



The Formation of Training and Occupational Safety Conditions as a Factor in the Creation of a Favorable Image of an Educational Organization

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ABSTRACT

Intensive competition between educational organizations implies a shift in the perspective of studies aimed at investigating the creation of a favorable image of an educational organization from the external environment to the internal potential of higher educational institutions in the context of formation of optimal conditions for the training and occupational safety of employees and students. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the system of occupational safety and training in Russian State Social University (RSSU) according to the following blocks: personnel, research and development, and infrastructure. Interviews, questionnaire surveys, and overt observations were used to determine the opinions of teachers (n=35) and students (n=140) in regards to the social and occupational phenomena related to the problem of creation of favorable labor and training conditions. The paper reveals the preferences of teachers and students in regards to the optimization of the RSSU image policy, formulates a strategic forecast of the optimization of training and occupational safety conditions, and gives recommendations regarding the creation of a favorable image of the RSSU.

Keywords: image of an educational organization, favorable training conditions, occupational safety, student competitiveness on the labor market, personnel technologies, Russian State Social University, Russian Federation

INTRODUCTION

With the current dynamic development of the educational service market, the formation of favorable training and occupational safety conditions in educational organizations plays a major role (Bol, & Van de Werfhorst, 2013; Walter, 2012, Leamon, 2001). This requires administrators of all levels to carefully plan the creation, maintenance, and development of a favorable image of a higher educational institution (Khanna, Jacob, & Yadav, 2014).

The world practice shows that the administration of educational organizations starts its work on the formation of an appealing image by evaluating the external environment: competition on the market (Horgan, & Liinamaa, 2016; Wenhua, Licheng, & Ru, 2016), demand for this or that specialization, etc. (Kostoglou, Vassilakopoulos, & Koiliias, 2013; Lubienski, & Myers, 2015). However, studies of the public opinion show that higher educational institutions have positive image among the population a priori, which is related to higher education being perceived as high-status and prestigious (Campbell, & Sherington, 2013; Hemsley-Brown, & Oplatka, 2006).

It is possible to refer to the commercialization of educational services, which basically eliminated the difference between commercial and state ownership of higher educational institutions (Gupta, 2015; Ramirez, & Christensen,

Contribution of this paper to the literature

- The study found a number of trends in changes in training and labor conditions at the RSSU, which should be taken into consideration when solving current problems related to the formation of a favorable image of the educational organization.
- Survey results show the RSSU currently provided for a transparent evaluation of teachers' work based on scientometric indicators, which increases the level of employees' support of the administration's motivation policy on the one hand, but makes said employees uncertain of the stability of the policy as the teachers achieve set indices on the other hand.
- The conducted analysis found that the RSSU had a well-developed logistics and infrastructural base, which ensured that the teachers had the possibility to perform their educational and research functions.

2013). At that, the distinguishing positive components of training and occupational safety conditions of the educational organization, which can be regarded as a strategic foundation for the creation of a favorable image of said organization, move to the forefront (Laurillard et al., 2013, Macuzic et al., 2016).

One can note a lack of favorable training and occupational safety conditions causes information overload and stress in students (Guglielmi, & Tatrow, 1998), which affects not only the quality of their occupational training, but also their health (Abouserie, 1994; Artamonova, 2011; Carausu, Lupu, & Antohe, 2016, Nie et al., 2017). Students' complaints about the class schedule, combined with an unreasonable loss of time while getting to the place where the classes are held, causes fatigue in students, increases their irritability, and creates prerequisites for various cardiovascular diseases, neurotic and psychological disorders (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein, & Hefner, 2007; Glogor, Pantea, & Sirbu, 2014).

The university administration faces a difficult task of providing high-quality education while preserving the physical, emotional, and psychological health of the employees and students of the educational organization by forming training and occupational safety conditions. Thus, the purpose of this study is to offer an optimization of the basic elements of occupational safety and training, which includes personnel technologies that give the opportunity of career progress and professional growth to the academic staff of the higher educational institution by creating an open system for incentivizing the scientific activity of teachers at the international level, organizational and technical equipment of the learning process and the scientific work of employees via a developed infrastructural network of the educational organization.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

In this research, monitoring and evaluation involved employees with appropriate qualifications, experts and specialists in the field of creation (protection, assessment) of favorable labor and training conditions aimed at preserving the health of employees and students of higher educational institutions.

