

Luhautsova A.I., Head of
Organizational Methodic
Department in Center for
Development of Pedagogical
Education
Krasnova T.I., Cand. of
Psychology
Torhona A.V., Dr. of in
Pedagogics
Maksim Tank Belarusian
State Pedagogical University,
Belarus

Conference participants,
National research analytics
championship,
Open European and Asian
research analytics championship

Internationalization in Belarus cannot be understood without considering its historical legacy, which is connected with the period in which the USSR disintegrated and a new search was undertaken for a national Belarusian system of education in general—and teacher education in particular.

After Belarus gained its sovereignty in 1991, interacting with the world educational community was set as a priority, and the process of internationalization began. The main focus was on exploiting foreign experiences in higher education and teacher education in order to ensure an optimal transformation of the national educational system. As a result, the structure of teacher education was changed and a model of multilevel higher education was implemented. Programmes for international student exchange were introduced, and a school reform extended the standard period of study to 12 years. At the end of the 1990s, joining the Bologna Process was a realistic option and stakeholders from higher education institutions were ready to support internationalization.

In the beginning of the 2000s, most efforts at internationalizing towards the western countries were frozen because the country adopted a new general strategy in international relations. At the same time, however, the country was not in total isolation, as some stakeholders claimed. But international contacts became rare and were often limited to individuals and based on personal contacts and initiative.

It took ten years until the Belarusian government rediscovered the importance

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TEACHER EDUCATION IN BELARUS: DYNAMICS, PROBLEMS, PECULARITIES

The article describes the unique characteristics of internationalization in teacher education in the Republic of Belarus by introducing a concept of internationalization, and by analyzing its three components. The new nation's various and changing contacts with other countries, in both east and west, call into question the term "internationalization" for Belarus, where former national contacts have quickly embraced internationalization.

Keywords: teacher education, pedagogical university, internationalization in higher education, academic mobility.

of internationalization in higher education and announced its readiness to join the Bologna Process. Now, cross-cultural communication and international relations have again been established as priorities for universities.

Components of internationalization

Belarus today, internationalization is understood in two main ways: it can be either internal or external. This understanding is similar to the Russian one, indicating that in general Belarusian concepts of education and educational services closely follow those understandings prevalent in the Russian Federation. *Internal* internationalization occurs inside the country. For example, educators offer educational programmes in foreign languages and for foreign students, they invite foreign lecturers (known as inbound mobility), and they participate in international educational projects. They also include intercultural and international dimensions in their teaching and learning processes, conduct research on international issues, and develop relationships with local cultural and ethnic groups. This understanding is similar to the conception of internationalization at home, which the European Association for International Education defines as "any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student and staff mobility" (Crowther et al. 2000, 324 p. 6). The second understanding of internationalization is *external* internationalization: faculty and students teaching and learning abroad

(outbound mobility), along with joint diploma programmes, university. The second understanding of internationalization is *external* internationalization: faculty and students teaching and learning abroad (outbound mobility), along with joint diploma programmes, university cooperation, international branches of educational institutions, and distance learning. For our analytical purposes, we draw on another concept of internationalization, which Knight (2003) developed based on a survey that compiled the top reasons for internationalization in higher education. Knight's list contains the following reasons for internationalization in higher education, in descending order of importance: mobility and exchanges for students and teachers; teaching and research collaboration; academic standards and quality; research projects; cooperation and development assistance; curriculum development; international and intercultural understanding; promotion and profile of the institution; diversifying faculties and students; regional issues and integration; international student recruitment, and diversifying income generation.

Many of these twelve motives for internationalization are either not realistic to implement in Belarusian teacher education or are being reinterpreted in a specific Belarusian way and mixed with the legacy of the Soviet educational traditions, leading to rather idiosyncratic conceptions and results in Belarus that sometimes differ from the originally intended ones. Out of Knight's list, above, we will discuss six motivations and the corresponding forms of internationalization.

tion that also apply to teacher education in Belarus: (a) mobility and exchanges for students and lecturers, (b) teaching and research collaboration, (c) research projects, (d) international student recruitment, (e) diversifying income generation, and (f) regional issues and integration. Accordingly, in the next sections we first address international mobility and international cooperation (items a, b, and c), and then the recruitment of international students to generate income (items d and e). Finally we address issues related to regional integration (f).

