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ACADEMIC MOBILITY AS A WAY OF CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTION

The article discusses the problem of academic mobility in perspective of personal and international profit. The modern trends and prospects of its development being analyzed, economic side of a question was considered. Based on students' experience, situation with academic mobility in TPU was analyzed.

Keywords: *academic mobility, TPU, student, university, education, globalization.*

Today's job market is quite competitive and the higher education of the applicant doesn't ensure future employment. As a result, there is a list of additional qualifications which can be required to get the position. Among the most frequently used ones is knowledge of foreign languages, communicative skills, and flexibility. Currently, there is a promising way to gain all these qualities and skills while studying at university. That is academic mobility.

A potential employee that studied abroad for a certain period of time is a priority able to speak foreign languages. He has a lot of experience with foreign colleagues. He has a broader view of life gained after a long stay in a foreign environment. Developing his own as a specialist, he is ready to help develop his employer's business. That is why more and more students every year choose participation in the programs of academic mobility as a good investment of money, time and effort, because they know that everything will pay off handsomely.

However, there are many challenges which students may face. An academic mobility program and its preparation at various levels is a very laborious process that requires close cooperation between the various representatives of universities that are organizing them. This article will examine the history of academic mobility of students as a global process, along with its main problems and prospects of development.

Academic mobility is the movement of students and teachers of higher educational institutions for a certain period of time to another educational or scientific institution within or outside their country for the purpose of studying or teaching. International Academic Mobility is one of the most effective ways of developing opportunities at an individual level. Students that take part in mobility programs open the way to improved educational and research courses and programs. They return home not only with new knowledge, but also with invaluable experience. It is important to note that the term does not imply emigration or long-term training (work) abroad.

One of the mobility's features is physical displacement of mobility entities. Physical mobility cannot be replaced by a virtual one. Such a remark is contained in documents since the Bologna Appeal European rectors in Salamanca in 2001.

Academic mobility of students is a process that is very important for personal and professional development as each participant faces the need to solve different life problems and to analyze them from his own position and the «foreign» culture's position. It automatically and often unconsciously develops certain qualities:

- the ability to choose the way of interaction with the outside world;
- the ability to think in a comparative aspect;
- the ability for cross-cultural communication;
- the ability to recognize the insufficiency of knowledge, or knowledge of a lack of knowledge that determines the motivation to learn;
- the ability to change the self-image;
- the ability to view their country in cross-cultural aspect;
- knowledge about other cultures.

The objectives of higher education mobility can be different. They not only can be educational, research, or teaching related goals, but also personal, cultural, social, immigration, language, or other ambitions for the acquisition of high-quality education.

Goals of the Russian system of higher education in the field of academic mobility are formulated in the state program «Development of Education» for 2013–2020, adopted in October 11, 2012 at the Russian Federation's Government meeting. The main focus in this case should act as the formation of a pan-European educational space, which is realized by means of programs aimed at promoting the development of higher education systems in country-partners (non-EU). Integration of the overall educational environment is achieved through the expansion of cooperation in the field of higher education in the context of the Lisbon Strategy and the Bologna process.

The Bologna process is the process of creating the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) among common European countries, whose main objectives must have been achieved by 2010. It began with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 in Bologna, Italy, which set out the main goals of leading to the achievement of comparability and harmonization of national educational systems of higher education in Europe.

Currently, the Bologna process brings together 46 countries. The Russian Federation joined the Bologna process in 2003 at the Berlin Conference of European Ministers of Education.

Mobility has a positive effect for the quality of higher education and higher education institutions development and for the raising of the cultural level of society as a whole. However, any initiative may face problems, and academic mobility is not an exception. The main concern of mobility usually comes down to the fact that the student will be free to travel around Europe, searching for a university, where it will be quite easy to go for a semester or a year. Then he will be required a certain number of academic credits and require the base university to deduct them according to The Bologna documents to get his diploma. One of the reports at the international scientific conference on the Bologna Process in Moscow was noted, that the groups of students who knowingly engaged in the search for those European universities where foreign students willingly accept and receive academic credits more easily were observed. However, now in the European practice of mobility there is an official document «Learning Agreement», which contains a section to fill for the guiding university with this wording: «We confirm that the proposed program of study is approved». The agreement is signed by the faculty coordinator of the guiding university and the student himself.

