

Strategies of Russian Education Internationalization Development

Estrategias de desarrollo de la internacionalización de la educación rusa

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ABSTRACT:

The article presents strategies of Russian education internationalization development through analysis of foreign experience of international collaboration development in the education sector within the education innovation clusters. Experience of foreign countries has shown that promotion of the education brand shall be inextricably connected with development of qualitative educational infrastructure, scholarship programs and grant schemes for foreigners, assurance of quality and objectivity of the mechanisms for their implementation, advanced training of teachers and employees of universities and colleges.

Keywords: internationalization of higher education, education innovation cluster, competitiveness of Russian education.

RESUMEN:

El artículo presenta estrategias del desarrollo de la internacionalización de la educación rusa a través del análisis de la experiencia extranjera del desarrollo de la colaboración internacional en el sector educativo dentro de los grupos de innovación educativa. La experiencia de países extranjeros ha demostrado que la promoción de la marca educativa debe estar indisolublemente conectada con el desarrollo de infraestructura educativa cualitativa, programas de becas y programas de becas para extranjeros, garantía de calidad y objetividad de los mecanismos para su implementación, capacitación avanzada de maestros y empleados de universidades y colegios.

Palabras clave: internacionalización de la educación superior, grupo de innovación educativa, competitividad de la educación rusa.

1. Introduction

It is increasingly evident that the national systems of higher education cannot develop outside of the global processes and trends, in isolation from demands of the global labor market. Not only national criteria shall be taken into account when solving the problems of development and improvement of higher education in certain countries. Many scientists and politicians believe that the system of higher education won't be able to train the specialists meeting requirements of the information society and ensure sustainable development of its country in XXI century. The system of higher education can respond to the global challenges of XXI century only by concerted actions. Therefore, addressing the issues of globalization

and international integration in the higher education sector is well-timed, actual and relevant as it sensitizes the society to the knowledge-based development. Internationalization of higher education is the process of national, industrial and institutional level. The goals, functions and mechanism of rendering educational services acquire international nature in this process (Concept of scientific, research-engineering and innovative policy in the educational system of the Russian Federation up to 2020, n. d.).

2. Main part

Under current conditions, Russia is facing the challenge of integration into a new educational environment. In view of this, there are the following incentives to internationalization:

- Deriving profits from delivery of educational services;
- Personal development of country citizens;
- Contribution into economic development;
- Development of the labor market;
- Gaining of foreign policy advantages;
- Promotion of national culture;
- Institutional perfection;
- Improvement of education quality.

Development of collaboration of Europe and announcement of initiatives in the field of education development by the Russian party can increase competitive advantage of the Russian education, position itself as a unique "quality mark" of the Russian education and, therefore, attract students from all over the world (Does Russian education attract students?). Besides, internationalization of the higher education sector will provide the opportunity to invite leading foreign professors and apply advanced educational techniques. Russian universities and colleges will take the lead in the world's major academic ratings again. The ties with the real economy sectors will strengthen, including leading world-level Russian companies. All of these things will precondition not only survival, but success of Russian universities and colleges under conditions of national and global competitiveness as well.

Competitive ability of any country depends on its natural and human potential. However, many countries proved that it is possible to be among the advanced countries even with the lack of the natural potential. Therefore, the human potential is of key importance and, primarily, the amount of education, competence, creative abilities of humans and conditions for their implementation. Knowledge is the major source of competitive advantages in XXI century. However, it is highly unlikely that the country lagging far behind the developed countries in the context of economic efficiency and standard of living will take the lead in the education sector. Low competitive ability of nearly all sectors of the Russian national economy, state management (one of the least efficient in the world), and economic lag are the indicators of low competitive ability of the educational system, including higher education. Rather low competitive ability of the labor potential of Russia in terms of labor productivity and quality, innovative restraint point at defects in operation of professional educational institutions, and primarily, universities and colleges.

The Russian system of higher education is conservative, inertial, and closed. University science is often scholastic. At times, teachers possess only theoretical foundation. Curriculums in the universities and colleges are not adjusted to the trends and conditions of the global labor market and, therefore, are not in demand abroad. Thus, it is no wonder that the share of educational service export is less (3% of the global market of educational services) than in the developed countries (the share of educational service export in the USA amounts to 22% of the global market and it is considered as one of the major income items (Perspectives of Russia at the international market of educational service export, n. d.). Lack of national education prestige is confirmed by the world rankings of the best world universities. If the Russian universities are included in these rankings, they usually take up the last positions. According to Times Higher Education for 2016-2017, though Russian

universities and colleges were included in the top list of 200 Best World Universities, they were only 188th in the list (M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University) (Russian Universities are not in top 200 of Times Higher Education Ranking, n. d.).

