

ПРОБЛЕМЫ РАЗВИТИЯ ВЫСШЕЙ ШКОЛЫ

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ENHANCING INTERNATIONALIZATION BY MEANS OF DOUBLE DEGREE PROGRAMS BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ITALY AND RUSSIA

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Высшее образование — один из ключевых факторов модернизации экономики и общества. Одним из источников повышения эффективности образования является развитие международных проектов (интернационализация). В представленной статье основное внимание уделяется стратегии развития международного сотрудничества в целях поощрения к участию в совместных проектах студентов из Италии и из России. По итогам исследования материалов источников и данных опроса, в качестве рекомендуемого к развитию направления сотрудничества между вузами России и Италии предложено развитие программ обучения для студентов, по итогам которых студенты получают дипломы вузов каждой из стран-участниц.

Ключевые слова: развитие международных проектов (интернационализация); учебные программы для получения дипломов двух вузов; HEI; международное сотрудничество; мобильность студентов.

Higher education is a key factor of modernization of economy and society. One source of increasing its effectiveness is internationalization. This paper focuses on internationalization strategy of international cooperation for promotion mutual interest and mobility of students between Italy and Russia. To find out the current situation in the field of double degree programs in Russia and Italy a thorough survey of the relevant literature has been done, the in-depth interviews with representatives of Russian and Italian Higher Education Institutions, as an information source and therefore chosen as an important input for analyzing problems and challenges in reference to development of double degree programs in Russia and Italy has been carried out and presented in this paper.

Key words: Internationalization; Double degree programs; HEI; international cooperation; mobility of students.

I. INTRODUCTION

Researchers on international education give many definitions of “internationalization”. Internationalization of education is seen as an important component of educational policy. Among its obvious advantages are expanding access to higher education, the universalization

of knowledge, the emergence of international quality standards, strengthening the innovative nature of higher education, expanding and strengthening of international cooperation, intensification of academic and student mobility.

Internationalization of education in a growing number of countries becomes the subject of a deliberate policy on the part of the state, fo-

cused on specific political, social and financial problems. At national, sectorial and institutional levels is defined as the internationalization process of integration of international, intercultural or global dimension into the goal, functions or methods of delivery of higher education. Thus researchers define essential characteristics of the internationalization of higher education in the modern period. With respect to the driving forces noted that the strategy and practice of internationalization of higher education in individual countries are affected by not only national policies, nature or identity, but also by requirements and challenges of international or regional global organizations. Various factors, especially the pace of economic globalization and the spread of information and communication technologies, as well as the introduction of market mechanisms have a growing impact on the internationalization of higher education in selected countries. Today internationalization is driven by economic factors and occurs in a more competitive environment at the global level.

International student mobility in the world has increased dramatically over the last three decades, from 0.6 million in 1975 to 4 million in 2014. This trend indicates that in the coming years, the growth continues, fueled by globalization processes raw economy and society. Forecasts of market research show increase in the mobility of students in 2020 to 5.8 million, and by 2025 — up to 8 million people. Currently, most of the flow is localized in 6 countries: USA, UK, Germany, France, Australia, Japan. More than half (54%) of all foreign students studying in the top four English-speaking countries: USA, UK, Australia and Canada. Europe remains the region receiving the largest number of foreign students. North America takes fewer students in absolute terms, but ranks first in the number of regional suppliers, including Asian students make up almost two thirds (60%). Asia tops the list of regions to guide students abroad for higher education, and accounts for nearly half (43%) of all foreign students in the OECD area. Europe is in second place (35%), followed by Africa (12%), North America (7%), South America (3%) and the Asia — Pacific region (1%) in accordance with OECD statistics.

Each country should develop a strategy for the internationalization of higher education studies starting from its own economic and political

opportunities, taking into account the size and geographic location, history and culture, the quality and features of its higher education system, the role of the language of their country in the world, as well as experience work in the field of international cooperation.

