

Management Consulting in the General Education System: Feedback Mechanism in Civil Society

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Abstract: Over the past 5 years, significant changes have occurred in terms of requests from consumers of consulting services in the educational sector. Quality management, internal audit are superseded by requests for consulting support of projects in the field of “improving school leadership” and “consultancy in failing school” of public schools, as well as strategic planning of SMM consulting, PIM consulting in the non-state sector of general education. The listed types of consulting projects are in great demand as a response to changing expectations of consumers of educational services. “Digital Aborigines” (“Generation Z” - “GenerationZers”) are accustomed to manage information “at their fingertips”, receiving a near-instant response with a high degree of relevance to the request, possessing targeted consumer experience for most of their lives.

1. Introduction

Practical studies of foreign and Russian experience in management consulting in the education system, including in the part of inclusive education and programs for supporting children with disabilities [7, 14], made it possible to substantiate the need to form the core competencies of the consultant within the framework of the industry-specific education system, including through the development of skills of initiation, planning, organization and management of consulting projects in the education system. Considering the problem of the formation of the needs of educational institutions in consulting support at the level of “general education”, we turn to studies in which the long-term and continuous nature of the interaction between the consultant and the client (educational institution) in the system of general education is analyzed. The rapid nature of changes in the general education system itself, including changes in organizational structures and requirements from key customers for the quality of education, initiates the ongoing evolution of consulting practice in the educational sector.

2. Methods

The article explores the issues of modification of consulting practice and the structure of consulting services related to changes in the expectations of consumers of educational services. The results of the GAP-analysis of opportunities and gaps in planning the placement of information for students, parents on the websites of educational institutions, GAP-analysis of opportunities and gaps in the field of social media are given. The article examines the experience of management consulting in the educational sector in terms of digital recruiting and Web-based strategies to attract students in private and public schools.

3. Results

In their research, contemporary scientists consider the goals and objectives of the formation of the institute of leading consultants on the development of the national education system; analyze the issues of personnel reserve formation and training of leading consultants at the regional level [1, 2, 6].

“Consulting services in the field of educational development are connected with the influence of current innovative projects on the consulting “product”. Modernization processes generate lively innovative practice, which often remains insufficiently generalized and normatively fixed, which directly influences both the selection of the content of consultations and the selection of specialists capable of performing the function of consultants. The process of forming the institute of leading consultants on the development of the education system is intended to be one of the instruments of educational state policy on the synthesis, adaptation, generation, and dissemination of modern applied knowledge for managers of different levels of educational systems, as well as other categories of industry professionals” [6, p. 80].

The key performance indicators of educational institutions from the standpoint of quality assurance process, the direction of basic research in the field of education management, research questions on the need for consulting services from educational institutions, approaches in the field of management consulting in the educational sector determine the need to develop consulting practice at various levels of the education system, taking into account existing Russian and foreign experience.

The restructuring of management and marketing activities as a process of management consulting in the education system is aimed at developing mechanisms for optimizing the interaction of commercial and educational organizations in the context of the economic crisis. In domestic practice, the following issues are highlighted as problematic: the role of marketing and management in the functioning of the school; the role of education in the development of the reputational and social capital of companies; modern indicators of the effectiveness of business processes in a crisis; stimulation of integration processes of higher educational institutions and business community; intellectual, organizational, personnel resources for cooperation of educational institutions with the business environment; experience of introducing social technologies in the educational process; educational and professional standards; reflection of market requirements in formal state documents (sections on the integration of universities and businesses in research activities; social engineering and education: problems and prospects; social corporate responsibility of the university and contemporary challenges; problems of interfacing educational and professional standards) [17].

Considering the need for consulting support of educational institutions at the level of general education, we turn to studies in which the long-term and continuous nature of the interaction between the consultant and the client (educational institution) in the system of general education is analyzed [15].

Thus, by the example of the development of schools in various German lands, the trend is considered when several non-profit organizations, independent consultants turn into partners in terms of systemic improvements in general education. This question is particularly relevant from the point of view of the modernization of “failing schools”, for schools with a revealed discrepancy between the quality of education and the results of the inspection.

