

International Cooperation in Education – the Foundation for Future Wellbeing

Joint Universities as a Tool for Promoting the National Interests of Russia and China

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At present, the opening of joint educational institutions is one of the leading educational trends. It allows states to improve the quality of national human resources and the national education system. Thus, it is particularly important for transition economies in the context of an innovative model of development.

Russia and China turned to this practice in 2010 after the launch of the SCO University, established by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Today joint educational institutions function not only multilaterally but also bilaterally. This article examines the Shenzhen MSU-BIT University, a joint Russian-Chinese university, as a tool to promote the national interests of the two countries.

The author presents the basic history of Russian-Chinese cooperation in education in the second half of the 20th century. She argues that the Cultural Revolution and period the subsequent of difficult relations between the two countries had a negative impact on educational ties. Russia lost 17 years in China's educational market, which was filled by other countries, primarily the United States.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Russian-Chinese humanitarian cooperation was positive. The author relates the increase in the volume of Russian-Chinese educational exchange to the success of several events, including the large-scale projects of the Year of Russia in China and the Year of China in Russia, the Year of Chinese Language in Russia and Russian Language in China, the opening of the Russian Cultural Centre and the Chinese Cultural Centre, Russian centres and cabinets of the "Russian World" in China, and Confucius Institutes and classes in Russia.

After analyzing the current situation, the author describes the new forms of cooperation, which include the opening of joint institutions. She assesses the interests and prospects of Russian and Chinese participation in the creation of the Shenzhen MSU-BIT University through the prism of national interests. Her methodology is based on the principles of integrated research and relies on sources, using problem-chronological and comparative methods, content analysis and event analysis.

The author also refers to similar projects between China and the United States, Australia and several European countries. She stresses that joint institutions contribute to the competitiveness of educational services of the participating countries, and also serve as an effective tool for promoting national culture,

¹ The editorial board received the article in January 2016.

language, values and lifestyles. The author demonstrates the advantages of this form of cooperation for Russia and China as a new mechanism of collective cooperation.

The author concludes that Russia is interested in establishing joint educational institutions with China primarily as an instrument of soft power that can increase the competitiveness of Russian education, not only in China but throughout Asia, and can promote the Russian language. For China, it is important to get access to Russian intellectual resources for its further socioeconomic development. She ends with a proposal for the creation of a Russian-Chinese university that could contribute to the successful implementation of this project.

Key words: Russia; China; joint university; internationalization of education; intellectual resources

For citation: Medianik E. (2017) Joint Universities as a Tool for Promoting the National Interests of Russia and China. *International Organisations Research Journal*, vol. 12, no 1, pp. 7–23 (in Russian and English). DOI: 10.17323/1996-7845-2017-01-7.

Introduction

For both Russia and China, education is a priority development area. There is a growing recognition that it is a key to increasing the total power of the countries and economic prosperity, and to improving living standards. An innovation economy cannot be formed without a modern education system, able to respond to new challenges and international standards.

The analysis of Russian and Chinese official documents, presented in this article, shows that a more active participation in internationalization processes is becoming an important component of the two countries' policy in the field of education. The import of foreign educational resources and the export of national educational services are key elements of internationalization. They enhance the international competitiveness of the national education system.

The analysis of the history of relations development in the field of education between the People's Republic of China and foreign countries in the aftermath of the "cultural revolution," and at the beginning of the policy of reform and opening up, allows us to conclude that our country has lost its leading position in the field of education cooperation, being left behind by Western countries and has a considerably decreased humanitarian presence in China. Previously, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the USSR had a great influence on the formation of a national education and training system in China. Studying the dynamics of China's relations with foreign partners reveals that China turned to the practice of creating joint educational programmes with foreign partners earlier than Russia [Huang Futao, 2006, p. 26–27]. In this context, Australia, the United States, Canada and several European countries (notably the United Kingdom and France) began actively developing various forms of joint cooperation with China in the field of higher education. Russia has also developed this area of interaction, but has significantly lagged behind other foreign states in the extent of cooperation.

