

Vietnamese students in Russia and abroad: tendencies and prospects

Estudiantes vietnamitas en Rusia y en el extranjero: tendencias y perspectivas

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ABSTRACT:

Main tendencies of distribution of Vietnamese entrants among higher educational institutions of different countries are considered in the paper. The principal causes of the explosive growth of the number of Vietnamese students at foreign higher schools are: an active growth of economy, including owing to high-technological branches; shortage of skilled personnel; impossibility to satisfy "personnel hunger" at the expense of the resources of the national educational system; demographic growth combined with the growth of well-being, which allows families to pay for tuition abroad. In the previous years, the Soviet Union was one of the preferred directions for the Vietnamese aiming to obtain higher education, and nowadays the Vietnamese prefer universities of Japan, the USA and Australia. To recover lost positions, it is necessary to analyse the reasons of such choice, to determine what advantages can be offered to Vietnamese entrants by Russian universities, and to develop a strategy of promoting Russian educational services in Vietnam. For that, the author of the paper suggests using results of the survey, carried out in 2016-2017 at Moscow Automobile and Road Construction State Technical University (MADI), processed by means of a concordance method. (This university has long-standing traditions of training Vietnamese specialists). Results of the survey have shown that when the Vietnamese choose a country of study, the main criteria are availability of professions with good job opportunities and acceptable cost of tuition. Consequently, a competitive advantage of Russian higher schools when attracting entrants from Vietnam must be built on efficient pricing policy and efficient informational policy, which will allow disclosing potentials of universities of Russia in training the jobs that are of high demand in Vietnam.

Keywords: higher education, Vietnamese students in Russia, export of educational services

RESUMEN:

Las principales tendencias de distribución de los participantes vietnamitas entre instituciones de educación superior de diferentes países se consideran en el documento. Las principales causas del crecimiento explosivo del número de estudiantes vietnamitas en escuelas superiores extranjeras son: un crecimiento activo de la economía, incluso debido a las ramas de alta tecnología; escasez de personal calificado; imposibilidad de satisfacer el "hambre de personal" a expensas de los recursos del sistema educativo nacional; El crecimiento demográfico combinado con el crecimiento del bienestar, que permite a las familias pagar la matrícula en el extranjero. En los años anteriores, la Unión Soviética era una de las direcciones preferidas para los vietnamitas que buscaban obtener una educación superior, y hoy en día los vietnamitas prefieren las universidades de Japón, Estados Unidos y Australia. Para recuperar las posiciones perdidas, es necesario analizar los motivos de tal elección, determinar qué ventajas pueden ofrecer a los participantes vietnamitas las universidades rusas y desarrollar una estrategia para promover los servicios educativos rusos en Vietnam. Para ello, el autor del artículo sugiere utilizar los resultados de la encuesta, realizada en 2016-2017 en la Universidad Técnica Estatal de Automóviles y Carreteras de Moscú (MADI), procesada mediante un método de concordancia. (Esta universidad tiene una larga tradición de formación de especialistas vietnamitas). Los resultados de la encuesta han demostrado que cuando los vietnamitas eligen un país de estudio, los criterios principales son la disponibilidad de profesiones con buenas oportunidades de trabajo y un costo de matrícula aceptable. En consecuencia, una ventaja competitiva de las escuelas superiores rusas al atraer a participantes de Vietnam debe basarse en una política de precios eficiente y una política informativa eficiente, que permita revelar el potencial de las universidades de Rusia para capacitar a los empleos que son más solicitados en Vietnam.

Palabras clave: educación superior, estudiantes vietnamitas en Rusia, exportación de servicios educativos.

1. Introduction

By the moment when the Soviet Union had ceased its existence, the number of foreign students at higher schools of the USSR was about 150 000 people, which made it the second most important centre of attraction for people, wishing to obtain education beyond their own country. Training at soviet higher schools was an excellent opportunity to obtain free education for citizens of the countries that were in the orbit of the USSR influence; but not only that attracted students. Soviet higher education often became a powerful social ascensor, giving rise to a career in the homeland for many foreign graduates of soviet higher schools.

