

SUPPORT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AS A WAY TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THEIR EDUCATION

MARINENKO OLGA

*The Belarusian Russian University,
Republic of Belarus/ Russian Federation*

Abstract: This article updates the importance of providing assistance and support to international students during their education abroad. Specific supporting procedures as to peer-programs with volunteering students, mentorship, and teaching adaptation course specially developed for international students are presented. The effectiveness of the provided support is considered as a way to improve the quality of educational services.

Keywords: international students, supportive services, advising teacher, mentorship, adaptation course

ПОДДЕРЖКА ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ КАК СПОСОБ ПОВЫШЕНИЯ КАЧЕСТВА ИХ ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

МАРИНЕНКО О. П.

*Белорусско-Российский университет,
Республика Беларусь /Российская Федерация*

Аннотация: В данной статье актуализируется значение оказания помощи и поддержки иностранным студентам во время их обучения за рубежом. Представлены конкретные поддерживающие процедуры: организация программ сопровождения студентами-волонтерами, кураторство, преподавание специально разработанного адаптационного курса и пр. Показана эффективность оказываемой поддержки для повышения качества образовательных услуг.

Ключевые слова: иностранные студенты, поддерживающие процедуры, кураторство, сопровождение, адаптационный курс

In the last two decades, the process of world globalization has become especially noticeable and the number of international students has been increasing worldwide. This trend has also affected the Republic of Belarus, where even in past years, complicated by the pandemic, the number of international students has been rising [1].

International education has a number of advantages for both parties: providers (educational institutions) and consumers of educational services

(overseas students). So, institutions have monetary feedback, enhance their ratings, develop potential cooperation with their graduates, and promote the social and cultural awareness of university population. International students, in their turn, get internationally approved diplomas, learn or improve the new language, enrich their cultural and social experiences, and make bonds with local students.

However, despite numerous advantages of studying abroad, international newcomers face various problems and challenges such as psychological and somatic disorders, academic and language difficulties exacerbated by social and cultural differences between their native countries and the host cultures. Respectively, the difficulties experienced by international students impose certain obligations on the host universities to develop special supportive activities.

Institutions with great international enrolments launch and promote programs to introduce newcomer students the university environments, make them familiar with administrative procedures, and increase academic achievement and language development to foster academic adjustments. In addition, it is considered important to observe newcomers' mental state and provide psychological, social and cultural support to these students [2].

The previous research has proved that targeted assistance provided for international students facilitates their adaptation and acculturation and significantly increases the effectiveness of education abroad [3]. Thus, the purpose of this article is to present the most effective procedures for international enrolment's support.

Firstly, special programs to pair newcomer international students with mentor students can be arranged to intensify interaction and help to manage adaptation problems of foreigners. Such activities called "peer-programs" are extremely popular in foreign universities and require the participation of volunteering students [4]. The similar programs were developed for international newcomers at the Belarusian Russian University where local students who could speak foreign languages participated in supporting activities. Particularly, these students were encouraged to show sojourners the university and the city, explain local rules, assist in learning Russian and spend leisure time together [3]. For international students who could not speak fluent English programs with senior international students were arranged, because these students had experience of studying abroad and could share it with newcomers.

To present international students the educational establishment, its academic resources, cultural differences of the new country and colloquial language, universities can develop and host a special "First Year Experience course". Such disciplines are timetabled for all students at most institutions in the USA, although a paucity of them is purposefully designed for international students [5].

In our practice, a special adaptation course has been developed and all first year international students were obliged to participate. During the classes, students got acquainted with university policies and procedures, developed efficient study skills, discovered campus resources, and interacted with faculty. The classes within

course were held weekly and included interactive activities, small group learning, project education, and guided tours.

The research recommends that each group of international students should be accompanied by specially trained teachers who provide specialized supportive services [3]. Such advising and counselling should be organized to track students' adjustment and manage problems. It covers not only academic guiding of international students but also caring about their personal needs and psychological problems. The advising teachers should initiate regular meetings with ward students, conduct group discussions and trainings on significant topics, as to public transport, shopping, local customs and traditions, etc.

Further, special workshops should be organized for teachers to present them difficulties of international education and motivate to support international students. At the Belarusian Russian university special classes were purposefully organized for teachers and staff in order to introduce supportive services and procedures and create a supportive learning environment.

Finally, international students should be actively involved in extracurricular activities: social evenings, trips, clubs and workshops that help them to get familiar with the new environment, improve language skills, make friends and gain new knowledge and experiences. The extracurricular activities should be a special responsibility of advising teachers who present newcomers various programs and organizations and encourage their participation in the events.

For several years we have been conducting experiments to compare the results of the adaptation of international students who received additional assistance and support with the students of the control groups. The experiments proved that different indicators of students' states (health and mental comfort, interactivity, adaptability) were of more optimal values in experimental groups [3].

Moreover, the learning outcomes of experiment participants were also more significant, which allowed us to recommend host universities to foster supportive services to international students. Such activities help overseas students better adjust to the learning environment and improve the quality of education abroad.

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