The studied groups included 14 male and 21 female teachers of the Management Department and the Sociology Department and 140 final-year students (44 – male, 96 – female) majoring in State and Municipal Management, Conflict Resolution Studies, and Personnel Management. The average age of students was 21 and 45 for teachers.

The visual analysis used in the study helped to grade materials by respondent groups and allowed determining the degree of the effect of internal conditions of training and occupational safety on the positive perception of the educational organization throughout the studied period (September 2014 – May 2016).

The polls, which were conducted in the form of interviews and questionnaire surveys, and the overt observations, determined the opinions of teachers and students in regards to the social and occupational phenomena related to the problem of creation of favorable and safe labor and training conditions according to three blocks: personnel, research and development, and infrastructure.

The structure questionnaire included the following items:

- workplace organization
- psychological profile of occupational safety
- score according to a five-point scale: (five being the highest, one being the lowest)
- labor intensity
- organism stress (physical and psychological)
- emotional stress
- stress at work

- sociocultural profile of occupational safety
- score according to a five-point scale: (five being the highest, one being the lowest)
- possibility of professional growth and career progress
- timely and full salary payment
- use of various forms of merit recognition for employees that diligently perform their job duties
- leisure guaranteed by normal working hours
- awareness of the available possibilities of recreation and distribution of holiday packages
- psychological climate in the team
- corporate culture
- infrastructural profile of occupation management
- availability of recreation areas
- work of catering facilities (cafeteria, cafe)
- library
- recreational facilities in the infrastructure
- hostel
- other infrastructural objects (sports, culture, etc.)

Statistical methods were used to analyze obtained data, with a view to substantiating the strategic forecast of the optimization of training and occupational safety conditions and the recommendations concerning the creation of a favorable image of the educational organization.

In 2016, the study was conducted in limited form. A questionnaire that featured several questions (assessment of classrooms, training and labor conditions).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Nowadays, the key direction for the growth of the effectiveness of the academic staff at the RSSU is the fact that the academic staff has switched to effective contracts, the purpose whereof is to take into account the difficulty of labor, the effectiveness of work, and the intellectual nature of work when establishing wages.

According to 54.3% of respondents, the introduction of the effective contract improved the quality of the personnel potential at the RSSU. 57.1% of respondents noted a growing motivation of employees to engage in professional development; 59.9% - to improve their "research and development" effectiveness. 60% of surveyed teachers noted a general improvement of the effectiveness of their activities in the field of education and science.

Negative assessments in several areas were found alongside positive trends. For instance, 77.1% of teachers believed that entering into contracts for a term of one year significantly increased their fear of getting dismissed; 68.6% of respondents noted that the short term of the contract prevented employees from establishing loyalty to the organization. According to 57.1% of respondents, entry into one-year-long contracts was the main factors that increased social stress and disunity of the academic staff and the administration of the higher educational institution. Furthermore, 37.1% of respondents claimed that the requirements set by the administration in the contract increased the already significant load on teachers, increased the labor intensity of their work, and, as a direct result, the level of stress to which the teachers were exposed.

It is worth noting that the "dissatisfied" group included all workers aged 60 and older, which apparently is indicative of the fact that they find it difficult to adapt to transformations that take place in the scientific and educational space of modern Russian higher education.

The enhancement of the scientific function of higher educational institutions, which the government is expecting, brings us to the plotting of the scientific career trajectory for the academic staff. For instance, 77.1% of respondents consider themselves ready to perform their scientific activities at the required international level; 11.4% were undecided. 74.3% of teachers positively evaluated the actions of the administration aimed at disjoint and fair career trajectories for both young and experienced employees. At that, 77.1% of respondents supported the policy of the higher educational institution aimed at bringing in young teachers and researchers.

Table 1. Distribution of answers to the question: “Are you satisfied with the quality of classroom facilities at the RSSU?”

	2016	2015	2014
Yes	85.7%	73.3%	74.9%
No	14.3%	26.7%	25.1%

Table 2. Evaluation of workplace organization

Score	2016	2015
1	2.1	11.7
2	9.4	14.3
3	37.1	37.8
4	34.3	24
5 (highest score)	17.1	12.2

The survey found that presently, the RSSU evaluates the labor of teachers transparently, according to scientometric indicators (number of published works, index of scientific citation, etc.). 60% of respondents supported the motivation policy of the RSSU administration; 37.1% noted the flaws of the quantitative approach to evaluation, which loses sight of the qualitative aspect of the teachers’ research and development activities. Furthermore, one in two teachers were not certain that the established system of bonuses would not be changed to increase indices as the previous ones were achieved. This trend significantly reduces the level of teachers’ motivation (37.1%) and causes frustration (31.4%).

