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Rygalova N.V.¹, Kostenko T.V.¹, Eremin A.A.^{1,2}¹ Altai State University, Barnaul, Russia² Altai Branch of the Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Barnaul, Russia**ASIAN VECTOR OF INCOMING INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL MIGRATION IN THE BORDER REGION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION: ALTAI STATE UNIVERSITY CASE**

Abstract. The article provides an analysis of incoming international educational migration in the Altai Krai (in the border region of the Russian Federation) based on an assessment of the flows of foreign students to higher education institutions in the region. The flagship Altai State University was chosen as a representative institution. It is the leader in the number of foreign students (30%) in the region. In the geography of the places of origin of foreign students of the university, an Asian (primarily Central Asian) orientation is clearly expressed. The position of the Altai Krai on the border with Kazakhstan led to the predominance of students from this country (2/3 of all foreign students of Altai State University). Besides, a significant percentage of students from Tajikistan (14%) and China (8%) is worth noting. In the course of the study, an anonymous survey of students from other countries was conducted to analyze the process of educational migration from the inside.

Key words: education, international educational migration, Central Asia, Altai Krai, Altai State University

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Аннотация. В статье проводится анализ въездной международной образовательной миграции в Алтайский край (приграничный регион Российской Федерации) на основе оценки потоков иностранных студентов в высшие учебные заведения региона. В качестве репрезентативного вуза был выбран опорный Алтайский государственный университет. Он является лидером по количеству иностранных студентов (30%) в регионе. По анализу географии мест происхождения иностранных студентов вуза отчетливо проявляется азиатская (прежде всего, центральноазиатская) направленность. Положение Алтайского края на границе с Казахстаном обусловило преобладание студентов из этой страны (2/3 всех иностранных студентов Алтайского государственного университета). Кроме того, стоит отметить значительный процент студентов из Таджикистана (14%) и Китая (8%). В ходе исследования был проведен анонимный опрос студентов из других стран для изучения процесса образовательной

миграции изнутри.

Ключевые слова: образование, международная образовательная миграция, Центральная Азия, Алтайский край, Алтайский государственный университет.

Introduction and problem statement. International migration in a globalizing world is gaining momentum, so in 1970 the percentage of international migrants of the world's population was 2.3%, and in 2020 - 3.6% [18]. Given the pace of world population growth, one can imagine the scale of migratory flows between countries. The most interesting research object is international educational migration [6, 8, 12, 23], which provides growth not only of the host country's economy, but also of its human capital [18]. Educational migration stands out by the highest percentage of non-return: a diploma is viewed as a ticket to a new life in another country, which is often characterized by a higher quality of life compared to the country - the migration donor. In addition, educational migration serves as a “soft power” [23] in relations between countries, which is an important strategic moment in modern geopolitics.

Foreign students are active participants in educational migration. International (or internationally mobile) students are students who undertake all or part of their higher education experience in a country other than their home country or who travel across a national boundary to a country other than their home country to undertake all or part of their higher education experience [10].

Many countries around the world are focused on attracting foreign students to the national education system, Russia is no exception. The state pays great attention to migration policy, including the support and development of international educational migration [5]. In 2019, educational migrants in Russia accounted for only 3% of the total flow of people coming to the country from abroad [12]. In the world market, the Russian Federation ranks 7th (as of 2019), accepting 6% (334.5 thousand) of all foreign students [10]. The undisputed leader is the United States of America, which receives 21% of student migrants. At the same time, in the United States, the share of foreign students studying at universities is only 5.5%, while in Russia this proportion is 8.6% [ibid.].

In recent decades, there has been a trend towards an increase in interest in the educational environment in Russia, which is reflected in the rapid growth of educational migrants in the country's universities. First of all, Russian education is attractive to foreign students, among whom the largest share belongs to immigrants from the CIS countries [9]. According to the data for the 2020/2021 academic year [7], foreign students from Central Asian countries make up 85% of all students from the CIS countries receiving higher education in Russia (Kazakhstan accounts for 30%, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan – 21% each, Tajikistan – 10%, for Kyrgyzstan – 4%). These are mainly Russian-speaking applicants who, in addition to educational purposes, are considering the possibility of obtaining Russian citizenship in the future and moving to the Russian Federation. An important factor in the choice of Russia as a country - an exporter of educational services is the allocation of budgetary places for foreign students: since the beginning of the 2000s the percentage of foreign students who received education for free in the Russian Federation, compared to the 2015/2016/2017 academic years doubled and amounted to 40% [4]. This explains the almost absolute preference of state universities by foreign students (97% of all students from other countries according to data for the 2016/2017 academic year [ibid.]). The most popular areas of education among foreign students in Russia are engineering and technical specialties and medicine (about 20% each).