Thus, development of educational collaboration with other countries is one of the key tasks of Russian higher education reforming. It will contribute to achievement of scientific, cultural, social, economic and political goals, in particular:

- Improvement of teaching quality;
- Improvement of Russian educational infrastructure;
- Expansion of number and improvement of quality of the scientific research conducted in Russian universities;
- Development of tolerance in Russian society;
- Enhancing of intercultural dialogue in the country;
- Raising interest to the processes in the country and improvement of Russia's image abroad.

Some initiatives implemented lately in Russia prove recognition of importance of scientific educational internationalization at the political level (Dudareva 2010, Kupriyanova-Ashina and Zhu 2013). They include joining the Bologna process, an attempt to join the Framework Programs for Research and Technological Development of the European Union and OECD, mega-grants competitions aimed at attraction of the world-class specialists to Russian universities and colleges, recognition of diplomas and scientific qualification of some countries, cancellation of administrative-legal restrictions for foreign specialists in relation to teaching in the universities, resolution to establish scholarship funds to contribute to academic mobility, etc. Meanwhile, at the system level, there is no strategic vision of Russia's role in the global academic environment, which would group together the above mentioned and other measures into the uniform political policy and determine the role of higher education internationalization in achievement of certain goals of national development. The academic community and state do not have well-defined benchmarks and strategy of Russian education popularization abroad. The system of Russian education promotion in curriculums of foreign universities and support of foreign students studying in Russia are underdeveloped. The USA has American Boards on International Education under the State Department, France has a powerful program of support in the field of education of French-speaking states, Germany is famous for good organization of the academic exchange systems, but in the Russian Federation, generally speaking, each university is operating alone. Therefore, we need a state (national) educational concept providing a complex presentation of set goals and tasks in this sector.

It is reasonable to adopt foreign experience of establishment of education innovation clusters to achieve the desired educational goals. The education innovation cluster means "a system association of different institutions (educational, scientific institutions, industrial enterprises, companies of investment innovative infrastructure, state authorities, local authorities, nonprofit organizations, etc.) , which allows using advantages of intra-cluster interaction for quicker and more efficient distribution of new knowledge stimulating innovations for growth of competitive ability of the regional economy" (Fedorov and Peshina 2016)

The education innovation cluster offers the following opportunities for education internationalization:

- Overcoming of restraint and further integration into the international environment;
- Expansion of export-oriented trends;
- Easy access to the international education market;
- Cooperation in the field of R&D and knowledge transfer.

Table 1

Number of foreign students in RF universities
(Academic Mobility of Foreign Students in Russia 2016)

Parameters	Number of students	In % of total
Former Soviet states	188,064	79.17
Asia	28,078	11.82
North Africa, Near East	9,164	3.86
Sub-Saharan Africa	7,883	3.32
North, West, South Europe	1,898	0.80
South America	1,631	0.69
East Europe	582	0.25
North America	217	0.09
Australia and Oceania	21	0.01
Total	237,538	100.00

Composition of foreign student cohort on a country-by-country basis is interesting for analysis of global flows of students (Table 1). Aggregate number of foreign students in Russia as of the beginning of academic year 2015/2016 amounted to 237,538 persons (5% of total number of students in the Russian Federation). Most of them are students from ex-USSR countries (79% of foreign students) (Academic Mobility of Foreign Students in Russia 2016). Thus, there is a negative dynamic of students from far-abroad countries (reduction from 51 % in 2011 / 2012 down to 21 % in academic year 2015/2016).

Analysis of foreign experience of international cooperation in the field of education within the education innovation clusters is required to develop a strategy for development of Russian education internationalization. According to the experience of foreign countries, promotion of the educational brand shall be inextricably connected with provision of qualitative educational infrastructure, introduction of scholarships and grant schemes for foreigners, maintenance of quality and fairness of their implementation, advanced training of teachers and employees of universities and colleges.

