

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF RUSSIAN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES' FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The article touches upon the dynamics of the development of Russian private universities, reveals the advantages of foreign language education in the private and public education sectors. Foreign language training is considered according to the communicative competence components: social, sociolinguistic, linguistic, strategic, discourse, and socio-cultural. Assessment of the possible benefits and risks of the entry of the higher education sector into the international market of educational services has been carried out.

University education is a determining factor in the formation, development and realization of educational needs. Private higher education further stimulates this process relatively more than the public one. Private higher education in Russia has already demonstrated its strengths. For example, it can actively create and implement new educational strategies and technologies, demonstrating high adaptive qualities regarding the system of education, having a strong influence on the development of public higher education, demonstrating stimulating opportunities of extra budgetary development within public educational institutions.

Among the possible risks for public and private sectors of Russian education on the international market of educational services for foreign language training we should note the following: lack of clear organization of the Russian exchange programs; lack of infrastructure to attract foreign students and the best international teachers and researchers, a low degree of internationalization of the learning environment in the whole; Russian state and private universities do not occupy leading positions in international rankings of the best universities, that fact reduces their competitiveness in the international market of educational services; the problem of recognizing Russian documents on education abroad.

Keywords: non-state education sector, public universities, foreign language training, communicative competence, international market of educational services.

1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays the private sector of education in Russia can be considered as a testing ground for new approaches in education. Its proposals are included in the Federal Target Programs. It is the ability of private universities to the timely adjustment of training programs that is a prerequisite for maintaining their competitiveness on the market. Private universities are focused on implementing individual approach to students, maintenance of a democratic atmosphere in the University that promotes a beneficial language training environment for future professionals, and their entry into the international labor market.

1.1 The private sector flexibility

The vast majority of Russian private universities prepare specialists in economics, management and law, and students have distinguishing differences in the humanitarian knowledge. This is due to the financial opportunities that allow attracting qualified personnel, having technically equipped classrooms.

Private higher education institutions can have the greatest flexibility for optimization processes and quality improvement of professional training, as they are able to respond quickly to the demands of the society and the economy due to the greater freedom in designing the curricula and mobilizing the resources. This makes the private sector as a testing ground in education.

1.1.1 *Factors influencing the formation of private educational institutions*

The emergence and formation of non-state educational institutions in Russia is due to a number of factors, of which the following can be noted [1:38]:

- objective impossibility of quick response of the public education system to the changing socio-economic and political situation in the country;
- appearance of certain social groups' requests to create educational institutions that meet their interests and needs;
- blocking of practice-oriented forms of cooperation between Russian education and foreign pedagogical systems, as in previous years;
- absence of management structures, scientific-research and scientific-practical centers which define the conditions and mechanisms for implementing the most promising domestic models of training and education in the educational practice, within the existing system of education.

1.2 **The contradictions at the public University**

At the public University there are contradictions among which the following can be noted [2]:

- between the status of the institution and its public mission, on the one hand, and the actual law and competition with non-state University on the educational market, on the other;
- between the qualitative efficiency criterion of the public institution and the economic efficiency criterion of the University as a market participant in the non-budgetary sphere, which affects the motivation of the teaching staff;
- between the traditional administrative methods with linearly-functional structure and the market demand to manage the economic methods using horizontal and network structures.

2 **METHODOLOGY**

The teaching methodology was based on cooperative learning and project-based methods, individually-differentiated approach, and other interactive learning technologies which are described in more detail in 2.1.1 – 2.1.5.

2.1 **Features of foreign language training in higher professional education institution**

Various ways of teaching have been considered involving the development of all the components of the communicative competence: social, socio-linguistic, discourse, linguistic, strategic, and socio-cultural.

2.1.1 *Foreign language as a means of communication: a role-playing game technique*

Foreign language training is focused on developing the ability of students to communicate, when a foreign language is mastered by students as a means of communication.

