

ADVANTAGES OF TRAINING ABROAD AND DIFFICULTIES OF STUDENT INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE

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Getting education abroad is very prestigious in Russia. Presence of a foreign university diploma or international appendix to a Russian university diploma is considered to be advantage for employment . It is believed that participation of Russia in the Bologna process where academic mobility is an important indicator should encourage international student exchange.

Although training of Russian students at foreign universities is still more of an exception rather than a rule this trend is developing. In particular, at the beginning of 2014 Russia launched the program "Global Education". Its purpose is to create conditions for Russian students in the best universities of the world at the expense of the state budget . "Each student included in this program will receive 1.5 million rubles from the state annually". A very important requirement is after training specialists will have to return to work in Russia . If the specialist wishes to stay and work abroad he will be obliged not only to return the money spent on it but also to pay 200 % fine.

According to UNESCO Statistics Institute the number of the students who go to study abroad from their country annually increases by 12%. Now the number of those being trained abroad reaches 3,5 million people.

The most active are Chinese. According to the collected data of the Institute of International Education (IIE) over 440 thousand Chinese are currently being trained abroad. Among other countries students who get their education abroad most often are the citizens of India and South Korea. However their educational flows abroad are twice lower.

As for Russians, the biggest part of international students from this country prefer to study in the USA. However, many of them go to get education in Germany, France or the UK.

The advantages of studying abroad is promoted a lot by advertising. In these promotional materials the emphasis is put on the prestige and accessibility. Most universities that are mentioned in them are located in eastern Europe. Of course, the reliability of these sources of information can be doubted because of biased coverage of this issue. However, there is sufficient number of objective publications on the Internet and in press where one can find the analysis of the positive aspects of educational exchange with foreign universities .

Studying abroad helps to develop independence, both financial and psychological because while your parents are away you can rely on yourself only. It encourages the development of self-sufficiency. It motivates to look for learning options, applying different methods and tools for obtaining information. In most places class attendance is not controlled. So students can participate in one activity and the other one can be replaced by something more interesting.

In my opinion "free" way of learning is not always an advantage. In particular, those students who are accustomed to more strictly regulated training schedule have difficulties in European universities with planning independent learning and choosing subjects and areas of training.

When a student participates in exchange program the advantages of studying abroad include not only prestige and well-organized international procedure but also the absence of accessibility issue as the most costs are covered by sponsoring international organization.

The main barrier preventing Russian students from learning efficiently is misunderstanding of foreigners, their language, culture, mentality. For example there can be different dialects in different parts of the country that make language understanding more difficult. Social adaptation of students in a foreign country is a very individual process. For some of them, this process takes just a few weeks, and for someone it lasts for several months or even a year. Another negative factor of Russian students adaptation is being homesick. It affects the learning process a lot ("nostalgia is taking a person over so much that his thoughts are not about learning").

Another negative factor is that the average standard of living in most countries where Russian students participate in international exchange is higher than in Russia. Particularly students who came from the provincial universities feel this way. Expenses on food, clothing and entertainment abroad they usually are much larger than expected. It is also becoming a significant obstacle to adaptation.

Among the other negative factors I can specify uncertainty of Russian students in their abilities, affordability of staying in another country, personal motivation to live there long enough and to be successful in training at a foreign university. A student who participates in the international exchange needs to get health insurance, apply for a visa, register in another country which requires a lot of effort and time. It seems quite difficult for many students.

The Key Questions that students ask are: - Where will I live ? - How will I communicate with foreigners? - What am I going to wear and eat? - Who will be the classmates and teachers? Fears and doubts, difficulties of Russian students adaptation abroad are to a large degree the result of the underdevelopment in the international students exchange practices in Russia. The lack of such experience in many Russian universities also causes problems for exchange students.

The problem of entering the new sociocultural environment can be solved by strengthening language training and organizing some kind of studies of culture, customs and laws of different countries in Russian higher school when the universities have agreements to carry out exchange programs with these countries. In this case it is possible for the exchange to become mutually beneficial. It will help to establish strong links with the foreign partners. And the Russian university itself will attract more interest of foreign students. In this case it will be ready to accept them and provide them the same high-quality training and accommodation.

Siberian Federal University is continuing to strengthen partnerships with foreign universities that allows it to organize various kinds of exchange programs as well as special training focusing on talented students of different majors. Organization of short courses about the the partners such as American University in Washington or Jena univesitet or Polytechnic University of Madrid and their countries can make future exchange programs to be more beneficial for all the participants.