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The Russian Market for Exported Educational Services: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Network University

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Abstract

The research reported in this paper seeks to assess the potential of the Russian market for exported educational services through the example of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Network University (SCOU). The authors share the findings from their analysis of a set of educational models for the SCOU, provide an assessment of the role of backbone Russian and Chinese colleges in and their contribution to the implementation of priority areas for the training of specialists from SCO member states, share the findings from their statistical analysis of demand for joint export educational programs (JEEPs), and examine some of the key forms and characteristics of the academic mobility of students attending school via a JEEP, which they view as an indispensable part of today's international educational process. The paper shares the findings from a sociological study which was conducted by the authors in the form of a questionnaire-based survey of students from top Chinese and Russian colleges participating in the SCOU program for the purpose of exploring the motivation of students in the context of planning out their individual educational path based on the pursuit of studies overseas. The work makes use of SCOU-related data from the Ministries of Education of China and Russia and various statistics websites on the Internet to analyze the results from the implementation of SCOU JEEPs and also explore the foreign student body attending school in Russia. In putting this work together, the authors employed a set of traditional methods of research, including classification, comparative analysis, summarization, juxtaposition, forecasting, and surveying by questionnaire. The authors' assessments of the potential of the Russian market for export educational programs, based on the example of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Network University, have helped put together a set of recommendations on boosting the competitiveness and efficiency of the market for the export of educational projects and programs.

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1. Introduction

Without question, a key role in the development of the market for educational services in the first quarter of the 21st century across the Eurasian educational space will be played by network universities. Above all, these are the network universities of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (Filippov, Yuhua, 2015). One of the initiators and organizers of and active participants in these international projects is the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN). The SCO Network University (SCOU) was established in October of 2008, bringing together higher-education institutions from Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Belarus (Agreement, 2006; Charter, 2011). Since 2012, the SCOU's International Rectorate has been headed by RUDN Rector V.M. Filippov, Academician of the Russian Academy of Education (Efremova, Fedorov, 2017).

The SCO Network University incorporates 21 Russian universities, which represent various regions of Russia (SCOUR). Among them are the following colleges with a high standing in the QS world university rankings: Lomonosov Moscow State University (MGU) (QS ranking – 84), Saint Petersburg State University (234), Novosibirsk State University (242), Tomsk State University (268), Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO University) (366), Ural Federal University (364), Kazan Federal University (392), RUDN University (392), and others.

In May of 2012, China's Ministry of Education appointed Rector of Dalian University of Foreign Languages Sun Yuhua Chairman of the National Rectorate of the SCOU of China. Among the key objectives for the Rectorate on China's part is coordinating the operation of the 20 Chinese colleges participating in the SCOU, as well as conducting strategic research on the SCOU's development (Sun, 2017; SCOU). Some of the key Chinese colleges participating in the SCOU include the following: Tsinghua University (QS ranking – 16), Beijing University (22), University Science and Technology of China (89), etc. (data as at June 26, 2019) (www.usco.edu.cn/RUS/dxgk/). In addition to colleges from Russia and China, the SCOU incorporates 14 Kazakh, 8 Kyrgyz, 10 Tajik, and one Belarus colleges (<http://uni-sco.ru/country/6.html>).

It would be safe to assume that the popularity of an organization, technology, product, service, and other outcomes of activity may be assessed via Internet portals. As was found by the authors, the SCO University and its member colleges are quite popular today. For instance, hash-tags related to the phrase 'Russian SCOU colleges' turned up 14 million in Russian and 6 million results in English, respectively, with those related to the phrase 'Chinese SCOU colleges' turning up 12 million and 3 million, respectively, and 'RUDN as a SCOU member' – 15 million and 4 million results, respectively (all data as at June 25, 2019). SCOU member colleges operate across the following key seven areas: Regional Studies, Environmental Protection, Power Generation, IT, Nanotechnology, Economics, and Pedagogy. Among these, the most sought-after academic area is Regional Studies (MESRF). There are a total of 27 Regional Studies-related specialties offered in 43 % of all the Russian and 70 % of all the Chinese universities. By popularity, the academic areas are currently ranked with Russian and Chinese SCOU member colleges as follows (respectively): Economics – 48 % and 25 %; Environmental Protection – 38 % and 25 %; Energetics – 19 % and 35 %; IT – 28 % and 40 %; Nanotechnology – 19 % and 25 %; Pedagogy – 24 % and 10 %.

