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THE RUSSIAN CUSTOMS ACADEMY: INTEGRATION INTO THE GLOBAL NETWORKS OF EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the topical issues of the Russian Customs Academy's integration into the global networks of education institutions. The special attention is paid to RCA's cooperation within the International Network of Customs Universities (further – INCU) and its role within Education and Methodic Association for Customs in Russia (further – EMAC). The authors' approach to the arrangement of educational institutions for Customs within the interaction of INCU and EMAC is suggested. The incentives and conditions for interaction with overseas partners are considered and the obstacles on the path to the integration are identified.

Keywords: Russian Customs Academy, Customs training, interaction, integration, global network of educational institutions

Introduction

The Russian Customs Academy (further – RCA) and its three branches in Saint-Petersburg, Rostov-on-Don and Vladivostok constitute a unique educational, research and methodical complex providing higher professional education for specialists in Customs management in regions of the country associated with the priorities of Customs policy implementation: in the center and on the north-western, southern and eastern frontiers. The organizational structure of the Russian Customs Academy together with its branches is created on the same principle and includes the Faculty of Customs, Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Law and Faculty for Advanced Training providing refresher courses for all Customs officers every five years after three years service in Customs authorities.¹

The higher Customs education in Russia aims to train professional managers in Customs for Customs authorities capable of administrating in compliance with international standards and regulations, comprehending and implementing state-of-art technologies of Customs control based on electronic declaration and risk management system.²

¹ Kislovskiy, Y.G. 2008, *The historical review of the Russian Customs Academy development*, Moscow, RCA Press, p. 24

² Dyakov, V.I. 2010, *The beginning of the higher customs education in the Far East.*, Vladivostok, Vladivostok Branch, RCA Press.

Besides the RCA trains specialists in economics and law to cover positions, responsibilities of which do not comprise Customs managers' range of primary duties, but are of great importance for Customs authorities as they are related to the fiscal policy and law matters that provide entire legal framework.

The Russian Customs Academy like any higher educational institution in the Russian Federation is building international relationships and actively working on integration process into the global university networks.

1. Incentives and conditions for interaction with overseas partners

It should be noticed that significance of network approach used by the Russian higher educational institutions to integrate into global scientific and education community is caused by a number of main reasons: globalization and acceleration of changes in the world economy, policy, science and engineering and other important spheres of human activities; new generation of workers' need for fast response to such changes, expansion of international cooperation between universities for sharing experience in education; development of network computer technologies and global computer networks.

With focus on the international activities of the RCA, it is important to emphasize that incentives and conditions for interaction with overseas partners are totally different from those in other higher educational institutions.

Firstly, it is the Customs domain that creates a platform for the Russian Customs Academy to develop international cooperation. Strengthening economic links between states led to world market grouping along specified product lines of individual regions and steady flows of goods. Thereby, it increases importance of the Customs service and as a result it gave rise to the necessity for forming future Customs specialists' new competencies: ability to understand interconnection between national and global challenges, readiness to professionally respond under conditions of international cooperation and competition as well as interact with the representatives of Customs administrations from foreign countries. This sphere is being realized in special education and other types of training for Customs officers in many countries.

Secondly, the work on the development of the RCA's international relations and its branches is defined by goals and objectives of the Federal Customs Service of Russia that takes part in ensuring Russia's interests and activities in economy and trade and in such transnational alliances as the World Customs Organization (further – WCO), the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (further – APEC), the Association of SouthEast Asian Nations (further – ASEAN), The East African Community (further – EAC) and others as well as international organizations aimed to group more countries sharing both common interests and (or) common borders and similar level of development: Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Customs Union, Commonwealth of Independent States, Euro-Asian Economic Community.

Thus, in addition to the above mentioned, the focus should be made on two factors that have broken traditional isolation of national Customs systems or their separate elements and thereby have created the necessary conditions for interaction. These factors are as follows:

1. alliances of countries (economies) aimed at overcoming barriers to the flows of

goods;

2. increase in cooperation between national Customs administrations within the framework of the World Customs Organization regarding developing and implementing the international standards, information and automated systems in Customs technologies.

Besides, there are three more factors which have impact on training for Customs authorities and facilitate integration including one internal and two external ones:

1. “Internal factor” is related to the necessity to implement standards and principles based on the Revised Kyoto Convention, other innovations proposed by the World Customs Organization into the practice of the national Customs activities and executives’ mentality;

2. “External factors” include a) the expansion of Bologna declaration and adoption of its principles for general educational systems to be modernized almost all over the world; b) international program for distant learning through the Internet developed by the WCO (E-learning Program).³

The given factors presupposed integration policy direction of the RCA as part of the Federal Customs Service of Russia, which is responsible for training and retraining, into the infrastructure of international organizations and networks of educational institutions. The Intergovernmental Economic Committee of Economic Union of the Commonwealth of Independent States by its resolution from October 1, 1997 assigned the Russian Customs Academy to perform functions of the base training center for Customs training for the member-states of the Commonwealth of Independent States (according to the special agreements). In 2002, the Russian Customs Academy became the leading training center for Customs authorities of the Euro-Asian Economic Community member-states, the status of the IV WCO Regional Training Center being awarded.

