

# Interuniversity integration on the basis of Network Interaction: Experience of Russia

## Integración interuniversitaria en base a una Red de Interacción: Experiencia rusa

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#### ABSTRACT:

The network form of implementation of educational programs is understood as a form of education with the use of resources of various organizations primarily performing educational activity. Already at the stage of development of educational programs in network forms one has to face a number of issues associated with unification of the disciplines being taught, which is most pronounced when network forms of implementation of educational programs are used in the field of study "Jurisprudence".

**Keywords:** educational activity; educational program; network forms; master courses

#### RESUMEN:

La forma de red de implementación de programas educativos se entiende como una forma de educación con el uso de recursos de diversas organizaciones que realizan principalmente actividades educativas. Ya en la etapa de desarrollo de programas educativos en forma de red, uno tiene que enfrentar una serie de cuestiones asociadas con la unificación de las disciplinas que se imparten, que es más pronunciada cuando se utilizan formas de implementación de programas educativos en el campo de estudio "Jurisprudencia".

**Palabras clave:** actividad educativa; programa educativo; formas de red; cursos magistrales

## 1. Introduction

The world community entered the era of globalization and it led to changes in many aspects of public life, also including organization of the educational system. Modern challenges of time caused by the change in requirements of employers to the quality of graduate education, new information technologies related to development of the Internet do not allow modern institutions of higher education willing to occupy a rightful place in the market of educational services to continue educational activity according to the standards of the 20th century. In this situation, a rather wide set of measures is used to improve the quality of

education, and organization of effective network interaction between institutions of higher education is far from being the last measure among them.

In reference literature, "interaction" is usually considered as a philosophical category reflecting the processes of influence of objects on each other, their mutual dependence, an objective and universal form of movement, development determining existence and structural organization of any material system (Gordeeva, 2016, 100).

The network form of education based on interaction of intellectual and material resources of a few objects of educational relations (Russian and foreign institutions of higher education) allows accumulating their efforts (both scientific and methodological or practical) required for successful completion of educational programs. Network interaction of a few institutions of higher education allows saving monetary funds of each participant, while increasing the effectiveness of their spending; carrying out an in-depth study of individual educational programs of applied or theoretical significance; allows students to acquire additional knowledge, expertise and skills due to use of the synergistic effect of possibilities of subjects of network cooperation. In addition, conclusion of agreements for network interaction disciplines the parties to the agreements and concentrates efforts on achieving the final result, as well as improves the quality of mastering of educational programs (Gurieva, 2014, 234-235). Agreements for network interaction must meet the following criteria: by industry affiliation they are civil agreements; by intended purpose they are agreements aimed at organization of education. Their subject matter is distribution of responsibilities between the participants in terms of conditions and the procedure for performance of educational activity according to the educational program implemented through the network form; the procedure for implementation of the educational program (accounting and documentation of the results of mastering of corresponding educational courses in different organizations, the nature and volume of resources used by each organization). These agreements are not directly mentioned in the Civil Code (Korshunova, 2016, 64-66).

Therefore, organization of implementation of educational programs in the network form is relevant in the following cases: when resources of a few organizations performing educational activity are used, or when participants of the network form of implementation create and approve a joint educational program. However, what is the legal regulation of this activity?

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## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Regulatory framework and network interaction experience in Russia**

The possibility for educational organizations to implement educational programs including master educational programs in the network form stipulated by Part 1, Article 13 and Article 15 of Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" No. 273-FZ of December 29, 2012 is an innovation of the educational legislation. Relations between educational organizations regarding performance of educational activity with the use of network forms is determined by agreements between them and other documents on organization of network interaction. However, there is still neither legislative regulation nor sufficient practice in relation to understanding the mechanism of implementation of education in the network form.

The prerequisite for emergence of the network form of interaction is the so-called theory of networks, which is actively developed by a number of representatives of social and human sciences (Zayakina, Romm, 2013, 118).