The RUDN is a participant in the following five priority academic areas: Nanotechnology, Pedagogy, Regional Studies, Economics, and Environmental Protection. Some of its key partners include the following institutions: Heilundzian University, Dalian University of Foreign Languages, Harbin Institute of Technology, and Hainan Tropical Ocean University.

1.1. SCO University model

The SCOU offers the following types of academic program: (1) Preparatory Language Courses; (2) Bachelor's Program (4 years); (3) Master's Program (2 years); (4) Postgraduate Program (3 years); (5) Doctoral Program (3 years); (6) Advanced Training Program, Vocational Retraining Program, Distance Learning Program, and On- and Off-Site Learning Program. The principal language of study within the SCO University is the state language in the country of study and/or the SCO's official languages – Russian and Chinese.

1.2. Joint academic programs within the SCOU

When it comes to international educational programs, one of the common forms of international educational cooperation today is joint educational programs (JEPs). Programs of this kind are becoming increasingly popular today in the Eurasian educational space. Russia is currently engaged in cooperation in the area of the development and promotion of joint educational programs both with European and Asian nations. Russia and China have been engaged in nearly 125 Chinese-Russian projects, with the number of Russian-Chinese JEPs being about the same (Guruleva, Bedareva, 2019). There is an agreement entered into as part of the SCOU that permits students attending school via a University's program to continue their studies in any term at a backbone college participating in the program. The minimum period of study in a participating foreign college is one term. The condition for getting two diplomas (one from one's home university and one from the foreign college) after having completed the educational program is having to attend a foreign college for a certain period of time – no less than 30 % of a JEP's length, which is a key competitive advantage with the SCOU.

A phenomenon that is part of the implementation of international JEPs is student academic mobility. Academic mobility is an indispensable, immanent form of the existence of intellectual potential, which reflects the fulfillment of the inherent need for it to continually change and move across the space of cultural, social, economic, and political relations and relationships (Burmam, Delius, 2017). There is geographic, social, professional, sociocultural, cultural, personal, and academic mobility (Waters, 2017). There is also credit mobility, which implies attending one or more terms of school at a university in the territory of another state after having provided documentation on credits earned at the person's home college in order to continue their studies (Gulson, 2017). Certain researchers also use the term 'institutional mobility' (Larionova, 2013). Thus, there is occurring a transformation of the actual conceptual meaning of what academic mobility is. Today, the processes of academic mobility involve not only students, teaching staff, and researchers but cross-border programs on the pursuit of a degree (a diploma) that are created by university branches in developed and developing nations throughout the world. Some of the key forms of academic student mobility include the following: joint double-diploma programs; exchange programs as part of inter-college cooperation; academic traineeships and internships; summer schools; language schools; joint research and development; research traineeships and internships; seminars and conferences; scientific-technical exhibition activities; international student contests and Olympiads (Grigashkina, 2015).

Scholar N.V. Krasilnikova (Krasilnikova, 2015) employs the term 'mobility of curricula', which may imply the following: incorporating into the curriculum "international" disciplines (e.g., international law, world economics, etc.); expanding the curriculum through the supplementation of the content of traditional disciplines with international problems and topics; developing curricula for foreign students; developing curricula related to the training of national and foreign residents for work at international companies; developing curricula in foreign languages for intercultural communication that will contain intercultural knowledge; developing interdisciplinary curricula covering in the informational aspect two or more nations; developing curricula conducive to joint or double diplomas that will be recognized in two or more countries; developing curricula with a mandatory "international" section which the student will be able to master in a different country under the guidance of instructors at a college there.

In the view of scholar T.L. Guruleva, the international educational space is characterized today by the following two major forms of academic mobility – outbound and inbound. Subjects of inbound mobility are citizens of foreign states who are recipients of exported national educational services. Inbound mobility is the principal form of implementation of international joint educational programs (Van, Baranova, 2017). The active development of AR and VR electronic technology may have facilitated the emergence of the term 'virtual mobility' (Yalalov, 2014), whose potential in export of educational programs and courses is still highly underestimated for now.

