

OUTGOING MOBILITY OF THE SB BSU BACHELOR STUDENTS: EXPERIENCE AND OBSTACLES

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The relevance of our research work lies in the fact that many students have a desire to complete training in universities abroad within the framework of the academic mobility programs. The number of such students only increases every year. Therefore, we decided that it would be useful to learn about the obstacles students may face and share information with those who have not yet decided on this step.

The aim of this survey is to identify the real factors that stop students from taking part in international exchange and understand whether it is really difficult to combine exchange training and the educational process in the Republic of Belarus or it is just a stereotype, and find out what is the main goal of students wishing to participate in the exchange.

In order to achieve this goal, two surveys were conducted: for students who have never taken part in international exchange, and for students who already have experience.

Object of the study – international academic mobility of SB BSU bachelor students.

Subject of the study – bachelor students who want to go on an exchange for the first time and bachelor students who have already gone on an exchange.

Key words: internationalization in higher education student mobility; academic mobility; international exchange; outgoing mobility.

The globalization of world processes inevitably leads to the internationalization of higher education, one of the consequences of which is the involvement of each university in the global educational environment. Internationalization is a significant resource for increasing the competitiveness and authority of the university [1].

The most famous form of internationalization of higher education is student mobility – the movement of a certain number of students for the purpose of study abroad. Student mobility is stimulated by various state and regional programs [2].

Belarus is also not lagging behind in attempts to create favorable conditions for the mobility of students and teaching staff. Speaking about students of the School of Business of BSU, they also have the opportunity to study at foreign universities as part of the academic mobility program. Every year, the percentage of students who want to go on an exchange increases proportionally with an increase in cooperation agreements. The list of partner universities includes universities of Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovenia, Finland, Turkey and South Korea.

According to the data obtained from our survey, it was revealed that 92 % of the respondents had thought about participating in the student mobility

program at least once. For 31 % of students, the implementation of student exchange programs at the university was decisive when choosing a place of study.

To achieve the goal of our work as clearly as possible, we decided to conduct two surveys: one for students who have never taken part in international exchange, and for students who already have experience. Most exchange students study in English (73 %). All students from this survey participated in international exchange only once.

The first hypothesis is that unsatisfactory choice of countries is a key factor that stops students from taking part in international exchange.

Based on the research among students, who haven't yet participated in an exchange program, we have identified several reasons why they haven't decided to participate in it yet. Among these reasons are a financial component – 32 %; the list of provided countries is not satisfactory – 25 %; separation from family and friends – 15 %; temporary job loss – 10 %; fear of independence in another country – 8 %; fear of insufficient knowledge of the foreign language – 5 %; the difficulty of passing exams twice – 5 %.

Based on these results we cannot prove our hypothesis, but we can definitely say that this factor plays a second role in the decision-making process. That is why we decided to delve deeper into this issue and asked the students directly if they were satisfied with the list of countries provided by the School of Business of BSU for international exchange and which countries they would like to add to this list. By analyzing this question we came to the conclusion that 48 % of students are completely satisfied with the provided list. Among the rest 52 % respondents: 14 % of students would like to have an opportunity to have an exchange program with Germany; 11 % – with the USA; 11 % – with Spain; 9 % – with the United Kingdom; 6 % – with the Czech Republic; and other countries.

Even though we didn't prove our hypothesis and the provided list of countries doesn't play the main role in making the decision whether to participate in an exchange program or not, it should still be given special attention and taken into consideration based on the results that we managed to collect.

The second hypothesis is that it is difficult to combine exchange training and the educational process in the Republic of Belarus.

We asked students who did not participate in the exchange, whether they are afraid of the consequences of combining the two studying processes and the results are the following: 25 % of them answered positively, 37 % answered that they had never thought about it, and 38 % answered that they have no fears about it. As for the students who already have experience of international exchange, 54 % of them did not experience difficulties in combining the two educational processes, and 46 % faced these difficulties.

We decided to clarify what is the main problem with 46 % of students who faced difficulties. And it was revealed that some teachers of the School of Business of BSU are really demanding and consider it is essential to complete the tasks of the Belarusian program in order to subsequently be admitted to tests and exams.

Therefore we reject the hypothesis that it is difficult to combine exchange training and the educational process in the Republic of Belarus, but want to say that it is necessary to be prepared for the fact that you will have to do the double amount of work and, possibly, take 2 sessions at the same time.

The third hypothesis is that the desire to receive an education abroad is the main goal of students wishing to participate in the exchange.

After interviewing students who have never had a chance to participate in an exchange program a question regarding the reason why do they want to participate in it, we received the following results: the desire to receive a foreign education – 48 % out of 100 %; the opportunity to acquire a new experience of living abroad – 81 %; the possibility to travel – 78 %; the possibility to overcome the language barrier – 77 %; and the opportunity to find foreign acquaintances – 69 %.

Speaking about the students who have already had an opportunity to participate in an exchange program, most of them had such an expectation before going abroad as getting the experience of foreign studying (the desire to receive the foreign education) – 30 %, the opportunity to communicate with foreign students and learn their culture – 55 %; the opportunity to live abroad and travel – 55 %; the opportunity to improve the level of English – 12 %.

By analyzing these results we can see that our hypothesis is rejected, as the main reason is connected with the opportunity to acquire a new experience of living abroad and the possibility to travel. The possibilities to overcome the language barrier and to acquire new foreign friends go next.

By concluding our research we want to suggest the administration of the School of Business of BSU while encouraging students to participate in the exchange program, pay attention not only to the possibility of receiving a foreign education but also to the possibilities of acquiring a new experience of living abroad, traveling, as well as overcoming the language barrier and acquiring foreign friends.

As follows from our research, all our hypotheses were subject to refutation, moreover, it was found that, despite all the difficulties, a large number of respondents want to acquire the experience of student exchange, and those who have already received it, think about how to participate in it again. Our survey has shown that academic mobility programs have a very positive impact on the student's life, providing them with a rewarding experience and opening the horizon of new opportunities.

References

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