Let us consider the internationalization process in some European countries. For example, in Germany, one can obtain a higher education without knowing the German language. The comprehensive list of German universities comprises 93 bachelor's programs and 421 master's programs taught completely in English. The spectrum of study areas is very wide: foreign philology, international relations, bioinformatic technologies, engineering, machine building and many other areas. Natural and engineering sciences prevail in the list of major disciplines. Besides, Germany is attractive due to the conditions provided especially to foreign students as well. Thus, there are several opportunities to receive education for free (obtaining of grant or scholarship). If you enter a private university, the academic year will cost about five thousand Euros. Moreover, upon receipt of education in Germany, foreign students can stay for two years in the country for further employment and obtaining the permanent resident status. This internationalization strategy of Germany is sure to be interesting for Russia. Russia could use similar elements of this experience, in particular, teaching in English and provision of necessary conditions for foreign students in terms of further employment and accommodation. Currently, according to the migration law, foreign students are equated with migrant workers, though they arrive not to earn and take money out of the state, but to invest their money into the educational system of the region.

Grants are not the only form of financial support for students of the universities in the

western countries. Many governments resort to state support provided through flexible tax policy and grant cost benefits to the students willing to receive higher education and/or their families.

Also, one of the most attractive opportunities of education in the western countries is student credits. Amount of credit varies depending on the country. The lowest credit amount is in Germany (it is not surprising for the country with free education), and the largest amount is in Great Britain and the USA. Seven countries, including Great Britain, Sweden, USA, Finland, Holland, New Zealand and Australia, issue student credits to check the needs. According to the statistics, a large portion of students in the United Kingdom use the credit schemes, and almost half of the students use them in the USA. Up to 80% Swedish, over 70% of Australian and 60 % of New Zealand students exercise their right to the educational credit.

Experience of Germany in the field of education internationalization based on two contrary approaches is rather interesting.

The first approach is based on cooperation and partnership and ensures the opportunity to receive free education. This approach has been developed historically as higher education in Germany was free.

The students from the developing countries are often granted financial support, provided that they return to their home country upon graduation. This approach allows Germany to have a successful position at the global market of educational services. Free teaching of a large number of foreign students by Germany at the expense of its taxpayers is considered as its contribution into international exchange and global development. Its problem was inability of universities to promote themselves at the market in order to attract students.

The second competitive approach underlies the national initiatives, for example, GATE-Germany. Its key feature is creation of competitive and internationally attractive European environment of higher education, which shall win over a significant share of the global ever-expanding market of mobile students and researchers. Advantage of this approach is development of international marketing of educational services. Its disadvantage is lopsided perception of the universities as magnets attracting well-trained foreign specialists by business companies.

Parallel use of these two contradictory approaches resulted in fast growth of number of foreign students in Germany for the last two decades: from 158,000 in 1997 up to 358,000 in 2017 (Valers 2018, Abdulkerimov 2011, Dubovitska et al. 2013).

Russian higher education faced some obstacles on the way to internationalization. The question is unfriendly visa, labor, and migration law for citizens from other states, lack of awareness of Russian education system abroad, difficulties related to recognition of Russian diplomas, rather low positions of Russian educational institutions in the world rankings.

Foreign applicants do not consider the opportunity of entering a university in Russia due to their low popularity abroad. Unfortunately, our universities are not in the top hundred of the world rankings. Most Russian universities do not have either advertizing departments or employees with respective qualification. In modern world advertizing is a large industry where professionals work. Advertizing of university shall not be limited with one-time publications in specialized literature or issue of advertizing catalogues and booklets.

Therefore, universities shall have a department with professional employees developing strategy, tactics and implementation of the advertizing campaign to development and implement the program for attracting foreign applicants. The advertizing campaign shall be based on marketing research intended to give recommendations in relation to the countries and regions of the world suitable for such campaign and instruments and tools to be used. We shall start distributing information about the most prestigious Russian universities abroad. We can use different methods, for example:

- Active participation in international educational fairs;
- Offering grants for education to the best graduates of foreign schools and colleges;
- Wide implementation of student exchange programs under collaboration agreements with

leading foreign universities;

- Promotion of double certification programs (with opportunity to obtain diplomas of two universities according to the training results);
- Organization of joint trainings allowing the students to reinforce the obtained skills under conditions of different states and enterprises and to make contacts with foreign enterprises;
- Inviting teachers of foreign partner universities for familiarization of students and teachers with new techniques both in the sectoral science and teaching methods;
- Opportunity of international internship for university teachers in partner universities.

