



# RÚSSIA-ÍNDIA: ADAPTAÇÃO DOS ESTUDANTES INDIANOS ÀS UNIVERSIDADES RUSSAS NO CONTEXTO DO DIÁLOGO DE CIVILIZAÇÕES E CULTURAS



## RUSSIA-INDIA: INDIAN STUDENTS' ADAPTATION IN RUSSIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DIALOGUE OF CIVILIZATIONS AND CULTURES

### РОССИЯ – ИНДИЯ: АДАПТАЦИЯ ИНДИЙСКИХ СТУДЕНТОВ В РОССИЙСКИХ ВУЗАХ В КОНТЕКСТЕ ДИАЛОГА ЦИВИЛИЗАЦИЙ И КУЛЬТУР

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Received 22 January 2018; received in revised form 07 February 2018; accepted 07 February 2018

## RESUMO

O artigo aborda as perspectivas para o desenvolvimento de uma interação humanitária e intercultural entre a Rússia e a Índia no exemplo da adaptação social dos estudantes indianos nas universidades Russas. O monitoramento da satisfação dos alunos realizado em 2011 e 2015 e a pesquisa sociológica sobre os problemas de adaptação dos alunos do segundo e sexto ano da Faculdade Profilática Terapêutica da Universidade Estadual do Estado de Rostov permitiram revelar como o sucesso da socialização e da inculturação dos alunos depende da eficácia de trabalho internacional em uma Universidade Russa. Os autores da pesquisa acreditam que é possível tornar o processo de adaptação mais fácil e rápido, criando as condições necessárias para a educação e a residência de estudantes de diferentes países, levando em consideração o patrimônio histórico e cultural, bem como as características nacionais e religiosas dos indivíduos envolvidos no espaço educacional.

Palavras-chave: *Adaptação; Índia; Educação; Rússia; Socialização*

## ABSTRACT

The article touches upon the perspectives for the development of a humanitarian and intercultural interaction between Russia and India on the example of Indian students' social adaptation in Russian universities. The monitoring of students' satisfaction conducted in 2011 and 2015 and the sociological survey on the adaptation problems of second and sixth year students of the Therapeutic Prophylactic Faculty at the Rostov State Medical University allowed revealing how students' socialization and inculturation success depends on the effectiveness of international work at a Russian University. The authors of the research believe that it is possible to make the adaptation process easier and faster by creating the necessary conditions for the education and residence of students from different countries with a consideration of the historical and cultural heritage, as well as the national and religious characteristics of the individuals involved in the educational space.

**Keywords:** *Adaptation; India; education; Russia; Socialization.*

## АННОТАЦИЯ

В статье рассматриваются перспективы развития гуманитарного и межкультурного взаимодействия между Россией и Индией на примере социальной адаптации индийских студентов в российских вузах. Проведенные в 2011 и 2015 гг. мониторинг удовлетворенности студентов и социологический опрос по проблемам адаптации среди индийских студентов 2-го и 6-го курсов English-medium лечебно-профилактического факультета на базе Ростовского государственного медицинского университета позволили выявить зависимость успешности социализации и инкультурации обучающихся от эффективности интернациональной работы в российском вузе. Авторы полагают, что процесс адаптации пройдет легче и быстрее благодаря созданию необходимых условий для обучения и проживания студентов из разных стран с учетом исторического и культурного наследия, национальных и религиозных особенностей вовлеченных в образовательное пространство индивидов.

**Ключевые слова:** адаптация; Индия; образование; Россия; социализация.

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## INTRODUCTION

2017 is marked as an anniversary year for Russia and India. The two countries celebrate the seventieth anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations. Undoubtedly, the Russian and Indian people have a centuries-old rich history of relations. However, the history of friendship and cooperation at the diplomatic level dates back to April 13, 1947.

Since the 1960s, the Soviet Union closely cooperated with India in the field of education, culture, as well as trade and economic relations, and actively participated in creating the industrial power of the Indian State.

The collapse of the Soviet Union laid the foundation for a fundamentally new stage in Russian-Indian relations. On January 28, 1993, a fundamental document, namely the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Republic of India (Kostyuk, 2000), was signed between the two countries. In the conditions of multi-polarity in international relations, India (along with the PRC, Brazil and some other states) is becoming one of the centres of the new post-bipolar world order.