International mobility and international cooperation

The academic mobility of students and lecturers in teacher education is one of the most visible forms of internationalization. In Belarus, however, it is rather limited. As an illustration, we describe the international activities in one of the country's leading educational institutions, the Belarusian State Pedagogical University (BSPU). (Here, we consider only short-term mobility, lasting from a few days to two semesters of study; we discuss other forms of mobility below, under recruitment). During the academic year 2009–2010, only 193 students from abroad came to study at BSPU (2010). Most of these students were from Russia, Turkmenistan, and China; this was also true in 2008–2009. If we compare these figures with the total number of students (about 18,000 in 2009–2010), it becomes clear that only a small percentage of students from abroad are studying at the BSPU. Similarly, very few lecturers and students from Belarus take courses abroad, e.g. in the CIS and other foreign countries—no more than two dozen per year. Similarly, they rarely invite foreign experts for lectures or consultations; BSPU registered just three such visits in 2009–2010. The same situation applies to the export of educational services and to participation in international projects. Gancherenok and Shaton (2002), mentioned earlier, found several obstacles to the internationalization of higher education generally and international mobility specifically.

Though the situation disintegrated further in the years after their study, these are some of their findings for the

late 1990s: One serious obstacle was lack of knowledge of foreign languages. Only 50.9% of respondents said they knew a foreign language at an appropriate level. This is part of the Soviet Union's educational legacy: students in higher education did not always study foreign languages. Second, 32.7% of respondents mentioned a "lack of information about possibilities of international cooperation" as an obstacle to internationalization. This can be interpreted in several ways. It could be a consequence of not having the experience or language ability to use or understand information available on the World Wide Web. It could also reflect unsatisfactory work by the universities' international offices, which still only reform their original task of assisting in international cooperation at a minimum level.

For 10.9% of respondents, administrative resistance by the Ministry of Education and other government bodies is an obstacle to internationalization; 9.0% saw the administration's lack of awareness as an obstacle. Thus, they found that some regulations and administrative procedures constitute obstacles to international mobility. In addition, students' lack of experience and of language competence keeps them from becoming interested in the possibilities of international mobility. One example of such a regulation is the Ministry of Education's decree no. 125 of 27 December, 2005, which describes the procedure for students to gain permission to study abroad, or take part in sport, cultural, and other activities during the academic year. The process requires multiple documents and individual scrutiny by the Minister of Education who then personally grants the permission. It significantly limits the opportunities for interaction between members of the Belarusian and foreign academic communities. This obstacle has both obvious and hidden impacts on student mobility. Knowing how difficult it is to get official permission, students search for other ways to go abroad without notifying the ministry, or university staff.

Internationalizing teacher education

Belarusian universities, however, continue to actively collaborate with European partners within the frame of the

Tempus Programme. Almost all the republic's leading universities are involved in this kind of cooperation and take part in working out programmes of distance education and lifelong learning. At the same time participation in travel-related activities and foreign joint projects depends very much on individual initiative, including personal awareness of opportunities and personal contacts. The low level of foreign language knowledge among students and lecturers also limits mobility—and it limits the numbers of interactions with foreign partners and of publications in international academic journals. The result is reduced awareness of international research in teacher education and other university-related concerns.

Recruitment of international students for income generation As the economy in Belarus has faltered, the government can no longer finance all the activities of universities. When the transition process began in the 1990s, many students chose to study in private institutions of higher education and teacher education.

As a result, money flowed away from government-run universities and towards private ones. To reverse this process, the government downplayed the value of diplomas from private universities and pressed employers to preferentially hire young specialists with diplomas from government run HEIs.