In Russia, the flow of foreign students is unevenly distributed: the main share falls on the capital and large universities of the country. In general, the Central and Northwestern Federal Districts account for 54% of all foreign students studying in Russia in the 2016/2017 academic year. The Siberian Federal District accepted 13% of students from other countries (primarily, universities of Tomsk, Novosibirsk), which are represented by citizens of the CIS

countries up to $\frac{3}{4}$. Of all foreign students admitted to universities in the Siberian Federal District in 2016/2017 academic year about 9% arrived in the Altai Krai.

Altai Krai is a border region of the Russian Federation. The factor of transport accessibility and the presence of universities with various specializations in the administrative center of the region – city of Barnaul – make it attractive for foreign students, primarily from neighboring Kazakhstan. In this article, a characteristic of the incoming educational migration in the Altai Krai is given. Altai State University was chosen as a representative university of the region. A survey of foreign students the university was carried out and the results are presented below.

Study of the problem. The growth of scientific attention to educational migration (including international) and the increase in publications on this topic have been observed in recent decades [13]. For Russia, which is actively developing the export of educational services, the CIS countries, primarily the Central Asian region, are significant partners in this area. This has become the basis for many publications on the designated topic in recent years [11, 14, 19, 21, 25]. In the publications, the attempts were made to study the motivational behavior and problems of foreign students from countries of Central Asia, socio-economic implications and prospects for the partner countries. It is natural that border regions are always more involved in international interaction, while at the same time there are differences in the structure of foreign students depending on the territorial factor [15, 24]. In this regard, it is important to study the characteristics of international educational migration at the level of individual regions of the Russian Federation.

The aim and objectives of the work. The aim of the study is to analyze incoming educational migration in the Altai Krai (subject of Russian Federation) using the example of a representative university in the region. The main tasks were the analysis of statistical data on foreign students of the region and the university for several years, as well as an assessment of the attitude of foreign students to training and the level of education in Russia based on a selective anonymous survey.

Materials and research methods. The main methods used in the study are the methods of questionnaires and GIS-mapping. To determine the goals and motivation of studying foreign citizens at Altai State University, an anonymous sample survey was conducted, in which 114 foreign citizens from near and far abroad, studying in all educational forms (63% of students were enrolled in undergraduate programs, 20% - in magistracy, 3% - in postgraduate studies and secondary vocational education on the basis of the university, 2% - in specialty and 9% of students took Russian language courses at the preparatory department) in various areas of training.

The study is based on the analysis of special scientific literature on the subject. To assess the flows of educational migrants in the Altai Krai, reports on international activities [2, 3], unpublished materials of the International Relations Department of Altai State University and information presented on the official websites of the main higher educational institutions of the city of Barnaul [1, 20] and the website of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Altai Krai [16, 17].

Due to the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on migration processes, including educational migration [22], the data for the analysis were taken just up to 2020 (before the coronavirus) in order to exclude the influence of this factor on the results of the study.

Results and its discussions. The educational potential of the Altai Krai is being realized on the basis of 7 state universities, the overwhelming majority of them are located in the administrative center - the city of Barnaul. There is a positive trend of growth in the number of foreign students in the universities of the Altai Krai every year: from 900 people in 2013 to 4,000 in 2018 [16, 17] At this time, the largest number of students were educational migrants from The Republic of Kazakhstan (about 95%), as well as some other CIS countries (primarily Tajikistan) and far abroad, such as China and India. In 2017/2018 academic year

students from 39 countries studied at the universities of the Altai Krai. This demonstrates the expansion of the geography of countries-importers of educational services in the region.

The predominance of foreign students in the following universities of the region is noted: *Altai State University* – has the status of a flagship university of the region, in which, according to the 2018/2019 academic year, 1261 foreign students studied, *Polzunov Altai State Technical University* – 695 foreigners in the 2017/2018 academic year [20], *Altai State Medical University* – 712 people as of 2016 [1], a smaller number of foreign students are at *Altai State Pedagogical University* – 185 foreign students studied in 2018/2019 academic year [3].