The increase in the number of joint educational programmes contributed to establishing joint higher education institutions. Currently, there is one joint Russian-Chinese institute. Other joint universities are to be established, among which special attention should be paid to the joint project of Lomonosov MSU and the Beijing Institute of Technology's University in Shenzhen. It is also worth emphasizing that Russia and China are developing cooperation in the field of joint educational structures both on a bilateral and a multilateral basis. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization University (SCOU) operates successfully, and the BRICS Network University (BRICSU) is being prepared for a pilot launch. These universities are unique international projects that combine scientific and educational schools in different geopolitical spaces.

The article emphasizes that this form of interaction serves the national interests of both parties. The paper tries to define the interests of Russia and China in establishing the joint Shenzhen MSU-BIT University (China).

Development of Cooperation in the Field of Education between China and Russia in the Second Half of the 20th Century and Early 21st Century

Today, Russia and China are two dynamically developing states, and key players on the international scene. Currently, relations between the two countries are at their highest point of development in their history. Russia and China are building a comprehensive relationship based on an equal and confidential partnership and strategic cooperation [Kulikova, 2012, p. 210].

The history of Russian-Chinese cooperation in the field of education is long, and there have been both periods of successful and close cooperation, and periods of decline. It should be noted that until the cooling-off period in relations between the USSR and the PRC, the absolute leader in training the Chinese youth was the Soviet Union [Zhang Kaiyuan, Yu Zixia, 2013, p. 537]. During the period from 1951 to 1966, the total number of Chinese citizens seconded for training in Soviet educational institutions amounted to 11,221 [Ibid., p. 547–548]. At the onset of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (1966–1976) the PRC leadership stopped sending its citizens to study abroad, including to the USSR. Six years later, in 1972, China resumed contacts in the field of education with foreign partners. During the period from 1972 to 1976, 1,629 Chinese citizens were sent to higher educational institutions in 49 foreign countries. However, relations between the USSR and the PRC in the field of education recovered only in 1983 [Ibid., p. 622, 710, 713]. Unfortunately, it can be stated that Russia has been absent from the Chinese educational market for 17 years. The vacant niche was occupied by other countries, first and foremost by the United States. During the period from 1978 to 1984 the PRC leadership sent 26,800 students and scholars to study in foreign higher education institutions, and 12,022 of them were sent to study in the US. Subsequently, this trend continued – in 1987–1988, 25,100 Chinese students studied at US universities, accounting for 59.25% of the total number of Chinese students abroad [Zhang Kaiyuan, Yu Zixia, 2013, p. 681]. At the same time, cooperation in the field of education between China and other foreign countries strengthened. However, during the period from 1983 to 1991, only 2,475 Chinese citizens studied in the USSR [Ibid., p. 718].

In the 1990s the increase in education cooperation between China and Australia, the US, Japan, Canada, and several European countries continued. For example,

in 1995 almost 40,000 PRC citizens studied in Australia, 39,613 Chinese students in the US, 24,026 in Japan, 2,746 in England, and only 1,300 Chinese citizens in Russia [Ibid., p. 738, 687, 656, 637].

At the beginning of the new millennium there was a rapid increase in the number of Chinese citizens in Russian educational institutions: in 2000, there were 6,700 Chinese citizens studying in Russian educational institutions, whereas in 2011 the figure was 20,000 [Ibid., p. 807–808]. Such a positive dynamic was certainly due to the launch of a number of projects aimed at strengthening the humanitarian component of bilateral cooperation: the Year of Russia in China and the Year of China in Russia, Years of National Languages, the opening of a Russian Cultural Center and a Chinese Cultural Center, Russian centers and Cabinets of the “Russian World” in China, and Confucius Institutes and Classes in Russia, etc. [Kulikova, 2012, p. 215–423].

Today, about 25,000 Chinese citizens are studying in Russia, and 17,000 Russian citizens are studying in China. According to statistics from the Chinese Ministry of Education, Russia is now among the countries accounting for less than 3% of the total number of Chinese citizens traveling abroad to study in foreign universities. The most attractive for Chinese students from the viewpoint of learning abroad are the US (30% Chinese students of the total number of students going abroad to study choose this country), the United Kingdom (21%), Australia (13%), Canada (10%), Japan (5%), and France (4%).