As an example, let us cite some Vietnamese citizens having studied in Russia: Secretary General of the Communist Party of Vietnam (2001 – 2011) Nông Đức Mạnh, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (1997 - 2006) Trần Đức Lương, Prime minister of Vietnam (1997 - 2006) Phan Văn Khải, many outstanding scientists, production managers, cultural workers. Overall, more than 50 000 citizens of Vietnam obtained education in the Soviet Union and then in Russia. By the mid-80s of the last century, the Vietnamese made a contingent that ranked second in the number of foreign students studying at higher schools of the USSR. These days, these figures do not seem very impressive. Academic mobility has increased several hundreds of times.

According to the data of different sources, the number of Vietnamese students at foreign higher schools and colleges has reached 100 thousand people per year. In 2013, 13789 Vietnamese students arrived only in Japan for study, in 2014 – their number has doubled, and in 2015 – made record 38882 people, having made the Vietnam contingent the second largest population at Japanese higher schools after the Chinese one (Viet Nam Migration Profile 2016). Today Vietnam is considered as one of the most promising sources of students from the viewpoint of countries-exporters in the field of higher education. The country represents a powerful resource from the viewpoint of financial investments in education and providing prospect, highly motivated students. Many countries with a developed system of higher education are ready to compete for this segment of the market of educational services. It acquires particular relevance for the countries facing demographic problems. For such countries (unfortunately, Russia also pertains to them), attraction of foreign entrants becomes one of the main possibilities to maintain a high level of development of national scientific schools, to preserve teaching staff and high ratings of their universities.

2. Methods

Nowadays, Russia, having initially excellent competitive advantages, but having lost them owing to a whole series of political and economic reasons, has an opportunity to restore leading positions in export of its educational services in Vietnam if it answers three main questions. What criteria do Vietnamese citizens use when choosing the country for obtaining higher education? What attracts the Vietnamese in Russian education? In what direction must Russian higher schools work to train more Vietnamese students? Aiming to find answers to the raised questions, let us define an algorithm of the current research:

1. to analyse the directions of academic mobility of the Vietnamese;
 2. to reveal reasons by which the Vietnamese aim to obtain higher education abroad;
 3. to formulate a hypothesis about criteria, by which the Vietnamese citizens are guided when choosing a country for obtaining education;
 4. to determine criteria of selecting Russian higher schools by the Vietnamese with the help of empirical methods of research (questionnaire, ranging);
 5. to conclude about prospects of attracting Vietnamese citizens to Russian higher schools.
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3. Results and discussions

Vietnam has started to familiarize itself with the international market of educational services since about the 2000s. According to the report published by the World Education Services in 2012, Vietnam has been included in the group of four countries with the most actively developing academic mobility. Let us enumerate the main reasons that led to it.

Vietnam is a very young country, 45% citizens of which are younger than 25 years old, that is, they are potential students now or in the near-term outlook. According to data of the Vietnamese government, the country is in need for 10 to 15 thousand specialists in the field of information technologies, construction, tourism, the financial and bank sector. In 2012, about 1,8 million Vietnamese people submitted documents for entering colleges (0,53 mln) and higher schools (1,3 mln), whereas the local educational institutions were ready to accept not more than 600 thousand students for training. That means that two thirds of the persons, interested in obtaining higher education, did not get such opportunity. The shortage of positions at higher schools is recognized at the government level, and the ways of overcoming the problem were indicated in a series of documents, for example, "On creation of the state strategy of human resources development until 2020", "Resolution on complex and fundamental reformation of the

higher education system in Vietnam for the period of 2006 – 2020” and others (Nguyn 2004).

A rapid growth of requirement for highly skilled specialists is explained by a rapid economic growth, which the country has been experiencing from the beginning of the new century. Before the crisis of 2008, the growth rates of Vietnamese economy made 8 – 9 % per year; after the 2008 crisis, they slowed down to 6 %, but nevertheless Vietnam is one of the most rapidly growing economies in the world. At that, the economy of Vietnam is characterised by a transition from an agrarian to industrial type (only in 2015, the industrial growth made about 9 %), and in recent years it has been developing high technology fields. Two main factors – increased demands for highly skilled specialists and resources of the national education system mismatching them – create conditions for a sharp increase of the number of the Vietnamese, aiming to obtain education abroad.

