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## Competitive Advantages of the European and Russian Higher Education Institutions and Their Place in World Educational Space

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### Abstract

The article considers the main competitive advantages of higher educational institutions of Western Europe and Russia and their place in the world educational space. In addition the article explores the basic components of the competitiveness of the higher education institutions, taking into consideration the best universities of Western Europe, provides a ranking of the best European universities and the Russian higher education institutions included into the ranking of higher education institutions of the world. The main distinction between European higher education institutions and other universities and institutes, including Russian, are considered.

**Keywords:** university, higher education institution, Western Europe, Russia, education, educational institution, competitive advantage, university rankings.

### 1. Introduction

In modern conditions of actualization of social and economic relations significance, education of the individual as a fundamental mechanism for human resources development plays a very important role. The process of reforming the education systems of developed and developing countries, including Russia, in recent years is rapid and affects all areas of the system. The Government declared that the aim of the reforms of Russian higher education is to increase competitiveness of Russian universities on national and international markets of educational services. It is clear that the achievement of this goal requires solving a number of important tasks: focusing on advanced foreign technologies in the education system, increasing the level of teaching staff, improvement of infrastructure of higher education institutions and so forth.

### 2. Materials and Methods

The sources on which the statements and conclusions of this publication relied upon were the rankings of higher education institutions, among which: Times Higher Education World University Rankings, the rating of Russian universities "Top 100", ranking of the BRICS universities. In addition, while preparing the publication, monographs materials, thesis in conference information packages, articles and information from open Internet sources were used. The article used methods of analysis, synthesis, comparison, classification, and grouping.

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### 3. Discussion

Issues of development of the competitive advantages of Russian universities in order to enhance their competitiveness in the global educational space is not widely covered in the national literature. The questions of management of educational institution through the last century were anyway raised in researches of such scientists as V.I. Zagvyazinsky, I.K. Novikov, K.P. Pobedonostseva, I.N. Sizemsky, K.M. Ushakova, O.S. Batalova, E.D. Lipkina and some others. However, in the researches of Russian authors, there is no unified systematization of competitive advantages, a comprehensive system of assessment haven't been developed, methods of improving competitiveness of higher professional education institutions in modern conditions have not been described.

Primary competitive advantages of the modern University. In the system of competitiveness components of higher professional education institution it is possible to distinguish the following: infrastructure level, information and methodical ensuring of educational process, structure and qualitative composition of the teaching staff, efficiency of employability, scientific activity of students, extracurricular activities of higher school with students, international activities, the opportunity to get education for persons with disabilities (inclusive education) and a number of other components

All these criteria for evaluation of competitiveness of higher education institution contain tens of sub criteria, allowing to carry out more comprehensive and deep analysis of the educational activities of the University (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Criteria for evaluation of competitiveness of higher education institution "efficiency of employment" and "the international activity of higher education institution"

No	Criterion	Sub-criterion
1	Efficiency of employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A list of the companies where graduates are employed (Russian and foreign companies)</li> <li>2. Level of the salaries received by university graduates</li> <li>3. The possibility of an internship while studying</li> <li>4. A share of the graduates employed with the help of higher education institution</li> <li>5. A share of the graduates who get employment themselves</li> <li>6. A share of the graduates who have decided to continue scientific activity</li> <li>7. Amount of bases for practice with a possibility of further employment</li> </ol>
2	International activity of higher education institution	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The number of the students who are trained according to programs of exchange</li> <li>2. The number of publications of teaching staff of higher education institution with the international scientists</li> <li>3. The number of lectures delivered by invited international professors</li> <li>4. The number of international training for teaching staff of higher education institution</li> <li>5. The number of foreign students in higher education institution</li> </ol>

Source: Compiled by authors

The place of the European higher education institutions in rankings of institutions of the countries of the world. Each rating has its own methodology with a certain set of estimated criteria. For example, in some ratings the following criteria are considered: the number of graduates who have received the Nobel Prize, the annual investment in the equipment of the university, etc. The most influential world ratings of assessment of educational services are: Times Good University Guide, US News, QS World University Rankings and Shanghai Ranking.

According to a rating of the best universities of the world (The World University Rankings), it is possible to name the Oxford university (Great Britain), the Cambridge university (Great Britain), Imperial college of London (Great Britain), the Swiss federal institute of technology in Zurich

(Switzerland), University College London (Great Britain) (Table 2) as the best higher education institutions of Europe.

**Table 2.** The best higher education institutions of Europe, which were included in the top 50 universities in the world (The World University Rankings)

No. in a rating	Name of university	Country
2	University of Oxford	Great Britain
4	University of Cambridge	Great Britain
8	Imperial College London	Great Britain
9	ETH Zürich – Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich	Switzerland
14	University College London	Great Britain
23	London School of Economics and Political Science	Great Britain
24	University of Edinburgh	Great Britain
27	King's College London	Great Britain
28	Karolinska Institute	Sweden
29	LMU Munich	Germany
31	école Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne	Switzerland
35	KU Leuven	Belgium
37	Heidelberg University	Germany
47	Wageningen University and Research Center	Netherlands
49	Humboldt University of Berlin	Germany

Source: Compiled by the author based on: Rankings of the best universities in the world by Times Higher Education. Humanitarian encyclopedia [Electronic resource] // The Centre for Humanitarian Technologies. – 16.03.2012 (last revised: 02.10.2015). URL: <http://gtmarket.ru/ratings/the-world-university-rankings/info>

A great number of the best higher education institutions of Europe are located in Great Britain, Germany and the Netherlands.

