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MANAGING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS BASED ON IMAGE AND COMMUNICATION POLICY IN THE REINTEGRATION OF WAR VETERANS INTO DIGITAL SOCIETY

The article establishes that modern society is a complex of relationships among individuals. It is noted that in Ukraine, due to military actions, there is a growing need to enhance the communicative and image policies of higher education institutions. The aim of the study is to develop an effective communication and image policy for higher education institutions during the reintegration of veterans into the digital society. Despite a sufficient volume of scientific research in the field of communication and image policy, the question of developing an approach to its implementation remains unresolved. Moreover, it is important to consider the combination of both policies and view them as a unified whole that complements each other. It is proven that in the process of reintegrating war veterans into the digital society, the goals of policy implementation can include: reproducing a recognizable image, improving reputation, increasing rating, maintaining constant contact with stakeholders, establishing communication channels, implementing innovations, crisis management, increasing security level, and strengthening resilience. It is outlined that a higher education institution, in reintegrating war veterans into the digital society, can implement various types of images, the most popular of which are corporate, content-based, and comparative. It is proposed that in developing an optimal communication and image policy for a higher education institution in the reintegrating of war veterans into the digital society, one should adhere to the author's methodology. It consists of four stages: defining the problem and possible alternative solutions, project planning, plan execution, control and verification of plan execution, reflection. The final stage is cyclical.

Key words: image policy, communication policy, veterans' reintegration into society, management, reputation.

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УПРАВЛІННЯ ЗАКЛАДАМИ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ НА ЗАСАДАХ ІМІДЖЕВОЇ ТА КОМУНІКАТИВНОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ ПРИ РЕІНТЕГРАЦІЇ ВЕТЕРАНІВ ВІЙНИ У ЦИФРОВЕ СУСПІЛЬСТВО

У статті встановлено, що сучасне суспільство є сукупністю відносин між індивідами. Зазначено, що в Україні через військові дії зростає необхідність в удосконаленні комунікативної та іміджевої політики закладів вищої освіти. Доведено, що у процесі реінтеграції ветеранів війни у цифрове суспільство цілями реалізації політики можуть стати: відтворення впізнаваного образу, покращення репутації, підвищення рейтингу, постійний контакт з стейколдерами, встановлення комунікаційних каналів, впровадження інновацій, антикризове управління, збільшення рівня безпеки, зміцнення стійкості. Окреслено, що заклад вищої освіти при реінтеграції ветеранів війни у цифрове суспільство може реалізувати різні типи іміджу, найбільш популярними з яких є корпоративний, контентісний та зіставлювальний. Запропоновано при розробці оптимальної комунікаційної та іміджевої політики закладу вищої освіти при реінтеграції ветеранів війни у цифрове суспільство дотримуватися авторської методології.

Ключові слова: іміджева політика, комунікативна політика, реінтеграція ветеранів у суспільство, управління, репутація.

Formulation of the problem. Modern society can be viewed as a set of relationships among individuals

historically formed through collective activity. Such a society is informational, characterized by features that consider the needs of individuals as members of the digital society. These needs encompass not only physical but also safety, social, esteem, and self-expression needs. They are linked to the development and improvement of relationships in the information society. Knowledge, technology, and communicative connections are the needs that every individual focuses on. Higher education institutions play a leading role in shaping and meeting the needs of individuals in society through the information exchange sector and communicative hub. They accumulate information and provide social skills that are needed by every member of society regardless of their field of activity. According to forecasts by the World Economic Forum, by 2025, 50 % of all workers will require retraining, as the world's economies are experiencing a double shock - the pandemic and rapid automation of work. It is anticipated that machines could replace 85 million jobs over the next 5 years. At the same time, 97 million new jobs could emerge as the labor market adapts to new realities [2]. Due to military actions in Ukraine, there is a growing need to improve the communication and image policies of higher education institutions. This is driven by the necessity to collaborate with socially vulnerable and unprotected segments of the population across different age groups, including war veterans. Educational institutions are capable of creating a competitive informational environment, which consists of spheres and conditions for the formation and utilization of precisely relevant information that affects the functioning and development of society as a whole.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In modern society, many researchers raise questions about communication and image policies in higher education institutions. In particular, Afanasyeva N. argues that distance learning and remote technologies are not inferior to face-to-face education [3, c. 8]. However, it is worth not fully agreeing with this statement. The process of distance learning itself cannot replace the communication processes that occur between students and teachers in the educational environment. It can only be used for individuals who have high motivation and interest in learning outcomes. In the vast majority of cases, higher education institutions should provide a communication and image policy that fosters collaboration with participants in the educational process.