The Bologna documents do not contain any restrictions for the number of student mobility programs' trips. Nevertheless, in the framework of the Bologna Declaration, which points out the university's autonomy and the control of the education' quality, the high school has the right to control this trip. First, even for reasons of common sense, loans that were received for a non-studied profession, cannot be gotten. For example, engineers cannot qualify for offset credits in medicine, and vice versa. Second, programs that are studied during the implementation of mobility must comply with the year of studying and the scientific and theoretical level of the studying of every specific discipline in the high school. Third, disciplines that are studied in a foreign university must meet the requirements of the educational standard of Russian higher education. Base university has the right to limit the number of visits to a particular student, if the trip does not provide a complete mastery of his training program. If the student insists, and, after receiving the consent of the host university, will leave to study there, without listening to the advice of the faculty coordinator of the Bologna process and the dean of the faculty guiding university, this university has the right to not count his accrued credits for his diploma. At least, they have a right to lengthen the term of his studying, as he will have to get those credits that are required for the program.

The imbalance between different regions in the interchange of students is obvious: dominated flows of «mobile» students from Northern and Eastern Europe to Western Europe are dominating, while there is an almost complete absence of reverse flows.

Students, who are studying at the department of military training, will face some extra difficulties. Even if the curricula of two universities is fully harmonized, the presence of the sponsor that will pay for studying and a sincere desire of the student, leadership of the military department is very strict about all the «movement» of students who are on military training. It turns out that the student must make a choice: participation in the program of academic mobility or continuation in the training of the military department, because the possibility of a mutual agreement with its leaders to postpone, or take a short sabbatical from the subsequent recovery in the next year or so is extremely small. It can be assumed, that in the near future, the majority of training mobility will be at the master's level only. In this case, the problem with the military department is removed. At present, the program of academic mobility is available for undergraduate students too, who have to make a choice.

Another important issue is the language of academic mobility programs. The Bologna Declaration is very important to the preservation of the languages and cultures of the continent, but the need for a common language of European education brings the English language to this role. Most often education is carried out in English, but it is constantly emphasized that the student is encouraged to study the language of the host country, and the host university has to organize intensive language courses for foreign students. In some cases, universities are even ready to charge a visiting student academic credits for learning the language of the host country. In the case of a one-year internship, universities are recommended to teach foreign students in English during the first semester, and in the language of the host country during the second. In general, the student must arrive at a foreign university with fluent English or the host country's language. This raises the question of an in-depth study of the English language courses' organization in all Russian universities, not in linguistic or humanities only.

Problems of mobility's practical organization clearly differ in relation to students who go to a foreign university and in relation to arriving for training foreign ones. Theoretically, the student can search for a university that is ready to accept him for a semester or a year by himself. A foreign university will receive the decision to admit a student on probation according to the basis of many reasons, such as a basic level of incoming students, possession of a foreign language, the presence of the host institution's sufficient classroom funding and places in hostels or in the rental sector. In the case of individual student's actions, after receiving the consent of the host university, a student will have to notify faculty coordinators of the base university in order to enable them to determine which subjects that he proposed to study are correlating with the curriculum of the Faculty for the same period of study. If the Bologna coordinators and the dean's office cannot find a sufficient number of matches between the curricula of universities, the question of inappropriateness of this trip will raise. For the above reasons, it is obvious, that the best way is to organize mobility between universities that already have established partnerships. In this case, it is not obligatory to study the curricula of the university where the student goes in a separate way; credits offset can be pre-stipulated with long-term agreements.

