

IMAGE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Alexander A. Tkachev*, Ekaterina V. Ryazanova* and Lidia V. Rebisheva*

The paper deals with the issue of managing and adjusting the image of higher education in society. The notions “picture” and “image” are correlated and analyzed within the context of higher education, their similarities and differences, as well as the scientific context of usage. The given analysis of theoretical conceptual framework is necessary as a base for conducting sociological studies of image. The issues of the higher education institution’s image formation turned out that it is important to define the university image formed in students’ minds and based on it to build the correct image highlighting strengths. This can help to avoid disappointment and inconsistency of the university evaluation at the stage of admission and in the learning process. Results of the study can be useful to educational institutions interested in forming of their positive image as well as interested in this subject specialists.

Key words: Educational institution image, picture, sociological studies of education image.

INTRODUCTION

Over the last two decades the higher education system has been undergoing a number of numerous reforms, which rebuild traditional obsolete educational processes, directing them to a new vector of development in line with state goals. In the course of these transformations higher education becomes increasingly open, transparent for society and intensive to the utmost by the rate of information exchange with society. Any changes in the system available to people at large result in popular response, which forms particular opinion about educational innovations considering previous experience and generalized character of education. Regular changes taking place in the education area lead to the loss of stable traditional image of education. Each particular individual generates a new image of modern education based on the postulates different information sources translate to him. In the absence of well-designed image based on particular significant symbols, higher education runs the risk to give up the formation of its chaotic image to the masses and different means of mass media, which pursue their own aims. Studying factors of image formation in the field of education becomes, therefore, most relevant. In order to make the notion of image specific it’s necessary to analyze scientific approaches for building the base for further studies.

Image (имидж) in Russian means character, representation and figure. It’s widely believed that American economist and sociologist Kenneth Boulding was the first who introduced the term in his book *Image*. In this book Boulding identifies image with the role a person takes on, building up the behaviour pattern

* Department of Marketing and Government Administration, Tyumen Industrial University, Tyumen, Russia, E-mail: sever626@mail.ru.

corresponding to this role. According to the author, each member of society has a certain political role. “Knowledge is based on truth, image – on belief”, in particular, the author states that image is based on delusive notions of the object, the image carrier. (Kenneth, 1961).

METHODS

V.P. Shestakov (1988) in his book *Mythology of the 20th century: Criticism of Theory and Practice of Bourgeois Mass Culture* states the idea that the notion of image originated from the mass culture. According to him, this term isn't equivalent to the Russian term “образ” (“picture”), which reflects a realistic mode of thought, but implies “inadequate character, intentionally, consciously oriented to incorrect distorted reflection of reality”, some reproduction of an ideal, prestige, desired illusion. In this case ideal or prestige implies a set of certain symbols perfect for perception of qualities, translation of which implies a certain benefit for its carrier. In this regard, this term became widespread in the commercial field and strengthened as a research area in the field of marketing and public relations. Scientists found out the effectiveness of image as a tool to influence the population's mood and assessment regarding the object of interest, and development of free market economy and increasing competition in the market contributed to cultivating the need for shaping a certain image of a company or a product most advantageous for target audience. In this respect we can provide a few scientific interpretations of the “image” notion.

In particular, image is interpreted in the philosophical dictionary as an artificial imitation or presentation of the external form of a certain object, especially, personality. It's a mental picture of a person, product or an institute, which is directionally shaped in the social consciousness with the aid of publicity, advertising or propaganda” (Ryazanova & Rebysheva, 2016).

V.M. Markin (1996) distinguishes the idea of information transfer by means of image through certain image-signals about yourself, your true (personal and professional) buttresses, ideals, plans, deeds” as a frame basis.

According to M.O. Koshlyakova (2012), image is a picture, which expresses public representatives' ideas of the subject's social role.

N.V. Ushakova and A.F. Strizhova (2012) also consider “image” a particular synthetical picture, which is being formed in the people's mind with respect to a particular person, organization or other social object; includes significant amount of emotionally charged information on the percept and incites to certain social behaviour.

From a public relation view, image is a certain picture, which personality, his “I” represents to people around, a kind of self-presentation, when an emphasis is put on all strengths and weaknesses are hidden. Image includes a presentation, impression about some reality, but not the reality itself (Panasyuk, 2009).

