

UDC 376-054.62:378.147(713.54)

THE PRE-UNIVERSITY PREPARATION PROGRAMS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN CANADA (EXPERIENCE OF UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO)

Proskurkina Ia.I.

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

The article reveals the main features of the system of the preparation of international students for admission to the universities in Canada. The author considers the admission rules, the content of the training programs and educational practice for international students. The ways of using the international experience in the organization of the pre-university preparation for international students in Ukrainian universities are offered.

Keywords: international students, foreign students, international experience, preparation, pre-university education, pre-university preparation, universities in Canada, University of Toronto.

Introduction. Over the past decade, Ukrainian universities have greatly expanded the areas of international activities and are confidently heading towards integration into the European education area. Among the traditional and most developed areas of international activities of Ukrainian universities is training international students for other countries. Providing high quality of training foreign specialists requires a comprehensive analysis of the global educational practice of preparation programmes for international students facilitating their entry into academic world. Such analysis allows to distinguish the best experience from the leading countries which have gained international recognition in terms of training international students (advantages and drawbacks), and to determine the opportunities of the practical implementation of the world education achievements that help to improve efficiently pre-university preparation for international students at Ukrainian universities. We find it interesting to consider the experience and education strategy of Canada, which takes the 7th place in the rating the effectiveness of national education systems (according to the British international group Pearson data) [1].

The aim of the study. The aim of this article is to analyse the organizational and pedagogical

features of pre-university preparation for international students in Canada, to find out the factors determining the attractiveness of education for international students, and to offer possible ways to improve the system of the pre-university preparation for international students in Ukraine.

The theoretical framework and research methods. N. Bulgakova, L. Kuryshcheva, O. Palka, A. Rementsov, A. Suryhin, N. Ushakova and others made an important contribution to the development on the issue of training international specialists for foreign countries. The analysis of their researches shows that scientists focus on didactic basis, organizational and methodological support the process of preparing international students. The language aspect of the preparation international students is considered in the works by O. Bastrikova, L. Guseva, T. Dementieva, E. Ivanova, A. Korylova. The problem of adaptation international students is studied by M. Ivanova, L. Kuryshcheva, D. Poroh, A. Sharova, T. Yazvinska and others. It's worth mentioning that in their works the authors refer to national experience and the experience of neighboring countries. Various aspects of the education system in Canada are highlighted in the works by I. Balytska, S. Bodnar, V. Volosovych, N. Mukan, O. Slonovska.

The analysis of the theoretical sources shows that in the modern native pedagogy there are no work, examining the experience of other countries including Canada on preparation international students to entry the universities. The above-mentioned determines the selection of research material and our scientific research.

Research methods. Due to the nature of the study, to achieve the aim of this article we chose a qualitative research approach. We search for the literature via online databases. The majority of the search was done via University of Toronto database. We analyzed the educational-methodical documentation (curricula, curriculum programs, educational work) of University of Toronto. It made possible to find out the state of the pre-university preparation for international students in Canada and to define the main factors that make education in Canada attractive for international students.

The results. To study the foreign experience of preparing international students for admission to universities we have chosen Canada as one of the global providers of educational services among the ten world leaders in academic mobility programs.

Canada became active in terms of academic mobility since the 70's of the last century, therefore, has a long practice and extensive experience of international academic cooperation. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education, since 2008 the number of international students who get education in Canada increased by 83%, and in 2014 reached 336,497 people, which is 10% more than the previous 2013. International students made up 11% of the postsecondary student population in Canada in 2012–2013 academic year [2].

The demand from international students for study in Canada can be explained primarily by international recognition of Canadian education, high academic rating of Canadian universities and professional development prospects after graduation. According to the QS World University Rankings 2016–2017 academic year the most popular universities in Canada became McGill University (30th), University of Toronto (32nd), University of British Columbia (45th) [3]. As University of Toronto is one of the largest centers of international education in Canada as well, we chose it as an example to analyze the system of preparation international students to entry and study at the universities in Canada. The international education programs offered by University of Toronto are a typical example of the Canadian approach to prepare international students for entry into higher education. To be competitive, international students are expected to have a high level of language proficiency, confirmed by the results of the international test TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). For students participating in higher education programs they expect to see TOEFL 100 points iBT (Internet version of the test) or TOEFL 600 points pBT (a paper version of the test). They also accept other international language tests such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) with an overall band of 6.5 and with no band below 6.0, or tests of English courses GCSE / IGCSE / GCE with a minimum final grade level of "B".