Sports and culture are an indispensable part of the life of a student. Not only during school – these two areas will matter throughout life. One can do either amateur (i.e., a focus on education, first, and sports, second) or professional sports (sports, first, and education, second). When it comes to doing sports with an aim for major achievements, one could later take part in the Universiades, Olympics, Paralympics, World Championships, Championships of Europe, Championships of Asia, etc. Students and college graduates who become champions or win a medal

at a sports competition are the pride of their university. As revealed by the study's findings, in choosing a college, an educational program, a level of education, or a further education program, such students tend to prioritize the availability at the educational institution of a sports team of a certain level or a comfortable environment in which it would be possible to do their favorite type of sports throughout the period of study. Russia possesses a state-of-the-art, world-level sports infrastructure for winter, summer, and team sports. Consequently, where schoolchildren and students want to do sports and there is potential for student sports mobility there can form the groundwork for a segment of the international market for educational services such as exported educational services. This fact helps isolate into a separate category a variety of student mobility such as student sports mobility (SSM). Unfortunately, in Russia there is currently a paucity of research devoted to SSM (Pestereva, 2015; Fedotova, All Hussini, 2017).

Thus, academic mobility in all its varieties and forms is not just about the cross-border movement of students and instructors but about the opportunity for the learner to design, based on a joint educational program, their own academic path by choosing whatever subjects, courses, institutions of learning, study schedules, or study modes they deem right for themselves based on their proclivities and aspirations, i.e. design an individual learning pathway for themselves with elements of sports and culture incorporated into it.

What makes a student choose a certain educational program? What kind of motivation do students have today? What is the best way to organize the marketing strategy in an attempt to boost the competitiveness of the domestic market for educational programs for students who do sports? What is the best way to attract foreign students who are active in sports? These questions can be answered substantively only based on some real sociological research.

Thus, a joint educational program (JEP) is the main "service" or "product" in the export educational market. A JEP's relevance, quality, sought-afterness, originality, and innovativeness is what the economic efficiency of the export of education will depend on.

As commonly known, all markets, including the market for the export of educational services, are formed based on the opposite interests of the Seller and the Buyer. Some of the first research studies devoted to assessing the market for the export of educational services include research by A.N. Lunev (Lunev, 2014), J. Ma and K. Zhao (Ma, Zhao, 2018), and K.G. Krechetnikov and N.M. Pestereva (Krechetnikov, Pestereva, 2017). Theoretical issues related to the market for the export of educational services have been investigated in works by T.N. Guryanova and L.Z. Fatkhullina (Guryanova, Fatkhullina, 2014), T.I. Chinaeva (Chinaeva, 2017), and others. Some of the key priorities at the current stage of the development of the Russian market for the export of educational services include: conducting in-depth research into the matter and putting together a generalized "portrait" of the potential "buyer of Russian educational programs", segmenting the consumer market, developing specialized JEPs not only for undergraduate- and graduate-level education but further education and advanced training as well, factoring in the characteristics of regional investment programs for development.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. The work's source information is grounded in open data from the official websites of universities in Russia and China, national websites on education, articles from journals indexed in WoS and Scopus, and a scientific electronic library built based on the Open Science paradigm.

2.2. The authors also made use of data from the websites of:

- UNESCO Institute of Statistics Data Centre (<http://data.uis.unesco.org/>);
- Ministry of Education of China (<http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index>);
- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation University in China (www.usco.edu.cn);
- Shanghai Cooperation Organisation University in Russia (<http://uni-sco.ru/>);
- Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation (<https://minobrnauki.gov.ru/ru/activity/statan/stat/highed>);
- National Bureau of Statistics of China (<http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/Statisticaldata/AnnualData/>);
- Overseas Chinese Network (<http://www.chinaqw.com/hwjy/2017/04-24/138500.shtml>).

2.3. The work employed the results from a questionnaire-based survey of Russian and Chinese students who are on the basketball teams of the following colleges: Saint Petersburg State University, Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, Harbin

Institute of Technology, and Zhejiang University. All of these institutions are a part of the SCO University. A total of 48 Russian and Chinese students were surveyed.

2.4. The work employed a set of methods of sociological research, including surveying by questionnaire and statistical and graphical processing of the data obtained. The study's principal purpose is to gain insight into the motivation and intentions of students in their choice of educational program, university, and country of study.