The studies [4; 5; 6; 7] highlight the features of distance education for both economic and technical specialties. They identify the challenges faced by learners during these programs. The authors consider the lack of communication links between all participants in the process as the main problem in distance learning. They argue that these links provide real progress in society and create an environment that fosters meeting the needs of society.

Volkova V.V., Ohlih V.V. emphasize that the development of communication innovative technologies with learners in their interaction contributes to the successful implementation of the goals and objectives of the communication policy of educational institutions. They also emphasize that creating a new type of communication relations is a strategically important goal of higher education institutions [1, c. 180-182]. Additionally, they note that the image is formed as the ultimate result of a long process of conscious building of relationships, mutual understanding, and trust between the educational institution and the public [1, c. 176].

Volodyna D.S. and Ivanova S.A. noted that an institution offering services and aiming to gain popularity among its target audience should create a specific image, lifestyle, and habits in its clients. Among them, the key is the visitation of this particular establishment. It is important for the client to understand why they choose this establishment over others. They observed that it is necessary to identify the criteria that are important to the target audience: atmosphere, service quality, unique style of the establishment, or something else [10, c. 29].

The study was conducted based on materials obtained during the implementation of the scholarship program «Centrum Dialogu im. Juliusza Mieroszewskiego».

The aim and objectives of the article. The aim of the work is to develop an effective communication and image policy for higher education institutions during the reintegration of veterans into the digital society. Despite the sufficient volume of scientific research in the field of communication and image policy, the question of developing an approach to its implementation remains unresolved. It is worth considering the combination of both policies and treating them as a single entity that complements each other. Additionally, the issue of veterans' reintegration into the digital society needs improvement in terms of awareness of the importance and their involvement in further educational digitization. Addressing these issues will contribute to the further development of modern paradigms of communication and image policy in higher education institutions, aimed at satisfying the interests of various segments of the population, including war veterans.

Presentation of the main material and substantiation of the obtained research results. Higher education institutions should clearly define the main goals of their communication policy to adhere to during their activities. In the process of reintegrating war veterans into the digital society, these goals could include:

1) reproduction of a recognizable image and formation of a positive institution's image;

2) enhancement of reputation through receiving positive assessment of educational services quality among stakeholders;

3) increase in the ranking of educational institutions' scientific achievements;

4) continuous contact with stakeholders to increase demand for educational services;

5) establishment of effective communication channels for interaction with service consumers;
6) implementation of innovations in the educational process regarding communication with learners;
7) crisis management aimed at minimizing the impact of a turbulent competitive environment;
8) enhancement of internal and external security levels and risk mitigation;
9) strengthening resilience and preserving the integrity and functionality of the university as a system.

It is worth noting that communication policy encompasses both interpersonal and impersonal communications. Interpersonal communications occur in the process of personnel formation, motivation, training, working with potential consumers, and monitoring results. The product promotion process is also associated with both interpersonal communication (such as personal selling) and impersonal communication, an example of which can be advertising communication.

The image of higher education institutions is the perception and attitude towards them by various social groups based on the external and internal image formed through direct contacts or received information. The image is usually based on ideas and associations that exist in public consciousness regarding a particular university and include a developed system of identification (design, logo, etc.). The reputation of higher education institutions in the process of reintegrating war veterans into society is shaped by its image – educational, socio-communicative, scientific, financial, and personnel-related. Reputation encompasses general assessments and characteristics of the university, which are formed by all stakeholders such as the government, society, employers, and consumers. These assessments and characteristics result from strategic communications and are reflected in mass media, social networks, and among prospective students.