All these definitions put an emphasis on the main characteristics of image:

- It is of synthetical, artificially formed nature;
- represents a system of well-balanced information focused on deriving profit;
- It's being shaped in both particular individual's mind and public conscience as a sum of different images (pictures);
- as a rule, created for deriving commercial, social, political profit;
- can be actively and most efficiently shaped using particular marketing tools: propaganda, publicity, advertising, and mass media.

Due to the fact that image is equivalent at its bottom to a certain pattern being formed in the consciousness, image as a communication phenomenon became popular research subject in the field of psychology.

For example, in her works doctor of psychological sciences E.B. Pereylygina (2002) positions the term as a symbolic image of the object, where studying public psyche of people, ties and relations between different phenomena, which allow identifying the image content, clarifying its dependence on the perception by different social groups, appear key issues.

A.Y. Panasyuk (2009) presents the object's image as opinion of rational and emotional nature about an object (person, item, system) originated in the mind – in the sphere of consciousness or subconsciousness of a particular or certain or indefinite group of people based on the pattern formed purposefully or involuntarily in their mind as a result of either their direct perception of some or other feature of the object or indirect perception for the purpose of attraction appearance – people's attraction to the object.

According to V.G. Gorchakova (2012), image is adequate representation of the leading intention, the person's general inner goal by all means of expressiveness. This system of social programming of people's behaviour (orientation) by mental stereotypes and symbols of group behaviour for the purpose of uncritical, mimetic symbolic following is based on the attraction to social success.

In this case the following features of image are taken as a basis:

- Picture that appears in the mind, consciousness;
- It's shaped by means of object perception through particular communication systems: direct, indirect (through other people's views);
- object perception and formation of attitude to the object depend not only on the emotional colour of information scope but also the person's system of values.
- As a result of perception, certain emotionally charged attitude to the object is being formed and, consequently, opinion of positive or negative nature.

The analysis of image interpretations states that this category emerged at the joint of cross-disciplinary areas – marketing and sociology. The majority of scientists correlates or identifies the notion with the category of “picture” («образ»). However, we need to pay attention to features, the image notion makes specific. For one thing, we need to consider the “picture” («образ») notion from a scientists’ point of view.

The philosophical dictionary defines picture as a form of reflection and learning of world object by the man, a consciousness product and that is being formed in the consciousness in the form of a sign or simulacrum demonstrating changes and differences (Ryazanova & Rebysheva, 2016).

The first understanding of image can be found in ancient literature in the works of Plato and Aristotle. Plato perceived “picture” not as a result of sensuous impression, but a prototype for imitation. “Thinking is impossible without picturing”, Plato believed. The similar view is also seen in the mimesis theory of Aristotle, who argues that transformation of an object into the picture takes place in imitation (mimesis), which leads not to creation distortion, but elevation over it and catharsis (Ryazanova & Rebysheva, 2016). The nature of artistic pleasure is enclosed in the joy of recognition: the look of familiar phenomenon updates memories about the similar, associations, comparisons, etc. Putting an emphasis on the obvious peculiarity of the artistic reality in comparison with the actual world, Aristotle brings forth a problem of truth and credibility in the art. Credibility takes place as a result of skilful copying of reality, everything that exists outside the art. Truth in the art is something that is beyond credibility; it almost personifies specific, artistic meaning, the artist’s efforts are targeted to express. The artists may give up the accuracy of details, if it helps to achieve the greater expressiveness of a work. This theory of copying pictures of reality became common use in culture and aesthetics, as imitation is revealed in the forms of creative activity – reproduction of artistic pictures in the art and painting.

Plato supports his own difference between image and picture, original and copy, model and simulacrum. Copies are secondary owners of idea, rightful claimants guaranteed by similarity; simulacra are a kind of pseudo-pretendents based on dissimilarity. In his State Plato represents the image of an ideal man, ideal citizen.

Classic philosophers, therefore, perceive picture as mental imitation, reproduction of a percept based on symbols perceived in the course of contact with the percept. In the old time cognition of his own nature by the man was the cause for searching for self-identity and his place in the world. Distinguishing yourself among others, the man translates his own unique picture to the external environment.