2.5. The work employed a set of traditional methods of research, including classification, comparative analysis, summarization, juxtaposition, and forecasting.

The statistical data and articles from Chinese sources in Chinese used in this paper had been translated into Russian by Wang Qi, Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences, an Assistant Professor in the Russian Language Institute at Heilundzian University, who also helped prepare an analytical background report on the subject of research.

3. Results

3.1. Analysis of the potential of the Russian market for educational services for students from China.

The information base was put together on the strength of open data from the Russian and Chinese websites for the SCOU, the websites of the Ministries of Education of China and Russia, and a few other information sources on the Internet. A summarized analysis of SCOU JEPs revealed the following figures on Bachelor's degree programs: double diplomas account for 14 % of all joint programs offered by the institution, student exchange programs – 86 %, and joint degree programs – 0 %. There are a total of 117 programs. The SCOU is also offering Master's-degree (double diplomas (only Russian degrees offered)), postgraduate, and doctoral programs.

The bulk of the Chinese student body attending Russian colleges is made up of residents of China's northeastern and eastern provinces. The number of students from Beijing and other regions of China is currently no more than 9 % (Table 1).

Table 1. Number of Chinese Students Attending School in Russia, with a breakdown into Areas of Their Permanent Residence in China

	Region	Province
1	Northeast China – 77 %	Heilongjiang – 69 %
		Jilin – 8 %
2	South Central China – 8 %	Henan – 8 %
3	East China – 6 %	Jiangsu – 4 %
		Shandong – 2 %
4	Direct-controlled municipalities Beijing and Tianjin, provinces Zhejiang, Sichuan, and Hunan, and autonomous regions NMAR and XUAR – 1.3 % each (9 %).	

The geographic whereabouts of foreign students in Russia is distinguished by a high degree of concentration: a third of all foreign students is accounted for by Moscow (25 %) and Saint Petersburg (9.7 %). Omsk Oblast and Tomsk Oblast account for about 4.5 % [MESRF]. The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia is a recognized leader in Russia in number of foreign students. The RUDN currently provides instruction to 5.139 individuals (data as at June 26, 2019). Given the rich history of its development, the high caliber of its teaching staff, its decent QS world ranking, its advanced material-technical and technological capacity, its well-developed infrastructure, and its comfortable campus environment, the university looks pretty strong in terms of potential in the market for the export of educational services.

3.2. Assessment of the export potential of top colleges in Russia

A group of researchers at the RUDN University headed by V.N. Kholina, Head of the Department of Regional Economics and Geography, undertook a research project devoted to the analysis of the potential of 39 colleges chosen by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education for participating in 'The Development of the Export Potential of the Russian System of Education' priority project: 23 are in Moscow, 3 – in the Tomsk region, 2 – in St. Petersburg and the Republic

of Tatarstan, one each in the Belgorod, Saratov, Sverdlovsk, Novosibirsk, Tambov, Rostov and Chelyabinsk regions, Primorsky and Krasnodar regions (Kholina et al., 2016).

Based on the results from ranking the universities by the Internationalization parameter, the way is led by the following institutions: Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Higher School of Economics National Research University, Lomonosov Moscow State University (MGU), MEPhI – National Research Nuclear University, and National Research Tomsk Polytechnical University. With the Best Colleges by Conditions for Getting a Quality of Education category (top 20), the leaders were as follows: Lomonosov Moscow State University (MGU), Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Moscow Physics and Technology Institute, Higher School of Economics National Research University, and National Research Tomsk Polytechnical University.

The preparedness of a college for implementing inbound JEPs is assessed by the sum of points awarded to it across the following criteria: share of foreign students in total students; availability of a program or a facility for teaching foreigners Russian; availability of top research schools; availability of summer schools; availability of conferences for young researchers; share of students not provided with dormitory accommodation in total students in need thereof. The degree of preparedness for taking part in the Russian market for exported educational services was assessed as follows: high (over 12 points); medium (7–12 points); below medium (0–6 points). The study helped formulate the following key measures for colleges to undertake in order to boost their export potential: increasing the number of higher-education academic programs implemented jointly with foreign colleges and conducive to the receipt of two diplomas; galvanizing work on the establishment of new research schools; increasing the share of foreign students in total students.

