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THE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO FORMING THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COMPETENCE OF WOULD-BE EXPERTS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CONTEMPORARY EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS

The paper presents the issue of application of strategic management with the view of forming students' foreign language competence as a constituent of their professional training at higher educational institutions. The main components and stages of the strategic approach with defining specifics of their use in the educational setting and conditions of their effective implementation for optimal organization of teaching would-be experts in the framework of contemporary requirements for higher education have been analyzed.

Key words: strategic management, foreign language competence, professional training, strategic approach, optimal training organization, strategic planning, resource management, control and evaluation.

Introduction. In the light of the recent ubiquitous trends of globalization and internationalization, the concept of the foreign language competence as a core one in the portfolio of a promising expert in any sphere of business and social life has become common. It leads to the crucial changes in perception of the foreign language as exceptionally a tool for communication since it is also considered as a key requirement for career growth, access to wider opportunities for self-development and it is frequently taken for granted that any expert is fluent in at least one foreign language.

Such an approach to the understanding of a foreign language, and English as a lingua franca in particular, has caused critical shifts in the priorities in the curriculum devised by the leading higher educational establishments to underpin the competitive advantage of their graduates on the labour market at the national and international level. **Taking into consideration all the barriers** that exacerbate the crisis within the national economies the right combination of the graduates' professional competencies can make a difference in the volatile market conditions and eliminate uncertainty of their employment prospects.

Bearing in mind two basic approaches to teaching foreign languages such as audio-lingual and natural, as well as a number of methods including the communicative-analytic one and immersion it seems to be worth applying the strategic approach to acquiring the foreign language competence considering it as a basic direction while using more specific methodological approaches simultaneously.

The focus of strategic management, to date, has largely been on its application in corporate setting. These concepts can yet be extended to more general application to the other fields including the educational sphere since it represents a new and virtually untapped area for employment of strategic management. In the business field, the term of strategic management implies enabling organisations to meet their long-term goals by achieving strategic fit between its resources or competences and its external environment, and in the educational process collaboration between the teaching staff and students with the view of sharing the expertise and acquir-

ing knowledge and skills by the students needs to help the would-be experts to reach such strategic fit between their competencies and the conditions of the external environment to make them a true match in the tough competition on the labour market. In this perspective, a team of students can be considered as an organization with the teacher performing functions of the manager. Thus, strategic management can be applied in the educational sphere and in second-language acquisition, in particular.

Literature review. The issues of forming the foreign language competence of the students of non-linguistic directions of study have been the subject of the studies of a number of academics and researchers. The certain aspects of foreign language training of would-be experts have been discussed in the papers of such researchers as D. Hymes, J. Sheils, O. Bihych, R. Johnson, Ye. Passov, S. Savignon, O. Tarnopolsky, and Ye. Vereshchahin. Peculiarities of the communicative competence have been studied by C. Cazden, M. Canale, M. Swain, A. Aleksiuk, M. Barna, I. Vynohradova, O. Pometun, W. Widdowson, L. Cherniy and others. Although strategic management has been elaborated by a large number of authors including A. Thompson, A. Strickland, A. Rowe, R. Mason, K. Dickel, F. David, M. Moore, M. Porter and others, barely have the issues of intersection of strategic management and the educational process with forming the foreign language competence taken as an example been studied.

The **aim** of the article is to analyze the scope of application of strategic management principles to forming the foreign language competence in order to increase effectiveness and efficiency of the educational process and meet the contemporary educational requirements and standards.

Findings. Forming the foreign language competence leads to shaping a linguistic personality characterized by such individual features as creativity, autonomy, emancipation, open-mindedness, an ability to interact and establish a rapport with interlocutors, as well as eagerness to be involved in the modern world processes of human development to improve people's society [4, p. 87]. Creating such a complex individuality requires a specific approach which could ensure properly established goals, principles and procedures to reach the aim of forming the foreign language competence. Therefore, the strategic approach should be applied as one of those which can foster second language acquisition.

The concept of strategic management has been mainly applied in the corporate surrounding, although it can have practical use in a wider range of directions including the educational area since strategic management principles can be highly beneficial while being utilized in forming the professional competence. According to A. Steiss, strategic management is concerned with deciding in advance what an organization should do in the future (strategic planning), determining how it will be done and who will do it (resource management), and monitoring and enhancing ongoing activities and operations (control and evaluation). It involves the combined effect of these three basic components in meeting the goals and objectives of an organization [5, p. 8]. Strategic planning (effectiveness) involves doing the right things while resource management (efficiency) means doing things right, and control and evaluation (accountability) implies being held responsible for what is done.

A team of students studying the subject can be considered as a small organization and their teacher as a manager of this organization since an organization is a social unit of people that is structured and managed to meet a need or pursue collective goals while having a management structure that determines relationships between the different activities and the members [1]. The common goal of this group of students is to acquire the foreign language competence and satisfy the need for self-development and self-actualization. Thus, it seems to be reasonable to see forming the foreign language competence as a constituent of the professional competency through the prism of these three components of strategic management since it can be beneficial and structure the educational process.

Firstly, strategic planning identifies the specific actions required to implement a given strategy. It involves establishing overall strategic goals and objectives; selecting appropriate policies for the acquisition and distribution of resources; providing a basis for translating policies and decisions into specific action commitments [5, p. 19]. Speaking about forming the foreign language competence, strategic planning implies development of the program of the course indicating the specific intended learning outcomes, the content of the course, scheduling the main steps in the educational process and selecting the most appropriate methods and general pedagogical techniques for achieving the goals set.

