

# Network Interaction in New Generation Economics Professional Training in Higher Education

## Interacción en red en la formación profesional de economistas de nueva generación en educación superior

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#### ABSTRACT:

Today, an up-to-date technological base makes it possible to transform the combined knowledge held by higher education institutions into a virtual educational resource available to the learner anywhere and anytime. Our research has focused on the gist of network interaction in new generation economics professional training in higher education. Our analysis of the existing experience of network interaction among Russian universities has demonstrated the lack of a common methodological framework for setting up and operating network communities, along with a need to develop innovative economics professional technologies. The novelty of this scientific research consists in the development of methodological framework for network interaction comprising a system of laws and patterns, of principles and methods, of modes and algorithms of interaction. The study presents the tools developed to improve the quality of training of graduating students, as well as opportunities for and the need of network interaction. We have put forward an idea of creating a

#### RESUMEN:

Hoy en día, una base tecnológica actualizada hace posible transformar el conocimiento combinado de las instituciones de educación superior en un recurso educativo virtual disponible para el alumno en cualquier lugar y en cualquier momento. Nuestra investigación se ha centrado en la esencia de la interacción de la red en la formación de la nueva generación de economía profesional en la educación superior. Nuestro análisis de la experiencia existente de interacción de la red entre las universidades rusas ha demostrado la falta de un marco metodológico común para la creación y operación de comunidades de redes, junto con la necesidad de desarrollar tecnologías innovadoras de economía profesional. La novedad de esta investigación científica consiste en el desarrollo de un marco metodológico para la interacción de la red que comprende un sistema de leyes y patrones, de principios y métodos, de modos y algoritmos de interacción. El estudio presenta las herramientas desarrolladas para mejorar la calidad de la formación de los estudiantes egresados, así como las

partner network community involving various universities to provide new generation economics professionals with improved, first-class training. We have also suggested a rationale for organizational and methodological conditions necessary for shaping an intensive interaction among partner universities assuring high quality training for students in various areas of economy.

**Keywords:** network curriculum, academic mobility, study abroad training, joint programs, education.

oportunidades y la necesidad de interacción de la red. Hemos presentado una idea de crear una comunidad de red de socios que involucre a varias universidades para ofrecer a los profesionales de la economía de nueva generación un entrenamiento mejorado y de primera clase. También hemos sugerido un fundamento para las condiciones organizacionales y metodológicas necesarias para dar forma a una interacción intensiva entre las universidades socias asegurando una formación de alta calidad para los estudiantes en diversas áreas de la economía.

**Palabras clave:** currículo de red, movilidad académica, formación en el extranjero, programas conjuntos, educación.

## 1. Introduction

Today, we are witnessing the emergence of a new type of community, the network one (Patarakin and Yarmakhov 2007). The current state of information transmission and processing raises to a new level the interaction processes taking place in various socio-economic systems, including organizations, institutions and other economic entities, and produces a synergetic effect resulting from their interaction. This is what makes the current research study relevant.

A growing interest for network communities is due to a shift to a new level of digital development (Patarakin 2004). Our analysis of the existing experience of network interaction among Russian universities has demonstrated the lack of a common methodological framework for setting up and operating network communities, along with a need to develop innovative economics professional training technologies.

The main aims of the present research study are as follows:

1. To develop a methodological framework for the concept of network interaction aiming to enhance the quality of new generation economics professional training.
2. To compile a list of academic activities organized by partner universities dealing with issues of network interaction.
3. To set up network interaction activities within the framework of the learners' academic and research work.
4. To develop necessary conditions for the network interaction organization with a view to assure access to high quality education for persons with disabilities.
5. To improve network interaction methodologies and technologies, including distance and electronic learning.
6. To update the core course content through network interaction among educational institutions featuring the latest equipment and highly qualified specialists.

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## 2. Methodology

The methodological foundation of network interaction comprises a system of laws and patterns, of principles and methods, of modes and algorithms of interaction.

The methodology is based on the idea of creating a partner network community involving various universities to provide new generation economics professionals with improved, first-class training. There is also a great deal of variation in types of network participation among university training structures. One of the obvious cases in point is participation in joint activities of departments that are close to each other in terms of disciplines and share a common academic and educational area. However, building network interactions based on interdisciplinary exchange principles is of greater interest. Cooperation among departments across different fields of specialization can contribute to the strengthening of the so-called synergetic effect resulting from the participants' mutual enrichment with their specific bodies of

knowledge.

