

Creating a cluster type partnerships between academics and professionals

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Abstract

In this work the perspectives of interaction between educational institutions and employers in Russian mono-cities is discussed. The possibility of using cluster approach in the development of academic and professional partnership is proved. The design expertise of cluster environment is shown through the example of Arseniev the mono-city of Far Eastern Federal District. The structure of academic and manufacturing cluster is presented, and the mechanism of its subjects' interaction is described. Copyright © 2015, Far Eastern Federal University, Kangnam University, Dalian University of Technology, Kokushikan University. Production and Hosting by Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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Introduction

In the modern social and cultural environment, the partnership of educational institutions and employers is considered to be an institutional arrangement of competitive human capacity formation and also a necessary institution for improving the quality of education. The modifications of the conditions and content of economic activity that have developed in our country have noted a range of requirements on the part of employers to ensure the quality of graduate training. Problem-solving ability and commitment to an occupational role in an appropriate sphere of science or

business are considered to be some of the most important factors when concluding professional contracts. The educational system responds to these requirements with the selective development of intervention mechanisms for educational processes that contribute to the formation of professional self-determination indicators and personal characteristics [1]. Strategic cooperation is extensively implemented via rather local academic and manufacturing branches of “university-enterprise”. However, it is important to note that in the Russian Federation, there are territorial units for which the problems of the extension of entities' interactions and the identification of the statuses and functionalities of concerned parties are actualized. These territorial units refer to Russian towns (mono-cities) in which there are generally one or several core companies and a chain of educational institutions related to middle, middle-professional and high levels

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of qualification. According to the latest sociological studies [7,8], in most mono-cities, modern enterprises are experiencing staff scarcity not only in terms of top-level professionals but also in terms of blue-collar workers and middle-ranking specialists at the staff level. It is quite clear that the effective and dynamic development of such mono-cities requires the organization of a unified academic structure that is focused only on satisfying the staff needs of the current business entity.

It appears that one of the prospective approaches to solving this problem is the organization of strategic partnerships between employers and educational institutions that are organized in terms of cluster type. The cluster approach represents one of the directions of system concepts for solving problems concerning competitive regional growth, and this approach was initiated by Mr. Porter, a professor of the Harvard Business School [9].

In regional development, extra attention has recently been given to an approach based on clusters in Russia [2]. The principles of the organization and development of clusters are listed in the concept of cluster-based policy in Russia, which was adopted by the government in 2008. The application of the cluster approach as a strategy for social and economic development has assumed a leading role in a number of Russian regions. The occurrence and necessity of the formation of cluster-based educational milieus in Russian mono-cities is determined by the following factors:

- all parties of a strategic partnership are geographically isolated; in other words, current developments in education, production and information infrastructure are provided;
- all contributors adjust with a multilevel training system for specialists with the required qualifications;
- the enterprises and educational institutions are integrated into clusters in the mono-cities in a manner that is beneficial to cooperation in terms of the product's competitive growth, cost reduction and, most importantly, the training of qualified specialists who are suitable for the specific nature of the cluster.

This paper describes the experience of organizing an academic and manufacturing cluster-based environment in Arseniev, a city in the Far Eastern Federal district. The structure of the academic and manufacturing cluster is presented, and the

mechanisms of the interactions of all of the cluster parties are outlined.

Brief description of the mono-city of Arseniyev

The population of Arseniev city is small, approximately 60 thousand people; thus, this city is socially positioned as a small town in Russia. However, its strategic importance goes far beyond the Far East region. This importance depends first on the presence of the two fastest growing economic entities that specialize in engineering, that is, the JSC Arseniev Aviation Company “Progress” and the JSC “Askold”. The products of these companies are highly valued in our country and abroad. In this regard, the city is in a favourable demographic situation (which is generally not the case for typical small towns in Russia); consequently, this town has its own personal capacities for core enterprises. Approximately 20% of the population is composed of young people of 20 years or younger.

The territorial entity called Arsenyev received a boost to its development in the early 40s during the Great Patriotic War when there was a need for strategic defence enterprises that were geographically distant from the western borders of the Soviet Union. Almost simultaneously two engineering businesses were founded, the “Progress” and “Askold” factories, and contributed to a sharp increase in the population primarily because of the well-organized relocation of highly skilled professionals from the western regions of the country. At the same time, these businesses opened a vocational school for the operational training of workers from the local population for specific positions. After the war, the plants did not stop their activities, and most of the new specialists stayed in the city, which consequently initiated the development of a network of educational institutions beginning from pre-school. In 1952, Arsenyev was granted the status of a city with priority development due to the specific features of the business production entities [10]. By the early 1990s, Arsenyev city was among the most successfully developing small towns of the Far Eastern region. However, the sharp economic downturn that occurred in the post-Soviet era affected this city particularly harshly. The conversion of defence enterprises caused by a decrease in government contracts launched a huge outflow of highly qualified specialists into the neighbouring and western regions of Russia, where plants with a certain profile were functioning. The situation worsened due to the outflow of young people from the neighbouring large cities Khabarovsk

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