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**THE INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION ACCOMPLISHMENTS
OF INNOVATIVE UNIVERSITY OF EURASIA
WITH ANSHAN NORMAL UNIVERSITY (CHINA)**

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Following the idea of integration of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the world educational process, Kazakhstan joined the European Higher Education Area (the Bologna Process) in March 2010 [1]. Many universities of Kazakhstan, including Innovative University of Eurasia (InEU) signed the Great Charter. By signing this document they commit to development of autonomy of the universities, democratic principles of management, academic freedom of students, freedom of scientific research, etc. One of the key points the Bologna Declaration involves is centered on elimination of all the obstacles to freedom of movement, providing the mobility of students, teachers and researchers.

Being the innovative private university in Kazakhstan, InEU effectively supports and promotes the ideas of international cooperation of various kinds, so to provide both students and faculty with more study abroad as well as international internship opportunities. As the result InEU initiated the negotiations with different foreign universities and signed several documents of understanding, mutual cooperation, Agreements, Memorandums, etc. One of those documents of collaboration was signed with Anshan Normal University (ANU) in May 2010. The Agreement was aimed at cooperation in scientific and educational fields constituting mutual advantage. According to the document both universities are obliged to regularly exchange the information and experience as far as advanced teaching techniques are concerned, to render methodological and scientific assistance, exchange students as well as faculty, etc. [2].

Throughout four years all the students learning Chinese language at InEU's Foreign Languages and Translation Studies Department have had the opportunity to apply for Study Abroad program provided via the Agreement signed with ANU. Each academic year ANU administration offers InEU students two fully and two partially funded scholarships (tuition fee is 50% of total amount per academic year) and two fully funded ones for teachers. To get the scholarship the students must go through the competition-based selection process, including language test which evaluates both productive and receptive Chinese language skills. The total number of students who had a chance to participate in the program and studied at ANU for at least one semester accounts 26. At present four Department students study at ANU and find it their personal achievement and advantage in general.

To get the students feedback about their studying abroad experience, their greatest achievements, successes as well as their challenges, worries, and concerns we conducted a survey which included several questions. So, the students were interviewed and asked to mark the survey questions as “Very much related”, “Much related”, “Not so much related”, “N/A (not applicable)”. The survey consisted of four focus question groups comprising social, educational, communicative and cultural issues:

- ***social issues focus group*** included unaccustomed surroundings, personal relationships students face with, accommodation challenges, homesick, feeling confused and lonely, being lack of financial support, etc.;

- ***educational issues focus group*** referred to new formats of studying, schedule arrangement, teacher-students relations, studying hours, different language of instructions, etc. were relegated;

- ***communicative issues focus group*** relegated to lack of understating of the native speakers, challenges of foreign (Chinese) language acquisition, communicative traditions of being polite, verbal and non-verbal means and content of communication process different from the native culture, etc.;

- ***cultural issues focus group*** comprised various Chinese traditions and customs, eating habits different from the native cuisine peculiarities, organization of free time (including shopping, entertainment, etc.), integrating into the new culture with own beliefs, etc.

The results of the survey established that the greatest students’ *social challenges* included the following: being away from the families and friends, experiencing different from the native culture social manners and behavior of the locals. In general, 68.8 % of the respondents marked social aspect as “Not so much related” challenge; 14.4 % marked it as “Much related”, the rest 16.8% marked it as “Not applicable”. *Educational challenges* represented in students’ responses covered unfamiliar methods of arranging the schedule, tasks and academic activities based on the principle of autonomous learning, and extra activities offered for students after classes. Many students noted that they spent more time for studying in China compared to their home university. They also mentioned that most of the teachers were nice, supportive and encouraging which helped a lot. As for the total number of the respondents about 58 % marked educational challenges they faced with as “Much related”, and 42% as “Not so much related”. *Communicative challenges* occurred mostly at the beginning of studying abroad program, they comprised language barrier in the context of foreign language environment and covered the intercultural communication issues (such as following the communicative norms in formal and informal spheres of interaction, e.g. appropriate ways of greetings, addressing locals, being polite, etc.). All in all 75.7 % marked this aspect as “Much related” and 24.3% as “Not so much related”. *Cultural challenges* referred to Chinese national habits, including different from native culture attitude to various phenomena, values and norms, different lifestyle, food, etc. The fourth focus group of survey questions is the most essential one, because its components penetrate to other focus groups described.

We find it essential to note that most of the above mentioned challenges students experienced while abroad were relevant to the symptoms of Culture Shock. According to Liu, Volcic, and Gallois (2011), – cultural shock refers to the feelings of disorientation and anxiety when entering a new culture. It occurs between the sojourner and the host national(s) when cultural norms and values that are familiar to the sojourner are questioned in his or her new cultural environment [3]. As various researches on sociology say, the symptoms relevant to InEU students described above, usually happen at the beginning and considered to be regular among sojourners.

The sociologists came to the conclusion that soon after the excitement about being somewhere new and feeling almost euphoric the stage of “Frustration or Disintegration” comes. People may feel depressed, anxious, confused, isolated, helpless, homesick, sometimes intolerant, etc. So to overcome negative thoughts and emotions people start to adjust to new cultural environment which is marked by achieving a psychological balance and an increase in comfort with the new culture. People develop the ability to negotiate interactive aspects and acquire culturally appropriate skills. Then the stage of adaptation comes when people feel as if the new culture is more predictable and more willing to engage, they also feel a sense of belonging and no longer suffer the symptoms of culture shock [4].

Our students’ international academic experience witnessed that they went through all the stages of culture shock and finally succeeded in adapting to new cultural environment and achieved academic progress. Their success was provided by supportive and motivating Chinese teachers and advisors; by establishing relations with local, international and fellow students from own culture; by attending all orientation sessions and activities; improving communicative Chinese skills, etc.

Throughout their studying abroad experience InEU students carried out numerous advantages and outcomes, among which they named:

- establishing contacts and relations with foreign students and teachers;
- acquiring international cultural experience and exchange;
- further developing adjustment and adaptation skills;
- becoming more tolerant learner and future specialist;
- obtaining access to authentic materials and resources as well as qualified assistance from the side of native experts in Chinese;
- getting opportunity to expand academic research and cultural cooperation around the world;
- becoming more competitive specialists and Chinese language learners;
- turning into independent and more confident learners;
- getting better job opportunities in future.

The survey has shown that InEU students satisfied with the way they overcome social, educational, communicative and cultural challenges in China. The most difficult challenge is connected with the cultural issues. Experience students gained during their stay in China gives them opportunity to obtain vital skills for improving their life skills as well as broadening their cognitive base.

Taking into consideration the results of our partnership we would like to continue cooperating with ANU.

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