One of the key players in the global market for educational services today is China – over 700,000 Chinese students attend school overseas, with 30,000 of them (4.3 %) attending school in Russia. On the one hand, there are quite a number of top Russian universities with high potential for the export of educational services at the level of world standards, while, on the other hand, there is China, one of the world's largest markets for educational services, which is Russia's partner both geographically and historically.

3.3. Organization and results of the sociological study

September of 2019 will mark the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and China. In commemoration of this special inter-country event, Russia and China have been organizing various activities related to this. In June of 2019, Harbin hosted an international student basketball tournament among top colleges within the SCOU. The competition was organized by the Government of Harbin, Heilundzian University, the Harbin Institute of Technology, the Harbin Association of International Sports Cooperation and Exchanges, the Student Basketball Association of Russia, and the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. The authors took part in organizing the tournament and conducted a sociological study in the form of a questionnaire-based survey. The questions were designed by N.M. Pestereva. They were translated into Chinese by Wang Qi.

Based on the survey's results (Table 2), the overwhelming majority of high school graduates doing basketball in Russia and China would like to attend a college that would guarantee them the chance to continue playing basketball. At the same time, the future students appeared to be in no particular rush to go with a foreign college with a highly-ranked basketball team (11–21 %).

Given that, in assessing the potential for the Russian export of educational services, of primary significance are questionnaire data from Chinese students, regardless of which university team they are on, the entire original sample was divided into two groups: Russian students and Chinese students (Table 2 and Table 4). To assess the significance level P (likelihood) of the results obtained, the authors employed the well-known Pearson's chi-squared test (χ^2). As commonly known, the distribution of χ^2 statistics does not depend either on the expected value of the chance quantity X or the dispersion σ^2 but depends just on the size of the sample N . Each group had 24 questionnaires. For each group the authors computed the values of the empirical frequency χ^2_{emp} , the critical values $\chi^2_{0.05}$ and $\chi^2_{0.01}$ and tested the null hypothesis H_0 .

Table 2. Student Preferences in the Choice of College and Educational Program depending on the Possibility of Playing Basketball

Question: Were you planning to continue to play basketball after finishing high school (a vocational training program)?						
Answer	Russian students, %			Chinese students, %		
	SPSU	UFU	Mean	HIT	ZU	Mean
No	-	8	4	16	-	7
Yes	67	59	63	33	47	41
In choosing a college, I factored in its team's ranking	8	-	4	8	53	33
In choosing a college, I factored in the possibility of playing basketball there	25	33	29	42	-	19
H_j^i	$H_1^{0.01}$ $\chi^2 emp = 22.08; \chi^2 0.01 = 9.21$			$H_0,$ $\chi^2 emp = 5.01; \chi^2 0.05 = 7.81$		
Question: Were you planning to enter a foreign university whose basketball team has a high ranking?						
Answer	Russian students, %			Chinese students, %		
	SPSU	UFU	Mean	HIT	ZU	Mean
No	67	82	75	75	100	89
Yes	25	18	21	25	-	11
Undecided	8	-	4	-	-	-
H_j^i	$H_1^{0.01},$ $\chi^2 emp = 19.00; \chi^2 0.01 = 9.21$			$H_1^{0.01}$ $\chi^2 emp = 32.25; \chi^2 0.01 = 9.21$		

Note. Acronyms in Tables 2-5: SPSU – Saint Petersburg State University, UFU – Ural Federal University named after the First President of Russia B.N. Yeltsin, HIT – Harbin Institute of Technology and ZU – Zhejiang University.

Designations in Tables 2 and 4: H_j – null hypothesis ($j = 0$, difference between the distributions is not statistically significant, H_0 ; $j = 1$, difference between the distributions is statistically significant, H_1); $\chi^2 emp$ – empirical frequency, $\chi^2 0.05$ – critical value of the theoretical frequency, significance level $P = 0.05$; $\chi^2 0.01$ – critical value of the theoretical frequency, significance level $P = 0.01$.

The survey revealed a difference in the preferences of Russian and Chinese students in terms of the choice of educational program (Table 3). Russian student picked Physical Education and Sports in 50 % of cases. At the same time, all the members of the basketball team at Zhejiang University are enrolled in the Economics and Management program (baccalaureate-level education). Also, nearly 60 % of members of the team at UFU are graduate students.

