

establishments. Thus they are obliged to pay taxes on their net revenues.

From the point of view of creating healthy competition with public higher education, private institutions still have a long way to go before they can generate reformative effects on public education. So far private education has been more of a spontaneous response to the lack of skills needed by the new market-oriented economy, rather than being a full-fledged private system in its own right. Although private institutions claimed to have put highest priority on the quality of teaching, rather than on making a profit, they are, at least for now, more complementary to, than competitive with public universities. As private education focuses on programs that are not offered by public universities, the spirit of competition between them for more efficiency and higher standards has not yet emerged. The threat from private education is too

feeble for public institutions to feel the need to improve, especially since they are still safe under state protection.

#### *Conclusion*

The restructuring of Kazakhstan's higher education has been aimed at enabling it to respond effectively to the new market-oriented economy. However, tradition and resistance to change have been major stumbling blocks. Those currently in charge of Kazakhstan's transition are the product of decades of entrenched Soviet principles.

In the hands of the old guard, the country's comprehensive transformation is unlikely. Although Kazakhstan has changed much since independence, the goals of restructuring have not yet been reached. The future of Kazakhstan's higher education, and indeed the health of the country itself, lies with the restless young generation of today. They will lead the country without being bogged down by the vestiges of the Soviet era. ■

## Internationalization in Belarus: The Post-Soviet Experience

### **O. V. Klimanovich and I. I. Gancheryonok**

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Internationalization of higher education has not been defined as a priority in Belarus, but many universities have taken initiatives on their own, introducing various changes. In this article we highlight some of the approaches used by the Belarusian higher education community to introduce international education into institutions of higher learning, as well as some of the constraints encountered by Belarusian universities in the attempt.

#### *General Overview*

The Republic of Belarus, situated at the western border of the former Soviet Union, was one of the most industrially developed republics, with very strong higher education and science sectors. As of the 1999–2000 academic year, the state system of higher education comprises 42 higher education institutions. The nonstate sector of higher education is represented by 15 institutions. Belarusian institutions of higher learning currently enroll 243,700 students (the population of the republic is 10 million).

At present 50 percent of students attend programs in economics and the humanities. Admissions to technical and science education have declined. The list of programs offered has expanded substantially and now includes more than 200 fields and over 1,000 specializations. This makes it possible to provide trained specialists in practically all branches of the economy.

#### *Internationalization Efforts*

*Institutional Changes.* At many state universities and most nonstate universities, departments of international relations have been created. The main objective for such departments is to develop international linkages for the university by assisting faculty members to participate in international educational and scientific exchanges and educational programs, by supporting foreign faculty and students at the university, and by seeking out opportunities for international cooperation.

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***Belarus has only one Internet provider—the Belpak Company—which is fully controlled by the government.***

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Many universities have introduced administrative positions to deal with issues of international education—often these positions are ranked at the level of vice rector. It is obvious that universities with both an international relations department and a vice rector for international affairs are quite

oriented toward introducing internationalization.

#### *Foreign Languages*

In Belarusian higher education, all students are required to study a foreign language for at least three years. However, a number of fields—such as international relations, international economic relations, international law, and the like—offered at state universities now require proficiency in two foreign languages. Some nonstate institutions also require proficiency in two foreign languages.

#### *Foreign Students*

Belarusian universities have created Russian language departments for international students. After completing the courses in these departments, international students are able to study as full-time students in a regular department with the Russian language as the medium of instruction. For a number of reasons, Belarus continues to be a popular place for international students to study, especially those from the former socialist countries: the level of educational quality is high, yet tuition is not as high as it is at Russian universities; the language of instruction is Russian and many people from the formerly socialist countries still have some knowledge of Russian; and Belarus is a safer environment compared to present-day Russia. Some universities have also introduced courses conducted in foreign languages to attract foreign students.

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Universities see several benefits of providing educational services to international students: international students serve as a source of additional income for the university, and once the students graduate they will create international contacts and links for the university.

#### *Regional Links*

The leading state universities are situated in the center of Belarus, in the capital city Minsk. There are five more regional centers, located near the Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian borders. These regional influences contribute international components to the institutions.

Some universities located in the capital, close to the headquarters of international organizations, have set up offices for these organizations or provide space for them on campus.

#### *Foreign Aid*

International foundations and agencies have played and continue to play a significant role in internationalizing higher education in Belarus. The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State (formerly the USIA), the Eurasia Foundation, and the European Union have actively supported academic exchanges and partnerships on all levels in Belarus. However, for political reasons, international assistance has been on the decline, which is of concern to Belarusian universities.

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#### *Obstacles to Internationalization*

*Inflexibility of the System.* Unfortunately, the present Belarusian system of higher education is not compatible with the Western credit system. This creates difficulties for students wishing to study abroad, as they do not receive official recognition of the valuable experience they have had during their international studies.

*Limited Internet Access.* Belarus has only one Internet provider—the Belpak Company—which is fully controlled by the government. Although universities were defined as priority sites for developing Internet access, the resources are still very limited and the quality of connection is not reliable. Scarceness of Internet resources makes it almost impossible to undertake joint international activities in the field of higher education and research.

*Financial Constraints.* Most university faculty do not make adequate salaries in Belarus and are forced to look for second jobs or provide tutoring services for high school graduates wishing to attend the university. Given the financial situation, it is very difficult for the university administration to expect faculty members to implement the internationalization of teaching and research.

There are, of course, other financial issues—for example, the problem of funding library acquisitions of books, in particular of foreign languages titles, and subscriptions to international periodicals. ■