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Russian Universities in Global Competition

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Education

by

Veronika Rozhenkova

2019

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Russian Universities in Global Competition

by

Veronika Rozhenkova

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

Professor Val D. Rust, Chair

One of the challenges that Russian higher education system faces today is the integration in the global academic community. In the last few years, the task for the Russian universities to become more globally competitive has turned into a national imperative. The 5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, introduced in 2012, has become the most noticeable initiative aiming to maximize the competitive position of a group of the leading Russian universities in the global market of educational services and research programs. To achieve the goal of becoming more competitive on the international higher education arena, universities have engaged in various internationalization initiatives that include but are not limited to: inward and outward academic mobility, publishing in international research journals, establishing inter-university research collaborations with foreign higher education institutions, introducing dual degree programs with universities abroad and others. Depending on the institutional profiles, objectives and available

resources, different universities choose different paths to internationalization.

Based on 18 months of fieldwork, which included conducting case studies of four universities using document analysis and semi-structured interviews, this dissertation unveils the relationship between globalization challenges and higher education institutional responses. Furthermore, it explores how Russian universities develop in the context of globalization and internationalization of higher education. These case studies include one 5 – 100 participant and three regional universities that are not taking part in this governmental program. Since this dissertation focuses on the universities organizational development and change that is triggered by globalization conditions and imperatives, in my research I rely on two theoretical orientations: globalization theory and organization development theory.

The case studies reveal how universities in a given national context develop and undergo specific transformations in their structure, organization and governance that are caused by the pressures produced by globalization processes. Furthermore, throughout this research I take a closer look at the challenges that universities are facing throughout their internationalization efforts, the ways the institutions find to overcome those and their prospects on the success in the global university competition. Finally, this study uncovers the differences in the approaches to internationalization and globalization challenges between regional universities and those located in the major Russian cities.

The dissertation of Veronika Rozhenkova is approved.

Edith Mukudi Omwami

Christina Christie

Carlos Alberto Torres

Val D. Rust, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles, 2019

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VITA

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INTRODUCTION

“Higher education is one of few areas where this country competes with the rest of the world and wins. The best of American higher education outstrips any in the world. Look where the rest of the world goes for higher education for graduate degrees. They come here.”

Donna Shalala

For many countries, even for those with distinguished academic tradition and outstanding research, the fact that Western higher education systems surpass theirs is the reality. This situation has been consistently demonstrated by the global rankings that annually publish the lists of the leading universities. With the world becoming increasingly globalized, it is impossible for universities to be isolated and to not pay attention to how they compare with other institutions both nationally and internationally. Higher education institutions all over the world have engaged in the global competition for various political, socio-economic and cultural reasons. Throughout this competition they are striving to advance higher in the rankings, to attract the most talented students and faculty, to engage in inter-university research and educational collaborations, and to become world-class universities.

Throughout the last few decades, higher education has become increasingly important as it has the potential to benefit the lives of individuals, improve national economies and promote social stability (Belyakov et al., 2009). With remarkable technological achievements and innovations that have led to the creation of a knowledge-based global economy the demand for higher education has been growing. There is a

strong relationship between education and economic development. More and better education gives emerging countries and individuals a greater opportunity to benefit from the new global economy (The World Bank, 2000). Higher education is an important sector of any national economy, as it produces innovation, which, in its turn, contributes to economic growth, as well as improves living standards and ensures sustained competitiveness of the country on the global market (Robertson, 2009). With the increased importance of the role of higher education, national systems of tertiary education have been facing a number of issues and undergoing transformation in their organization and governance due to various internal and external factors. Luchinskaya and Ovchynnikova (2011) identify three major challenges that higher education institutions all over the world face today: an increased level of internationalization of educational and research activities; the mass expansion of higher education, which leads to financial and capacity constraints; and the new internationalized labor market demands that require universities to produce graduates that are capable of being more internationally mobile.

Throughout the last thirty years the system of Russian higher education has been greatly affected by major socio-economic transformations and reforms. During the Soviet era education was publicly provided and free, and students were guaranteed employment after graduation (although not necessarily in the locations of their choice). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, higher education divided into public and private sectors, became more diverse and began charging tuition. At the same time, the new dual system of payment for education evolved: fee-charging and state-funded places were being offered for students within the same department or academic program. Furthermore, since

1991, the number of students enrolled in tertiary institutions started growing. In Russia, higher education has always been greatly valued; it has been accepted as a societal norm for someone who considers themselves educated and cultured to get at least a college degree. Furthermore, there have been economic incentives to pursue university education: college graduates, on average, earn 60-70 percent more than those without degrees (Abankina, 2007). These facts may explain the tertiary gross enrollment ratio of roughly 82 percent, which is very high by the world standards (The World Bank, 2016).

According to Luchinskaya and Ovchynnikova (2011), since the collapse of the Soviet Union the parallel system of mass higher education and elite higher education has been developing, which may suggest that a number of institutions, especially those that did not fall into the elite group and had constrained resources, were providing low quality education. Moreover, the introduction of the fee-charging places and underdeveloped student loan system created unequal access to higher education. Despite the aforementioned new changes and developments, there is still a continuation of the Soviet era, specifically in regards to the popularity of the Specialist Diploma (5-year course of study in addition to the 4-year program leading to a Bachelor's degree), the system of post-graduate education, and student stipends (Luchinskaya & Ovchynnikova, 2011).

The expansion of the global market, the development of technology, the flow of people and information, and other characteristics of globalization have had fundamental influence on higher education. In the last decades, internationalization, as a response to globalization, has become very strong and pervasive in the higher education context, pushing universities to change. In the new global environment universities have been challenged by the increased global competition, which has forced higher education

institutions to seek effective competitive strategies in order to become more internationally recognized. Competition among universities to enroll better students, to hire internationally renowned faculty, to raise research funds and to improve their national and global rankings has significantly increased in recent years. Russian universities that have historically had very strong academic tradition could not stay out of the global rankings game. Having realized the importance of establishing world-class universities that are recognized internationally, Russia had to initiate certain changes in its higher education policy. One of the most prominent steps was taken with the development of 5 - 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project with the original goal to have at least five universities ranked in the top 100 world universities by 2020.

In recent years, globalization has become an important concept in social science research. The pace of global, economic and technological development makes change an inevitable feature of higher education institutions all over the world. Therefore, globalization theory is one of the theoretical orientations that I rely on in my dissertation. Furthermore, since this research deals directly with organizations (in particular, higher education institutions) and how they develop in the given context, another theory that I employ is organization development theory. Organization development is usually thought of as a general strategy for organization improvement. Within the given theories, I used qualitative research methods, which include document collection and analysis, and case studies involving faculty members, academic staff and leadership of four universities situated in the cities of Moscow and Yaroslavl.

Obtaining world-class status and becoming more internationally recognized present important issues for Russian universities and the national higher education system

more broadly. These issues need to be addressed through rigorous research and subsequent actions. With numerous changes within the education system and with the strong desire and dedication of Russian universities to achieve higher international standards, Russia remains a country of growing opportunity and strong potential to become one of the leading countries in higher education.

PART 1
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

CHAPTER 1

CURRENT STATE OF RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

In Russia, higher education has historically been considered very important for the balanced and holistic development of an individual, as well as for the social status. Such societal attitude has been reflected in the tertiary education enrollment data. Due to the prestige of higher education and the demand of the labor market for employees with college degrees, the number of tertiary students has been steadily rising in the last decades. From 1991 to 2009, the number of tertiary students noticeably rose from 2,824,500 to 7,513,100 (Rosstat, 2016). However, it is important to mention that due to the recent demographic crisis, the number of secondary school graduates, and, consequently, college students has decreased and is expected to continue falling for the next few years (WENR, 2017). For this reason, the number of students enrolled in higher education institutions decreased from 7.5 million in 2008/2009 to 4.4 million in 2016/2017 (NIC ARM, 2018).

Nevertheless, in comparison to some other countries, the overall participation of the Russian population in higher education is still quite high. In 2016, gross tertiary enrollment ratio was reported to be 81.82 percent, which represents a growth from about 47 percent in 1998 (Trading Economics, 2019). Based on the OECD Survey of Adult Skills¹, Russia has a considerably higher percentage of adults who completed tertiary education (67 percent) compared to the OECD average of 33 percent (OECD, 2018).

¹ The Survey measures adults' proficiency in literacy, numeracy and problem solving, as well as collects data on how these adults further use the acquired skills at home, at work and in the wider community.

According to the same survey, the percentage of parents, aged 25-64, having tertiary education also exceeds the OECD average. This fact may also explain such a high tertiary attainment in the country, since, as research indicates, the parental education level can be an important predictor of children's educational attainment and outcomes (Haveman & Wolfe, 1995; Eccles, 2005). Thus, tertiary attainment increases dramatically, if at least one parent has attained upper-secondary or post-secondary education. Furthermore, similarly to other OECD countries, young women (25-30 year old) in Russia are more educated and qualified than men of the same age. In Russia, 65 percent of women have attained tertiary education, compared to 50 percent of men with the same degrees while the OECD average is 50 percent for women and 38 percent for men (OECD, 2018). The aforementioned numbers that exceed the OECD average suggest that Russia is preparing a highly educated labor force while making higher education more accessible.

Furthermore, higher education institutions are not distributed equally throughout the country. According to one of the national university ranking systems, RAEX Rankings², 50 out of the top 100 higher education institutions are located in the cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, as well as in Tomsk and Moscow regions. The fact that the strongest universities are concentrated in the central regions thwarts the development of other regions of the country and creates somewhat unequal access opportunities for students living in rural and remote areas. The format of education has also been gradually changing: the number of students getting distance education has increased from 10.2 percent in 2017 to 11.3 percent in 2018 (Statistics of Russian Education, 2019).

² RAEX university rankings (RAEX Analytics) have been published since 2012. Starting from 2014, RAEX Analytics also began publishing reputational rankings in specific areas, such as "Technical sciences, engineering and technologies", "Economics and Management", and others.

The public spending on education in general in Russia is quite low, just as it is the case in many other countries; however, it is far from the lowest. The government spends a modest share of its GDP of 3.6 percent on education, which is below the OECD average, but the plan is to increase this number to 4.4 percent by 2024 (Interfax, 2018). Expenditures per student at the tertiary level are roughly about USD 8,000, and these expenditures vary considerably by region, which can be explained by the fact that some of the regions in the country have drastically different living conditions (OECD, 2018). Inward and outward student mobility is not very well developed in the Russian higher education sector. The number of international students in the Russian higher education system overall is not high but close to the OECD average, it was 4 percent for Russia and 6 percent for the OECD countries in 2016. Less than 1 percent of all Russian students are enrolled in the university programs abroad, compared to 2 percent across other OECD countries (OECD, 2018).

The importance of engaging in the internationally oriented activities and establishing international research collaborations is noted in a number of national laws and regulations. A part of the Law on Education of the Russian Federation is devoted to the necessity of internationalization of higher education. It specifically defines the goals, forms and directions of international research collaborations. The main objectives of these collaborations are to expand the learning opportunities for the Russian citizens and non-citizens, to coordinate international relations with foreign countries and organizations with the goal of developing education, and to perfect the national and international mechanisms of improving education (The Law on Education of the Russian Federation, 2019). The law states that Russia supports the development of international

educational collaborations, international academic mobility, inviting foreign specialists, students and faculty, and the mutual recognition of educational qualifications and degrees. Furthermore, the law approves collaborations with both governmental and non-governmental organizations. A further analysis of the Law on Education indicates that the government supports and creates favorable conditions for the following directions of internationalization:

1. Developing and implementing educational and scientific programs in collaboration with international organizations;
2. Sending and supporting students, as well as teaching and research staff of Russian educational institutions to foreign educational establishments, which includes granting stipends for study abroad; and the enrollment of foreign students, teaching and research staff in Russian educational institutions for studying, further education and perfection of scientific and educational activities including international academic exchange;
3. Conducting joint research projects, implementing fundamental and applied scientific research in the sphere of education, and collaborating on innovative projects;
4. Participating in the networking form of educational program implementation;
5. Participating in the activities of international organizations and developing international, scientific research and technical projects, organizing congresses, symposiums, conferences, seminars, and bilateral and

multilateral exchange of academic and scientific literature (The Law on Education of the Russian Federation, 2019).

Although, according to the Law on Education, the government supports various sorts of educational initiatives, throughout this study certain bureaucratic challenges were identified that appear to represent serious barriers to such activities as international academic recruiting, for instance. These and other obstacles to internationalization and the ways to overcome them will be discussed further in this dissertation.

Furthermore, in 2012 the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation introduced a number of criteria according to which it evaluates the efficiency of higher education institutions. Based on the results of this evaluation, universities that prove to be inefficient are supposed to be closed or merged with other more efficient institutions (RIA News, 2012). The main objectives of university evaluations are to increase the quality of education and university efficiency, to improve the educational process in these institutions, to better integrate educational and research activities, to expand international inter-university collaborations and to increase the competitiveness of Russian universities on the global higher education arena. The importance of internationalization of Russian higher education is noted in two of the four key areas of the assessment of university efficiency (SamSTU, n.d.). These areas include:

1. Educational activities (some of the indicators in this category incorporate enrolled students' average Unified State Examination³ scores, the number of students who have received presidential and governmental scholarships,

³ Unified State Examination is a graduation examination in high school and the main form of preliminary examinations in universities.

per student expenditures, the percentage of alumni who got employed within one year after graduation, and others);

2. Scientific and research activities (number of publications and citations in the Web of Science and Scopus databases, expenditures on and income from research activities, and others);
3. International activities (the percentage of international students coming from countries other than former Soviet republics, the number of academic staff members who have received their degrees in foreign universities, the number of academic staff members who have received international grants, the percentage of internationally recruited faculty (non-Russian nationals), the percentage of domestic students who have studied for at least for one semester abroad, university rankings in the global ranking systems, and others);
4. Financial-economic activities (academic staff salary and university income from different sources).

This initiative of evaluating universities' efficiency caused a lot of debate within the academic community, specifically in relation to whether some of these criteria actually evaluate the quality of education. For instance, the Russian Union of Rectors believes that the average USE score of the enrolled students probably signifies a more prestigious and popular specialization or department rather than defines the quality of education in a particular institution (RIA News, 2012). Furthermore, such criteria as the number of textbooks published both in Russian and foreign languages, the number of patents and research grant applications, the number of faculty and academic staff

(Russian nationals) with foreign degrees should be added to the list. Finally, the profile of a university should be taken into account when evaluated, as well as the specifics of the geographical area where it is located.

As a result of the efficiency evaluations, the number of higher education institutions in Russia from 2014 to 2017 decreased from 2,268 to 1,171, which is almost twice of a reduction (Makeeva, 2018). According to Makeeva (2018), the branch campuses of both public and private universities suffered the most: their number decreased from 908 to 428 and from 44 to 81 respectively. The number of universities (main campuses) decreased from 567 to 484 for the public institutions and from 371 to 178 for the private ones. Therefore, the total number of higher education institutions that stopped operating amounted to 1,097 (Makeeva, 2018). According to Dmitriy Livanov, a former Minister of Education, the original plan for the universities' efficiency evaluations and accreditation assessment was to reduce the number of universities, which were not providing high quality education, by 40 percent and the number of branch campuses by 80 percent (Makeeva, 2018). At the same time the government aimed to support those universities that were engaged in promising research and provided high quality education for students.

An important piece of legislation that is closely related to supporting internationalization initiatives was the Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation #220. According to this document, the government provided monetary grants on a competitive basis for the development of science and innovations in tertiary education and to improve the quality of higher education. The main goals for this initiative were to invite world-renowned scientists and researchers to the national

universities and research centers (including Russian nationals residing and working abroad); to create scientific laboratories capable to compete with their international counterparts; to conduct high quality world-class research; to create better work conditions for research and teaching staff, as well as an efficient system of motivation to conduct scientific work; to attract more younger people to the fields of science, education and technology; to establish strong sustainable connections and collaborations between Russian universities and leading international research centers; and to transfer the most promising new developments into the national economy (Mega Grants, n.d.).

Applications can be submitted by any leading scientist in partnership with a Russian university. An important aspect of the proposed research project is that it should have a team assembled of not only faculty and researchers but also graduate and undergraduate students.

The Grant Board that consists of the representatives of the bodies of state power, business community, research and public organizations and higher education institutions handles all the issues associated with selecting the winning application and disbursing the funds for the support of the research projects. The Board is responsible for identifying the research areas eligible for the grant, determining selection criteria, identifying winners in the open competition, and deciding whether the grant can be extended based on the achieved results. This and other state-level pieces of legislation created the basis for the university institution-level internationalization initiatives that have been introduced in response to globalization imperatives.

The analysis of the aforementioned legislation documents indicates that the national government is not only incentivizing universities through providing grants but is

also pushing them to engage in international activities, such as publishing in international research journals, expanding research collaborations with higher education and research institutions abroad, increasing student and faculty inward and outward mobility.

Additional pressure is created by the fact that the universities that do not meet the stated efficiency criteria might be closed or forced to merge with other more efficient institutions, which is not ideal for any underperforming university. Therefore, internationalizing educational and research activities has become a national imperative for Russian universities.

RECENT REFORMS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

During the last few decades, with the country's major political and socio-economic transformations, the system of Russian higher education has undergone drastic changes through a number of national reforms. The transition to the market economy and the country's deeper integration into the world economy led to a revision of the approaches to the higher education system. A long series of reforms include but are not limited to the introduction of the two-tier system (Bachelor's and Master's degrees versus the traditional five-year Specialist degree), the creation of the new federal universities, the designation of certain institutions as national research universities, the introduction of academic mobility grants, and a greater focus on deeper internationalization of universities.

Throughout the last few years, Russian higher education system has undergone major reconstruction. To become more compatible with the foreign institutions and to increase student mobility, in 2003 Russia officially joined the Bologna Process and

introduced the new university degree system: a four-year Bachelor's program and a two-year Master's program with the goal to make the recognition of Russian degree qualifications across other countries easier. The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental agreement incorporating a series of reforms in higher education, which were supposed to set up the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) having its foundation on democratic principles (Luchinskaya & Ovchynnikova, 2011). EHEA, in its turn, encouraged international cooperation, facilitated academic exchange and broadened labor market destinations for students. The main objectives of the Bologna Process were: 1) easily comparable degrees within the three-tier system – Bachelor's-Master's-Doctorate; 2) quality assurance in accordance with EHEA standards; and 3) recognition of foreign degrees across countries (Luchinskaya & Ovchynnikova, 2011). One of the major goals of joining the Bologna process for Russia was to integrate in the international academic community while preserving the traditions and achievements of the national system of higher education.

Before the introduction of the two-tier system, all Russian universities offered five-year programs granting Specialist Diplomas of Higher Education. Most universities in the country still offer both: five-year Specialist programs, and Bachelor's and Master's programs. Given the differences in the countries' profiles and their systems of education, the implementation of the Bologna Process was different depending on the specific context. Initially, in Russia there were fears associated with the new changes: various stakeholders (academics, politicians, students, and their parents) were concerned that the new system will ruin the remains of the Soviet education system that was perceived to be the best among other countries and that the easy recognition of diplomas will exacerbate

the brain drain. Furthermore, this process has been consistently criticized for its initial flawed implementation: instead of creating new curriculum, the new Bachelor's accreditation is frequently simply inserted into the standard five-year programs with reduced hours of in-class instruction. Moreover, the new system has become the reason for confusion in the job market: employers being used to the traditional five-year system have been reluctant to recognize the new qualifications and hesitant about how they should treat the new Bachelor's degree holders: as graduates who have completed the full course of study or job applicants whose academic experience and skills are inferior to those of the traditional diploma holders.

Additionally, there is still some confusion with the post-graduate education system that has also been changing. Historically, in Russia there were two levels of post-graduate education: Kandidat Nauk (the Candidate of Sciences) and Doktor Nauk (the Doctor of Science). The Candidate of Sciences programs normally last about three years and require carrying out independent research and defending a dissertation. The Doctor of Science, a much more advanced degree that may follow the Candidate of Sciences requires becoming well known in the chosen field of study, publishing and having experience supervising students. An extended sabbatical can be taken to prepare research for this degree, although there is no specific length of time that might be required to obtain it. The Doctor of Sciences requires a public dissertation defense. There are still debates in the Russian academic community if there are direct equivalents to those degrees in the U.S. or other countries across the globe, besides similar degrees in the post-Soviet countries. Currently, many universities in Russia are also offering PhD programs, and, while the old system is still in place, it becomes somewhat confusing to

differentiate between the two systems, especially within the university environment and throughout the academic hiring process.

Furthermore, a very limited number of prestigious and well-established institutions have obtained the status of national research universities through nation-wide competition announced by the government. These universities providing high quality education and conducting extensive research receive federal financial support for their innovative development programs. While these institutions receive more autonomy and economic freedom, the destiny of other universities in the higher education system is quite unclear. They may be partially federally funded, but for the most part these institutions have to seek funding from regional budgets or try to merge with more prominent institutions. The real threat of such a reform is that an important part of the higher education sector may simply be lost through these mergers, as the universities who are forced to merge with larger or more prominent institutions may lose their original academic identity.

Additionally, in the last few years, higher education institutions have gotten more autonomy in terms of constructing curriculum, and their teaching and research activities. The former can be structured more independently by a university taking into consideration the institution's academic specializations and particular student populations that it is serving. Moreover, universities have gotten more autonomy in terms of their for-profit activities, such as organizing more courses for an extra fee, tutoring, and other possible activities that may provide additional internal income. This increased degree of independence led to various outcomes for different institutions: some universities took this opportunity to become more dynamic centers of teaching and research, while others

failed to adjust to the reform and remained highly bureaucratic and hierarchical (Slonimczyk, Francesconi & Yurko, 2017).

Another important initiative in reforming the Russian higher education system was undertaken with creating a new educational financing model (Smolentseva, 2005). The new model was supposed to be linked with the two-tier system. Currently, every public university has a limited number of state-funded places (the equivalent of receiving full or partial scholarship) that students can get into based on their academic achievement. At the Bachelor's level, the student funding is correlated with the Unified State Examination test scores: the higher the test score the more financing a student gets and vice versa. However, this part of reform has been heavily criticized for limiting higher education access for many vulnerable socioeconomic groups who have less opportunity for test preparation, and, therefore, less chances to receive high scores on the test. At the Master's level, some government funding is provided for training a limited number of students in only a few specialized fields that would appear to be in demand by the current economy (therefore, the list of fields might be changing) (Smolentseva, 2005). The majority of the students will either have to find support through corporate financing or will have to pay full tuition fees from their own resources.

