The model of the intercultural adaptation ecosystem of universities as an element of strategic development

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ABSTRACT

The tasks of increasing the international competitiveness and export of Russian education within the framework of national development priorities are inextricably linked with the need to create a favorable environment for the adaptation of international students based on ecosystem and stakeholder approaches. The development of an integral and multidimensional model of the Russian intercultural adaptation ecosystem for universities and other educational organizations should take place with full recognition of the values of external and internal internationalization in all activities in order to form long-term key competencies. The model of the intercultural adaptation ecosystem should become a matrix and, in a way, a framework solution from the point of view of the strategic development of universities in the global world, taking into account rethinking and sophistication of their mission as a social institution in global partnership.

The article offers a comprehensive vision of a model of an intercultural adaptation ecosystem of the educational organization with two contours – internal and external. The internal contour includes four components: values, practices, processes and structures. The external contour of the intercultural adaptation ecosystem of an educational organization also includes four components: inner Russian educational collaborations, international cooperation, interaction with national and cultural communities, and recommendations for authorities.

The authors offer a detailed analysis of the factors and priorities of the necessary organizational changes in Russian universities in the context of the tasks of intercultural literacy skills' strategic development for all participants and stakeholders of the educational process with further transformation into the competence of cultural intelligence.

KEYWORDS:

student-centered learning, international students, cultural adaptation, adaptive environment, intercultural communication, diversity management, cross-cultural trainings, internationalization, tutor, higher education, educational organization, university.

1. INTRODUCTION: ECOSYSTEM APPROACH FOR ADAPTATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

The modern development of the internationalization of Russian higher education requires critical rethinking and enhancing the value orientation towards more progressive principles. Alongside successes in improving of services for foreign students within the standard processes of academic and administrative university services, we observe not just insufficient development, but also fundamental lack of values-based understanding of the necessity and productivity of full transition to cross-cultural interaction and effective management of diversity as both integral and cross-cutting function of educational system in the conditions of increasing participation of all stakeholder groups in forming the culture of educational organizations [Straker, 2016].

Currently, Russian universities are at the relatively early stages of forming strategic development targets in the global world with due account for rethinking and increasing complexity of their mission as a social institute in the global partnership [Pherali, Lewis, 2019]. As a thesis for discussion, we can suggest that the overall understanding by the Russian educational establishments, in particular in their central theses and priorities, of the entire mission of universities within the increasing internationalization and interdependence has traditionally been overdue for a decade in comparison with the leaders of education export. To some extent, this problem is, undoubtfully, 'materialistic' (in the meaning of 'existence defines consciousness'): attempts of Russian universities to reach beyond the traditional export markets – Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Africa – have yielded few results so far. Hence, it is easy to close oneself within a self-isolating mentality: 'no one needs us, and we need no one'. However, in order not to lose the CIS and African markets, the way it happened with the Chinese market, which is probably irretrievably lost, it is necessary to move forward. The relevance of the task of building a cross-cultural adaptation ecosystem based on the principles of functional and instrumental understanding of the cultural intelligence in the educational environment will continue to grow.

The concept of cultural intelligence [Ott, Michailova, 2018] as a fundamental category in the internationalization of education does not imply acquiring knowledge through learning; instead, it implies a skill of a representative of a foreign culture to interpret the signs of another

culture the way it is done by the its bearers [MacNab, Worthley, 2011], which is different from the instrumental approaches that use the cultural diversity in education only with a view to increase the representation of students with diverse ethnic and cultural origins [Moon, 2016].

Effective approaches of adaptation and facilitation of individualization of training and educational achievements of foreign students with due regard for multi-faceted comprehension of their social and cultural needs and values should be constructed as an ecosystem solution on the basis of strategic resource-centered approach to the management of an educational organization. Strategic resource-centered approach implies the transformation of resources allocated for the development of adaptation of foreign students into sustained abilities of the organization with further transition of abilities into distinctive competences and competitive advantages [Delpechitre, Baker, 2017] at the global education market on the basis of implementation of cross-cultural differences management [Wu et al., 2015].

Cross-cutting and comprehensive approach to adherence to the principles of development of cross-cultural interaction and communication skills in the course of training, research, social, educational and informal work with foreign students, development of social cohesion, enhancing the involvement in teamwork and encouraging active position in discussions implies the creation of an all-round favourable environment (an ecosystem), which should be founded on the eight basic principles of improving the activity of an educational organization.