Comparative Analysis of Chinese Cooperation with Russia and Western Countries in the Field of Creating Joint Programmes and Joint Educational Structures

Through its policy of reform and opening up, China has established relations in the field of education with more than 100 countries. Active development of inter-university relations has resulted in different forms of joint interaction. In the mid 1980s China first tried to create educational programmes in conjunction with foreign partners. The first steps towards the implementation of joint educational programmes, were made by China in partnership with the United States. In the mid 1980s at the People’s University and Fudan University, preparatory courses in economics and law were launched in conjunction with US universities. In 1988 one of the first Chinese joint programmes with foreign universities was arranged – the business administration programme (MBA) at Tianjin College of Finance and Economics (now Tianjin University of Finance and Economics) [Huang Futao, 2006, p. 26–27]. Russian universities have been implementing joint international educational projects since the beginning of the 1990s [Gorylev, Kamynina, 2015, p. 186]. The first joint Russian-Chinese edu-

cational programme was launched in 1995 [Zhang Chun, Liu Zhenyu, Yu Zixia, 2010, p. 309–310].

At present, China is implementing more than 2,000 educational projects in cooperation with foreign states: university exchanges, joint educational programmes that are primarily represented by joint and dual degree programmes, joint educational institutions, and so on. In this respect it should be noted that only about one in five students (110,000 people) of the total number of students (550,000) in the framework of joint Chinese educational projects with foreign countries choose to study abroad [Bingchen, 2015]. This suggests that to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of educational services, foreign states need to create joint programmes and educational institutions on the territory of the PRC.

According to the Higher Education Funding Council for England, Russia is currently in fifth place in the total number of joint educational programmes with China [Chan, 2015]. The leader is Australia, which has launched 413 such projects [Chui, 2014]. It is followed by the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada. The number of joint Chinese programmes with Australia and the United Kingdom is more than 2.5 times greater than with Russia. Russia lags behind in the number of joint post-graduate education programmes (master's, post-graduate and doctoral studies), and in the number of vocational training programmes. Nevertheless, Russia is in third place in the total number of undergraduate programmes [Chan, 2015].

At the same time, China is also not leading from the viewpoint of joint educational programmes in Russia. The largest number of joint projects are implemented with European Union countries and the United States. For example, Russian higher education institutions and European Union universities formally have 317 joint educational programmes [Burquel et al., 2014], and in 74 Russian universities there are about 239 double-degree programmes [Sinyatkin et al., 2010].

Establishing joint educational institutions is one of the most promising forms of cooperation. According to experts, the practice by universities from developed countries of creating branches in developing countries, which attract students primarily because of their “brand,” has become one of the characteristics of higher education internationalization and globalization [Carnoy et al., 2013, p. 18]. Besides, the creation of branches is not always initiated by the parent universities. It is often initiated by the host country's government or large organizations, which are willing to cover the financial costs [Bespalova, 2012, p. 7]. In this case the parent universities are mainly required to provide educational programmes and scientific developments. In addition, the host country is also interested in attracting the foreign university faculty.

At the same time, experts note that today there is no generally accepted definition of a foreign institution branch. R. Becker, Senior Researcher at Higher Education with-

out Borders Observatory, defines it as “an offshore higher education institution, whose operations are managed by the parent university or which is a joint venture partner,” after graduates receive diplomas of the foreign university [Burquel et al., 2014].

R. Becker notes that the number of foreign universities’ branches worldwide is constantly growing. During the period from 2006 to 2009 their number increased by 43% to 162 international campuses [Burquel et al., 2014]. Currently, there are more than 200 foreign university branches worldwide, and another 37 projects are under development [Healey, 2015]. The United States is leading the way, having opened 78 campuses of their universities worldwide. They are followed by universities from France (27 branches), the UK (25), and Australia (12) [Becker, 2016]. The largest host regions are the Middle East, East and South-East Asia [Healey, 2015].

It is important to note that not all states allow the establishment of foreign universities’ branches in their territory without the participation of local educational institutions. In the case of China, there are laws which only permit the creation of joint educational institutions in partnership with Chinese universities [Huang Futao, 2006, p. 26–27]. It is a protectionist measure which has been approved by the Chinese Government, giving it the right to control the joint educational structure and the right to access to foreign academic resources.