The similar approaches of Moscow and Delhi to the numerous problems of the modern world, including problems of international security, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, and the interpretation of the international law, led to the establishment of a long-lasting strategic partnership between the two countries (Rekha, 2017: 57-58). The BRICS Summit became one of the key platforms for exchanging views between the leaders of the two states.

Another vivid example of the high-level interaction and similar approaches of Russia and India to the key problems of international relations was India's entry (2017) into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that was established in 2001 and unites Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. India's and Pakistan's entry into the SCO leads to expect an expansion of political and economic, as well as cultural, educational, scientific and technical relations (Desai, 2017).

Humanitarian ties, including cooperation in education and science, in particular, student exchanges and Indian students' education in Russian universities, hold a special place in Russian-Indian relations (A New Era...2015: 104). In addition to the Association of Indian Students in Russia, there is a direct interuniversity cooperation between Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov and Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, St. Petersburg State University and the University of Mumbai, as well as the Diplomatic Academy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia and the Foreign Service Institute of the Ministry of External Affairs of India.

According to statistical data, in the academic years of 2011 and 2012, more than 124,000 foreign citizens were enrolled in Russian universities for full-time study, and more than 62,000 foreign citizens were enrolled for distance and part-time learning forms of education (Arefiev, Sheregi, 2014: 70; 125-127). Although students from the CIS countries make up 50% of this number, the percentage of Indian students is quite high too.

In the period of the survey, 4,100 Indian citizens studied in Russian universities. At the same time, the overwhelming majority were

enrolled in full-time studies (more than 99%) on a contract basis (more than 98%) education (Arefiev, Sheregi, 2014: 70; 125-127). Thus, in terms of full-time education, the percentage of Indian students in Russian universities was 3.3% of the total number of international students and 6.9% of the number of international students from non-CIS countries. In other words, in terms of the number of foreign students enrolled in full-time studies in Russian universities, India ranks the 9th place among all the states and the 2nd place among the non-CIS countries after China (15.2 thousand students) education (Arefiev, Sheregi, 2014: 70-74). At the same time, the absolute majority of students enrolled in distance and part-time learning were citizens of the CIS countries; therefore, the statistics on students enrolled in universities full-time are more revealing.

Particularly noteworthy is the increasing number of Indian students in Russian universities. Compared to 2012, the total number of Indian citizens studying in Russian universities increased by 20% and reached 5,300 in 2017 (Study in Russia, 2017).

There are a number of factors that determine the popularity of Russian universities among students from India. The first factor is related to the development of international integration processes in the sphere of education in the 2000s-2010s (in particular, the Bologna process), which beneficially affected the free exchange of experience and student exchanges between the educational institutions of Russia and India.

Secondly, the fundamental nature of the Soviet education and, subsequently, Russian education makes Russia an attractive country for foreign students. The concept of an open educational space adopted in modern Russia leads to an increase in the number of students who arrive in Russia from different countries, including India, to study and obtain a diploma of higher education in Russia and achieve a successful career in their home countries.

Thirdly, the traditionally high level of the development of bilateral Russian-Indian relations contributes to the Indian population's positive perception of Russia as a friendly state that offers broad opportunities in the field of education and intercultural communications.

Finally, another important factor is the financial accessibility of higher education in Russia in comparison with the United States and

European countries. The relatively low cost of studying and living in Russia, along with the traditionally high quality of higher education in Russia, makes Russian universities highly competitive in the world market of educational services, which is confirmed by the fact that the vast majority of Indian students choose to study in Russian universities on a contract basis.

It is necessary to point out that Russian-Indian ties in the sphere of education, in particular, student exchanges, have considerable potential for further development. It is related both to the possibility of increasing the number of Indian students in the quota of the Ministry of Education (the number of students was only 40 in 2011 (Shkunov, Radchenko, 2011: 8), and to the activation of Russian universities' international cooperation and promotional activities abroad.

Analyzing the regional preferences of foreign students, including students from India, it is necessary to point out that about 25% of foreigners study in Moscow universities, and about 10% study in the universities of St. Petersburg followed by the Omsk and Tomsk regions, the Republic of Tatarstan, Novosibirsk, Rostov, Chelyabinsk and Astrakhan regions. The last leader of the top ten is the Altai Territory (Bolotov, 2016: 11-12).

Russian universities that are quite popular among Indian students include the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow's First Moscow State Medical University named after Sechenov, Kazan and Ural Federal universities, as well as the medical universities of Tver, Orenburg, Bashkir, Volgograd, and Rostov (Arefiev, Sheregi, 2014: 31-32).