Finally, Russia, aiming to achieve higher international standards, needed to adopt a new examination system that could provide a more uniform measure of students' knowledge and abilities. For many years the main college admissions criteria in Russia were oral and written examinations conducted at every single university and assessed by few faculty members and exam proctors. Such components as grades, overall secondary school academic achievement, participation in extra-curricular activities, and other

possible elements were rarely taken into consideration. Thus, the access to higher education institutions depended solely on entrance exams, the results of which could be more or less easily corrupted. “The old system of admissions is morally outdated and in many ways inadequate to the present day demands” (Osipian, 2009, p. 48). One of the major steps taken with the aim of reforming admissions in higher education was the introduction of the Unified State Examination (USE).

The USE is a compulsory standardized test that is both a secondary school final graduation exam and one of the main forms of preliminary examinations to enter college or university. The test started as an experiment in 2001 in five regions of Russia and since 2008 it has been introduced in all schools, colleges and universities throughout the country. It aimed to address corruption in the tertiary education sector and to free the examination process from subjectivity and prejudice inherent to the previous system of oral and written examinations. Another important objective of the USE was to broaden participation in higher education of students coming from remote and rural areas. All students have to take mathematics and the Russian language examinations, and can choose to be tested on the unlimited number of profile subjects that include chemistry, physics, biology, geography, history, social studies, literature, computer science, and foreign languages. The list of selected subjects depends on what university programs a student is planning to apply to. The minimum threshold that needs to be reached in order to pass the exam is 27 out of 100 for mathematics and 24 out of 100 for the Russian language. Those who failed the examination can take it for a second time; if they fail again, they are not allowed to retake it anymore and will not be able to apply to a university. Given the low minimum required score, it is extremely rare that students fail

the USE though: in 2015, for example, only 1.5 percent of the test takers failed to reach the passing score and in 2016 this number went down to 0.7 percent of all the students (WENR, 2017). The main pressure is not simply to pass the test but to get as high scores as possible in order to get admitted to the university programs of students' choice. Higher scores increase the chances of getting admitted into the top national universities and potentially getting into the state-funded tuition-free spots.

The USE became the first standardized testing experience for Russia that has raised much controversy. Scholars dispute the effectiveness of the USE and find both advantages and shortcomings of the new exam. Among the advantages improving academic mobility within the country takes one of the central places (Smolin, 2005). Before the introduction of the USE, universities were making independent admissions decisions and students had to travel to the actual colleges and universities to take entrance tests and exams. Given the vast territory of the country, this put students from remote parts of Russia or those who could not afford to travel at a disadvantage and prevented them from applying to the institutions of their choice. Now the test presents everyone with an opportunity to apply to several colleges and universities (up to three programs at five universities, so the total of fifteen applications) without the necessity to travel. This increases their chances of getting admitted to a university, thus, providing better access to tertiary education. Therefore, the exam partially improved access to higher education geographically. At the same time, the academic mobility turns out to be rather restricted by the students' income. Although they can apply to any university they want, they will most likely go to the one they can actually afford in terms of tuition and living expenses. According to Slonimczyk, Francesconi and Yurko (2017), the USE test did make higher

education institutions more accessible. As they found throughout to their study, with the USE, students in larger cities other than Moscow and Saint Petersburg explored the new opportunities by applying and, consequently, enrolling in some of the top universities across the country. Students from rural areas and smaller cities seem to stay closer to their parental households but are taking more advantage of the situation by increasing attendance at the local universities (Slonimczyk, Francesconi & Yurko, 2017).

Furthermore, the introduction of the USE did address the issue of corruption in higher education. Russian universities have historically been facing academic corruption challenges throughout the admissions process. To illustrate the scale of corruption, according to Galitskii and Levin (2004), the amount of bribes paid for the university admission reached the shocking number of USD 455 million in 2004. Previously, entrance exams conducted at universities were believed to be quite subjective and prone to corruption when some of those staff members who were administering the exams were offered bribes for granting higher grades and test scores. With the introduction of the USE the admission decision does not entirely depend on the particular committee members, but heavily relies on the actual test results. At the same time, there is evidence that corruption was not eliminated but rather redirected and the bribery now takes place at the structures administering the test, that is schools, instead of colleges and universities. So the money, although in reduced amounts just flows in a different direction: “...corruption changes its forms and mechanisms but does not disappear entirely” (Smolin, 2005, p. 43). Corruption in this case can take place before, during and after the test (hiring “tutors” who would be proctoring the exam, soliciting test answers for a bribe, revising the incorrect answers and others).

Finally, although standardized testing and unified examinations are implemented all over the world, in certain countries, such as South Korea and Spain, for instance, where a lot of emphasis is put on standardized testing, the public is strongly opposing such exams, mostly because they measure a narrow range of academic skills and qualities of students and also because they are highly correlated with socioeconomic background of students (Smolin, 2005). Therefore, switching to standardized testing does not necessarily mean making a step up to higher international standards for Russia. Overall in Russia, according to the data of the Public-Opinion Foundation, attitudes toward the exam have been characterized by quite a negative attitude in the beginning but a positive dynamic on the whole (Solodnikov, 2009). This positive trend can be partly explained by the fact that students started learning test-taking techniques, became more comfortable with the exam and consequently started getting higher scores.

GLOBAL UNIVERSITY RANKINGS AND WORLD-CLASS UNIVERSITIES

For a country that is introducing a number of reforms while striving to radically enhance the presence of its universities on the global higher education arena, it is important to understand the major international ranking systems and their methodology. In their internationalization efforts, Russian universities are predominantly looking at the three main global university ranking systems: Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), QS World University Rankings and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE).

Initially, global university rankings were designed to compare universities. However, in recent years these rankings have become important instruments in creating

the perception and understanding of the quality of education, research activity and university functioning (Sidorenko & Gorbatova, 2015). The first international ranking project was undertaken by Shanghai Jiao Tong University Institute of Higher Education in 2003 with the title: Academic Ranking of World Universities. It is considered to be the precursor of the global university rankings and one of the most influential ones. About 1,800 universities are ranked annually and the first 1,000 are published. ARWU was followed by Times Higher Education – QS World University Rankings in 2004. In 2009 the Times Higher Education and QS rankings separated and announced their own versions. THE rankings introduced a new improved methodology in 2010 and QS World University Rankings continued to use the pre-existing one. These three ranking systems led to the transformation of higher education on the global scale (Marginson, 2006).

At the turn of this century there were no global rankings. Some nations maintained internal comparisons of performance, but little had developed globally. The United States, for example, has long maintained rankings of its universities and colleges through the annual rankings of the US News and World Report that has been given the broadest kind of media coverage, because the rankings publicize to families where they should send their children to get the best possible education. However, international information was only of interest to education specialists, and nobody was really concerned with global classifications or cross-country comparisons of higher education. When the ARWU appeared, it was noticed by not only higher education specialists, but also by the media and the general public; therefore, this ranking system began to influence the behaviors of university administrators, political leaders and students. According to Sidorenko and Gorbatova (2015), the main goals of international university

rankings are: to evaluate higher education at all levels including teaching, research, administration, financing and infrastructure; and to provide consumers with reliable information regarding educational services.

Different ranking systems use different indicators to evaluate and rank universities. The Shanghai rankings, for example, focus on four indices related to research:

- Quality of education (the number of alumni winning Nobel Prizes and Fields medals) – 10 percent;
- Quality of faculty (the number of staff members who have won Nobel Prizes and Fields medals and the number of highly cited researchers) – 40 percent;
- Research output (papers published in Nature and Science and papers indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Science Citation Index) – 40 percent;
- Per capita academic performance – 10 percent (Labi, 2008).

The Times Higher Education World University rankings' performance indicators are divided into five areas:

- Teaching (reputation survey, staff-to-student ratio, doctorate to Bachelor's ratio, doctorates-awarded-to-academic-staff ratio, institutional income) – 30 percent;
- Research (reputation survey, research income and productivity) – 30 percent;
- Citations – 30 percent;
- International outlook (proportion of international students and international staff, and international collaboration) – 7.5 percent;
- Industry income (knowledge transfer activity) – 2.5 percent.

QS World University Rankings evaluate universities according to the six metrics:

- Academic reputation that is based on the Academic Survey – 40 percent;
- Employer reputation that is based on Employer Survey – 10 percent;
- Faculty-to-student ratio – 20 percent;
- Citations per faculty as a metric for research quality – 20 percent;
- International faculty and student ratio – 10 percent.

As can be seen from the methodologies of these three ranking systems, their evaluation criteria differ; therefore, they frequently show quite different outcomes. All of the aforementioned rankings consider citations as one of the important indicators of research quality and productivity. Interestingly enough, the ARWU rankings do not consider international outlook as one of the criteria of a successful international university.

These ranking mechanisms are a by-product of the global competition phenomenon; at the same time they stimulate increased competition as universities strive to make it to the top of the list or to be represented at all. According to Altbach (1990), every country “wants a world-class university. No country feels it can do without one. The problem is that no one knows what a world-class university is, and no one has figured out how to get one. Everyone, however, refers to the concept” (p.126). The concept of a world-class university does not only involve noticeable research achievements, sufficient budgets and higher level of internationalization but also academic freedom, transparency and collegiality in decision-making, and open competition (Smolentseva, 2015). Unfortunately, within many Russian higher education institutions these aspects are missing or underdeveloped, which can present an obstacle in

the search for excellence. According to Smolentseva (2015), becoming a world-class university will require providing adequate compensation and incentives for faculty, stimuli and opportunity to conduct high quality research, deeper integration in the global academic community and English proficiency. These changes among others may attract the best faculty and students and form a certain academic culture that is necessary for an institution to become world-class.

Higher education leaders are increasingly using global university rankings to make decisions and to influence higher education reform (Hazelkorn, 2008). Additionally, global rankings may show the government the necessity of allocating additional funding to certain aspects of higher education, for example, investing into research activities or attracting more international students and faculty. On the other hand, global university rankings have been consistently criticized for undermining non-English instructing and less science-oriented institutions, as well as for heavily relying on subjective reputation surveys that are based on the opinions of educational and industry experts. As pointed out before, different rankings produce different results, because they depend on different quality criteria. The validity and value of these criteria are questionable: ranking mechanisms are created with specific sets of indicators designed to represent quality; thus, some indicators are omitted, while others are assigned more weight than the others. The “best” institutions are those that score high on the indicators chosen by the publisher. Thus, each ranking system implicitly defines educational quality through the indicators selected and the distribution of weighting mechanisms. Global university rankings represent a new challenge for universities worldwide. Among numerous universities all over the world, only a very few are world-class with the most

elite universities located in a small number of countries, including the United States, Japan and the United Kingdom. For instance, in 2019, ARWU ranked eight American and two British universities in the top ten global universities. Every year only minor changes occur in the top of the rankings. To illustrate that, Harvard University, for example, has been consistently ranked number one for the last seventeen years (ARWU, 2019). In order for many universities in other countries to get into the top 100 global universities they need to do something absolutely extraordinary, which very often, given their constrained resources and national specifics, is next to impossible. Otherwise, they will keep occupying lower positions in the rankings.

CHAPTER 2

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Throughout the last few years, despite all the reforms, Russian higher education institutions seem to have been struggling to win higher international recognition. In 2019, the Times Higher Education World University Rankings included only four Russian universities, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, National Research University Higher School of Economics, and National Research Nuclear University (MEPhI) in the top 400 (ranked 199th, 251 – 300, 301- 350, 351 – 400 ranges accordingly) (THE World University Rankings, 2019). Academic Ranking of World Universities ranked only two Russian universities, Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University, in the top 400 (87th and 301-400 range accordingly) (ARWU, 2019). QS World University Rankings included the largest number of Russian universities in their top 400, ten higher education institutions from all around the country, with Moscow State University on top of the list (ranked 90th) and nine other universities in the 200 – 400 range (QS World University Rankings, 2019). Russian universities have a better representation in subject rankings and, every year, more universities make it to those rankings depending on their specializations and strengths.

However, given the country's strong academic tradition and groundbreaking research, Russia is probably one of the most notable absentees from the global institutional rankings. "While its blooming oil industry and the relative stability of recent years have put this humbled superpower back on the top rung of international diplomacy, its research institutions have continued their decline from the glory days of Sputnik"

(THE World University Rankings, 2010). Science and research have long been an important focus of the Russian academy, but throughout the last few years the situation has exacerbated. In 2009 a group of prominent Russian scientists based around the world sent an open letter to the President and the Prime Minister expressing concern about the state of research and science: “The regression is continuing and the scale and danger of the process have been underestimated. The level of finance for Russian science is in sharp contrast with comparable figures in developed countries. Scientists’ mass departures abroad have remained a major problem for Russia” (THE World University Rankings, 2019). Furthermore, it is important to mention that historically for decades the national government did not really encourage the internationalization of education and the active development of international cooperation for political reasons. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation changed; however, the financing of the education system was cut drastically and the ties between higher education institutions and economic sector were to a great extent destroyed. Throughout recent years the university system as a whole has also suffered by losing the leading research talent to other countries through noticeable brain drain.

The limitations of the Soviet system and other problems of the immediate post-Soviet era seriously weakened the higher education system. These and other challenges when dealing with global university rankings have been identified in the literature. For instance, one of the issues in ranking Russian universities is their change of name or part of the name as a result of a series of reforms, or the complexity of their full official names, as well as the process of merging higher education institutions (5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, 2014). This may potentially lead to the misrepresentation

of certain institutions, especially if the data from previous rankings is being analyzed. Therefore, one of the important tasks for the universities is to check, recheck and provide more accurate data when reporting to the ranking agencies. Moreover, apart from the national economic and infrastructure problems, one of the measurements that Russian scholars and researchers frequently fail to excel at is the citation index (Kotsubinskiy et al., 2014). A great number of Russian researchers tend to publish mostly in Russian in the Russian journals; thus, these publications frequently remain unnoticed by the international academic community and do not get represented in the databases that are used to compile global university rankings (Rozenkova & Rust, 2018). Another issue with publications is that not all the existing publications are indexed by Scopus, for example. For instance, an article will not be indexed if its bibliography contains a lot of Russian publications that were previously not indexed by the database. Therefore, the problem is not always in the low number or lack of publications, but also in the fact that they are simply not indexed. Furthermore, many Russian universities are characterized by overspecializations, when they mainly focus and offer academic programs that are narrowly related to this or that field (e.g., economics, engineering, teacher training and others), which makes it harder for these institutions to compete with more comprehensive universities. Finally, the lack of or inadequate monitoring of the alumni and their employment history due to the absence of strong alumni networks presents yet another issue when reporting the institutional data to the global ranking agencies (Melikyan, 2014).

It is important to note that there is a certain level of resistance to the idea of international rankings of Russian higher education institutions coming from a number of

researchers and educators. For instance, when asked to comment on Russia's low citation index, the president of the Russian Academy of Sciences Yury Osipov stated in an interview with one of the newspapers that Russian scholars do not have to learn English because if “one is a high-level specialist, he will study Russian and read articles in Russian” (Odynova, 2010, November 17). Another comment was made by Andrei Volokhov, a spokesman for the prestigious Bauman State Technical University: “We consider those ratings incorrect. For us, the evaluation by employers is more important. And both Russian and foreign employers hold our graduates in high esteem” (Odynova, 2010, November 17). Being quite frustrated and unsatisfied with the global university rankings, Russia made several attempts to produce its own international ranking of the top higher education institutions aiming to include universities from the Commonwealth of Independent States, BRICS, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries. For instance, in 2009, a global universities ranking was released by an independent Russian rating agency ReitOR. They ranked Lomonosov Moscow State University the fifth, after MIT, Caltech, the University of Tokyo and Columbia University. One of the main indicators of the ranking was the quality of education, which was defined as the combination of such measurements as public acknowledgement and reputation of educational and research activities of a university, competency of the faculty, infrastructure, and alumni employment (Roth, 2012).

Russia is somewhat a unique case. When compared to other top universities abroad using the scale of global rankings, Russian higher education institutions generally underperform. At the same time there is a tremendous amount of talent among both students and the academic profession. Russia can boast a distinguished academic

tradition. The problem is not just in low scores and weak representation of the Russian universities in the global rankings, which have their own internal issues and are not always the most objective measure of the success of a university as an educational institution. A former Minister of Education, Livanov, notes, “Entering the international rankings can’t be a goal in itself. We understand that the rankings only provide a rough evaluation of university performance” (ICEF Monitor, 2014). A much bigger issue is the fact that the national higher education institutions with the history of distinguished research and scientific innovation, the universities that provide quality education remain very low internationally recognized. This, in its turn, influences whether and how much they get involved in international research collaborations; whether they will receive governmental funding or national and international research grants, how many international faculty members and students they will be able to attract, and other factors that are important for an educational institution to further develop and thrive.

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS: 5 – 100 RUSSIAN ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE PROJECT

With the increased global university competition and with the international university rankings gaining more influence and popularity, universities that are concerned about their position among their international counterparts have to develop strategies to become more globally competitive. The Prime Minister, Dmitry Medvedev, during a State Council meeting stated: “I would like to remind you that the objective to bring Russian schools into the top 100 universities in the world remains relevant. Frankly, this is not a simple objective. Nevertheless, we will attempt to fulfill it” (ICEF Monitor, 2014).

In May 2012, the Russian government introduced the 5 - 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, a multi-year project that was created with the goal to maximize the competitive position of the group of the leading Russian universities in the global higher education market of educational services and research programs. Some of the tasks that this program aims to fulfill include but are not limited to: developing better research capacity of the universities; designing and implementing system-wide, institutional and infrastructure measures; bringing the composition and the quality of educational programs to the level of international standards; integration of education, entrepreneurship and innovation; and the increase of export of educational services (5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, 2014). Originally, the plan called for at least five universities to be ranked among the top 100 higher education institutions in the world by 2020. Fifty-four universities from all over the country applied and thirty-six were selected to compete based on their research work, educational programs, levels of involvement in the international academic community, and position in the global university rankings. Those universities had to create their plans on how they would enhance their competitiveness on the international scale. Some of the proposed initiatives were based on the global university rankings criteria and included but were not limited to developing joint educational and research programs with international partner universities and international research laboratories; creating a campaign to attract more foreign faculty and students; increasing international academic mobility; establishing the centers of excellence, and others. Based on the assessment of their chances of achieving high positions in the rankings, 15 universities were selected in the beginning of the project in 2013. In October 2015, six more were added to this group. These institutions are located

in various cities across the country, representing different regions: in Moscow and Moscow region (6), Saint Petersburg (3), Tomsk (2), Nizhniy Novgorod (1), Vladivostok (1), Kazan (1), Novosibirsk (1), Yekaterinburg (1), Samara (1), Tyumen (1), Chelyabinsk (1), Kaliningrad (1), and Krasnoyarsk. The Council on Competitiveness Enhancement of Leading Russian Universities among Global Research and Education Centers overlooking this project consists of twelve international and Russian representatives of the academic community, including public officials, scholars and experts in the field of higher education reform. The Council is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Tatyana Golikova; and the 5 - 100 Project, being a national governmental initiative, is supervised and funded by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

Furthermore, a special monitoring program was established in order to track the progress and to assess the performance of the participating universities in their efforts to reach the key program benchmarks. According to one of the former Council members, Oleg Alekseev, the universities were supposed to create very specific roadmaps for their institutional development in the direction of internationalization and those universities that do not meet the established requirements may be expelled from the project (2014). It is interesting to note that each participating university had to create their own unique strategy in trying to achieve the goals set by the project. The reasoning behind this is that every university has its own background, history, concentrations, and resources; therefore, they can all reach the same goals in their own unique way (Rozhenkova & Rust, 2018). Most participating universities hired teams of national and international experts to work on the roadmaps. These action plans include such initiatives as attracting

international faculty and researchers; developing academic mobility programs; establishing international joint research centers and programs; recruiting more foreign students; and others (5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, n.d.). For example, here is a 5-step algorithm of achieving excellence developed by the Ural Federal University (Sandler, 2014):

1. Attracting talented Russian students;
2. Creating business-partner network, linking globally successful Russian and foreign companies searching for talented students;
3. Establishing academic partnership programs involving world best universities and research organizations attracted by the UrFU business-partner network (Step 2) and talented students (Step 1) and pursuing research goals together;
4. Attaining teaching excellence through the recruitment of globally recognized professors and graduates from top universities; academic partnership programs (Step 3), business-partner networks (Step 2) and talented students (Step 1) being their motivation;
5. Attracting talented international students pulled in by high quality teaching (Step 4), academic partnership programs (Step 3), business-partner networks (Step 2) and talented students (Step 1).

The university analysts assume that taking all these consecutive steps should take approximately five to seven years assuming that five to ten programs based on the above algorithm are undertaken every year (Sandler, 2014). These steps might not appear unique, what is unique, however, is the combination of these steps, since each

participating university comes up with their own algorithm depending on their strengths and weaknesses in terms of the global competition as well as available resources.

Regarding funding, in summer 2014 the Russian government announced the release of nearly USD 300 million to the 15 universities in the effort to boost the global competitiveness of Russia's higher education institutions (ICEF Monitor, 2014).

Different participating institutions received different amounts: the Institute of Physics and Technology, the National Research University Higher School of Economics and the National Research Nuclear University MEPhI each got USD 27 million. Novosibirsk State University, the St. Petersburg National Research University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics, the Moscow Institute for Steel and Alloys, and the Ural Federal University in Yekaterinburg were handed USD 22.5 million. The rest of the universities got the remaining sum divided equally (The Moscow Times, 2014). Just to compare, the annual budget of the National Research University Higher School of Economics is about USD 350 million, therefore, although the numbers on the surface might look big, in reality they constitute less than 10 percent of most of the universities' budgets.

According to Altbach (2014), one of the members of the 5 – 100 Council, the project has several major objectives: to help a small group of the Russian universities to move up in the global rankings, and (which is more important) to help them identify their position among the best universities in the world. Additionally, another critical goal of the Project is to initiate further substantial reforms, particularly in regards to the university governance, organization and internationalization. Furthermore, the 5 - 100 Project provides additional resources for the top universities, which becomes very helpful

given that Russia's spending per capita on higher education and research is less than in most developed countries (Altbach, 2014). Nevertheless, these funds are not transformative, which means that they will play a significant role in supporting the necessary change but are not enough to ensure systemic sustainable change; therefore, the universities need to use them strategically (Rozhenkova & Rust, 2018).