This paper focuses on development of internationalization strategy on international cooperation for promotion mutual interest and mobility of student between Italy and Russia. To date, Italy is one of the most important partners of the Russian Federation in Europe, which established and developed intensive interaction in almost all directions.

In the late nineties, some European universities, in reaction to globalization, took a new approach to internationalizing their institutions. The traditional form of internationalization based mainly on student mobility and reciprocal exchanges had become outdated. It is no longer satisfying the students' needs to acquire the necessary skills to function and prosper in a globalized context. Employers, multinationals, and small and medium enterprises started seeking multilingual candidates able to function in an intercultural environment. In addition to the new global context, the institutional rationales for international mobility have changed in the last 20 years. In the United States, and in other English-speaking countries such as Australia, higher education has also become a market that attracts degree-seeking students from other countries. In Europe, the interest in higher education has only recently begun to move from a focus on mobility and cooperation programs to other forms of internationalization, motivated among others by a need to increase the number of international fee-paying students. This change has been assisted by the actions of the Bologna process (The Council of Europe, 2010) and the Lisbon Convention (The Council of Europe / UNESCO, 2002), both aimed at building a competitive knowledge society.

In this context, the issue of the internationalization of the Italian university has gradually attracted attention by university managers, and, more recently it has become a priority of policy makers. Globalization as an objective factor in the development of national economy and social sphere largely determines if not unity, but the common approaches to solving similar problems, the degree of application of which

depends on the capabilities of specific countries, economies and institutions. In addition, external “global” mechanisms/scenarios of development in a sphere can significantly affect selection of priorities in national decisions.

In the field of international education such common solutions include the use of the internationalization strategy — the consistent development of the international potential of National High School, intensive capacity — country presence in the international educational space: politically, financially and institutionally effective use of cross-border education

The main targets of the Russian Federation with regard to the development of international education identified in the “Concept of export of educational services of the Russian Federation”, developed in the framework of the Federal Program of the Development of Education in 2010, and development of double degree programs is part of the objectives stated in the Concept.

Although a lot of work has been done towards Joints and Double degree programs the development of a more or less acceptable to many European universities structural models of double degree programs (joint degrees) was, and still remains one of the most difficult problems which still awaits solution. This particular work contributes to the global picture of the state-of-art of double degree programs by analyzing the situation in Russia and Italy and providing recommendation for an Italian-Russian double degree program.

II. EVALUATION AND INTERPRETATION

DDP in Russia and survey discussion

International cooperation is one of the top priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science, as it allow integration into the world educational space, improve the competitiveness of Russian education on the international market of educational services; provide overcoming isolationism Russian education system, openness of the education system to the global market knowledge, technology, talents; Russian international recognition of educational programs and Russian documents on education; increasing the attractiveness for foreign nationals training in Russian institutions of vocational education; enrich-

ment of the national education system bringing foreign educational programs and innovative technologies and intellectual potential of the best foreign universities; promotion of technological and organizational Russian educational standards in the country and abroad by training specialists in these countries, including the teaching professions, and by supporting activities abroad Russian educational institutions, as well as teachers and researchers — representatives of Russian institutions of vocational education; integration of Russian higher education in addressing the global challenges of providing continuing education.

Improving the conditions for inclusion of students (pupils) Russian educational institutions in the international community to ensure the adaptation of students (pupils), graduates of the Russian educational institutions to global challenges, their involvement in international exchanges and programs; increase the level of educational, occupational and social mobility, competence and competitiveness.

Thanks to international programs, such as Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, the mobility figures are improving. This is supported by the development of joint programs with EU universities.

Formation and development of double degree programs (DDP) in Russia can be roughly divided into three stages. First stage: 1990–2000. Establishment of a market economy in Russia. New market demands. Appearance of the first double degree programs in Russia. Second stage: 2000–2010. Expanding distribution territory of double degree programs. The emergence of transnational projects working with double degree programs. Russia’s joining to the Bologna club. Third stage: 2010–2020. Differentiation of Russian Universities: competitive support of 57 innovative universities, the creation of federal universities, and competitive selection of research universities. Completion of the formation of a two-level education system. According to IBF International Consulting report there are 239 double degree programs at 74 universities in Russia, conducted with the participation of European universities.