One can note that regular monitoring of labor and training conditions, conducted by the respective structural unit of the higher educational institution, helps to consistently update the logistics base of the university, which is indicated by a positive dynamic in the evaluation of this indicator (it increased by 12% over the last year) (Table 1).

The vast majority of respondents (85.7%) were fully satisfied with the state of the classroom facilities at the RSSU, while 14.3% of respondents had certain remarks regarding the temperature, ventilation, and cleanness of classrooms.

The administration of the RSSU paid special attention to organizing the workplace of teachers, which was confirmed by a positive evaluation dynamic (Table 2).

The course that the administration of the educational organization set, which includes a complete technical equipment of workplaces, is fully supported by the academic staff. According to obtained data, teachers attach particular importance to the equipment of the workplace (97.1%) that would enable them to maintain a high level of professional activity. For instance, 68.6% of teachers noted the satisfactory equipment of their respective workplaces and emphasized the possibility to use to the full extent the computer equipment and office appliances for education-related purposes.

In addition, advanced technologies used to hold lectures and seminars require multimedia equipment, access to which during working hours is limited according to 62.9% of employees. The other 37.1% of teachers noted that they had to coordinate their “working needs” in regards to the use of various technical facilities with their colleagues.

During the creation of favorable labor and training conditions for employees and students of the educational organization, special attention was paid to the development of recreational facilities. According to the study, 78.3% of respondents (students and teachers) used the services of recreation centers or holiday hotels of the RSSU. 86.9% of respondents evaluated the level of provided services highly.

With the increasing relevance of research and development activities of higher educational institution employees, the respondents’ assessment of the quality and accessibility of the RSSU scientific library gains special importance in the infrastructure block. This parameter had mostly positive responses (77.7%).

For instance, the RSSU has a separate building dedicated to hosting an electronic social library that provides such resources as the Statistics of Russia Information and Publishing Center, Russia University Information System, and the Russian State Library electronic dissertation database. Therefore, it is revealing that the respondents made an especially high assessment (78.9%) of access to electronic catalogues and full-text electronic resources in general. 21.1% of respondents had remarks concerning the software used at the library, while 18.3% of respondents offered to reconsider the forms of delivery and assessment of knowledge during the learning process with regard to the development of digital technologies and the Internet.

It is pertinent to point out that the potential impact of information technology on occupational safety and health can be considered from the perspective of three different viewpoints. The first perspective relates to the changes in terms of how employees perform their jobs. The second is about the use of current information technologies at the

Table 3. Sociocultural profile of occupational safety

Scoring parameters	Score				
	1 point	2 points	3 points	4 points	5 points
Possibility of professional growth and career progress	2.9%	11.4%	40.0%	25.7%	20.0%
Timely and full salary payment	0%	0%	0%	11.4%	88.6%
Use of various forms of merit recognition for employees that diligently perform their job duties	0%	5.7%	17.2%	11.4%	65.7%
Leisure guaranteed by normal working hours	11.4%	11.4%	31.5%	20%	25.7%
Awareness of the available possibilities of recreation and distribution of holiday packages	0%	2.9%	17.1%	28.6%	51.4%
Psychological climate in the team	0%	14.3%	14.3%	37.1%	34.3%
Corporate culture	0%	2.9%	20.0%	40%	37.1%

Table 4. Distribution of answers to the question "Are you satisfied with the training conditions at the RSSU?"

	2016	2015	2014
Yes	75%	76.2%	69.4%
No	23.6%	18.9%	25.1%
Do not know	1.4%	4.9%	5.5%

workplace. Third perspective is related to the development of the way in which information technology allows university administration to organize work in general (Hejduk & Karwowski, 2016).

In contrast, the main negative factors that the respondents noted were high labor intensity and a considerable and unevenly distributed pedagogical load throughout the academic year. Most respondents (51.4%) were not satisfied with the work schedule or partially satisfied with it. Therefore, the problem of optimization of class schedules is the most relevant one for many respondents.

