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ИНТЕРНАЛИЗАЦИЯ СИСТЕМЫ ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ: КЕЙС АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОЙ ГРУППЫ

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается процесс интернационализации высшего образования, его значимость в современном мире, стратегии, вызовы и результаты. Основное внимание уделяется культурным барьерам, с которыми сталкиваются студенты в мультикультурной среде, и способам их преодоления. Авторы анализируют языковые, культурные и психологические барьеры, возникающие при межкультурном общении. В частности, обсуждается проблема неравных условий обучения для студентов разных этнических групп, в том числе изучается то, как размер социальной группы людей может повлиять на опыт обучения в кросс-культурной среде. Приведены примеры преимуществ и недостатков межкультурной коммуникации в академической среде. Путём использования описательных диаграмм, на примере конкретной академической группы рассматривается соотношение студентов из разных стран и их влияние на процесс интеграции, владение способностью выражать мысли и поддерживать общение на том или ином языке. Предлагается ряд мер для преодоления культурных и языковых барьеров, включая организацию занятий по межкультурной коммуникации для всех студентов и усиление языковой подготовки иностранных студентов. Авторы делают вывод о значимости процессов интернационализации для повышения качества образования и подготовки студентов к жизни в современном глобальном мире. Авторы подчёркивают, что интернационализация образования способствует развитию межкультурного понимания и сотрудничества, обогащая образовательный опыт студентов и способствуя формированию более инклюзивного и инновационного общества.

Ключевые слова: высшее образование, интернационализация высшего образования, межкультурная среда, тематическое исследование.

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INTERNALIZATION OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM: CASE OF THE ACADEMIC GROUP

Abstract. The article deals with the process of internationalization of higher education, its significance in the modern world, strategies, challenges and results of development. The main focus is on the cultural barriers that students face in a multicultural environment and ways to overcome them. The authors analyze the linguistic, cultural and psychological barriers that arise in cross-cultural communication. In particular, the problem of unequal learning conditions for students of different ethnic groups is discussed, including the study of how the size of a social group of people can affect the learning experience in a cross-cultural environment. Examples of advantages and disadvantages of studying with representatives of different cultures are given. By using descriptive diagrams, the ratio of students from different countries and their influence on the integration process, the ability to express thoughts and maintain communication in a particular language is considered on the example of a specific academic group. A number of measures are proposed to overcome cultural and language barriers, including the organization of intercultural communication classes for all students and strengthening the language training of foreign students for the main study period. The authors conclude that internationalization processes are important for improving the quality of education and preparing students for life in today's global world. The authors emphasize that the internationalization of education promotes intercultural understanding and cooperation, enriching students' educational experience and contributing to a more inclusive and innovative society.

Keywords: higher education, internationalization of higher education, cross-cultural environment, case study.

Introduction

The internationalization of higher education has become a cornerstone of modern academia, driven by the forces of globalization and the need for cross-cultural collaboration. As universities worldwide strive to prepare students for an interconnected world, they are increasingly integrating international perspectives into curricula, fostering global partnerships, and promoting student and

faculty mobility. In addition, university graduates enjoy a certain prestige and recognition globally [1-2]. This article explores the significance, strategies, challenges, and outcomes of internationalization in higher education.

Internationalization of higher education is the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and teaching staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society [3].

Being a part of the internalization process of higher education means that a person can be either a student in their own country or a student who studies abroad as an exchange program student or an international student. This is called internalization “at-home” and “cross-boarder” [3-4]. In either case students gain equally valuable experience, yet such exposure to intercultural academic environment has both strengths and weaknesses.

In literature, the authors identify the following sources of cultural barriers [5]:

- language (semantic);
- cultural norms and values;
- stereotypes;
- values and beliefs;
- body language and gestures.

It should be noted that in cross-cultural academic environment, there can arise the problem of unequal learning conditions for students from different ethnic backgrounds. This may depend on the personal predispositions of the teacher or the unsuitable conditions provided by the university. Both options are unacceptable, but they are still traced in the practice of intercultural education.

While challenges such as cultural barriers, resource constraints, and equity issues persist, the benefits – ranging from academic excellence to economic growth – far outweigh the obstacles.

Foreign young people from all over the world are becoming interested in obtaining a foreign diploma and Russia is more than just welcome to enrol them. Every young man that is going to be a part of Ural State University of Economics should be prepared to study in cross-cultural environment. The curriculum involves studying in academic groups with a certain number of foreigners. As an example of internalization of the higher education system, we will consider the case of the academic group majoring in International Management (USUE). This case will be considered from the perspective of a Russian student.

