

ASSESSMENT OF CONDITIONS FOR OBTAINING HIGHER EDUCATION BY FOREIGN STUDENTS IN REGIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to assessing the conditions for obtaining higher education by foreign students in regional universities of Russia. In the course of the study the authors discovered that in the recent decades the competition of regional universities for foreign students has increased. Currently, the number of students from foreign countries is constantly growing. This growth is caused mostly by the CIS countries. According to the results of the interviews conducted by the authors, the main indicator of the attractiveness of education in Russia for foreign students is a good quality of education and its low cost. The most popular fields of studies for foreign citizens are: engineering, medicine and economics. The main influx of students is observed in the educational institutions of Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Yekaterinburg, Voronezh, Stavropol and other cities of Russia. In the process of research the authors identified some difficulties encountered by foreign students. The study showed that the majority of students who came to Russia to continue their studies in higher education are satisfied with the quality of education. The authors defined a complex of activities designed to attract foreign students to regional universities in Russia.

Keywords: Foreign Students, Quality of Education, Foreign Students, Tutoring.

INTRODUCTION

For most countries the most desirable category of migrants is foreign students. Today about 680 Russian educational institutions accept foreign citizens from 170 countries (Arefiev, 2016). In the recent decades, the competitive struggle of regional universities for foreign students has increased. Given the current demographic situation, Russia is actively using the migration

potential of the youth from the near abroad countries and developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Currently, the number of students from foreign countries is constantly growing. This growth is caused by the CIS countries (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine). In the Privolzhsk Federal District the number of foreign students increased by 2,9 thousand who were enrolled in 116 universities (Arefiev, 2016; Khorasani, Maghazei & Cross, 2015). Most universities enter foreign educational markets on their own. According to many researchers, under the conditions of fierce competition this issue requires a state policy in order to promote the Russian educational system and to advertise the Russian educational institutions in other countries (Pukhova & Dvortsova, 2014).

METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Russia has always occupied one of the leading positions on the market of educational services. The first universities, which at the end of the XIX century admitted students from Bulgaria, Albania, Serbia and other countries, were St. Petersburg, Moscow and Novorossiysk. However, the training of foreign citizens in pre-revolutionary Russia was not widespread.

In the Soviet period, our country occupied the third place in the world according to the number of foreign students studying in the universities of the USSR, behind the universities of the United States (419.6 thousand foreign students of colleges and universities) and France (136.9 thousand) (Arefiev & Sheregi, 2014).

After the collapse of the USSR, an effective system of education was destroyed in the country. The transformational processes that began in the country had a very negative impact on the domestic system of education and science. They significantly reduced the position of Russian universities in the world.

According to statistical data, studying in Russia are mainly the students from the Middle East and North Africa (16.9%), Africa (16.6%), CIS (11.9%) and Asia (7.2%), much less from the countries of Northern Europe (6.2%) (Arefiev & Sheregi, 2014).

According to the results of the polls, the main indicator of the attractiveness of studying in Russia for foreign students is a good quality of education with its low cost. According to the number of foreign citizens studying in Russian universities, the leading positions currently belong to the natives of China, India, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Malaysia, Morocco and Moldova.

The most popular fields of study for foreign citizens are: engineering, medicine and economics.

The overwhelming majority of foreign students in Russian universities study on the Specialist and Bachelor degree programs (only 8.8% of foreign students of the tertiary level of education are enrolled in master, postgraduate and doctoral degree programs). This is not a coincidence, because the level of education in the Russian higher school is still considered to be quite high.

The factor that inhibits an active growth of the number of foreign citizens in Russian universities is their difficult adaptation and socialization in the new environment.

At present, regional educational institutions are very active in attracting students from abroad (Pukhova, Belyaeva, Varakina & Ruzanova, 2016). The main influx of students is observed in the educational institutions of Nizhny Novgorod, Novosibirsk, Tomsk, Yekaterinburg, Voronezh, Stavropol and other cities of Russia. This is related to a number of political, socio-economic and psychological factors in provincial cities: affordable cost of

training, satisfactory level of security, satisfactory living conditions, the organization of which is treated with great attention by regional universities since the influx of foreign students significantly increases not only the revenues of universities, but also the country's budget in general.

Very promising for the training of foreign students is Nizhny Novgorod, where there are a sufficient number of public universities and academies, each of whom has a long history. Many universities have more than 20 years of experience teaching foreign citizens on pre-university and university training programs.

According to the Ministry of Education of the Nizhny Novgorod region, the biggest number of foreign students in the academic year 2016/2017 was enrolled in Lobachevsky State University of Nizhni Novgorod (900 students), Nizhny Novgorod State Medical Academy (800 students), Kozma Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University (350 students).

The studies conducted in several Russian universities made it possible to identify the difficulties encountered by foreign students. Firstly, the existing traditional system of education does not always provide foreign students with an opportunity to freely choose training courses, lecturers, to formulate the priorities in training in accordance with their interests. This makes Russian educational institutions insufficiently competitive on the international educational market. With more large-scale education of foreign students, sooner or later, it will be necessary to solve the problem of compliance with the established standards on a massive scale-to borrow a more democratic organization of the educational process in foreign universities, to train lecturers to use modern educational programs.

The training of a bachelor requires the existence of certain professional competencies, which include "the ability to scientific, analytical and creative work, inventiveness, etc." However, it should be noted that foreign students are rarely involved in research activities of universities and have a considerable difficulty in writing course and diploma papers.