In 2005–2006, four events, which are of great importance for progress in Customs research and education, took place.

The PICARD (Partnership in Customs Academic Research and Development) was established by the World Customs Organization to build general approaches to training, initiate researches on relevant developments in the Customs domain and create a platform to share experience in science and Customs training.

Some academic institutions and businesses with the WCO and PICARD assistance established the International Network of Customs Universities (INCU) and decided on the publication of the “World Customs Journal (WCJ), the first issue of which came to its existence at the 2nd PICARD Conference on March, 2007.⁴

Within the framework of the INCU Customs administrations and academic institutions have recognized that there is a distinct set of knowledge, skills and behaviors that are needed for Customs to serve as a unique government agency regulating international trade to meet national objectives. Implementing such requirements or standards would result in more unified training results and, as consequence, common professional approach to management of development and professionalization of Customs

³ Customs Center for Learning, viewed 3 September 2013, http://www.wcoomd.org/learning_customshome_membersco

⁴ PICARD Programme, viewed 3 September 2013, <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/topics/capacity-building/activities-and-...>; INCU: <http://www.incu.org/>; WCJ: <http://www.worldcustomsjournal.org>

officers.

The PICARD in partnership with the INCU developed such a set of professional standards. The professional standards for Customs training were finalized and adopted by the WCO in July, 2009. Today the standards can and are being used by the academic world to develop educational programs which provide professional qualifications for Customs staff to BA and MBA Levels.

2. The arrangement of Customs educational institutions within the interaction of the INCU and the Education and Methodic Association of Customs Universities

The data received in June 2013 showed that the INCU membership consisted of 11 institutional members including Shanghai Customs Academy (College), Innovation Trade School of Kazakhstan, academic institutions of the Philippines, Australia, the USA, Nigeria, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Germany, Federation of the Italian Associations of Mechanical and Engineering Industry (ANIMA); 46 individual members; 133 affiliates represented by academic institutions, administrative and judicial bodies, and businesses. Four Russian higher educational institutions including the Russian Customs Academy, International Business and Law Institute (IMBIP) of Saint-Petersburg State University; Saint-Petersburg State University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics (the first Russian participant in INCU); Management of Customs and Insurance Service Department of the Saint-Petersburg State University of Service and Economics; Russian Academy of National Economy and Public Administration under the President of the Russian Federation, North-West Institute are also members of this network.

The INCU has created a platform for the WCO and research and academic institutions cooperation in the fields of Customs research, training and retraining for Customs service. When compared with educational institutions under the Bologna declaration, the INCU membership is characterized by the diversity of typological clusters, which are distinguished by quality and quantity of educational services they offer as well as by willingness to interact with similar academic institutions. These typological clusters include:

1. Higher educational institutions of vocational Customs education established by Customs authorities, which are:

- Shanghai Customs Academy (further – SCA) under the General Administration of Customs of the People's Republic of China;
- Academy of Customs Service of Ukraine;
- Vladivostok Branch of the Russian Customs Academy under the Federal Customs Service of Russian Federation.

SCA provides both 3-year Master's and 4-year Bachelor's degree programs. Vladivostok Branch offers 5-year program for training specialists for Customs management. The Academy of Customs Service of Ukraine provides specialist's, Master's and Bachelor's programs.

2. Higher special educational institutions administered by universities:

- University of Munster, Faculty of Law, Department of Customs and Excise Duties provides several Bachelor's programs;

- University of Nottingham, Business school with a wide range of non-degree programs for Customs and logistics, UK;
- Belarusian National Technical University, department of Customs, specialist's program;
- Lyceum of the *Philippines University* provides Bachelor degree's program in Customs;
- College of Business Education and Training (further – CBET) of Asian Institute of Maritime Studies (further – AIMS) provides Bachelor of Science in Customs Administration;
- Department of International Business in Seowon University, Cheongju-city, offers the course of Customs Law (3 credits) for undergraduates;
- Centre for Customs and Excise Studies (further – CCES), University of Canberra, provides both Master's degree programs and Bachelor's degree programs and also trains specialists;
- Institute of Customs, Taxation and Border Management of Pannasastra University of Cambodia (further – PUC) offers Executive Master of Business Administration-Customs and Executive Master of Business Administration-Taxation;
- Massey University, Center for Defense and Security Studies in New Zealand provides Master's / Bachelor's / PhD degree programs and also trains specialists.