As part of the study interviews were conducted with the representatives of 20 Russian Universities to identify the main factors motivating participation in the DDP. On each indicator derived from interactive interviews asses-

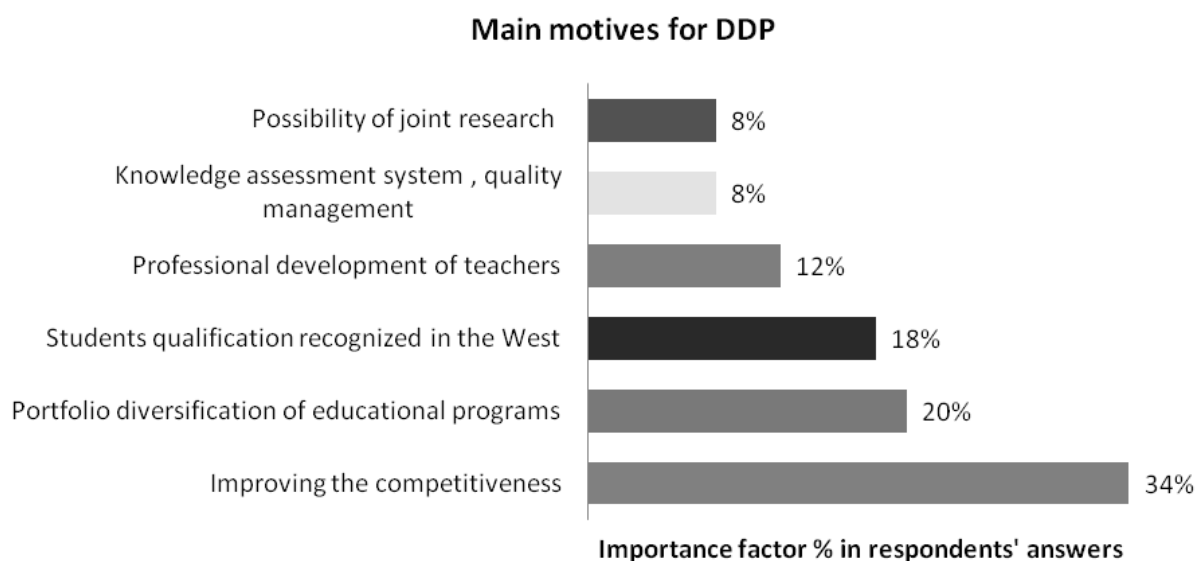


Fig. 1. Motivations for universities to participate in the DDP

sment exhibited on a scale of 1 to 10 points. Total mean score for each sub-criteria expert group indicators are calculated as the arithmetic average of scores for each expert, rounded to the nearest whole number by mathematical rounding rules. The final numerical score for each sub-criteria groups of indicators calculated as the arithmetic mean of the scores of all respondents who participated in the interview, rounded to the nearest whole number by mathematical rounding rules.

In the course of the interviews and analysis of the information received, it became clear that we are talking about a few important factors (Figure 1).

Those asked pointed out that having a DDP as an indicator of heightening competitiveness is the main motive. Interviewees are considering DDPs primarily as an opportunity to enhance the reputation of the university, not only in Russia but also in the world, increasing the skills of their teachers, conducting joint research and by an introduction to the new European system of knowledge assessment and quality management.

Interviews conducted with top managers and university administrators allow saying that the spread of personal motives of respondents are extremely large. Representatives of all schools surveyed stressed that from the beginning they did not expect any significant financial benefits from working with foreign partners. At the same

time recognized the importance of obtaining grants, sponsorship fees, salary increases for teachers and administrators of joint programs. Russian partners are aware of the fact that the development of double degree program will need to find ways to finance them, and the best that they can count on — gradually reach the breakeven point.

