

## Letter of the Guest Editor to Readers

The Russian Association of Higher Education Researchers organized the conference on “Rethinking Students: Ideas and New Research Approaches” in October 2015. The Conference was designed, inter alia, to refocus the attention of Russian researchers into such an important area of study as student experience and trajectories. Incredible as it may seem, there have been few valuable empirical studies on characteristics of Russian students so far, despite the dramatic changes to higher education in Russia of the last three decades. The high level of reports and discussions delivered in the conference allows us to hope for a surge of interest for student experience and the role of higher education in the life of students. We are happy to present some of these discussions in the form of papers and interviews with the key conference speakers.

The issue begins with an interview with Manja Klemenčič, researcher of higher education and student engagement from Harvard University. She comments on the central ideas of her speech devoted to the metaphor of student as citizens (student university citizenship). Are students only objects within higher education system, or are they agents that shape universities and education programs just as university management and professors? The answer to this question has far-reaching consequences not only for research methodology but also for practical solutions in development of universities.

Paul Ashwin from Lancaster University focuses in his interview and article on student engagement and the importance of detailed consideration of student transformations in the learning process. He criticizes the existing approaches to education quality assessment, proposing an alternative perspective based on disciplinary differences and specifics of socialization in various fields of knowledge.

The following three articles are unified by the common topic of academic dishonesty, namely plagiarism, cheating and bribery. Unfortunately, we have to admit the level of tolerance for dishonest practices among both students and professors remains very high in Russian higher education. Natalya Maloshonok from the Higher School of Economics suggests a conceptual model of relationship between academic honesty at the university and student engagement.

The fundamental conceptual correlations within this model are tested by a cross-university survey of students in economics and management. Elena Denisova-Schmidt from the University of St. Gallen, Martin E. Huber from the University of Freiburg and Elvira Leontyeva from the Pacific National University measure efficiency of anti-corruption educational campaigns. Based on an experiment conducted in Russian and Ukrainian universities, the authors try to find out how conversance with materials on anti-corruption changes student opinion about bribery in higher education and society as a whole. Finally, Yevgeniya Shmeleva from the Higher School of Economics explores a crucial problem: how incidence of plagiarism and cheating correlates with personal characteristics of students vs. unique features of university environment. Her study contributes a lot to the discussion on the measures to reduce the incidence of academic dishonesty.

The article by Mikhail Balyasin from the Higher School of Economics, Luís Carvalho from the University of Porto and Georgiana Mihut from Boston College is dedicated to development of tools to assess quality of Master's programs implemented jointly by universities of various countries as part of the Erasmus Mundus program. The authors describe how they developed and tested the tools to analyze performance of 193 Master's programs.

I am sure the research results presented in the articles of this issue will find a response among the readers and promote discussions on student experience characteristics.

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