Before moving on, it is important to point out that within the present paper the terms 'university' and 'educational establishment' are used fully interchangeably, since the work is focused primarily on higher educational establishments. However, it should be noted that many priorities, principles and components for constructing of the cross-cultural adaptation ecosystem model are quite universal overall for this area: for higher, vocational secondary and even secondary education.

2. PRIORITIES FOR FORMING THE CROSS-CULTURAL UNIVERSITY ADAPTATION ECOSYSTEM

A cross-cultural adaptation university ecosystem should be constructed on the basis of the following progressive priorities at the intersection of productive trends in education and cross-cultural interaction.

1. Development of methodological approaches and strengthening the values of internal internationalization of an educational

establishment, which involves continuous integration of international and cross-cultural aspects into formal and informal activity for all students within the domestic (national) educational environment. Cross-cultural components are included in the list of obligatory competences that form both separate disciplines and whole training programmes. Purposeful use of cultural diversity in learning process to ensure increasing inclusivity in education, teaching and attestation in the framework of extended understanding of methodology of building of inclusive systems [Marginson, 2016], methodological approaches moving in the direction 'from international to cross-cultural' [Heyward, 2002].

2. Developing techniques for individual approach to training and adaptation of an individual subject of cross-cultural communication (a foreign student) in the context of the host national culture, which, in its turn, is integrated in the common civilizational space formed due to globalization. Systematization of practices of using sociocultural technologies in the process of involvement, exchange of foreign students and teachers, institutional and national expertise in adaptation, including in foreign partner universities.

3. Increasing of informational openness of an educational establishment and overcoming barriers of cross-cultural communication, including the development of internal navigation in the institution, comfortable and friendly environment. Involving officials of every area within in the university into internationalization process. Ensuring targeted interaction with foreign students.

4. Expanding the tools and techniques of cross-cultural interaction within the formalization and regulation of processes and structures in the educational establishment, including with a view to reduce power distance and cultural distance [Zhang, 2013].

5. Using a wide set of tools of the intensive induction adaptation course for foreign students.

6. Introducing the system of monitoring of satisfaction with how educational programs are implemented. Increasing use of questionnaires for foreign students on the parameters of adaptation work in the institution.

7. Forming a multi-level and holistic value and competence system of the staff development programmes in the area of foreign students' adaptation and tutorial support. In order to overcome communication barriers, the subjects of intercultural communication expand and develop cross-cultural competence in the context of educational space;

8. Forming the institution of tutors as a central personnel link in the system of flexible educational trajectories and facilitation for foreign students in the context of modern approaches and techniques to individualize education. Tutors must understand the complex social and cultural values of foreign students [Lochtie, 2016] and integrate students' cultural values alongside the individual values in setting of their objectives, helping students to define which cross-cultural and cross-disciplinary skills they need to achieve training goals and deal with acculturation-related stress [Han et al., 2017].