When speaking about the professional preferences of Indian students studying in Russia, it is necessary to point out that medical specialities are absolute leaders. In particular, 80% of Indians choose medical specialities (an average of 18% foreigners give preference to these specialities). Other popular study areas are economics and management, as well as the humanities (Bolotov, 2016: 6).

Despite the high popularity of Russian universities among students from India, the problem of students' social adaptation is a serious obstacle for their integration into the student community and knowledge acquisition. Identifying, analyzing and eliminating the reasons that restrain students' social adaptation will help overcome the difficulties of students who already

study in Russia, which, in turn, will have a positive impact on the growth of the popularity of Russian universities among applicants from India.

Taking into account the fact that the absolute majority of Indians studying in Russia prefer medical specialties, it is necessary to emphasize the importance of studying the problems of Indian students' social adaptation in a medical university.

In this regard, the key objective of the research conducted at the Rostov State Medical University is to substantiate the effectiveness of using the results of the customer (student) satisfaction monitoring in the subsequent corrective work with students from India, which is aimed at their socialization and inculturation in the educational space of a Russian university.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditionally, Russia is characterized by a multi-national population, a high level of tolerance, and readiness to interact with representatives of other nations, which has repeatedly become a subject matter for the analysis of domestic researchers. In particular, K. N. Kostyuk points out the cultural heterogeneity of the Russian society conditioned by the poly-ethnic composition of the population, as well as the combination of various cultural norms and values, which makes it possible to characterize Russia as "*a space of global cultural clashes*" (Kostyuk, 2000: 35).

In this context, researchers of the Rostov State Medical University draw an analogy between the poly-ethnic composition of the population in Rostov-on-Don, where representatives of more than 100 nationalities (Ukrainians, Belarusians, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Georgians, Koreans, etc.) live, and the student community that includes representatives of the listed nationalities, as well as visitors from near and far abroad (India and a number of African countries). At the same time, the Rostov Region is among the top ten regions with the largest percentage of foreign students, and healthcare is one of the most popular specialties among foreigners.

The problem of the social adaptation of foreign students studying in Russian universities is of special relevance. G. N. Shapoval and O.N. Kamalova note: "*The promotion of Russian educational services in the international market*

*and the preparation of competitive foreign specialists require the organization of learners' adaptation process, which is a complex process of changing the structure of the individual and integrating him/her into a new society*" (Shapoval, Kamalova, 2011: 93).

Examining the problems of foreign students' social adaptation, Y. N. Dorozhkin and L.T. Mazitova emphasize the paramount importance of ensuring optimal living and studying conditions for foreign students taking into account the complex process of their adaptation to a new lifestyle (Dorozhkin, Mazitova, 2007: 73).

The authors define adaptation as a complex concept that includes socialization and inculturation processes characterized by the development degree of the social and cultural conditions of life. Depending on the degree of expression and the duration of adaptation, socialization and inculturation processes can be "easy and fast" and "heavy and slow". The multidimensionality of adaptation makes it a "through" research subject for a number of human sciences, including philosophy, cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, social psychology, pedagogy, conflictology, medicine, etc. (Zhou Y., 2008). The success of adaptation depends on the effectiveness of joint efforts – internal (individual) and external (society), which results in the establishment of parity in the relationship of the individual and the environment.

Examining the actual problems related to the socialization of first-year students, L.N. Boronin, Y. P. Vishnevsky, and Y. V. Didkovskaya identified a number of basic parameters of adaptation, including the degree of proficiency in the language of the host country, age, sex, expectations, nature of initial contacts with local residents, etc. (Boronina, Vishnevsky, Didkovskaya, 2001). In their turn, M. A. Ivanova and N. A. Titkova (1993) determined that the difficulties of foreign students' adaptation depend on national and religious characteristics and vary from year to year. Similar conclusions have been made by foreign researchers H. Wu, E. Garza, N. Guzman (2015) as well as J. Russell, D. Rosenthal and G. Thompson (2010).

In particular, the following factors lead to significant difficulties in the adaptation of foreign students:

1) a language barrier that hinders both the learning process and peer-to-peer communication. It is necessary to point out that

the educational environment in Russian universities is not always adapted for the education of foreigners (Gatwiri, 2015);

2) difficulties of foreign students' involvement in the student community, which is often related to Russian students' unwillingness to communicate with their foreign peers, as well as the unwillingness of foreign students to interact with their Russian peers and their desire to limit themselves to communicating with their compatriots;

3) the social and living conditions associated with bureaucratic procedures and the low level of social services in dormitories of many universities;

4) differences in national, religious and cultural characteristics of Russia and the home states of students from abroad;

5) limited opportunities for the employment of foreign students, which is related to the specifics of migration legislation, as well as discrimination by employers (Arthur, 2013).