In Russia, the idea of using network forms in educational process has appeared and taken shape recently. This happened, first of all, due to participation of educational organizations of the Russian Federation in the Bologna Process, along with the possibility to enter the developing European education space. After the necessary changes were made to the legislation and a legal possibility to organize network interaction emerged, a question arose about its organization not only at the level of "double diploma" programs, which was

targeted at small groups of gifted students who speak foreign languages but also on a more massive scale, with participation of not only foreign but also Russian partners.

After adoption of the Federal Law "On Education in the Russian Federation", in our opinion, the tendency to development of joint educational programs not only with foreign but also with Russian partners will grow. It is necessary to take into account the current economic and social environment in the Russian society, the needs of the labor market, where not only thorough theoretical training but also the ability to immediately implement practical skills is required of modern graduates. This means that the employer does not expect a graduate who still needs to be taught something but a young specialist capable of professional self-improvement.

Therefore, the stage of professional "running-in" of knowledge, expertise and skills acquired in institutions of higher education must be passed by students also in institutions of higher education, as an option, with the help of network educational programs. They must demonstrate their achievements and at the same time improve them in another educational environment (and perhaps in another practical environment too – if not another educational but different organization is a partner of the institution of higher education, for example, a potential employer for the current students).

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation prepared letter of 28.08.2015 No. AK-2563/05 "About Methodical Recommendations on Organization of Educational Activity with the Use of Network Forms of Implementation of Educational Programs", which currently guides educational institutions interested in organization of educational activity with the use of the network form. Federal universities of Russia, for example, concluded the Agreement for Interaction of Federal Universities in Implementation of Network Educational Programs, which is framework for organization of the educational process with the use of the network form between certain universities in specific fields of study and levels of education. In the field of study "Jurisprudence", for example, negotiations were successfully held and such a bilateral agreement was signed to promote the framework Agreement between Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University (hereinafter "Kant BFU") and Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University (hereinafter "KFU").

The work on fulfillment of the Agreement for Interaction of Federal Universities in Implementation of Network Educational Programs involved a number of problems which, in our opinion, are typical exactly of the field of study "Jurisprudence".

In studies of future lawyers there are no such problems as in studies of technical specialists, for example, problems associated with the lack of material and technical resources, modern laboratory facilities, the lack of a sufficient number of highly qualified scientific and pedagogical staff members. The Federal State Educational Standard of Higher Education (hereinafter "FSES") in the field of study "Jurisprudence" allows educational organizations that educate or are going to educate lawyers to comply with the requirements to the material and technical base and the human resources of the educational process.

Educational institutions which produce lawyers must have both an educational courtroom and a room for a student legal clinic, a lecture hall audience equipped for classes in forensic science. We should make special mention of the requirement for availability of lecture halls for all types of classes which are provided for by the curriculum of the institution of higher education.

It is somewhat more difficult to rearrange the organization of libraries in accordance with the latest requirements and trends of time. In accordance with the federal state educational standard of higher education in the field of study 40.03.01 Jurisprudence (bachelor's level), which will come into force on September 1, 2017, for the whole period of education every student shall be provided with individual unlimited access to one or several electronic library systems (electronic libraries) and to the electronic information and educational environment of the organization. The electronic library system (electronic library) and the electronic information and educational environment shall provide the student with the possibility of access from any point which has access to the Internet, both in the territory of the organization and beyond it.

In case the organization does not use the electronic library system (electronic library), the

library fund shall include printed publications based on at least 50 copies of each edition of the main literature listed in the work programs of disciplines (modules), practice and at least 25 copies of the additional literature for 100 students. Therefore, provision with publications in case of non-use of the electronic library system (ELS) shall comply with the norms for the main literature as one for two – one book for two students and as one for four – one book for four students for the additional literature. Moreover, according to the requirements of the standards, the tendency to organize comfortable space for independent work of students is also modern. A library or a reading room can be such a place.

Mutual use of resources of libraries of educational organizations implementing network educational programs would be interesting. This could ensure improvement of the level of graduates' competence, would allow expanding the boundaries of students' awareness of available educational resources, increase motivation for learning and facilitate a more conscious choice of the educational path by students.