3. Educational institutions with the incomplete program in Customs matters affiliated by research and development institutions:

- Korea Customs and Trade Development Institute under the Korean Customs service, Republic of Korea;
- Training and research department of Iran Customs Service.

4. Training centers:

- Customs Training Institute of Japan;
- Customs Border Control Training Center in Cheonan-si, Republic of Korea;
- *Centre for Customs and Excise Studies*, Bangkok, Thailand.

5. Institutions for Science and Research:

- Korea Research Society for Customs (further – KRSC), Seoul, Republic of Korea.

In spite of the short random choice from the INCU membership list, the arrangement of the INCU participants given above provides an approximation for each cluster. It is evident that academic institutions from the first two clusters offer all levels of higher education and special training for Customs as well as an opportunity for relevant research during the training. Clusters 3-5 are focused on initial training, retraining, adapting to the working environment, providing opportunities for Customs technology progress.

The potential for cooperation in all professional areas is open up before academic institutions from the first two clusters. The interaction between clusters 1-2 and clusters 3-5 will be fruitful, but not of a regular character and there will not be a common framework for the closest relationships in the nearest future.

Thus, pursuing the selected direction and the form of partnerships, the RCA will certainly find understanding as well as opportunities for contacts in science and research with other higher educational institutions training staff for Customs administrations and

with a larger group of universities fostering Customs professional education.

Besides the INCU membership, by resolution of the State Customs Committee of Russia (1996) the Russian Customs Academy has become the main higher educational institution and a member of the internal network of higher educational institutions of Russia providing Customs education. The network, which is called Education and Methodic Association of Customs Universities in Russia (further – EMACU), includes 85 higher educational institutions: 63 state institutions and 20 private institutions.⁵ Three Russian universities, members of the EMACU, were mentioned above as they together with the RCA belong to the INCU. This network includes two foreign participants: Belarusian National Technical University (further – BNTU) and Kyrgyz National Technical University (further – KNTU) that provide higher education specialist's programs.

The world-wide experience based on the Bologna agreement, normative legal documents of the higher education in Russia as well as local normative acts of the Russian Customs Academy and others define the possibilities for network cooperation through academic mobility as the important factor for development of modern education.⁶ This determination would seem easy to follow but the reality is harder for it to be realized.⁷ There are many cases that clearly show it and the farther away from Europe the more obstacles there are on the path to implementation of this principle including financial support, language barriers, discrepancy in credits, curriculums and others.⁸

What, in our opinion, should be taken into consideration, when arranging network cooperation and academic mobility according to the RCA's objectives?

Firstly, both education programs (contents, the number of credits, teachers' skills, curriculum mapping, the essence and correlation of theory and practice, teaching techniques, information management and technologies) and characteristic features of the EMACU as the potential partners for internal network mobility (beneficial support, living conditions, rules for information resources, peculiarities of schedule, restrictions) are to be studied comparatively.⁹

Secondly, it is necessary to rightly choose a program, which is to be reasonable and matching customers' desires as well as duration for its full or part-time completion, ways and forms of final credits.

Thirdly, language barriers should be overcome.

Fourthly, there should be the legal contracts in an authentic form.

Fifthly, enough funds to cover such expenses as travels and grants provided by one or some resources and possibilities for granting projects both prior to their implementation and according to the schedule are required.

If we imagine the structure of interaction within the INCU and the EMACU in the

⁵ URL: http://rta.customs.ru/rta/index.php?option=com_content&view=artic..., viewed 20 June 2013

⁶ Federal Law "About the education in Russian Federation" dated from 29.12.2012, №273-FL, art.15.

⁷ Appendix to RCA's order of 21.12.2012 №1349, *The provision for academic mobility of students, post-graduates, doctorants and academic staff of the Russian Customs Academy.*

⁸ Gretchenko, A.I., Gretchenko, A.A 2009, *Bologna process: integration of Russia into the European and world educational community*, Moscow, KNORUS.

⁹ 2-nd APEC Conference on Cooperation in Higher Education in the Asia-Pacific Region "Mobility of Education in the APEC Region" 2013: report and discussing /not published, Vladivostok, FEFU 29/06/2013/

form of a circle diagram, we can see that the RCA and several higher education institutions from St. Petersburg and Belarus mentioned above share the common segment. The same networks include three detached branches, located in the northwest, south and the Russian Far East. The INCU also embraces other universities from Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan which can be considered as a peripheral segment in the circle diagram surrounding higher education institutions of “two-network segment” and as a potential for its expansion.

Basing on the RCA’s priority of academic mobility development and taking into account the number of favorable signs reflecting the situation of development (according to the results of monitoring of five points mentioned above), it is possible to identify some concentrically arranged spheres.

The first sphere: the RCA and its branches. It is an internal sphere which is characterized by a great number of the same features, common resources for financing, good knowledge of academic staff and others.

