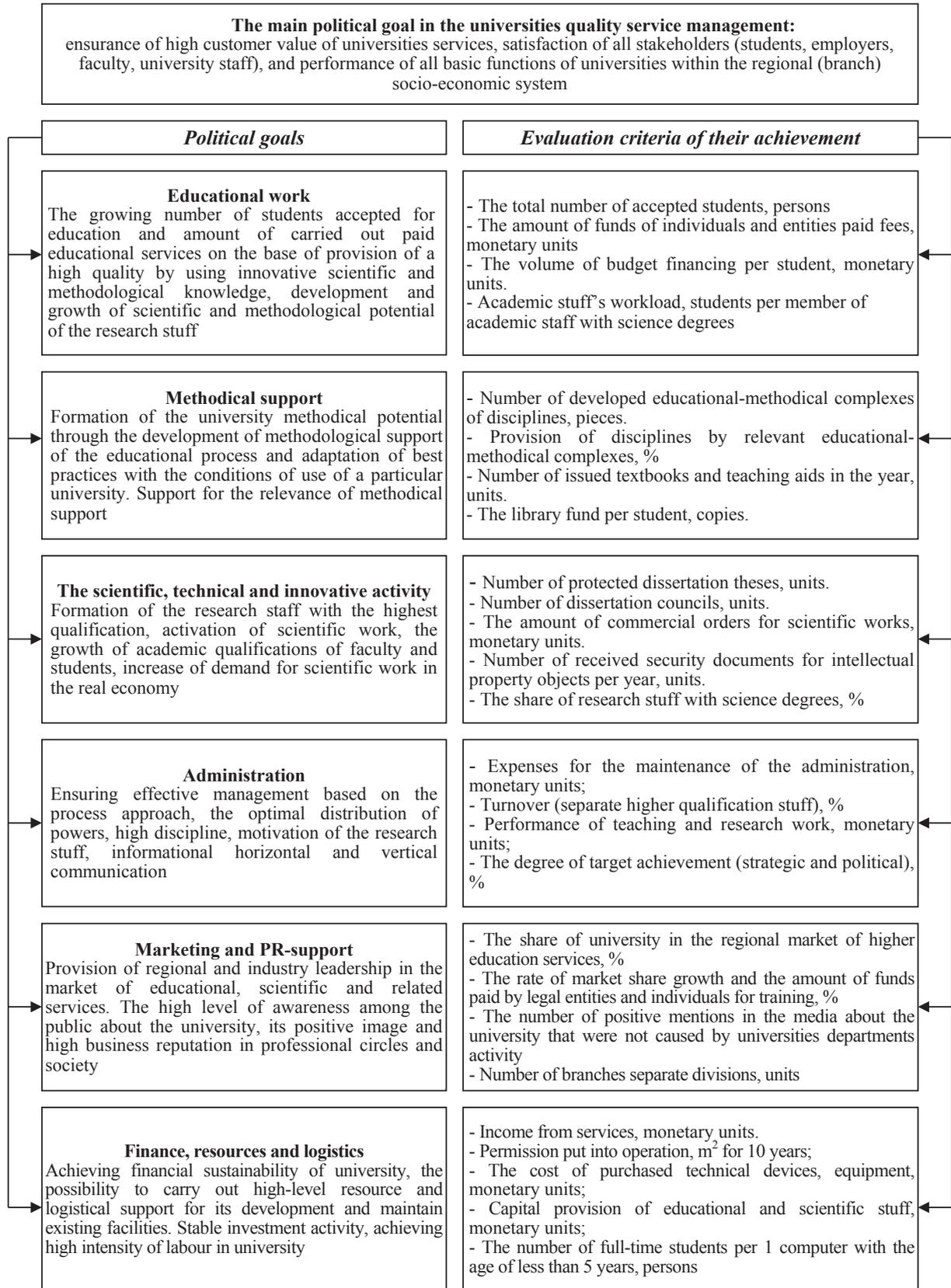


Fig. 2. The policy objectives in the field of Universities quality management services and benchmarks of their achievement

As a part of the process, including facilities management, one often identifies certain resources that are divided by the criteria of long-term and short-term usage. Here a resource in general is understood as a wide range of production facilities factors and logistics used in the provision of educational services: faculty, staff, buildings, technologies and teaching methods, equipment, technology, intellectual property, etc. Each one is considered as a separate system with a certain level of autonomy, as a consequence, the analysis process requires the external environment, which affects it. But the most important issue is that each of the processes should be controlled. In other words, each of the processes is a specific area of management authority and responsibility. Using modern quality management philosophy, the official responsible for the implementation of a separate process quality management system is a process owner or manager.

The activities of the organization traditionally speak about workflows or business processes. The latter term is currently used in respect of any organizations that are not necessarily commercial, including universities. One of the key properties required of any workflow is its so-called "capability", which is understood as the ability of the process to perform the desired function from it and produce the output result or services to the established and expected properties. Process control loop is typically included to ensure that properties in the process scheme. The scope of the concept of "process" is not limited to technological and production processes or service processes. In fact, any work performed by humans or machines is a process. Thus, the process can be considered, on the one hand, in a very general sense,

as the totality of people, equipment, materials, methods of measurement and the external environment, which interact with each other to produce "output" of required quality, and on the other, a narrower sense, as a kind of limited employment or operation performed by a specific person or a machine (Erokhin, 2004).