When developing the students' ability to communicate the communicative skills are being formed (listening, speaking, reading, and writing), the communicative competence is being developed, involving the development of certain personal qualities (sociability, desire to make a contact, ability to interact in a team). The organization of foreign language training in a private University is based on centering on a student's personality as a subject of pedagogical process, where communication and interaction of students is organized in a favorable atmosphere and comfort [3]. The leading components of the communicative competence formation are the sociolinguistic and social.

During the development of learners' language as a means of communication a teacher uses the technique of a role-playing game, providing a permanent interest in the foreign language speech activity. Students must clearly understand the purpose and the result of their speech act.

For example, under the topic "Marketing" of the course "Business foreign language" there was a game situation to be resolved: "...assume a variety of reasons for the drop in the product demand of the firm." Accordingly, the grammatical construction of a subjunctive mood was used. For example, a teacher started a sentence with a certain phrase, in order to allow the students to continue the preset

thought in a variety of ways: "...The item would be in great demand if... (we had thought of a better cover, had chosen the right target market...). The product would have been well accepted if... (we had done/did something)..." Not necessarily the teacher started with the main clause, if the students had already learned well the formation of the subordinate, in the same way, the teacher could start with a subordinate clause, so that the students practiced the formation of the main. But in such educational work it is not good to focus on correcting grammatical errors [4], because the emphasis is on communication, on understanding each other.

In speech teaching a game acts as the principal motivation. In relation to texts for reading and to written work, the cognitive motivation becomes a leading one [5]. Thus, the communicative and cognitive demand creates the motives of each speech act of students at teaching the communication means. The leading components in the formation of the communicative competence are linguistic and strategic.

2.1.2 Interactive learning technologies: cooperative learning and project-based method

Students are focused on using the target language in practice. In real life, such speech acts as reading, speaking, writing and listening as independent are rare. While during the classes the learners use these activities frequently in conjunction with the consolidation of the material being studied. But the lack of traditional work on the exercises to practice these skills is that language learning becomes formal. Today this disadvantage can be eliminated by the use of interactive learning technologies [6], such as cooperative learning and project-based method as one of the ways to implement training in cooperation. According to the project-based methodology a goal is formulated, aimed at achieving practical results. Both the teacher and the students are equally responsible for the results of the jointly organized productive activities.

Project-based methodology as a problem-based learning involves sequential transformation of the input data into the desired result, and develops thinking and cognitive skills [7]. The problem solving algorithm can be represented as follows:

1) the occurrence of the problem; 2) students' awareness of the nature of the problem and its formulation; 3) finding solutions to the problem, the nomination of hypothesis; 4) the proof of the hypothesis; 5) verification and presentation of the result.

So, the organization of the educational process in a private higher educational institution is performed using teaching techniques that stimulate interaction between students, to achieve practical results through the target language. Educational and cognitive skills are formed on the indicative activity basis, the algorithm. Here primarily the discourse and social components of the communicative competence are developed.

2.1.3 Language training as a dialogue of cultures

Foreign language training is provided for the purpose of familiarizing with a different culture. In higher education it is built as a dialogue of national and foreign cultures. So, culture is manifested as the living activity of people in social relationships. The main objective of foreign language training is the familiarization of students with the particularities of everyday experience, national traditions and linguistic background knowledge of students abroad in comparison with their personal knowledge, traditions and verbal experience. Such a dialogue of cultures in both private and public higher education institutions is possible due to linguistic-cultural orientation of training, when acquisition of lexical units takes into account the national and cultural specificity of their use [8].

Foreign language training as a means of familiarizing with a different culture enhances motivation to learn a foreign language and increases the learning efficiency due to the fact that the student uses the language in real life. So, the organization of the learning process opens a "window to another world" for the student. In this pedagogical process mainly the socio-cultural and sociolinguistic components of the communicative competence are implemented.

2.1.4 The educational process based on practical actions

The process of foreign language training of students is recognized by the latter as such provided that students see personal relevance of the learning and the meaning of the educational activity, since only in this case all the mental processes of the student are activated [9].

The organization of foreign language training of students in a higher education institution should be implemented so that they always see the point in this educational activity. The educational process is to be based on practical actions typical for students to involve all the senses.

The priority components of the communicative competence here are the linguistic and discourse.