The introduction of teaching in English is an important element of the internationalization of the educational space, the universities of the region solve this problem in different ways: on their own and with the involvement of guest teachers from other countries. Altai State Medical University implements educational programs using teaching in English, which made it possible to admit students and listeners from a larger number of foreign countries (India, Iraq, Egypt). Considering the demand for Russian medical education among foreigners, this helped to confidently enter the international market of educational services.

The number of all students at Altai State University (AltSU) is about 16.5 thousand people, with a share of 12% of foreign students. The university occupies high positions in various world rankings that assess the level of provision of educational services, including in terms of international activity. The university's policy is aimed at actively expanding the partners network: at present, the university has about 250 valid international treaties, agreements, memorandums and protocols in the field of science, education and culture.

Altai State University occupies a rather significant position in the international market of educational services, especially in the Russian-Asian educational space. The geographical position of the Altai Krai determines the more effective interaction of the AltSU in the field of international cooperation with the universities of bordering and closely located states: Kazakhstan, China and Mongolia.

In 2018-2019 academic year in the Altai State University, including its branches and college (an institution of secondary vocational education), 1261 foreign students studied, of which 144 (11%) were citizens of far abroad and 1117 were citizens of neighboring countries. Compared to 2011, when there were 194 foreign students enrolled [2], the trend towards increasing export educational potential is getting obvious.

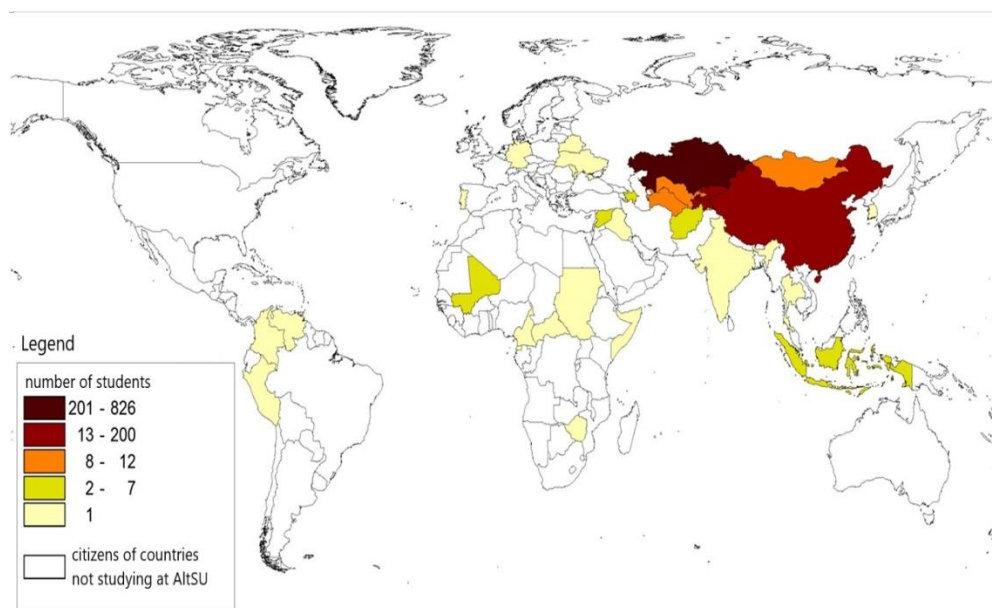


Fig. 1. Geography of the countries-importers of educational services of Altai State University. Source: (unpublished data of the Department of International Relations of AltSU).

The main importers of educational services at AltSU are the CIS countries, among which the leader (as well as in Russia in general) is the Republic of Kazakhstan (Fig. 1), Which provides 74% of educational migrants from neighboring countries or 66% of all foreign students of Altai State University. This is followed by the Republic of Tajikistan (16% of all students who came from neighboring countries), Kyrgyzstan (8%), Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (1% each), the rest of the countries are in the minority. Among far abroad countries, the leader is the People's Republic of China with 106 students studied (74% among students who arrived from far abroad countries, although the share of Chinese students among all foreign students of the university is 8%). Most of the educational migrants study at the Faculty of History (direction "Regional Studies"), the Faculty of Mass Communications, Philology and Political Science (direction "Linguistics") and Geographic Faculty.

Among other far abroad countries that are importers of educational services at Altai State University (significantly lagging behind China), one can note Mongolia (11 people). Foreign students from such countries as Mali, Sudan, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Peru, Colombia, Thailand, Indonesia and others, who are mainly students of the preparatory department, are represented in small numbers (1-3 people).