External consultants were a key factor in the development of schools in the general education system. In this context, management consulting in the education system is based on the ideas that external experts influence the restructuring and modification of internal school development processes and the results (efficiency). This approach is also valid when improving the quality of education at the level of “failing schools”, which is confirmed by empirical data. They were obtained as part of a research project, where significant shortcomings emerged during the first round of school inspections in the federal state of Lower Saxony in Germany [9]. It has been proven that the framework conditions for follow-up inspections affect school activities in such a way that a certain type of counseling and/or a specific consultancy procedure becomes meaningful and effective for schools. Thus, the question arises about the development of concepts of external counseling in the system of general education on the development of schools, including in terms of ensuring effective support for the activity of “failing schools”.

In terms of foreign experience (UK), under the conditions of a “self-improving” general education system, at present, several thousand national colleges appointed by “system leaders” work in English schools as school support consultants [4]. The issue of systematic consideration of the long-term development of consultants in accordance with the values and interests of specialists in the field of education is solved by presenting a program for the development of counseling services in English schools. Conclusions can be made about the importance of initiative in defining the long-term program of consulting development in English schools [5].

Some approach to the development of modern consulting in the field of “general education” is considered in the context of moving from the “best practice” to the “next practice” [3]. Problems characterizing the modern educational environment [8, 11, 12, 13, 14] require more flexible approaches to leadership than the traditional reliance on the codification and integration of systematized knowledge, including innovative teaching methods, behaviors that would allow school principals to move from the “best practice” to the “next practice”. This approach allows us to identify a way to solve complex problems that have become an integral part of the landscape of educational leadership, including circumstances in the professional environment that either limit or encourage this kind of educational leadership. Second, it aims to encourage consideration of the implications of this way of working for thinking, learning and developing managers. To this end, the nature of the problems, designed to define the landscape of educational leadership now and in the future, is discussed for the first time.

Consulting projects in the general education system are included in the subject area “improving school leadership” [16].

The GAP-analysis (gaps and opportunities) is one of the key management consulting tools for the development of general education and school development. We will give an example in the form of an analysis of the consulting practice of the consulting company Ruffalo Noel Levitz.

Management consulting in social media promotion is being developed in a number of Social Media Marketing (SMM) projects. As an example, we present data on the GAP-analysis of opportunities and gaps in the field of social media (Table 1) [10]:

- (“E-Expectations”): 77% of students in grades 10-12 and 76% of students in grades 7-9 use YouTube weekly, while
- 23% of private universities (4 years), 29% of public universities (4 years), and 29% of public colleges (2 years) do not use YouTube.

TABLE 1 THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE STRATEGY TO ATTRACT STUDENTS (US EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS).

Private universities (4 years)	Public universities (4 years)	Private colleges (2 years)
Facebook (98.6%)	Facebook (96.6%)	Facebook (100.0%)
Twitter (90.0%)	Twitter (94.9%)	Twitter (91.7%)
Instagram (86.4%)	Instagram (78.0%)	Instagram (66.7%)
YouTube (70.8%)	YouTube (77.1%)	YouTube (71.2%)
Snapchat (39.3%)	Snapchat (45.8%)	LinkedIn (33.3%)

Consider the results of GAP-analysis of opportunities and gaps in the field of planning the placement of information for applicants on the university website: 85% of high schools and 90% of secondary school students say that when planning college entrance, they find reliable information on the website. At the same time, 30% of private universities (4 years), 37% of public universities (4 years), and 62% of public colleges (2 years) do not consider the function of scheduling admission through the website of an educational institution. Thus, 9 out of 10 universities provide the following on versions of mobile web sites: a list and description of academic programs, specializations; admission information; information regarding financial assistance; application process for enrollment [10].

In the field of management consulting for non-state schools, the following model of consulting support is applicable (Fig. 1.).