It should also be noted that the Chinese regulatory framework for joint educational institutions and programmes is much more detailed than the Russian one. Russia has no legal instrument dealing with the design and development of joint educational programmes and institutions, or a list of priority subjects for them [Ivanov, 2013, p. 34–35].

There are now seven universities and 40 institutions in China which have been established together with foreign partners [Yang Lan, 2015]. These are essentially joint Chinese educational institutions with the United States, Australia, and several European countries. It should be noted that five out of seven joint universities are located in the Yangtze River delta, a region with an open and flexible educational policy. In 2014, the Forum of Chinese Joint Universities’ Rectors was created with foreign partners. Since its creation, the Forum has become a platform to exchange experience and views regarding the further development of joint educational structures. Unfortunately, Russia does not participate in the work of this Forum [Yang Lan, 2015].

In this area of cooperation, Russia is currently represented by one operating joint university – the Russian-Chinese Institute based on Novosibirsk State University and Heilongjiang University. However, it is important to emphasize that the idea of establishing joint higher education institutions has been quite widely disseminated. Such an initiative was taken by Vladivostok State University of Economics and Service, and Changchun Guanghai University, under whose auspices an International Institute of

North-East Asia is to be established; and also by St. Petersburg State University and Renmin University (Beijing). In addition, in 2016 students will be enrolled for the first time to study at the Russian-Chinese Joint Arts Institute located in Weinan, Shaanxi Province. In April 2016, Urals Federal University and North China University of Water Resources and Hydroenergetics signed documents for establishment of a joint institute of engineering and technology. Special attention should be paid to the project of a joint Russian-Chinese university based on Lomonosov MSU and Beijing Institute of Technology (Shenzhen MSU-BIT University).

Joint MSU-BIT University in Shenzhen from the Perspective of Russian and Chinese National Interests

The first joint Russian-Chinese university (MSU-BIT University) to be established in Shenzhen, southern China (Guangdong Province) has good starting conditions. The project's key objective is to train in China, on the basis of the best Russian educational programmes, young highly skilled professionals who will be in demand not only in Russia and China, but all over the world [Sadovnichij, 2014].

It is noteworthy that it was decided to establish the university in Shenzhen, one of the most dynamically developing cities of China. At that time, one of the five Chinese special economic zones was created there. Shenzhen is now a large trade and economic center with developed industrial and social infrastructure. The city's population is rapidly growing – in 2000 it amounted to 7 million people, and in 2014 it surpassed 18 million. In addition, southern China has always been the most attractive region for foreign investors.

A number of foreign countries are also planning to create universities together with China on the territory of Shenzhen in the near future, namely the Universities of Berkeley and Rochester (US), and Melbourne and Queensland (Australia). Universities in Germany, the UK and Denmark are also preparing several similar projects. Should these plans be successful, Shenzhen may become the largest international university center.

For China the project is undoubtedly of great interest, as the whole learning process will take place on the basis of Lomonosov MSU's educational programmes and standards. The best Russian and foreign specialists will be attracted as professors, and graduates will receive two diplomas – one from Lomonosov MSU and one from the joint Russian-Chinese university [Sadovnichij, 2014]. It is important to note that graduates of Lomonosov MSU have always been highly regarded in China. The university has at all times been known for its natural science and engineering school, and these areas are of strategic interest for China in the context of forming an innovative eco-

onomy. In November 2012 at the 18th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party it was noted that China should become an innovative State through enhancing the contribution of science and technology to economic growth. It should be noted that despite high rates of economic growth, the level of education development in China lags behind the country's economic success [Agranovich et al., 2010, p. 92]. For further economic growth, the level of the population's educational attainment needs to be comparable to that of developed countries. The PRC leadership allocates huge funds for education and science from the state and regional budgets [Matjash, 2013].

It can be stated that today, fundamental science and research are underdeveloped in China, and the level of the country's own innovations is rather low [Gan'shin, 2012, p. 46–47]. According to experts, China lacks trained professionals in such areas as new and high technology [Afonas'eva, 2013, p. 71]. As indicated in the “State Plan Basic Provisions for Mid-Term and Long-Term Development of Science and Technology in 2006–2020,” China plans to increase the contribution of science and technology in the economy by more than by 60%, and decrease foreign technological dependence to 30%. For these purposes, according to the approved plan, China needs to pay greater attention to basic research, and to develop such advanced science areas as biotechnology, information technology, technology of new materials, and energy, marine, laser and space technology.