Russia is not the only country implementing some sort of "excellence initiatives". Germany being concerned with its universities' poor performance in comparison with those of the U.S., the U.K. and the Netherlands, held an open competition for universities. It was supported by significant funding for the universities that promised major innovation. Similarly to Russia, the funds were not transformative, however, this initiative laid the foundation for the more competitive research-intensive universities to emerge. Another appropriate example is China, where the government identified and funded a number of universities with the aim of strengthening and turning them into internationally competitive research institutions. Two of the most noticeable initiatives are Project 985 and Project 211. The latter aims to strengthen 112 higher education institutions and their global position among their international counterparts. Some of the program's major objectives include: to train high-level professional manpower in the context of the country's social and economic development, to improve higher education, to accelerate the development of science, technology and culture, and to enhance China's overall capacity and international competitiveness (China Education Center, n.d.). The goal of Project 985 that started in 1998 is to found world-class universities in China. In the initial phase of the project there were 9 universities; the second phase, launched in 2004, included 39 universities. Although these programs have succeeded in creating

research universities, only a few institutions managed to become globally competitive. Furthermore, the C9 program aims to create a Chinese equivalent of Ivy League of nine universities that have the potential to become world-class. According to Altbach (2014), it is not clear whether this program will succeed. However, some Chinese universities, especially younger ones, which have been aggressively implementing various internationalization initiatives, have been consistently pushing down their competitors in the global university rankings.

Learning from others' experience is important and useful. The idea behind having an international Council for 5-100 Program is that international experience should help inform executive decisions and suggest international best practices. It is clear that any improvements should be implemented having taken Russian realities into account, but the international perspectives may be useful to consider, especially given that until recently the Russian system of education has remained very traditional and unchanged for decades. The international members should be able to bring a global view to this project and direct to innovative ideas from around the world.

PART TWO

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCHER IDENTITY

RESEARCHER IDENTITY

My interest in the topic of internationalization of Russian higher education was strengthened through my participation in the Global University Summit that took place in Moscow, Russia in April 2014. The central topics of the Summit were: defining the new role of the universities in the rapidly changing international environment, developing new instruments for more dynamic development, and finding the new strategies for the universities to become more competitive in the international higher education market and to move up in the global university rankings. Special attention was paid to the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), in which only one Russian higher education institution, Moscow State University, at that point was ranked in the top 100 (84th in 2014 and 79th in 2013). Moscow State University, founded in 1755, is considered to be one of the top Russian universities; it is being consistently highly ranked by the national university rankings, but not by international ones. The university “serves the function of Harvard, Oxford and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology all rolled into one” (Kishkovsky, 2012). A sufficient amount of time at the Summit was devoted to discussing the major questions and challenges that Russian universities face in competing with other universities internationally. I believe my participation in this event was very important for my further research. First of all, I could clearly see that the issue of the universities striving to get the world-class status and to become more competitive among other institutions across the globe was one of the urgent and most important ones for the

Russian higher education policy. Second, I was able to lay the groundwork for my future research by establishing my personal credibility and making contacts with the people who were directly or indirectly involved in the process of enhancing the competitiveness of Russian universities.

While conducting this study and reflecting on my identity as a researcher, I found myself in an interesting position. I was born and grew up in Russia, I speak fluent Russian as my first language and I identify as a Russian national. Furthermore, I have worked as a faculty member for a little over ten years at two Russian universities. Therefore, when designing my dissertation research project, I was considering myself more of an insider, who will have little to no difficulty in approaching the universities and finding potential interviewees for my study. At the same time, I have and will have received both of my graduate degrees, Master's and PhD, from the U.S. universities, conducted various projects while grounding my research mostly on Western theoretical foundations and for some time was disconnected from the system of higher education in Russia. Additionally, when I started my data collection, I realized that having come from the U.S. and representing UCLA, I was looked at as more of a foreigner or an outsider. This perception was much stronger in the regional universities where, I assume, they do not get to deal on a regular basis with a large number of international researchers studying their institutions. Ironically, I had more difficulty finding potential interviewees in my hometown, where I have spent over a decade working at universities. Interestingly enough, while being in Russia and reflecting on my own identity, my perception of myself as a researcher also shifted.

Insider and outsider positionings have long been discussed and defined by social sciences theorists. In the international and comparative education literature, a number of researchers argue against the fixed nature of these positionings (Katyal and King, 2011; Arthurs, 2010). Arthur (2010) states that a researcher's identity as an insider or an outsider can shift over time depending on the socio-political context and cultural values. Additionally, there are other potential reasons for switching between these positionings. According to Milligan (2016), while the research has concentrated mostly on the theoretical developments of thinking about the researcher's insider - outsider identities, less attention has been paid to the methodological processes that might be contributing to those shifts while conducting cross-cultural studies. A number of scholars in the field of international and comparative education have stressed the importance of revisiting the duality of the insider and outsider identities and its relevance to the scholars conducting cross-cultural research (Arthur, 2010; Katyal and King, 2011). Furthermore, other authors point out a more complex relationship between the researchers and the researched that should go beyond the traditional boundaries of gender, ethnicity, race, nationality, language and culture, and consider various ontological, epistemological and disciplinary boundaries (McNess, Arthur & Crossley, 2015). When conducting research, one is never quite totally inside or outside; they assume multiple identities that get revealed depending on the context, people and the situation. This fluidity of identities suggests the reconsideration of the fixed concepts of an insider and an outsider. Milligan (2016) introduces the positioning of an 'inbetweeneer', that comes in contrast with the fixed positioning and means that a researcher is neither an insider nor an outsider and exhibits the traits of both identities.

Being fluent in the language and having worked in Russian higher education for many years before, I had the knowledge and experience of the system and could relate to the people that I was interacting with throughout my research trips. At the same time, when I was entering the research sites, I came to realize that there was a discrepancy between my image of myself and how other people viewed me. Having lived in Los Angeles for several years, representing an American university, having conducted research as a part of a UCLA PhD program, and having been out of the loop of the Russian higher education reforms for a few years, I exhibited the traits of an outsider and, therefore, was perceived as one by many people I came across with. Depending on my interactions with different stakeholders and, at different times, having been perceived differently, I came to realize that I was shifting between different identities: that of an internationally oriented researcher, a doctoral student from an American university, a Los Angeles resident, a Russian-speaking female living in the U.S., and a former Russian university faculty member. Depending on different situation, the context of my interactions and the people I was talking with, I was shifting from an insider to an outsider and vice versa. Additionally, the recent political tensions between the U.S. and Russia did not make this situation easier and affected how some people viewed me knowing that I was coming from the U.S. As mentioned before, going on my field research trips I initially felt as more of an insider or at least a knowledgeable outsider and made a conscious effort to not appear as an outsider; however, in the case with the regional universities, I have to admit that I was hardly ever perceived as an inbetweenner, let alone an insider, which made entering certain spaces and building relationships more difficult. Hence, this partially affected my data collection process and made some

interviews less engaging. Having acknowledged that, I still managed to establish connections and to have fruitful conversations with a number of university officials and researchers at those institutions that were equally interested and willing to share their perspectives and to contribute to this research project.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Enhancing global competitiveness of Russian universities is a national issue and a pervasive problem: every university has to deal with it to a certain degree. Even if a university is not aspiring to succeed in the global competition, it still affects their reputation, governance, and organization, in either positive or negative way. My dissertation research is only partially focused on the national level of the aforementioned issue, and is mostly concentrated on the institutional one. In my dissertation I primarily look at how higher education institutions are responding to the global and national imperatives of internationalizing higher education.

The main goals of my research are to explore how Russian universities react to the challenges of global higher education competition and to define what their future might look like in respect to other universities across the globe. Therefore, the questions this research seeks to answer are as follows:

Research question 1: How do Russian universities respond to the global competition phenomenon?

Research question 2: How do Russian universities assess their current position on the global higher education arena and the challenges that they face throughout the internationalization process?

Research question 3: What kind of specific institutional changes are Russian higher education institutions implementing in response to the global competition?

Research question 4: What are the prospects of Russian universities for the success of educational reforms in the global competition?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Within the context of globalization, development of technological, economic and cultural exchange, as well as increasing global competition, Russian universities have faced the necessity to boost their competitiveness within the global higher education market and implement certain changes in their governance, organization, student population, curriculum, and academic work and culture. One of the theoretical orientations that I am relying on for this research while looking at these changes is globalization theory.

Furthermore, since the proposed research deals directly with organizations, in particular, higher education institutions, and how they develop in the context of Russia, another theoretical orientation that I base my research on is organization development theory.

Globalization Theory

Globalization has strongly affected education systems across various countries. Global economic, political and cultural changes impact educational practices and policies. Being one of the key issues not only in comparative education, globalization is studied by researchers from a variety of disciplines. Neubauer (2007), for example, points out that globalization has changed “how people live, work, identify and aggregate, communicate and engage - locally, nationally, internationally, globally, and how they are educated” (p.

24). Given the immense body of literature on globalization, there are plenty of definitions of this concept. Torres (2007) defines globalization as “increasing interdependent and sophisticated relationships between economies, cultures, institutions and nation states” (p. 11). Rhoads and Torres (2006) view globalization as having “many manifestations that interact simultaneously in a fairly convoluted fashion” (p. 9). They present five faces of globalizations: globalization from above, focused on economic globalization and framed by neoliberalism; globalization from below, manifested in oppositional social movements; globalization represented by the movement and exchange of people and ideas and the subsequent influence on culture; globalization of human rights that emerges from increased international integration, and places more emphasis on human rights rather than on markets; and the globalization of the international war on terrorism. Similarly, Kellner (2000) notes that globalization “involves crucial economic, political, and cultural dimensions” (p. 304). Furthermore, Stromquist (2002) brings up the two important aspects of contemporary globalization: the emphasis on a global market and economy, and the development of new technology, both contributing to global interconnectivity and interdependence. According to Spring (2008), the research on educational globalization can be divided into four major theoretical frameworks interpreting its causes and processes. The first one suggests that all cultures are gradually integrating into one world culture that contains Western ideals of mass schooling. The second one states that there are two unequal world systems, with the core system represented by the U.S., the EU and Japan dominating periphery nations. The third, postcolonial approach looks at globalization as the way for the wealthy countries to become even wealthier at the expense of the poorer countries. Finally, the culturalist

interpretive framework implies the borrowing and lending of educational policies and practices within a global context.

As Morrow and Torres (2000) state, “no place has been more subject to these processes of internationalization and globalization than the university” (p. 44). Given that globalization is one of the very pronounced structural features of the contemporary world, it affects higher education in its various aspects: policymaking, governance, organization, and academic work, culture and identity (Vaira, 2004). Rust, Johnstone and Allaf (2009) define three categories of educational response to globalization: receptivity (the process of borrowing and adopting policies of other educational systems with the aim of improving one’s own), resistance (countering globalization process through maintaining differences in cultures, languages, and political ideologies), and restoration (preservation and promotion of indigenous knowledge and practices). Undoubtedly, comparing different systems with the aim of finding and implementing the best practices can greatly benefit education in various countries. However, when borrowing and adopting education policies it is crucial to find the balance between those three main components – receptivity, resistance and restoration.

Within the context of globalization, universities respond to its challenges through engaging in all sorts of internationalization initiatives. The term ‘internationalization’ is not new and has been used for decades in political science and governmental discourse. It gained its popularity in education only in the 1980s. Before that, the term ‘international education’ was more widely used instead, which eventually led to a discussion about the difference between terms ‘international education’ and ‘comparative education’, ‘global’ and ‘multicultural’ education, and the more recent ones: ‘borderless’ and ‘cross-border’

education (Knight, 2015). Interestingly enough, the former term implies that there are no borders for education, while the latter acknowledges the existence of those. Both terms reflect the today's reality: with distance education and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), geographical borders tend to diminish; while the national borders cannot be completely ignored when the focus is on policy regulations, funding, and accreditation.

In the last few decades, the notion of internationalization of higher education has evolved. If at first, it was viewed more as a component of an institution's profile, now it directly touches upon the questions of social and curricular relevance, the quality and prestige of a university, national and international competitiveness, and potential for innovation (Knight, 2015). For decades, the research and debates on internationalization have been dominated by the individuals and organizations from the developed world. This has led to the power imbalance and to leaving certain voices out (Jooste & Heleta, 2017). The authors further call for collaborative engagement in research on internationalization ensuring an inclusive international dialogue with the aim of thinking critically about the existing issues and paradigms and creating the new knowledge on the topic of internationalization. Scholars in the field of comparative education emphasize the importance of revisiting the definition of internationalization, taking into consideration the current challenges and changes, and incorporating different voices and international contexts (Knight, 2007; Jooste & Heleta, 2017). There are multiple definitions of internationalization. According to Knight's (2007) "updated" definition, internationalization implies incorporating the intercultural and global components into the goals and main functions of the institution - research, teaching and service activities.

Internationalization can have multiple dimensions and should be understood on the global, national and institutional levels, and the relationship between the three (Stukalova, Shishkin & Stukalova, 2015). Internationalization on the global level is managed by international organizations, such as UNESCO or the OECD, aiming to contribute to peace building and to foster cooperation between peoples in the sphere of education, science and culture. These agencies develop a general and common global framework, which defines the context in which higher education institutions operate today (Vaira, 2004). Talking about the global level of internationalization, it is important to consider the role of international cross-country agreements as well, for instance, the agreements between European countries defining the Bologna process. On the national level, internationalization is realized by national governments and is defined by the set of governmental policies and norms that shape and reshape the higher education sector in accordance with the national culture, and social and economic needs. Evidently, in the context of globalization, these policies and the systems of higher education cannot develop in isolation, and their policies and strategies to a certain extent will be shaped by the international trends and changes in education. The institutional level of internationalization involves decision-making processes in regards to the policy and strategies on the university level. At this level, universities ensure the implementation of the governmental internationalization policies with the aim of transforming national university into an international one (Vaira, 2004). The notion of an international university implies inclusion of the global aspect in the educational and research activities of the institution. Furthermore, higher education institutions are not only shaped by national policies, but also by specific institutional cultural features and traditions

inherited from their past, which to a large extent defines how universities respond to the current challenges of globalization. Different universities have different responses to the new changes in the academic environment, which produce a diverse set of outcomes in organizational structure, behavior and culture, as well as in the pathways to internationalization.

Scholars differentiate between internal and external types of internationalization (Semchenko, 2012; Stukalova, Shishkin & Stukalova, 2015). The former implies creating an institutional culture that promotes and supports international and intercultural communication and understanding, which might include various programs and research projects with the global components added to them; while the latter ensures offering educational services and products across borders through the use of education technologies and partnerships (Semchenko, 2012). The examples of internal globalization can be implementing international educational standards and internationalizing the curriculum; and of the external one – introducing study abroad programs and establishing international partnerships (Stukalova, Shishkin & Stukalova, 2015).

Internationalization does not mean unification of education in this or that country, it rather suggests the analysis and potential borrowing of the best practices that are being used and implemented by other universities across the globe and, thus, improving one's university system of governance and organization. Higher education institutions all over the world engage in the process of copying the strategies and approaches, as well as borrowing educational practices and policies from other countries where those appear to work successfully. The problem is that what works well in one context, may not necessarily work in another. Therefore, it is important to remember that a foreign

example cannot just be blindly borrowed but should be understood within the proper context, only after that it can be successfully adopted. Phillips and Schweisfurth (2011) note three stages of the borrowing process: identification of successful practice, introduction into the home context, and assimilation. If the context is not taken into account, misreporting (exaggeration or distortion) of information may take place. This may lead to misplaced enthusiasm for the foreign educational practices and may further result in educational experiments that will turn out to be quite damaging (Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2011). There is a wealth of examples illustrating that transferring policies and practices should be done with caution. Russia sometimes seems to be overenthusiastic about different educational practices and policies abroad. Thus, while implementing reforms in the system of education they occasionally tend to borrow certain practices without considering possible negative effects. So, those supposedly successful initiatives sometimes turn into damaging experiments for school administrators, teachers, students and their parents. Therefore, while borrowing policies it is important to think about how they can be transferred into another system with minimal to no damaging effects.

Organization Development Theory

A number of scholars point out that globalization, technological advancements, and economic fluctuations have pushed various organizations to search for increased competitiveness through new radical forms of change (Kanter, 1997; Beer & Nohria, 2000; Burnes, 2007). Evidently, in the changing environment higher education institutions as organizations get impacted by the new challenges that they face and start

developing in a different way introducing changes into their structure, governance and culture in order to stay effective in the new circumstances. Organization development (OD) is a “process that applies a broad range of behavioral science knowledge and practices to help the organizations to build their capability to change and to achieve greater effectiveness” (p. 17). Kurt Lewin with his three-step change process is widely recognized as one of the founding fathers of OD. According to this linear model – unfreezing > changing > refreezing – the successful organizational change involves creating the perception that the old order does not work any longer and the change is needed, then introducing the necessary changes, and finally solidifying it as a new organizational norm. Although criticized by some scholars for being overly simplistic and outmoded, it is still considered to be the classic approach for managing organizational change (Cummings, Bridgman & Brown, 2016). Organization development is an ongoing, systematic process of implementing effective organizational change. It is known as both a field of science focused on understanding and managing change and as a field of scientific study and inquiry. It is interdisciplinary in nature and draws on sociology, psychology, and theories of motivation, learning, and personality.

There are a number of definitions of organization development that have slightly different emphasis, whether it is on the culture of the organization, the process of change or various aspects of organization development. Cummings and Worley (2009) provide the following definition that incorporates the different views on the organization development: “Organization development is a system-wide application and transfer of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development, improvement and reinforcement of the strategies, structures, and processes that lead to organization

effectiveness” (p. 1). According to Schmuck and Runkel (1994), organization development is based on the following assumptions: groups differ from a sum of individuals; change occurs through work groups; members' goals and motives have relevance for action; members' feelings have relevance to action; untapped resources have relevance; and change is made from within.

The theory of organization development has undergone intensive evaluation and criticism. According to Dalin and Rust (1983), it has been criticized for its identification with the concept of management (especially in industry). The applicability of the concept of organizational effectiveness has also been questioned by a number of education researchers. Furthermore, the authors state that with organization development being internationalized, its “peculiar American bias” has become recognized. Dalin and Rust (1983) define the following key understandings of organization development theory in relation to educational institutions:

- The goal of organization development is to improve the functioning of educational organizations relying on the holistic approach, that is concentrating more on the whole system and not on isolated practices.
- Organization development is self-correcting and self-renewing process undertaken by the members of organization.
- Organization development includes the following steps: self-assessment, diagnosis, problem solving, planning and action.
- It is a long-term process.

It is important to mention that organization development focuses on improving the total system – the organization and its parts in the context of the larger environment

that affects them. Changes may occur in the strategy, structure and/or the processes of the entire system (Cummings & Worley, 2009). Organization development is evaluated in terms of its ability to improve an organization's effectiveness. A number of researchers point out the difficulties in assessing organization's effectiveness in higher education. There are certain obstacles to the selection of criteria of effectiveness in institutions. The first difficulty is in specifying the concrete measurable goals and outcomes, without which it is rather challenging to assess the effectiveness of an organization (Cameron, 1978). Second, the evaluation of institutional effectiveness might face skepticism and defensiveness of the academic community. They may see it as restriction to the academic freedom, to the freedom to experiment and innovate with the risk of failure, as well as to the freedom of establishing their own unique quality standards (Cameron, 1978). Furthermore, many individual higher education institutions tend to view themselves as having unique objectives and characteristics that cannot be compared to those of other institutions. Third, the financial concerns of universities have led to research on efficiency rather than effectiveness. Efficiency deals with how a given output can be produced at as low cost as possible, which, when applied to educational institutions means how to provide quality education for less money (Jones & Jones, 2013). Efficiency may be measured by such indicators as cost per student, faculty-student ratio, cost per faculty members and others. The criteria of efficiency appear to be not sufficient enough to understand the success or effectiveness of higher education institutions since they should not only be efficient, that is, use their resources at the lowest cost, but should also be able to use those resources effectively. Therefore, while doing research on

organization development, more emphasis is needed on identifying and choosing the right criteria of organization effectiveness.

When talking about the organizational change and development, it is important to acknowledge that higher education institutions are tradition bound organizations that have to maintain timeless values and to be somewhat resistant to change in order to protect those values (Kezar, 2011). One of the reasons for a university's success as an institution is its ability to stay focused on and true to its mission and values. However, higher education institutions do change due to certain internal and external challenges and new developments. They develop with the aim to identify and to address the problems that they might face. Changes can occur but are not limited to the transformation of the curricula, reorienting the employee roles, creating new administrative structures and others.

Given the context of this research it is important to look at how higher education institutions develop and change while facing the challenges of globalization. Their historically rooted values undergo transformation in response to the new social, political and economic demands. As a result, the mission and the foundational values of the higher education institutions very often get redefined to include the features of the new globalized reality. These changes go beyond the institutional level and get embedded in the national higher education sector redefining its role, governance and priorities (Vaira, 2004). The way in which universities as organizations behave in the new changing environment depends on their strategic responses to the pressures of the global competition. In the context of globalization, higher education institutions go through the deep process of organizational transformations reevaluating their mission, values, and

policies. This process may lead to the resistance and tensions within organizations, but also to the adaptation of the established national higher education system to the new globalization features and the adjustment of higher education institutions and their structural and cultural features to the new global imperatives and demands (Vaira, 2004). This dissertation focuses on the universities organizational development and change that is triggered by globalization features and conditions.

RESEARCH METHODS

To answer my research questions I used qualitative methods that included document collection and analysis and case studies of four universities. With the global competition currently being one of the most important topics in the Russian education policy, there are a number of documents that I identified and examined with the purpose of grounding my case studies on them. Since boosting the universities' competitiveness is a national initiative, I started with the policy documents, acts and resolutions issued by the federal government and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. Then I looked at the documents compiled by the particular higher education institutions with the aim to learn what kind of strategies and policies they were adopting in response to the national call to become more competitive on the global higher education arena. These documents provided the solid foundation for my research; the primary source of the data collection, however, was the case studies of universities. Case studies included interviews with university officials, faculty and administrative staff members who are actively involved in various internationalization initiatives. Using multiple methods of data collection ensured the convergence of results, as well as provided rich data enabling the

inclusion of the participants' perspectives (Golafshani, 2003). The two methods of analyzing documents and conducting interviews appeared to be complimentary to each other since the documents do not always show the full picture of what is happening and has been achieved by an institution. Moreover, the interviews conducted with a wide range of stakeholders provided a variety of perspectives on the process and the results of internationalization initiatives implemented by universities. Finally, various reports and information posted on university websites tends to focus more on the positive sides and successes rather than negative sides of the process and even more rarely – failures; therefore, frequently, the interviews revealed certain aspects of internationalization activities that would have been impossible to unveil simply through studying the institutional documents.

