

THE MOSCOW TIMES

Import/Export Economists

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Tuesday, February 27, 2007. Issue 3604. Page 10

Recent discussions about writing a new charter for the Russian Academy of Sciences have been of significant importance for academics working in fields that have traditionally been strong in Russia. For those working in fields that have historically been underdeveloped here, the whole question is of much less importance, as they have more mundane issues to deal with.

This is clearly the case in the field of economics -- the most world's most broadly quoted social science. One objective indicator of a country's level of achievement in a given field is how its academics rank internationally. According to Thomson's Science Citation Index, no Russian economists are ranked among the world's top 2,000. The country's leading research institution in the field, the New Economic School, is ranked about 100th among European economic research departments according to the number of times its scholars' works are cited based on the Research Papers in Economics project. The second strongest school ranks a lowly 400th. If there is going to be any hope of properly understanding what is going on in the economy, there will have to be significant investment in developing the study of economics.

There has already been some progress. Two of Moscow's most frequently referenced young economists recently landed positions as editors of the reputable international magazines *Economics of Transition* and the *Journal of Comparative Economics*. This is a positive sign, given the highly integrated nature of global economic research, particularly in comparison to other fields of social science. The most important progress, however, is being made on another front.

It is standard international practice for economics departments to hire graduates from other institutions. This year, a major state university, the Higher School of Economics, joined the ranks of the two existing smaller schools, the New Economic School and the International College for Economics and Finance -- a joint project between the Higher School of Economics and the London School of Economics. These two have been hiring new professors from the international pool of graduates for a number of years now.

When hiring new teachers, economics departments typically proceed as follows. Any application package includes a paper authored by the applicant and a few letters of reference from supervisors. From the initial pool, a few dozen are selected to be interviewed at a major U.S. or European economics conference. From five to 10 of these are then invited to a job market seminar at the institution, where they also meet the faculty. Finally, some of these candidates receive job offers, with the remainder left to continue looking for employment.

This job market is highly competitive, and economics departments without high international rankings have real trouble attracting strong candidates. Adding to the problems faced by Russian schools here is that lectures must be given in Russian, despite English being the working language at leading schools in Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria and Hungary. Nevertheless, people with doctorates from Harvard, MIT and the universities of Michigan and Pittsburgh currently hold positions at Moscow institutions. The final results of this year's "head-hunting" season are not in yet, but there is a good probability that the circle of universities with graduates ending up in Moscow will widen. For a country with a gross domestic product ranked about 14th in the world, the picture does not look particularly appealing. But we can be proud of the achievements of our Russian graduates abroad. Anna Mikusheva, a graduate of both the

New Economic School and Moscow State University's mathematics department, recently completed her doctoral studies at Harvard and was given a teaching position at MIT. Russian universities may not yet have the funds to compete for such highly qualified candidates, but at least it looks like they are interested in trying.

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