

language to take full advantage of their studies. To resolve the language problem, some universities are starting pilot programs that offer courses in certain foreign languages—English, French, and German.

Other issues include the absence of information on education in Russia for perspective students, the inability of most Russian universities to compete on the international market, and the lack of marketing skills. Surveys have shown that most foreign students come to Russia on the recommendation of family members or friends, or are sent by their governments.

One of the perils facing international education is the avid desire of some institutions to earn money by enrolling tuition-paying students (most Russians are able to study for free). International students have thus become one of the vital sources of revenue. Some universities are ready to overlook everything in order to get a student who pays money. They wink at a student's educational qualifications, achievements, and progress while studying. This approach influences the general level of the student body of an institution and the quality of education.

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In addition, conditions on campus—housing and the overall level of services—particularly in some regions, cannot be seen as an asset of Russian higher education. Furthermore, the personal safety of international students, especially those from Africa and Asia, is a serious issue in many Russian cities.

These problems raise concerns about the policy of attracting international students to Russian universities. Undoubtedly, the major famous institutions are able to compete and attract good students who are eager to study and complete their degrees. But there are students who enroll at other Russian universities and do anything but study. A number of reports have appeared in the press about international students, mostly from developing countries, who are involved in illegal business activities or narcotics distribution. In the absence of work permits or adequate support from their governments, families, or sponsors, international students have to earn a living by all means possible.

In conclusion, today Russia is outdone by many countries in the number of international students in its

higher education system. Also lacking in Russia is the understanding that a policy of attracting foreigners will require much effort, financial resources, and time. In Russia, the current situation with regard to international students and future prospects has not been examined well enough and will require serious research. ■

International Higher Education in Russia: Missing Data

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Throughout its history, the Soviet Union was widely considered to be a “closed society.” Examples of the country's profile include restrictions on foreign travel, a lack of transparency, and keeping the outside world ignorant about conditions within the country. A common thread was the lack of publicly available data or the provision of false data on a variety of topics. Perestroika put an end to that isolation and opened doors to the global integration of the former Soviet nations. However, some of the old Soviet habits die hard. Anyone involved in research on higher education in Russia knows it is very difficult to obtain accurate statistics on the subject. The database on foreign student mobility continues to be restricted and problematical, which makes it impossible to assess internationalization of Russian higher education.

The Current Situation

The former Soviet leadership proudly proclaimed the USSR to be a world leader in higher education, providing impressive statistics on the numbers of foreign students studying in the country. Fact sheets from Soviet times claim that “all the advantages and high quality of Soviet education attracted in 1989 over 130,000 foreign students from more than 160 countries.” At the same time, specific information concerning this topic was considered classified and thus kept in the “restricted section” of the Federal State Archive. Even today, the data have yet to be released.

Given the right to engage in international cooperation on the institutional level by the 1992 Federal Education Act, Russian universities initiated a nationwide movement to attract foreign students. For the last decade, data collection concerning international students has occurred at the institutional level and been submitted to the Ministry of Education. It would be reasonable to

assume that with the introduction of reforms in the management of the Russian university system, the issue of data inaccessibility would be eased.

This change has not, however, taken place. Statistics on foreigners studying in Russia reported in local publications are very limited and are often contradictory. Based on the same data source, the Ministry of Higher Education, two national statistical reports show very different figures for the total number of foreign students in Russia in the 2000–2001 academic year: 95,957 and 61,426, respectively. The same problem of inconsistency characterizes almost all of the published information on international students in Russian universities.

Next comes the question of how foreign students are counted in Russia and, to a certain extent, attempting to analyze that process creates more questions than answers.

Data Collection

Next comes the question of how foreign students are counted in Russia. To a certain extent, attempting to analyze that process creates more questions than answers. First, all the approximately 35,000 students from the former USSR republics studying in Russia are now classified as foreigners—identified as students from the “near abroad.” Confusingly, published statistics in Russia usually present the annual numbers of students from close and distant foreign countries separately, providing no unified system for counting the total number of international students.

Another difficulty is the complexity of the Russian university system, in which anyone taking evening classes or external courses is considered an “enrolled student.” A person might live and have a full-time job in the Ukraine, return to Moscow twice a year to pass exams and collect course materials, and still be counted as a fully enrolled foreign student from Europe. Trainees or researchers from abroad are also counted as students, even if they are students in their home countries. The official website of the Russian Ministry of Education, invites foreigners to come and study in Russia, presents 13 different categories available in the Russian higher education system for foreign students. It is difficult to make sense of these different categories.

If Russia is to take advantage of the many opportunities for collaborative research and internationalization, there needs to be better access to pertinent and useful data and more accurate statistics. ■

International Network for Higher Education in Africa Launched

A new initiative called the International Network for Higher Education in Africa (INHEA) has recently been launched here at the Center for International Higher Education. The Network is intended for use by scholars, experts, practitioners, policymakers, funding organizations, students, and others engaged in research and development on higher education in Africa. As interest in higher education in Africa grows and as research and related publishing expands, this new resource will provide valuable information and strengthen communication and collaboration.

Many institutions and organizations are engaged in activities that relate to higher education development in Africa. These activities include research and advocacy, conferences and workshops, cooperative relationships with and among African institutions, and other efforts to gauge the state of higher education institutions in Africa. Most organizations focusing on Africa operate independently and often are unable to exchange information with others. The creation of this forum permits the easy changes of ideas, data, and news of activities and initiatives.

The Network features centers and institutions around the world that are engaged in work on African higher education. It also provides a list of experts and researchers (and their contact addresses) engaged in higher education in Africa. An effort will be made to provide information on current and upcoming higher education conferences and meetings that have relevance to higher education in Africa.

The Network also provides a rich source of bibliographical information that includes references to books, articles, and reports, as well as doctoral dissertations on African higher education. The references are conveniently organized by country and theme. Also provided are higher education profiles for every country in Africa. References and country profiles will be updated as regularly as possible.

The idea for INHEA stems from the Center’s two major initiatives concerning African higher education—*African Higher Education: An International Reference Handbook*, and the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa (JHEA)*. The network may be accessed at <http://www.bc.edu/inhea>. The Network is directed by Dr. Damtew Teferra, founding editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Higher Education in Africa* and senior editor of *African*