The scheme of cross-cultural adaptation university ecosystem model with internal and external contours is shown at picture 1.
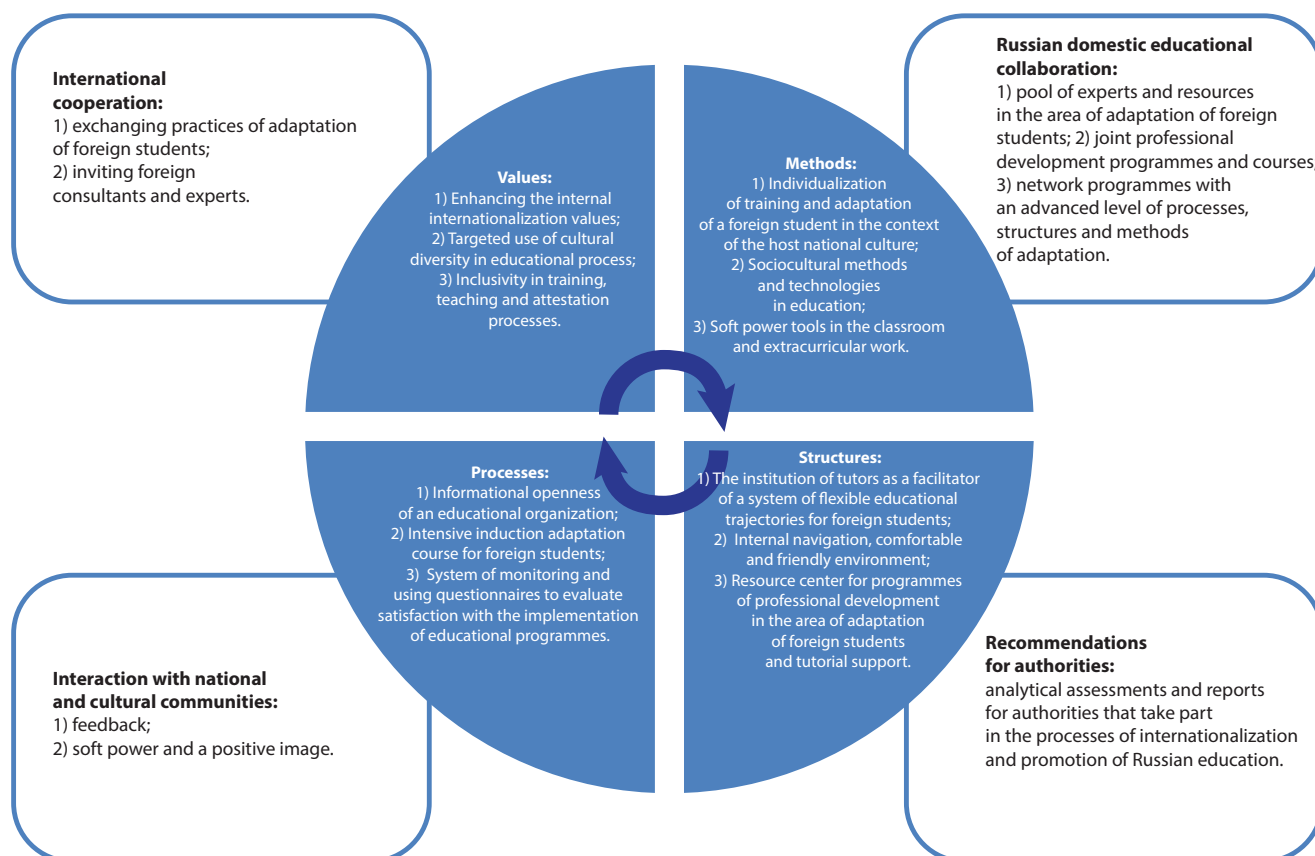
3. INTERNAL CONTOUR OF THE UNIVERSITY ADAPTATION ECOSYSTEM

The internal contour of cross-cultural university adaptation ecosystem includes four components: values, methods, processes and structures.

3.1. VALUES

The primary principle of cross-cultural interaction in a multicultural environment of an educational organization should be not so much prevention, forecasting and averting conflicts, but rather constructing a new value paradigm and corporate culture, which will be able to create a favorable environment, adapt, engage and motivate foreign students to study in the Russian Federation. To achieve this, the development of flexible skills and

Pic. 1. Model of cross-cultural adaptation ecosystem in a university: external and internal contours

International cooperation:
1) exchanging practices of adaptation of foreign students;
2) inviting foreign consultants and experts.

Russian domestic educational collaboration:
1) pool of experts and resources in the area of adaptation of foreign students; 2) joint professional development programmes and courses; 3) network programmes with an advanced level of processes, structures and methods of adaptation.

Values:
1) Enhancing the internal internationalization values;
2) Targeted use of cultural diversity in educational process;
3) Inclusivity in training, teaching and attestation processes.

Methods:
1) Individualization of training and adaptation of a foreign student in the context of the host national culture;
2) Sociocultural methods and technologies in education;
3) Soft power tools in the classroom and extracurricular work.

Processes:
1) Informational openness of an educational organization;
2) Intensive induction adaptation course for foreign students;
3) System of monitoring and using questionnaires to evaluate satisfaction with the implementation of educational programmes.

Structures:
1) The institution of tutors as a facilitator of a system of flexible educational trajectories for foreign students;
2) Internal navigation, comfortable and friendly environment;
3) Resource center for programmes of professional development in the area of adaptation of foreign students and tutorial support.

Interaction with national and cultural communities:
1) feedback;
2) soft power and a positive image.