If a student has the approval of a basic high school, credits that he receives should be counted fully, without any additional tests or exams. There are cases where the foreign university-partner interprets the basic parameters of the Bologna Process incorrectly, for example, charges for training more or less than 30 and 60 credits, offers fractional loans as rates of individual disciplines, etc. If negotiations about these issues will not give a positive result, basic university will be forced to adjust the host university's policy in relation to its curriculum. For students who want to take part in the mobility programs in Russian universities, there are also a number of limitations. Based on the capacity audience, the number of academic groups and the availability of housing in the dorms or in the private sector, it is necessary to determine in advance the approximate quota for admission; within these quotas the testing of candidates' prior study of each discipline courses should be provided, as well as foreign or Russian language. It is necessary to give a candidate as much information about the conditions of his stay in Russia, including a wide range of issues, such as particular weather during their stay in the country or cost of health care.

Nowadays, European universities in countries where higher education is paid, charge foreign students, and sometimes even increased in comparison with local students. In the UK this practice is the rank of educational policy: tuition fees for foreign students can reduce tuition for citizens of the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, the National Unions of Students in Europe (37 European countries, 11 million students) «is strongly opposed to any tuition fees.» When we talk about free mobility in countries where higher education is funded by the state, it means only the absence of tuition fees. In any other case, the student has to pay travel, accommodation, food, medical care, and other social spending by himself, if he does not have a sponsor from his basic university or the government, which can be a substantial amount. To him, in basic ally all the high school scholarships and other social payments of the base university should remain for the period of students' mobility. However, according to Russian realities, the size of a basic scholarship would not help students abroad very much. The documents of the Bologna process is constantly calling for European universities to initiate programs of financial assistance for students in order to maintain their European academic mobility, but it is hard to believe in their success in the Russian conditions.

Governments and European institutions realize the benefits that the mobility development brings for increasing the competitiveness of universities, countries and the entire European education, the development of the single market and competitiveness of the European economy as a whole. Therefore, they have started to support the development of academic mobility as a tool and one of the aims of the Bologna process is to add new energy. The action plan for the mobility development in European universities has been developed and supported by the Council of Europe in 2000 (Nice).

The plan starts with a recognition of the fact that the creation of a united European knowledge area is one of the main priorities for European development. Free, unhindered mobility of all participants of the educational process – students, teachers, researchers and administrators should be the base of it as one of the main condition for improving the competitiveness and attractiveness of education at European universities.

Most of the participants of academic mobility programs face difficulties in their daily lives. The results of surveys conducted among studying abroad students show that they have to deal with family, financial, psychological and social difficulties. Psychological barriers and difficulties are connected with such aspects of college life as homesickness or fear of a new everyday social environment. Social problems are usually related to problems in communicating with family and friends. The level of the students' experience of the various difficulties is different in each case.

Female students that take part in the programs of academic mobility face a number of specific problems due to their gender role. For example, having a partner and children has a significant impact on the academic mobility of them. Some of the findings from the interviews conducted with scientists from Bulgaria and Poland have confirmed the importance of greater personal and family relationships for mobile female students as a barrier or as an incentive.

Apart from academic mobility in the framework of a united European educational space, we should pay attention to the countries of the eastern region, which have occupied a leading position in the global education market for many years. Changes in higher education systems of these countries are in line with the trends of globalization and internationalization. At the same time, experts point out the need of higher Asian education development.

Asian universities in the basic aspects of functioning have to adapt to the Anglo-Saxon model in order to achieve a competitive position in the global education market. The researchers point out that the internationalization should not be understood only as a following to American or Anglo-Saxon standards.

Asian universities are paying close attention to the international benchmarking – the studying and the borrowing of foreign (primarily European countries) positive experience in the field of education. Their desires to take a leading place in the world rankings of universities, to raise their prestige in the eyes of world public opinion, to attract foreign students and others make them do this policy. At the same time the criteria for entering the rankings are determined by the Anglo-Saxon tradition and practice.