Table 3. The Student’s Status at the University (Professional Area of Training, Educational Program, and Mode of Study)

Professional area of training, share of students, %						
	Russian students			Chinese students		
	SPSU	UFU	Mean	HIT	ZU	Mean
Engineering-technical	-	32	17	-	-	-
Humanities	25	-	8	83	-	37
Natural sciences	16	-	8	-	-	-
Physical education and sports	42	60	50	-	-	-
Economics and management	16	8	17	17	100	63
Educational program, share of students, %						
	Russian students			Chinese students		
	SPSU	UFU	Mean	HIT	ZU	Mean
Bachelor’s degree	76	34	50	92	100	96
Specialist's degree	8	8	8	-	-	-
Master’s degree	8	58	38	8	-	4
Postgraduate education	8	-	4	-	-	-

Note. All the Russian and Chinese learners are full-time students.

In terms of planning their future career, Russian students exhibited a greater preparedness to work as executives within the sports industry than students from Chinese universities (Table 4). The variance in opinions was even greater when it came to choosing to work in an international sports organization. Chinese students were found not to be planning to work for one as a manager in nearly 70 % of cases. Virtually even numbers of the respondents (58-59 %) said they were prepared to engage in activity in sports management and within the sports industry.

Table 4. Motivation and Expectations of Russian and Chinese Students Who are on the University Basketball Team

Question: Do you see yourself as working in the future for a sports establishment within the federal, regional, or municipal authorities?						
Possible answer	Russian students			Chinese students		
	SPSU	UFU	Mean	HIT	ZU	Mean
Yes	50	42	48	16	13	15
No	16	8	8	59	47	52
I don't for now	34	50	44	25	40	33
H _j ⁱ	H ₁ ^{0.05} , $\chi^2 emp = 6.75; \chi^2 0.05 = 5.99$			H ₁ ^{0.05} , $\chi^2 emp = 6.25; \chi^2 0.05 = 5.99$		
Question: Do you see yourself as working in the future for an international sports organization?						
Yes	58	58	58	25	20	22
No	8	8	8	67	67	67
I don't for now	33	33	33	8	13	11
H _j ⁱ	H ₁ ^{0.05} , $\chi^2 emp = 9.00; \chi^2 0.05 = 5.99$			H ₁ ^{0.01} , $\chi^2 emp = 12.25; \chi^2 0.01 = 9.21$		
Question: Do you see yourself as working and enjoying career growth in sports and the sports industry?						
No	-	-	-	16	27	22
Yes	33	75	58	42	73	59

It is possible	46	16	34	-	-	-
Undecided	16	8	8	42	19	19
H _j ⁱ	H ₁ ^{0.05} , $\chi^2 emp = 7.75; \chi^2 0.05 = 5.99$			H ₁ ^{0.01} , $\chi^2 emp = 9.25; \chi^2 0.01 = 9.21$		
Question: Are you interested in continuing your education via a particular educational program (e.g., International Sports Management)?						
Yes	33	25	29	50	60	56
No	25	16	20	50	27	37
Undecided	42	59	51	-	13	7
H _j ⁱ	H ₀ , $\chi^2 emp = 2.25; \chi^2 0.05 = 9.21$			H ₁ ^{0.01} , $\chi^2 emp = 19.75; \chi^2 0.01 = 9.21$		

From a perspective of the export of educational services, of the greatest interest are the preferences of Chinese students pursuing a Bachelor’s degree. For instance, nearly 50 % of Chinese students are interested in continuing their studies via International Sports Management, a Russian Master's-level graduate academic program. It was found that colleges in Harbin do not offer this particular program at the moment. This fact is a precondition for viewing this academic program as a potential export as part of the SCOU (Table 4). There are plans to soon put in place a joint Master's-level graduate academic program of this kind (at the RUDN (Russia) and the HIT (China)).

The fact that there is optimism regarding the export of educational services is evidenced by Table 5. Around 60 % of Chinese students are planning to carry on their studies, after having completed their Bachelor’s degree, at a Eurasian college. With Zhejiang University, this figure is 80 %.

Table 5. Student Answers to the Survey Question ‘Are You Planning to Carry on Your Studies at a Eurasian University?’