2.1.5 Individually-differentiated approach

Individually-differentiated approach is applied in terms of group forms of work with the use of information technologies in foreign language training. In terms of group forms of work the selection of individual tasks depending on the motivation of students and the formation level of their speech skills is provided for, as well as the formulation of cognitive objectives related to the learners' personal past experiences, and the ability to work in a group. Therefore, for the organization of interaction in class it is necessary to use such communicative situations that affect the interests of the student and in paired and group forms of work to maintain interest in students with low verbal status.

The use of information technologies and internet resources helps to implement student-centered component of the personal-activity approach in training and provides individualization and differentiation of training [10]. Classes are held in specially equipped computer rooms where electronic media with training programs are used, that can display information as text, sound and video. The increased rate of learning the material is one of the strengths of information technologies.

Of course, computer in learning can be considered only as a means, with the exception of using it in dynamics, during a time period, when it takes over the function of a teacher. The last is the characteristic to implement the concept of learning throughout life, at distance education faculties. So, equipment and training in Russian private and public higher educational institutions comply with the principles of creating a single information and educational area and meet the principle of professionally oriented teaching.

3 RESULTS

The development dynamics of private universities is due to:

- competition with public higher education system, which forces to constantly be in search of something new, able to attract the attention of potential customers in the hard market of educational services;
- being unencumbered by experience and traditions, which could weigh down upon them;
- the need to make quick changes in the training of future professionals, to maintain a high focus on innovation as a result of direct dependence on the labor market. Private higher education is associated with a new formation, which is a consequence and at the same time a factor of the society transformation [11].

3.1 Formation of communicative skills

The non-state sector is more responsive to the changes occurring in our society. A feature distinguishing private universities is their flexible response to the conditions of the Europeanization of education.

Both in private and public sectors of higher professional education the main aim in language training is the development of abilities of the future professional to communicate in a foreign language, formation of skills of foreign language communication at a high level. The realization of this objective is connected with the formation of the students' following communicative skills:

- use of rational methods of mastering a foreign language, continuously improving it;
- understanding and generation of foreign-language statements in accordance with the specific communication situation, communicative intention;
- exercise of their speech and nonverbal behavior, given the rules of communication and national-cultural characteristics of the target language country [3:11].

3.1.1 *Personal-activity approach*

Organization of foreign language training in private and public higher schools takes into account the main provisions of the personal-activity approach:

- development of personality through organization of its activities;
- formation of ideas about the communicative activities as personally significant;
- unity of personal and subject-practical aspects of communicative activities.

3.2 **Benefits and risks of the private and public education sectors**

Private universities are focused on the implementation of individual approach to students, the maintenance of a democratic atmosphere at the University. Students have an opportunity to control the integrity and completeness of the University educational services.

Among the possible benefits of the private and public education sectors should be noted the following: investing significant resources in the development of innovative educational programs, their quality improvement, focus on the integration of science and education, the possibility for high profitability of international educational services; expanding the range of educational programs and the learning technologies, including through the development of distance, short-term, and exchange programs, on the basis of individual educational plans; the adequacy of information resources to effectively meet the challenges of entering the international market of educational services; sufficient autonomy of universities in the allocation of resources, including international activities.

Among the possible risks for both the private and the public sectors of the Russian education nowadays on the international market of educational services with regard to foreign language training the following should be noted: lack of a clear organization of Russian exchange programs; lack of the infrastructure to attract foreign students and the best international teachers and researchers, a low degree of the overall learning environment internationalization; Russian universities do not occupy leading positions in international rankings of the best universities, that fact reduces their competitiveness on the international market of educational services; the problem of recognition of Russian documents on education abroad.

4 **DISCUSSION**

The formation of the above communicative skills is related to the formation of the communicative competence, which involves the inclusion of a foreign language in the context of the future professional's activity, when a foreign language is a means of communication and interaction with another national culture and its bearers. So, the priorities in the higher school are the educational and developmental aspects of teaching the subject.

The selection of the content of foreign language training in a private educational institution is carried out in accordance with students' interests with regard to their communicative needs and social mandate. The content of education in a public higher education institution, in addition to general communicative orientation, should meet such requirements as the information content, authenticity and accessibility.