The reason for choosing the case study method was to get a more complete understanding of how higher education institutions in the particular context engage in internationalization initiatives in response to the global university competition. Case studies are normally described as a form of qualitative inquiry that is most appropriate for a comprehensive examination of a complex issue in its context (Harrison et al., 2017). Creswell (2003) notes that case study design is especially widely used in organizational studies and across the social sciences; and it is ideally suited for exploration of issues in depth. Therefore, the major goal of a case study is to conduct an in-depth analysis of an issue or a phenomenon within its context while looking at it from the perspective of participants. Merriam (2009) emphasizes that one of the defining characteristics of case study research is the case - “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (p. 67). Depending on the purpose of the project, the case study can be

categorized as exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory, and it may be based on a single case or on multiple cases. Case study is a research strategy rather than a method; and while a method usually involves a particular procedure, a strategy usually is less specific—a case study does not claim any particular method for data collection or data analysis (Merriam, 2009). Apart from collecting and analyzing the information about the particular universities and what kind of strategies/policies they are developing and implementing with the aim of becoming more internationally competitive and recognized, I also conducted interviews with the university officials, administrative staff and faculty members involved in this process. According to Merriam (2009), “Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 6). I conducted interviews to get a better idea of what is actually going on in the universities and how people who work there are reacting to the new goals, strategies and policies that are currently being developed and implemented.

The sampling strategy that I used for this study is purposive or purposeful, that is “based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). The sample consists of thirty-eight participants from four universities situated in the cities of Moscow and Yaroslavl. The Moscow institution that I looked at participates in the 5 - 100 Project: National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE). HSE is one of the largest and leading research universities in Russia. It specializes in economics, social sciences, mathematics, engineering and computer science. The university has more than twenty departments with the main

campus located in Moscow and three additional campuses in St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod and Perm. The number of enrolled students is a little over 17,000, which includes both undergraduate and graduate students. I believe it is especially interesting to see what a program participant, that is highly motivated to succeed in the 5 - 100 Project in particular and in the global university competition in general, is doing in order to enhance its competitiveness. Additionally, when choosing a university I had to consider the issue of access; at HSE, I already established contacts through meeting some of their researchers at an international research conference.

For the second case study I combined three regional universities: Yaroslavl State University (YSU), Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University (YSPU) and Yaroslavl State Technical University (YSTU). The reasons for looking at these three universities together were: first of all, because of similarities of the context (in terms of location, type of the institution and overall development goals); second, none of these institutions participate in the 5 - 100 Project; and third, the number of staff and faculty members involved in internationalization initiatives is considerably smaller than at HSE and, therefore, it appeared to be more reasonable to present these universities as one case. My objective with the case study of the regional universities was to see what is happening in terms of the global competition with universities that are, first, located outside of the major Russian cities and, second, are not as incentivized by extra funding or specific governmental programs. Are they even concerned about the global competition and global university rankings? Do they bother being internationally recognized or not? If they do, what kind of institutional changes are they implementing? Besides, Yaroslavl is my hometown, so I was hoping to have easier access to these universities as I was

previously employed as a faculty member at one of them. Therefore, this represented convenience sampling, which means I chose it based on the location and availability of respondents.

To briefly introduce the regional universities that I looked at: Yaroslavl State University (YSU) is one of the leading Russian universities in the upper-Volga region preparing students in 70 specialties and specializing in socio-political sciences, natural sciences, humanities, law, economics, and computer science. Located in a smaller city, the university has about 7,800 students, which is still quite a large institution. The university offers traditional five-year course of study along with Bachelor's and Master's degree programs. Moreover, one can continue their education on the Candidate and Doctor of Sciences tracks.

Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University (YSPU) is one of the oldest pedagogical educational institutions in Russia with about 10,000 students and 600 faculty members. Similarly to YSU, the university offers degree programs of the Specialist (5 years), as well as Bachelor's and Master's programs on the part-time, full-time and distance learning bases. Post-graduate programs (Candidate and Doctor of Sciences) are also available at YSPU.

Yaroslavl State Technical University (YSTU) is one of the well-established Yaroslavl universities offering Specialist's, Bachelor's and Master's degrees with the total enrollment of about 5,000 students. The university offers 60 different technical and economic programs and specializations within five faculties and three institutes. YSTU has one of the largest campuses in the region with eight academic buildings and four dormitories.

On the initial stages of my research project, my biggest challenge was to identify the potential interviewees and making contacts with those people (policy makers, university officials and faculty members) who were currently involved in the reform process. The governmental and institutional policy document analysis that I conducted helped me to do that. The university officials were able to provide the more technical details of the process, while the faculty members even if not directly participating in the internationalization initiatives could share their attitudes toward those, as well as toward global competition and rankings in general. I had 24 interviews in Moscow and 14 in the regional institutions. I used the snowball sampling strategy to recruit the interviewees, that is, I asked those who already agreed to participate to refer me to the other potential participants who met the necessary criteria. The interviews were semi-structured, that is the questions were more flexibly worded with the order of questions not being determined beforehand. The questions were mostly open-ended inviting the participants to provide as much information as possible. The conversations took about one hour; they were recorded with the consent of the participants and later transcribed and analyzed. The lists of interview questions can be found in the Appendices section.

Finally, it was essential that the respondents' identities remained anonymous. The guarantee of confidentiality also encouraged the participants to provide more candid responses in their interviews. During the interviews, where I directly contacted the university officials and faculty members, I needed to make sure that the adequate procedures ensuring confidentiality were in place. This was achieved by the following: removing all direct identifiers, substituting codes for identifiers and using pseudonyms. Furthermore, in order to avoid the invasion of the participants' privacy, the

interview process was designed so that subjects could choose not to answer questions that made them uncomfortable, or that they wanted to skip for any reason. Finally, when reporting on the results, I am not using the participants' real names so that I do not breach their confidentiality.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1: NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS (HSE)

Founded in 1992, National Research University Higher School of Economics having developed from an economic institute into a comprehensive university, has become one of the leading universities not only in Russia, but also in Eastern Europe and Eurasia with four campuses in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod and Perm. It is one of the leading higher education institutions in economics, management, sociology, computer science, public policy, and political science. The university serves about 40,000 students with 7,000 faculty members and researchers representing 50 countries (HSE, 2019a).

While striving to be a full-fledged player in the international academic community, the university claims to combine Russian educational traditions with international teaching and research practices. According to the institution's mission, the university carries out its academic activities based on international academic and organizational standards, stressing the importance of international engagement and collaboration: "We perceive ourselves as a part of the global academic community and believe that international partnership and engagement in global university cooperation are the key elements of our movement forward" (HSE, 2019a). Although HSE is not included in the top 100 universities in the global rankings, it is consistently ranked quite high in the international subject rankings. For instance, ARWU ranked HSE in the top 100 for Sociology and Mathematics in the Global Ranking of Academic Subjects. QS World University

Rankings also placed this university into the top 100 subject rankings for Sociology, Politics and International Studies, and Economics and Econometrics (HSE, 2019b).

In its internationalization efforts, HSE does not have a goal to become “just like Harvard”, for example, but rather to use its competitive advantages to become a more efficient university that is more recognizable on the global scale. Although there is no objective to copy this or that university across the globe, when the 5 – 100 Project roadmap was created, HSE had to choose some sort of benchmark universities whose internationalization experience they would be learning from while introducing their own initiatives. Therefore, they chose those universities that actively participated as international partners in helping create and shape HSE as a higher education institution. HSE was established with the participation and under the influence of the London School of Economics, Erasmus University, Sorbonne University and Humboldt University. These four universities have served as the benchmark institutions for HSE throughout their internationally oriented activities. Given its institutional profile, the London School of Economics is the most probable “model” university for Higher School of Economics (noticeably, even their names are similar). Furthermore, when working on its development strategies and initiatives, HSE is looking at those universities who have similar profiles, goals and challenges, and who have succeeded in the global competition, whether it is reflected in the rankings or by other measurements. For instance, considering young newly established Chinese universities that are trying to enhance their international presence is beneficial for HSE. Moreover, several useful lessons can be learned from the analysis of the higher ranked universities’ indicators and what strategies the institutions use to improve those. Finally, HSE is considering the experience of those

universities who have implemented similar reforms or are involved in similar educational and research activities. Warwick University, with which HSE has a dual Master's degree program, is one such example. Warwick is a public university in England that was founded in 1967. Similarly to HSE, it is a comparably young institution that is involved in a number of governmental projects. HSE, being one of the national research leaders, acts as an expert center for the government of the Russian Federation, which is unique comparing to other Russian universities. Given these similarities, learning from Warwick University's internationalization initiatives is also helpful.

HSE Development Program 2013-2020 (5 – 100 Roadmaps)

There are a number of documents posted on the HSE's official website that are related to the 5 - 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, specifically the four stages of Roadmaps: Stage One (created in 2013), Stage Two (was revisited in 2014 and defined the further development of HSE for 2015 - 2016), Stage Three (2017 – 2018) and the final Stage Four (2019 – 2020). According to the original roadmap (Stage One), HSE's strategic goal has been “to achieve globally recognized standards in its research, education and project work, and to join the ranks of the world's leading research universities in the social sciences, economics, humanities, computer sciences and mathematics” (HSE, 2013). The set objectives included: to transform the university into a pivotal point for the country's integration into international networks of knowledge and technologies in the social sciences, economics and humanities; to become a global leader of research and development in the field of transition economies and societies; to attract the most talented domestic and international students while offering Bachelor's, Master's

and PhD programs in a wide range of disciplines; and to become an alma mater for professionals possessing global competency.

Three major challenges in achieving these goals were identified in the documents: HSE's research agenda, education process and infrastructure. First of all, the research that is being conducted at HSE is predominantly looking at the issues of national interest. This focus needs to change in order to incorporate both research on Russia and the questions of the global importance. Additionally, in order to increase the university's international research and enhance its visibility globally, more articles and papers should be published in the internationally recognized reputable research journals. Prior to the beginning of the 5 - 100 Project, the total number of such publications per HSE faculty was about one fifth of that of the London School of Economics [LSE was taken as an example as a university comparable to HSE] (HSE, 2013). Furthermore, the education process needs some improvement in order for HSE to become more competitive on the global higher education market and to be able to attract more international students. According to the aforementioned roadmap, the university's education process lacks efficient interaction between its research and teaching components, as well as curriculum flexibility and an integrated e-learning system. Moreover, due to the fact that the HSE brand is not well recognized outside of Russia and the promotion of HSE's education is quite weak, the representation of international students is very low. As for the infrastructure, it also needs some major improvements in regards to the number of classrooms and labs, dormitory space, and quality of living in those dormitories. Improving the infrastructure will help to attract more international students to the university. Finally, the system of integrating newly recruited international faculty into the

university academic and social life is underdeveloped, which makes HSE less attractive as a workplace for the types of academic staff members and faculty that they are trying to attract.

The initial 2013 HSE's roadmap that defined the university's major development plan until 2020 suggested a number of major drivers of transformation. The first one is related to the faculty and attracting scholars and researchers who are already well versed in the global issues, integrated in the international academic community and are actively publishing in internationally recognized research journals. Staff reorganization should also be related to increasing the number of postdoctoral positions, recruiting international faculty and researchers, aiming to have a 50/50 proportion of domestic versus international academic staff members, and hiring those with international competency and expertise. The second driver of transformation is creating a high-potential research team, providing them with the necessary support and facilitating their integration into the global academic community. Furthermore, transforming research agendas while maximizing the benefits of the status of Russia as a "testing ground for transition economies and societies" represents an important task (HSE, 2013). The following driver is related to the restructuring educational programs through introducing and expanding joint programs with leading universities across the globe and conducting evaluations of the existing programs involving international experts. Additionally, graduate programs are also being taken into consideration in the roadmap with the emphasis being put on increasing their productivity through expanding and including a larger research component into the academic programs. Moreover, reforming university governance by increasing the size of the departments, distributing resources and restructuring university

administration is an important component of the transformation plan. In addition, creating an attractive working environment by offering internationally competitive working conditions and improving university infrastructure and services to further attract more international students and faculty is stated as important. Finally, promoting educational products on the global higher education market, obtaining international accreditation of the existing and future programs, and developing MOOCs courses are the targets that will help improve the university's visibility and contribute to the growing of international recognition.

The 2013 roadmap suggested six strategic initiatives that should have set out the university development agenda until 2020 and contributed to making HSE more competitive among world-class higher education institutions (HSE, 2013):

1. Achieving international competitiveness in research & development, expert evaluation and analysis in a number of areas within the social sciences, economics, humanities, computer science and mathematics

Within this initiative, the main emphasis is put on the international components in the research projects and partnerships. Some of the major tasks include but are not limited to developing research centers headed by international scholars, fostering international collaborations, combining teaching and research, creating incentives for increasing publishing in international journals, seeking accreditation of HSE's journals in Scopus and Web of Science, and establishing stronger partnerships with international publishers. The target numbers within these initiatives are: to increase the number of materials in Scopus and Web of Science per faculty or research

staff member from 0.35 (in 2013) to 1.8 (in 2020), average citation index per faculty (from total number of published papers in Web of Science and Scopus) from 0.45 to 8.0, and the R&D per faculty or research staff member (in thousand rubles) from 950 to 1,700 (HSE, 2013).

2. Creating and promoting globally oriented educational products

Some of the main tasks within this strategic initiative include introducing a new for the traditional system of Russian higher education major-minor study model; increasing the research and project work component in the learning process, while decreasing classroom hours; increasing instruction in English; expanding joint programs with foreign universities; introducing PhD programs in all areas of study; updating programs content in order to make it more up to international standards and employees' expectations; replacing department-led program management with personalized program management⁴; and increasing student mobility and exchange programs.

Numbers-wise targets within this initiative are the following: to increase the percentage of full-time master's and doctoral students from 25 percent in 2013 to 28 percent by 2020, to increase the number of credits received for research and innovative project work from 8 to 20, and the number of disciplines taught in English – from 5 to 20 (HSE, 2013).

3. Expanding into new education markets geographically and increasing the selectivity of graduate programs

⁴ Traditionally, in the system of Russian higher education, every discipline within the university has its own department as the main management structure without subdividing into individual program offices; this is a more centralized university governance system.

Currently, HSE, being one of the leading universities in Russia is attracting some of the most talented students from across the country. The new priority within this development program is to attract the top students both from the former Soviet republics and internationally at all levels (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral). In order to make their programs more attractive to non-domestic students, they offer significant tuition and accommodation discounts and grants, as well as assist applicants with getting student loans. The affordability of the HSE programs should make the university much more competitive when attracting international students. The main tasks to fulfill are: to establish a network of HSE partners domestically and abroad; to connect with international student recruiting agencies; to increase HSE's visibility at the international education fairs; to develop orientation and preparatory courses for international students through HSE Internet School, MOOCs and face-to-face format; to establish internships for doctoral students; and others. The only number that the university is trying to achieve within this strategic initiative is the percentage of international students out of the total number of students, which should increase from 3 to 12 percent by 2020 (HSE, 2013).

4. Human resources for a research university

This strategy speaks directly about the integration of international faculty into the university workforce. Apart from international recruiting, this initiative calls for at least 50 percent of the administrative staff to speak English. The major tasks in relation to human resources include: recruiting

internationally (both early career professionals who have recently received their PhDs from Western universities and leading scholars who are established in their fields and have high citation indexes); facilitating smooth integration of the newly recruited international faculty into the university life through orientation programs; introducing incentives to increase academic productivity; introducing the standard contracts for both research and teaching staff that includes research, teaching and administrative components; hiring adjunct faculty with non-academic backgrounds; drastically increasing the number of research and teaching assistants; and fostering faculty mobility. The targeted number for increasing the percentage of international faculty and research staff (including both foreign nationals and Russian nationals with Western PhD degrees) is 12 percent in 2020, which should increase from 5 percent in 2013 (HSE, 2013).

5. Modernization of the university governance system

The main tasks of modernizing the current centralized governance system are as follows: to decentralize the management structure while allocating resources to the most advanced academic departments; to develop academic self-governance through establishing management committees consisting of faculty, research staff members and students; improving campus and social infrastructure; and others. The set targets are related partially to the expenditures and resources and partially to the personnel: to increase the university expenditures on the strategic initiatives from 17 percent in 2013 to 25 percent in 2020; to increase the central university budget resources

allocated to the academic departments for development purposes by up to 30 percent; to achieve a higher percentage of the positive evaluations by faculty and staff of administrative standards – from 30 to 80 percent; to increase the percentage of faculty and staff members with personal working places from 5 to 80 percent by 2020 (HSE, 2013).

6. Social mission of HSE

In its activities, HSE puts an emphasis on outreach and engaging its students and academic personnel with a wider world, with the goal to create social impact. Some of the tasks that are crucial to achieve in this respect are: to provide expert evaluation and analysis on socially relevant issues; to disseminate knowledge necessary to social and economic development; to organize platforms for open discussion of current public issues; to introduce and maintain open educational resources; to develop projects that aim to reform the education system as a whole, especially in social sciences and economics. This strategic initiative probably has some of the most ambitious targets of increasing the number of HSE's MOOCs at the international platforms from 3 to 250; and the total number of unique visits to the HSE's online resources from 10,000 to 80,000 (HSE, 2013).

The total budget for the development program aiming to increase HSE's global competitiveness by 2020 was planned to amount up to 48 billion rubles (an approximate equivalent of USD 763 million) (HSE, 2013). The state support coming from the 5 - 100 Project will account for 10-20 percent depending on the allocations throughout the project. Since about 40 percent of the HSE's revenues come from non-budgetary sources,

the sustainability of these efforts mainly depends on the consistency of the Russian government to fund the development of the country's leading universities in their work on increasing global competitiveness.

HSE's Internationalization Initiatives

Although HSE is a 5 – 100 participant, the university sort of stands from the other participating universities. As both document analysis and interviews indicated, this university had been involved in various internationalization initiatives long before the Project started. While some internationalization initiatives just started at those universities with the beginning of the 5 – 100 Project, in HSE the same types of activities had already been in place. For instance, HSE was one of the universities that won the grant under the Resolution #220 for the development of two research laboratories: in geometry and sociology. Therefore, international laboratories that were introduced in some participating universities only with the beginning of the Project, had already been not only established at HSE years before but had also been evaluated in regards to their effectiveness. The institutional evaluation of international laboratories at HSE is conducted every three years and is based on the research agenda, and indicators and expected results suggested by the laboratories themselves, which can include but are not limited to: the number of publications that resulted from the labs' research projects, the number of undergraduate and graduate students involved in the lab, their participation in research conferences seminars and summer schools, and others. Not all laboratories have passed the evaluation and few have been closed; however, most of them have demonstrated their effectiveness and continue their productive research activities.

Upon the completion of the governmental grant, HSE decided to continue establishing international research laboratories, only with a little bit more modest funding. Being less dependent on the governmental financing, the university also introduced a few changes for the international researchers leading these laboratories that made their full participation easier. For example, they lowered the previously existing requirement for researchers to be physically present in the country from four months to two months but introduced the requirement to give lectures during their time at the institution, so that the students could also take advantage of learning from the foreign specialists. According to the HSE's official website, today there are 34 international laboratories and research centers on Moscow campus, 2 in Saint Petersburg and 1 in Nizhny Novgorod and Perm (HSE, 2019c). Seven of the laboratories were established under the Resolution #220 grant. Given limited funding, the labs are encouraged to seek outside grants. Evidently, social sciences labs are having more difficult time finding additional funding than those in hard sciences.

Throughout the last few years, HSE has implemented a number of internationalization initiatives, covering various areas of academic activities that help the university to achieve its mission and internationalization objectives. To reach its goal of becoming more globally competitive, the university claims that both faculty and students are fully engaged in all sorts of internationalization initiatives. Students' engagement appears to be of particular importance since, generally speaking, apart from participating in study abroad, students are frequently left out of many other internationalization initiatives implemented by their universities. The rankings race puts universities in the position when all they are concerned about is moving up in the rankings while forgetting

about the quality of education, which inevitably affects students and their educational experiences. Being concerned about the number of publications and other indicators, universities very often focus predominantly on research forgetting about teaching and providing quality education. One way to address this situation is to engage students into various international research projects and collaborations and to let them participate in preparing publications. Both faculty and students can contribute to and equally benefit from various internationalization initiatives that are introduced on university campus and this is what HSE is trying to ensure.

HSE has established various units within the university that are responsible for different aspects of internationalization. First of all, the Department of Internationalization was created with the aim to help international faculty, staff and students to integrate into the university community, to encourage collaboration with other administrative units on campus and to promote the inclusive academic environment with English as a shared language of communication. Moreover, in 2015 the Ranking Information Center was created with the goals to analyze the global university ranking systems' methodology, to communicate with and to collect and submit institutional data to the international ranking agencies, and to create analytical reports and recommendations on the improvement of institutional indicators for the university management and administration. Furthermore, there are also a number of administrative staff members and university officials that oversee and run various internationally oriented activities of the university. For instance, among others a new position of the Vice Rector of International Affairs was introduced.

Some of the major internationalization activities that have been introduced in the institution are related to the student inward and outward academic mobility, inviting international faculty and scholars, establishing research collaborations and increasing the number of publications in the internationally recognized academic journals. To stimulate more active publishing activity, a system of bonuses was introduced through which researchers and faculty receive financial incentives upon the publication of their articles in the selected international research journals. This initiative was identified by most interviewees as successful in this particular university context since the number of publications has grown, which, in its turn has contributed to improving HSE's academic reputation on the global higher education arena. However, with all the growth of the number of publications (and this number is growing approximately twice every year), there is still a lot to be done in this respect. According to the HSE Ranking Information Center, in order to compete with the very top world-class universities, such as Harvard University, for instance, this indicator should grow by not just twice or three times, but by one hundred times.

Furthermore, to meet the growing needs of academic personnel and students to become more engaged in the global academic community and to increase the visibility of the university's research and educational services, HSE established the Academic Writing Center. Targeting faculty, researchers and students who write for international journals and participate in international conferences, the Center offers face-to-face and online academic writing courses, seminars and workshops, consultations on all sorts of academic papers (conference proposals, abstracts, publications and others), mentorship

for the faculty teaching courses in English, and the space for professional communication and collaboration.

Moreover, the faculty and research staff's increased presence at international research conferences has been enhancing the visibility of the research that is being conducted at HSE. Another serious step to ensuring better visibility and recognition of HSE in the global higher education space became placing its MOOCs on Coursera, the world's largest international educational online courses platform. At this point, HSE is one of only seven Russian universities that managed to do that (Coursera, n.d.). Being a partner of Coursera, HSE has placed a number of courses taught by HSE's professors in English and in Russian. The disciplines and research areas, which the offered courses cover, include but are not limited to: computer science, mathematics, physics, economics, international relations, linguistics, history, education and others. There is also a course based on intercultural communication that is called "Understanding Russians" and is aimed at the international audiences interested in Russia. About 2.8 million people from 195 countries have enrolled in HSE's courses so far (HSE, 2019a).