Besides these main factors, there are also less evident ones. First, the growth of the living standards in the country and, as a consequence, an increase of the number of young people, whose families can afford getting a foreign diploma, have become an additional prerequisite. Second, it is necessary to take into account a qualitative and quantitative rise of the level of language training, to which Vietnamese schools started to pay much more attention. Consequently, obtaining education in a foreign language (first of all, in English) becomes more accessible.

Third, one should not forget about serious support of foreign diasporas, the number of which, according to some data, reaches 4 million people in more than 100 countries of the world. It is evident that young people will rather go to the country where there is already quite a large number of compatriots, ready to render moral, financial, legal and social support, are living densely. The Vietnamese differ by an extremely high sense of national unity, without which the nation could hardly have preserved the statehood, withstood in hard conditions of almost continuous wars of the 20th century and made a powerful economic burst at the beginning of the 21st century. Russian thinker Lev Gumilev called this property as “super-passionarity”: ability to reject personal needs for the sake of interests of one’s nation, to make sacrifices for achieving highest national goals, collectivism, multiplied by heroism and working capacity. In practice, the modern Vietnamese, having preserved adherence to communism in the ideological and political aspect, live in the capitalistic economy, combining perfectly traditional values and modern life attitudes (those who are interested in this question can be recommended an interesting study devoted to the phenomenon of “glocalization” in South-East Asian countries) (Kozhevnikova 2016).

Data of international organisations are evidence of the fact that in 2015 – 2016, about 100 thousand Vietnamese students obtained higher education abroad. The beginning of the 2000s can be considered as a reference point, after which a rapid growth of academic mobility of the Vietnamese began. For example, in the meantime in the USA, the number of Vietnamese students at colleges and higher schools has increased 9 times. As have been already mentioned above, as of today the leader in admitting the Vietnamese is Japan (38880 people); the second is the USA (17875 people), almost the same number of students – 17222 – was trained in New Zealand. Also the first five countries, admitting Vietnamese students, include Australia, where the number of students for the same period varies about 10 000 people (however, Australia yielded its leadership, which it had in 2010 with 26 thousand people), and Canada which on the contrary increased admission to higher schools up to 5618 people.

South Korea also shows much interest in students from Vietnam. Along with Japan, this country is sorely in need for influx of students from abroad since demographic problems are of great concern and can influence negatively the education system of these two countries. Solution of this problem is of national importance. To prevent outflow of highly skilled teaching personnel and educational technologies (as of today, South Korea and Japan rank ninth and tenth correspondingly in the World University Rating (OS)), state strategies on increasing the number of foreign students have been developed (Krechetnikov and Pestereva 2017).

Among specialities that the Vietnamese, studying in the USA, choose, business administrating (in the Russian nomenclature of specialities - management) is far ahead; almost one third of students choose it. About 9% of students prefer training in engineering specialities, 8,6% prefer linguistic education (English language), 8% study information technologies, 7% - natural science disciplines (biology and physics).

An absolute majority of Vietnamese students pay for their education independently, spending on average about 1700 dollars per year for training, which is quite a low indicator for American education and explains the fact that the majority of the Vietnamese in the United States obtain education in colleges (11 400 people versus 2 800 at higher schools) since they cannot afford the university diploma because of financial reasons (Clarck 2014). It is interesting that for the same money a Vietnamese may afford getting a higher education diploma at a Russian higher school – consequently, a financial factor can become one of the determining ones when choosing a country of education for a Vietnamese, about which the author will dwell on further.

State programmes allowing the Vietnamese to study abroad at the expense of budget are quite limited. Thus, in 2016, 1464 students took part in these programmes; at that, the absolute majority (722 people) were sent to study at higher schools of the Russian Federation, 107 people – to Australia, 93 people – to France.

Therefore, asking the question as to what attracts Vietnamese students in such countries as Japan, the USA and Australia, it is possible to answer confidently – not only the education quality, a high level of the infrastructure and availability of necessary specialities, but also the opportunity to find a job in these countries and to become a resident of these countries. Who are Vietnamese students from the viewpoint of the countries accepting them? These are potential labour migrants having obtained good local education, knowing the language perfectly, highly motivated, and adequately adapted socially and culturally over the years of study.