International students who don't meet English language requirements might be candidates for

programs specializing in language and academic preparation. The programs range in length from six weeks to eight months. Courses preparation programs are flexible enough – from General English (standard course or intensive) to specialized programs such as "English Academic Preparation", "Foundation" and others. The main objective of all programs for international students is to give students a solid foundation in English, without which further successful learning and adaptation of students to the requirements and standards of study and life in Canada is impossible. English language proficiency requirements for admission to preparation programs are slightly lower: 63–99 points TOEFL iBT (Internet version of the test) or 523–599 points pBT TOEFL (paper version of the test), 5.0–6.5 points for the IELTS test and level "C" for tests of English courses GCSE / IGCSE / GCE [4].

The program Foundation enjoys the highest popularity among international students. Foundation program typically covers a period of eight months of preparing. Although depending on their initial language proficiency international students can choose summer intensive programs of shorter duration. The popularity of these programs can be explained by a number of distinct advantages. First and foremost, international students get a conditional admission to the first year of university, so they simultaneously improve their English, develop more academic skills and study subjects from university program, which allows to save time and money. To be considered for full admission to the university undergraduate, international students must complete Foundation with high grades and pass exams.

The curriculum of the program "Foundation" combines English language course and academic support with first year university courses (within which students can earn one full credit towards their undergraduate degree) and discipline-specific courses (students take discipline-specific courses which correspond to their admission stream).

Most of the learning time is dedicated to language training, more precise to academic English. Studying language is integrated with the development of academic skills required for the future successful study at the university. The structure of the language course consists of 4 modules: academic listening and speaking, critical reading and writing, English writing discourse, university skills and strategies. Step by step international students learn how to use information from oral and written sources, how to express their opinions clearly and correctly and to justify them convincingly, to participate in seminars and colloquiums, to take notes, to make presentations and to do independent research. Knowledge which international students receive while studying greatly facilitate their entry into the foreign language educational space.

Discipline-specific courses that international students study according to their field of study serve as introductory courses for first-year classes in these disciplines. The main objective of these courses is to form students' communicative competence level sufficient for adequate communication in educational and scientific field. In these courses international students learn the language of their speciality, including: necessary general and

scientific terminology vocabulary that takes into account their future profession, assignment types, academic requirements and evaluations used in their area of study. Special subjects are taught by instructors from specific departments where international students receive conditional admission thus ensuring the implementation of the principle of continuity in learning.

During the preparation program "Foundation" international students study one of the university courses, which is counted as one full credit towards their undergraduate degree: history course (for faculties of Arts and Sciences, Architecture, Landscape and Design, and Music faculty) or engineering course (for Applied Science and Engineering faculty). The history course gives international students the understanding of the development of human societies from the origins to the present, with examples from around the world. Course topics also include the following issues: the environment; cultural development and cooperation; the creation and nature of belief systems; political, economic and social structures; gender relations; and the relationship between global patterns and local developments.

Engineering course consists of two parts. The first part of the course is an introduction to the design process. Consistently, students are introduced to the actual design process, strategies for successful work in a team, to design for human factors, society and the environment. A feature of this course is that the content of engineering study is enriched with the educational material focused on the formation of the communicative competence of international students and engaging students into various intensive communicative environments. International students learn to apply their knowledge in practice, for example, to express and justify their point of view, work with different sources of information, to write technical reports in groups and individually, to make presentations within a discussion group. Building on the first course, the second part deepens the acquired knowledge and skills. At this stage, international students begin to perform more complex tasks, such as: working in teams on long-term projects, writing a series of technical reports and performing group presentations, design projects.

The analysis of the University of Toronto shows that besides educational services, the range of services includes assistance and support for foreign students to adapt to the new academic and socio-cultural environment, which in turn boosts academic achievements. So, the university created sites and designed electronic brochure "International Program Foundation" (in Russian, English, Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese languages) which contain useful information for foreigners.

For newly admitted international students the employees of the University have tried to enhance international students' adjustment experiences through the implementation of the initial adaptation program called «Orientation Week». The purpose of the program is to lay a foundation for the new students' entire life and study at the university. During the orientation tour, series of events, programs, and meetings provide new students with an in-depth overview of how their

future study is going to be. Important parts of the adaptation program include registration for classes, overviews of the various academic disciplines, and meetings with faculty, academic advisers, and fellow students.

Besides it, during the whole term of the university study international students can consult advisers on academic, social, cultural and personal issues, in some cases such consult advisors can act as "advocates" of international students defending their interests against the university community. Consultants solve students' problems either by themselves or send them to appropriate university services.

Such organization of educational process at the University of Toronto aims to provide effective training international students so that they are able to adapt to the university learning environment. Besides it creates conditions for the preservation of motivation while studying at university.