The PRC leadership understands that training world-class highly skilled experts in science and technology cannot be done only with the country's own resources, and that foreign experience and resources need to be attracted. This approach is reflected in the national “bringing in” (yinjinlai) strategy of the Chinese leadership. According to the “National Plan Basic Provisions for Mid-Term and Long-Term Human Resources Development (2010–2020),” an important role in improving the quality of human capital is played by training in internationalisation processes. Among the priority areas of cooperation with the outside world are joint projects in the field of training, including with the Russian Federation. They include joint educational institutions, associations of universities, joint graduate studies, academic and exchange programmes.

Russia still has powerful scientific and technological capacity in the field of fundamental and applied research. Russia has preserved its world-class scientific schools in natural sciences and engineering [Kamaltdinova, Kochetkov, 2011]. Accordingly, the creation of a joint university will allow Chinese citizens studying at one of the world's top engineering and natural-scientific schools, Lomonosov MSU. The priority training areas at the joint Russian-Chinese university that have already been declared, include “Information Technology and Applied Mathematics,” “Medicine,” and “Space Research.” These areas are of primary interest for the social and economic development of the People's Republic of China.

The project of a joint university meets Russian national interests, as it would enhance the prestige of Russian education, promote Russian language and culture (it is planned that one of the training areas will be “Russian Language and Literature”), and deepen Russian-Chinese humanitarian dialogue. It is worth noting that popularizing the Russian language in the world is one of the main goals of Russian policy in international cultural and humanitarian cooperation. The 2015 “Concept for State Support and Promotion of Russian Language Abroad” notes that the Russian language is one of the key “instruments for the promotion and implementation of Russian strategic foreign policy interests.” In addition, the “Basic Russian Policy Directions in the Field of International Cultural and Humanitarian Cooperation” stress the particular importance of cooperation with China for the dissemination of the Russian language and culture. Along with this, this document considers the increase in exports of Russian educational services to be a priority task, including through the establishment of joint educational institutions with foreign States and of branches of Russian universities abroad.

The project would allow Russia to increase the competitiveness of its education system within the global university community, and to strengthen its positions in the Chinese market of educational services, which is by far the largest supplier of international students in the world. The education model itself will greatly contribute to this, as recipients of educational services will not have to bear additional costs connected with moving to Russia, or to undergo a period of adaptation to the new conditions, and it will provide them with an opportunity to study in a foreign university in their own country. It should be noted that, according to experts, the main factors which prevent Chinese students coming to Russia are the harsh climate, relatively low-quality social infrastructure of universities, and crime on racial and inter-ethnic grounds [Ivanov, 2013, p. 14]. Besides, a university branch abroad is a new source of funding for the activities of the educational institution. It should be noted that the underfunding of education is the main obstacle to innovative development in Russia [Kamaltdinova, Kochetkov, 2011].

Another important point is that a joint university will be able to accept not only citizens of the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation, but also representatives of other States, including students from Central Asian countries. It will serve as an additional platform for strengthening Russian-Chinese humanitarian dialogue with the Central Asian region. Thus, Russia will be able to build a reputation as a country with a high-quality and modern education system, both in China and outside it. This will, in turn, promote a more positive image of Russia both in China and in the Asian region as a whole. It is also of special significance for China to promote the concept of the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB). This is because the full-fledged

operation of projects designed in its framework will require highly skilled professionals from SREB partner countries.

The experience of Western countries shows that creating branches of their universities together with China allows them not only to increase the attractiveness of their education systems in the Chinese market of educational services, but also to transmit to a Chinese audience their culture, language, values and lifestyle. In its turn, it surely contributes to the “Westernization” and “Americanization” processes in Chinese society. These projects also allow Western countries to attract talented young Chinese people for further work in their national research structures.

