THE CONCEPT OF “HOME” INTERNATIONALIZATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: EXPERIENCE OF SOUTH URAL STATE UNIVERSITY

Y. Seryapina

South Ural State University (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)

Abstract

With the development of the processes of globalization and the internationalization of the economy and business, a new goal has arisen before higher education: the training of professional staff that is able to work effectively in the changed conditions of the global market. The Rector of South Ural State University (Chelyabinsk, Russia) A. Shestakov understands clearly that Russian graduates should be competitive. Moreover, Russian universities should be competitive as well. As a result, South Ural State University (SUSU) suggests using the multicultural environment of the university itself as a source of internal internationalization. Besides, in 2015 SUSU took part in the Project 5-100 which deals with the creation of a modern effective structure of the university, corresponding to world standards and leading scientific practices.

The author gives the overview of the changes connected with methods of teaching, publication activity, foreign students, teachers' mobility, curricular, system of bilingual education in South Ural State University. The author compares SUSU of the 2014 and SUSU of the 2016 to analyze how the Project 5-100 and internal internationalization influence the way the university works.

The present study applies traditional research methods of observation, comparing and data analysis. With the help of these methods the author reveals strong and weak points of the internal internationalization in the South Ural State University, tries to find the roots of the problems and suggests the possible ways to solve them. Speaking about strengths the author considers increasing number of publications in international journals, involvement of students in the process of changes and desire to take part in new projects, readiness of teachers to change their methods of teaching and implement the most successful world experience, growing number of foreign students who are eager to study at SUSU to get Master's degree or to be involved in Postgraduate education. On the other hand, not all students and teachers understand clearly what internalization is, the level of the English language is not always sufficient to work in monolingual English environment and it is difficult for some students and teachers to work in rapidly changing situation.

The author assumes that South Ural State University is developing much faster than other big universities of Chelyabinsk due to the internationalization and that the speed of development will grow because of the advantages that internationalization gives to the university. Moreover, purposeful improvement of the work allows SUSU to provide the region with small innovative enterprises, modern engineering solutions and highly qualified specialists.

Keywords: higher education, internationalization, Russia.

1 INTRODUCTION

Internationalization plays a significant role in our modern world as it deals with main spheres of life: politics, economics and higher education. In the context of the global internationalization of higher education the majority of Russian universities are integrating into international scientific and educational communities and expanding contacts with other universities of the world. Millions of people travel to various countries of the world every year due to the programs of youth and academic exchange, scientific internships, conferences, studies. This contributes not only to the development of cultural and economic ties between countries but also to the overall scientific-technical progress of mankind, raising the level of world civilization.

For nearly 30 years the term internationalization has been discussed and many scholars have been trying to define it. The term “internationalization” came to the educational sector from political science and gained its popularity in the early 80s. Prior to this, the term “international education” was used and is still popular in some countries. Different scholars used different approaches to define the term “internationalization” that is why I can find various definitions by such famous scientists in this field as J. Knight, P. Altbach, H. de Wit, U. Teichler, P. Scott, B.M. Kehm. In this paper I will not discuss all the
definitions but I will stick to the latest and the broadest one given by J. Knight who proposed that “internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education”. [1]

Internationalization at the institutional level deals with two different streams of activities. The first one occurs on the home campus and the other stream relates to those activities that happen abroad or, in other words, across borders. The term internationalization at home has been developed to bring attention to those aspects of internationalization which would happen on a home campus, namely, the intercultural and international dimension in the teaching learning process, the extracurricular activities, and the relationships with local cultural and ethnic community groups. [2]

The concept of internationalization at home appeared due to the fact that not every student has the opportunity to study abroad, and, therefore, a new goal was born: to internationalize the education of the vast majority of higher education students who would not leave their home country. Internationalization at home seeks to link international and intercultural aspects in promoting broad-mindedness and understanding and respect for other people and their cultures.