What advantages of the network form of implementation of educational programs in the field of study "Jurisprudence", except those which are typical of fields of study of technical profile, could be noted? What is the purpose of creating educational programs in the network form in the field of study "Jurisprudence"? In our opinion, this is mainly the possibility of development of personal qualities of students, competences in oral and written communication, development of the ability to adapt to a different educational environment with its traditions, pedagogical approaches, or a professional environment, which is promoted by mastering of an educational program beyond the educational organization of students. From the point of view of pedagogical staff members, this is activation of the exchange of best practices in education of new legal human resources, which creates conditions for raising the level of professional and pedagogical skills of the academic staff (Ilyina, 2010, 26). Therefore, as is noted by O.A. Serova, it appears reasonable to develop network models of interuniversity interaction exactly in the field of study "Jurisprudence" (Serova, 2015, 28). Let us study the master's level in more detail.

## **2.2. Peculiarities of creation and functioning of network master courses**

In our view, the master's level in the field of study "Jurisprudence" is most affected by academic freedoms in the area of content of educational programs. Today, we can state the lack of uniformity of the educational process in Russia in the field of study "Jurisprudence" in terms of names of disciplines being studied, their labor intensity and sequence of study. Under these conditions the academic mobility of students, which was to be achieved in the course of educational reforms, becomes problematic. For example, in the course of reviewing applications for transfer to the master's courses of Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, after the applicants, students of other institutions of higher education, submitted the necessary documents on the previously studied disciplines, we had to give negative responses about the possibility to change the educational institution due to the discrepancy in the content of educational programs.

Let us explain the essence of this problem on the basis of a simple example. In the city of Volgograd there are three institutions of higher education (and legal faculties), which have master courses in profile "Civil Law, Business Law, International Private Law". In the first institution of higher education (Volgograd State University) in these master courses the emphasis is placed on study of international private law (discipline "Role of Intellectual Property Law in Terms of Innovative Economic Development", "Sources of Private Legal Regulation of Innovative Economic Activity", "Fundamentals of Legal Regulation of Foreign Economic Activity", etc.)

The second institution of higher education (Volgograd Institute of Business) developed a unique master program focused on practice in law of immovable property (in its framework the following disciplines are studied: "Legal Regulation of Real Estate Activity", "Legal Regime of Immovable Property", "Mediation as a Form of Business Dispute Resolution", "Legal Infrastructure of Business", etc.)

The master courses of the third institution of higher education (Volgograd Institute of Management) include almost the same disciplines as bachelor courses but in an in-depth form. For example, this institution of higher education offers special courses "Law of Obligation", "Subjects of International Civil Commerce", "Issues of Housing Law", etc. Simply speaking, Volgograd Institute of Management has no unique concept of master courses in civil law.

As a result, even within the boundaries of one city students can not implement the principle of academic mobility only because the educational programs of the three institutions of higher education do not "match" each other, and that is why after one term in another institution of higher education and return back these students can not obtain a successive view of civil legal science. Their perception of civil law will be mosaic. Consequently, it appears that within the narrow specialization of legal master courses in civil law there should be a single concept of knowledge, expertise and skills that students must gain.

In other words, of the three components of the master program in one separate city of Russia in three institutions of higher education, only disciplines of the general scientific cycle ("Philosophy of Law", "Comparative Jurisprudence", etc.) common for all fields of legal master courses coincide. Mismatch of the professional cycle (including elective disciplines) makes it meaningless to transfer from a master course of one institution of higher education to another one even for one term.

Hypothetically, the deans of the three institutions of higher education of one city can sit down to talk and conclude an agreement for network interaction, having adjusted at least the professional cycle of the master program in civil law, but for many years it simply have not crossed their mind. However, even if this is ever done, the problem will still exist: if a Volgograd graduate student decides to study one term in another city of Russia due to academic mobility (for example, in Kaliningrad in I. Kant BFU) or, even in a foreign institution of higher education, this wish will still remain unfulfilled. Moreover, if we visit almost any website of a European institution of higher education, for example, the website of Sofia University (Bulgaria), we find no master programs in civil law.

