# RUSSIAN-CHINESE COOPERATION IN EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF EURASIAN ECONOMIC UNION AND SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

**N.P. Parkhitko, E.V. Martynenko, K.P. Kurylev, V.A. Glebov**

*RUDN University (RUSSIAN FEDERATION)*

## Abstract

The article researches the activity of two large international economic and political structures, the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, created in the post-Soviet space and includes a huge list of cooperation spheres, not the least - cooperation in education. Politically, Russian-Chinese relations are an important component of the modern system of international relations. The course of political and economic processes, at least within Eurasia, will largely depend on how relations between China and Russia develop. In recent years, bilateral relations between the two countries have been on the rise, which is expressed in the high growth rates of commodity circulation, expansion of investment cooperation, intensification of inter-regional and cross-border ties, and a marked increase in political dialogue and humanitarian interaction. Cooperation with China is crucial for the modernization of the Russian economy, giving it an innovative character and integration into the Asia-Pacific economic space. For Russia, relations with China are a priority in comparison with other Asian countries. In this regard, further development of partnership relations and strategic interaction with China is one of the main and, of course, priority and long-term policies of our country. Cooperation in the field of education is an integral element of strategic cooperation with Russia and China, which determines the relevance of the topic of our research.

Preparing the article the authors pursued two main goals: to reveal particular qualities of the Russian-Chinese cooperation in the sphere of education and to analyze some characteristic features of the development in educational sphere in the frameworks of Eurasian Economic Union and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Despite some correlative aspects of these two integrative structures, attitude towards the questions of education has a definite difference. The same thing can be said concerning Russian and Chinese systems of education regardless of the high level of cooperation between our countries.

The authors used the following scientific methodology: the method of keys, the historic analytical method and the method of political analysis. The first mentioned method helped the authors to research the historical backgrounds of the Russian-Chinese cooperation on the whole and the development of their national educational systems - in particular. The method of keys provided a deep and precise analysis of the Russian and Chinese national educational systems. Finally, the method of political analysis made it possible to analyze the educational agenda in the frameworks of Eurasian Economic Union and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

In the final part of the research the authors came to the following conclusions: national system of Chinese education is successive to the Soviet one. At the same time, it is quiet paradoxical, but the Russian system is totally borrowed from the Western Europe. The second conclusion refers to the educational issue in the context of cooperation between the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The authors revealed a number of aspects which complicate the full-scale cooperation between these two institutes due to the crucial difference of the educational systems mentioned above.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Modernization of higher education is an integral part and crucial factor in the process of innovative development. Economic production and the lifestyle of mankind are most directly affected by economic globalization, and for the higher education system, the most direct influence is the internationality of universities, their openness to students and teachers from all over the world. Today the internationalization of education is becoming the object and subject of a targeted state policy, focused on solving national, political, social and economic problems.

Let us look at the essence of the “internationalization” concept in the field of higher education which includes two aspects: internal and external internationalization (or education abroad, intercountry education, cross-border education). The concept of “internationalization” is complex and ambiguous. Initially, the definition was formulated in 1993 by J. Knight [6]. According to it internationalization of higher education was taken as the basis of the conceptual apparatus in this area. It was the introduction of international aspects into all the basic functions of higher education - educational, research and service.

The process of internationalization has become the most important content of the universities’ strategic activities because for most universities entering the international arena is not just a way, but also a goal. Achieving this goal not only helps universities in the search for external support, but also plays a key role in the institutional development of universities. We can state that internationalization of higher education has not only become a strategic choice in the development of higher education, but at the same time an important condition determining the very existence and development of the world's universities. Internationalization is a resource for the development of a university.

In this context cooperation between the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China in educational sphere is a vivid example of both political will and effective implementing of the universities’ internationalization. Today in 2019, there has been long and fruitful cooperation in the field of education between Russia and China. It is implemented by means of joint projects and programs in various directions, conferences, meetings, and consultations which are regularly held. Moreover, a lion's share of the projects and initiatives refer to the field of cooperation in the frameworks of the Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization – both of them include Russia and China as key-partners (in the first case – external partners, in the second – internal ones).