One of the most difficult challenges within internationalization is the social interaction and dialogue among students themselves (for example, domestic students with international students on campus) and their surroundings (for example, international students with local community and domestic students with local communities of different cultural background). In spite of many efforts on campuses by staff and students, bringing international and domestic students together remains very difficult. [3]

As modern economy is developing rapidly nowadays one of the most important tasks of universities is to prepare graduates to work in a global competitive environment and in international teams, to live in multinational and multireligious communities and in conditions of tolerance, professional mobility and migration of labor resources. That means that the most important task of universities now is to internationalize the majority of their own students and professors. And it imposes new serious demands on internationalization of practically all aspects of university life.

South Ural State University (SUSU) was founded in 1943 as Mechanical Engineering Institute with only two faculties. Now it is a large university with a modern and efficient structure with 3 schools and 7 institutes inside, a scientific and educational center not only of the South Ural region but also of the country. In April 2010, SUSU became one of 15 universities in Russia, which were awarded the status of “National Research University”. Since that time new goals and challenges have appeared: to get SUSU rating up, to pay special attention to globalization and market relations in the sphere of intellectual services. In October 2015 South Ural State University was selected to participate in Project 5-100. There are 21 Russian universities in this Project and the aim of it is the maximization of the competitive position of a group of leading Russian universities on the global market for educational services and research programs. The strategic goal of SUSU in the Project 5-100 is to form a research and entrepreneurial University of the world level aimed at achieving a position as a global leader in supercomputing field, engineering, natural Sciences and Human Sciences. [4]

For more than 6 years SUSU has been involved in the process of globalization and internationalization. The aim of this paper is to analyze the results that have already been reached due to the “home” internationalization.

2 METHODOLOGY

To analyze the results that SUSU has reached due to internationalization and internalization at home in particular and to reveal strong and weak points of internal internationalization desk research was applied as well as the traditional methods of observation, comparing and data analysis.

I employed desk research as I needed to study and analyze a number of SUSU documents, to allocate those that are connected with international activity of the university and internationalization itself, development plans. Then to understand the whole university situation and to find out its place on the international educational market I applied comparing and data analysis. Qualitative analysis was used to study documents and quantitative analysis was utilized to evaluate the performance of SUSU under the program of internationalization (the number of foreign students, the number of internships and international programs and the number of students and teachers that take part in them, the publication activity). General-logical methods of deduction and induction were also used in this paper.
3 RESULTS

Internationalization of higher education started in Russia much later than in Europe or the USA as a consequence the best variant for Russian universities appears to follow the “home” internalization stream. First of all, such choice is made due to the fact that it is a great opportunity to use international experience in Russian universities which are supposed to have long history and their own scientific schools. Unfortunately, an old-fashioned way to rule universities, absence of foreign teachers, falling academic reputation and low ratings at the end of the 20th century led to the fact that Russian education started to lose its attractiveness for foreigners and slowed the pace of development. The second thing is connected with the fact that having international experience for students gives them more opportunities to get better job. Consequently, if the university has capabilities to give the chance to students to study abroad for a semester or two then it has more advantages over other universities and is more attractive for applicants. Thirdly, interaction with foreign scientists and common projects can help develop Russian scientific schools.

A more detailed look at internationalization “at home” includes a diversity of activities such as the following: Students’ and teachers’ mobility, international projects, curriculum and programs, teaching/learning processes, research and scholarly activity.

3.1 Curriculum and programs

Talking about curriculum and programs in connection with internationalization J.Knight means that there should appear new programs with international themes; international, cultural, global, or comparative dimensions should be infused into existing courses; foreign language should be studied more intensively and joint or double degrees should be introduced.

Any curricular or a program is a link between a student and a university. The introduction of changes in any university program is not an easy task. On the one hand, universities realize the necessity to meet the demands of the society to get update knowledge so they strive to improve their educational programs, offer the most advanced fields of knowledge. On the other hand, traditions are still highly valued in education and some universities are proud of having successful programs with long history. The older the university is the more people trust it. In such situation it is extremely important to find the balance: to preserve the best but at the same time to follow the changes and the requests of the market. This is the thing SUSU has been doing; being the university with highly valued technical faculties and fundamental research laboratories it has never stopped its development. In 2011 SUSU as a result of “Bologna process” changed its system of higher education to a two-tier system with bachelor’s and master’s degrees. In 2015 SUSU took part in 5-100 project that proves the idea of Rector’s ongoing commitment to make SUSU more prestigious.

