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Lifelong Transition Trajectory for the International Researcher

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Abstract

The paper discusses recent changes occurring in the sphere of research worldwide. A special accent is made on the difficulties that face Russian scholars within adaptation to Bologna Agreements, European Framework for Research Careers and the necessity to integrate into the world research market characterized by transparency, international cooperation, active mobility and worldwide scientific interdependence. The paper provides theoretical analysis of the mentioned changes, highlights the most significant barriers and constraints to becoming an internationally recognized researcher as pointed by the Russian scholars within the case-study of Southern Federal University in Russia. Eventually the author's conclusions and offers are made concerning the tactics for overcoming these constraining factors when planning contemporary researcher's lifelong transition trajectory at the international level.

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1. Introduction

The processes of globalization and Europeanization are strongly challenging the development of contemporary science and education worldwide making trans-border research collaboration highly significant [1]. These phenomena are of special concern in the Eastern European countries that were joining Bologna process at the beginning of the XXI century. It is explained by huge differences in these countries' higher education systems and historical and cultural background of their development that to some extent cause the complexity in higher education

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systems' synchronization with the unified European model, deep transformations and active modernization in tertiary sector. In the Russian Federation that signed Bologna Agreements in 2003 the adaptation to the new circumstances was complex, demanded profound understanding of theoretical and methodological basis of its specifics and has not been finished so far [2]. It is mostly related to the integration of Russia into the European Research Area as this process raises a lot of questions, needs serious explanatory work to lessen the tension of researchers and scientists within adaptation to the new rules of work and self-representation at the international research arena.

The latest official document 'Towards a European Framework for Research Careers' issued by the European research network for innovation in 2011 may be seen as a preliminary guidance for the researchers whose work should strengthen European science and technology, promote free circulation of knowledge and technological advances thus making them more competitive in contemporary world [3]. The offered draft distinctly defines career paths researchers may have working internationally irrespective of their age, nationality and country of residence. The offered Career Framework provides comparability in research career structures, lessens researcher's labor market fragmentation on the national criteria, diminishes segregation tendencies between career in industry, academia and other sectors, stimulates mobility and cross-border research cooperation.

This career model is strongly supported theoretically. Firstly, by the concept of lifelong learning that goes in line with the ideas of the self-directed learning and the Andragogy School in adult learning across the lifespan [4]. Secondly, it also correlates with lifelong transitions and transformation practices to mature thinking, guidance in working out and planning individual career pathways [5] and to some extent even addresses the concept of the 'learning biography' firstly introduced by du Bois Reymond & Chisholm in 2006 in relation to modern young people able to create their own biographical projects to turn from disengaged into productive learners alongside with the changes that occur in the characteristics of transitions which go from linear to non-linear or reversible ones with multiple available pathways not excluding the opportunity of coming in and out of research career trajectory [6, 7]. Thirdly, by some general ideas expressed in the publications aiming to 're-theorise transitions using international perspectives as critical tools' [8, p. 394] however not at the researchers' but at the young learners' level.

2. Objectives, methodology and research design

Introduction of the basic European documentation regulating research careers in the region (2011) initiated active discussions concerning the defined research career trajectory and requirements for the successful transitions from one stage to another. The main postulates were previously documented in the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning (EQF), the Bologna Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area. Perceiving a researcher as a 'professional engaged in the conception or creation of new knowledge, products, processes, methods and systems and also in the management of the projects concerned' [3, p. 2] has put a stress on the main criterion of researcher's career development, i.e. high quality research.

In accordance with this understanding the following stages of researcher's career development are offered: R1 - First Stage Researcher (up to the point of PhD); R2 - Recognised Researcher (PhD holders or equivalent who are not yet fully independent); R3 - Established Researcher (researchers who have developed a level of independence); R4 - Leading Researcher (researchers leading their research area or field) [3, p. 2]. The document demonstrates the profiles and necessary and desirable competences for each of them. It is important that such progressive career paths do not necessarily require transition from one stage to another and it means that the researcher may feel comfortably within one chosen stage during his/her lifespan. However it is not a desirable variant as this framework demonstrates research prospects and possible research career advantages worldwide.

Nevertheless a misbalancing contradiction is in the fact that these requirements and career stages are either unknown to a big mass of Russian researchers or cannot be fully followed by them due to some objective reasons in spite of the urgent necessity to integrate into the international research market. Thus, the overall objective of the paper is to identify drivers and barriers to becoming an international researcher and investigate the ways in which

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