The mimetic characteristics of picture are also reflected in Biblical philosophy, stating that God created the man “in His image and likeness” (in Russian the word

«образ» is used), correspondingly, the “picture” notion in this context reflects features similar to the prototype. (Ryazanova & Rebysheva, 2016).

“Picture” was later considered in terms of epistemology a cognizer’s perspective. Besides, the nature of picture was divided into empirical and rationalistic. According to the former approach, “picture” is not only an icon but an imprint brought to mind by the original object. According to Kant, picture is an object of imagination without the presence of the object. Picture can become a product (creative work) or reproduction (memory) of previously existed contemplation. Since imagination synthesis refers not to singular contemplation, as Kant suggests, but only to its unity in the definition of sensibility, there should be a difference between picture and scheme. Picture is always demonstrative, while scheme is rather a general method, the imagination uses to deliver the picture notion. Time forms the basis of schemes, since time series is typical for both contemplations and notions (Lysikova & Lysikova, 2006).

In the era of Renaissance there was a value overturn and deeper turning of attention to the man and his axiological characteristics. The next belief was widespread: the man is the highest value; it had an impact on the development of individualism in the sphere of world view and all-round manifestation of individuality in public life. The appearance of social life marked the need to represent yourself to the society in a particular way, creating the picture acceptable and recognized in the milieu.

The picture of a labour man was seen in the Marxist-Leninist philosophy – the creator of all material and spiritual values, the world transformer (Marxist Leninist Theory of the Historical Process, 1981). The representatives of this philosophy stated significance of public relations’ influence on the personality formation. Karl Marx argues the man’s essence as an entirety of all public relations. Lenin considered that the man’s first productive power is a worker, a working person (Marxist Leninist Theory of the Historical Process, 1981).

P.Y. Galperin (1966). perceived a mental picture as a result of subject’s abstracting activity, method of object representation to subject.

The modern studies of Rome club reflect the modern person’s picture, distinguishing his outstanding characteristics: egoism, isolation, restraint within narrow mercantile interests, self-interest, detachment from nature, society and other people, search for personal benefit to the injury of other members of society, anti-humanist attitude to people and to the world as a whole. Such a set of features, according to researchers, has an impact on the people’s behaviour in the society, who aim at reaping the benefit and not achieving the activity result useful for the society. Alienation, drive to maximum consumption and production is an important feature of the man. A person named Aurelio Peccei, the Rome club’s founder, step by step turns into a grotesque Homo economicus. The term is typical person’ image in the today’s reality (Leibin, 1982). To reveal the man’s picture Rome club placed

a special emphasis on the man's inner orientations formed on the psychological and individual-personal level. The members of Rome club assess such a picture as biased and not reflecting the individual's inner world wealth.

In this respect person's value paradigms, the behaviour pattern widespread in the society was chosen for forming a picture. The researchers consider domination of material benefits in the person's life the cause for such a picture, that in its turn a consequence of scientific and technical progress. As a result, Rome club considers material revolutions, namely, industrial, scientific and technical ones, the source of "the man's crisis" (Leibin, 1982).

The "image" and "picture" notions have related characteristics based on the following similar elements:

- Both categories are formed in the person's mind through the perception of translated information.
- Both image and picture are formed based on a collective set of particular symbols. The philosophical dictionary defines symbol as an ideological image structure containing references to some or other distinct items, for which it is generalization and an unexpanded sign. As an ideal structure of an item, symbol secretly comprises of all possible manifestations of the item and creates the prospect for infinite expansion into thoughts, a shift from generalized sense-bearing characteristic of the item to its particular personalities (Ryazanova & Rebysheva, 2016).
- Forming both phenomena takes place as a result of correlation to the person's system of values.

RESULTS

It is therefore fair to say that any image can be named "picture", but not any picture is image, image is consequently a highly specialized notion.