Its master's degree programs ("Justice", "Public Administration", "International Law and International Relations") in principle do not coincide with the majority of Russian master programs in law, as they are arranged not by branch of law but by quite different criteria associated with students' study focused on practice. The Legal Institute of Kant BFU acted in a similar way, having established 4 master's degree programs: "Law for Public and Municipal Administration"; "International and European Law"; "Law in Business and Property Right Protection"; "Criminal Justice, Law Enforcement and Forensics".

Meanwhile, in our opinion, this problem is not insuperable. One of possible ways to settle it is to develop schemes of implementation of the educational process. For this purpose partner institutions of higher education must agree upon harmonization of educational programs implemented by them in a certain field of study. In the course of negotiations on possibilities of designing and further implementation of network educational programs, partner institutions of higher education inevitably have to make compromises, otherwise they will not have an opportunity to reach agreement. In the field of study "Jurisprudence", it is necessary to coordinate, first of all, the types of professional activity for which future masters are educated. In accordance with the Current Federal State Educational Standard (FSES) of higher education in the field of study "Jurisprudence" of the master's level, these are such types of activities as lawmaking, law enforcement, expert consulting, organizational and management, research and pedagogical.

When developing master educational programs, an institution of higher education relies on certain types of activity from this list. From our experience, there is no point in selecting all possible types of activity from those stipulated by the standard for an educational program of a certain profile, though many institutions of higher education have all possible types of activity in master educational programs. In our view, inclusion in one educational program of all types of activity further excessively overloads it with variety and heterogeneity of requirements to results of education in master programs. Selection of, for example, two or three types of activities allows drawing a compact and clear list of skills that must be gained

by students. Meanwhile, it should be remembered that it will be also necessary to form an optimal system for assessing the quality of education of students (evaluation tools). No one doubts that conventional means of assessing students' knowledge must be enhanced in reliance on a competence-based approach (Polupan, Azarova, 2013, 29).

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### 3. Results

I would like to note that it will be necessary to pay special attention not only to formation of the necessary competences of students in the educational program in the field of study "Jurisprudence" but also to formation of the competences of academic staff and human resources of educational and methodological subdivisions of educational organizations in terms of designing and implementation of educational programs with network interaction. Ensuring effective interaction of institutions of higher education in the modern integration process in the field of educational, research and other types of activity is the most important area of organizational changes in the system of higher education in Russia. Research and pedagogical, educational and methodological staff which will ensure academic mobility of students itself must be competent in the area of planning of network interaction, in the area of development of work programs and modules and in the area of development of methodological recommendations for implementation of educational disciplines and modules in terms of academic mobility and network interaction.

After determination of the profile of study and the corresponding types of activities of graduates in the course of designing educational programs it becomes clear which professional competences students mastering a certain educational program must possess – it is "bound" to types of activity. In parallel with definition of the profile of the master program and types of professional activity, when designing an educational program, partner institutions of higher education should present and coordinate educational goals. Establishment of educational goals is possible through aggregation of competences (Kiseleva, Pogosyan, 2013, 58).

If institutions of higher education work according to the FSES, competences in relation to types of activity may not mismatch, but their set can be different. Therefore, one of objectives will be to determine goals of a specific educational program taking into account its profile. This task is solved through coordination of future competences of graduates. Network educational programs imply coincidence of educational goals of the partner institutions of higher education. Every educational goal is achieved with a certain set of academic disciplines, types of practice and research work of graduate students).

Related groups of educational disciplines, types of practice and research work can be combined into modules, the level of mastering of which will be evaluated in aggregate. The educational program itself can be a certain set of modules, each of which will ensure implementation of the set goals. For convenience of structuring the educational program and facilitating further interaction of partner institutions of higher education, it is necessary to determine the labor intensity of each academic module (each academic discipline), which in total will ensure labor intensiveness of the entire educational program, which for magistracy is determined as 120 credit points (c.p.) for master courses.