Despite the higher education reforms, the parameters that characterize the possibilities of professional growth and career progress available to teachers were assessed as mediocre by respondents (40.0%). In terms of the difficulties in the development of this area of occupational safety, respondents distinguished the labor intensity of their work, which left them with no time to improve their professional activity and had a negative effect on the physical and mental state of teachers (31.5%), excessive "paperwork" load on teachers (34.3%), and demanding requirements to the professionalism of the academic staff (17.2%) (Table 3).

When talking about the students' assessment of the image of the RSSU in the context of formation of favorable training conditions, it is worth noting the system of students' consumer preferences. According to the survey, the main expectation of 84.3% of respondents was that they would achieve a high living standard immediately after graduation. Modern students do not ask "What skills will I have after graduating from a higher educational institution?" (12.1%), they ask "How much will I earn after learning at your higher educational institution?" (68.6%). Therefore, a modern educational organization that claims to be advanced and innovative should have not only a well-developed educational and scientific potential, but also an integrative infrastructure that would maximally increase the percentage of students that find employment in their respective degree field. Nowadays, RSSU students assess this index poorly (29.3%). It is worth noting that when assessing the image of the RSSU, students used such characteristics as state (43.6%), multidiscipline (31.1%), and modern (50.7%), dynamically developing (59.3%), and socially active (52.9%), while the characteristic of "ensuring employment" was seldom mentioned.

Students' assessment of their satisfaction with the content of education yielded contradicting results. For instance, 64.3% of respondents said their level of satisfaction was average. At that, 76.4% of respondents admitted that they found education to be diverse and rated the level of education of an RSSU student 7-8 points out of 10. In general, students were satisfied with the skills and interest of teachers in the good results of training (88.6%). They distinguished nine characteristics of the image of RSSU teachers, seven of which were rated positively. At that, part of the surveyed students (32.1%) noted negative aspects: lack of efficient workplace practice and flawed planning and organization of learning. Almost 31.4% of students, especially those that majored in Conflict Resolution Studies, were not certain if they would be able to find a fitting job after graduation.

The logistics base and infrastructural conditions of the higher educational institution were rated as average by students (6-7 points out of 10), but with a possibility of their development. High scores were given to the Almaz academic and rehabilitation youth center, the RSSU Cultural Center and Sports Base, KVN ("Club of the Funny and Inventive People") groups, and other creative clubs (and facilities for them).

It is worth noting that students are ambivalent about the university - their feelings range from pride to dissatisfaction. Nowadays, only 75% of students consider the training conditions created at the RSSU comfortable, while others give them a negative assessment (23.6%) or refuse to answer (1.4%) (Table 4).

The results of the study showed that the main negative factor was stress caused by anxiety that the students experience when they prepare and take exams (30.7%), flawed organization of learning process support, and conflicts that occur during the solution of certain problems related to document support (29.3%). 18.6% of students experienced heavy physical fatigue caused by the lengthy time it took to get to the place where the classes were held. Working students mentioned, on a side note, that combining learning with work also caused stressful situations on a regular basis and had a negative effect on their health. However, according to 34.7% of them, such rapid pace increased students' professional and personal development motivation, self-organization, and self-management.

The percentage of respondents that noted a high level of development of the corporate culture of the higher educational institution increased (5.3%) over the last year. This is partly due to the improved cooperation between students and teachers and the administration of the higher educational institution in regards to organizational issues (Słowikowski, 1998; Cetin, 2016). It is noteworthy that the pedagogical community has created a favorable psychological climate, which is noted by 69.5% of respondents.

Our study showed that the established system of occupational safety and training at the university had different effects on the positive perception of the image of the RSSU in the eyes of both employees and students of the university. For instance, teachers assessed the image of the university highly, which was probably related to the support of the stimulating policy carried out by the university administration. When considering in detail the principles of the motivation policy, it is worth noting that three theories dominate the motivation literature: goal-setting, social cognitive, and organizational justice (Rus, Radu, & Vanvu, 2016).

The practice of moral and material stimulation of teachers in an educational organization also affects the "weight" of Russia in world science. According to official data, less than 2% of citations in journals that are part of the main Russian and foreign databases cited Russian researchers. As an advanced Russian university, the RSSU acknowledged the need to change the vector of its scientific policy and basing its motivation component on the work with the academic staff, with a view to achieving a significant number of works published in the Russian Science Citation Index database and a science citation index in databases recognized throughout the world – Web of Science and SCOPUS (Ilina et al., 2015).