Any type of relationship and interactions with consumers must abide by formal rules taking into account people's expectations. The consumer wants the company to consider him or her as a valuable, reliable and long-term partner, with whom they will work together to address their issues. Companies must understand their clients' current needs to deepen their emotional bond to the company, which is only possible when partners are interacting closely with each other. However, this is often impossible in terms of territory. The use of network interaction is suggested in case of geographic distance between partners.

One of the challenges facing modernization processes in education is their closed nature. Opening education to exterior influences creates conditions for enhancing its susceptibility to society's expectations (Sakharova 2012). Educational technologies are constantly updated, leading to eventual improvements in the quality of education. It is by means of network interaction that educational technology updates take place.

Currently, network interaction is a powerful innovative educational resource. A network helps to find precedents, to obtain expert evaluations of its teaching modules, to expand the range of services offered to students, including through implementation of curricula in the form of networks.

## **2.1 Opportunities for and the need for network interaction**

The network provides the opportunity to promote innovative activity products in education and, consequently, to obtain additional funding.

Network interaction strengthens the resources of any innovative institution by means of other institutions' resource facilities.

Network interaction provides the following opportunities:

1. Allocation of resources, given the common activity task.
2. Emphasis on the initiative of every participant.
3. Direct contact among participants.
4. A variety of possible progression paths, given the common external goal.
5. Use of common network resources for the needs of every participant.

Implementation of network interaction brings about the following:

- A raise in the quality of education;
- Accumulation of positive experience among partner universities in terms of professional training of new generation economics professionals;
- Development of a comprehensive approach among learners owing to the existing educational experience and scholarly traditions of partner universities;
- Expansion of the knowledge acquisition system and of new generation economics professionals' awareness and an increase in their motivation to study disciplines and acquire professional knowledge and skills;
- Preparation of professionally competent graduates;
- Job opportunities for graduates everywhere in Russia and abroad;
- Enhanced exchange of experience in specialist training among partner universities.

The network is set up on a voluntary basis and is maintained by common issues and interests shared by all network members. The network is always a result of a project idea, given that its members must all contribute to the achievement of the same goal, coordinate interaction mechanisms and patterns and agree on performance results. As far as higher education institutions are concerned, network interaction implies the establishment of an important learning and academic research cluster within a group of universities ensuring an efficient implementation of competitive curricula and intellectual production aimed at interaction with leading Russian and foreign universities.

Such a network will help accumulate past and present experiences of various university teams,

find precedents, obtain expert evaluation of academic, teaching and methodological tools, expand the range of services offered to students, including through implementation of curricula in the form of networks.

Network interaction takes place among specific partners, such as higher education institutions and other commercial and non-profit entities.

## **2.2. Methodological conditions for the shaping of interaction**

Russian universities' objective need in network interaction has demonstrated the lack of a common methodological framework for setting up and operating network communities involving higher education institutions (Yeryomina 2015). Network interaction is one of the most valuable tools to develop innovative education in Russia as a whole (Kaybiyaynen 2015).

The web environment in education is becoming an indispensable strategy tool for universities. Today, an up-to-date technological base makes it possible to transform the combined knowledge held by higher education institutions into a virtual educational resource available to the learner anywhere and anytime (Kamordzhanova 2016).

Methodological conditions are necessary for the formation of steady interaction among partner universities assuring high quality training for economics students in the following areas:

- coordination of the network interaction's shell among universities;
- establishment of a single format for posting information on activities within the context of a network agreement on partner universities' websites;
- organization of administrative webinars among partner universities

We shall now consider the need for and possibility of establishing partner network communities in universities aiming at network interaction. Innovative educational methodologies are implemented through the use of electronic and distance learning technologies, such as videoconferences, guest presentations with the participation of leading scholars and employers, research seminars and webinars. Universities must express a desire to develop in the right direction.

This need is evident, and opportunities are cost-efficient. Computer labs and Internet access are available in all higher education institutions.

## **2.3. Network interaction and economics professional training**

Universities offering economics programs have provided the framework for our research study. Several universities take an active part as associated members in university network interaction activities. In so doing, the participants' geographical spread is expanding in proportion to the number and quality of activities done at the organizing university.