Speaking about curricular and programs I should note the results that the university has achieved in this field. Together with a number of international partner universities, SUSU Institute for International Education offers a wide range of double-degree programs.

In 2010 South Ural State University and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (KazNU) (Kazakhstan) signed the papers that confirm that after successful completion of the program the student receives two diplomas (American and Kazakh).

In 2012 the cooperation between South Ural State University and Lappeenranta University of Technology started. Students can get Master’s degree in the field of economics; technical mathematics and physics; sustainable corporate development; chemical technology, and industrial electronics.

Since 2014 SUSU Institute for International Education has been partnering with Clark University to offer its students Russian-American Master’s degrees. Clark University sets high standards of teaching. The double-degree program starts at SUSU Institute for International Education and finishes at Clark University. The study period at Clark University can last for one or two semesters and the graduates receive two diplomas (South Ural State University and Clark University). [4]

In recent years programs with international themes or a strong international component have gained great popularity all over the world and Russia is not an exception. I must pay special attention to the development of the programs. Several years ago new competencies that students should acquire appeared in SUSU programs. First of all, they should be able to communicate in oral and written forms in Russian and foreign languages to solve problems connected with personal and intercultural
interaction. Secondly, ability to work in a team and tolerant attitude to social, ethnic, confessional and cultural differences are developed.

Moreover, due to 5-100 Project students have opportunity to get excellent linguistic training that is they learn the English language all 4 years of studying at SUSU instead of 2 years that was traditionally in Russian curricular. Since 2015 students have had 2-3 lessons a week and at the end of the training the most hard-working and talented students will be given the chance to take international exams such as IELTS that are financed by SUSU and it opens great opportunities for their future career.

3.2 Students’ mobility and internationalization at home

The most famous form of internationalization of higher education is mobility of students that is the opportunity for a certain number of students to study abroad. SUSU has a number of the agreements with overseas universities, and some of them are meant specifically to facilitate student exchange while others include exchange as part of a wider Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The students of SUSU Academic Mobility Programs study at both universities according to the joint curriculum which means that any academic credit earned at the host university shall be transferred to the home university in accordance with procedures determined by the latter. Currently SUSU offers approximately 15 academic mobility (single semester abroad) programs and I would like to give several examples.

Since 2012 joint non-degree programs have been offered by the agreement between Zhejian Ocean University (China) and South Ural State University (Russia). SUSU provides opportunities for undergraduate students of all disciplines. Chinese students have the opportunity to study on such programs as Linguistics, Environmental Engineering, Architecture and Construction, Civil Engineering, Mechatronics and Robotics, Power Engineering, Finance and Banking, Economics and Accounting, Management, Mechanical Engineering. This is also the case with Russians who are eager to visit Zhejian Ocean University. Nominees for each discipline are selected on the basis of available places, academic achievements and the applicant’s suitability for the program offered at the Host university. The Director of the appropriate School/Institute has the right to approve or decline the student’s nomination.

Another agreement was signed between Heihe University (China) and South Ural State University. Heihe is located close to the RF-China border and runs one of the most popular Chinese language programs. The program is a must for SUSU undergraduate students enrolled on Asian Studies who take 9 of their disciplines in China (including conversational Modern Chinese Classes, tai chi, Chinese culture, economy and politics, Chinese art and calligraphy). Annually about 20 students are able to experience the culture and improve their language skills that is a great advantage for their future career. SUSU, for its part, welcomes 20-30 Chinese students from Heihe University to learn Russian.

