

The peculiarities of training and development for lifelong learning sector in the industry of higher education in Russia on the example of Plekhanov Russian Rniversity of Economics.

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Key words

Adult training, teacher training, higher education, educational integration, international academic profile.

Abstract

The example that is described below represents the case of International Business School (faculty) at Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. The experience of providing the system of education according to Bologna process and its proceedings/standards has created solid background for organizing the training course for teachers of High schools in order to ensure high quality of provided educational services. The training course (delivered in English) aimed at mastering professional teaching skills and getting acquainted with innovative teaching techniques, as well as building up commitment in professional development. The course is also based on the experience received from adult trainings, previously delivered to corporate staff, which enables the creators to integrate the most successful business techniques into the teachers training course. The results of the program can be monitored through improving teacher/tutor portfolio. Further research of the issue can be organized in order to extend the program and provide more profound post-training activities and support of individual and professional development. The value of this experience is especially notable for those who have just started working under the requirements of Bologna Process, or for the establishments that are keen on continuous development of their academic staff in order to pursue competitive edge in the educational industry (higher education).

Introduction:

Currently Russia is going through the transformation process of making a switch to full compatibility of educational stages according to the requirements and standards of Bologna Process. This means that all high schools and universities are to provide the programs of bachelors (4 years) and masters (2 years). The previous generation of programs implied 5-year education for the degree of specialist. Some internationally-oriented programs could voluntarily employ the system of bachelors and masters or could combine such programs with the programs of specialist degree

Basing on the requirements of bologna process the educational body should provide that kind of education that meets the following criteria: employability of graduates, transparency of educational and assessment system, efficiency of competencies provided (the combination of interactive lecturing, individual research and practical training), recognition of the degree acquired, competitiveness of the program on both local and international levels, attractiveness to entrants, graduates and employers and mobility of staff. The idea that lied at the basis of creation was that academic staff of the University should be able to deliver these ideas through their teaching expertise, professional integrity and global educational commitment.

Main body of the paper. Discussion/prerequisites:

The educational transformation and Russian integration into global educational framework requires from teachers to comply with international requirements and to provide highly effective educational services. International cooperation implies doing academic and professional research in English, not to mention effective teaching and commitment to share academic experience within international working teams. As IBS faculty has a proven record of providing globally embracing education, due to international partnerships in terms of student internships, double degree diplomas and

guest lecturing, it seemed logical to organize university wide training and development platform there. The idea was to combine international cooperation, international cases of effective teaching and learning, Russian requirements for improved teaching competences and proven business tools in training and development.

The solution:

The solution was presented in the form of on-site training course, provided in the university, every week for 3 hours at a time, during 2,5 months. During this time participants took part in weekly trainings, shared their academic experience, structured their knowledge in teaching, trained practical skills in teams, came up with innovative and brand-new solutions for different class situations and had the opportunity to master received tools in their classrooms. After each and every training the participants received "home assignments" – individual tasks that they were to complete. The fulfilled tasks contributed to the body of final project presentation and were to demonstrate parts of their innovative teaching program that could be presented as an innovative course in "_____(Subject) for _____(bachelors, masters) program in PRUE". The project was presented to the board of authorities at the end of the course. The board included deans of the faculties, where programs could be integrated (both in English and in Russian), administration of the University and managers from companies – partners of the faculty. Thus, the final project could be assessed on: innovative and interactive approach to teaching, applicability of methods offered, academic value and feasibility of the program, business value of the program to graduates and employers, future potential of the program to be developed and flexibly adopted to constantly changing requirements of educational industry. The assessment of teaching competences and potential for professional development was divided into three main parts: self-assessment at the beginning and at the end of the program, on-going assessment according to numerous criteria during the training program, 360 degrees assessment at the final stage of the program. According to the results of total assessment key indicators of continuous professional development were designed to accompany the achieved results of the training program within the next 6 months after the program was completed.

Preparation:

The participants of the training program were selected from teachers of the university. The main criteria of selection were the following: 3-5 years of teaching experience in higher education, knowledge of English language not lower than B2 level (according to European Framework of Reference for Languages), ability to demonstrate commitment to professional development and to effective training collaboration through the whole program. For the first program in spring 2011 – 12 teachers were selected out of 43 candidates that applied for the program. Before the start of the program participants were asked to provide true and fair view of their teaching competences in the form of self-assessment list in the following directions: academic presentation, academic correspondence, group dynamics, interactive framework, internal networking, external networking, academic interest and development. The results of this assessment were later compared to the results achieved at the end of the program and to the results of self-assessment at the end of the program.

On-site training:

As it was mentioned earlier, the training program lasted 2,5 months and comprised 12 trainings, divided into 3 main sections: discourse management (group dynamics and interactive framework), communication skills (oral and written), academic networking (internal and external). The main methods of training activities used were: interactive mini presentations, ad hoc presentations, role plays, case studies, brainstorming, mind-mapping, argumentative discussions and graphical structuring. Business tools employed were extracted from corporate trainings on: emotional intelligence, time management, project management, team building, decision-making, motivation, networking, public speaking and others. Practical on-site activities were organized during the training program in order to master the skills within real classrooms.

Post-training activities:

All participants received the list of key strategic indicators of professional development basing on total assessment and their self-assessment of the program results. The indicators comprised 5 main direction of professional development: delivery, class management, ALMs, interpersonal communication and academic development. Further actions were based on the recommendations for the next 6 months. The participants were encouraged to conduct certain activities (within the university and their programs as well as within the framework of international academic cooperation) and provide valid results of these activities to the board after the period of post-training assistance was over. Some of the participants with outstanding results were offered to conduct further research on training and development at the faculty.

Discussion and conclusions:

The program has provided training to 36 teachers of the University so far. The areas of professional interest of the participants who successfully completed the course are: Micro and macroeconomics, marketing, management, finance, logistics, statistics, international economic relations, IT and others. The faculty has employed some participants to teach on the programs of Bachelors and Masters within the 3rd generation of Russian Educational Programs (complying with the requirements of Bologna Process). Other faculties paid closer attention to teachers who participated at the program, also they allocated educational space for the newly designed programs to be taught by the teachers - participants of the program. The program is now being developed to be shared with other Economic Universities of Russia. The concluding point can outline the necessity and urgency of such programs for Russian Universities and for International Universities, especially from developing countries that are undergoing changes in educational system due to complying with the requirements of Bologna process. Moreover, the program provides structured instructions to organizing solid platform for training and development of academic staff within educational body. It takes into account main psychological and interpersonal peculiarities of lifelong learning for academic staff.