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OPTIMIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL OFFICES ACTIVITY (ОПТИМИЗАЦИЯ РАБОТЫ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ СЛУЖБ)

Сравнительные исследования международных служб вузов России и некоторых Северных стран показали, что для развития международной деятельности российских образовательных учреждений в связи с выходом на международный рынок образовательных услуг требуется реорганизация и изменение подхода к структуре, функциям и кадрам международных служб с учетом международного опыта и специфики российской системы образования.

In the nearest future UNESCO tends to follow the so-called "university of perspective orientation" concept, that alongside with the other purposes supposes transformation of each higher education institute into institute, well oriented in the modern world, into institute that coordinates its activity with the rhythm of the modern life and with special peculiarities of each country and region [1]. While developing this thesis, the Worldwide Conference on Higher Education, held in October 5-9, 1998 in Paris [2], stressed attention on the necessity of introduction of a new policy into the sphere of education management. Practically, this policy is based on giving «an international character to the educational programs and scientific researchers". And here it is emphasized that "each higher education institute should aspire to establish a specialized office, concerned with the questions of assistance and management of international cooperation".

We made the comparative analysis of the International Offices (IOs) of 26 Russian Higher Education Institutions (RHEIs) i.e. the State Higher Education Institutes of St.-Petersburg, Moscow, Ivanovo and of 15 Foreign Higher Education Institutions (FHEIs), mainly - the universities of the some Northern countries. We took all the data from the results of questionnaires and from the Internet, and then we carefully studied the material and brought it to the average indices. The analysis has shown that the structure and organization of domestic and foreign IOs have both resemblance, and differences.

In RHEIs the organization of supporting of the international cooperation is carried out by two main subdivisions: Department for International Relations (DIR) and Department for Foreign Students Affairs (DFSA). A unified service (International Office) is responsible for this activity in FHEIs. We found out that in 31% of RHEIs DIR and DFSA has merged in a unified department. This fact excludes duplication of some functions, allows using the freed staff for other purposes and favors the better organization of IO. In 19% of RHEIs, which have recently entered the international market of educational services, originally DIR was responsible for duties of DFSA. In

some FHEIs the especially detached people of large faculties manage the international activity of these units, besides the IOs. Presently, such practice exists only in one of the inspected RHEIs.

The number of the employees in IOs of both RHEIs and FHEIs correlates with quantity of the students and scale of international cooperation; it makes from 3 up to 28 employees if number of the students is 1500 – 35000. However, the average quantity of the stuff of RHEI's IOs is higher, than of FHEIs; it makes 8,4 employees. For instance, FHEI's IOs has no interpreters, employees who are in charge of passport and visa control, of activity in a hostel and etc. Unlike RHEIs, the FHEI's IOs staff do not carry out different responsibilities. The staff of FHEI's IOs are mainly engaged in coordination and promotion of the concrete projects and programs, besides the employee is responsible, as a rule, for one project or a program. In IOs of the inspected RHEIs 25% of the established posts (including the heads of the departments) are teachers. It is connected with the fact, that in RHEI's services 45 % of the permanent employees – are not teachers, but nevertheless they know one foreign language at "comprehension level", whereas all persons of the staff know two - three foreign languages at the same level and one foreign language perfectly in FHEIs.

Engaging of the teachers does not allow increasing general proficiency of the employees of IOs, as the teachers, due to specificity of RHEIs, can not develop their knowledge in the international cooperation. In FHEI's IOs the heads of IO are the professional managers specialized in international cooperation development. In FHEIs a great attention is given to the improvement of professional skills of the permanent employees of IOs; it is promoted by sharp share of the responsibilities between the employees. For example, in Great Britain since December 1999 till July 2000, i.e. for nine months, they scheduled 14 national seminars and 12 international conferences for the different levels and professional orientation IO's staff.

Of course, also we have to pay attention to the difference between the equipment, hardware of RHEI's and FHEI's IOs. In FHEIs each person of IO has the separate telephone, a personal computer, with access to the Internet, has a personal e-mail address. There are no problems with printing, manifolding (Xeroxing) and interlacing of the prepared materials (documents, reports, advertising etc.). All FHEI's IOs have quite large libraries of publications, concerning to the developing directions of international activity, gathered from all over the world.

Additionally we investigated the effectiveness of IOs by comparing the totals of activity of 15 Saint Petersburg RHEIs and of 15 Northern countries HEIs in 1999. The analysis of the RHEIs questionnaires and data, taken on sites of FHEIs, has shown, that:

- Quantity of the international educational and scientific projects and programs, where FHEIs participated, is more at least in 7 times, than number of the projects and programs carried out by

RHEIs;

- Quantity of the foreign universities - partners of FHEIs is more, than those of RHEIs in 5 times;
- Quantity of the national students of FHEIs, studying for the short- or long-term programs in other countries exceeds quantity of the Russian students of RHEIs, learning abroad, in 14 times;
- Quantity of the foreign students taking various courses at FHEIs exceeds in 2.5 times the same parameter of RHEIs, located in St. Petersburg.

Of course, rather low international activity parameters of RHEIs are connected with many factors: with the political and economical situations in country, with lack of experience of working in the international educational services market according to the international programs and projects. Nevertheless, the factor of IOs quality work also plays a great role. The tendency of transition to professional work in the international cooperation sphere is obvious: in 55% of inspected RHEIs they reorganized management of international cooperation at a level of the pro-rectors for international relations, DFSA still exists only in 26% of the St. Petersburg HEIs, already 32% of the employees - not teachers in RHEI's IOs have basic humanitarian, and 15% - economical education, though it is not connected with their international activity.

Our research demonstrate, that due to changes in the RHEIs management system and policy regarding to the development of international cooperation it is required to change the approach to structure, staff and functions of IOs taking into consideration the international experience and specificity of the Russian educational system.

ЛИТЕРАТУРА:

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