This action did not solve the problem of underfinancing and the universities were forced to search for additional financing. One new source of income they identified was recruiting foreign students who would pay for their higher education in Belarus. This economic logic encouraged the government to accept a certain degree of internationalization. Currently, exporting educational services in the form of importing students is one of the most important priorities of international educational policy in Belarus. Rising numbers of international students are helping to finance higher education and teacher education in Belarus. In academic year 2008–2009, 7,500 foreign students from 87 countries studied in Belarusian universities. In 2009–2010, 9,028 students from 84 countries did so. The total number, however, is not very large compared to the 60,000 students currently graduating each year from HEIs in Belarus. Thus this

effort is not generating substantial income. In addition, most international students in Belarus come from Asian countries, such as China, India, Lebanon, and Iran, as well as CIS countries: Russia, the Ukraine, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan. The two countries sending the most students are Turkmenistan and China. We might conclude that international students study in Belarus mainly through channels established during the time of the Soviet Union. In its efforts to attract students from abroad, Belarus is succeeding about as well as other countries. Data from international organizations and Belarusian institutes of educational management show that the share of international students in countries like Japan, Spain, Italy, and Turkey is almost the same as in Belarus (Gedranovich 2004). This provides a base to characterize these countries' education systems, as well as those of the United States, Belgium, Canada, Switzerland, and Norway, as oriented toward the "inner" educational market. In recent years, however, the Ministry of Education has intensified its focus on exporting educational services and attracting students from abroad. Regional issues and integration: Bologna and the two-tier system. One of the most visible forms of internationalization from the perspective of public policy is an often observed regional integration: the convergence of higher education systems from different, often neighbouring countries. In Belarus, however, the regional integration is oriented toward two different regions. First, the return to some Soviet ways, described earlier, involves intense cooperation with former republics of the USSR towards building a common educational environment. Second, European integration involves harmonizing the Belarusian higher education system with the Bologna system that is predominant in Western Europe. In this section we first outline the efforts being made in Belarus towards joining the Bologna Process. We then sketch the various reforms being undertaken to establish a two-tier system of higher education that would support the country's integration into Europe.

Reluctance about the Bologna Process

Since the late 1990s, the academic community in Belarus has been discussing the need to join the Bologna Process.

In the early 2000s, an experiment to integrate a two-level model (bachelor's and master's degrees) into the higher education system began at the country's leading university: the Belarusian State University. It was then extended to the Belarusian State Pedagogical University.

In 2002 Belarus joined the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region. In 2003, at the Berlin Summit of Ministers of Education of the European Union, the Belarusian delegation stated its willingness to sign the Bologna Declaration. But shortly afterwards, due to political changes in the republic, the process of internationalization was gradually stopped. The first victim was the Bologna Process. Over the next few years, officials made very few comments on the issue, while most educational experts stressed that the final outcome on this question depended on the political will of the country's leader. The head of state, however, repeated several times that joining the Bologna Process should not be done in haste. Later, several official statements pointed to the need to preserve traditions from the Soviet educational system, and the intention to search for a Belarusian approach to its system of higher education. The ministry's position was that "For many vectors of development, the aims of European Union and Republic of Belarus are equal but the national aims take into account the obligations and tradition of the Belarusian State within CIS and different agreements" (Vetokhin 2004, p. 53). The reluctance to engage with the Bologna Process was based on several factors. The primary one was fear. The government expressed its worries about the depth of reform in higher education that would be required to join the Bologna Process. This is perhaps understandable, since the country's education system has been reformed several times with very ambiguous results. This experience has also created a cautious attitude towards further transformations of secondary schools and HEIs among the academic community, management staff, and parents. Other reservations were expressed about the potential for future requirements from the headquarters of the Bologna Process. The second group of arguments stated that Belarus had al-

ready fulfilled all the recommendations of the Bologna Process. In particular, it had a two-level higher education system in place, as we describe below, and its educational standards had already met the requirements of the European quality management system ISO 9001. Despite all these fears and doubts, it has now become obvious in Belarus that accession to the Bologna Process will allow the country to achieve a number of positive results. For example, it can now participate in developing advanced educational and research programmes, taking national interests into account. It can attract more international students.

It can strengthen interaction between universities offering different programmes. It can open up additional educational opportunities for Belarusian students in Europe. And it can increase the competitiveness of Belarusian diplomas and degrees. This was the context in which, in January, 2010, then Minister of Education Alexander Radkov made a statement to the Presidential Administration about legislating an official document for joining the Bologna Process. This was a significant event. From the experts' point of view this process was stimulated by the warming of relations between official Minsk and Europe. At a meeting on the development of higher education on 6 July, 2010, the president of the republic requested that officials consider more carefully whether it would be appropriate to join the Bologna Process. A few short months later, the decision to join the Process was made.