Recommendations for authorities:
analytical assessments and reports for authorities that take part in the processes of internationalization and promotion of Russian education.

cross-cultural competences of all actors in an educational organization is necessary, or, in other words, the subject-subject relations paradigm and student-centered approach in the work of all staff of an educational establishment, which implies focus of the professional activity on the needs of foreign students.

From the point of view of forming cultural intelligence, motivational aspect is of primary importance for qualitative transformation of educational organizations, since it is necessary to systematically and sustainably increase the engagement and professional and cross-cultural awareness of all university services that are directly or indirectly involved in creating friendly academic and service space for foreign students.

The starting point of constructing a new value model within the adaptation ecosystem of an educational establishment is *the values of internal internationalization,* which imply integration of the priorities of international and cross-cultural dimension into educational environment in the course of classroom and extra-curricular activities of a university.

This value orientation allows to overcome the problems of limited capacities (including within geographical distribution) of international mobility. Even if there are significant resources and partner relations to implement programs and projects on international academic student and teacher mobility, this is not enough considering the necessity to comprehensively and through the whole curriculum form competences of all the graduates to work in a multicultural world (in the context of international competition, as part of international teams) [Adair et al., 2013].

It is clear that there is no antagonism or tight alternativity between the two values – internal internationalization and proactivity of leading participants of international mobility. Rather, it is due to long-established practices and criteria to assess effectiveness of educational organization activity international academic mobility appears to be more visible, verifiable, measurable, more accounted for as a result and an indicator, whereas the values of internal internationalization appear to be more neglected due to their more long-term and less tangible advantages.

It is for this reason that it is necessary to set the tasks of more correct accentuation and reflections of the values of internal internationalization through the whole range of its directions: within the internationalization of administrative services and campus, separate research and training divisions, descriptions and syllabi of the main training programmes and individual disciplines. The strategy of internal internationalization should be aligned with all strategic aspects of the development of an educational organization higher education institution (its mission, goals and objectives, structure, key indicators,

partners) in the context of the enhancing trends of internationalization of its activity.

Targeted use of cultural diversity in the design of educational programmes and process implies, besides the changes in the contents of curricula and individual disciplines, substantial transformation in the students' and teachers' activity and behavioral priorities through rethinking and changing of routine, conventional practices and approaches: new methods, techniques, practices, tools in training, teaching and methodological work of personnel, new functions of administrative services, students' activity, methods, forms and techniques of control and assessment of training achievements.

Value prioritization in the framework of competence approach implies the following as the main indicators of competences the future graduates': the ability to recognize the significance and productivity of cross-cultural harmony, to assess problems and professional situations from different points of view, to demonstrate understanding of other cultures in the same way as their own culture, to understand interrelationship between cultural and professional traditions of various countries, to assess the consequences of actions on the local level (community level) and for the international community, to be able to communicate with the representatives of other cultures. It includes developing the ability to understand the limitations of one's own culture and language and when communicating with other cultures a skill to switch to not just language-related, but also non-verbal norms of behavior. It does not mean neglecting one's own culture; on the contrary, it stimulates reflection, helps to understand the uniqueness of one's own culture, identify oneself in the process of interaction with the contrasts of another culture.

3.2. METHODS

From the point of view of methodological improvement of parameters of cross-cultural adaptation in an educational organization, special significance is attributed to the internationalization of disciplines within the prioritization of cross-cultural aspects of work programmes, content, forms of study, developing lecture and workshop materials, classroom work on the part of students, criteria and approaches to control and assessment.

The methodological approaches to cross-cultural communication and adaptation in a multicultural environment in educational organizations have not been sufficiently developed, which has a negative impact on deep adaptation of a personality to the existing multicultural environment and does not allow effective use of internal resources. Hence, in the conditions of cultural instability of an educational institution it is necessary to develop an adequate methodological toolbox in order to achieve harmonization of cross-cultural

interaction between all actors of educational process.

For many teachers, internationalization of disciplines implies stepping out of their professional comfort zone. In this regard, educational establishments should set up a system of methodological support: expand international components of curricula, develop international strategic partnership, design fully internationalized discipline curricula. Changes are required in the approaches to the curricula design. Cross-cultural components should be included in the list of obligatory competences formed both within separate subjects and in the educational programmes on the whole (e.g. including a separate Diversity Management Module in all programmes as it is done in many universities abroad). However, integration of international components should not be limited to optional subjects and electives, nor should it be intended only for specific groups of students within optional or elective courses.