Dalian University of Foreign Languages (China) is one of new SUSU student exchange partners. The program is for undergraduate students whose level of knowledge of the Chinese language is high enough to communicate and understand academic Chinese easily as classes are taught in Chinese and lectures are not adapted for foreigners. It is a challenging environment for Russian students, on the one hand, but on the other, it allows students to improve their Chinese proficiency and to enjoy the feeling that they have just achieved everything they set out to do.

Harbin Institute of Technology is one of 6 national key universities in China and a long-term strategic partner of SUSU. It has been providing graduate education programs for SUSU students for 5 years.

In 2016 the University started new undergraduate education programs with Huazhong University of Science and Technology (China), in Architecture, Urban Design and Landscape Architecture; in Civil and Environmental Engineering, Architectural Design and L.N. Gumilev Eurasian National University (in Journalism, TV/Radio Broadcasting).

SUSU also joined Erasmus+ program which supports education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Then students have the opportunity to get international grants to study abroad. Finally, one more chance for students are Programs with SCO universities. Today SUSU cooperates with the universities of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. [4]

It should be noted that with all the support of mobility programs by regional organizations. With all the commitment of the universities themselves, it is impossible to send 100% of students abroad. And here I should mention “internationalization at home” which is the form of internationalization that makes the results of international interuniversity cooperation accessible to all students without
exception. SUSU tries to implement this concept in 2 ways. First of all, there are several programs in English such as Bachelor’s Programs: Mechanical and Automation Engineering, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering, Chemical Technology, Economics and Finance, Economics, Financial Management, Finance and Loan, Merchandising, Food Technology, Animal-Source Products, Linguistics and Masters Programs: Data Mining, Economics, Philology. Secondly, I should point out that today over 2000 foreigners (that is 9% of all SUSU students) from 37 countries of the world (the majority of which are so called “the near abroad”) study at SUSU in various specializations and areas. This number is twice more than in 2014 when there were 950 foreign students. Taking into consideration that in 2011 only 50 first foreign students came to SUSU to get a degree we can see that Russian education and education at SUSU in particular is gaining its popularity. Thanks to foreigners in SUSU Russian students can get experience of international communication and, moreover, take part in celebrations of their national holidays that is a wonderful opportunity for cultural exchange. [4]

3.3 Teachers’ mobility and publication activity

The next activity that is closely connected with home internationalization according to J.Knight is the movement of professors/scholars and experts for purposes of teaching and research, technical assistance and consulting, sabbaticals and professional development.

Academic mobility of teachers and administrative personnel of university has great importance in the Bologna Process and it has become the world standard. In recent decades academic mobility is recognized as one of the most effective tools for improving the quality of education. Modernization of higher education in Russia can be considered as an element of some global international project in which academic mobility is a priority task of synchronizing higher education in Russia, Europe and the world. Internationalization of education is the process of introducing an international dimension to the functions of an educational institution such as: teaching, researching and providing services.

Teachers mobility at SUSU is closely connected with grants and participation in international exchange programs such as ERASMUS+, TEMPUS and Fulbright. For the teaching staff it means the possibility of carrying out research and teaching activities as well as internships and the exchange of professional experience in different countries participating in the Bologna Process. Now I will speak about each program in detail. First, Fulbright is the program which aims to improve interaction between Russia and the USA. SUSU staff takes part in this program each year as it gives opportunities to study in the USA, to do scientific research, to give lectures or to intern. ERASMUS+ is the second program that SUSU teachers and students participate in. Cooperation within the framework of the ERASMUS+ project assists partner countries in the development and improvement of postgraduate educational programs and scientific research. The basis of the interaction is Software Engineering Body of Knowledge (SWEBOK). This project helps partner universities exchange experience in the areas of research and educational activities in software engineering including such areas as cloud technologies, problem-oriented learning methods, mathematical methods in software engineering, methods of information protection, etc. The last project under this program is School “Mathematical and Computational Fundamentals of Software Engineering” conducted by SUSU in conjunction with Ural Federal University in May 2017. Teachers of SUSU (Russia), UrFu (Russia), the University of Central Lancashire (Great Britain) and the University of Luxembourg will share their experience in the field of software engineering, modern technologies for storing and processing data and intellectual data analysis. It is worth noting that a series of lectures will be given by Professor Frank Leprevo (the University of Luxembourg) who is an expert in information security. His lectures are devoted to methods of cryptography and information protection. Thirdly, TEMPUS is another international program that SUSU takes part in and it is the program of the European Union aimed at promoting the development of higher education systems in partner countries. Under this program SUSU managed to get a grant for training specialists for IT industry. The peculiarity and advantage of this program is that it is implemented not by one university but by a group of higher educational institutions. For example, the coordinator in Russia is Saratov State Technical University. In addition to this university and SUSU this program is executed by four other Russian universities and five universities in Kazakhstan. These universities can exchange educational programs and work experience which is important for improving the effectiveness of training. [4]