# 2 RUSSIAN-CHINESE COOPERATION IN EDUCATION. LEGAL AND POLITICAL FUNDAMENT

The legal framework of modern Russian-Chinese cooperation in the field of education is based on the following intergovernmental agreements: on cultural cooperation of December 18, 1992, on mutual recognition and equivalence of documents on education and academic degrees of June 26, 1995, on the study of the Russian language in China and Chinese in Russia of November 3, 2005, as well as the agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia and the Ministry of Education of China on cooperation in the field of education of November 9, 2006. In addition, the working documents are the minutes of the annual meetings of the intergovernmental Russian-Chinese subcommittee on cooperation in the field of education.

Within the framework of the Sub-Commission on Cooperation in the Field of Education functioning since 2001, there is a Working Group on issues of interaction in the study and teaching of Russian and Chinese languages, development of bilateral academic exchanges and scientific cooperation between universities, the main content of which is monitoring bilateral cooperation in the field of education, practical development of recommendations for the specified Sub-Commission and universities. An agreement was reached with China on the development of an interagency memorandum on supporting the activities of the Russian Language Centers in China and Confucius Institutes and Classes in Russia. The issues of increasing the exchange of students and graduate students to 100 thousand people by 2020 were considered and a plan for the implementation of this initiative was worked out. So, according to the Chinese side, by the end of 2016, the total exchange (that is, students, undergraduates, graduate students, short-term exchange programs and students of post-secondary education) amounted to about 70 thousand people, while according to Russian data this is about 50 thousand people, of which more than 17,971 Russian citizens study in China, and about 30,233 Chinese citizens in Russia [12].

In September 2014, during a meeting of the Russian-Chinese Commission on Humanitarian Cooperation, the Chinese side expressed interest in creating associations of philological, aviation and agricultural universities. In order to maintain a high level of interaction and a wider involvement of young people in the study of Russian and Chinese, the Years of National Languages (2009-2010) were held. The results of the Years are of particular importance for improving the quality of training of Orientalists with the knowledge of the Chinese language in the interests of staffing Russian departments and organizations, as well as strengthening the base of practical and scientific Sinology. To date, more than 900 partnerships have been established between Russian and Chinese universities and organizations, in which 120 universities participate on the Russian side, and about 600 on the Chinese side [10].

During the Years of Youth Exchanges between Russia and China in July-August 2014, summer schools of the Russian language and culture were organized for Chinese students on the basis of S. Yesenin Ryazan State University, Udmurt State University, Ulyanovsk I.N. Ulyanova State Pedagogical University, a summer camp for the study of the Russian language and acquaintance with the Komi culture on the basis of the Ukhta State Technical University, with more than 100 people participating [5].

Cooperation in the field of education between Russia and China is implemented both in the format of bilateral interaction and within the framework of international organizations - through the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The Agreement of the SCO member states governments “On Cooperation in the Field of Education” proclaims: “The concept of creating a Eurasian educational field as an integral part of the global educational space is becoming particularly relevant in the academic, social and geopolitical plan” [3].

As for the Eurasian Economic Union, Russia plays there a significant role as the locomotive of integration in all spheres including education. It goes without saying that Russia strengthens its positions in the context of cooperation with such a great country as China and the format of cooperation “EAEU-SCO” is in some cases even more preferable than the classical bilateral format “Russia-China”.

January 1, 2015, is considered to be the date of creation of the EAEU, as the agreement on its occurrence was signed. This agreement is believed to play the role of a bridge between the dynamically developing Asia-Pacific Region (APR) and Europe as part of the world in the geographical understanding of this territory. Despite this fact (the acknowledged signing date of the EAEU), already in the 2000s within the CIS, a number of framework agreements aimed at creating a unified educational system were signed. They included: the agreement on cooperation in the field of education in order to implement a coherent educational policy, a Concept and an Agreement on cooperation on the formation of a single educational space of the Commonwealth of Independents States, model law "On Education" and some other legislative acts. Later on May 31, 2001, the CIS Council of Foreign Ministers approved standard draft agreements: on coordination of efforts in the field of licensing educational activities, certification and accreditation of educational institutions, and on the procedure for the creation and functioning of branches of higher educational institutions in the territory of the CIS member states. At the same time, the first framework laws regulating educational cooperation at the national level were adopted in the member states.