Among the main methodological elements of enhancing internationalization and cross-cultural adaptation in methodological and teaching-methodological activity of educational organizations, the following can be singled out.

1. *In the contents of subjects*: internationalized work programs of subjects, promoting the importance of carrying out a critical review and comparison of national and foreign sources, including cases, examples and illustrations from different countries, cultures, perspectives, tasks to conduct comparative analysis of trends or situation in other countries comparing to the situation in one's own country.

2. *In the techniques of preparation of lectures and practical sessions*: expanding the use of multicultural round tables, workshops, other forms of intra-group interactive sessions, developing practical projects with organizations working on international projects; host presentations by lecturers with international experience and follow-up discussions; using the issues and materials provided by foreign students.

3. *In the elements of students' work during lectures and workshops:* increasing the use of interactive forms, which motivate local and foreign students to interact with representatives of other cultures, discuss issues and topics with foreign students with a view to deepen the comparative aspect of tasks, formulating research tasks on the principles of comparing local, national and international practices.

4. *In the students' unsupervised work*: creating contexts for tasks to be done independently that encourage students to learn foreign languages and aspects of cross-cultural communication, value

interpretations and ethical issues, inclusion of tasks aimed at forming cross-cultural knowledge, skills, relationships and behavior, or in the area of a second foreign language.

5. *In the pool of assessment tools and techniques to carry out continuous and interim control and monitoring:* recognition of international and cross-cultural aspects in the results of training, including the abilities to work effectively in multi-cultural and multi-lingual contexts when preparing and presenting individual and group projects; using the peer check technique with local and foreign students and teachers participating.

Therefore, students of any program, studying any subject, ought to have an idea about international and cross-cultural component in their subject due to embedded development of cross-cultural knowledge, relations and behavior in the subject that is taught. The students are offered to research and critically analyze the reality through the lenses of various cultures and ethnic groups.

Targeted use of cultural diversity in the educational process will allow ensuring greater level of inclusivity and student-centeredness in education and providing of services. Using cultural diversity of student groups as an educational resource will enable the organizations to integrate experience and knowledge not just from foreign students, but from those representing different regions, cultures and segments of society.

An important methodological priority is the language support of foreign students, which may involve introduction of additional lessons of Russian as Foreign Language within the main educational program (or as an elective instead of English or other foreign languages); putting foreign students in separate groups to study during the first year, when the teacher can take into account the students' level of language skills and adjust the language; development of a wide range of English-language programs to attract the English-speaking cluster of foreign students without the need to undergo an induction course.

3.3. PROCESSES

Process-based approach in an educational establishment is, primarily, the accounting, improvement and targeted use of the elements of an educational process and infrastructure context, including informational, orientation, presentational, adaptation elements and the cross-cultural and communicative component.

In this regard, it is suggested to consider the internal environment of an educational establishment not as a monoenvironment, but as multidimensional one, which includes various functional subenvironments that can be classified as academic, informational, social and day-to-

day living and ethnocultural environments. Therefore, since communication problems of foreign students are manifested not just the language level, but also in the gaps in the requirements to learning and academic standards, social and day-to-day living aspects, informational accessibility and cultural and ethnical peculiarities, stable stereotypes and biases of communicating subjects, it is important to design an innovative paradigm of adaptation focused on the processes of adaptation of students of various cultures to multidimensional environments of educational organization.

An intensive induction adaptation course for foreign students includes orientation induction for newly arriving foreign students with the participation of services of an educational organization (visa and registration, educational, dealing with dormitories, financial, etc.), organizing the work of a Student Service Center to facilitate, support and help foreign students to navigate the university space, installing multilingual signs and updating the multilingual web-site according to the principles of *informational openness of an educational establishment*.

The modules can be elaborated and presented by officials of various service departments for newly arriving students and students with migration-related past (dormitory rules, visas and registration, financial issues, getting to know the infrastructure: library, key offices, external environment, e.g. banks, pharmacies, medical services, guards and cultural attractions). Further build-up of comprehensive intra-university cultural links should be based on improved understanding of the adaptation needs of foreign students as well as on the recognition of their wider contribution in the productivity and cultural diversity of the entire educational environment.