Internationalization Initiatives: Students

It is quite difficult for any Russian university to attract international students. Certain challenges in fulfilling this task were identified throughout the literature review and interviews. Since the main language of instruction in most Russian universities is Russian, a lot of international students come from the former Soviet states and near Baltic countries. However, this situation is gradually changing while Russian higher education institutions are utilizing various strategies in their efforts to find competitive advantages

against their Western counterparts. Before describing individual institutional efforts, it is important to mention a critical change made on the national level, which is represented by raising the quota of state-sponsored scholarships for international students. In 2016 this number increased from 15,000 to 20,000, making higher education basically free for the foreign students coming to study in Russia (IIE, 2014). According to the IIE (2018a), in 2018 the number of inbound international students in Russia constituted 313,089, which represented a 5.7 percent increase from the previous year. Most students come from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine; the non-Soviet countries that send the largest number of students to Russia are China, followed by India, Malaysia and Vietnam; Western European countries, the U.K. and the U.S., have a very small representation in the international student population studying in Russia (UNESCO, 2019). In 2018, Russia made it to the Top Host Countries (at number 7), hosting 6 percent of the total population of outbound students studying abroad (IIE, 2018a). According to Marina Borovskaya, the Deputy Minister of Science and Higher Education, Russia aspires to host about 425,000 international students by 2024 (Civinini, 2018). The majority of inbound students enroll in degree granting undergraduate programs (about 196,000 students in 2018); about one third of the total number came as graduate students; and the rest enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate non-degree courses of study. In terms of the disciplines that foreign students choose to study, engineering, business and management, humanities, and health professions are on top of the list with fine and applied arts, agriculture and social sciences being the least popular (IIE, 2018b).

In general, there is an abundance of research on what affects international student motivation to study abroad and influences their choice of the higher education

destination. A number of researchers agree that some of the main factors that attract students to particular institutions are cost, quality of education, culture and social perceptions (Bodycott, 2009; Wilkins and Huisman, 2011; Li and Bray, 2007). The push-pull model that frequently comes up in the literature on international students and study abroad covers the main barriers and enablers in the student choice of the study abroad destinations (Foster, 2014). The push factors represent the obstacles to the quality education that students experience in their home countries that “push” students to pursue education in other countries. These can include a lack of capacity to provide quality education, low quality of education, lack of employment opportunities post graduation or employer preference for foreign education, as well unstable political and/or economic situation in the home countries. The pull factors are the factors that host countries and universities are using in order to attract international students. These can include the global academic reputation of the institution, better quality of education, improved employment prospects and the opportunity to experience the new culture (Wilkins, Balakrishnan & Huisman, 2012).

According to Foster (2014), among some of the major barriers to student mobility and their participation in studying abroad are the cost, language and homesickness. HSE is trying to address all of the aforementioned challenges in their efforts to attract more international students. For universities with less recognizable names in comparison to more renowned institutions, reduced tuition and a well-established scholarship system are probably the most obvious levers of influence on the students’ choice of study destination. To make the cost of attending HSE more affordable, the university is offering tuition discounts for international students in both undergraduate and graduate programs,

as well as providing scholarships and assisting students with receiving loans. The scholarships and tuition discounts are granted for the full period of studies. Throughout the university application process, international students can indicate that they would like to apply for the governmental merit-based scholarship and, based on their previous academic achievement, they may be recommended for full tuition scholarship. Those students that are not eligible for governmental scholarships still have an opportunity to apply for a number of other grants that will provide 10 to 50 percent tuition discounts (HSE, 2017b). The aforementioned scholarships, however, are not available for the programs that enroll only fee-paying students, such as the HSE - University of London Double Degree Program in Economics. These programs may offer their own flexible system of tuition fee discounts for international students based on their academic performance, covering from 15 to 100 percent of tuition fees. According to the program statistics, in 2017, 62 percent of students paid reduced tuition (HSE, 2017b). In addition, it is important to mention that all the scholarships only cover tuition and fees (fully or partially) and not the cost of living, which can be quite expensive, given the fact that the university is located in Moscow, one of the most expensive cities of Russia. However, having waived or partially covered tuition costs can be a huge decisive factor for the students choosing between various locations for their studies.

Language proficiency can represent both a barrier and a pull factor in choosing a university or country to study in. Undoubtedly, with English being a major language for communication in the world, English-speaking countries are in a more favorable position on the global higher education market. However, in the increasingly competitive globally oriented job market, knowing another language can be beneficial for enhancing cross-

cultural competency and future employment opportunities. Therefore, universities in non-English speaking countries can use that as an enabling factor in attracting international students. In 2014, HSE introduced International Preparatory Program that helps students with different levels of the Russian language knowledge to reach certain proficiency in order to be able to enroll in Russian-taught degree programs. The program lasts up to ten months and a student can choose from three tracks: humanities, economics and engineering. Throughout this program, students can also adapt to the new educational and social environment before starting university studies. Furthermore, courses at HSE at both undergraduate and graduate levels are taught not only in Russian, but also in English and a combination of two languages, which decreases the necessity for a potential international student to be fully proficient in the Russian language. Moreover, the dual-degree program with London School of Economics and Political sciences is taught entirely in English and the graduates receive two degrees from HSE and the University of London. The fact that international students coming to HSE do not necessarily have to speak Russian and can take courses and even enroll in a Master's program that is taught entirely in English helps to internationalize the student population to a greater extent.

Finally, homesickness is the third barrier to student participation in study abroad identified by researchers. According to Doyle et al. (2010), 17 percent of students in their study reported that leaving their home, family and friends was one of the most serious obstacles to study abroad. This situation worsens when the culture of the host country is significantly different from that of a student's home country. In the case with HSE, multiple interviewees identified the following country specific difficulties in attracting international students: current political situation and tensions with different countries,

discrimination based on race and sexuality, difficulties with social adaptation within the university and broader community, and colder climate. When students go to study abroad, they do not just receive education from a particular university but also learn within a social context. If students are worried or concerned about their homesickness or have difficulties adapting to the new social environment, they will not be fully receptive to learning. Therefore, it is important to make their transition to the new environment as smooth as possible. Rodriguez and Roberts (2011) suggest that study abroad programs should look wider and include pre- and post-stages within a student's academic experience.

One of the initiatives that HSE has been implementing to ease the transition to the new academic and social environment for international students is the University Buddies Network. This is an independent student organization that started in 2014 aiming to support foreign students. Buddies are current HSE students who volunteer their time to help international students to get adapted to the new university, new city, and the new cultural and social life. An incoming foreign student can request a buddy online who will meet them at the train station on the way from the airport, accompany them to the dormitory and assist through the check-in process, help them orient themselves on campus, assist with dealing with basic documents and forms in Russian, recommend events and places to visit in the city, redirect them to the right administrative person who can answer questions related to the program of study, housing, funding, and other issues. The buddy organization is very structured: there is a leader who runs the work of the whole organization and coordinators, each of which oversees the work of five buddies. All buddies go through the training process where they familiarize themselves with the

HSE international student population, what kind of problems they can face, how buddies can help in this or that situation based on the actual cases, and what they should and should not do. The dormitory staff also goes through the same type of training to make sure that they are prepared to work with international student population and can address any issues that may arise.

Additionally, international students receive a handbook with the regulations, details of living in Moscow and advice on what to do and who to contact in different situations. All the information that international students need can be found on the HSE website, the part that is specifically related to the academic mobility, which was carefully developed based on the HSE's international partner universities' online resources, and international students' experiences and feedback. According to one of the interviewees, the website is constantly being updated depending on the issues and questions their international students have on a day-to-day basis. Furthermore, the university offers webinars for foreign exchange students and various internationally focused events where international and domestic students can interact and mingle together. Finally, the program coordinators are planning events so that they include both domestic and international students, making sure that the latter get integrated into the university life as much and as smoothly as possible.

As it has been mentioned, attracting international students has been one of the major tasks on HSE's internationalization agenda. The number of international students is still quite low compared to many other universities across the globe but it is slowly but steadily growing. The university does recognize the challenges that they are facing throughout this process and tries to address those through offering preparatory courses,

English language instruction, and various social and academic adaptation programs. According to one of the interviewees, one thing that is missing though is the information on the support of the LGBTQ students, which appears to be closely related to the national cultural idiosyncrasies and the general attitude toward the LGBTQ community that is quite ambiguous and very often negative.

Furthermore, developing outward student mobility is another priority of internationalization of higher education for Russian universities. The total number of Russian students studying abroad is steadily growing: according to the UNESCO data this number exceeds 55,000 students (UNESCO, 2019).⁵ The Russian students' top destinations for study abroad vary in different years depending on various internal and external factors. According to the recent data, the top five host countries have been: the Czech Republic (10 percent of the total number of mobile students), the U.S. (9 percent), the U.K. (7 percent), France (6 percent) and Finland (5 percent) (UNESCO, 2019). In terms of gender, slightly more female than male Russian students study abroad generally, which can be at least partially explained by the differences in the fields of study that students of different genders choose to pursue (IIE, 2014). Generally, more female students choose to enroll in liberal arts and foreign languages, which facilitates their participation in study abroad: their inclination toward language and cultural studies paired with the language knowledge that is essential to study abroad make them ideal candidates for those programs.

⁵ UNESCO tertiary-level data mostly report on the students pursuing education abroad for a year or longer, so the information on the geographical study abroad destination may vary slightly from other sources.

There have been some interesting recent trends in the Russian students' choices of the study abroad destinations. Due to the increasing tuition in most of the top Russian universities, especially in the ones located in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, many students tend to choose to study abroad in Central and Eastern European higher education institutions (Vorotnikov, 2017). The main reason for choosing those universities is lower cost of both studying and living in those countries (if compared to some Moscow universities) with a comparable quality of education. The data provided by the department of education of the Moscow city government confirms that the Czech Republic and Finland are among the most attractive study abroad destinations for Russian students: in the period from 2013 to 2016, their number in those countries doubled (Vorotnikov, 2017). For the same financial reasons, the demand for studying in the most prestigious domestic universities has fallen: in 2017 this number dropped by 15 percent compared to the previous year (Vorotnikov, 2017). Another interesting trend is the growing interest of Russian students to attend Chinese universities, which can be explained by strengthened economic cooperation between the two countries, the introduction of the exchange Russian – Chinese programs and an increase in the number of internships in recent years. Russian students go to China mainly for short-term exchange, language learning and internship programs (WENR, 2017). The interest to the U.S. and the U.K. institutions is still high; although the cost of studying in those is almost always much higher compared to the Russian universities, the prestige of such universities as Harvard, Stanford or Oxford and the opportunities that they see after graduation is what keeps attracting students from abroad.

Russian government encourages students to further their education abroad. Aiming to strengthen the human resource capacity and to ensure that students come back to Russia after the completion of their study abroad program, in 2013 the government introduced Global Education Program funding graduate students who wish to pursue their education in all areas of science, technology, social sciences, business and medicine in one of the selected 288 universities around the world (72 of them are located in the United States). The program is competitive and each student who gets accepted into the program can receive up to 2,76 million rubles (approximately USD 42,000) a year to pay for tuition and living expenses (Global Education Program, 2019). According to the program requirements, the students have to commit to returning back home and working for at least three years after graduation; otherwise, they will have to not only repay the full amount of the received grant stipend but also to pay the fine which is twice the amount of the grant (Global Education Program, 2019). In order to prevent brain drain and to motivate talented young people to come back, except for introducing the fine, the government is helping the grant awardees to find employment upon returning. The list of potential employers includes 948 companies, educational and research establishments. Global Education Program is considered to be one of the important steps on the way to internationalizing Russian higher education, as it demonstrates the interest of the country in international engagement (ICEF Monitor, 2012).

Among other Russian universities, HSE is also trying to increase its outward student mobility. There are a number of exchange programs within which students can spend a semester abroad in one of the countries that HSE has exchange agreements with. The staff working on student mobility programs encourages students to participate and

understands the importance of the international exchange programs. Here is how one of the HSE interviewees explains the benefits of their study abroad programs:

This is an outstanding experience for them [students]! No university will ever teach you how to orient yourself in life, how to make independent decisions, how to build your career trajectory in terms of networking and establishing contacts! You look at another country and your way of thinking is changing... your horizons broaden. You won't learn that sitting in the classroom.

It appears to be clear that HSE recognizes the benefits of study abroad. Apart from career enhancement and broadening worldviews related benefits, the university emphasizes the following additional features of study abroad programs trying to attract more students: improving one's intercultural skills, learning more about different academic environments, building long-lasting relationships and enhancing foreign language skills. Previous research also indicates that students who study abroad do not only benefit from those programs after graduation, but they can also enhance their academic experience: students who went to study abroad receive better grades upon coming back to their home institution, experience less attrition, graduate from college at higher rates, and are generally more competitive on the job market (IIE, 2016).

According to the HSE's official website, at this point, the university has reached over 74 agreements on student exchange with universities in over 27 countries. The list of partner universities includes: San Diego State University (USA), University of Toronto (Canada), University of Hong Kong (China), Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (Japan), Leiden University (the Netherlands), Aalto University (Finland), University of Bern (Switzerland), Vienna University of Economics and Business (Austria), College of

Mexico (Mexico), Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), and others (HSE, 2019d). Each year the Student International Mobility Office receives about 1,200 applications for approximately 370 slots. Applications open twice a year to start the program in either Fall or Spring semester. Students from all four HSE campuses are eligible to apply for study abroad programs, however, according to one of the interviewees, the largest number of applicants come from the Moscow campus. The winning applications are selected by an expert committee: the decisions are made mostly on the students' academic performance, class rankings, as well as on received language certificates and other related indicators. If the students study at a partner university, their tuition is covered within the exchange agreement; however, they do need to cover all the other costs, including visa, travel, accommodation and any other expenses. As for the financial support, students have various funding opportunities to pay for studies at a partner university: Erasmus+ grant⁶, FIRST+⁷ grant or an HSE scholarship (in case they did not receive any other financial support). Students whose study abroad applications get selected by the committee are recommended for the scholarships, but the final funding decisions are taken by the partner host institutions. These grants cover travel to and from university and living expenses for the whole period of the exchange program, which makes participation in the study abroad programs much easier and more attractive for students.

⁶ Erasmus+ is the EU's program that supports youth's engagement in education, training and sports. Erasmus+ provides grants for study abroad programs ranging from three months to one year within the participating countries.

⁷ FIRST+ is a Russian-Finnish student and teacher mobility program that promotes partnerships between universities in Russia and Finland.

Internationalization Initiatives: Faculty

A lot of research on the globalization and internationalization of higher education looks at the international students, inter-university collaborations, and research and knowledge flow; not much attention has been paid to the academic profession and faculty. The reasons for hiring international faculty vary from country to country, and from institution to institution. Many universities view them as the key contributors to internationalization as they integrate their experience as well as teaching and research paradigms into the higher education system of the host country (Altbach & Yudkevich, 2017).

Attracting international faculty and researchers is implemented in various ways and with different degrees of success in different countries. The U.S., for example, has a very well documented history of attracting academic talent. Their institutions offer generous salaries, promising research opportunities and flexible work conditions, which are generally strong attractors. Some other countries are more successful in other internationalization initiatives, such as attracting international students rather than faculty. Universities worldwide compete for the best academic talent and come up with different creative schemes of attracting faculty members and researchers from abroad. As mentioned above, attracting factors can include: higher salary, better benefits, research and travel funding, better career advancement opportunities, and others.

In the context of international academic recruiting, it is not solely institutional efforts that influence the applicants' decisions to come to this or that country to start or continue their academic career. Transnational academic mobility is always influenced by the socio-economic and political factors that define the intensity and direction of the flow. There are factors that go beyond the control of institutions, and can either facilitate

or constrain faculty mobility (Kim & Locke, 2010):

- Differences in the national pension schemes, social security and childcare systems;
- Differences between countries in the recruitment and moving procedures;
- Language and cultural differences and the possibility to conduct research and teaching in English;
- Differences in salaries, social status, teaching workload, promotion and tenure processes;
- Immigration laws, visa and work permit regulations including the time and costs attached to obtaining those and maintaining the appropriate status.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, additional barriers to being and feeling included in a foreign society can include nationality, race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. All these factors, depending on what the situation in a given country is, can either simplify the recruiting process or create additional barriers, which will prevent international academic job seekers from working in another country. It is not a secret that in a lot of countries, international recruitment is encumbered by bureaucratic difficulties. To address that, very often higher education institutions, especially more influential ones on the national scale, come up with certain initiatives and suggestions to the government, recommending simplifying the work permit requirements. According to the anecdotal evidence collected throughout the interviews at HSE, for instance, the university came up with such initiatives on multiple occasions and some of those were successful.

HSE is the first Russian university that introduced international faculty and staff recruiting. Other higher education institutions recruited foreign faculty members and staff

before but no other universities hired anyone on a long-term contract. This stresses the commitment of the university to the continuous diversification of their faculty and staff and bringing on board international academic employees. The newly recruited international employees do not necessarily have to be foreign nationals, but they have to have a degree from a Western university. The number of HSE staff members who are Russian nationals exceeds that of foreign nationals, however, the majority of them graduated with terminal degrees from very well recognized Western universities. The number of internationally recruited faculty members differs in various departments and faculties. For instance, the Faculty of Economic Sciences has eighteen tenured and tenure track international faculty, while the Faculty of Communication, Media and Design – only three (HSE, n.d.).

Given that throughout the international recruitment process HSE has to compete with other more recognizable universities, they need to come up with certain perks that will help them recruit and retain more talented and promising faculty members. One of such incentives is offering a very low teaching course load and providing more time for conducting research and publishing. Another aspect is the salary, which although not as high as compared to that in the U.S. or some countries in Europe, it is still quite high for a person residing in Moscow. International faculty's salary is also considerably higher than that paid to the domestic faculty members and it may vary depending on the discipline and the department that a faculty member is hired by. Furthermore, providing research and academic mobility funds, as well as an opportunity to hire research assistants are other attractive features for the faculty. Finally, the university is providing support for the newly recruited faculty through every stage of the hiring process, their arrival and stay in

the country, and is trying to integrate the new academic employees in the university life, as well as into a broader community. International Faculty Support Unit within HSE provides assistance with all the employment procedures and resolves any issues, aiming to create a “friendly administrative environment”, produces English-language information channels for the international faculty and organizes social networking to foster more successful professional and cultural integration of the foreign faculty into the university and broader community. Furthermore, the university organizes various events that involve both newly hired faculty and those who have been already working there for a while with the goal of helping them to adjust to the new academic and cultural environment faster.

There are various reasons for which different individuals choose HSE as their work place. According to some of the interviewees that are directly or indirectly involved in the hiring process, the internationally recruited academic staff can be grouped in three categories [unofficially]. The first group is those who lived in Russia before and decided to get their graduate degrees abroad, knowing that they would be coming back home to seek employment (for family reasons; because they received governmental funding to study abroad, and other reasons). The second group comprises of “very ambitious” employees who strive to work at the top world-class higher education institutions but at this point lack strong publications or research experience and they are hoping to acquire it while working at HSE. For this group of faculty, low teaching load and focus on research at one of the top Russian universities is very appealing. These faculty members, unfortunately for HSE, although very promising but will most likely be leaving the university in a few years after they are “ready” for more ambitious employment

opportunities. Unfortunately, this happens quite often, given that the university has difficulties competing with more recognizable American and European institutions that can also offer higher pay and better benefits. The last category, are those faculty members who come to HSE mainly because of the salary. These individuals, having realized that the university is trying to recruit international faculty manage to negotiate higher salaries and benefits. Evidently, this situation sometimes triggers a negative reaction from other faculty members who were also recruited internationally and even more so from the domestic faculty. However, it is difficult for the search committee to identify the applicants' ulterior motives during the hiring process. Additionally, at least at this point HSE cannot be extremely selective when attracting foreign faculty. Therefore, the university is trying to use this situation to their advantage and, although many of the aforementioned hires might leave at some point, the university will still have its affiliation on their publications and, more importantly, the knowledge that those foreign faculty members shared with the more permanent academic staff.

Clearly, one of the main reasons of international recruiting is for the university to move up in the rankings. However, as emphasized throughout the interviews, another critical aspect of having foreign faculty on campus is that these individuals contribute to broadening the intellectual tradition and changing the culture within the university. Even if a faculty member stays at HSE for only a few years and then moves on to another institution, their contribution to the campus culture is still noticeable. One important change triggered by initially negative reactions from the domestic faculty toward the higher salaries and better work conditions of international faculty happened when the former started publishing more just to prove that they can be just as good as the latter.

This is how one of the interviewees described it:

Just their [internationally recruited faculty] presence changes the culture here. People start moving faster just looking at them. How many of our local faculty started to publish in recognizable international journals just to prove that they are not any worse than their foreign counterparts and maybe even better! Nobody even thought about such an effect.

It is interesting that, after all, a positive change that is both beneficial for the staff and the university as a whole, grew out of something negative, such as the discontent of the permanent academic staff with the unequal pay and work conditions. It is never easy to change the campus culture, especially in the country with very strong education traditions and values. In this case, this change is implemented through the colleagues, although it is somewhat unexpected and not entirely planned.

One of the aspects of international recruitment at HSE involves hiring “high-profile” faculty - the academics with very well established names and strong academic reputation, who would serve on the advisory board of the university or supervise international research laboratories and centers. For example, Dr. Philip Altbach (Education, Boston College), Dr. Daniel Treisman (Political Science, UCLA) and Dr. Timothy Colton (Government, Harvard University) are among the members of the International Advisory Committee at HSE, which monitors the institution’s progress in enhancing its global competitiveness. Furthermore, almost every research laboratory has international academic supervisors. For instance Dr. Martin Carnoy (Education, Stanford University) serves as the Academic Advisor of the International Laboratory of the Education Policy Analysis and Dr. Johanna Nichols (Linguistics, UC Berkeley) supervises Linguistic Convergence Laboratory at HSE.

Regarding domestic employees, they also contribute to the internationalization of HSE's educational and research activities. There is a good amount of pressure on the HSE faculty members and research staff to publish in the international research journals. Faculty and researchers are supported through their publication activities via Academic Writing Center services and institutional incentives. The knowledge of English in this respect also becomes critical. It may not necessarily be a requirement in every job description; however, it will appear as a competitive advantage and crucial for publishing in international peer-reviewed journals.

With the aim to control the number of publications and monitor the research activities, an evaluative tool called Research Productivity Assessment (RPA) has been developed. It was introduced in 2013 and initially was tested on a small number of research units to make sure that the new assessment system worked and to see what the general situation with the publication activity was at that point. According to one of the interviewees, this first assessment demonstrated that about one third of the researchers were already meeting the established criteria, another third were publishing but predominantly in the Russian academic journals and the last part was not involved in any research publishing. The following conclusions were made based on that: the first group would be rewarded, the second group would be provided with as much assistance as possible to help them make their first publication in an international journal, and the third group would be warned that if they do not meet the publishing requirements next year, there will be certain measures taken including those leading to the dismissal from the university (in the extreme cases). The next year RPA showed that the situation already improved. According to Dmitry Dagaev, HSE Deputy Vice Rector, the publication

activity is improving: in the beginning only 33 percent met the set criteria, while in 2016 this number went up to 86 percent (HSE, 2017a). Since this evaluative tool is clearly working, the university administration keeps raising the bar with the goal to encourage its employees to publish in high quality international research journals.