Content analysis of user queries of the Yandex search system for average month allowed identifying most popular phrases, including the category of "image" and "picture":

TABLE 1: POPULAR USER QUERIES RELATED TO "IMAGE" AND "PICTURE"
(«образ») CATEGORIES

<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of queries</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Number of queries</i>
Image	258 955	Образ (picture, character)	3 593 044
Shaping image	9926	Образ жизни (way of living)	524 108
Company image	8986	Образ человека (image of a man)	140 445
Organization image	6620	Образ романа (novel character)	66 708
Person image	6451	Система образов (set of patterns)	65 267
Business image	5835	Образ времени (image of time)	61 270
Creating image	5135	Создание образа (creating image)	52 730

Image by the number of queries is broader notion than image. Interest in this category 14 times increases “image”. The fields of “picture” context are culture, art, psychology, philosophy; the fields of “image” context – commerce, politics, marketing.

Let’s unite all the characteristics of picture and image definitions into a comparison table.

TABLE 2: THE MAIN DIFFERENCES OF PICTURE FROM IMAGE

<i>Picture</i>	<i>Image</i>
Action of naturally formed nature	Directed action of synthetically formed nature
Broader notion	Highly specialized notion
It’s of idealized nature	It’s of artificial consumer commercial nature
Often created based on actual object perception	Created based on mediated perception through communication channels
May have natural object perception	Emotionally charged positively or negatively, it’s expressed in clear position, opinion regarding the image subject
Formed with regard to many material and immaterial objects	Formed with regard to person and social groups
Picture is formed through the system of subject-object interaction, through subject’s active transforming attitude to reality	Image is characterized by sending of image-signals by the subject and their receipt by the percept
Most popular set phrases: “гносеологический образ” (gnoseological image), “образ науки” (image of science), чувственный образ (sensuous image), образ жизни (way of life)	Most popular set phrases: person image, company image

The notion of “picture” is, therefore, an evolution-created category, which eventually acquired a number of different connotations and meanings, but managed to preserve its natural character. Image is initially a product artificially created by society as a means towards its end. Image is, therefore, a tool for creating picture, for that reason it will be also a “picture” in its interpretation. The image of higher education is the very foundation the society’s attitude is formed on. Image under conditions of continuous transformations should appear a means of formation and support of required consistent picture in the people’s consciousness.

The level of knowledge regarding social communicative strategies of image functioning is currently insufficient and non-specific, since different specialists have no single conceptual vision of the research subject. In particular, specialists in the area of sociology are focused on the stereotypes of mass consciousness, social psychology – on the role of the unconscious in producing and perceiving a image-shaping message, communication science – on various aspects of role behaviour, stylists and designers – on thing meanings, representatives of communication management, which is largely related to PR, consider that semantic fields of reputation management, social responsibility are description of images

meanings, etc. The boundaries and prospects of cross-disciplinary synthesis in studying image and its structure elements currently remain vague (Solovyov, 2010; Kalimullin & Islamova, 2016; Gabdulchakov, Kusainov & Kalimullin, 2016).

In order to establish interconnection of picture and image on a practical example we carried out a research dedicated to identification of image and picture of education on the example of a subject of education system of higher education institute – Tyumen Industrial University (TIU). The research was carried out in the autumn term of 2016-2017 academic year.

With due regard to the established theoretical base of the research, the statement that an actual image of HEI is a set of symbolic information obtained by students during direct perception of an object, i.e. in the process of learning, and that image is a picture that they had had during enrollment at the university, was taken as a basis. In other words, the decision of HEI entrance was made based on the shaped image of the university, which was previously created by mass media means, marketing instruments – advertisements on TV, in the Internet, outdoor advertising, opinion of environment and other factors. Considering that image is of synthetically generated phenomenon, the content analysis of mass media means was undertaken. The following set phrases are most popular characteristics of university: the largest scientific educational park, higher education institution of corporations, basic regional higher education institution (Podoprigora & Podoprigora, 2015).

In order to correlate the university picture translated by applicants, a survey was held among pupils of 10-11 grades on the associated perception of the university. Thus, leavers perceive the university as a “higher education institution of corporations”, “the best higher education institution in the oil and gas industry”, “a university that guarantees employment with high wage”.

The degree of university image impact on the decision of going to the university was demonstrated by the results of questionnaire survey among TIU students. Particularly, 22% of students admitted to the university were certain that studying in the university guarantees demand in the labour market, 28% - went to the university due to the interest in the chosen profession, 10% of respondents were attracted by a high standard of wages of specialists of the chosen field in the labour market, 19% of respondents were interested in occupational prestige, 14% - went to the university on parents' and friends' advice, 7% - stated other reasons (Figure 1).