And how is the situation with Vietnamese students developing in Russia? Over 2015 – 2016, about 4 thousand Vietnamese students were admitted to Russian universities, ranking seventh among the most popular countries for Vietnamese students. The fact that the author, writing this paper, faced a serious disruption in statistical data of domestic and foreign sources is of interest. Thus, according to the UNESCO data, in 2013, 1419 students arrived in Russia from Vietnam, whereas data being published over many years basing on the information of the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia give the number of 4676 people (Export of Russian educational services 2016).

The author assumed that, when choosing this or that country for obtaining education, Vietnamese entrants are guided by the following criteria: 1) availability at higher schools of specialities demanded in the modern Vietnamese labour market; 2) cost of tuition; 3) an opportunity of job placement during study; 4) an opportunity of further job placement after graduating from higher school; 5) affinity of cultural traditions, mentality, and social systems; 6) geographic and climatic proximity (an opportunity to visit the homeland, to see relatives is extremely important for the Vietnamese); 7) knowledge of the foreign language in which the training is realised; 8) presence of a large Vietnamese diaspora (a possibility to meet with support of compatriots); 9) availability of the system of preuniversity training in the country allowing foreign students to adapt to a new language and socio-cultural environment, as well as to approach the level of subject knowledge to the level of graduates of local schools; 10) presence of traditional ties in the field of higher education allowing the use of possibilities of programmes for obtaining education at the expense of state budget; 11) comfortable living conditions, opportunities for various leisure activities; 12) an opportunity of receiving as complete information as it is possible about conditions of future study.

To conduct the survey, a group of students from Vietnam was selected, representing different levels of education: preparatory department, Bachelor's, Master's, postgraduate's courses. The number of surveyed people was 28. For comparison, the survey was carried out in the group of students from Iraq (22 people) and China (20 people). Overall, 70 foreign students of Moscow Automobile and Road Construction State Technical University (MADI) took part in the experiment. The survey was carried out partially during personal interview, partially - by electronic mail; at that, the respondents had an opportunity to ask qualifying questions. The survey was carried out in the Russian language, which the respondents mastered at the First certification level (it approximately corresponds to level B1 by the European classification of foreign language mastery); this level includes not less than 2300 vocabulary language units of general knowledge, which allows a foreign student to carry out training according to educational programmes of the first year of study of any Russian higher school.

The respondents were offered 12 criteria according to which they could choose a country to study. It was suggested to choose 8 criteria that were the most significant ones and to arrange these criteria by the degree of importance. Thus, each criterion was scored from 1 to 10. As a result, the Vietnamese students selected the following criteria from the list mentioned above (in brackets there are conventional names, which were explained in the questionnaires): 1 (thematic), 2 (price), 4 (career), 5 (socio-cultural), 8 (national), 9 (preparatory), 10 (interstate), 12 (informational).

The first step was determination of a degree of agreement inside each national group by means of the Kendall's coefficient of concordance. This coefficient changes in the range from 0 to 1; at that, 0 means absolute disagreement of experts, and 1 – complete unanimity. That was made to find out whether one could consider a group of students of the same nationality as a concordant expert group. The presence of the high concordance coefficient allowed considering that the choice of the country to study correlated in a certain way with the preferences of a specific national group, i.e., was of nationally conditioned nature.

The result of the calculations for the Vietnamese group was found to be equal to 0,76; for the Iraq group – 0,87, for the Chinese group – 0,82, which in all cases was evidence of high consistency inside the group of students of one nationality. Then using the ranging method, the author determined the degree of importance of each of the criteria inside the national group and obtained the following results (Table 1):

Table 1
Ranging of criteria when choosing Russian higher schools by Vietnamese students

Criterion of university choice	Degree of importance from 1 to 8 (1 – the highest)
Thematic	1

Price	2
Career	3
Informational	4
Preparatory	5
National	6
Interstate	7
Socio-cultural	8