Conclusions

It is evident from all the arguments and facts we have provided here that the process of internationalization in Belarus is developing slowly and faces multiple problems. At the same time, international relations in higher education, and teacher education, still face paradoxes that impede their further development. The first obstacle is that HEIs do not have the autonomy to make their own strategic decisions concerning their internal and external activities. This keeps them from developing contacts with the European and world educational communities. The number of study activities abroad and possibilities for participating

in international events in Europe and other parts of the world is still low. International relations in education still develop mostly with neighbouring post-Soviet countries, such as Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan.

Based on our specific historical heritage and taking into account the current situation of teacher education in Belarus, we propose several ways to develop internationalization in higher pedagogical education.

In this article we have shown that the connected concepts behind the words national, nationalization, international, and internationalization have changed, and perhaps multiplied their meanings several times over during the first two decades of Belarusian sovereignty; meanwhile they have had huge impacts on education and teacher education. The first phase was marked by attempts to establish a national education system by learning from good examples from other countries in the east and west. Internationalization in higher education and teacher education was certainly on the agenda, but the well established contacts with former partners in the united educational environment involving countries of the former Soviet Union often outshone the relationships with the newly discovered world in the West. After about ten years of indepen-

dence, "internationalization" was almost completely reduced to former Soviet countries. These relationships, however, often appear to be natural to the Belarusian academic and educational community, given the long period in which Belarus was a part of the USSR. The recent resumption of international cooperation with European and western countries by signing the Bologna Process seems to be an important step towards internationalization in higher education and teacher education in Belarus.

References:

1. BSPU/БГПУ [Belarusian State Pedagogical University] (2010). *Отчет о работе БГПУ за 2009/2010 учебный год* [BSPU report on academic year 2009/2010], под ред. П.Д. Кухарчика, А. И. Андарало, А. В. Торховой. Minsk: BSPU/БГПУ.
2. Crowther, P., Joris, M., Otten, M., Nilsson, B., Teekens, H., & Wa'chter, B. (2000). Internationalisation at home: A position paper (resource document). Amsterdam: European Association for International Education (EAIE). <http://www.eaie.org/IaH/IaHPositionPaper.pdf>.
3. Gancherenok, I., & Shaton, G. / Ганчеренок, И., & Шатон, Г. (2002). *Интернационализация высшего*

образования в Республике Беларусь: социологическая диагностика экспертного мнения [Internationalization of higher education in the Republic of Belarus: A sociological diagnosis based on an expert's opinion]. Информационный бюллетень, 3. <http://newsletter.iatp.by/ctr3-6.htm>.

4. Gedranovich, C. / Гедранович, А. (2004). *Рынок международных образовательных услуг*. [The market for international educational services]. Paper presented at an international conference on the results of globalisation in Belarus. Minsk: BSPU. http://www.economy.bsu.by/library/%D7%F2%EE_%E4%E0%E5%F2_%C1%E5%EB%E0%F0%F3%F1%E8_%E3%EB%EE%E1%E0%EB%E8%E7%E0%F6%E8%FF/%C1%C3_%C3%E5%E4%F0%E0%ED%EE%E2%E8%F7.pdf.
5. Knight, J. (2003). Internationalization of higher education. Practices and priorities: 2003 IAU survey report. Paris: International Association of Universities. http://www.pucminas.br/imagedb/documento/DOC_DSC_NOME_ARQUI20060214115459.pdf.
6. Vetokhin, S. (2004). Education in Belarus: National report of the Republic of Belarus. Minsk: Ministry of Education, National Institute of Higher Education.



WORLD RESEARCH ANALYTICS FEDERATION

Research Analytics Federations of various countries and continents, as well as the World Research Analytics Federation are public associations created for geographic and status consolidation of the GISAP participants, representation and protection of their collective interests, organization of communications between National Research Analytics Federations as well as between members of the GISAP.

Federations are formed at the initiative or with the assistance of official partners of the IASHE - Federations Administrators.

Federations do not have the status of legal entities, do not require state registration and acquire official status when the IASHE registers a corresponding application of an Administrator and not less than 10 members (founders) of a federation and its Statute or Regulations adopted by the founders.

*If you wish to know more,
please visit:*

<http://gisap.eu>