A number of questions were put concerning living up to expectations against the reality to define the picture of education that students have generated in the course of studying. Following the survey, it was found out that 47% of respondents answered in the affirmative, among them only 13% gave the “yes” answer. The same number of students answered “no”, “rather no” – 26% of respondents, 14% - were undecided (Figure 2).

The findings were supported by an open question, where students were offered to indicate 2-3 causes that influenced the estimate they gave. Most popular students'

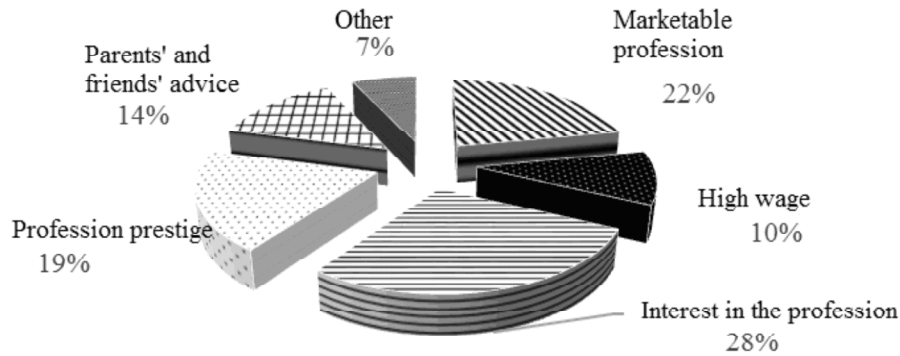


Figure 1: Causes for going at the university

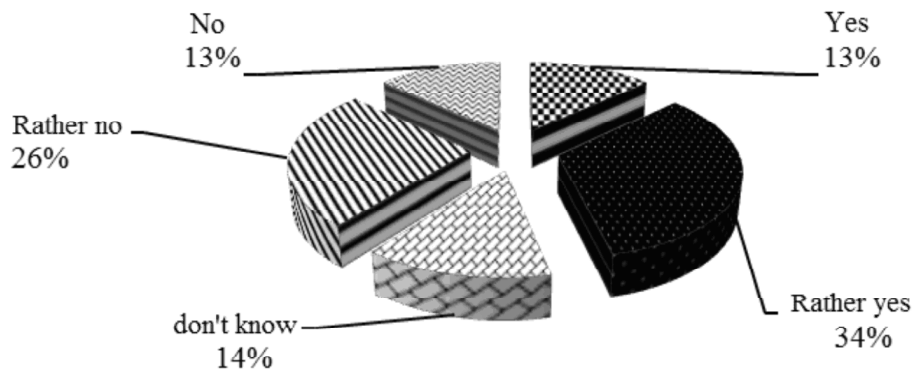


Figure 2: Correspondence of expectations from studying with reality

answers were grouped as follows: exhibition of teachers' incompetence regarding some issues, introduction of the system for student objectified control (SOCS), inconvenient curriculum in terms of both content and hours and practice-lection ratio, academic performance rating using the Educon system, flawed organization of practical trainings and internships.

Students were provided with criteria for assessing educational process components (Figure 3).

Summarizing the carried out analysis of assessments, we may draw the following conclusions: respondents distinguished teaching staff competence as the most significant factor in the process of studying, however they do not get the level of education to the extent they'd like to. It's also proved by the second most popular estimate given to "teaching staff quality". The deviation of importance scale from correspondence scale is downmost in the "learning process", it means that the university creates most favourable conditions for teaching students: there's