The qualitative development of higher education in Asian countries is usually associated with its internationalization. The intensity of the measures for the higher education internationalization in Asia depends on the educational policies of individual countries. Among the Asian countries, the most revealing are changes in the Chinese system of higher education. The researchers of higher education in Asia view China as a collective image of the changes that occur in the formation of all Asian countries.

Higher education in China for many years has been isolated from the world market of educational services. Up to the middle of the twentieth century, it was under the influence of the USSR higher education model. For a long time education was free, but this model did not meet the requirements of economic development. Later, Chinese uni-

versities were able to take a quarter of students for training on a fee basis. In the 2000's Chinese higher education has become more open, it began to take into account global trends in higher education. Greater openness of the country, changes in the economy and education made the Chinese education market very attractive to foreign educational institutions. The universities in China are increasing the number of educational programs that are taught in English, which makes them more and more attractive for foreign students.

Increasing students' mobility in the study abroad form is a well-known form of the education internationalization. Of course, traveling students is not a new phenomenon, and some regions of the world have a big experience in this business. Most European countries are known for the influx of students from their former colonies. A large number of Latin America students trying to get a postgraduate degree in North American universities. During the Cold War, USSR and Eastern European universities attracted students from ideologically supporting countries. Benefits of studying abroad were obvious: acquisition of new cross-cultural knowledge and skills, knowledge of foreign languages (especially English), the establishment of an international staff of teachers and professional network, familiarity with the customs and culture of other countries, etc.

International student exchanges are now becoming the main characteristic of a global system of higher education. In quantitative terms, the dynamics of these processes looks impressive. Over the past 40 years the growth rate of international students even exceeded the overall growth rate of the number of university students. According to UNESCO statistics, in 1994-1995 in 50 host countries were about 1.5 million foreign students. Over the past 25 years, international student mobility has increased by more than 300 %.

The economic side of this issue is impressive. As it is known, the championship in imports of foreign students belongs to the United States. According to WTO information, in 2005/2006 one-third of the sum of all revenues from providing educational services to international students in higher education accounted for the United States (13.5 billion dollars). Providing educational services to foreigners is the fifth largest contribution to the national economy by export items of the USA.

Besides the US, the countries that host the largest number of foreign students to study are the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, where the dominant language of communication is English. It is clear that the largest flows of student mobility come from countries with developing economies of the Asia-Pacific region (Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, China, and Hong Kong).

In many host countries, international student flows express the «trade» relationship in a greater extent than «aid». This is especially works in Anglo-Saxon countries. Income from tuition fees of foreign students is a good supplements to domestic financing, without which many businesses would fall under the threat of closure. Thus, increasing student mobility becomes more market oriented than state or aid or service.

In connection with the above-considered problems and major trends of academic mobility, we can formulate the prospects for its development. The European Observation Group of the Bologna Process (BFUG) conducted a comprehensive analysis of action to promote mobility, which should be seen as a list of possible steps, covering different policy areas, levels and characters, to be taken in each country.

Step 1. Information, transparency and equal opportunities for mobility

- Easily accessible and transparent information about the possibility of studying or teaching abroad
- A simple, clear and transparent system of reception and selection methods
- Measures to reduce language barriers

Step 2. Active actions to expand access to mobility opportunities

- Information of admission and application process rules in other countries for foreign students
- Information of learning and living conditions, as well as administrative procedures in the universities of other countries for foreign students and teachers
- Help and support for the poor
- Recognition of abroad studying time by universities and employers
- Encouragement and motivation for mobility in universities and among employers
- A flexible curriculum and training structure for mobility
- Attention to the students' personal problems

Step 3. Provision of services in the host country

- Access to the academic and social services in the country
- Fast and efficient visa processing
- Availability of places to stay for the students

Step 4. Mobility financing

- Information about the funding for the period of mobility
- Existing state support system
- Scholarships / public funds for those mobile students who need it
- Compensation for additional costs in the host country
- Consideration of possibilities for financing of students from countries where there is no system of financial support

Step 5. The system of social security and labor market regulation

- The ability to qualify for employment
- Social security and benefit entitlements

- Review the impact of mobility on employment opportunities

As can be seen, the main barriers for mobility are issues related to the issuance of visas, immigration, employment, accommodation, social security for interested in mobility students, their recognition upon graduation. Overcoming these challenges in the near future will create not only the European, but, perhaps, the Eurasian or worldwide unified system of education. It will ultimately ensure the development of the world economy, intercultural establishment, and stable world atmosphere.