Discussing about the adaptation levels of foreign students, A. L. Arefiev singled out the following qualitative levels of adaptability: high - full acceptance of environmental conditions with subsequent assimilation, acceptance of language, customs, and values; medium - partial acceptance of the environment's expectations manifested in the willingness to adopt binding norms at the same time preserving the elements of their own tradition, and low - detachment (segregation) or rejection of any compromise in terms of values, norms, and cultural rules peculiar to the social and ethnic environment. Sometimes a psychological breakdown forces students to leave for their home countries (Arefiev, 2007: 78). To prevent extreme cases, foreign students' host country must create the necessary conditions for their successful adaptation to the social and cultural aspects of life at the individual and group levels. Adaptation surveys which analyze these issues are widely conducted in foreign universities (Severiens, 2008: 253-254).

It is necessary to point out that the vast majority of studies on the problems of foreign students' social adaptation in Russian universities analyze the trends that are characteristic of students from different countries. As a rule, students from non-CIS countries are viewed as a single and internally homogeneous group. At the same time, the social adaptation of foreigners

seems to have some peculiarities that depend on students' country of origin, which is associated with significant cultural and linguistic differences, as well as differences in students' value systems, concepts of household comfort, etc. The scientific novelty of this research is related to the fact that no other works in the domestic science have been devoted to the problems of the social adaptation of students from India (despite the fairly high percentage of Indian students among foreign students studying in Russian universities).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research was conducted at the Rostov State Medical University. The authors applied a number of theoretical (observation, generalization, systematization) and practical (search, description, comparison, analysis, correction, comprehension) methods during the research. The methods used for analyzing the data obtained include the manual processing method, the information systematization method, and the comparison method.

The inclusion criteria included English medium 2nd and 6th-year students of the Therapeutic Prophylactic Faculty. The exclusion criteria referred to 2nd and 6th-year students of the pharmaceutical, dental, pediatric, medical prophylactic, and therapeutic prophylactic faculties, as well as the military training centre, and first, third, fourth and 6th-year students of all the RSMU faculties. The sampling set included 50 respondents.

In May 2011, as survey, namely "Customer Satisfaction Monitoring", was conducted among students from India. Students served as consumers of educational services. In particular, English medium second-year students of the Therapeutic Prophylactic Faculty were viewed as consumers. The evaluation of the attractiveness of education consisted of the following four characteristics:

- 1) the faculty's attractiveness level;
- 2) the attractiveness of learning and living conditions;
- 3) the attractiveness of the methodical equipment of the educational process;
- 4) the attractiveness of learning specialities.

Four years later, in May 2015, the same students were re-surveyed. The indicators of customer satisfaction with the quality of

educational services in the year of 2011 were compared with the data of 2015.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

During the process of the "Customer Satisfaction Monitoring" survey, foreign students were asked to give an evaluation score in accordance with the following characteristics: low – 0, satisfactory – 2, and high – 2. The surveyed students gave the following assessment of the characteristics under study:

1) the students assessed the faculty's attractiveness level in the following way: high – 42%, satisfactory – 58%, and low – 0%;

2) the attractiveness of learning and living conditions was assessed as followed: high – 14%, satisfactory – 40%, and low – 46%;

3) the attractiveness of the methodical equipment of the educational process was assessed in the following way: high – 12%, satisfactory – 68%, and low – 20%;

4) the attractiveness of learning specialities was assessed in the following way: high – 78%, satisfactory – 22%, and low – 0%.

The monitoring results of customer satisfaction with the quality of educational services revealed a low level of the attractiveness of learning and living conditions (40%) and methodical equipment of the educational process (20%). At the same time, the faculty competence and the attractiveness of the specialities studied were traditionally highly evaluated. Based on the data obtained, the authors of the research developed a survey to identify the causes of student dissatisfaction and further corrective measures aimed at determining the adaptation and inculturation level of foreign students studying at the RSMU.