Case: Academic group majoring in International Management

Major International Management is already considered to have bigger number of foreigners than others, but in the 2022 year of admission, the foreign student enrolment turned out to be above average. Currently, at the end of term 6 there are only four Russians out of 18 students and the situation feels different. Let us look closer and consider the case step by step.

On the one hand, there are some advantages in such multinational student environment. Most of the students have a desire to learn other cultures: their values, unique habits, traditional and modern aspects of life. It is also interesting to be a part of a community where every human being thinks and acts differently not only because of their own opinion, but because of their cultural mindset and features too.

On the other hand, there are still disadvantages in this situation. To understand them deeper, let us look at the national composition of this academic group below (Figure 1).

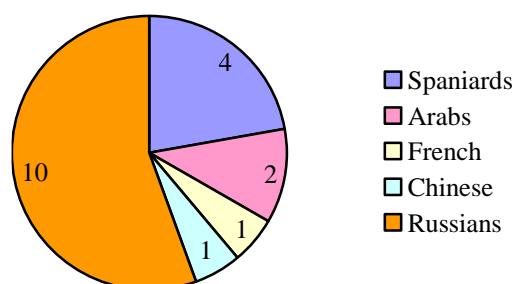


Figure 1. Academic group composition (number of persons)

As you can see, that there are five ethnic groups, which include dramatically different cultures, 50% of the total being Chinese students. On the one hand, small-sized ethnic groups such as Spanish speaking or Arabic speaking students are experiencing the process of cultural integration as individuals who are joined into a larger community. This factor provokes a tension between the rights for independence, self-expression, and the duty to conform to certain norms, meet certain standards, so that people generally behave in line with social norms, ideas about correct behaviour in particular contexts [5-6]. In contrast, the group of Chinese students outnumbers all the other groups combined so they continue to live in their own comfortable environment, where there is no need to try to join a very new community. In this case, Russian students rather than international students face a challenge to get integrated into a bigger group. In the Russian reality, this ratio is unusual and turns the process of integration 180 degrees [7-8].

When establishing contact during cultural integration, it is necessary to overcome communication barriers. The academic group under consideration turned out to run into some communicational barriers: perceptual, psychological and language.

Perceptual and psychological barriers. All student are dramatically different from each other culturally. They perceive the world based on their experiences, beliefs, and values, which is likely to lead to different interpretations of the same message. Misunderstanding can arise due the fact that in some cultures direct communication is appreciated, while in others, indirect or subtle communication is preferred [7; 9-12]. These barriers are tightly intertwined with the concept of high-context and low-context cultures, coined by anthropologist Edward Hall. For the first time these concepts were discussed in the book “Beyond Culture”, published in 1976 [13].

The situation is getting even more complicated when it comes to the language barrier issues [14]. Figure 2 illustrates the language proficiency of students in the Group.

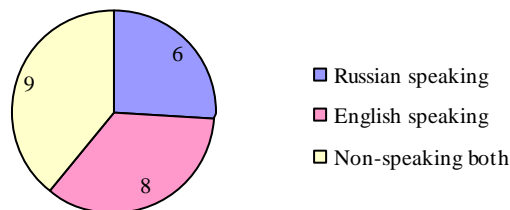


Figure 2. Language proficiency (number of persons)

This diagram chart shows that 6 out of 18 students can speak Russian fluently, 8 out of 18 can speak English and Russian, and 9 out of 18 students can speak neither Russian nor English. As you can see, less than half students can establish communication on their own and continue to have a conversation without using translation devices. A solution of using online translators comes to help but a process of communication lasts up to several minutes because conversation participants lose interest in such difficult and long way of communication so it is not a way out of the such a situation.

Such communication obstacles make adverse impact on academic performance and overall work of the educational team (teaching staff, department specialists, other university staff). Students, like lecturers, experience unusual and difficult cases that result in a negative attitude to international students and the Group in general. However, it is important to remember that by integrating international perspectives, fostering cross-cultural understanding, and promoting global collaboration, institutions prepare students to thrive in an interconnected society [15].

Conclusion

In conclusion, the process of internalization of higher education is a transformative process that enhances the quality and relevance of education in a globalized world. To solve the problems of perceptual and psychological barriers, there must be taken proactive measures to avoid the situations in which the number of foreign students exceeds the number of Russian students in the

academic group. In addition, the university authorities should consider arranging classes on intercultural communication for both international and Russian students during the first term of studies. To overcome the language barrier, it is necessary to enhance the effectiveness of Russian language training for international students and increase the number of classes per week. Given these measures are implemented, embracing internationalization by Russian universities will not only enrich the students' educational experience but also contribute considerably to building a more inclusive, innovative, and globally competent future.

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