Since the initial results of RPA turned out to be satisfactory, starting from 2014, the evaluation of the research activities has been conducted on a regular basis. It is important to explain what triggered the introduction of RPA: as mentioned before, in the HSE's organizational structure, there are faculty members whose employment contracts clearly state that they need to be engaged in publishing activities and the renewal of their contracts partially depends on the degree of their involvement in those activities; and then there are research staff members, who have perpetual contracts, which used to not specify how much they should be publishing in order to continue their employment at the university. This created an imbalance in the university's policies regarding its employees. Since publishing in international peer-reviewed journals is very often a long process and research productivity cannot be entirely equal from year to year, RPA takes into consideration all the articles that a staff member has published in the last two years, not just one year. Those employees, who have been on maternal/paternal leave or are currently enrolled in a degree program, have an opportunity to be temporarily exempt from the evaluation process. Previously, internationally recruited faculty was not monitored by RPA; however, starting from 2018 they have been included in this system, although without any potential repercussions or changes in their contracts.

RPA represents a kind of "carrot and stick" incentive system, where actively publishing employees receive monetary rewards and those who are less active are being

warned and their inactivity can lead to the termination of the employment contract if the employee consistently does not fulfill their responsibilities. Evidently, this creates the pressure for the employees to publish; however, it is important to mention that those who have demonstrated lower research productivity are not simply being punished but rather encouraged and supported to engage in research activities more and improve their numbers next year. Each particular case is considered on the individual basis and the individual plan of research and publishing activities is developed to support the researcher. Still, a carrot and stick approach can potentially evoke mixed emotions from the academic staff and, possibly, a somewhat negative reaction. As one of the interviewees noted, this system induces both “understanding and tension”:

And then they put in place this system – if according to your contract you have to publish and you don’t – you are out. Well ...this leads to lots of emotions... a mixture of understanding and tension. People are complaining ... about the formality and bureaucracy but they do understand. They say, “Yes we understand, we can’t just say we are ahead of everyone in this competition, we actually need to be ahead of everyone, and if that’s the price we need to pay, so be it.

Therefore, with all the additional work that the faculty members might need to do in the context of internationalization and the risk of being laid off, for the most part they still understand that if publishing in internationally-recognized journals is one of the requirements of working at one of the leading research institutions, they need to deal with it. Moreover, as the university leadership emphasizes, with all the formality of the research productivity assessment process, it is not just about the numbers and meeting the certain criteria for the sake of receiving rewards or avoiding sanctions (HSE, 2017a). The

main idea behind RPA is to make the research conducted at HSE visible to the international academic community, so that it can have an impact on research in respective areas on the global scale. Thus, the formal RPA requirements correspond to the major institutional goals of producing and disseminating high quality research.

To make RPA a little more flexible and less stressful for the employees, in 2018 a number of changes were introduced to make it more transparent and not as rigid (HSE, 2017a). First of all, to diversify the ways in which the researchers can meet the evaluation requirements a point system was introduced, when different types of publications (a research article, a book chapter, a book, etc.) are assigned a certain number of points depending on the quality of the journal where they are published (whether they are indexed by the Web of Science or Scopus). This change allows faculty members to use different strategies to pass the assessment process. The second change is related to switching from manual to electronic evaluation using the special software. This alleviates the burden for the staff who have to check all the submitted materials in quite a short time frame; at the same time the online system gives academic staff the opportunity to check their evaluation status easily and regularly, rather than waiting for the official results of the completed assessment to be released. One important point that should be mentioned here is: since the software collects information from the personal web pages of the faculty and research staff members, they are responsible for timely updates of the new publications to make sure that those get accounted for. Finally, HSE continues to raise the bar in terms of expectations from the academic staff to publish in high quality international journals.

Key Results of the Global Competitiveness Program

As emphasized multiple times throughout the interviews with various stakeholders and also supported by the analysis of the HSE institutional documents, the university has been involved in internationalization activities and reforms long before its participation in the 5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project. This fact explains certain successes in the institutional internationalization process, as well as suggests the sustainability of these efforts after the completion of the Project. Today the university boasts of 120 student exchange programs, 39 English-language Master's degree programs that are offered jointly with leading universities across the globe, and over 55 double degree programs with major international universities such as the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, Kyoto University, Indiana University at Bloomington, University of Leeds, George Mason University, Erasmus University, Fudan University and others (Study in Russia, 2019). Although establishing international partnerships was identified as one of the most challenging tasks, HSE managed to reach over 600 partnership agreements with foreign universities and research organizations (HSE, 2019a).

Throughout my conversations with the HSE university officials, they pointed out that the major and very important changes in relation to internationalization have been introduced in the structure of the university and the governance of the academic programs. As mentioned before, in comparison with the traditional Russian university system that was based on a number of major faculties, the new system has become less centralized and more comparable to the western university system, which has also facilitated the redirection and optimization of funding. Every academic program now has its own office and is administered as a separate entity. Moreover, these programs do not

have to belong to a specific department; they can be interdepartmental or interdisciplinary. This has enhanced flexibility and created more favorable conditions for certain programs to implement various internationalization initiatives and to establish international partnerships as they see fit. Being more flexible, these programs can also respond faster to institutional imperatives, including those related to the international students and faculty, publishing and research collaborations.

One aspect that is always important to explore in the context of any reforms is: who are the agents of change? Who are leading this change and bring about critical transformations to the system? Throughout the interviews at HSE, multiple interviewees emphasized that the secret of success of most of their initiatives are in the strong leadership team of people with very clear goals, who are overseeing and managing the implementation of the new initiatives and facilitate institutional transformation. The following is an excerpt from one of the interviews speaking directly to this point:

Yes, we have a very strong and unique leadership team. Just like in any other university, as long as the “first” person [the rector of the university] does not understand in which direction the vessel is going, there won’t be people around them who would be swimming in the same direction, which is very important! ... that they don’t create barriers but rather make this journey smooth by creating favorable conditions for the new changes. I mean they would face the difficulties, accept the challenge, consolidate, find solutions and move forward. Another good thing about this is that when an institution is going through major transformations, it becomes clear who in the team is capable to face and cope with challenges and who isn’t.

Evidently, without strong leadership that sets clear goals and develops meaningful

strategies, any change is hardly possible. According to this and other HSE employees, one of the secrets of success of various internationalization initiatives is the good management vision of the university administration. In this case that means, first of all, a clear strategic vision and setting realistic goals taking into consideration the given institutional and international context and resources. Second, the knowledge of how to interact with various stakeholders outside of the institution that are involved in this process, such as the Ministry of Education and Science, for example. As some of the interviewees pointed out, what makes the internationalization process at HSE more successful than in other Russian universities is the result of very well thought through institutional policies covering educational, research and recruiting activities - policies that are clear, open and transparent. Looking further into the organizational structure, it is important that at HSE there are specific units within the university, which are responsible for implementing certain initiatives and have to regularly report on the progress. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, HSE has a number of entities that are accountable for and report on various aspects of internationalization.

Furthermore, when talking about the initial goal of the 5-100 Academic Excellence Project, only very few interviewees were confident that HSE would be able to achieve it - to get into the top 100 universities in the global higher education rankings; the rest of the respondents were more cautious with their prognoses. As one of the respondents clarified, the reason why they thought so was because, firstly, HSE had already been doing more than other program participants before the project was even introduced. For instance, they had already been engaged in recruiting foreign faculty and establishing international research laboratories, so they were a little ahead in this

competition. Second, HSE's current development strategies go beyond 2020 and the university will continue to develop in the direction of internationalization after the Project is over.

Various challenges and difficulties have been identified in relation to the HSE's efforts to become more internationally recognized. One issue related to HSE's academic reputation that came up in multiple conversations was linked to the name of the university. First of all, when one hears 'Higher School of Economics', the first association that comes to mind is that this is some sort of a business school or that this institution is strictly specializes in economics. Second, the words 'higher school' are too close to 'high school', which might create yet another confusion. Additionally, the official full name of HSE is very long (National Research University Higher School of Economics), which makes it difficult to remember. There has been a lot of discussion in the last few years about changing the name, specifically coming up with a short and catchy name in English that is easy to recognize and remember. However, this will inevitably create other types of difficulties, such as losing the HSE brand that has already started building and losing the number of publications that previously had affiliation with HSE.

Another challenge for HSE is related to its institutional profile: the disciplines and the programs of study that the university offers mainly belong to the fields of economics and social sciences, rather than physical, earth or life sciences. The absence of such discipline as medicine, and smaller concentration on the hard sciences make the institution more narrowly focused, and, therefore, certain internationalization initiatives are more difficult to implement. Here is how one of the interviewees explains this

challenge, providing an example of publishing in the field of social sciences:

Another factor... HSE is a very strange university to be a 5 – 100 participant because of its institutional profile. We have a more narrow profile, mostly social sciences... I mean it's not that narrow, but without physics or medicine, and specifically, without medicine it is difficult to hope for much [in terms of internationalization and global university competition]. So the disciplinary profile of HSE is a little bit imbalanced and internationalizing social sciences is much harder: the article that you write in Russian is not enough just to translate and share with the international community, you would need to put it in a specific context... it should be a different discourse... For physicists and mathematicians it is easier and at this point our mathematicians are most active in regards to international publishing.

Thus, as this excerpt suggests, universities with a broader focus and more balanced representation of various disciplines may potentially experience less difficulty internationalizing their activities. For example, publications produced by STEM researchers will be more universal and probably more appealing to the global academic community and, therefore, easier to publish in the international journals, rather than those produced by social scientists and focusing on specific contexts.

Furthermore, in addition to the university officials and faculty members at HSE, I also interviewed a researcher from one of the top U.S. universities who has been closely collaborating with the HSE's faculty and staff members on a number of projects and papers. It was interesting to get a perspective of how HSE is doing in terms of internationalization from the outside. Apart from the general questions about the internationalization of higher education and his current projects, I asked this interviewee

questions that were related to his views on the 5 - 100 Project and the potential of the Russian universities in the global competition including their position in the international rankings; on the quality of research and publications produced by this particular institution; on the motivation of foreign universities and scholars to collaborate with HSE; and on the prospects of Russian universities, and HSE in particular to succeed in the global competition. Throughout this and previous conversations with the foreign scholars collaborating with Russian universities, they underlined that the national universities frequently lack researchers who actually know how to conduct quality research, specifically in the humanities and social sciences. The research methods courses are not widely offered in most Russian universities as much as in their foreign counterparts, therefore, very often research is conducted by individuals who either self-learned how to do research or have quite a vague idea of how it needs to be done. HSE is trying to fix this problem by engaging their scholars in high quality research and innovative methods through collaborative projects with other universities internationally.

Additionally, there is no adequate system of tracking the alumni employment and alumni networks are quite underdeveloped at HSE. This is unfortunate for the institution, since employment statistics could help them to move up in certain ranking systems and the university could also use the help of its alumni in promoting the brand and making it more recognizable around the world. This situation is gradually changing: the university now has specific staff members working with alumni who help them with employment and collect some sort of data post graduation. Another important aspect that needs to be developed is work with international students who graduate from HSE. These alumni who are spread all over the world can act as HSE ambassadors when they go back to their

home or other countries, and contribute to better recognition of the university name and the education opportunities that it provides.

Finally, what appears to be missing at HSE is the internationalization “at home”, which is growing its own globally competent specialists. Not simply attracting faculty and researchers from abroad but equipping academic employees with the skills that will ensure the university’s success in the global competition. This is not a fixed set of skills, but it can include foreign language knowledge, the potential to publish in the international research journals, the ability to establish international research collaborations and to lead international research laboratories, and others.

The fact that not too many individuals believed that HSE would get into the global rankings does not mean that they thought that anything they do in terms of internationalization is useless. As mentioned before, most of those efforts contributed to positive changes within the university and created a good foundation for the transformations to follow. Overall, 5 – 100 Academic Excellence Project gave an opportunity to bring change in the higher education system on the national level. As some of the HSE’s interviewees mentioned, they were hoping that the Project would bring a systemic transformation rather than a one-time change. An important contributor to ensuring the systemic, ongoing transformation is the change in the campus culture that was discussed previously in this chapter. The need to internationalize the HSE’s main activities, research and teaching, has become apparent long before the university became a 5 - 100 participant, therefore, their internationalization initiatives will not stop after the completion of the Project. HSE has a very dynamic environment within the university, in which everything is constantly changing. This feature, however, can manifest in both

positive and negative ways. On the one hand, the institution is very flexible and more receptive to innovative initiatives; however, this fluidity of the environment can lead to the instability that may be unsettling for various stakeholders starting from the university leadership and ending with students. As the interviews indicated, overall attitude of faculty and students toward internationalization activities is positive. Students benefit from such initiatives as study abroad programs and international research laboratories through which they can get engaged in various research projects, as well as take advantage of learning from and interacting with foreign faculty and students. Faculty members contribute to enhancing their academic careers through publishing in the international peer-reviewed journals and conducting meaningful research. As any other initiatives, internationalization activities face certain difficulties and challenges; however, those will not prevent HSE from further developing in the direction of internationalization.

CASE STUDY 2: REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES

The regional universities that I chose for this case study are all located in the Yaroslavl oblast (region), which is in the close proximity (a few hours away drive) from Moscow and Saint Petersburg. With the population of about six hundred thousand people, the city of Yaroslavl is the administrative center of the region with the rich history of over a thousand years and long-standing educational traditions. Yaroslavl is the home for eight major public and two private universities. The three universities that constitute this case study are some of the oldest and well-established higher education institutions in Yaroslavl: Yaroslavl State University (YSU), Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University (YSPU) and Yaroslavl State Technical University (YSTU).

For the regional universities, internationalization initiatives are something that they very often need to engage in, and not necessarily something they are enthusiastically willing or have enough capacity to do. As indicated in the Background and Context section, there are a number of legislative documents that regulate the main functions of the university and define their efficiency criteria, which if not met, may potentially result in university closure. Therefore, the main motivation for these universities to attract more international students or to publish in highly ranked international journals, for example, is to meet the requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Science in order not to be identified as poorly performing, rather than their ambitions to become more recognizable among their foreign counterparts or move up in the global university rankings. Here is how one of the interviewees commented on the motivation of their institution to internationalize:

Of course our university cares about the internationalization indicators. First of all, this pressure of being merged with some other institution... As always, somebody wins and somebody loses. So when they [the Ministry of Education and Science] start deciding which universities need to be merged, they will first of all try to identify the leading institutions. So the question will be, who stays in the leadership team, staff, and so on... so of course we care about these indicators [internationalization indicators]. Furthermore, funding depends on this! I mean this federal money that the leading university will get when other institutions get merged to them.

Therefore, the pressure produced by the federal government and the unwillingness to merge with other universities and to lose their own institutional identity presents the major motivating factors in internationalization efforts for regional universities. Another interviewee confirms this point and further elaborates on the stimuli for the higher education institutions to engage in internationalization activities:

The Ministry requirements are the major stimulus, I would say. Other than that... a research interest, the desire to share your ideas, research... personal contacts and connections with other scholars that one is willing to develop and utilize... Other than that I can't think of anything else.

Judging by this quote and the similar opinions expressed by some other interviewees, another reason why this or that unit within the university may engage in internationalization activities is based on an individual interest rather than an institutional one. Furthermore, given that regional universities at this point are not as competitive on the global scale, they are being very realistic about their potential to ever get into the global university rankings, let alone to take a leading position among other institutions globally. When asked the question whether their university is even considering global

rankings throughout their international activity, this is what an interviewee from one of the regional universities said:

You need to understand that the universities that are looking at international rankings are those institutions that have a much higher status. For example, Moscow State University: for them collaborating with someone [a university], who has lower ranking does not make much sense since it's below their status. We collaborate with whoever is ready to collaborate with us. Frankly speaking, it doesn't matter who is where in the rankings, what is important is the result of our activities. What's more important is the outcome of this interaction rather than where it will get us in the rankings.

This quote demonstrates that this university is being very realistic about its position among other institutions across the globe and very humble about cooperating with them. Nevertheless, that does not mean that they would welcome any collaboration with absolutely any institution, it would still have to be based on the mutually beneficial and productive interactions, whether they are related to research or educational activities, with well-established institutions that provide quality education and engage in meaningful research. Global university rankings are simply not what is important to them throughout establishing and maintaining inter-university collaborations, what is critical though is the results that these activities can potentially bring to both sides. Having said that, regional universities are much more concerned about the national university rankings and how they compare with other institutions within the country, both on the institutional and subject levels. In this regard, all three universities are being consistently highly ranked among other Russian higher education institutions.

Again, the reason why regional universities engage in internationalization activities less than more prominent universities is not because they are not willing to do that but more because they have limited resources. One of the biggest barriers for these universities to fully engage in the internationalization initiatives is insufficient funding, or, very often a lack of funding. Given that regional universities have much more modest budgets and, therefore, less opportunities, their level of engagement in internationalization varies from that of HSE or similar institutions. Regional universities, although providing quality education and very often producing high quality research, have very low to no chances to participate in the programs similar to 5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project since they cannot compete with the larger and more nationally recognized research universities that are better funded by the government.

Three universities in this case study have different institutional profiles and organization; however, they are somewhat similar in their internationalization efforts. The major activities that all of them are involved in are establishing international inter-university collaborations, and increasing student and faculty inward and outward academic mobility.

Internationalization Initiatives: Students

In the case with Russian universities, the reasons why students choose to attend those, very often depend on where the students come from. Geographic proximity, lack of language barrier, and economic ties between the countries make Russia one of the top destinations for students from former Soviet republics. The three top sending countries are currently Kazakhstan, Belarus and Ukraine (WENR, 2017). Regional universities,

although trying to attract international students from all over the world, mostly receive students coming from the former Soviet republics. Furthermore, the number of Chinese students enrolled in Russian higher education institutions has also grown considerably in recent years, accounting to about 7 percent of all international students (WENR, 2017). Universities in Russia offer more affordable alternative education to Chinese students compared to the Western universities. Geographic proximity, intergovernmental agreements and Russian language centers established in Russia facilitate the increased inflow of the Chinese students. For example, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University has established a student exchange program with Southwest University in China, within which Russian and Chinese students study abroad for one semester. Apart from China, India and Vietnam are two other countries that send a noticeable amount of students to study in Russia for similar reasons. The number of students coming from European countries and the U.S. is considerably smaller compared to those from the aforementioned countries.

Across all three selected institutions, international students come predominantly from the former Soviet countries, such as Ukraine, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and others, and enroll in degree granting programs, mostly Bachelor's and Master's. Students from outside of the former Soviet block, from such countries as the U.S., France, and the U.K., mostly participate in some sort of exchange programs and come for a shorter periods of time, ranging from a few weeks to a semester. The major barriers in attracting international students for all Russian universities were identified earlier in this dissertation. Regional institutions experience even more difficulties since they have to compete for students not only with their international counterparts but also with the more

prestigious Russian universities located in the major cities. Such a university as HSE, for example, situated in Moscow, among other aspects, such as its status, and vast educational and research opportunities, already has another competitive advantage in terms of its location. Furthermore, another factor that defines higher enrollment of international students is the availability of housing/dormitories. Out of the three universities in this study, Yaroslavl State Technical University has the largest and most developed infrastructure with multiple dormitories, which helps provide very affordable housing for the incoming international students and use this factor to its advantage. Additionally, the fact that instruction in these universities is provided predominantly in the Russian language limits the number of international students considerably. Sometimes, universities provide Russian language courses prior to admission to a degree program, however, it might still be somewhat challenging for students to go through the whole program entirely in Russian. Finally, the types of academic disciplines that universities offer may have a different degree of attractiveness for international students. For example, as mentioned before, the most appealing disciplines among foreign students include engineering and business, while social sciences are among the least attractive ones (IIE, 2018b). Therefore, for example, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University with its focus predominantly on the humanities and social sciences might be experiencing more difficulties in their efforts to attract international students. One of the directions that many universities are taking to stay competitive and to still be able to attract foreign students is offering Russian as a foreign language programs along with the regular academic disciplines that are offered for all students.

As mentioned in the previous case study, there are different ways in which higher education institutions can “pull” international students to enroll in their programs. The first and probably most important advantage of studying at a regional university rather than at Moscow or St. Petersburg ones is the cost of tuition and living, which is almost always considerably lower. Moscow specifically is one of the most expensive cities not only in Russia but also in the world, and for someone on a student budget choosing a more affordable option might be worth going outside the capital. Additionally, Yaroslavl is still a regional center that is located only four hours drive (or train ride) from Moscow, so students still have the option of easily visiting Moscow while studying and living in a more affordable location. Moreover, Yaroslavl is the “Pearl of the Golden Ring of Russia” – the area in which eight oldest, historical Russian cities are situated in the shape of the ring. These cities and towns are among the most picturesque places in Russia that boast rich history and culture. Therefore, if choosing among various Russian cities, Yaroslavl might be one of the really interesting, exciting, and desirable locations offering everything what a big city has to offer for a more affordable price.

Universities are trying to ensure that foreign students integrate into the new university environment and broader community. For example, according to one of the interviewees, their university organizes so called Lingvo Cafés where domestic and foreign students join different tables depending on the spoken language and interact with each other over coffee or tea. This initiative is very popular among all students and particularly Russian ones, since at this moment with the recent reforms and transition through the Bologna process, the number of foreign language classes (and courses in

some other disciplines as well) has been drastically reduced. The following interview excerpt further elaborates on this point:

With transition to the Bologna system, the number of hours devoted to the foreign language got reduced. When I was teaching before that, it used to be that the students were taking language classes for four years twice a week. The students were very good at it! They were taking conversational English for two years, for example, and then for the other two years – they were taking language classes that were tailored specifically to their discipline. Now it's a year and a half... what are they going to learn? "Hi, my name is...?" You gotta be kidding me. This is really nothing.

Given such a situation with the reduced number of hours, evidently, students are seeking other opportunities to learn foreign languages. Therefore, this demonstrates that multiple stakeholders can benefit from certain internationalization initiatives: international students get better integrated into the university environment, while domestic students learn foreign languages and the university administration improves its efficiency indicators.

Furthermore, in order for the international students to integrate in the new academic and social environment more smoothly, more work needs to be done not only with the foreign but also with domestic students by enhancing greater tolerance and understanding of other people and their cultures. For instance, YSTU is regularly receiving a good number of students coming from Muslim countries and, in order to help domestic students to better understand religious and cultural differences, the university invites an imam from one of the city mosques to hold an open conversation and dialogue.

