

FROM THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENT EXCHANGE PROGRAMS

*I.S. Marchik, V.A. Lukashenkova, 3rd year of studies
Scientific supervisor – O.A. Khmel
Polessky State University*

For many people, education abroad is still associated with thousands of dollars that is not true: when you study abroad, you can not only learn for free, but also get a scholarship. The foreign student exchange experience helps young people of all nationalities embrace challenges and discover new opportunities that will help them achieve more than they have ever thought possible.

A student exchange program generally can be defined as a program where students from university choose to study abroad in partner institutions. The terms 'student exchange' and 'study abroad' are often used interchangeably, however study abroad usually involves the students study full time and not in partnered institution like student going for exchange where they will be studying in the partner university of their home institution.

The term "exchanges" means that partnered institution exchanges their students but not necessarily the students have to find a counterpart from the other institution to exchange with. There are two types of student exchange program: international and national.

International student exchange and scholarship programs are effective ways of opening the doors to new education opportunities and can help build bridges of understanding among students from a diversity of countries. However, this potential is not exploited to the full.

Student exchange programs give such good opportunities as:

- Increasing awareness and adoption of alternative approaches to learning;
- Acquiring analytical and problem solving skills;
- Enhancing interest in global issues as well as broadening general knowledge;
- Enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem;
- Integrating into another family as well as developing life-long friendships and appreciating home and family;
- Developing independent opinions, making informed decisions and striving to attain fresh goals;
- Obtaining knowledge from another language and culture;
- Enhancing personal flexibility, encompassing an ability to reach compromise, focus and succeed through challenging times [4].

The European Union funds such programs in education as Leonardo da Vinci, Socrates, Learning Abroad, Ploteus Portal, Erasmus Mundus Program, EU/Third-Country Cooperation, Tempus (Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies), EUROPASS Training, European Schoolnet, Jean Monnet Project.

In the Republic of Belarus such programs as Erasmus Mundus and Tempus are implemented. Erasmus Mundus is a cooperation and mobility program in the field of higher education that aims at enhancing the quality of the European higher education and promoting dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through cooperation with Third-Countries. It contributes to the development of human resources and the international cooperation capacity of higher education institutions in Third Countries by increasing mobility between the EU and these countries.

Tempus supports the modernization of higher education and creates an area of co-operation in countries surrounding the EU. Established in 1990, the scheme now covers 27 countries in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, North Africa and the Middle East [2].

Erasmus Mundus and Tempus are being implemented in the frame of the Bologna process. In many ways, the Bologna process is a revolution in the field of the European higher education. Its beginning can be attributed to the mid-1970's, when the EU Council of Ministers adopted a resolution on the first program of cooperation in education. The Sorbonne Declaration was signed in 1998 by the ministers of four countries such as France, Germany, Britain and Italy. The decision to participate in a voluntary process of creating a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was issued a year later in Bologna by representatives of 29 countries. 19 June 1999, this date is the official start of the Bologna process. Today the process involves 47 participating countries. The Bologna process is opened to access of other countries.

Russia joined the Bologna Process in September 2003 at the Berlin meeting of European Ministers of Education. Bologna Declaration was signed in 2005 in Bergen by the Minister of Education of Ukraine. Belarus is developing a plan for accession of the Republic to the European Higher Education Area.

Bologna process - key standards of education for the European countries. The idea arose due to the integration process in Europe. The main goal of consolidation was the desire to increase the competitiveness of the European education in the world and enhance its impact in social transformation.

Bologna process is based on credit-module system, which fulfills two main functions. The first, the workload of students is clearly defined. The second, transition from one university to another is simplified. ECTS allows promote mobility and international recognition of periods of study abroad.

On the example of Ostroh Academy, credit-modular system provides:

- Modular structure of the educational program;
- Use of credits to assess the complexity;
- Use of rating evaluation systems of knowledge
- Student participation in shaping the individual curriculum;
- Increasing the share of self-learning in the educational process;
- Increasing the flexibility of educational programs [3].

Credit-modular system is based on two elements:

Credit - is a measure of the value of labor discipline. One credit unit - 36 hours.

A second component - module – is a part of an educational program or academic discipline, has a logical completeness in relation to the purposes and results of training and education [4].

Evaluation is carried out on the 100-point scale a work is assessed as excellent (91-100 points, as good (79-90 points), as satisfactory (61-75 points), as unsatisfactory (less than 60.99 points).

The final score is based on points received for the work at every practical session (about 30-60 points), for attending lectures (10 points), for individual work during the week (up to 15 points), and for the modules (20-60).

It should be noted that the educational year is divided into trimesters. One week self-training is given to students in the middle of each trimester, which means fulfilling individual and collective tasks that allows students to improve their skills of independent work with a large amount of information.

The institution of curators plays a big role in terms of credit-modular system in the organization of the learning process. Every student of the third year of studies is assigned to a student of the first year of studies. The role of the curator of the academic group is to create conditions that will help students find themselves and their place in student groups and in social life. Ostroh Academy is also involved in the process of student exchange with Poland and Canada, as a result of it, students improve their skills in the English and Polish languages, gain experience of interacting with people from other countries and learn their mentality.

Polesky State University is gradually acquiring experience in international student exchange. The program of exchange with the National University "Ostroh Academy" of Ukraine was implemented in 2010. Due to this program our University accepts experience in efficient organization of educational process based on the Bologna system. The Republic of Belarus is planning to join the Bologna Process in 2012, so this aspect is important for the university.

A student exchange program for students allows getting practical independence, self-confidence and greater self-awareness, and improving skills for building relationships with others. Students get experience in other languages, they understand other cultures and appreciate their own culture better. It helps to make a career choice. To summarize everything up, programs of student exchange develop lifelong learning skills and knowledge due to educational and cultural diversity.

Literature references

1. About Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 // European Commission [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://www.erasmus.eu.com>. - Date of access: 15.02.2011.
2. Tempus: modernising higher education in EU neighbours // European Commission [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes>. - Date of access: 15.02.2011.
3. Foreign Relations // Ostroh Academy National University [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://www.uosa.uar.net/en/information>. - Date of access: 15.02.2011.
4. Credit-modular system of education — what is it? // University Embankment [Electronic resource] / Access mode: <http://un.csu.ru>. - Date of access: 15.02.2011.