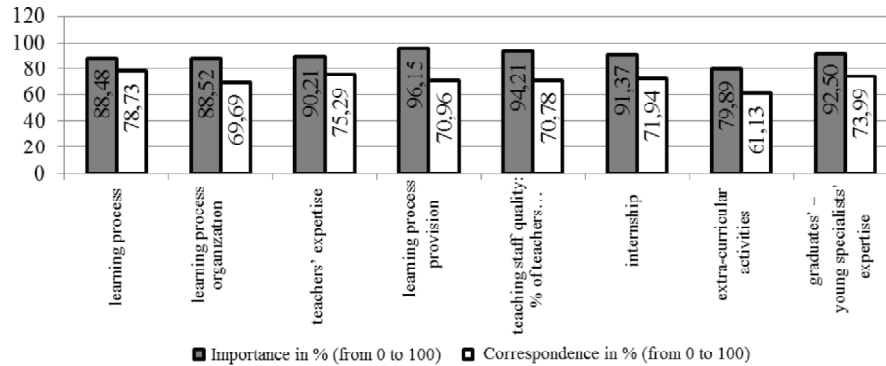


Figure 3: Students' general satisfaction assessment with educational process components

a wide choice of occupations, modes of study, curriculum is being thoroughly developed. It is worthy of note that students consider "graduates' expertise" the third significant aspect, confirming their expectations in respect to a set of future competences.

Since the major positioning of the university guarantees employment and cooperation with corporations student, students were asked a question on interning and university's assistance in employment. It was found out that 48% of respondents called practical training satisfactory. 37% were satisfied with practical training, and only 2% of them gave the answer "very good". The same number of students gave the answer "very bad", and 13%, in addition to them, are dissatisfied about practical training, calling it "inadequate" (Figure 4).

Only 20% consider the deanery's help in employment sufficient, 58% of respondents' answers indicate deanery's job dissatisfaction regarding employment issues, and 22% of respondents are of the opinion that deanery doesn't help in this regard at all (Figure 5).

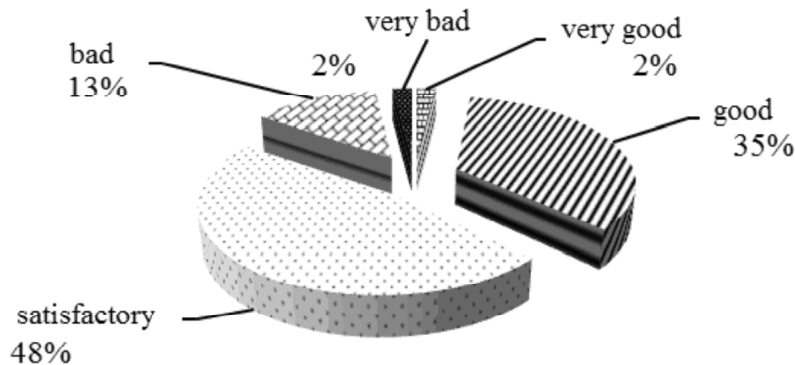


Figure 4: Students' satisfaction with practical training

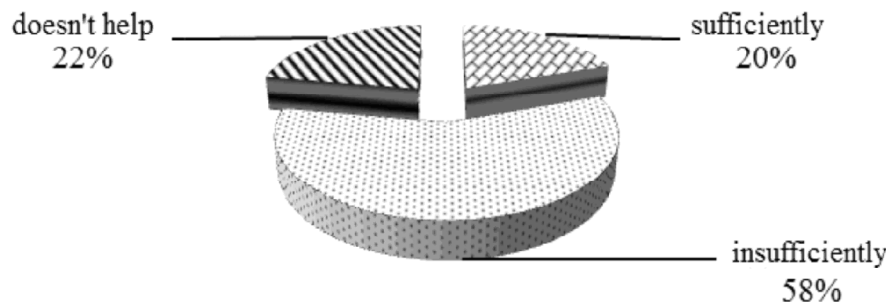


Figure 5: Assessment of deanery's help in employment

In this case the statement about inadequacy of practical training in the university is not obligatory. Such estimates may be the consequence of overstated expectations from a certain image of the university at the stage of admission and reality perception.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Image is an important tool providing image carrier's competitiveness, however, it's necessary to make a difference between the categories of "picture" and "image" as evolutionally and synthetically formed phenomena, correspondingly. In this case image appears a tool for adjusting picture the percept gets in the course of direct or indirect communication. Studying the issues of higher education institute image formation, it was found out that it's important to define university's image shaped in the students' mind and to build up a particular image on its base focusing on the strengths. This will make it possible to avoid disappointment and university assessment mismatch at the stage of enrollment and in the course of studying.

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