According to one of the interviewees, this is done with the goal to prevent potential future conflicts and misunderstandings between students coming from different backgrounds.

To bring more awareness about various academic programs, regional universities utilize different ways of attracting international students. One of these ways is participating in various educational fairs with the goal to market the university's academic and exchange programs and to attract international students. For example, Yaroslavl State University is actively participating in such fairs in Central Asia. Furthermore, very often universities use the services of the international student recruitment agencies, especially if university representatives do not have an opportunity to visit certain geographical areas and recruit students by themselves. Moreover, when asked the question "How do you attract international students to study at your university?" an interviewee at Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University replied that as an institution they cannot do much to attract a large number of students and have to mostly rely on the word of mouth approach, when students who had completed a course of study there before, tell their friends and relatives about their (hopefully positive) experience, which may potentially lead to creating more interest around studying at this particular institution. Here is how one of the interviewees comments on the difficulty of attracting international students:

Marketing our programs... we are trying but it's not very productive or successful... because there are too many other universities with a different status and name that gain the majority of those [international] students. We are still trying to do as much as we can.

It may not be even necessarily Moscow and St. Petersburg universities; higher education institutions located in Siberia were mentioned as some of the competitors, for example. For students from Kazakhstan, for instance, that is a more close and convenient location.

Furthermore, in their internationalization efforts, universities are constantly seeking better opportunities through establishing international partnerships with various organizations that aim to improve education. The close proximity to Europe very often defines the nature of these opportunities. Two out of three studied universities are actively engaged with Erasmus+ program (previously TEMPUS program), a program that supports education, training, sport and youth in Europe. This program aims to promote sustainable development in the field of higher education; to reduce unemployment, specifically for young people through encouraging them to learn new skills required by the labor market; to promote adult learning; to support innovation, cooperation and reform; and to enhance cooperation and mobility for the program partners (European Commission, n.d.). Erasmus+ has a budget of € 14.7 billion to provide opportunities for individuals to study and gain experience abroad, and this budget is set to last until 2020 (European Commission, n.d.). The program is not limited to only students and is open to other individuals and organizations; however, studying abroad is the main focus of Erasmus+. The program is open to the students of all levels (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral) and can last from 3 to 12 months. Additionally, there is an opportunity to combine study abroad with traineeship in order for the students to get valuable work experience and become more competitive on the labor market. According to the European Commission (n.d.), participation in Erasmus+ contributes to improving students' communication, language and intercultural skills, gaining more self-confidence

and independence through deep immersion in another culture, as well as acquiring soft skills that are most valuable with a lot of employers. Participating students can study at any university with which their home university has an inter-institutional agreement. Moreover, their study abroad program must be relevant to their field of study and pursued degree, and directly contribute to their learning and personal development goals and needs (European Commission, n.d.). Students participating in Erasmus+ are exempt from tuition, registration fees and any other learning-related costs (e.g., access fees to university libraries, laboratories, and others). In addition to that, they are eligible to apply for scholarships covering their travel and living expenses. The funding is not guaranteed but is highly probable.

The main benefits for universities to become a part of Erasmus+ are: an increased capacity to operate at an international level, enhanced management methods, access to more funding opportunities, and a more attractive portfolio of opportunities for both students and faculty (European Commission, n.d.). Furthermore, higher education institutions may engage in a number of development and networking activities, including strategic improvement of the professional skills of their staff, organizational capacity building, and creating international partnerships with universities abroad in order to produce innovative outputs or exchange best practices. The main goal of any organization participating in Erasmus+ is typically to develop such internationalization activity as mobility of students and academic staff. Other key objectives may include: creating strategic partnerships to support innovation in the higher education sector, as well as in business and industry; contributing to developing new approaches to teaching and learning, entrepreneurship in education, and the modernization of higher education

systems in Europe; narrowing the skills gap and ensuring a closer alignment of vocational education and training with labor market needs; exchanging knowledge and best practices in the higher education field; and supporting broader accessibility and internationalization of higher education in partner countries (European Commission, n.d.).

According to an interviewee from YSU, within this program they receive international students predominantly from such countries as France, Italy, and Poland and send their students mostly to Serbia and Slovakia. Furthermore, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University for multiple years has been involved in the TEMPUS program, the predecessor of Erasmus+. The TEMPUS (Trans-European Mobility Program for University Studies) encouraged universities in the European Union and partner countries to engage in structured cooperation. TEMPUS implemented Joint European Projects and provided Individual Mobility Grants to university faculty and academic staff members. Starting from 2014, TEMPUS activities have become a part of Erasmus+ program. Within this program the YSPU Faculty of Foreign Languages was responsible for creating an electronic platform consisting of five modules for the Master's level students from the countries participating in Tempus.

Another way that universities find to support their students is through partnering with international educational charity foundations. For example, Yaroslavl State University is one of the 20 universities that work with Oxford Russia Fund (ORF), a charity organization that aims to support Russian students through providing scholarships and donations to the educational institutions. They are specifically targeting humanities students pursuing their studies in such disciplines as anthropology, archeology, journalism, art, history, law, sociology, digital humanities, economics and others.

Additionally, Oxford Russia Fund supports educational institutions in the U.K., which contribute to advancing education in Russia through providing training, research programs, student/teacher exchange programs and cultural activities. Finally, the fund takes active part in the conferences and workshops, related to Russian education and other initiatives, such as seminars for faculty, that aim to improve education in Russia. Therefore, the Fund does not only present an instrument of encouraging the most talented and motivated students, but also sets broader goals of developing education in the field of humanities and familiarizing students with various research methods and practical applications of knowledge, and, most importantly, aims to narrow the gap between the quality of education in regional universities and those located in the country's capital. Annually about 2,000 undergraduate students are rewarded merit-based scholarships ranging from USD 1,000 to USD 1,500 through this fund. Since 2005, the year when it started, about 33,000 Russian students have received scholarships (Oxford Russia Fund, n.d.). The scholarships are disbursed on a monthly basis on the condition that students maintain high academic performance. Additionally the fund encourages ORF scholars to participate in annual summer and winter schools that are held in various locations within Russia. These schools are designed to encourage students to familiarize themselves with international research and experience, to meet other scholars with similar interests, and to develop professional networks in related academic fields. Furthermore, each of the 20 universities is provided with an English language digital library sourced by the Oxford University Press and other publishers. The books and literary works donated to the library are available to all university students and not just ORF scholars. Finally, it is important to mention that the Rector of each university receives a small fund with the goal to

facilitate or supplement any of the aforementioned activities as the university leadership sees fit.

Internationalization Initiatives: Faculty

All three researched universities identified recruiting international students as a relatively successful aspect of internationalization that they are involved in, while foreign faculty recruitment – as the most challenging and, for the most part, non-existent one. It can be explained by the fact that to attract students, the universities can utilize some of their competitive advantages, such as the low cost of tuition and location; however, with the faculty recruitment, they cannot really compete with other institutions that can offer a much higher compensation, as well as research opportunities and better work conditions. Therefore, unlike such universities as HSE, which are able to recruit international employees and can afford paying them higher salaries, regional universities can attract international faculty members mostly for short-term contracts rather than long-term ones. Domestic faculty mobility is also mostly limited by their participation in short-term exchange programs and international research conferences or seminars. For example, at YSTU a number of faculty members regularly go to Germany for a short period of two-three weeks to teach within the faculty exchange program established between the two universities. Going back to the question of limited resources: although regional universities are trying to engage their faculty in international activities and provide them with the opportunities to go abroad with the goal of exchanging knowledge and acquiring new skills, their efforts are constrained by the available resources. Frequently, these trips

abroad are based on the individual initiatives or previously established personal connections.

Domestic faculty members at the regional universities are making efforts to be more academically mobile. Erasmus+ that was discussed in the previous section offers short-term teaching opportunities abroad. Such an experience can help improve one's language skills and cultural knowledge, as well as equip instructors with new teaching methodologies and techniques learned in another academic environment. Academic teaching staff can participate in the program in one of the partner universities for the period of minimum two days and maximum two months. During their time abroad their teaching load should be at least 8 hours a week (European Commission, n.d.). Similarly to the program funding provided to students, Erasmus+ may partially or fully cover travel and living expenses throughout the participants' stay abroad. Based on the interviews at the three universities in this case study, a very limited number of faculty members take advantage of this program. One of the barriers to broadening participation of both faculty and students in academic mobility opportunities is the language knowledge. Low proficiency in English, as well as other foreign languages (depending on the country they are aspiring to go to) clearly prevents them from participating in the academic programs abroad. Therefore, in the case with regional universities, the most active departments in internationalization initiatives are those that are closely related to foreign language teaching and research (Philology department; departments of Foreign Languages, and others). For example, at YSPU, the majority of the faculty members who have participated in Erasmus+ programs are from the Faculty of Foreign Languages and who are fluent in one or more foreign languages.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SPECIFIC INSTITUTIONAL INTERNATIONALIZATION INITIATIVES

Yaroslavl State University (YSU)

Yaroslavl State University is a member of the Euroasian Universities Association (EUA), which ensures university's compliance to international standards and provides collaboration perspectives on the internationalization of higher education. EUA is a reputable international organization of higher education institutions, which includes national universities from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), leading regional universities and higher educational institutions of the Eurasian region. Currently, the EUA has 139 university members from such countries as Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Moldova, Russia, Tadzhikistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine and others (Euroasian Universities Association, 2019). The major objectives of EUA are to develop national education systems, to preserve common educational environment, to ensure the equivalence of universities' diplomas and degrees, and to develop the cooperation among the universities. The Association conducts its activity through academic conferences, forums, and inter-university collaborations (Euroasian Universities Association, 2019). For instance, the EUA organizes international research and practice conference "Universities and Society", which has earned strong reputation within the wider academic community and gained wide international recognition. A large number of university faculty members across the CIS and from other countries, as well as representatives of international organizations, participate in this conference.

Although it is not mentioned in the mission statement, the university claims to be actively involved in the process of internationalization of higher education (YSU, n.d.).

They have established a number of international partnerships and bilateral agreements with higher education institutions in the U.S. (e.g. University of Texas at Brownsville), the European Union (University of Poitiers, University of Bremen, University of International Studies in Rome and others), China (Taipei Medical University) and NIS countries (Kazakh National Pedagogical University Abai, Minsk Institute of Modern Technologies and Marketing, Belarus State Economic University, Russian-Tajik Slavonic University and others). The international initiatives include student and faculty mobility programs, foreign language study and joint research collaborations.

International cooperation at YSU has been developing in various formats. As mentioned before, YSU is a member of Erasmus+ projects that aim to enhance academic mobility flows between Russian and European universities. Students at all levels (Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral) participate in these programs, as well as academic staff and faculty members. Furthermore, the university runs a number of language and culture programs. YSU has a long-term ongoing experience in organizing summer schools for international students. The most recent Summer School 2019 lasted for two weeks and combined 40 academic hours of language instruction, choral singing, and Russian arts and crafts classes, as well as city excursions, museums and summer camp visits. From 2011 to 2014 the International Affairs department with the sponsorship of the American Councils for International Education was organizing summer language program NSLI-Y (the National Security Language Initiative for Youth) targeting high-school students from the U.S. The program focused not only on the Russian language instruction but also on the cultural immersion. Furthermore, since 2008, the university has also been running language and culture study programs for students of British

universities, including a 32-week program for Oxford University students. Additionally, within an exchange program with the University of Jyväskylä, YSU annually accepts a group of Finnish students headed by a Russian language instructor, who come to Yaroslavl with the goal of familiarizing themselves with Russian history and culture. Finally, Yaroslavl State University cooperated with University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) and conducted the first series of classes in the Russian and English languages via telecommunication technologies. Students from both universities participated in this series. The partnership with UNL was also followed by collaborations with other US colleges (YSU, n.d.).

Looking back at the previous initiatives, one of the most noticeable international collaborative projects was a joint project between YSU and Stanford University's Institute for International Studies that started in 1999 – “Initiative on Distance Learning”⁸. Students from different universities in Yaroslavl were eligible to participate in this interdisciplinary project. They could choose out of the following courses: Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law; Security, Civil Liberties and Terrorism; Major Issues in International Conflict Management; International Security in a Changing World; and International Environmental Politics. The courses were taught in English in an interactive way via multimedia technologies. From my experience, it was quite an extensive course with online lectures and discussions followed by writing essays on each module of the course. Annually, about 50 course participants from Yaroslavl were awarded certificates of completion of this program (YSU, n.d.). Additionally, the

⁸ I happened to be one of the participants of this project.

university held an international student conference on contemporary issues of international security every year. The project was successfully run for 10 years and ended in 2009.

Other forms of internationalization activities include establishing inter-university teaching and research centers, creating international professional development programs, collaborating with foreign colleagues on the publications in reputable international research journals, organizing and participating in international scientific conferences, and applying to international organizations for research grants. Since 1998 a regional agency of International Exchange Center (IEC) has been working under International Affairs department at YSU. The IEC programs provide the university students and graduates with an opportunity to study foreign languages at various international language schools in the U.K., Germany, Canada, and the U.S.; to work in the USA, Costa-Rica and South Africa during summer holidays; and to do internships in the U.S. and Australia.

Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University (YSPU)

Yaroslavl State University is one of the oldest pedagogical institutions in Russia. YSPU claims to be one of the leading universities in the modern Russian pedagogical education system keeping and further developing the best academic traditions combined with pedagogical practice (YSPU, n.d.). Developing international collaborations is one of the goals of developing the university and improving the quality of provided education. The major objectives of the YSPU internationalization activities are to ensure better integration of the university into the global academic community, to improve the educational process, to enhance the quality of teaching, and to deepen the scientific

research collaborations with the leading higher education and research institutions across the globe (YSPU, n.d.). The internationalization initiatives that YSPU focuses on are: developing international programs and research projects in collaboration with foreign universities, organizing and participating in international research seminars and academic conferences, conducting research utilizing the resources offered by the foreign universities and libraries, enhancing greater faculty and student mobility, introducing internships in globally located companies for students and staff, and attracting more international students. YSPU has established and is continuing building strong partnerships with universities and research centers in such countries as Austria, Brazil, the U.K., Hungary, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Israel, Canada, China, the U.S., Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Estonia and others (YSPU, 2018). In 2006, in close cooperation with the Higher School of P.Vlodkovitsa Plock (Poland), YSPU founded the International Institute of Intercultural Communications, which is successfully operating and conducting successful educational activities in Poland, Russia and other countries. Furthermore, the university seems to develop extensive collaborations with Chinese universities: at this point YSPU has partnered with five universities in China. Additionally, a Chinese Cultural and Educational Center was established at YSPU in collaboration with Southwest University. Chinese is also a recently introduced new language in the Faculty of Foreign Languages that is quite popular among students. The university is also planning to extend Chinese language instruction to the broader community outside of the university.

To provide a better understanding of the scale of YSPU's internationalization activities, here is what the university accomplished in the academic year of 2018. YSPU

has reached major collaboration agreements with Jilin University (China), University College of Teacher Education Lower Austria and Huazhong Normal University (China). Furthermore, they organized international forum “Eurasian Educational Dialogue”. Additionally, in 2018 the university accepted eight students from Middlebury College (Vermont, USA) to the annual Russian as a Foreign Language program in which the students could take not only language but also history, political science and culture courses. In addition to that, this group of students could also attend lectures on the selected subjects together with the Russian students. This program can last from one to two semesters and is oriented toward the students of all levels of the language proficiency. The program started in 2008 and has proved to be successful due to the staff’s professionalism and excellent results achieved by the students (YSPU, 2018).

The total number of international students that studied at YSPU in 2018 accounted to 71; most students came from China, Kazakhstan, the U.S., Belgium and France and attended classes in the faculties of Foreign Languages, Russian Philology and Culture Studies, Pedagogy and History (YSPU, 2018). A number of domestic faculty members participated in various academic mobility programs abroad and took part in international conferences and forums; there was no international faculty working at YSPU in 2018 though. Finally, throughout the last year, the university continued multi-year collaborations with various higher education and research institutions all over the world.

Yaroslavl State Technical University (YSTU)

Simply by looking at the English version of the YSTU's website, one can notice some differences in comparison with the other two Yaroslavl universities that were researched in this case study. In the welcome word of the rector it states: "If you want to study in the Russian Federation, if you want to get excellent high quality education with low tuition fees, then our Yaroslavl State Technical University is the best place for you!" (YSTU, n.d.). Therefore, the university is clearly trying to appeal to the international student population by suggesting that they can receive excellent education for relatively low cost, which is a good selling point if one compares the YSTU tuition to even some of Moscow universities, and, clearly a great advantage in comparison with most Western universities. Additionally, the university is offering a ten-month Russian language preparation program for those whose language proficiency is not sufficient enough to enroll in the YSTU academic programs. Universities choose different strategies to attract international students. It is interesting to note that YSTU decided to emphasize the easiness of being admitted in comparison with other universities. For instance, they do not have any language test requirement, (such as TOEFL or IELTS, for example), which is normally the first and mandatory requirement for international students applying to a university in a different country.

Another feature of the YSTU's internationalization efforts that make this university stand out from other regional universities is its dual degree Bachelor's program with Technical University of Applied Sciences Wildau, Germany. Yaroslavl State Technical University has been partnering with the Technical University of Applied Sciences for over 20 years now. However, the dual degree agreement was reached in

2011 and it defines the conditions of the student exchange between the Faculty of Engineering and Economics at Yaroslavl State Technical University and the Faculty of Business, Computing and Law at Technical University of Applied Sciences Wildau. It is important to note that the program involves only Russian students studying in Germany and not vice versa. According to one of the interviewees, German students express less interest in this program than Russian students. Students are supposed to study for two semesters in Germany (6th and 7th out of the total of 8 semesters of their Bachelor's program); one is spent taking classes and another one – on practical training. The curriculum is created and approved by both parties. An absolute requirement for enrollment in this program is the knowledge of German that is demonstrated by taking the German language international tests, so students are required to take the language classes for five semesters prior to starting studies in Wildau. For those who meet the necessary test requirements but still appear to be less skilled in the language, additional German courses are organized prior to and during their stay in Germany (YSTU, 2019). According to one of the interviewees at YSTU, up to 20 students participate in this program annually. For a technical university, given that foreign languages is not one of its central disciplines, this appears to be quite a large number of students who are capable to study abroad in a dual degree program.

The participating students have to pay regular tuition and registration fees at their home university; their tuition fees at the host university are waived. Additionally, they are responsible for their living, transportation and any other expenses, such as on insurance or study materials, unless some third-party funding is provided. Compared to studying at the most American and some other European universities, these costs are

normally lower, which makes this dual degree program more affordable. Upon completion of the program, students receive two Bachelor of Science degrees granted by both universities.

An unfortunate outcome of this program is that upon completion of the program, many students end up staying in Germany; the fact that they are fluent in German and have an opportunity to have practical internships in German companies throughout this program facilitates their potential future employment. This is how one of the interviewees comments on this situation:

Interviewer: So, what do students do with their dual degree? Where do they work afterwards?

Interviewee L: In Germany.

Interviewer: In Germany? So, they go back to Germany?

Interviewee L: Yes, unfortunately, many of them. We [Russia] cannot offer them comparable work conditions and pay. Plus, while the students are there, the companies that they intern in try to attract the most talented folks. We cannot compete... However, we are happy for them. It feels good knowing that we are creating better opportunities for students.

Therefore, one can see that various internationalization initiatives, such as dual degree programs do create greater mobility, however, brain drain is always going to be a side effect of such activities unless the home country develops sufficient capacity to create better working and pay conditions for their citizens in order to motivate them to return back home and contribute to developing their home economy rather than seeking opportunities abroad.

Internationalization Features at Regional Universities

The scale of internationalization of higher education in larger, better nationally recognized universities and in the regional ones differs. While the former are developing their international activities in order to compete with their international counterparts, the latter are engaging in the internationalization initiatives with the goal to compete with other domestic universities and to increase their prestige within the country. The regional universities' main motivation and stimulus to internationalize their educational and research activities are mostly prompted by the governmental imperatives to meet the certain efficiency indicators with the pressure of being closed or merged with other institution, if they do not achieve those. More modest budgets and resources define the nature and implementation of the internationalization initiatives at these universities.

The number of university employees at these regional universities that are directly involved in the internationalization initiatives is considerably smaller than that at such universities as HSE. All three institutions have international departments or centers that run and report on the most internationally related activities. Sometimes it is literally one or two people covering all internationally oriented activities at a given institution, including planning, budgeting, operationalizing, implementing and reporting on the outcomes. Less frequently, various sorts of internationalization undertakings are interwoven with the activities of other organizational units within the university. For instance, at Yaroslavl State University, a Scientific and Research Center assists faculty members with international publications and participation in the conferences abroad. This is how one of the interviewees describes it:

The biggest emphasis at the university now is on science and research. A lot of people, who are in science, speak English, so they don't really need us [International Center]. They organize conferences without our assistance, exhibitions and so on. These initiatives mostly start with personal contacts that the faculty members initially make and then they turn into inter-university collaborations and projects.

Since these initiatives are mostly based on the individual initiatives, there is some sort of disconnect between different units within the institution, which creates less uniformity in internationalization initiatives and leads to certain tensions within the organization.

Given more limited resources and modest budgets comparing to more prestigious institutions in the major Russian cities, regional universities have to be more creative in seeking funding for their internationalization initiatives from outside. This explains their deeper involvement in such programs as Erasmus+ or partnering with international foundations that provide scholarships and grants for students and faculty, such as Oxford Russia Fund. Evidently, it is not just regional universities that are utilizing these opportunities – according to Oxford Russia Fund website, for example, National Research University Higher School of Economics is also on the list of their participating universities, however, regional universities have to rely more on support of such organizations since they are not getting sufficient funding from the government.

PART III
LESSONS LEARNED

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENT AND FUTURE OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN THE CONTEXT OF RUSSIA

When talking about the general results of internationalization, not just the 5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, a number of researchers agree that the level of internationalization of Russian higher education is not high compared to that of other countries (Marginson, 2014; Smolentseva, 2003). Some of the main consequences and results of internationalization of the Russian universities include but are not limited to the following. First of all, integrating Russian universities in the global academic community. For a while, Russia has been sort of isolated from the rest of the world in regards to the research topics and practices for various political reasons. Second, government's understanding of the importance of establishing world-class universities and bringing their education and research to the higher international standards provided extra funding to the higher education sector through such programs as 5 - 100 Project or additional subsidies to the education sector, which is crucial for the universities that are mostly being underfunded. The system of education in general in Russia, including the tertiary sector, is not getting much financial support from the government. As mentioned before, educational spending, both in terms of expenditures per student and of the national wealth share is below the OECD average: it accounts to 3.6 percent of the GDP, compared to 4.5 percent on average for the OECD countries (OECD, 2018). From the results of the 5 –

100 Academic Excellence Project we can see that governmental support and funding is critical for a more sustainable development of universities. Given that the higher education sector in Russia, similarly to many other countries is underfunded, it is very difficult for many universities that are not receiving any additional incentives and support from the government to engage in internationalization initiatives and projects.