The creation and implementation of double degree programs Russian universities and its European partners are facing a number of challenges. Interview respondents indicated that the main difficulties in the establishment and implementation of such programs were and are lack of foreign language knowledge by teachers and students in Russia, lack of financial resources of the university, lack of experience in establishing such cooperation, communication problems and legislative and fiscal problems (Figure 2).

DDP in Italy and survey discussion

Rank high on the international market of educational services was and is one of the important challenges facing the Italian higher education system with focusing attention on inter-university cooperation and the award of joint (double) degrees.

Implementation of this task is facilitated by the rapid development of joint international educational projects (for example, Franco-Italian University and the German-Italian University).



Fig. 2. Major obstacles for universities to participate in the DDP

During the last years, with the introduction of “contract system” among faculty members in the Italian universities increased the number of foreign teachers. At the same time increased the number of Italian students studying abroad. This was greatly impacted by the active participation of Italy in international mobility programs “Erasmus Mundus”, “Socrates”, “Tempus”.

By introducing new instruments, such as (according to provisions in Ministerial Regulation no. 509/99) the possibility to award joint degrees with foreign universities; the recognition of foreign study periods, credits and qualifications for the purposes of allowing to pursue further studies; the obligatory study of a another language of the European Union and the awarding of credits therefore; the possibility to sit the final degree examination in a foreign language; the generalized introduction of the Diploma Supplement, it were allowed to promote and enhance the activities of Italian universities on the international area.

The chance to exploit synergies between universities to enrich the programs on offer has been grasped by many universities. Many Universities launched the joint and double degree programs.

According to CIMEAPROJOINT Database there are 460 joint and double degree programs in Italy, 395 is recorded as double degree programs, 38 as joint degree programs and 27 is for multiply degree.

As part of this study interviews were conducted with the representatives of Italian Uni-

versities to identify the main factors motivating participation in the DDP with Russia. Sent questionnaires covered 16 Italian universities.

Interviews conducted with managers and administrators of universities showed the willingness to cooperate with Russian Universities on the topic of DDP. None of them currently has DDP with Russian University, only one has DDP in the field of International Relations and European Studies with the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. But almost half of respondents answered that they have ongoing bilateral agreements with Russian Universities.

Representatives of all schools surveyed stressed that Joint programs, including double degrees, are one of the key points of the internationalization strategy of their Universities. As for main motivation for DDP majority all of respondents mentioned the strong relationship between the two institutions that wish to establish together the project and the professional competences of the people involved in the project. Moreover it has been said that joint programs lead to development of interdisciplinary and flexible curricula, usable on the world labour market and provide added value both for students (i. e. long time abroad with intercultural exposure, acquisition of “soft skills” and language improvement; taking advantage of different ways of learning; find new academic programs) and for the university (creating stronger and more stable academic connections with partner universities; recruiting best student with language pro-

iciency and excellent academic results; competitiveness of the academic offer). Finally, development of joint programs might have better opportunities for financing and fundraising (i. e. International programs, National Ministries, industry). All respondents marked out the language of instruction as the major obstacle in development of double degrees between HEI from Russian Federation and Italy, along with differences between higher education systems, such as the use of ECTS, length of study programs, prerequisites for acceding to first, second and third level of higher education and visa requirements. But one of the interviewee emphasized that there are a lot of different problem while setting up such programs, but one should be used to work positively with counterpart in order to solve them efficiently.

III. RESULTS

Appreciating the potential importance of cooperation between higher education institutions, particularly in relation to joint curricula, academic mobility schemes, integrated programs of study, seeing it as a powerful tool to ensure the attractiveness of European education and its competitiveness, the authors of the Bologna Declaration proclaimed the importance of giving a European dimension to this cooperation. The documents on the results of the meeting of European Ministers of Education in 2001 in Prague, this task is specified in the form of a call for the development of inter-university programs leading to double degrees (diplomas).