The most important step was signing of the Memorandum of Cooperation on educational, scientific and technological cooperation in the Eurasian space between the ministries of education and science of the Union states. That was realized on April 13, 2016, in the framework of the Moscow International Education Salon. Nevertheless, one of the weak points of the EAEU is still the lack of an institution responsible for cooperation in the field of education, scientific and technical activities [1]. Such state of affairs can be explained by the fact that integration in the field of education is impossible without close and effective economic, political and social partnership of all participating countries. Only by joint efforts and the willingness of the EAEU member countries to compromise can the problem of creating a single educational space be solved and, as a result, one step closer to the goal - the creation of a Greater Eurasian Partnership be achieved.

## 3 DEVELOPMENT OF NETWORK EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND CHINA

During the meeting of education ministers of the SCO member states (Astana, October 28, 2008) a number of documents were signed reflecting the common desire of countries to create the SCO

University (SCOU), as well as confirming the content of the SCO University concept and the main areas of study: regional studies, energy, nanotechnology, IT-technologies, ecology, pedagogy and economics. On October 31, 2016, by an order of the Government of the Russian Federation, the Agreement No. 2309-r on the establishment and functioning of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization University was approved [11].

The main task of the SCOU is the implementation of joint training of highly qualified personnel on the basis of coordinated innovative educational programs in the specialties of priority interest for the economic and social development of the SCO member states. The university functions as a network of existing universities in the SCO member states, as well as in observer countries and dialogue partners. As of 2018, 79 universities from 5 participating countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, China and Russia) and Belarus as observer country are participating in the SCOU project with master's programs in the listed above areas of training. At the same time, 23 leading universities are participating in the project from China, and 22 from Russia. Between 2010 and 2018, 1,200 students were enrolled in Russian universities in the framework of the SCO program at the expense of the federal budget within the framework of the quota established by the Government of the Russian Federation of October 8, 2013 No. 891 [7].

Dynamic development is characterized by the interaction of universities of partner countries at the interuniversity level. The Russian-Chinese Association of Medical Universities (RCAMU) where 11 Russian and 18 Chinese universities participate, is successfully working. The Association was created with the aim of jointly improving the quality of medical education in China and Russia, in accordance with the requirements of the level of medicine and scientific research, considering RCAMU as an academic platform. Associations of specialized universities, such as the Association of Russian and Chinese Technical Universities, Universities of the Far East, Siberia and the Northeastern Provinces of China, Economic Universities, Pedagogical Universities, and Medical Universities also play an important role in the educational space of the two countries. Currently, work is underway to create an association of Russian and Chinese universities “Volga-Yangtze” in the format of interaction at the regional in-country level. It should be noted that the events of the associations attract a large number of participants, for example, in the XII Forum of rectors of universities in the Far East and Siberia of Russia and the North-Eastern regions of China in June 2017, more than 170 leaders, scientists and teachers from more than 70 universities took part.

In addition, Russian and Chinese educational organizations have expressed interest in creating associations of culture, philological, aviation and agricultural universities. The Russian and Chinese sides note that the main areas of activity of associations of specialized universities of the two countries should be joining forces to improve the quality of profile education, turning the member universities of the associations into the leading educational, scientific, cultural and educational centers of their countries in order to develop a system of training specialists with specialized university education and training of scientific and pedagogical personnel.

According to the Russian Ministry of Education and Science, to date, more than 950 partnerships have been established between Russian and Chinese universities and organizations, in which nearly 150 universities participate from the Russian side and about 600 from the Chinese one [12]. In particular, Moscow universities support more than 200 partnerships, and universities of Siberia and the Far East (Far Eastern Federal University, Kamchatka State University, Pacific State University, Siberian Federal University, Northeast Federal University, Novosibirsk University, Irkutsk State University, Tomsk State University and others) - about 300. In the framework of this cooperation, joint programs for training specialists, advanced training of scientific and pedagogical personnel, study of Chinese and Russian languages are implemented; forums for rectors of leading universities are organized.