All these problems are also different in different universities. Participation in the programs of academic mobility makes it possible to analyze the situation in Tomsk Polytechnic University from inside, on the basis of students' experience.

Tomsk Polytechnic University is one of the leaders in Russia in the number of students participating in academic mobility programs. Students have the opportunity to get an experience of learning and living abroad, to acquire skills in research laboratories of overseas partner universities, a chance to learn how to apply their knowledge in practice. TPU organizes and implement a wide range of academic mobility programs for students: academic exchanges, joint ventures with foreign universities educational programs, educational programs, international consortiums, themed school, training practice (including language) in foreign universities and organizations.

Academic mobility programs are implemented on a reciprocal base in accordance with the agreements concluded with partner institutions and organizations. In 2014, TPU has more than 90 agreements on the implementation of various programs of academic mobility with foreign universities of 27 countries in Europe, Asia, North and South America.

In 2014, 508 students of TPU took part in the programs of academic mobility. They studied and passed practice in 149 universities and companies in 27 countries. TPU was the host for 125 students of 32 partner institutions from 12 countries. During summer and winter vacations, TPU students go to foreign universities like Germany, Austria, Finland, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, and others to attend language and scientific courses from 2 to 8 weeks.

The University is constantly expanding opportunities for the academic mobility of its students. In 2014 40 new agreements with foreign universities were concluded or updated, including the L'Orientale University (Naples, Italy), Karaganda State Technical University (Kazakhstan), the University of Orleans (France), Anhalt University of Applied Sciences (Germany), Dresden International University (Germany), Joseph Fourier University (France) and others.

TPU students really do have many opportunities to study abroad, because there are a lot of programs that are offered. In addition, special scholarship «P.L.U.S.» is offered for those TPU students who are going to participate in the programs of academic mobility for a period of one month up to one semester, which almost completely covers the costs of individuals' accommodation and flights into the host country. Requirements for participation in the competition for this scholarship are not so strict: you need a developed curriculum approved in TPU; proficiency training at no less than B1 and academic success (no «satisfactory» marks in the last session). The contest is held twice a year. The number of participants is increasing every year: in 2013, 185 students received a scholarship, in 2014 – 227 students. The information about the beginning of application's acceptance for participation in programs is always update don time on the website of the Centre for International Academic Programs of TPU. There you can find any information concerning the program, conditions of participation and host universities. In addition, the center's specialists are always friendly and succinctly respond to any, even the most stupid and unusual issues arising from the students.

For those students who want to participate in academic exchanges, there are special language courses like «Language for mobility». Above out some problems that students usually face after they have arrived to the host country were pointed out. These courses were created just for the cultural and linguistic adaptation of students, which certainly helps to overcome many difficulties. I am currently taking part in this program and am learning the Chinese language. At first, I felt a bit skeptic and even fearful of this idea, because the Chinese language is considered as one of the toughest in the world. However, after the first lesson these feelings have gone away: the teacher has not only theoretical knowledge of the language, but also a wealth of experience of living in China. Her detailed explanation and infinite patience made me really love such a complicated language, infected with the desire to learn as much as possible. It should be noted that I have been studying English since I was six, a big part of my life I have to deal with it to a greater or lesser extent. Classes at the university allowed me to develop a lexical and conversational aspect of the language. A great impetus was a two-week English course in Prague, Czech Republic, which I got as a member of the academic mobility program while I was just a freshmen. However, now I have two lessons of English per week (four academic hours), and five lessons of Chinese (ten hours). So recently I began to notice that what I wanted to say in English, consensually was replaced by Chinese words. In my opinion, this is a clear indication that the Language for mobility courses really work and serve as an excellent tool to prepare for life in another country.