Competitive advantages of higher education institutions of Western Europe. The universities included in the rankings, have strong competitive advantages in such areas as international mobility of students and teachers, the level and number of scientific studies, achievements in innovation, citation of scientific articles, the level of educational services, etc. (Leontiev, 2014). So, the Cambridge University (Great Britain) is famous for the high level of teaching scientists with a world name, the famous politicians, economists and so forth. Among graduates of university, there are 82 Nobel Prize laureates. The medieval scientists I. Newton, F. Bacon, the Prime Ministers and the heads of governments of other countries studied here. At the University of Oxford (UK) members of the Royal Society, the British Academy members, prominent public figures teach students.

One of the specific features of advanced Western universities is a practical and scientific orientation. The practical orientation is expressed in the fact that the training of students is in close contact with the businesses, which dictate their needs. Students of Western Europe universities have the opportunity to participate actively in seminars, workshops, excursions, organized by both private and public companies. In addition, each institution has a wide range of base for practices that students can take, depending on their interests and in accordance with the established work plan.

Interdisciplinary connections that are assumed by teaching plans allow the student to get a universal education, to expand the list of disciplines that meet the requirements of the modern world. So, for example, in the UK universities more than 1,300 subjects are taught (L. Shirshov Study: e-learning in higher education in Europe, 2015). For example, in the field of management such

subjects, which are rare for the Russian practice of discipline, as: Management Techniques, Creative Management, Change Management, Management of local communities (Domestic management), Land & property management, retail management, and so forth are taught.

Many universities are actively preparing the best students to continue academic career. It is especially popular in French and English universities, which encourage deep research work of students, and research laboratories work very actively and so on.

Western European countries widely use modern educational technologies, among which are distance learning (or e-learning), blended learning (learning both at home and in the higher education institution), online courses.

Almost 91 % of Western European universities somehow use the e-learning forms. The most popular specialties for electronic learning are Economics, Management, Marketing, etc. In the sphere of art and medicine, electronic learning techniques are almost not used. It should be noted that such training is the strongest competitive advantage for the university in modern conditions, and quite popular service in the educational market. It is especially popular in Spain

The individual training programs are also interesting. These programs are developed for each student in a number of universities in Western Europe. So, for example, such system is popular in universities in the UK. For example, at Oxford University tutor from teaching staff is attached to each student. The tutor selects for a student an individualized education program, depending on the personal characteristics of the student, his abilities, potential and his life goals.

The prospects of improving the competitiveness of Russian Federation universities.

Only few Russian higher education institutions are included in ratings of the best higher education institutions. As a rule, ranging of higher education institutions in ratings is conducted by such criteria as teaching level, extent of the international integration, resources provision (including innovative infrastructure), popularity of higher education institution among applicants, the level of university graduates being in demand by employers, a level of development of system of cooperation of higher education institution and representatives of business, communication with industrial sector, research activity.

The largest and known higher education institutions of the Russian Federation, as a rule, are included into the international ratings: Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University, National research nuclear university "MIFI", etc. However, the number of Russian higher education institutions in these ratings is still not enough. According to a rating of "TOP 100" of higher education institutions of Russia" the largest domestic higher education institutions that are included into international ratings also take the very first places in national ratings (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Rating of HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS of Russia (TOP 100), 2015 (rating fragment)

The place in a rating	Name of higher education institution	Evaluation
1	Lomonosov Moscow State University	1000
2	St. Petersburg State University	840
3	National research nuclear university "MIFI"	822
4	National research university "MIPT"	821
5-6	Novosibirsk national research state university	785
	Russian Peoples' Friendship University	785
7	Moscow national research technical university of N.E. Bauman	766
8	Tomsk national research state university	732
9	Tomsk national research polytechnic university	714
10	St. Petersburg national research polytechnic university	677

Source: "TOP 100". Rating of higher education institutions of Russia. [Electronic resource]. Access mode: <http://basetop.ru/rejting-vuzov-rossii-2015-goda/>

For example, the University rating of BRICS countries (The BRICS & Emerging Economies Rankings), in which Beijing University has been a leader for a few years, in 2015 included such Russian universities as the Moscow State University n.a. M. V. Lomonosov (3rd place), St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (18th), Tomsk Polytechnic University (20th), National Research Nuclear University (26th), Kazan Federal University (31st), St. Petersburg State University (37th), MG TU n.a. N. Uh. Bauman (57-e), Novosibirsk State University (34th), Tomsk State University (87-e), Moscow Institute of physics and technology (93rd), National Research Technological University (99th) and others (only 11 universities of the Russian Federation)

Since 2003, Russia has been participating in the Bologna process, which means not only the entry of Russian universities on the world market of educational services, but also a serious struggle for students from all over the world.

Among the measures for improving the competitiveness of Russian universities, we can identify the project of support of Russian universities "5-100", having been implemented by the government of the Russian Federation in the field of education for several years. 21 domestic higher education institutions have been allowed to participate in the project, including: Baltic Federal University of I. Kant, National Research Nuclear University, Higher School of Economics, Russian Peoples' Friendship University, Novosibirsk State University, Siberian Federal University, Tomsk State university and so on.

Among the main objectives of the project are improvement of level of research potential; bringing the level of Russian universities education services to international standards; development of additional education; the expansion of international activities.

So, for example, within the framework of the project it is supposed to involve more scientists from the well-known higher education institutions of the world, to expand programs of student's mobility, to increase publication activity of the Russian teachers in the magazines included in international databases, etc.

#### 4. Conclusion

It is obvious that to achieve a high level of competitiveness of higher educational institutions of Russia in the world educational space large-scale mobilization of all participants that are interested in reforming the system of higher professional education (heads of institutions, employers, government representatives, etc.) is required. It is necessary to develop effective measures for improving the image of Russian universities in the world and improve the quality of educational services, to develop actively those criteria, which are taking into consideration while assessing the higher education institution.

It is also useful to use the best Western European experience of management of educational institution, but adapted to the national context, the economic situation and cultural context.

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