This task can be resolved in the most efficient manner within the internationalized education innovation cluster. For example, western partner universities will obtain some benefit from advertizing of Russian universities because the main goal of universities in this "team" is not competition, but achievement of the common goal as a result of synergetic effect. If an applicant failed to enter a western university according to the exam results, but can enter a Russian one hypothetically, the cluster will not lose a potential student. Also, one of the benefits of the education cluster is mutual interest of the universities in agreement of curriculums for joint training programs (for example, for double certification programs).

The issue of language barrier has several aspects. On the one hand, low level of linguistic skills of university teachers prevents from attraction of foreign students. While most students from the CIS countries making up the majority of foreign students speak Russian or can learn the Russian language used for teaching in Russian universities, it is more difficult for the students from English-speaking countries. It is necessary to provide teachers with the opportunity to master the techniques of teaching their disciplines in foreign languages (in particular, in English). For a start, the teachers shall be offered advanced training courses including foreign language study, and opportunity to take part in internships in prestigious foreign universities in order to adopt experience of foreign colleagues in the field of educational process and communication with foreign students. It is the easiest way to provide the opportunity of such training in partner universities. Besides, it is necessary to include advanced foreign language courses in the teacher training curriculum right now.

On the other hand, we shall help foreign students to study the Russian language. There are language schools for foreigners both in western and Asian countries. They offer a wide range of linguistic programs with different length, language level and objectives of studies. For example, most such schools in Japan offer training courses for foreigners willing to enter local universities. The main goal is to study the Japanese language up to the level required for entering and comfort studies in the university. At the same time applicants learn about specific aspects, traditions, standards and requirements to education. There are similar language and culture centers in many universities of Poland. They offer different language programs, such as preparatory language courses (i.e. the course for beginners to study the Polish language up to the level required to study in the university), language courses during the academic year, short-term courses and summer schools. Besides language learning, the goal of such centers is to acquaint foreigners with specific features of the education system, history and culture of the country, literature, music and main sights. Advantage of this teaching method is language immersion during the period of studies. There are no such schools in Russia yet.

It is necessary to pay a special attention to adaptation to the conditions of living and studies in a new country, i.e. solving of current programs of foreign students in Russia, including problems of safety, financing, legal basis for their staying in the country, difficulties to obtain student visas and existing ban on work for foreign students.

Currently, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia offers several programs, which are to help foreign students to find a common language with Russian teachers and students, to learn about mindset of Russian people, life style, traditions, and ethic norms. Such programs shall be more available and distributed among most universities.

Insufficient financing of education in Russia is a serious problem as well. Education in Russia is financed largely using state budget funds. The share of private investments is very small. Every year education financing increases: according to the report of RF Ministry of Education

and Science federal budget expenses in 2015 amounted to 3,079.8 billion rubles, in 2016 – 3,158.98 billion rubles, and in 2017 – 3,424.74 billion rubles. In particular, 2,038.60 billion rubles were provided for financing of higher and postgraduate education in 2017. (Glotova and Sarkisova 2013). However, these amounts are insufficient due to constant inflation: university teachers get low wages, university campuses are ill-equipped, and research activity of universities is not sufficiently financed. The reason is inefficient distribution of money among the universities and inside them by the state.

Distribution of finance in the cluster is more uniform and efficient. Therefore, universities can obtain additional funds.

Insufficient level of infrastructure development results from the problem of education financing. One of the most important factors for potential foreign applicants is accommodation for the period of studies. As accommodation in Russia is one of the most expensive in the world, applicants are interested in availability of well-equipped dormitory. Due to the lack of financing, low amounts are spent on repair, equipment and maintenance of dormitories and it has an adverse effect on their condition.

3. Conclusion

The key factor of attractiveness of foreign education is its quality and prestige. Influx of foreign students from the countries of Central and South-East Asia is due to the fact that Russian education quality is higher than in their native countries. To attract students from the countries of Europe and America it is necessary to improve quality of Russian education at least up to their level.

Internship of teachers in foreign partner universities as well as focus on their curriculums will contribute to conformance of Russian universities to the level of global educational standards. It will have a positive effect on the qualification level of Russian specialists and their competitive ability at the global labor market.

Only system approach on the part of the state and universities will help to resolve the problems preventing from education internationalization. The expected synergetic effect can be achieved only by joining the efforts of all components. This approach can be implemented within the innovative educational approach to the education, in particular, within the education innovation cluster, which will contribute to internationalization of higher education.

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