Thus, based on the results of the study, we formulated a strategic forecast of the optimization of training and occupational safety conditions:

- one of the areas in the activity aimed at optimizing training and occupational safety conditions should be the formation of good organizational culture and loyalty to the organization in teachers and students of the university;
- the main principle in building a system for managing the image of the RSSU should be internal centralization, which will convey the results of the new strategic investments of the administration of the educational organization to all target groups;
- the main technology used to optimize training and occupational security conditions should be the improvement of the quality of academic staff, support of their professional growth, individual planning of scientific and academic careers via a system that involves a candidate pool of potential leaders in the educational, scientific, and research activities of the RSSU.

Presently, the development strategy of the RSSU emphasizes the presence of a solidary team that is integrated into international education and creates specialized innovations to improve the training of specialists and managerial elite. This message is in line with the global trends in higher education (Pucciarelli, & Kaplan, 2016) and is confirmed by the place of the RSSU in the national ranking. The ranking method fully reflected the progress that the RSSU has made over the last two years. According to the Faculty Ranking data, prepared by the Expert analytical center, the Russian State Social University confirmed its high ranking in a number of specializations. Among Russian higher educational institutions, the RSSU was 12th in the Arts and Humanities category, 11th in the Social Sciences category, and shared the 9th-11th places in the Economics category with the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation and the Ural Federal University. The RSSU Management Faculty was third in the ranking posted by the Career.ru website that ranked the demand for higher educational institution graduates in Moscow and the Moscow Oblast. In addition, the RSSU was 25th out of 12,348 organizations registered in the Russian Science Citation Index in terms of published papers. One hundred and nine results of intellectual activity obtained at the RSSU have been registered by the Federal Intellectual Property Service; 112 million rubles were allocated by the RSSU (and its branches) to the funding of research and development in 2015 ("Federal State Statistics Service," 2016; Ilina et al., 2015). These figures represent the work done by the administration of the higher educational institution, which is why the system of training and labor conditions that was created at the university is of particular scientific interest.

Simultaneously, the management of occupational health and safety in the EU can be considered in a broad context of social well-being and development. I. Hejduk and W. Karwowski (2016) believe the first component of

such a perspective is the competitive national economy based on the high quality of human capital. The second – some cost savings because of the avoidance of economic losses resulting from absenteeism, increased demand for health services, as well as premature withdrawal from the labor market. The third factor is related to the physical and mental health of citizens of the European Union. The fourth component is a contribution to the development of safe work standards worldwide.

CONCLUSION

Survey results show the RSSU currently provided for a transparent evaluation of teachers' work based on scientometric indicators, which increases the level of employees' support of the administration's motivation policy on the one hand, but makes said employees uncertain of the stability of the policy as the teachers achieve set indices on the other hand.

The conducted analysis found that the RSSU had a well-developed logistics and infrastructural base, which ensured that the teachers had the possibility to perform their educational and research functions. The course towards the comprehensive technical equipment of workplaces, which the administration of the educational organization set, was fully endorsed by the academic staff.

The discovered problems included the anxiety of teachers regarding the possibility of keeping their job, which was caused by the introduction of one-year-long contracts; this also increased social stress and reduced the loyalty of employees to the organization. With that, high labor intensity of work made it more difficult for teachers to improve their professional activity and had a negative effect on their physical and mental state.

The survey of students found that they took an ambivalent stance on the assessment of the image of the RSSU. For instance, the students acknowledged the high level of training of RSSU graduates and were satisfied with the skills and interest of teachers in good academic performance. At the same time, many students did not share the corporate values of the university and emphasized flaws in the organization and support of the educational process.

The study found a number of trends in changes in training and labor conditions at the RSSU, which should be taken into consideration when solving current problems related to the formation of a favorable image of the educational organization:

- increasing level of teachers' satisfaction with the motivational policy carried out by the RSSU administration;
- increasing level of implementation of the teachers' scientific and research functions at the international level due to the plotting of scientific career trajectories for the academic staff, including the improvement of the subjective focus of teachers on professional growth and development of their scientific and research potential;
- changes in consumer preferences of students towards the enhancement of the practically-orientated component of the educational process;
- improving attractiveness of and trust in the RSSU on the part of teachers and students.

At that, negative trends were discovered, as well, such as the decreasing sense of stability and social optimism, especially among teachers, and increasing degree of stress.

The offered principles can be used not only by the higher educational institution studied herein, but also by other higher educational institution in developed countries.

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