

## Direction of Russian Higher Education

### Description

The Russian Federation is clearly making significant efforts to make up for the loss in its higher education sector that occurred during the post-soviet period. The expenditure on higher education as a percentage of GDP has increased substantially over recent years.

### Clear Governmental Support

There is clear governmental support for rejuvenating the Russian Federation higher education, evidenced by budget expenditure on Higher Education (HE) that doubled between 2005 and 2011 (at US\$ 14.5 billion). The government has also promised a further US\$ 2.4 billion for Federal and National Research Universities in the Russian Federation within the next 5 year period.

### The Demographic Gap

Alongside the growing state investment in HE there lies the emerging issue of shrinking student demography, which predicts a steady decline in the tertiary enrolment rate. According to Federal ministry data, the number of secondary school graduates expected in 2012 is 700,000, which is only 50% of the number in 2006 (1,300,000). Although this clearly suggests a lower demand for new places at the tertiary level, and the probable mergers if not closures of institutions, one more positive outcome of this demographic situation opens the opportunity to focus and concentrate on the "flagship" institutions.

### Only 2 Leading Global Universities

Out of approximately 455 Universities, Academies, Institutes and National Research Centres across the Russian Federation, only the 2 old state universities (Lomonosov " Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University) figure consistently in all major university rankings over the years. A total of 14 Russian universities featured in the QS " World University Ranking" in 2012.

In terms of strengths in particular faculty areas, the Russian Federation universities score comparatively better in Natural Sciences faculty area which perhaps shows the effort in holding on to the old soviet glory of natural science research.

### Student Mobility

For the Russian Federation, internal and external student mobility both matters of concern due to their low ratings. Local mobility is being hampered by regional inequality, lack of English language skills and high levels of institutional bureaucracy. The Russian Federation must also think about the demographics of the inbound mobile students choosing the Russian Federation as a destination to pursue their tertiary education in addition to reducing the visa and procedural difficulties. Only 15 countries account for sending 44% of the world's internationally mobile students. Leading the table are countries such as China, India, South Korea and Germany. However, an analysis of the

internationally mobile students shows that the Russian Federation does not attract many students from China, South Korea or Germany which is a hindrance for attracting more inbound international students.

### **Mobility of Academic Staff and Researchers**

The mobility of academic staff and the researchers is not high for Russian Federation universities. Internal mobility is low due to regional residents's permits, and regional bias in funding and infrastructure. The external mobility is low due to the lack of a real English language environment in Russian Federation academia, financial constraints and the issues pertaining to procedures and visa. The National Priority Project on Education also has a key component that deals with mobility of academics which has US\$ 415-million funding to attract the best international specialists to Russian universities and to stimulate the inflow of young researchers and to retain them.

### **Faculty Compensation & Aging Academia**

As a legacy of the soviet system, salaries in the Russian education sector are historically low, though in Higher Education they are bit better than secondary level. This is a serious concern as there is not much scope for progression in Russian academia. With an ageing generation holding on to staff and researchers positions, young researchers have little room in terms of career aspirations. The Brain Drain to the west that started in the 1990's still continues, albeit at a slow pace, aggravating the faculty situation in academia.

### **Stagnation of Research Activities in Universities**

The role of state, and federal universities in research have not been really promising in recent years, although the situation is different on a case by case basis for every institution. The primary reason for this sub-standard research performance by the Universities lies in the fact that a good majority of the state funding in research is allocated to the Russian Federation Academy of Science. The share of research done by the higher academic institutions was until recently, a mere 4 %.

### **End Note**

The current focus on the increased federal investment in the Russian HE system specifically targeted towards [University Rankings](#) can serve as an effective conduit to usher fundamental improvements in some of the core issues facing the Russian Higher Education in its path towards gaining back the world-class laurel.