Basing on students experience, some of the problems related to academic mobility in the TPU can be highlighted. Tomsk polytechnic university really organizes a wide variety of programs throughout the world, both for technical and humanitarian specialties. However, there still is a problem: it turns out, that the academic mobility with, for example, China universities are only for students, whose specialty is Chinese language. Of course, students studying technical sciences TPU offers a variety of programs in Europe. But, as discussed above, China's universities offer a wide range of programs and are happy to accept foreign students. So the problem is that even after the end of the Language for mobility course students have to develop a curriculum in the selected high school on their own, as

the program for engineering students does not yet exist. This raises the question of the need to expand the list of provided programs, taking into account the specific characteristics of all kinds of specialties taught at TPU. There is no doubt that the development of mobility programs with the technical universities in the eastern region will be irrelevant, as in connection with the recent political course of Russia's interest in this area is extremely high.

In general, the level of academic mobility programs' organization in TPU is quite high: from pre-preparation for life in a foreign country to assistance in obtaining visas. TPU teachers are happy to assist students preparing to study in another country, always help with words of support, and help out if you need a letter of recommendation. It could be said that academic mobility is encouraged by all the TPU teaching staff. Unfortunately, a lot of students are quite skeptical about the possibilities of studying abroad, considering it as prohibitively expensive and an extremely rugged luxury, which is, of course, not true. As mentioned above, due to the support programs operating in TPU, any student can go to study in another country, even from low-income families. In this case, for the promotion of academic mobility, TPU management should develop a plan to inform students about the possibilities offered in the field of foreign studies.

The ability to live and study in another country gives people a new cultural, social and academic experience, and creates opportunities for personal development. This increases the competitiveness in the international labor market and employment opportunities. Mobility plays an important role in developing and maintaining a democratic culture. Mobile students also contribute to the education internationalization. With the help of mobile students, a university gains new perspectives that call for consideration of established traditions and practices. Thus, mobility provides opportunities for academic excellence through the development of new contacts and views, as well as the comparison and development of education systems. In this open environment, it will strengthen international cooperation and linkages, as well as improve the quality of higher education and scientific research.

The experience of mobile people is embedded into society and contributes to its development. People with experience of living in other countries contribute to the reducing of prejudice, cultural and language barriers between people, countries and cultures. Transnational exchange provides mutual and competitive benefits for society, as well as changes and improves it.

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АКАДЕМИЧЕСКАЯ МОБИЛЬНОСТЬ КАК СПОСОБ МЕЖКУЛЬТУРНОГО ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЯ

В статье рассмотрены проблемы академической мобильности, как касающиеся каждого студента лично, так и те, что существуют в глобальном международном плане. Исследованы современные тенденции и перспективы развития процесса, экономическая сторона вопроса. На основе личного опыта студентов – участников программ академической мобильности проанализировано состояние академической мобильности в Томском политехническом университете.

Ключевые слова: академическая мобильность, ТПУ, студенты, университет, образование, глобализация.

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CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AROUND THE WORLD

The paper is devoted to cultural diversity around the world. The author investigates traditions, behavior patterns and communication styles that vary between different cultural communities. The article highlights the importance of respectful dealing with rules of conduct in various cultures to improve the effectiveness of intercultural communication.

Keywords: culture, traditions, cultural diversity, international communication.

There are a lot of different countries with their own cultures, traditions and folkways on our planet. Relationships between these cultures and between people sometimes are strained because of national peculiarities and patterns of behavior that are unique to every nation. Cultural factors act as invisible barriers in international communication. The reasons for cultural differences are often connected with the geographic location, religion or history of a country or nation [1].