Anonymous sample survey was carried out in order to determine the motivational basis for choosing a higher educational institution and a subjective assessment by foreign students of the quality of education at Altai State University. The gender structure of the respondents was characterized by some predominance of men (52%). The respondents were mostly 18-24 years old. Places of origin of foreign students who took part in the survey are represented by 14 countries of the near and far abroad (students from Tajikistan predominate – 1/4 of all students at the university were included in the sample, also a significant number of students from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China take part). The survey was attended by 1-2 representatives of such countries as Equatorial Guinea, CAR, Somalia, Colombia, Iraq and some others.

Considering the level of academic performance (recorded according to the students' words), foreign students studying mainly for the good grade prevailed (51%), the rest were equally divided into excellent grade and satisfactory grade students. In general, 80% of the respondents assessed the difficulty of learning educational programs of Altai State University as medium with some difficulties (10% characterized it as high). The main difficulties were noted in mastering the curriculum (40%) and in understanding the Russian language as the main means of communication in the new educational environment (30%).

Looking at the reasons for admission, most of the respondents indicated the prestige of AltSU, noting the high level of training of students, as well as the experience and qualifications of teachers. The second position in the list of reasons for admission is taken by the advice of respondents' friends who are still studying or have already graduated from this university.

The financial factor in choosing the university was quite significant: the respondents noted the importance of having a budgetary place for a desired specialty and having a place in a hostel, which facilitated the registration procedure for a foreign student in the Russian Federation and significantly reduced expenses for living in Barnaul.

Among the reasons indicated, one can also note the prestige of obtaining a Russian diploma of higher education, high chances of employment after training in the chosen specialty. For students from Kazakhstan, proximity to home was a significant factor.

According to the results of the survey, the majority (42%) of the respondents would like to obtain Russian citizenship in the future and even renounce the citizenship of the country of birth (if it is impossible to have two, for example, in Kazakhstan). 32% of the respondents did not decide for themselves the issue of obtaining Russian citizenship, some of the students have already taken the path of this process, having issued a temporary residence permit in the Russian Federation (8%) and received a residence permit (3%), 3% of the surveyed "foreigners" have already become citizens of Russia. Also, the majority of

respondents (56.1%) plan to stay in the Russian Federation after the graduation from AltSU. The minority are going to return to their homeland (12.3%) or leave for another country (7.9%).

Conclusion. Altai Krai is an attractive region for international educational migrants, due to its border location and the presence of quotas in universities for training students from near and far abroad, the number of which tends to grow. Over 5 years (from 2013 to 2018), the number of students in the region has more than quadrupled and in 2018 amounted to 4,000 foreign students from 39 countries (Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Algeria, Morocco, Germany, Indonesia, India, France, etc.).

In the context of educational organizations of the region, there is a predominance of foreign educational migrants in the following universities of the region: Altai State University, Altai State Medical University and Altai State Polytechnic University. AltSU actively positions itself on the international market of educational services, primarily in the Asian direction, in particular through the holding of various educational and cultural events on its basis.

As of the 2018/2019 academic year, 1261 students from 30 countries studied at the flagship university, which amounted to 32% of all foreign students in the region. Educational migrants from Kazakhstan predominate numerically, which is determined by the common border. It makes up 66% of all foreign students at Altai State University and 74% of students from neighboring countries. In second place students from Tajikistan are (14% of all students and 16% of students from neighboring countries), in third place are students from China (8% of all foreign students and 74% of students from far abroad countries), the next positions are occupied by Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Far abroad countries (with the exception of China and Mongolia) are represented at the university by 1-2 students.

A survey of foreign students of Altai State University conducted in 2018/2019 (sample of 114 people, 9% of their total number) made it possible to identify the reasons for choosing this university, they are: the prestige level, the opinion of the reference group, the availability of budget places and places in the hostel. The level of mastering the material during training in educational programs of Altai State University by foreign students was assessed as medium difficulty, 1/3 of the respondents indicated the difficulty of understanding the Russian language.

In addition to the educational goal of study, most of the surveyed foreign students of Altai State University would like to use the opportunity to obtain Russian citizenship, 3% of respondents have already implemented it. Despite the fact that the respondents pointed out the high importance of a Russian diploma in their home country, half of the respondents would like to stay in Russia after graduation. Thus, incoming international educational migration is aimed not only at providing intellectual services to the population from other countries, but also attracting young people from these states for a long stay, and, possibly, permanent residence on Russian territory. This can contribute to solving the economic and demographic problems of Russia, as well as establishing cultural interactions and strengthening interethnic harmony with foreign countries.

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