In the course of the research a sociological survey of foreign students was conducted in the universities of Nizhny Novgorod with the aim of determining their attitude towards the quality of education they received.

The majority of respondents believe that education in the universities of Nizhny Novgorod is of high level (Pukhova et al., 2016). Students note a good organization of the educational process, interesting training programs, high qualification of the teaching staff, good material and technical base for education and practical training.

Some respondents would like to stay in Russia (mainly in Nizhny Novgorod), which would have a beneficial effect on the labor market, which would be filled by highly qualified specialists.

Educational migration has economic benefits not only for educational institutions, but for the country in general, because it provides an opportunity to attract young qualified specialists who speak Russian and who were trained in accordance with the Russian educational programs. In addition, this migration will affect the demographic situation in the country (Vorobyova, 2008).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study has shown that the majority of students who came to Russia to continue their studies in higher education are satisfied with the quality of education:

1. Completely satisfied-20%;

2. Partially satisfied-47%;
3. Dissatisfied-15%;
4. Difficult to answer-8%.

The main difficulties encountered by foreign students include:

1. Unsatisfactory knowledge of the Russian language;
2. The complexity of documents processing;
3. Unsatisfactory living conditions;
4. Cold climatic conditions;
5. Hostility of local residents;
6. The lack of the necessary food;
7. Difficulties in accessing medical facilities.

It should be noted that inadequate knowledge of the Russian language among students from the CIS countries is associated with a decrease in the number of schools where teaching is conducted in Russian. The Russian language is taught as a foreign language. Teaching is conducted at a level that is not sufficient for professional communication, satisfying only everyday needs. A massive reduction in the volume of teaching of the Russian language in the secondary schools of the CIS countries drastically reduces the chances of school graduates to successfully pass entrance examinations to Russian educational institutions and makes it difficult to master the subjects taught in Russian.

A survey of foreigners studying in Kozma Minin Nizhny Novgorod State Pedagogical University showed that they are poorly informed about additional types of training and, as a result, they almost never receive additional educational services.

Studies have shown that extra-curricular interaction with lecturers and fellow students not only facilitates adaptation to the new educational environment, but also contributes to the improved performance of foreign students.

In our opinion, an introduction of tutorial support into the training practice will help partially solve the problems and difficulties encountered by foreign students (Belyaeva, 2015).

In this context, the activity of tutors is focused on the problems of the quality of teaching, involvement of students in research and development activities, adequate forms of leisure. In fact, it is compensatory in terms of the relationship with foreign students. Tutors can be young university lecturers (undergraduates, graduate students), who are able to develop an individual educational roadmap for foreign students (Chelnokova, 2014).

The need to organize interaction with foreign students makes special demands on the training of tutors, their ability to create a friendly educational environment based on such attitude to cultural heterogeneity that sees it not as a hindrance but as a resource for personal development, on the cultivation of common student interests, whether or not students are Russian citizens. Effective tutors are persons with multicultural thinking (Kurbatova, 2015), who implement the principles of competence approach, who possess interactive forms of training and who can reasonably solve the problem "friend or foe".

Tutors should realize that their life position, self-determination and personal examples have a direct impact on the formation of a friendly educational environment of universities, which is based on a productive dialogue of cultures. Therefore, one cannot accept the view of foreign students as "no different from the rest of the students" as well as seeing them as students who are "worse (better) than others". Neither the first position, which is based on ignoring the differences, nor the second one, which is based on the prejudiced evaluation of foreign students, is conducive to satisfying their educational needs.

Tutors should recognize the uniqueness of foreign students, be tolerant (not in the sense of "forced tolerance," but in the sense of "ability to ethnic confidence"), to possess a multivariance of thinking in unconventional conditions of pedagogical activity (divergent abilities), to be able to assess the situation taking into account the peculiarities of not only of their own, but also of other cultures (to take an enterorlativistic position). Working with representatives of different nationalities they must take into account "the influence of a culture on the emotional and cognitive spheres of a person ..., on the peculiarities of behavior in conflict situations" (Kurbatova, 2014).

Tutors should help foreign students build their own educational strategies, to develop tactics; to suggest how to adapt a basic curriculum to individual programs so that an education received in Russia would correspond to the needs of students and to the requirements of the states that sent them to study (Belyaeva, 2015).

The knowledge received by foreign students in Russian educational institutions should be applicable in other countries both for continuing the education and for professional activities. Therefore, only the most qualified faculty should be involved in this kind of activity. This will definitely activate the development and promotion of international educational programs; increase the competitiveness of educational services of universities. It is possible to offer such programs in the form of distance learning, when students study without leaving their countries (Poletaev, 2010).

CONCLUSION

So, to satisfy the interests of educational migrants, it is necessary to implement a set of measures designed to attract foreign students to regional universities in Russia. On the Russian side, these measures should ensure:

1. Accessibility of quality education, which implies the guarantee of training with the modern educational and material base with the use of modern laboratory equipment and educational literature;
2. Training in conditions that guarantee the protection of the individuals' rights in educational institutions, their psychological and physical security;
3. Creation of a system of pre-educational adaptation of students from foreign countries, including language courses, etc.;
4. Organization of tutor support, the training of pedagogical staff who possess relevant competencies;
5. Improvement of legal regulations of the conditions for attracting foreign students and ensuring their rights.

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