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Adaptation of foreign students in Russian universities: problems and solutions

The article highlights the issues that overseas students meet studying in Russia. The relevance of the work is determined by the fact that foreign students are a crucial factor in the development of the education system not only in Russia but worldwide. The paper specifies the current state of the gap in adaptation of foreign students in Russian universities. In conclusion, some ways to optimize the learning and adaptation process are illustrated.

Key words: adaptation; overseas students; education; Russia; universities.

The growing number of foreign students in the Russian Federation is a significant factor in the development of the higher education system, which contributes to the improvement of our image world-wide and replenishment of the educational potential lost over the years. This process cannot take place in isolation from the social and cultural environment of the hosting country [1, p. 125]. Therefore, the issue of adaptation is a significant factor affecting the quality and effectiveness of educational program. From the first days of their stay at a Russian university, foreign students find themselves in an unusual environment, in which they will have to adapt as soon as possible. Effective adaptation increases the quality and level of education of foreign students, provides high motivation for mastering knowledge, skills and abilities.

Thereafter, administration of Russian universities faces the problem of organizing the social and everyday environment of foreign students in such a way that it does not distract them from their main objective – their studies.

In order to avoid misunderstanding and various kinds of conflicts, it is necessary to have a deep knowledge of the specifics of the national psychological characteristics of various regional groups, and also take into account the fact, that people come to study in Russia from countries with different political systems, levels of economic development and different level of integration into the world community.

Analysis of the common problems that foreign students face during their training in the Russian Federation allows us to identify areas that need improvement. Most researchers identify the following problems of student adaptation in the educational space of a Russian university:

– Communicative problems – the inability to communicate with people puts foreign students in an extremely difficult position. They struggle to solve everyday problems like choosing the right bus, grocery store, or asking for help. Difficulties arise when buying things or food. At first, foreign students are able

to communicate with Russian people only with the help of gestures, facial expressions and a few memorized phrases. Aside from that, they face the difficulty of studying the Russian language, processing special terminology in the chosen major and understanding of the speech of teachers [2, p. 150].

– Academical problems – overcoming the difference in education systems; adaptation to new requirements and knowledge monitoring; the organization of the educational process that should be based on the principles of personal self-development, "cultivation" of knowledge, fostering skills of working independently. The difference in the forms and methods of constructing the educational process itself interferes with self-realization and self-expression of foreign students. The lack of special educational and methodological materials and the forced reading of unadapted texts in Russian is a great difficulty for foreigners [3, p. 129].

– Adaptive problems – an unusual social and cultural environment is present throughout the entire period of study, and the success of adapting to it highly depends on the individual characteristics and character of the student, as well as on the professional and human qualities of teachers. This is where the senior students of the same nationality come to the rescue, helping out their fellow countrymen in the same way they were once helped. Such interaction, well-established in the student environment, is an important component of accelerated adaptation and smooth entry into an unfamiliar environment. Involving foreigners who have already gone through the adaptation process in cultural events with local students can not only accelerate the adaptation process of future students, but also develop a tolerant attitude in the general student environment.

The outlined problems of adaptation are due to the inclusion of the individual in a new socio-cultural and cognitive environment, where the formation of personal relationships with all participants in the educational process takes place [4, p. 227]. The main burden associated with the educational process rests on the shoulders of universities that accept foreigners for training. The approach to organizing adaptation of foreign students to the educational environment of the university should be organized, purposeful, and complex.

To speed up the solution of the problems of adaptation of foreign students to Russian universities, it is necessary to ensure high efficiency of professional training in a foreign language and to form benevolent attitude towards Russia.

Considering the above, the following proposals for optimizing the adaptation process may be suggested:

- Create language situations, that are as close to reality as possible.
- Raise questions and topics that are relevant to a given student audience.
- Age, religious, social and other characteristics of the student should be accounted for.

- Stimulate the motivational sphere of foreign students.
- Give students opportunity to study independently.
- Objectively evaluate the results of their independent actions.
- Try to interest a foreign student and form a cognitive need in them.
- Try to introduce foreign students to Russian national and cultural traditions by means of extracurricular activities, to ensure their assimilation of elements of Russian culture through socio-cultural activities.

In the process of teaching foreign students, one should take into account the strengths of national and cultural characteristics and traditions. This will help to facilitate the adaptation period, master the necessary skills and make classes more efficient and interesting [5, p. 191].

The adaptation process should be built as a comprehensive pedagogical program, the success of which is determined by multiple parameters and criteria, that improves the quality of education for foreign students and achieve the best academic results with the least negative consequences.

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