In the content selection an important role is played by interdisciplinary relations – when knowledge and skills from other disciplines are transferred to a foreign language, and possibly vice versa. The idea of interdisciplinary relations is embodied in the principle of continuity of foreign language learning.

4.1 **From the language system to the speech activity**

Within the personal-activity approach, the student acts as an active participant. Considering the main features of personality and activity components of the personal-activity approach to foreign language teaching, the usual understanding is reviewed about the following:

- the object of the pedagogical process, which still continues to be not as communicative actions of students, but as the very language system;
- the scheme of interaction of the teacher and the students as the subject-object relationship;
- the pedagogical process as the knowledge transfer, as the organization of educational knowledge acquisition.

The process of foreign language training of students at Russian universities as the organization of the training activity in the personality-activity approach means the reorientation of the entire process on the formulation and solution of specific training and cognitive tasks (research, communication).

The peculiarity of the personal-activity approach to teaching is that the object of mastering changes from the language system to the speech activity in such its forms as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Language system serves only as a means of implementing these activities.

4.2 Advantages of a private institution

The work of such private universities of Kazan, as "Academy of social education" and "Kazan Innovative University" shows that the main advantage of a private institution is the ability to manage financial flows, which allows implementing the most innovative technologies in the educational process, to develop material and technical, and information-library database, and also to increase labor motivation of the teaching staff. Accordingly, it positively affects the learning efficiency, and, hence, professionalism of the graduates. The second point, which is typical for a private higher school is a learner-centered approach (as a component of the personal-activity approach to learning) to each student. Another feature is the openness to society, which is manifested, in particular, in connection with the implementation of the University information system. Academic performance is evaluated in points on the module-rating system, as well as in public Universities, which allows identifying each student's rating among the group, within the course, and in the whole University. In addition, great attention is paid to the quality of teaching. For example, annual monitoring is conducted for educators to identify gaps and determine ways to improve the work of the University. Private universities have the opportunity for rapid adjustment of their curricula and introduction of new majors in accordance with consumer demand. The ability of private universities to timely adjust the training programs is the prerequisite for maintaining their competitiveness on the market. It is assumed that in private institutions there are more opportunities for teachers' self-realization, testing new approaches in education, and experimentation.

Students at private universities are different from students at public universities by the dominance of the "education is the basis of professional development and material prosperity" motive. It is unlike the students in public universities, for whom education is "the need to conform to the standards of their social environment" [12:88].

5 CONCLUSION

Peculiarities of foreign language training of students in higher education institutions are determined on the basis of personal-activity approach. Based on this approach, the following forms of students' activities can be distinguished: the actual training activities, simulation of professional activity (business games, speech situations), and a scientific research activity.

Foreign language training of students at a University can be characterized by the following:

- focus of foreign language training of students to develop their ability to communicate when a foreign language is mastered by students as a means of communication;
- student-centered learning based on the personality-activity approach, when the formation of foreign language skills of the trainees is based on algorithms of the main types of educational and informative activities, focusing on the use of the target language in practice;
- building up the learning content based on authentic materials, providing for a dialogue of cultures and organization of the teaching and learning activities based on the real dialogic communication;
- application of information technologies in the teaching-learning process as a factor for realizing the principles of individualization and differentiation while updating the life experience of the trainees.

The leading components of the communicative competence formation are the social, sociolinguistic, linguistic, strategic, discourse, and socio-cultural.

5.1 The international non-state component of professional education

Assessment of the benefits and risks of the Russian non-public sector's entry into the international market of educational services is essential for identifying the organizational, financial, technical and other resources for strengthening the international non-state component of professional education in Russia. Particularly strong is the impact of international exchanges in the crisis moments of the educational system development, when the need for its institutional transformations increases. Foreign language is an important factor for participation in the international education market. In the private sector of higher education there is the experience of teaching disciplines of humanitarian, social and economic cycles. Universities that focus on their development will strive for forming the integral personality of a future professional in the educational process, adequate to professional and market requirements.

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