## 4 RUSSIAN-CHINESE STUDENTS’ MOBILITY EXPANSION AS A CRUCIAL TASK OF COOPERATING UNIVERSITIES’ INITIATIVES

From the Russian point of view, the increase in the flow of Chinese citizens to study at universities in the Russian Federation can be achieved in several ways.

*First of all*, it is the method of increased quotas for the training of Chinese citizens (in the 2015/2016 academic year, the quota was increased to 850 places, 1,277 people were actually accepted, 900 places were provided for the 2016/2017 academic year, 1,360 people were actually accepted, for 2017/2018 academic year, the admission plan provided for 930 places) [2]. In this context the example of RUDN University is demonstrative.

RUDN University participates in three multilateral international educational consortia:

- The CIS Network University (CIS NU) with the support of the Interstate Fund for Humanitarian Cooperation of the CIS Member States (IFES) was created on June 11, 2009 - the Agreement on the Consortium of the CIS Network University;
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organization University (SCOU) was established, as mentioned above, with the support of the SCO in 2008;
- BRICS Network University in 2014 (Fortaleza Declaration following the results of the sixth BRICS Summit, Fortaleza, Brazil, July 15, 2014).

The listed consortia train specialists in various areas, often intersecting (for example, economics - SCOU, CIS Network University, BRICS Network University, but with different profiles) and have an unequal number of participants. Speaking about the training spheres in the context of cooperation between RUDN University and the SCO Network University, it should be noted that the development of students' academic mobility includes the following specialties: IT-technologies, nanotechnologies, pedagogy, regional studies, ecology, economics and energy.

Each network university has its own main missions. The main mission of RUDN University is set forth on its official Website and sounds in the following way: "Uniting people of different cultures by knowledge RUDN University creates leaders to make the world better"[8]. The SCOU mission is introduced a bit wider: the implementation of coordinated training of highly qualified personnel on the basis of coordinated innovative educational programs in the specialties of priority interest for the economic and social development of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization "(SCOU University Concept) [11].

Since their foundation network universities have received support in the allocation of Russian Federation quotas for foreign citizens/compatriots permanently residing abroad to study on a permanent basis. SCO University holds a leading position; from 2010 to 2017 1,652 quotas were given to it [9].

*The second way* to increase student migration from China is to use the pre-emptive rights of leading Russian universities. In this context, a number of higher educational institutions (Lomonosov Moscow State University, MADI, MISiS, RUDN University, St. Petersburg State University, St. Petersburg State Polytechnic University, Far Eastern Federal University, Novosibirsk State University, National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University and others), who have received the pre-emptive right to recruit international students, mainly accept Chinese citizens for a full course of study at the magistracy and graduate school in the specialties of philology, pedagogy, economy, construction, and mechanical engineering. At the same time, the Far Eastern Federal University offers more than 40 areas of training for bachelors and masters, 8 programs for the training of specialists and 17 areas of training for masters and graduate students implemented in Russian and English for training citizens of China. At the university, 5 joint educational programs with Chinese universities are currently being implemented, where about 300 citizens of the PRC are studying. By 2020, it is planned to increase the number of such programs to 20 - 25 (that is, up to 1,500 students).

*The third way* to increase the number of Chinese students in Russia is to increase academic exchange programs with partner Chinese universities. For example, the Far Eastern Federal University (FEFU) is ready for a multiple increase in the number of Chinese citizens arriving for a short period of time (up to 1 semester) through academic exchange (from 500 to 1,000 people per year). For FEFU, the implementation of academic exchange programs is one of the most important methods for the prospective development of cooperation with Chinese partner universities.

*The fourth way* is the creation of new joint universities. In 2017, the first students were accepted by the Russian-Chinese University of Moscow State University-PPI in Shenzhen, created on the basis of M.V. Lomonosov and Beijing Polytechnic University according to the memorandum of understanding and cooperation between the Ministry of Education and Science of Russia and the Ministry of Education of China on May 20, 2014. Education at this university will be held in three languages: Russian, Chinese and English, graduates will receive two diplomas at once: MSU and a partner university. In October 2016, the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China issued a license to this university valid until December 31, 2066. The construction of the university complex is planned to be completed by 2018. The university is designed to accept 5 thousand people annually, including 600 masters and 40 graduate students a year. The number of students during the first five years of work will be 300-500 people per year.