The creation of joint educational institutions allows China to access intellectual resources and modern methods in the fields of education, and to gain global experience in that area. It also promotes the familiarization of Chinese students with world culture, enabling them to be better prepared in future for international professional communication. All of these facts are a manifestation of the Chinese “bringing in” (yinjinlai) strategy. S.N. Iftekhar and J.J.Kayombo stress this in their article “Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools (CFCRS): A policy analysis,” emphasizing that Chinese universities mainly strive to cooperate with prestigious and highly reputable universities in the global academic community [Iftekhar, Kayombo, 2015, p. 9]. This strategy creates a specific competitive environment for national educational institutions, leading to penetration into the Chinese educational system of advanced international educational standards.

It is important to note that the practice of creating university branches abroad is very topical in the context of the Chinese Government’s “going out” strategy (zouchu-qu). The first Chinese University to open a branch outside the PRC (in Malaysia) was Xiamen University, in 2013. Such initiatives were then taken by a number of Chinese universities: Zhejiang University, Suzhou University, etc.

It is worth noting that China adopted this practice quite recently, whereas Russia has accumulated a wealth of experience in this field. During the Soviet period, Soviet universities had their own branches in dozens of countries. For example, the Pushkin State Russian Language Institute had 11 foreign affiliates in seven countries worldwide in Soviet times, and annually prepared thousands of local professors in the Russian language. After the collapse of the USSR, all of these branches were closed owing to the sharp decline in state funding of education [Aref’ev, 2010, p. 20]. In the early 21st century, Russian state agencies became interested in such a practice again, and such projects received the necessary funding. To date, however, this practice is mainly used in the CIS countries [Krasnova, 2014].

The creation of a joint Russian-Chinese university in Shenzhen is an expansion of the geographical presence of Russian education “brands” as tools of “soft power.” It is

also important to note that today, the largest number of Chinese citizens studying the Russian language reside in the north-eastern provinces of China (Heilongjiang, Jilin, Liaoning). Conversely, the South of China is characterized by extremely low demand for the Russian language [Gan'shina, 2015, p. 160]. The creation of Shenzhen MSU-BIT University could become a center for popularizing the Russian language and Russian education in this region.

Conclusion

It should be emphasized that with the expansion of Russian-Chinese trade and economic cooperation, it is important to involve businesses in joint university activities. Training of students should be connected with commercial Russian and Chinese needs in the field of promoting joint economic and trade projects. A joint university can be a good platform for international forums, conferences, exhibitions, and fairs. It can host laboratories, technology parks, business incubators, and more.

Due to the internationalization of education, the world community is swiftly moving to providing educational services in English. Russia should take into account the difficulty of learning the Russian language, which is one of the main obstacles to Chinese nationals studying in Russia [Ivanov, 2013, p. 14]. High-quality training in English should be simultaneously introduced in order not to lag behind leading higher education institutions operating in the PRC. According to statistics, joint educational projects with English-speaking countries are the most popular in China.

At the same time, attention should also be paid to such important aspects as the popularization of the Russian language. Over the past few years, activities in this area in China have proved to be quite successful. In 1990s the Russian language presence in China declined severely, while today the Russian language is in third place by popularity among foreign languages after English and Japanese. A joint university can become an effective tool for the promotion of the Russian language in China. It can use a rather strong infrastructure: the Russian cultural center, the Russian center or Cabinet of the "Russian World," consulting centers for students wishing to study in Russia, etc.

Russia's relative lack of joint educational projects with China can also be seen in the extremely low number of post-graduate programmes. In this regard, after the launch of educational process in the first joint Russian-Chinese university, attention should be paid to the development of joint master's, post-graduate and doctor degree programmes.

In addition, Russia should focus on a marketing policy when creating a joint university, because this factor plays a significant role in attracting students. Experts believe that it is mainly the inactive marketing policy of Russian educational institutions which

hinders an intensification of Russian-Chinese educational exchange [Shhepin, 2013]. The experience of the US, Canada, Western Europe and Australia, who are active and effective in promoting their educational “brands” in China, needs to be carefully studied.

To summarise, a joint university is a new mechanism of joint cooperation between Russia and China. It is an important step in the intensification of Russian-Chinese humanitarian cooperation, which will serve the national interests of both parties and contribute to the launch of new joint projects in the field of education.

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