The main methodological approach 'from international to cross-cultural' requires methodology and elaboration of tools applicable to the quality of foreigners' stay at the educational institutions, namely their adaptation to foreign cultural environment and developing cross-cultural interaction. In terms of organizational changes and providing an institutional service in measuring the level of cross-cultural interaction, an important element is the development, first of all, of cross-cultural literacy of all participants of the educational process with further transformation into cultural intelligence skill.

It is especially important to continuously improve *the system of monitoring and using questionnaires to check satisfaction with the implementation of educational programmes*. A separate competence, which demands special attention, is mastering the methods of integration of newly arriving foreign students into multi-cultural and multilingual groups. With the aim of successful integration, it is necessary to develop a methodology to survey the needs of foreign students and process the data in order to create a database using cultural, religious and

ethnical parameters. In order to understand and determine communicative models inside specific cultural group, it is important to apply descriptive and functional approaches to identify and measure what certain ideas and cultural values of each separate group are based on..

3.4. STRUCTURES

Educational space is not homogeneous due to different levels of environments that comprise it. At first, future students (foreign applicants) encounter the informational environment while looking for information about admission policy and educational programmes on the university web-site. Newly arriving students start with interacting with social and daily environment, where they are introduced to rules of residence and socio-cultural values of the educational institution and external environment. Further on, foreign students deal with new rules and requirements related to studying and start interacting with teachers and students.

Resource center for programmes of professional development in the area of adaptation of foreign students and tutorial support can be a highly effective format to conduct training for educators related student-centered approach and techniques of working in a multi-lingual class, including with involvement of students in such training, as well as including components of teaching of dialogue culture in the curriculum for students and professional development courses for teachers.

Another effective tool for such a resource center can be professional development workshops on student-centered approach and soft skills not just for teachers, but also for administrative staff working in the contact zone [Rehg et al., 2012]. The interaction with the representatives of other cultures can be psychologically stressful, can cause certain anxiety and fear. It is suggested that the basic way to overcome ethno-cultural barriers of communication is increasing the staff's cross-cultural literacy, since cultural education in cross-cultural interaction is considerably different from simple 'awareness'. Developing the individual's cultural literacy involves purposeful changing of the subject, forming their respective knowledge and skills that will facilitate adequate orientation in the practical situations of cross-cultural communication. The knowledge one has in this case acquires the nature of a competence and has personal meaning since their carrier develops a personal existential position.

The described new approaches in their turn require, from the point of view of cultural intelligence, changes in the system of professional development of teachers and administrative staff in order to teach the contact zone staff to focus on the foreign students' needs in their professional activity, so called student-centered skills

to conduct training to teach cross-cultural competences and courses on teaching techniques in multi-cultural and multilingual classes.

The institution of tutors plays a role of a facilitator of the system of flexible educational trajectories for foreign students. The tutor's support in facilitation of adaptation, navigation and selection of individual trajectories is important from the point of view of the presence in an educational establishment of a separate category of experts-consultants (tutors) who help with the selection of subjects, internships, fellowships, additional programmes. To be effective, tutors have to understand complex social and cultural values of foreign students.

In terms of tutors' educational and methodological workload, provision should be made for conducting methodological councils on the techniques for consultation and mentoring of foreign students as well as learning and training on teaching methods in the context of highly interactive multi-cultural and multilingual classes and integration of newly coming foreign students.

Internal navigation, comfortable and friendly atmosphere are needed for the optimization of the foreign students' conditions of stay on campus, including living in dormitories in multi-cultural groups arranged according to an international principle, with each group including a Russian-speaking student to stimulate communication in Russian, as well as allocating additional individual space for rest and studying, co-working spaces, rooms for prayer, rituals and privacy. Another effective way is to conduct a cycle of events aimed at internationalization of the university community, cross-cultural interaction, cross-national and religious tolerance (for example, national exhibitions, culture festivals and national cuisine presentations), national holidays of all foreign students of the educational institution.

Such structures as Students Service Points can cover the provision of various services related to cultural and academic adaptation of foreign students, and will facilitate assistance and consulting for foreign students in relation to selection of courses, internships and exchange programmes, will ensure further individualization and variability of education, consolidate academic discipline. Navigation can include Student Service Points, bilingual and multilingual information stalls, navigation displays in the halls and on the floors, mobile phone applications for foreign visitors, students and teachers. A Service Point can also offer a wide range of opportunities for technologies and adaptation measures for first-year foreign students, e.g. parties, intensive two- or three-week briefings of foreign students with the participation of all relevant services and departments (visa, academic, financial, dormitories, etc.), getting to know the infrastructure.