Double degree programs are found in a variety of subject areas, but they are the most widely received in economics, business education, law, management and engineering education. Such programs also widely represented in the areas of knowledge related to the science of society and languages.

The Majority of double degree programs are presented at the master's and doctoral levels; to a smaller extent — at the level of bachelor. Most programs grew out of the bilateral cooperation between universities, although there are examples of multilateral programs.

Establishment of double degree programs in European universities in recent years has accelerated due to increased support from the international educational community. However,

their development is accompanied by a variety of problems which are often resulting of shortcoming of comparability requirements of the various European educational structures.

The most important among these problems are:

- Financing of training;
- Recognition of double degrees;
- Quality assurance and control;
- Management efficiency;
- Synchronizing movement of students in universities in different countries.

Awarding joint (double) degrees in Europe today is governed mainly by inter-university agreements, rather than by the legislative tools at higher levels. This is due to no national legislation recognizing double, and in some cases — joint diplomas.

The most difficult issue for the dissemination of joint or double degrees is the need to broaden the base of their funding. Such programs are more costly due to the built-in mobility. It should be noted that the practice has spread, when these higher costs are born by the members of the network, or even students. However, it is clear that in the first case it is possible to expect reduction of incentives for universities in such programs. And the second — the aggravation of inequality among students for which such programs will be available, depending on the extent of their financial solvency.

The ways to solve this problem include the following:

- To increase partnerships and funding sources at the European and national levels;
- To finance programs also from business side;
- Targeted redirection of funds for financial support for joint programs and double degree programs, which provide planned mobility (as opposed to support mobility in general).

By joining to the Bologna Declaration, Russia has made a serious commitment to the integration to the European higher education, but there are still serious differences in training programs in terms of timing, load volumes, methods of teaching and orientation programs on the result.

In Russia the Lisbon Convention in 1997 “On the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education”, which was signed by 40 European countries is in effect. And every country that

signed the treaty, obliged to recognize all the documents on education in other countries (if there is no significant difference in education). All EU countries recognize each other's programs, however, Russia is not among them.

In all the basic documents of the Bologna Process the main vector of development of higher education programs, including programs of double and joint degrees, defined as "the harmonization of their architecture" (Bologna and Sorbonne Declaration) by all countries through three cycles of higher education (bachelor — master — doctors).

Basic requirements for the qualifications of the three cycles are formulated in the so-called Dublin descriptors and the European Qualifications Framework.

Knowledge on the first cycle characterized by novelty and innovation and includes a critical understanding of theories and principles, skills and innovation in addressing complex and unpredictable problems in a particular field of study.

Second cycle assumes presence of highly specialized knowledge, including the most advanced knowledge in the field of study; critical thinking about knowledge in this and related fields; ability to solve problems in the field of research; create new knowledge and integrate knowledge from different fields. As practice shows, on this cycle profiles observed a greater variety of programs than in the first cycle, as second cycle involves specialized knowledge and skills.

Third cycle assumes presence of the most advanced knowledge in the field of study and related areas; the most advanced specialized skills and techniques, including synthesis and evaluation, required to solve the fundamental problems in the field of research and of innovation, and the ability to reinterpret existing knowledge and practices in the professional field; demonstrate authority, innovation, autonomy, academic and professional integrity and commitment to the development of new ideas or processes.

When designing educational programs of all cycles, these general requirements are necessarily considered. Thus the basic requirement for the formation programs of all three cycles — the definition of learning outcomes, which is not only based on the opinion of the representatives

of the academic community, but also employers. Only in this case, program goals and objectives are reasonable and the program itself will meet the requirements for training programs with modern systems of quality assurance. Combine the two components — academic and professional, allowing more adequately determine and shape the content of educational programs.

In other words, program development does not begin with the establishment of the number of hours, and with the definition of the subject areas to be included in the program and are determined on the basis of learning outcomes.