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## **3. Research outcomes**

It is evident from the results of our research study that a network platform setup usually implies heterogeneity of the participating universities. Less advanced universities will normally profit more from such cooperation. In case of an intelligent and rational interaction, they will learn from more advanced universities and get acquainted with modern research methodologies and latest learning technologies. However, interaction with less advanced universities may also be profitable to advanced universities owing, above all, to the fact that it considerably increases the number of undergraduate, master's and doctoral students and selects the most talented researchers.

### **3.1. Practical significance of research outcomes and**

# opportunities for its implementation

Practical significance of research outcomes lies in the following:

1. A rationale for and development of organizational and methodological conditions for shaping strong interaction among partner universities.
2. Development of innovative learning methodologies and technologies by using electronic and distance learning technologies:
  - videoconferences;
  - guest presentations with the participation of leading scholars and employers;
  - research seminars;
  - webinars;
  - and more

A few questions may arise here. Are prospective online students able to study independently? What about their time management? How well do they understand what they read and are they ready to devote at least five hours a week to network learning? (Benefits of Online Learning, n. d.)

3. Elaboration of advanced training and continuing education methodologies aimed at professors specialized in implementation of technological tools, such as LMS Moodle, among others, with a view to create e-learning materials for teaching and monitoring learners' knowledge acquisition:

- offering professors continuing education courses designed by universities participating in the project with the use of electronic and distance technologies;
- offering professors continuing education courses involving professional organizations.

4. Compilation of a list of network interaction activities among professors contributing to the implementation of a network program:

- further development of partner universities' schools of thought;
- cooperation among partner university professors on the core course content, including textbook and study guides;
- cooperation among partner university professors on writing academic articles and monographs;
- specifications for the best possible content and list of research activities done by students in the context of network interaction

5. Elaboration of interaction methods with employers, increase in employers' satisfaction with new generation economics professionals' qualifications in accordance with the core curriculum and required competences.

The integrated model of an educational network will make it possible to achieve a high quality level of professional education meeting the modern job market requirements, without additional funding owing to an increase in the efficient use of available educational resources (Golovina 2014).

An educational network will function most efficiently if it comprises professional associations, boards of directors of various educational institutions, training facilities and committees, along with other formal and informal entities. This will enable the network to efficiently interact with not only independent enterprises, but also associated employers (Novikov 2000).

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## 4. Discussion of the research outcomes

Saint Petersburg State University of Economics carried out a network interaction pilot project,

and Cristina Gonçalves Góis, professor at the Institute of Accounting and Administration (Coimbra, Portugal), conducted (in English) a webinar entitled *Portuguese Accounting: The IASB approach in a continental country* for master's students enrolled in Saint Petersburg State University of Economics, Rostov State University of Economics and Astrakhan State Technical University. In an online lecture, Cristina Gonçalves Góis dealt in detail with accounting and auditing characteristics peculiar to Portugal, including the historical aspects of the emergence and evolution of accounting and auditing, current accounting and auditing organizational and monitoring principles, reporting, the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) and stages of their adaptation to national particularities, economic entities subject to mandatory auditing, higher and professional education system characteristics, accountant and auditor certification standards, and many more. The presentation was followed by a general discussion conducted in English. A new way of acquiring knowledge enables learners to think ideas over and present them in a network format available for discussion and scrutiny (Patarakin 2009).

The lecture given in Portugal for students from Astrakhan, Rostov-on-Don and St. Petersburg was interesting and useful for all those studying accounting and auditing, master's students and professors alike, since the participants could prepare questions and put them to the guest speaker during her presentation. The outcomes of the webinar under discussion suggest a social, economic and cultural synergy resulting from the joint efforts of one representative from a Portuguese university and three representatives from Russian universities.

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## 5. Conclusion

From this we can conclude that a partner network community involving universities that offer economics programs will constitute a meaningful platform to enhance the quality of training for new generation economics specialists:

- by creating additional opportunities for academic discipline mobility and a multi-vector nature of internship and practice;
- by defining research activity prospects and by offering supplementary competitive advantages to master's programs, the magistracy and universities in general;
- by shaping master's students' skills in the use of modern educational technologies and of best possible teaching strategies;
- by providing learners with an opportunity to get familiar with the curriculum by drawing on resources available in a number of educational institutions, both Russian and foreign.

A university's participation in the network interaction system will offer students an opportunity to join discussions during conferences, to take part in contests, to check their level of knowledge, including their foreign language proficiency, to attend lectures given by leading university professors and participate in conferences.

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