Also on the basis of St. Petersburg Peter the Great Polytechnic University (SPbPU) and Jiangsu Pedagogical University a joint Russian-Chinese Engineering Institute was founded. It is focused on teaching students in joint educational programs in engineering and economics. The first enrollment of Chinese students for the new academic year in the amount of 250 people has been announced. Another example of such cooperation is the opening of transport institutes in Russia and China on the basis of the St. Petersburg State University of Railways named after Emperor Alexander I and Beijing Transport University.

## 5 IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES FOR RUSSIAN-CHINESE COOPERATION IN EDUCATION

Russia is not yet a leading player in the global educational services market. According to a study conducted at the RUDN University, Russia lags behind the leading countries of the world in terms of annual income from the export of educational services. According to various sources, in recent years, this amount ranged from 150-200 million dollars (0.5% of the world market for educational services) to 0.5 billion dollars (a similar figure for the United States 10.3 billion, Australia - 2.2 billion, China - $ 0.9 billion) [4]. One of the main reasons is that almost half of international students in Russian universities are citizens of the CIS countries.

The relatively low share of Russia in the international educational market can be fundamentally explained by the following circumstances: difficulty in mastering the Russian language as a foreign language, he harsh climate, and still often - poor quality of the social infrastructure of universities. Another obstacle to the further ranking growth of Russia in the global educational services market is the significant differences between the Russian education system and global models and trends.

There is at least one huge problem of opportunistic nature. Many university rectors, being influenced by the internationalization process, strive not for the quality of foreign students teaching, but for the quantity. Their key-thought can be formulated as: “the more partnership agreements are signed – the more successful international integration and more prestigious and attractive the university for other universities and students is”. In pursuit of status and rating, many Russian universities have concluded dozens of agreements with universities in China, but are still not able to implement them effectively. Often, these agreements were signed after numerous partnership commitments in the framework of the Bologna process. A large number of partnership agreements is also characteristic of Chinese universities. In this regard many European universities have reduced the number of partnership agreements to 10–20 best ones.

## 6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the authors note that deepening bilateral cooperation in the educational sphere is primarily manifested in increasing the competitiveness of higher education graduates in the international labor market, and contributes to increasing the human capital of partner countries. The Russian Federation is actively working not only in a bilateral format, but also initiates and supports international educational projects in the paradigm of promoting mutual development of the economies of participating countries, including Russia and China.

The Chinese side perceives cooperation in the field of education as an important element of its new model of international cooperation and development under the general title “One Belt and One Way”. This model, from the point of view of the Chinese, should incorporate the spirit of the ancient Silk Road and, based on it, strengthening the existing regional bilateral and multilateral mechanisms and structures of interactions with the participation of China, create new mechanisms for regional economic partnership. This should stimulate the economic prosperity of the countries involved, strengthen cultural exchange and ties in all areas between different civilizations, and promote peace and sustainable development. According to official data from China, “One Belt and One Way” covers most of Eurasia, connecting developing countries, including “new economies” and developed countries.

At the current historical moment it is necessary to involve the administrative resource in developing a strategy to strengthen Russia's position in the educational market of the Asia-Pacific region, and China in particular, to determine the potential of our country as a provider of educational services, and to develop a program of priorities. According to the Concept of educational services export of the Russian Federation for the period 2011–2020, the development of the strategy was entrusted to the Ministry of Education and Science, and the work is coordinated by a single interdepartmental body - a

specially created government commission. It must restore the macro-regulatory functions of the state in the process of international cooperation of universities, to combine the efforts of the state, universities, scientific institutions and public organizations. Its task is to conduct a systematic analysis of the available information received from universities, educators, and, most importantly, scientists from different fields of science. It should be kept in mind that competent conquest of the educational market in China is impossible without a thorough analysis of both development trends of its education system and general social- and political, economic and cultural context.

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