Reputation is built over a long period of time and creates significant opportunities for the development and competitive advantages of the university. However, despite this paradoxical phenomenon, reputation is a rather volatile attribute: it can become a limiting factor if the university is unable to respond promptly and adequately to the contemporary challenges of society and the expectations of various interested parties.

The long-term positive impact of the reputational component is formed through:
• developing strategic planning of targeted actions to create and sustain reputation;
• implementing innovative and flexible communication approaches that consider stakeholders' interests and foster positive interaction with them;
• achieving sustainable differentiation of the institution in the eyes of society, including through the formation and support of its uniqueness, positioning, and communication culture;
• incentivizing self-identification and loyalty from staff and students, which facilitates attracting the most talented individuals and serves as the basis for long-term reputation building and differentiation;
• instilling in consumers an awareness that this institution can secure their future, not only by creating positive associations but also by demonstrating its potential for their personal and professional development.

In the process of implementing effective communication and image policies during the reintegration of war veterans into the digital society, it is worth noting that the image can take on the following types:

Desired – This type of image reflects what we aspire to. It is formed under the influence of changes in leadership, the creation of new operating conditions, and updates to the workforce.

Corporate – This is the image of the higher education institution as a whole, not individual departments or outcomes. It encompasses the institution's reputation, its success, and the degree of stability. It is ensured by the formation of a corporate culture.

Multiple – This is the image created when several higher education institutions unite into one. This effect is observed when colleges and universities operate within specially developed rules and adhere to ethical behavior.

Contextual image is characterized by promoting the implementation or functioning of an image in the context of its use in a particular sphere, targeting specific segments of the population, levels of societal awareness, and so on. Thus, a higher education institution may have different images among prospective students, their parents, and other educational institutions.

Comparative image - This is an approach to image formation that involves comparing various image characteristics. Such comparison can occur at the level of ideal and actual image parameters of a higher education institution, between two or more leaders within it.

A higher education institution, in the process of reintegrating war veterans into the digital society, can implement various types of images. However, the most popular ones are corporate, contextual, and comparative. They are expressed in the ranking assessment of higher education institutions.

Here are the results World University Rankings 2024 [8; 9]. It is based on 18 indicators, which are components of 5 key higher education indicators. Specifically, teaching, research environment, research quality, industry collaboration, and international outlook. All indicators undergo certain adjustments taking into account the specificities of individual fields. In Figure 1, we will present the position of the educational institution in the ranking based on the first indicator for business and economics.
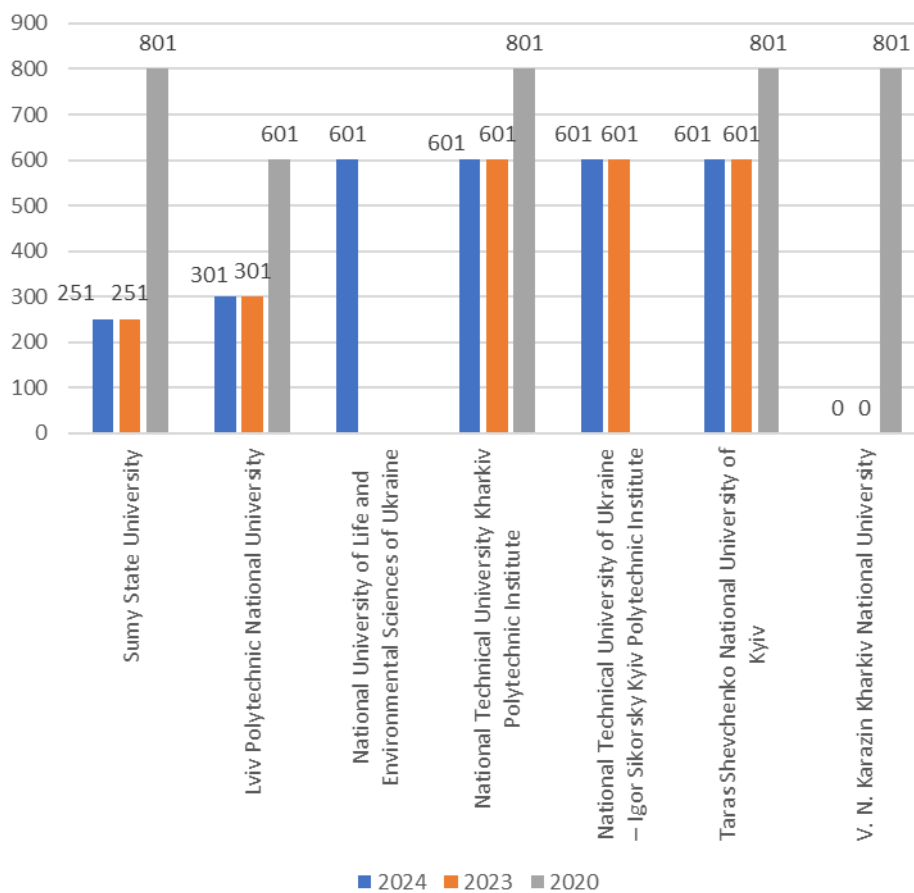
Fig. 1. *University Ranking World University Rankings 2024-2020 by subject: business and economics*
Sorce: compiled by the authors based by [8; 9]