While there are no new state educational standards in the field of study "Jurisprudence" of the master's level, it is too early to discuss the possibility of designing a new integrated (single) educational program for joint implementation. The difficulties faced by, for example, I. Kant BFU when designing the educational program in conjunction with KFU are implementation of current master programs on the basis of various educational standards.

At KFU these are Federal State Educational Standards of Higher Education (FSES), and at I. Kant BFU educational master programs are implemented on the basis of the Independently Established Educational Standard of Higher Education in the field of study 40.04.01 "Jurisprudence" of the master's level (hereinafter "IEESHE").

The structure of the curriculum formed in accordance with the requirements of the FSES implies cyclicity of mastering of the educational program by students, while the IEESHE of I. Kant BFU does not imply this cyclicity of the structure of the educational program and the

curriculum. In this situation, in our opinion, it is reasonable to speak not about designing a single program of two educational organizations with fully synchronized curricula and a calendar academic schedule but about forming an educational program with network participation.

In this case, first of all, the number of the term in which the joint module of the educational program will be implemented is determined. When designing the educational program with network participation of I. Kant BFU and KFU, we fixed upon the 3 term. Then we began to develop the disciplinary structure of the academic module aimed at achieving certain joint educational goals. Here it should be noted that in determining the educational goals it was taken into account that the partner institutions of higher education already implement master programs which are homogenous in their profile: at I. Kant BFU it is the master program "Law for Business and Property Right Protection" and at KFU the master program "Legal Support of Business". Law enforcement was determined as a specific type of activity for the designed educational program under the general title "Legal Support of Business". It corresponds with the goal to form the graduates' ability to apply regulatory legal acts in specific fields of legal activity, implement rules of substantive and procedural law in their professional activity in a qualified manner.

Other such types of activity are expert consulting that implies possession of such professional competences as the ability to interpret regulatory legal acts in a qualified manner, the ability to take part in legal expertise of draft regulatory legal acts, including in order to identify their provisions conducive to creating conditions for manifestation of corruption, to provide qualified legal opinions and consultations in specific fields of legal activity, and research activity that implies the ability to conduct research in the field of law in a qualified manner.

Therefore, the supposed model of the educational program is based on unity of educational goals, and formation of the set of disciplines of the joint academic module implies the possibility of choice of disciplines of the network module from curricula of partner institutions of higher education. This possibility implies the most complete use of the network potential of all partner institutions of higher education (Myzrova, 2016, 54).

This method allows taking into consideration the specificity of the region as well. For example, KFU offered such a discipline as "Legal Regulation of Entrepreneurial Activity in the Fuel and Energy Sector".

The model under consideration allows taking into account both requirements of the FSES and requirements of IEESHE as well as the established conventional procedure of education, in particular, the possibility to base formation of the joint module of disciplines selected by students on a set of professional competences taking into account the selected types of activity for which graduates of master courses in the field of study "Jurisprudence" prepare, which fully corresponds with the goal of creation and implementation of the educational program. The curriculum also contains the fundamentals of the competence-based model of graduates – the matrix of competences and the content of competences (goals of implementation of the educational program). The mentioned prerequisites will allow creating a network module of a certain labor intensity (approximately 30 c.p. with variations of 3 c.p.).

A smaller number of credit points per module is hardly reasonable, though can be considered as well. However, for this purpose, first it is necessary to determine the concept and the scheme of academic mobility of students.

M.V. Tokmoltseva supposes that academic mobility is transfer of someone related to education for a certain short period to another educational institution for study, teaching or research in the home country or abroad (Tokmoltseva, 2014, 17). E.I. Devyatova understands academic mobility as the possibility for students, academic and administrative staff "to move" from one institution of higher education to another one to share experience, have those opportunities which are unavailable in the "home" institution of higher education, overcome the national restraint and acquire a pan-European perspective (Devyatova, 2012, 112).