The second sphere: the RCA + Saint-Petersburg Branch and universities of Saint-Petersburg, BNTU. It is characterized by easy monitoring at minimal costs, developed infrastructure, opportunity for choice of qualified staff, lack of language and logistics barriers. The cooperation within this sphere demands minimal investments.

The third sphere: the RCA + Saint-Petersburg Branch + Rostov-on-Don Branch and universities, the INCU members from Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan. Here it is possible to effectively build relationships within INCU. It is characterized by optimal logistics, minimum of language difficulties and moderate investments. Effectiveness of Customs training is provided by a single normative base of the Customs Service (it is true for the Ukrainian Customs Service).

3. The first results of interaction within the INCU in Asia-Pacific region: challenges and prospects

The creation of Customs universities network is a great advance in the process of convergence of Customs education that can be considered as the achievement in understanding the significance of future integration. But the integration of Customs training seems to be a long-term prospect.

Today the geographical position of Vladivostok Branch of the Russian Customs Academy enables to develop relations with academic institutions of the Asia-Pacific countries within the framework of INCU.¹⁰

The International Scientific Conference which was hosted by Vladivostok Branch of the RCA on September 18-21, 2012 and gathered together 137 participants including 16 representatives from 7 European countries and Asia, promoted the first steps in our intention to build professional relations with the representatives from the Customs Institute of Japan, the Korean Customs and Trade Development Institute (Seoul), the Korean Research Society for Customs (Cheongju).

Vladivostok Branch continues to develop relations with Shanghai Customs Academy within the framework of the Memorandum signed; aims to establish

¹⁰ Dyakov, V.I., Eroshenko, S.S 2009, “Customs education and science in the east of Russia: search for ways of interaction in APR”, *The proceedings of the VIII International Forum of universities presidents of the Far East, China, Dalian*, pp.62-65.

relationships with other academic institutions of China, which are also the INCU members; maintains relationships with the Customs Institute of Japan and Korean Research Society for Customs; and searches for mutual understanding with the leaders of Customs education such as Centre for Customs and Excise Studies (CCES), University of Canberra, Australia and others. It is a challenging activity in all aspects. Nevertheless, there are first encouraging results and understanding of necessity to go on taking efforts targeted at the international cooperation.

Today we can see the first results of interaction between Customs academic institutions in Asia-Pacific region. The Bachelor's degree programs for Customs training carried out by many universities in Asia-Pacific region as well as MBA's degree programs for training Customs officials sporadically initiated by the University of Canberra on the basis of the University of Cambodia are key factors for cooperation.

The correlations of requirements for training Customs specialists with Bachelor's degree seem to be essential at this stage. The challenges in cooperation are caused by poor knowledge of each other, absence or shortage of available information base. To build collaboration with overseas partners it is essential:

- to make working contacts at special conferences, similar to those ones held by the PICARD;

- to organize and to participate in the international regional conferences similar to the conference held on the base of Vladivostok Branch of the Russian Customs Academy in September, 2012;

- to build partnership relations in education, science and culture among higher educational institutions.

The International Scientific forums evidently provide the shortest way of sharing experience, building new business and professional contacts and lastly, personal acquaintance, as not the least of the factors of trust. Not only do the similar meetings break the language and mental barriers but they also make it possible for all the participants to discuss on line the advantages of achievements made by the colleagues, and reveal drawbacks and strong sides of the national systems.

Future integration of Customs training in Europe and Asia-Pacific region countries is possible only if unified requirements are successively complied with. They include:

- two-level system for personnel training (Bachelor's degree program and Master's degree program necessary to occupy leading positions in Customs authorities) based on the PICARD Professional Standards;

- academic credits like ECTS;

- academic mobility;

- education quality assurance made by the INCU / WCO;

- development and participation in the international research program linked with a number of topical issues of economic development and goods flow to the countries of Asia-Pacific region.

And the key principles of interaction within internal all-Russian network for Customs education leading to effective activities and successful work upon which cooperation should be based are as follows:

- common long-term goal;

- integration of resources (educational, information, personnel, etc.);
- openness (free access, possibility of observing, including and joining);
- multiplicity of levels for cooperation (each participant of a network can cooperate directly with any partner, a member of the network).

Summary and concluding remarks

Thus, the Russian Customs Academy starts integrating into the international scientific and educational space and has its clear prospect. The RCA among four higher education institutions out of 80 Russian ones is a member of the International Network of Customs Universities and at the same time is a leader of all-Russian network of higher education institutions with programs targeting at Customs training. Taken together, all this gives great opportunities and commits the RCA to arranging and taking active part in a network interaction, developing academic mobility for teachers, researchers and students as the future specialists of Customs administrations in the Customs Union. A well-designed strategy framework will allow turning this important direction into the effective tool for preparation of highly qualified staff.

Endnotes

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