Next we calculate credits as required by the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), which is used to ensure comparability of programs and the academic and labor mobility of citizens, as well as a real mechanism to measure the complexity of programs. Currently, adopted at the European level "cost" of one academic year is equal to 60 credit units. Credits are allocated to all educational components of a study program (such as modules, courses, placements, dissertation work, etc.) and reflect the quantity of work each component requires in relation to the total quantity of work necessary to complete a full year of study in the program considered.

Joint educational programs are formed on the same principles. As mentioned above, in most cases, such programs are implemented within the interuniversity agreements on the basis of jointly developed and implemented integrated curricula. The latter represent a collection of modules/courses offered by universities to students participating in joint program. In this part of the module should be mandatory in the development of the partner universities, and they are offset through the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

Joint programs based on the synergy of the unique experience of each University allow the development of programs aimed at forming particular groups of competencies that complement each other. In this case too narrow specialization of each partner also counterproductive, because it hinders the cooperation of teachers.

When planning and implementing programs of joint/double degree special focus should be on quality assurance in terms of its compliance with national procedures specific to each of the parties or with international organizations. One method is to assess the quality assurance of pro-

grams by internal or external experts (university professors, partners or representatives of the accrediting agencies). Integral part of the quality assurance system is the assessment of the program by teachers and students.

As one of the conclusions can be stated that the double degrees are usually awarded after a training program that meets all or at least most of the following characteristics:

- Programs are created and approved jointly by several institutions of higher education;

- Students from each university are part of the training in other universities;

- Study plans of participating universities are comparable in duration;

- Terms of training and passed exams at the partner universities are recognized fully and automatically;

- University teachers also participate in training in Partner University within a jointly developed curriculum and create a joint commission on enrollment and defense;

- After completing the full program, students receive diploma of each of the participating universities;

- Co-financing of the program should be also from the business side.

IV. CONCLUSION

With the development of globalization and internationalization of the economy and business, higher education faced new purpose — the training of professionals who can work effectively in a changing global market. Internationalization of education have different objectives, including diversification and growth of revenues through attracting foreign students to pay tuition; expansion of curricula and the training of their students in foreign partner universities; regional network of high school for the effective use of its resources; improve the quality of education and research through the participation of students and teachers in the international process of knowledge sharing, etc. The development of international interuniversity cooperation allows organizing joint research projects, exchange programs for students and teachers, special programs for foreign students.

For European universities one of the main priorities in the creation of programs with Russian university is entering new markets of edu-

cation, attracting new strong students, strengthening their positions and recognition of diplomas in the labor market in Russia, creating more favorable conditions for the teachers and researchers and strengthening the international competitiveness of the university.

For Russian universities one of the first priorities of creating programs with foreign universities, especially double degree programs is the ability of the international recognition of their diplomas, strengthening their academic potential through interaction with foreign universities, improving the quality and competitiveness, creating new conditions for the development of academic staff and student learning, strengthening competitiveness creating prerequisites for the export of educational services. Existing experience shows the effectiveness of the formation within the universities stipulated by double degree programs due to involving direct international cooperation in a wide range of students, teachers and administrators. Factors benefiting students' participation include mastering their future profession, getting rich socio-cultural experience, getting greater guarantees of future professional demand in Russia, Europe and the world.

For Russian HEI it is one of the main channels of entry into the network of the world's leading universities and regular cooperation with them to ensure real integration of Russian universities in the international area of higher education and at the same time their modernization.

As was shown in the work, creating a double degree program is a complicated process required coordination of many issues, but this is one of major tasks of the internationalization strategy of the universities, both in Russia and Italy.

For Russia and Italy the cooperation in the field of education is a strategic policy. In order to develop further co-operation, traditional ties between Russia and Italy should be broaden and deepen in the in the field of education, standardization and harmonization of curricula, teaching methods and development double degree programs. For that reasons language training in Russian universities should be strengthen, both among students and teachers, along with the strengthening the potential of establishing such cooperation.

To see the positive effects of this cooperation it is necessary to support cooperation at all

possible levels by State as well as by business stakeholders

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