The obtained results confirm the theoretical suppositions made earlier that the Vietnamese, when choosing the higher education in Russia, orient themselves to the possibility of obtaining qualitative education at a relatively low cost. In fact, the average cost of tuition at a Russian higher school in the 2015/2016 academic year made 121 thousand roubles or 2428 dollars. At that, the cost of tuition can vary significantly depending on a specific higher school. Thus, for example, the average cost at higher schools being in charge of the Ministry of Agriculture made approximately 70 thousand roubles (1386 dollars), and at higher schools subordinated to the Ministry of Culture – 198 thousand roubles (3966 dollars). For comparison, the cost of the four-year bachelor's programme in one of the agricultural specialities at the American university, Oregon State University, makes 28 thousand dollars (or 7 thousand dollars per year); getting a diploma in the field of art and design only starts from this sum and can amount to 91 thousand dollars (Northeastern University) (OECD 2012, Education index n.d.). At the same time, one of the most expensive Russian higher schools for foreigners (as well as for the Russians), International State Institute of International Relations, charges about 350 thousand roubles for tuition per year (approximately 6 thousand dollars). Therefore, it is evident that Russian higher education can still compete with that of western in the matter of price formation, which is a very tangible advantage for citizens from the countries not having the highest living standards.

Analysis of the modern state of the labour market in Vietnam allows marking out a number of the most demanded specialities (Kien 2014): top and middle-level management personnel; teachers of higher educational institutions holding an academic degree; specialists in logistics; specialists of automated control systems in manufacture; specialists in the field of construction and operation of transport entities; engineers in high tech industry; specialists in the field of information technologies.

What specialities do Vietnamese students choose in Russia? The answer to this question can be obtained having analysed the most actively developing directions in interaction of two states. Among them, oil refinery industry, automobile production, railway transportation, energy industry, metal working, military-industrial cooperation. Vietnam is switching actively from export of the finished product to export of Russian technologies (Karapetian 2013). This means that the most popular engineering and technical and technological specialities are popular with Vietnamese students in Russia (whereas one should mention that in the USA, the Vietnamese choose predominantly such majors as business administration and information technologies).

In support of the mentioned, it is necessary to add the fact that in May 2011, an agreement on establishment of Vietnamese-Russian Technological University as an advanced innovation scientific-educational structure in the field of training highly skilled personnel was signed based on interaction of the consortium of Russian higher schools and Technological University named after Le Quy Don. For successful realisation of this project in the near future, it is planned to sign an intergovernmental agreement providing for allocation of a state credit to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam by the Russian Federation for financing the activity of this educational institution.

Russian higher schools-participants of the consortium must elaborate the training programmes, training packages, control and measuring and other materials, methods and educational technologies for Vietnam-Russian Technological University. At present, the following Russian higher schools have joined the project of Vietnam-Russian Technological University: Moscow Aviation Institute, Moscow Institute of Steel and Alloys, Moscow State Technical University named after Bauman, Saint-Petersburg State Polytechnic University, Moscow Automobile and Road Construction State Technical University (MADI) (Rementsov and Kozhevnikova 2016).

4. Conclusion

To attract an additional number of students from Vietnam to study at universities of Russia, it is possible

to propose the following measures:

1. analysis of modern tendencies in economy of Vietnam to determine the most demanded specialities in the labour market;
2. development of a strategy for entry of Russian higher schools, offering these specialities, to the Vietnam market of educational services (participation in educational exhibitions, work with Vietnam schools, educational campaign in mass media, work with social networks, etc.);
3. conclusion of direct contracts by Russian higher schools with Vietnamese companies, working in the Russian market or planning entering it, concerning training highly skilled specialists;
4. provision of additional financial preferences (credits, deferred payments, etc.) for Vietnamese citizens planning to obtain higher education in Russia;
5. popularization of the Russian language and culture in educational institutions of Vietnam (especially in secondary schools), development of new textbooks in the Russian language for the Vietnamese on the basis of modern electronic resources (mobile applications, internet-platforms, etc.). The Russian language knowledge will make a prospect of studying in Russia more attractive and available;
6. expanding forms of educational cooperation owing to creation of branches of Russian higher schools in Vietnam, development of joint educational programmes (in particular, allowing Vietnamese students to enter immediately the second or third year of study of Russian higher schools).

While the Vietnamese generation that studied in the Soviet Union works actively and occupies high posts in the state, Russian higher schools have a fair chance to restore the lost positions and to develop collaboration already at a new level corresponding to modern goals and tasks of these two countries.

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