

Introduction of bilingual educational programs in Tambov State Technical University, Russia

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Current changes in Russian economy and industry call for new forms of organization and functioning of higher professional education system. Competitiveness and success of university graduates at a labor market becomes the key goal of educational programs. With ongoing globalization of modern society and extensively growing international contacts and relations of Russian businesses, one of prerequisites of such success is excellent command of foreign language and appropriate professional terminology, i.e. professional bilingualism.

The need for foreign language knowledge is clearly understood by university students. The survey conducted among the students of Tambov State Technical University (TSTU) showed that 60% of informants were already taking additional language classes (at language centers or privately) to increase their competency in foreign languages and would be interested in taking up a bilingual program of study.

Integration of language teaching and professional education in one program offers certain advantages, the first of which is synergy: simultaneous building of a bilingual knowledge base in a subject and development of linguistic competency along with the increase of academic and professional competency. Besides, currently for certain academic fields (eg. Computer-aided engineering, Mechatronics, Stocks and investments, Marketing) up-to-date literature is available mostly in a foreign language, particularly in English; and studying it within the bilingual curriculum will give students “first-hand experience” of those disciplines. All together it is meant to increase the quality of student training.

Degree programs taught partly or fully in a foreign language are a new trend in Russian higher education. Currently very few universities offer such programs and mostly in Moscow and St. Petersburg. TSTU is one of the first educational institutions that have taken on the task of making them available in other regions as well, particularly in Central Russia.

Center for International Professional Training (CIPT) has been established at TSTU, which is admitting its first students in September 2005. The students are offered two five-year degree programs in English language – in Computer-Aided Design Systems and Economics and Business Management. The courses will be taught by highly qualified teachers of TSTU with extensive international experience, holders of International Engineering Educator title by the International Society of Engineering Education (IGIP), as well as guest professors from partnering universities.

These programs will also serve as an excellent framework for students and teachers academic mobility actions, contributing to the overall internationalization of university life.

In future CIPT plans to open German-language programs, as Germany is the largest Russian trade partner and German is the second most-widely studied foreign language in Russia.