Apart from financial hardships, a number of other challenges that Russian universities face on their path to internationalization have been identified. One of them is the extreme bureaucracy of hiring foreign faculty and admitting international students. Although 5 – 100 Project is a governmental initiative, there are a lot of bureaucratic obstacles to certain institutional activities, including obtaining governmental (both national and local) approvals, visa requirements for foreign nationals intending to work or study in Russia, and others. As one of the interviewees stated:

Interviewee: One of the most important aspects here is the high bureaucratic barrier... very high. It's not clear whether our government is for us or against us. Sometimes it's very unclear. For example, changing visa regulations... you do understand we are playing on the international arena, just like everyone else. And all those political changes that have been introduced have an affect, because they introduced the sanctions, made the visa process more complicated, removed certain privileges. One can get a work visa only if after they are done with their job their passport is still valid for another year and a half.

Interviewer: For what?

Interviewee A: Are you addressing this question to me? That's how it is. And a large number of people whose passport is still valid but for a shorter period of time have to apply for the new one. This very often means that

people just won't be willing to go through this and will decline the job offer. So we are pulling them in with one hand and pushing them away with another... so we need to decide either we want to be by ourselves, or with the rest of the world.

Therefore, one of the biggest challenges is bureaucratic barrier and extra requirements that although sometimes seeming small, still create unnecessary hustle that prevents individuals from coming to the country for work or studying. This might be the case with many other countries, not just Russia, since there are always a number of different levels of regulations and requirements in relation to international hiring; however, in this particular context, if not fixed, this situation will continue to create an unwelcoming environment for any sort of international interactions.

Another challenge is the unstable economic situation in the country that leads to the fact that universities cannot guarantee certain aspects of the employment contract for potential international hires. The following excerpt provides an example supporting this claim:

A person comes to work to Russia on certain conditions. He receives his salary in rubles, he can't get paid in anything other than rubles here. What if the exchange rate jumps up twice as high?! Our budget will not jump as much. So we have a situation when none of the universities can provide any long term guarantees to its international employees.

Although little can be done to ease this situation on the institutional level, universities are trying to find solutions. HSE, for instance, apart from one-time increase of the salaries, offers higher research and academic mobility funds as well as the possibility to hire research assistants for their foreign faculty. However, the impossibility of providing

guarantees and stability inevitably leads to the lack of strategic interactions, since one cannot build strategies on the unstable ground. Therefore, to have any sort of long-term sustainable internationalization efforts (in this case, hiring international faculty, as an example), it is important to establish long-term relationships and interactions. With the unstable socio-economic situations, this appears to be a very difficult task.

Furthermore, one of the biggest challenges for any institutional change is altering the organizational culture. Internationalization initiatives normally involve a large number of stakeholders, including university leadership, faculty members, administrative staff, and students. When changing organizational culture, all these participants need to be on the same page and to have the same goals and motivation, otherwise, at some point, the change will be thwarted by an individual or a group of individuals. One of the barriers here, for instance, is the resistance of the university faculty who see neither the point nor the stimulus to change their way of teaching, research and publishing. A number of interviewees have consistently mentioned that one of the challenges of internationalization is the “old and traditional” university structures and faculty attitudes that are hard to reform. Thus, if some of these stakeholders are not as engaged in the process of internationalization, it becomes increasingly complicated to bring about change.

Moreover, the most obvious barrier to the internationalization is the initial position of universities and the resources available to them. Even with the additional governmental funding it may not be enough to realize all the ambitious projects that a university might have in mind. This situation exacerbates in the regional institutions that are generally much less funded and more poorly supported.

Furthermore, talking about governmental support, it is important to note that throughout the document collection and analysis, it was difficult to identify information that specifically looked at the rationale of starting such program as the 5 -100 Academic Excellence Project. One interviewee suggested that it was not quite clear what exactly triggered the introduction of the Project, especially given that the two most important indicators in the ranking systems - academic reputation and publications in the international academic journals - appear to be the weakest aspects in the Russian higher education. Therefore, from the very beginning the goal of getting very high in the global university rankings did not appear realistic. The following example from an interview with one of the HSE researchers directly speaks to this point.

Although we might have researchers who have the potential to publish in international peer-reviewed journals, this space is still not entirely open to us; we have not been a part of this space and to get into it, one needs to belong to this global academic community and know how to find their way around there. Plus, the academic culture... most of them speak English, while most of us don't, so why would we get into this race? As far as I remember, there wasn't really a broad discussion for the rationale for getting into this competition.

Another interviewee suggested that the reason for starting this project might have been quite politicized, meaning that certain individuals in the government decided that this policy initiative was most appropriate in the given political time and context that was influenced by globalization. As for the internal triggers, the Russian system of education did not have particularly strong motives to get involved into the process of internationalization, however, education reforms that were contributing to going in that

direction started even before the 5 – 100 Project. The federal government began allocating funds for the innovative development programs. For example, in 2006 – 2007 the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation has announced the context of innovative educational programs for the higher education institutions. This was the first “real” very competitive contest between universities, which could provide additional governmental funding for the institutional development. The total budget of the contest was ten billion rubles (approximately USD 150 million). With the application, universities could ask for a subsidy to finance one of the four areas: obtaining laboratory equipment, developing or obtaining programing software, modernization of material and technical educational base, and professional development of the academic staff. HSE was one of the winners of this contest and was receiving funding for their innovative educational programs. Although, specific internationalization activities were not included as the area of development, some of the results of this development program are related to international activities: for instance, the university established a number of international research centers and six new Master’s programs (HSE, n.d.). Therefore, some of the interviewees expressed the opinion that the 5 – 100 Project was a very logical continuation of this development program, since this demonstrated the willingness of the government to allocate funding for the educational innovation and reform.

As mentioned before, only very few individuals who participated in this study suggested that the goal of getting into the top one hundred global universities was achievable. Most of the universities are quite adequate in assessing their position on the global higher education arena. They are mostly looking at the European and Asian universities (e.g. the London School of Economics and Beijing University when

strategizing their internationalization initiatives). What they are specifically looking for are the best practices used by Chinese universities since China has similar programs that have helped the selected number of young universities to become very competitive and highly recognizable on the global higher education arena. When creating their development strategies, Russian universities are also trying to look at those counterparts that have similar institutional profiles. HSE, for example, is comparing itself to MIT and Caltech in how they combine the study of economics, engineering and humanities.

In regards to the global university rankings, everybody understands that they are not the most adequate way of assessing the quality of education and research. At the same time, there is not really any other scale to compare universities on the global level, so higher education institutions have to consider international rankings when competing with other universities. Additionally, specifically for Russian universities that started initiating internationalization activities while striving to become more comparable to other universities across the globe, this has primarily been leading to more positive changes, such as increasing visibility of their research in a wider academic community, diversifying their faculty and student population as well as worldviews, and adopting best practices from other universities, which may potentially make educational experience on their grounds richer and more productive.

Referring to all Russian universities in general and their prospects of succeeding in the global competition and getting into the top 100 higher education institutions, it is important to note that Russian universities are quite different from their Western counterparts for a number of reasons. First of all, as mentioned before, they are not as adequately funded by the government to fully engage in certain internationalization

initiatives. Furthermore, the specifics of the Russian higher education with its separation of teaching and research, and the fact that a lot of university faculty members focus more on teaching rather than conducting research thwarts research productivity. Moreover, according to one of the interviewees the goal of getting into the top 100 global universities is impossible for a very simple reason: when 5 - 100 Project was created, the methodology of the rankings was not very thoroughly analyzed and, therefore, the goals that were set ended up being not quite realistic:

Look, when this program [5 -100 Project] was being created, nobody really studied the methodology of the rankings and nobody understood whether it was at all possible. And the plans that were being made were based on something that they wanted to achieve, but not because it was possible. Unless you know all the details about the rankings, it will be difficult to get into them.

Therefore, from the very beginning of the Project, the majority of the participating universities clearly realized that the goal of getting into the top one hundred universities was not achievable. In the case with HSE, as a very young university, it is still building its academic reputation (which is an important indicator in most global rankings), which will require many more years and would not be possible to achieve in less than a decade.

Another way to look at the rankings and how fast a given university can move up in those is to look beyond the institutional rankings and consider the subject ones, that are easier to get into. The subject rankings are specifically relevant for the universities with more narrow focus on certain disciplines, such as HSE. As one of the interviewees mentioned, it was not clearly stated in the 5 – 100 Project whether the participating universities had to necessarily get into the institutional rankings [Author's note: although

that was probably implied], therefore, that goal can technically considered to have been achieved:

Everybody is talking about the rankings, everybody is talking about the Project, however, nobody ever said that these rankings needed to be institutional. What is this top 100? Take MIT for example ... top ten clearly. Nobody doubts that. But if you look at their Linguistics program, it's probably not in the top ten. You can't be the best in everything. Of course you can be a Harvard and be the best in everything, but you need to be a Harvard for that. There are not too many Harvards out there.

This interviewee further emphasized that, with the goal of getting a high ranking, the most important aspect is not the result but the process of getting there. Throughout this process there will be intermediate results of getting into the subject rankings and other more important aspects of the process of internationalization, for instance increasing research productivity. One of the ways to look at a country's standing on the global scale is to look at the number of publications in the international research journals. According to the Scopus and Web of Science, by the end of March 2019 Russian researchers had about 98,000 and 75,800 publications indexed by these databases respectively (5 - 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, 2019). The largest numbers of publications were in such subject areas as astronomy, engineering, physics, materials sciences, chemistry and mathematics.

Another interesting point that was made by interviewees was related to how Russian universities can improve their performance on the global rankings if that remained a goal. Since some of the ranking systems can be somewhat manipulated, Russian higher education institutions might want to use that to their advantage. For

instance, every university can suggest a list of experts who might potentially be participating in the academic reputation survey. The more Russian experts get to evaluate the universities, the more chances for the Russian universities to get higher scores in the rankings.

When discussing internationalization features typical specifically for Russian higher education system, it is important to note that compared to some other countries that are aggressively internationalizing their education, such as the United Arab Emirates or China, for instance; Russia does not host too many foreign universities or branch campuses. According to the Cross-Border Education Research Team's list that was last updated in 2017, by that year, there were only two foreign-owned university campuses in Russia: Moscow University Touro and Stockholm School of Economics Russia (located in Saint Petersburg); both specialize on business education and offer BS and MBA degrees in Finance and Business Management and Administration (C-BERT, 2017). To compare, both China and the United Arab Emirates had 42 campuses each: for China these countries represent different parts of the world with American universities dominating the list; and for the United Arab Emirates this list is more diverse with the main universities located in the U.S., the U.K, Russia, European and Middle Eastern countries. On the other hand, Russian universities are represented really well in the post-Soviet countries, which makes Russia the leader in trans-national education in that part of the world. According to the Ministry of Education and Science data, there are 36 branch campuses in various former Soviet republics with the majority of them being located in Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (n.d.). Unlike some other countries, such as the U.K. or Australia, where trans-national education is mostly spearheaded by the private

institutions, in the case with Russia, it is driven by the state providers and is reinforced by the government. This may be explained by the fact that international and trans-national education is one of the elements of Russia's soft power strategy that aims at increasing the country's presence and integration in the post-Soviet space through economic, political and socio-cultural influence, as well as improving the image of Russia in the CIS countries (WENR, 2017).

WHAT IS NEXT?

In spring 2018, the Russian government published information on the new National Projects covering 12 areas of strategic development for the period of 2019 – 2024. Those areas include: healthcare, education, science, culture, ecology, urban development, international cooperation, and others (Government of the Russian Federation, 2019).

Overall, these national projects aim to achieve the significant scientific, technological and socio-economic advancement of the Russian Federation while improving living standards and creating conditions for the self-realization and development of one's talents. Each area identifies the major targets, challenges and problems, suggested solutions, results, and expected budgets. Each project also contains a comprehensive plan on how to achieve the set targets and what the expected outcomes are. There is a possibility that a part of the funds will be allocated to some sort of continuation of the 5 - 100 Academic Excellence Project and specifically for supporting such aspect of the project as international faculty recruitment and ensuring that foreign academic staff members receive salaries comparable to those offered in the Western universities.

The main objectives of the education part of the strategic development project are:

- 1) to ensure the global competitiveness of the Russian education and to help Russia become one of the top ten countries with the world in regards to the quality of education;
- 2) to bring up harmoniously developed and socially responsible individuals based on the spiritual and moral values of the peoples of Russian Federation as well as national-cultural traditions.

The education part of the new national project covers all levels of education; there are different programs within the projects through which higher education sector will be supported. A part of the new strategic development plan is related to increasing the presence of Russian universities in the top 500 global university rankings. According to the plan, by the end of 2020, 30 universities (at least one in each federal district) will receive governmental support based on the contest between the institutions. Similarly to the conditions of the 5 – 100 Project, these universities will have to develop roadmaps defining their institutional development until 2024 while taking into consideration the Russian Federation national development goals. Furthermore, by the end of 2019, 80 universities (from at least 40 subjects of the Russian Federation) will be included in the list of educational institutions of higher education providing training for the main sectors of the economy and social sphere with the goal of providing state support. Compared to the 5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project's goal of getting into the top 100 global universities, the objective of the new development program appears to be much more realistic. Additionally it covers a number of federal districts and subjects including a wide range of universities located all over the country and not only in Moscow or Saint Petersburg. An important part of the new national education development program of 2019 - 2024, is that regional universities should get monetary

support of 392 billion rubles within the initiative called “Higher education institutions as the innovative centers in the regions” (Interfax, 2018). Given that regional universities in their innovative activities are quite constrained by the resources available to them, additional governmental funding may potentially provide the necessary support and narrow the gap in the research capacity and educational services between regional universities and those located in Moscow and other major Russian cities.

Although not directly associated with internationalization but related to it, it is planned to implement alumni employment monitoring system with the goal to learn how satisfied employers are with the quality of the university training and the relevance of this training to the demands of the job market. Given that some of the global ranking systems consider alumni employment data, this may potentially contribute to improving some universities’ position among their international counterparts. Furthermore, according to this national development project, by 2024, 60 universities will have introduced at least five educational programs that will have gone through international accreditation. The number of international students enrolled in Russian universities should increase up to 425,000. It is not a secret that in the context of hosting international students, many universities all around the world started viewing them as a source of revenue since in most cases foreign students have to pay full or even increased tuition and fees, and normally receive low to no institutional funding. As mentioned before, this might not necessarily be the characteristic of many Russian universities, which have the national quotas for foreign students and provide additional funding and support. With the new development project, in order to attract a larger number of foreign students, additional funding will be provided for 10,000 most talented and promising students. Moreover,

77,600 new spots will be created in the student dormitories; thus, designing bigger and better infrastructure for the incoming foreign students is on the agenda (Government of the Russian Federation, 2019). A good portion of funding will be allocated to not only building dormitories but also university campuses as well. Furthermore, attracting international students for short-term educational projects, such as summer or winter schools, and summer camps is also a part of the plan. With the increased inflow of international students, it will be necessary to have more faculty members capable to teach in foreign languages. These instructors will be getting increased salaries (about 20% above the average) in order to be more incentivized to learn or maintain a foreign language. Moreover, something that has not been very well developed so far, Russian language resource centers in the partner countries should reach 50 by 2024.

According to this large-scale national project that covers all social areas, a lot of ambitious goals have been set for all sectors and levels of education for the next five years. However, given the aforementioned numbers and the funding that will be allocated for the achievement of these objectives, they seem to be at least partially realizable. Considering that a good portion of this project and one of the two main goals are devoted to increasing the global competitiveness of the Russian education, even with the end of the 5 – 100 Russian Academic Excellence Project, the government still considers it to be one of the major priorities. Although not explicitly stated in the project outline, it is very likely that a portion of the funding will be allocated to some sort of continuation of the 5 – 100 project. Experts suggest spending 39 billion rubles (approximately USD 582 million) annually, with additional 25 billion rubles (USD 373 million) set aside for the

international faculty salaries, one aspect that universities are struggling with when trying to attract foreign academic staff members (Interfax, 2018).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY AND AREAS OF FUTURE INQUIRY

The limitations accompanying this research stemmed from the very nature of the study. Throughout the data collection, I was constrained by the level with which some universities were willing to cooperate in providing me with enough information to conduct the study. Furthermore, I was challenged by how open the study participants were in discussing their knowledge or experience of the reform process. Thus, I was limited in the types of questions that I could ask that would provide me with meaningful data. Additionally, I only interviewed those stakeholders who were directly involved in certain internationalization initiatives, therefore, I was not taking into consideration much the opinions of students, who may be affected by, but not directly participating in the new developments. Looking at the students' attitudes toward the internationalization of universities presents an interesting direction for the future research.

Another potential focus of my research that would stem out of this study would be looking at how internationalization contributes to creating a greater diversity on campus. Both internationalization and diversity initiatives have common goals of enhancing cultural awareness and understanding each other's differences. Internationalization helps students to develop global critical thinking skills and prepares them to live and work in a world characterized by multiculturalism and diminishing borders. Engaging students in international activities is one of the best ways to give them the international learning, critical in the 21st century and to help them become global citizens and thought leaders.

Therefore, it is important that higher education institutions value inclusion and pluralistic learning and research environment, and respect and welcome various perspectives and experiences. Internationalization can help increase the diversity of worldviews and knowledge across a wide range of social groups including race, ethnicity, nationality, economic class, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, and their intersections. I am curious to see how various internationalization initiatives in the higher education context can increase diversity on university campus.

Finally, I would be curious to look at the internationalization of higher education from the perspective of those who are targeted by some of the initiatives, specifically foreign faculty and students. It would be interesting to unveil their major motivations and rationale for working and/or studying in one of the Russian universities as opposed to choosing any European or American institution. As mentioned before, I already talked to one of the faculty members who has been actively engaged in a number of initiatives at HSE for quite some time. Although this was outside of the scope of my research, it triggered my interest to explore this topic further but from a different angle.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this dissertation that is titled “Russian Universities in Global Competition” I explored various aspects of internationalization of higher education in a given context. Universities compete for more funding, better faculty, more talented students, more recognition, and higher rankings. The whole idea of any competition is standing alone against one’s competitors. The point is to win and leave everyone else behind. Interestingly enough, in the case with all the universities that I have looked at throughout this research, when

competing with other universities across the globe, they all engaged in some sort of international inter-university collaboration and cooperation. I would like to consider this part of the global university competition very beneficial for higher education institutions in any geographic context. I began this dissertation with the quote that talked about the winners in the global competition, Western universities. I would like to end this dissertation on a different note, with a different quote: "Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off" (Franklin D. Roosevelt). When competing with each other in the ranking race, universities have to seek strategies that would help them become more globally recognized, and one of the most efficient ways to achieve this goal turns out to be cooperation. After all, the researched higher education institutions ended up competing not with others but rather with themselves: when the goal is not to become just like someone else or better than anyone else, but to become better than what they were before. Having said that, I do not imply that every single internationalization initiative necessarily makes a university a more efficient institution, but rather state that it may contribute to bringing positive change, whether it is in the institutional organization, governance or universities' educational and research activities. Besides, how far can an institution go with any reform, in this case, with internationalizing its education? At some point a university will reach the set goals and indicators considering available resources and various constraints. Possibly after that, in the new context defined by globalization, a university will continue developing but in a different mode - through further cooperation, while, hopefully, looking far beyond just numbers and rankings.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

The list of interview questions for National Research University Higher School of Economics (5 - 100 Project Participant):

1. Globalization and internationalization of Russian higher education:
 - How does HSE understand globalization and internationalization of higher education?
 - Why did Russian universities start looking at their position on the global higher education arena? Did something trigger that?
2. Position of the institution among foreign universities:
 - Where does HSE see itself among other universities internationally?
 - Are there any “model” universities that HSE is looking at when implementing internationalization initiatives?
3. Internationalization initiatives:
 - What internationalization initiatives is HSE involved in?
 - How are students/faculty involved in various internationalization initiatives?
 - What is your personal involvement in these initiatives?
 - Who are the major players in the internationalization process at HSE?
 - What kind of reaction do faculty and students of your university have to various internationalization initiatives?
 - What initiative(s) appear to be more/the most successful? What makes you say that?
 - Which internationalization initiative requires more effort (which

internationalization initiative is not working as expected)? Why?

- What challenges does the university experience throughout the process of internationalization?
- What kind of support (on the institutional/local/national levels) would be most helpful?
- What changes (if any) have been introduced to the organization/structure/culture of HSE with internationalization?

4. Results of internationalization of Russian higher education:

- Do you think HSE will achieve the goal of getting into the top 100 universities in the global university rankings by 2020?
- Will the end of the 5 – 100 Project in 2020 affect the internationalization process at HSE (what will happen to the internationalization initiatives once governmental funding comes to an end)?
- What are HSE's most ambitious plans in terms of internationalization?
- What are the major results of internationalization of higher education in Russia in general?

APPENDIX 2

The list of interview questions for regional universities (Yaroslavl State University, Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University and Yaroslavl State Technical University):

1. Globalization and internationalization of Russian higher education:
 - How does your institution understand globalization and internationalization of higher education?
 - Why did Russian universities start looking at their position on the global higher education arena? Did something trigger that?
2. Position of the institution among foreign universities:
 - Does your university look at the global university rankings and its position among other universities both within and outside Russia?
 - Where does your university see itself among other universities internationally? (How do you compare your institution with other universities both in Russia and abroad)?
 - Are there any “model” universities that your institution is looking at when implementing internationalization initiatives?
3. Internationalization initiatives:
 - What internationalization initiatives is your university involved in?
 - How are students/faculty involved in various internationalization initiatives?
 - What is your personal involvement in these initiatives?
 - Who are the major players in the internationalization process at your university?

- What kind of reaction do faculty and students of your university have to various internationalization initiatives?
- What initiative(s) appear to be more/the most successful? What makes you say that?
- Which internationalization initiatives require more effort (which internationalization initiative is not working as expected)? Why?
- What challenges does the university experience throughout the process of internationalization?
- What kind of support (on the institutional/local/national levels) would be most helpful?
- What changes (if any) have been introduced to the organization/structure/culture of your university with internationalization?

4. Results of internationalization of Russian higher education:

- Do you think your institution will ever get into the global university rankings?
- Do you know about the 5 – 100 Project and what do you think about its goal of having at least five universities in the global university rankings by 2020?
- What are your university's most ambitious plans in terms of internationalization?
- What are the major results of internationalization of higher education in Russia in general?

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