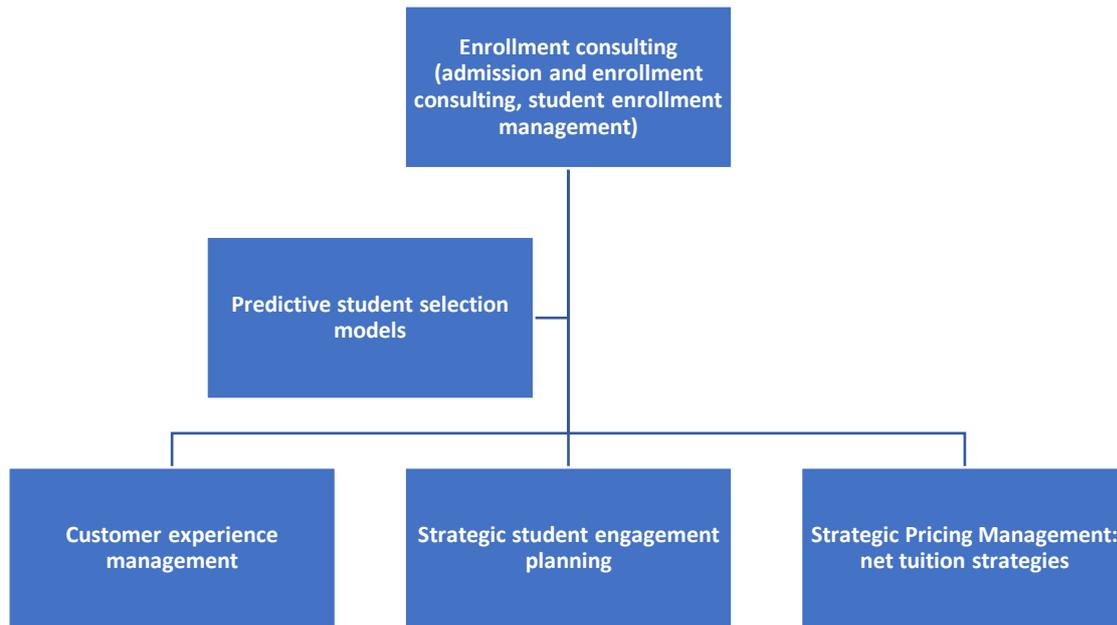


Fig. 1. Strategic planning for enrollment and student management in non-state schools.

At the same time, the issue of student e-recruiting and the selection of relevant communication channels in the absence of data on schools can be considered from the point of view of regular research of future applicants (Table 2.) [1,2].

Respondents were asked the following question: “What is the preferred area for e-recruiting practice for development when allocating a new budget for promotion?”

TABLE 2. PRIORITY DIRECTIONS OF THE IMPROVEMENT OF E-RECRUITING PRACTICE.

Priorities for improving of e-recruiting practice	Private institutions (4 years)	Public institutions (4 years)	Public institutions (2 years)
Site design	26.3%	25.9%	16.7%
Site content	23.4%	13.8%	8.3%
Interactive advertising	16.1%	29.3%	16.7%
Social media	10.2%	12.1%	25.0%
Email communication	5.1%	5.2%	20.8%
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	8.0%	8.6%	0.0%
Others, including the answers of individual respondents: CRM (Customer Relationship Management), text messaging (SMS) using phones and other mobile devices, developing a mobile version of the site	10.9%	5.2%	12.5%

Thus, the results of a retrospective analysis of the development of the process of management consulting in the general education system should be interpreted from the perspective of several areas: development of needs and requirements for professional qualifications and competencies of specialists in management consulting, development of approaches and stages of management consulting in the education system; consulting project hierarchy change.

4. Conclusion

For the development of research results, the solution of the following tasks is necessary: to form an understanding of the specifics of consulting in the educational system in terms of the sectoral specialization of consulting projects; to study the consulting project management methodology applicable to the education system; to consider the specifics of consulting in the education system; to study the dynamics of development of the practice of management consulting, including the example of the practice of foreign and Russian educational institutions in the system of general education.

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