4. EXTERNAL CONTROUR OF THE UNIVERSITY ADAPTATION ECOSYSTEM

The external contour of the cross-cultural adaptation ecosystem in an educational organization includes four components: Russian domestic educational collaborations, international cooperation, interaction with national and cultural communities and recommendations for authorities.

Russian domestic educational collaborations imply broad opportunities to engage a wide pool of experts and resources in the adaptation of foreign students, joint implementation of professional development programs and courses and at the highest level of expertise accumulation – network programs with an advanced level of processes, structures and methods of adaptation.

A productive format of interaction for a collaboration in the area of joint development of the foreign students' adaptation system can be designing a pilot training program, professional development training for all participants of the educational process to encourage employees of academic and non-academic university units, which will enhance cross-cultural competences and flexible skills, orienting at the foreign students' needs with regards to directions and topics for cross-cultural workshops for teaching and administrative staff working in the area of cross-cultural communication, integrational, psychological and social aspects of interaction with foreign students as well as with partners, including in the area of business communication and correspondence.

Within the services of international cooperation units in educational organizations, it is advisable to set up resource centers with wide interaction networks to study and implement the best international practices of cross-cultural adaptation of students. On the basis of systematization of practical methods of applying of socio-cultural technologies in the process of attracting, exchanging of foreign students and teachers, institutional and national experience of adaptation, resource centers can participate in improvement and replication of methodological innovations of cross-cultural education and intelligence for university departments and administrative units..

International cooperation in the area of improving adaptation ecosystem of an educational organization can be established through research and practical and methodological exchange of practices of foreign students' adaptation as well as regularly inviting consultants and experts from other states. Joint conceptual and field comparative international research and intensive exchange of expertise in the area of cross-cultural interaction are

particularly important. The tools of comparison and harmonization of the best international and Russian practices and ideas in the area of internationalization and adaptation, teaching methods and approaches in multi-cultural classes contribute to mutual enrichment and development of a platform focused on teaching and discussing, which can create joint effective communicative environment and be efficient for all participants of the exchange of knowledge and experience. In particular, it is useful to conduct specialized training for the target ethno-cultural groups, possibly in other countries, within the target educational programmes for foreign employees of Russian companies with large operational capacities abroad. In this way, internal university communication will become more open, democratic, transparent, flexible and transformable for various cultures in the university community.

In this regard, it seems relevant to harmonize Russian and international approaches to application of socio-cultural technologies in the process of attraction, exchange and adaptation of foreign students and teachers using the comparison methodology and generalizing institutional and national adaptation experience in foreign partner-universities with due regard for peculiarities of the latter related to procedures, methods and value priorities.

Feedback within the interaction with national and cultural communities can be implemented through the system of surveys and data collection in order to increase the effectiveness of cross-cultural communicative technologies. Such elements as electronic questionnaires for foreign and national students and online survey platforms provide important data for taking measures to improve cultural and academic adaptation. The development of interviewing methodology for various ethno-cultural groups of foreign students and data processing with a view to create a database of ethno-cultural preferences in choosing Russian education can include the reputation of the national higher education system at the international education market, employment possibilities during and after studying, visa and migration legislation, tuition fees, university ranking and reputation, education quality, various logistical amenities, economic and political connections, whether there are bilateral agreements on recognition of education degrees.

In this respect, especially promising is the development of methodology of consideration of opportunities and barriers in ensuring the optimal format of cross-cultural education aiming to overcome the acculturation-related stress that foreign students experience. Another challenging multidisciplinary task is increasing personal satisfaction with educational and extracurricular achievements with due regard for cultural, religious and national factors [Blasko, 2015]. In this relation, it is effective to use the cluster approach. The use of the clustering procedure (cluster analysis) allows to reasonably group and better understand similar objects,

identify typical and special elements and characteristics for identification of foreign students' belonging to certain civilization groups.

Another important facet of interacting with national and cultural communities is *the potentiation and projecting soft power through higher education.* 'Soft power' implies the ability to influence others and achieve national interests by way of engagement and persuasion, instead of coercion, military force or economic sanctions (commonly known as hard power).