Modern quality management philosophy is based on a process-oriented thinking, which, in turn, requires a clear information base, provided by evaluation and diagnostic systems. Such diagnostic and evaluation systems are typically statistical database analysis, which determines the list of corrective and control actions, as well as being the basis for management decisions. The information on the functioning of all processes is a certain code, a function that describes the work of universities in a certain time interval, the use of an operational impact on the arguments of this function later change the state of the entire system of universities. To put these provisions more specifically, all of the key activities within the university (teaching process, scientific-technical and innovative activity, methodological support, administration, universities, marketing and PR-support, finance, resource and logistics) are modelled as processes, which are characterized by certain inputs and results (outputs) and management features (Fig. 3).

The purpose of the functioning of the quality management system is the problem of control and remedial action on the input streams and the internal operations of their processing. The purpose of this control action is to obtain the desired output (planned) result, with this kind of outputs must get sustainable (since all the processes are cyclical, and the cycle of

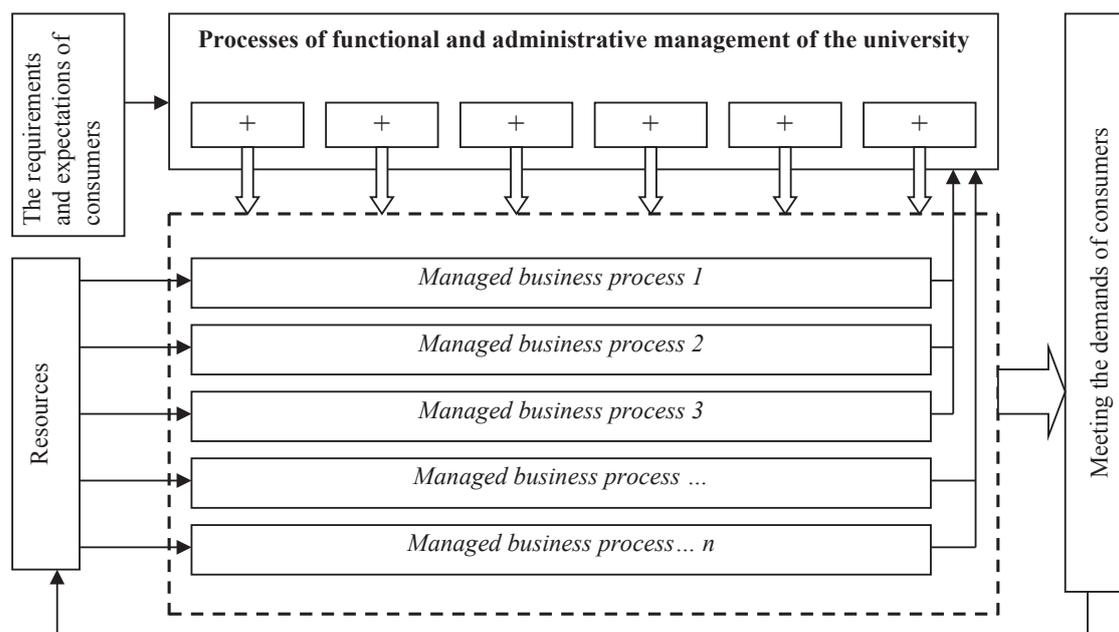


Fig. 3. System of the universities services process-oriented quality management

some processes can be very short). Such a resistance can be statistically evaluated as a low variation of planned and actually received indicators characterizing the process output. Another important issue is to ensure the qualitative characteristics of the process output, which also require consideration and support.

4. Conclusion

Thus, effective process of management of universities services quality is based on the following: identification of management processes, main working (control processes) and auxiliary processes of the organization; a clear subordination of each process to responsible person – the owner or manager of the process; development of continuous monitoring and

improvement of each process system, including the evaluation system of process parameters; carrying out (if necessary) a radical restructuring process – Business Process Reengineering; reorientation of all important control systems: financial, personnel, procurement and other processes to support.

The implementation of the process approach and quality management as a whole is largely dependent on its organizational support. Anyway, each process requires identification. Another important issue is that within each process working staff, organization, and management of which, within the specificity of the functioning of universities, is the main component of process management. As a consequence, strictly organizational support processes are the key to managing the quality of university services.

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МЕХАНИЗМ СТРАТЕГИЧЕСКОГО, ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО И ПРОЦЕССНОГО УПРАВЛЕНИЯ КАЧЕСТВОМ УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКИХ УСЛУГ

Аннотация. Целью работы является обоснование необходимости разработки и внедрения механизма управления качеством услуг высшего образования, что позволит решить ряд актуальных проблем, возникших на общегосударственном уровне, уровне системы высшего образования и уровне отдельных высших учебных заведений. *Методика.* Исследование основано на использовании положений стандартов и рекомендаций ENQA, а также современной общей методологии и практики управления качеством. *Результаты.* Функционирование механизма управления качеством услуг высшего образования следует рассматривать в плоскости трех уровней принятия решений (трех иерархически подчиненных составляющих механизма): стратегического, политического и процессного. Определено, что управление высшим учебным заведением, как и любой организацией, осуществляется на трех уровнях принятия управленческих решений стратегическом, тактическом, оперативном. Обосновано содержание и особенности реализации функций каждой из составляющих механизма управления качеством. *Практическое значение.* Определены составляющие процесса стратегического управления качеством услуг высших учебных заведений, в состав которых входит: стратегический анализ внешней среды и самооценка учебного заведения, разработка стратегических планов, управление реализацией

стратегии высшего учебного заведения. *Значение/оригинальность.* Определено, что политическое управление качеством услуг высшего образования включает широкую постановку целей высшего учебного заведения, которые в свою очередь определяются высшим руководством, излагаются в письменной форме, должны быть официально провозглашены (опубликованы) и доведены до всего персонала и подразделений высшего учебного заведения. Политические цели учебного заведения в области качества структурированы по функциональным и административным направлениям управленческой деятельности.