So the experience we studied can help to figure out the most promising areas in terms of its application for training international students in Ukraine. First, it can be providing within a language course a special module "Academic skills", aimed at forming academic skills required for further educational and research activities at the university. The main focus of this module should be on the techniques and methods of working with foreign language information. Secondly, it's the close cooperation between teachers from preparation and main departments, aimed at solving urgent tasks of language training and pre-university preparation. Thirdly, using some of the instructional techniques that are widely used in Canadian schools. It may be teaching by case- method, which is widely used today in the preparation international students in language classes. Fourth, further development and improvement of existing infrastructure of Ukrainian universities aimed at the comfortable staying international students. As a rule it includes visa support, study materials (maps, brochures), specific adaptation events (excursions, concerts etc.). In addition to the above-mentioned activities Ukrainian universities can create support and advice services on various issues, offer international students a special orientation about Ukrainian culture and overall academic culture. Such efforts might include holding informal meetings with international students like speaking clubs, study groups, workshops etc., aimed at extending their knowledge about Ukrainian culture, getting close with the peculiarities of other cultures, forming tolerance for cultural differences, and integration of international students into Ukrainian student community. All this allows international students to establish a dialogue easier and feel more comfortable in the new socio-cultural environment.

Conclusions. Analysis of aspects in pre-university preparation programs for international students in Canada on the example of the programs at University of Toronto proves that one of the main advantages of Canadian higher education for international students is its simple and transparent system of enrollment. Other advantages are the flexibility and efficiency of the Canadian system of higher education in the pedagogical aspect, its orientation to meet the urgent educational needs of students and practical character of training.

International students have an opportunity to select the most appropriate combination of all components of the study: to determine the terms of the program, to work at their own pace, to pick a program according to their goals, to go for general reputation (or geographical location) of the university and others. Canadian universities recognize an importance of pre-university preparation programs and they are well prepared to meet international students not only academically but also socially and culturally.

Combining the traditions of the educational process established in Ukraine and the above-mentioned features of Canadian universities, may promote the development of international activities of Ukrainian universities and further influx of capital into the Ukrainian economy.

Prospects for further research. Future studies should consider looking at international experience in the context of organizational and pedagogical principles of pre-professional training international students of different profiles.

References:

1. Index – which countries have the best schools // Pearson. – Retrieved 01.04.2017 from: <http://thelearningcurve.pearson.com/index/index-ranking>.
2. Canada's Performance and Potential in International Education // Canadian Bureau for International Education. – Retrieved 02.02.2017 from: <http://www.cbie.ca/about-ie/facts-and-figures/>.
3. World University ranking // QS Top Universities. – Retrieved 05.03.2017 from: <http://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings>.
4. International Foundation Program // University of Toronto. – Retrieved 15.01.2017 from: <http://www.ifp.utoronto.ca/>.
5. L. Liu. "An international graduate student's ESL learning experience beyond the classroom," TESL Canada Journal, vol. 29, no. 1, p. 77–92, 2011. – Retrieved 15.04.2017 from: <http://teslcanadajournal.ca/tesl/index.php/tesl/article/view/1090/909>.
6. Verbik L. & Lasanowski V. (2007). International student mobility: patterns and trends. The Observatory on borderless higher education, 1–48.

Проскуркіна Я.І.

Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ДОУНІВЕРСИТЕТСЬКОЇ ПІДГОТОВКИ ІНОЗЕМНИХ СТУДЕНТІВ У КАНАДІ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ УНІВЕРСИТЕТУ ТОРОНТО)

Анотація

У статті з'ясовано особливості системи підготовки іноземних студентів до вступу у вищі навчальні заклади Канади на прикладі досвіду підготовки іноземних студентів в університеті Торонто. Розглянуто правила вступу, особливу увагу приділено змісту програм підготовки та навчальній практиці. Запропоновано перспективи шляхів застосування зарубіжного досвіду при організації доуніверситетської підготовки іноземних студентів в українських університетах.

Ключові слова: іноземні студенти, іноземні студенти, міжнародний досвід, підготовка, доуніверситетська освіта, підготовка до університету, університети Канади, Торонтський університет.

Проскуркіна Я.И.

Киевский национальный университет имени Тараса Шевченко

ОСОБЕННОСТИ ДОВУЗОВСКОЙ ПОДГОТОВКИ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ В КАНАДЕ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ УНИВЕРСИТЕТА ТОРОНТО)

Аннотация

В статье проанализировано особенности системы подготовки иностранных студентов к поступлению в высшие учебные заведения Канады на примере опыта подготовки иностранных студентов в университете Торонто. Рассмотрены правила поступления, особое внимание уделено содержанию программ подготовки и учебной практике. Предложены перспективы применения зарубежного опыта при организации довузовской подготовки иностранных студентов в украинских университетах.

Ключевые слова: иностранные студенты, международный опыт, подготовка, довузовское образование, подготовка к университету, университеты Канады, Университет Торонто.