International higher education is widely recognized as one of the most noble and uncontroversial tools of the soft power concept alongside culture and medicine, since engagement and persuasion through education is the best way to establish a cross-cultural dialogue and reinforce trust. In the future, trust and involvement may pay dividends from the point of view of economic and geopolitical benefits, reputation and overall competitiveness. Among the most well-known examples of soft power in higher education are the Fulbright Program, British Council, German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), Confucius Institute, the EU Erasmus+ Project Matrix.

Undoubtfully, international higher education has changed dramatically over the last two decades. Not just students and scholars cross the borders, but also programs, providers and projects. Higher education area is characterized by international joint research projects, binational (as well as involving more countries) universities, multinational political networks, global mobility programs, regional excellence centers and international educational centers. It has been recognized that in our present-day highly interrelated and interdependent world higher education is a channel for transborder flow and exchange of people, knowledge, expertise, values, innovation, economy, technology and culture.

It is essential to understand an even more progressive connotation and interpretation of soft power *the principle of mutual power within soft power,* which is especially relevant in the education context. This concept acknowledges the fact that power should not necessarily be the so-called zero-sum game, it can have synergetic aspects. The mutual power approach is based on respective strengths of higher educational establishments and research institutes of a country, and provides solutions and advantages for all participants. The key feature is that the advantages will be different for various participants. This is based on the reality and the 'new norm', according to which the solution of the world's problems can not be attained by one state on its own.

Soft power tools of education work only in a long-term perspective. A world-class university must attract gifted young people, qualified staff and scholars. Decrease in

the concentration of talent and research achievements leads to educational organization losing its geopolitical mission.

Alternative to the power paradigm, whether it is about soft or hard power, is the concept of diplomacy, which regards negotiations as one of its main pillars. Over the last two decades, diplomacy went through dramatic changes. Modern diplomacy recognizes that the state-oriented process focused primarily on the ministries of foreign affairs and professional diplomats is no longer adequate. Plenty of new participants are involved in it, including non-governmental organizations, transnational corporations, professional organizations and experts in diplomacy. And higher education is one of these key players and tools of modern diplomacy. Public and cultural diplomacy includes social media, contemporary and traditional art forms, architecture, language and cross-cultural communication, academic exchange, sport and other means important for direct interaction with foreign community, not just with the governments.

Analytical assessments and reports of educational organizations for authorities, that participate in internationalization and promotion of Russian education should become a feedback system and a basis for improving of legislation (including by-laws), as well as analytical and expert basis for replicating of best practices in the area of comprehensive build-up and improvement of individual elements of cross-cultural adaptation ecosystem of educational organizations.

The developed mechanisms and tools can be implemented in order to ensure quality and evaluation of the results of changes carried out in the adaptation of foreign students in Russian educational organizations. Consequently, valuable contribution will be made in the management of cultural differences in the educational process and in modelling of adaptation multicultural environment in Russian universities within the internationalization cycle, which includes promotional tools, intake of students, enrollment, adaptation and teaching, graduation and development of international student associations.

Development of mechanisms aimed to create a favourable environment in educational organizations and improve conditions of stay of foreign citizens when they study in Russia is also one of the priorities of the project *Development of Russian Education System Export Potential.*

5. CONCLUSION

Cultural intelligence and cross-cultural interaction competences should become for educational organizations a resource for all kinds of activities (research and

methodological, teaching and methodological, project, educational, international) and one of the areas for forming distinctive competences and competitive advantages at the global education market.

Value- and competence-related prioritization of engaging all the student population, teachers and administrative staff in the international professional practices, as is demonstrated by advanced foreign and Russian experiences, turns out to be even more important as an ecosystem solution than efficient development of cross-cultural competences and awareness among the active participants of academic mobility.

Tutors, as a central link of adaptation ecosystem, should integrate the values of social culture alongside students' individual values in setting their goals and help the students determine which skills they need to achieve their learning objectives. As a result, foreign students, with the tutors' help, should have better understanding of how formal learning components can be maximally complementary and synergetic in combination with the informal ones.

Management of cultural differences in educational environments can be effective in overcoming barriers, for which tools are offered to ensure interaction of all structural levels of an educational organization related to administration, teaching and adaptation of foreign students.

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