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INTERNATIONALIZATION AS A TREND OF RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Internationalization and globalization processes are the main factors that define the modern evolution of higher education system in Russia and in the world. The article considers advantages and obstacles of internationalization process in Russia, and shows on an example of ETU «LETI», that one of the key components to accelerate the internationalization process could be development and launch of Master's degree programs in English.

Key words: internationalization, globalization, education, English Medium Instruction (EMI), Master's degree programs in English

The XXI century is the era of global processes in an every aspect of life, including education. Today any national system of the higher professional education cannot be separated from global processes and trends or demands of the world labor market, which are crucial needs for graduates who are to be real global citizens and positively contribute to the economy and society. In other words, for today's universities it is necessary to focus not on preparing qualified specialists for domestic needs, but rather on preparing specialists who are able to compete on the global market. This makes national governments execute new strategies in the field of higher education, namely, the internationalization of the higher education system, since it is a driving force of economic and social development worldwide.

Internationalization on the level of an educational organization is most often understood as a process of integrating an international dimension into all the spheres of its activity with the primary goal to improve the quality of education. Can be distinguished two concepts: external (e.g. international academic mobility) and internal (e.g. implementation of the world educational standards, development of educational programs and courses in English) internationalization processes.

The prevalent process of internationalization among Russian universities has been initiated by engaging Russian education system in the Bologna Process, and since then it was seen a significant increase in international academic mobility, research partnerships, and internationalization of

educational programs, which increased even greater with the beginning of the Project 5-100.

Participation in the Project 5-100 accelerated the internationalization process at Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University «LETI» (ETU «LETI») and one of the key components was development and launch of Master's degree programs in English, which ensure the competitiveness of the modern University. The development of Master's degree programs in English at ETU «LETI» has been started in 2013. Every Master's degree program consists of 10-12 courses, research work, workshops and trainings. Preparation to launch Master's degree programs in English is a complex procedure and it took a great deal of work in many directions at once, such as preparation of the documentation and educational and methodological materials in English, improving the level of English among the faculty and administrators, and etc. At the present time, there are three Master's degree programs in English at ETU «LETI»: «Laser Measuring Technology», «Bioengineering Systems and Technologies for Prosthetics and Rehabilitation» and «Automation and Mechatronics» and next year three more new Master's degree programs in English are going to be open, viz. «Photovoltaics and Solar Energy Technology», «Computer Science and Knowledge Discovery» and «RF, Microwave and Terahertz Engineering of Wireless Systems», thus, each technical faculty of ETU «LETI» are going to implement at least one Master's degree program in English. These programs are mostly aimed at foreign students, due to the generally insufficient knowledge of English among Russian students at the present time. In 2016, ETU «LETI» hosted about 1300 foreign students from more than 50 countries. This is more than 16 % of the total number of students. The largest groups of foreign students include Chinese, Vietnamese, Nigerian, Tanzanian, Egyptian and Algerian students, apart from students from the former Soviet Union countries.

Project 5-100 is aimed at strengthen international position of the Russian universities in the world, and as a basis for determining this position, Russian experts have chosen one of the most prestigious rankings – Q S World University Rankings by Quacquarelli Symonds (QS). ETU «LETI» has been participating in the Project 5-100 since 2013 and in 2017, one year after the launch of the Master's degree programs in English, it for the first time has been included into QS World University Rankings by subject Engineering – Electrical and Electronic [1].

Internationalization became a trend of the Russian academic community during the last decades; however, various world rankings show that Russian universities have not reached the high level of internationalization yet [1].

Russian higher education system is still in the transition mode. The main obstacle in Russian universities internationalization is a poor knowledge of English among faculty and students in Russia. This hampers international academic mobility; lower the number of publications in international journals with high impact factor, as well as the number of programs taught in English. Thus, Russian higher educational institutions, first of all, should overcome this obstacle and also number of administrative and cultural barriers to become a valuable part of the global academic community. This means that internationalization development strategy of university should include an engagement of all students, faculty, and administrators in the process.

Today, the development of education and science is determined by the globalization and evolution of the internationalization. These processes result in the fast development of the higher professional education towards the establishment of a multilingual learning environment, what leads to the origin of new requirements for the education process in higher educational institutions. Internationalization of education leads to the modernization of educational approaches, which should facilitate an integration of the graduates in the modern society.

References

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