The option which we consider implies that for the third term students of partner institutions of higher education leave their institution of higher education, which is considered to be the basic institution of higher education for these students, for the partner institution of higher education to study elective disciplines of the variable part of the curriculum, and the students have the possibility to choose academic disciplines. The universities have already developed a section which for convenience we call "section of elective disciplines" or "network section". Each institution of higher education suggested four or five options for it. Labor intensiveness is determined for each elective discipline, in order not to exceed the labor intensiveness of the network module in general (around 30 c.p.). For example, I. Kant BFU suggested the following set of elective disciplines.

**Table 1**  
List of elective disciplines of I. Kant BFU

Pos. No.	Description of discipline
Option 1	Issues of notarization of transactions and other notarial acts
	Judicial protection of civil rights
Option 2	Legal support of activity of organizations
	Issues of legal regulation of intellectual property
Option 3	Issues of legal regulation of the stock market
	Alternative ways of settlement of economic disputes
Option 4	Issues of legal regulation of entrepreneurship
	Issues of application of competition law

Students will be able to choose a set of disciplines comprising the required number of credit points from this list. Inversely, students of the partner institution of higher education choose disciplines from the elective disciplines suggested for the curriculum by the partner institution of higher education with the same number of credit points. Students can "collect" a certain number of credit points to fulfill the volume of the academic module due to the research seminar, which is permanent and obligatory in all curricula of master courses in the field of study "Jurisprudence" of all Russian institutions of higher education.

I. Kant BFU offers the Research Seminar "Exercise and Protection of Civil Rights" for the "network section". Therefore, within the framework of academic mobility in the third term students will be offered to master four or five academic disciplines in the partner institution of higher education with a test or an examination afterwards or take part in the research seminar to receive and present the results of their research activity as students of master courses for the period of the third term. Meanwhile, at the initial stage of adaptation – it can be one or two disciplines chosen by students to study the in the partner institution of higher education. Formal requirements for acceptance of students' education process at the basic university will be met in this way.

## 4. Conclusions

The educational program of partner institutions of higher education the framework of which implies network participation will be individual for each university. Students will master it in the basic institution of higher education. Since types of activity and educational goals are agreed upon, the part of the educational program studied in the basic institution of higher education is a certain foundation for mastering the variable part of the educational program.



With this approach elective disciplines in the curriculum imply deepening of students' knowledge, expansion of their expertise and skills. This approach also provides a greater degree of freedom for partner institutions of higher education in development of the master program. Probably, it can be used as a prelude to further expansion of cooperation, possible work on the integrated educational program. This approach provides the possibility to take into account the interests of the parties as much as possible and not to invade the territory of "private space" of partner institutions of higher education, because it should be remembered that (designing the educational program for students) it will be implemented by academic staff – specific people whose interests also should not remain without attention.

Despite some problems of both a subjective and objective nature which were mentioned (including the lack of a new FSES in the field of study "Jurisprudence" of the master's level), it is necessary to synchronize the curricula of the partner institutions of higher education, form a disciplinary field of joint academic modules, coordinate types of activity, educational goals and prepare other necessary documents. As noted in the scientific literature (Polupan, 2014, 49-59), these issues must be worked through already now in development of any educational programs. Therefore, we consider the proposed option of network cooperation promising.

Within the framework of the reform of higher education the network form of implementation of educational programs is an important tool for expansion of the possibilities of educational organizations, which significantly increases the level not only of theoretical but also practical education of students. In general, the network form of implementation of master programs provides the possibility to use the human, material, technical, informational potential of partner institutions of higher education and the experience of scientific schools. It provides the possibility to implement academic mobility and ultimately improve the competitiveness of graduates in the labor market. Network interaction today develops as a form of connection between educational organizations for exchange of resources. The objective of the future is to arrange network interaction in the field of study "Jurisprudence" not only with participation of educational organizations but also interested employers.

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