The next component is resource management which involves determination of the particular configuration of resources to be employed and the allocation of those resources. According to A. Steiss, it means determining requirements to meet identified goals and objectives; determining the available resources (fiscal, personnel, materials, equipment, and time) required for organizational programs; establishing the organizational processes, procedures, operations, and activities necessary to carry out the strategic plan; and judiciously allocating the resources of the organization in accordance with the system of priorities [5, p. 19]. In the educational perspective, this constituent has practical nature and realistic evaluation of the available resources to adapt them to meet the needs and requirements of the specific group of students taking into consideration the entry level of their foreign language competence, the curriculum with the allocated students' workload as well as material and technical resources of the higher educational institution. The right combination of the available resources which is unique for each team of students enables the teaching staff to avoid uniformity of the approach and implement the educational principles of differentiation and individualization.

The last component is control and evaluation which focuses on internal requirements for the implementation of the selected strategies. Feedback from various control mechanisms is used to determine any necessary modifications of the resource allocation and the organization processes to meet demands and ensure the success of the strategy. This step implies scheduling programs from the point of commitment to completion; exercising control by anticipating and responding to deviations between predicted and actual performance; monitoring activities to determine whether or not feasible and efficient plans and programs are being executed and if not, why not [5, p. 8]. Given the specifics of forming the foreign language competence, it involves interim and final skills assessment, progress and achievement tests as well as peer assessment. Benchmarking and grading are the most effective approaches to students' performance assessment since they provide objectivity of the evaluation, although praise and criticism can be simultaneously used as the techniques of motivating the students. On the basis of the students' academic performance it is possible to make a conclusion on the effectiveness and efficiency of the educational strategy and take corrective actions in case of serious deviations.

Extending the idea of the three components suggested by A. Steiss, it is reasonable to apply the approach devised by F. David who defines three stages of the strategic management process including strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation.

The first stage involves identifying external opportunities and threats, determining internal strengths and weaknesses, establishing long-term objectives, formulating alternative strategies, and selecting particular strategies to pursue [2, p. 5–6]. It is worth mentioning that such an approach to analyzing the team of students and their manager through application of SWOT-analysis can lead to better understanding of the current situation and enhance creation of the conducive environment for the effective learning process. This ability of the teacher to create vision and devise the step-by-step program of actions, i. e. strategic thinking, fosters intense acquisition of the foreign language skills and clear understanding of the ultimate goal of the course.

As for the stage of strategy implementation, its most crucial components which are applicable in forming the foreign language competence are devising policies and procedures for attaining the goal, motivating the team members and developing strategy-supportive culture, which can be extended to learning-supportive culture due to targeting the strategy at the educational process.

The stage of strategy evaluation, according to F. David, implies reviewing external and internal factors that are the bases for current strategies; measuring program performance; and taking corrective actions [2, p. 5–6]. The external and internal factors which can be of high importance for the educational area and forming the foreign language competence in particular can include changes in the educational priorities due to legal amendments or political alterations, the latest trends in society etc. Corrective actions aimed at improving the strategy have to be taken regularly as long as there is an urgent need for them or apparent prerequisites are created for the better academic performance of the students as a result of these corrective actions.

The main distinctive features of strategic management are its dynamic character and adaptability. The same applies to the methods and techniques of teaching foreign languages because effectiveness and efficiency of these approaches depend on the unique set of the factors and external and internal influences which can lead to unpredictable results. Uncertainty of the per-

formance can be eliminated by thorough planning and constant alterations as a fast response to changes in the environment which can lead to better feedback and higher achievements.

Conclusions. Despite the common standpoint of strategic management as a notion applied exceptionally in business setting due to its scope and paradigm, the strategic approach can be widely applicable in the educational field and second-language acquisition in particular. Should it be used properly taking into consideration all its constituents (strategic planning, resource management, control and evaluation), stages (strategy formulation, strategy implementation and strategy evaluation), and gauging intrinsic risks and deviations, strategic management can be beneficial for the educational institutions as a whole and the participants of the educational process, i. e. teaching staff and students, specifically.

The conception of strategic management in the perspective of its application in the educational area needs further elaboration with the view of employing specific strategies commonly used in business environment to the academic surrounding to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of the professional training.

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У статті розглядається питання застосування стратегічного менеджменту для формування іншомовної компетентності студентів вищих навчальних закладів як складової їх професійної підготовки. Проаналізовано основні компоненти та етапи стратегічного підходу з визначенням специфіки їх використання в освітньому оточенні та умов їх ефективної реалізації для оптимальної організації навчання майбутніх фахівців у рамках сучасних вимог до вищої освіти.

Ключові слова: стратегічний менеджмент, іншомовна компетентність, професійна підготовка, стратегічний підхід, оптимальна організація навчання, стратегічне планування, управління ресурсами, контроль та оцінювання.

В статье рассматривается вопрос применения стратегического менеджмента для формирования компетенции в иностранном языке у студентов высших учебных заведений как составляющей их профессиональной подготовки. Проанализированы основные компоненты и этапы стратегического подхода с определением специфики их использования в образовательном окружении и условий их эффективной реализации для оптимальной организации обучения будущих специалистов в рамках современных требований к высшему образованию.

Ключевые слова: стратегический менеджмент, компетентность в иностранном языке, профессиональная подготовка, стратегический подход, оптимальная организация обучения, стратегическое планирование, управление ресурсами, контроль и оценивание.

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