Based on the analysis of the data obtained, it is possible to conclude that adaptation difficulties are caused by a low level of proficiency in the Russian language and unjustified expectations related to living conditions. The survey revealed that the majority of learners (64%) hoped to live in Russian families rather than in hostels. The Indian students believe that the process of their adaptation to the social and cultural conditions of life would have been faster if they were more involved in the Russian society and got acquainted with the culture of their country of

residence (excursions, holidays, visits to theatres and cinemas, *etc.*).

When characterizing the methodical equipment of the educational process, the students pointed to the low-level equipment of the pedagogical process, a lack of library resources, and a language barrier between university teachers and foreign students. The research data allowed developing a corrective action plan at the Department of History and Philosophy of the RSMU. The implementation of the points included in the action plan led to the successful socialization and inculturation of foreign students:

–organizing days of Russian-Indian friendship days with degustation of national dishes and watching of presentations, documentary and feature films about the diverse traditions of peoples inhabiting Russia and India;

–conducting staging and role plays on the theme of "Dialogue of Cultures", emancipating students and giving them correct patterns of behaviour in the society (public transport, stores, market);

– including a regional component in the working programs of the disciplines taught at the department (history, philosophy, culturology, bioethics);

–organizing students' cultural leisure through familiarizing them with the sights of Rostov-on-Don (zoo, circus, conservatory, museums, theatres, exhibitions);

–improving the system of training the personnel for working with foreign students (certificates, pedagogical readings, exchange of experience).

Four years later (after the implementation of the correctional action plan), in May 2015, the same students were surveyed again. The analysis of the results showed that during the learning period the indicators of the attractiveness of the faculty and specialities studied did not change much in comparison with the data obtained in 2011. However, the assessment characteristics of the attractiveness of the learning and living conditions, as well as the methodical equipment of the educational process received a higher numerical expression. In their final university year, the students' assessment scores were as follows:

–the attractiveness of learning and living conditions was assessed as followed: high – 38%, satisfactory – 54%, and low – 8%;

–the attractiveness of the methodical equipment of the educational process was assessed in the following way: high – 42%, satisfactory – 46%, and low – 12%.

In other words, the Indian students' high evaluation of the learning and living conditions and the attractiveness of the methodical equipment of the educational process grew by 24% and 30% respectively.

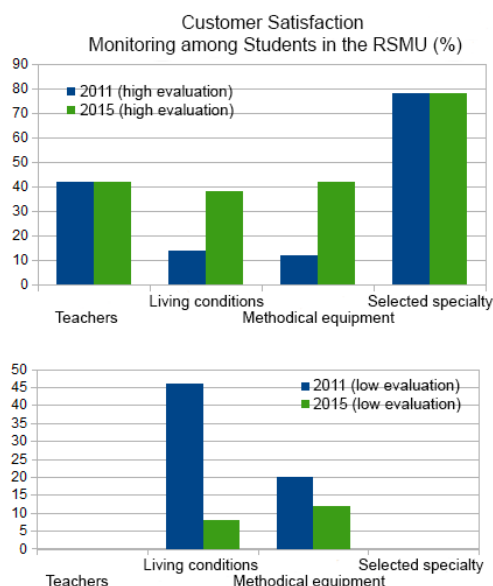


Figure 1. Results of students monitoring in RSMU

## CONCLUSIONS:

The authors of the research observed a significant positive dynamics in the course of the work aimed at the adaptation of foreign students in a foreign-speaking socio-cultural space. The increased indicators in the year of 2015 were the result of the implementation of a set of corrective measures at the Department of History and Philosophy during the previous four years, as well as the actions of the University administration, namely equipping the library with the necessary textbooks and teaching aids, connecting the computers in the library and hostel to the Internet, and providing access to electronic library systems. The corrective measures implemented in the RSMU in the period of 2011-2015 show that the important ways of improving the effectiveness of foreign students' adaptation include: 1) planning and conducting activities that promote dialogue between cultures and organizations, and 2) preparing and retraining the teaching staff, which contributes to the removal of

the language barrier between a teacher and a student.

The success of the planned activities for international education in a particular educational institution largely depends on the coherent interaction between the parties at three levels: university administration – structural unit – students. At the same time, the effectiveness of foreign students' social adaptation has a great impact on the effectiveness of student exchanges and is closely linked to the development of bilateral ties in the field of education in general. The dialogue of civilizations and cultures can be organized and expanded in individual and group contexts only through joint efforts, which will subsequently strengthen the friendship between the peoples of the two countries and will promote mutually beneficial long-term cooperation.

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