Answer	Russian students			Chinese students		
	SPSU	UFU	Mean	HIT	ZU	Mean
Yes. I’d like to improve my language command	8	25	17	-	20	12
Yes. I’d like to pursue a Master's degree overseas after I have completed my Bachelor’s degree	8	16	12	-	30	18
Yes. The current trend of education internationalization is perfectly facilitative of getting an education overseas	-	-	-	50	30	37
Yes. It would be exciting to carry on my studies at a foreign university which has a highly-ranked basketball team	25	8	17	-	-	-
No	58	50	54	50	20	33

The results from the authors’ assessment of the null hypothesis based on Pearson's chi-squared test (Table 2 and Table 4) are quite satisfactory and confirm the advisability of taking the approach adopted by the authors. Out of 12 assessments of the null hypothesis only two confirmed the absence of a statistically significant difference between the samples (H₀). For the overwhelmingly most part (83 %), the difference between the distributions is statistically significant, with it being greater than 0.01 (H₁) in 50 % of cases. Activity related to the conduct of questionnaire-based surveys of Russian and Chinese colleges will continue and the size of the samples N will increase, which will make it possible to generate more sustainable statistical assessments.

The authors are hopeful that their assessments of the significance level P confirm the advisability of proceeding along this chosen path for research into the “portrait” of the potential consumer of Russian exported educational services. They hope that research conducted based on colleges within the SCO University will be continued and that its geographic scope will be expanded.

4. Discussion

The internationalization of education and development of the market for educational services are among the key components in the global educational process today. While having a number of strengths and benefits, education internationalization also comes with drawbacks and side effects which may affect the development of the market for educational services. Based on the views expressed by a number of Russian and foreign researchers (Kholina, et. al., 2016; Finn, 2017; Joint Statement; Krechetnikov, Pestereva, 2017; Li, 2018; Sun, 2017; Wu, Zha, 2018 and etc.), these shortcomings, in summary, include the following:

- taking a commercial approach is reflected in the expansion of the practices of establishing offshore campuses, admitting students directly to paid academic programs, and implementing franchising programs, which may lead to poorer quality of education;
- certain countries lacking a legislation that would clearly define the rights, powers, and obligations of foreign students and instructors, as well as many of the concessions and restrictions existing in this area and in the area of employment for foreign student and graduates;
- internationalization may be fraught with stiffening competition in the global educational market, as developed nations have firmly in place a neoliberal model of the academic market for labor, where competitive relationships are a priority;
- the focus being shifted from academic results to secondary indicators like the number of students leaving overseas, the number of foreign students paying for their education, or the number of courses taught in a foreign language, etc.;
- a low level of tolerance on the part of certain students and instructors toward representatives of other nations, peoples, and cultures; what oftentimes gets ignored is the fact that internationalization is not so much about interaction between countries but interaction between cultures;
- an excessive focus on the utilitarian and economic aspects of education – as opposed to its social value;
- insufficient understanding of the importance of taking meticulous account of the local context and cultural characteristics when getting involved with global cross-border processes that are part of education internationalization.

A key objective for the development of internationalization is to boost the quality of education and research activity. It could be possible to boost the efficiency of Russian exported educational services via the following measures (based on the example of Chinese students attending the SCOU):

- developing a cutting-edge advertising strategy for attracting Chinese students (not only via state-funded programs);
- galvanizing activity in the “secondary” market for additional exported educational services for students who are attending a Russian university already;
- developing a strategy for attracting Chinese students attending not only a SCOU college in China;
- developing a strategy for attracting Chinese students attending a university in China run by a different nation (e.g., an American, British, French, German, Canadian, or Italian university).

5. Conclusion

As evidenced by research conducted by Russian and foreign scholars, the Russian market for the export of educational services has high educational and research potential and could be quite competitive in the Eurasian educational space. Some of the key priorities at the current stage of the development of the Russian market for the export of educational services include: conducting in-depth research into the matter and putting together a “portrait” of the potential “buyer of Russian educational programs”, segmenting the consumer market, developing innovative knowledge

transfer technology, and developing strategies and mechanisms for boosting the market's competitiveness at the national and regional levels. The authors suggest it may be possible to develop a concept on and a model for boosting the competitiveness of the Russian market for the export of educational services using many of the key findings and recommendations generated through this particular research study. A pilot project of this kind could be implemented and tested in the setting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Network University.

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