From the data in Figure 1, conclusions can be drawn that the image policy of higher education institutions in Ukraine is evolving. Measures are being developed to improve the position of the institution in global rankings. For example, Sumy State University, which was ranked 801st in 2020, rose to the 251st position in 2023 and 2024, an increase of 550 places. Other higher education institutions improved their positions by 200 places, such as the National Technical University Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute and Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, by 601 places, including the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine and the National Technical University of Ukraine - Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, and by 300 places, like Lviv Polytechnic National University.

In the phenomenon of the image of a higher education institution during the reintegration of war veterans into the digital society, two levels can be distinguished:

1. Macro-level, which is determined by the processes and phenomena to which the educational institution is involved, which develop and influence its formation and development.

2. Micro-level, which encompasses the sphere of conscious activity of the higher education institution and its unconscious manifestations that can be identified with its individuality and uniqueness, defining the specificity of its activities, professional, and status-role potentials.

The process of forming the image policy of a higher education institution usually begins with setting such goals:

1. Creating a favorable attitude: This aims to cultivate a positive perception of the institution's activities within society to ensure its normal functioning and expand its sphere of influence.

2. Reputation preservation: This involves aligning the institution's actions with societal standards and values, preventing negative consequences, and maintaining a positive image.

3. Internal relations: This involves leveraging the institution's image to stimulate the interest of leadership and staff in its activities.

It is worth noting that such an approach in the communication and image policies of higher education institutions will help them advance not only in the domestic educational service market but also internationally.

Conclusions and recommendations. Taking this into account, when developing an optimal communication and image policy for a higher education institution in the process of reintegrating war veterans into the digital society, it is advisable to adhere to the methodology for constructing a project model:

1. Problem Identification and Alternative Solutions. At the first stage, the problem and possible alternative solutions are identified. One of the possible alternative solutions is to use the example of the so-called random "fortunate phrase" from the project object. This requires a clear understanding of the end result, as image development may lead to the complete or formal destruction of the object or its transition to a new level of existence, such as the closure of an educational institution.

2. Project Planning. The second stage involves project planning. It should include: formulating the problem and project objectives; defining the main goals, target audience; outlining the project scope; developing a strategy and work distribution, including tasks, deadlines, resources, costs, and control system; identifying risks; detailed characteristics of the end result for successful project implementation.

3. Execution of the Plan. The third stage involves executing the plan.

4. Control and Evaluation. The fourth stage involves monitoring and evaluating the plan's execution, reflecting on the results. If necessary, plan adjustments or the development of a new project considering new conditions may be made. This scheme is cyclical because new conditions may arise after planning, requiring adjustments or the development of a new plan.

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