Speaking about research and scientific work at SUSU it is important to not publication activity which is steadily growing. Publications in foreign journals is a significant issue in the scientific activity of the teaching staff which greatly affects the overall rating of the university. To increase the number of such publications departments and library are engaged in searching for information on such opportunities
and then give their findings to the teaching staff. To stimulate the publication activity extra points are given to the teachers to get their own rating up. It is important to note that there are certain requirements to the journal where teachers can place article, for example, the impact factor of the journal, placement in international databases, such as SCOPUS, etc. When I compared the publication activity in 2014 and 2016 I saw that it doubled in SCOPUS (237 in 2014 and 488 in 2016) and tripled in Web of Science (108 in 2014 and 308 in 2016). These numbers show that thanks to 5-100 project (started in 2015) that ensure financial support from the government SUSU researches and teaching staff took the opportunity for scientific activity, publishing the results in international journals and taking part in conferences to share their experience. On the other hand, the number of publications in RISC fell from 5334 in 2014 to 4810 in 2016. The thing is that more and more teachers and researches would like to enter the world market and to show the results of their work in international journals to get more readers and scientific links. [4]

4 CONCLUSIONS

The global trends in the internationalization of higher education have had a significant impact on the Russian system of education. The international cooperation has become closer and it helps SUSU to enter the world-market. The SUSU Rector set the goal to improve the international ranking of the university and for this SUSU must meet a number of requirements: to strengthen the publication activity, to publish articles in journals belonging to such databases as SCOPUS, Web of Science, to implement programs accredited by international organizations, to open joint-training programs with foreign university-partners, etc.

In order to determine how much the university is involved in internationalization I analyzed curricula and programs, students’ and teachers’ mobility, number of foreign students, publication activity and system of bilingual education. The results that I have got are very promising and I suppose that SUSU has great potential to become recognizable university in the educational community. The curricula has been updated according to international best experience, new methods of teaching have been involved in the process of teaching such as distance learning, online activities, video conferencing, etc and new competencies have appeared, for instance, students must be able to communicate in foreign languages, to solve intercultural problems, to develop tolerant attitude to social, ethnic, confessional and cultural differences. Nowadays students have opportunity to study in English as SUSU has 10 programs that are taught in the English language and this number is expected to grow. The opportunities for students’ and teachers’ mobility are also at a high level. The number of students’ and teachers’ internships in 2016 was 150 and it is believed to rise. Foreign students play important role in internalization of the university as they help Russian students develop communication skills at the international level that becomes valuable experience at the time of globalization. In 2016 there were about 2000 foreign students and the rector hopes the rating of SUSU will rise and so will the number of foreigners. Publication activity has increased as teachers understand that it is a necessity to publish their works in international journals to get SUSU ranking up. In 2016 SUSU staff placed about 500 papers in SCOPUS and about 300 in Web of Science. Such results show that SUSU staff realizes the advantages of internationalization and helps the university to become well-known in the educational world. Thanks to such hard work South Ural State University takes the following place in the world ratings: QS EECA and QS BRICS 151-200, INTERFAX 38, Expert RA 57 and Rank Pro 573. [4]

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