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Retention of student enrollment as a scientific problem

Abstract. The article addresses the issue of retaining students in the field of traditional art crafts, using the example of the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting – a branch of the Russian university of traditional art crafts. A set of measures aimed at retaining students in regional-historical centers of traditional art crafts is examined, including enhancement of continuous professional education, cooperation with enterprises of folk art crafts and multi-level vocational guidance for diverse target groups.

Keywords: student retention problem, continuous professional education, traditional art crafts, basic department, vocational guidance, industrial practice, Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting, graduate employment.

Continuous professional education in the field of traditional art crafts is a key factor for preserving this unique component of Russia's cultural heritage. At the same time, ensuring the preservation and sustainable development of traditional art crafts involves addressing several related issues, including: almost complete absence of folk art craft enterprises, shortage of qualified personnel at existing enterprises, outflow of young people from small towns and rural settlements to large urban centers. As V.F. Maksimovich rightly points out, “there are currently opposing views on the necessity of Russian folk art crafts, which are often based on a primitive understanding of their essence” [6, p. 11]. Folk art crafts can be divided into two categories: “the first category includes simple products that do not require extensive production time or specialized higher education (wickerwork, matryoshka dolls, etc.); the second category comprises works of art as the splendor of our country's artistic legacy (lacquer miniature painting, decorative painting, artistic lace making), i.e., traditional applied arts requiring specialized higher education” [6, p. 11].

As emphasized by the authors of the leading profile university's development strategy, the mission of the Russian university of traditional art crafts lies in “developing and improving a multilevel continuous system of professional education in traditional art crafts as a guarantee for reviving and flourishing the magnificence of Russia's artistic heritage in historical regional centers of this art – villages, townships and small cities – and meeting the demand for this art in contemporary society” [5, p. 42].

For the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting, where there is no equivalent training of artists in three unique forms of art – Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting, Zhostovo decorative painting and enamel painting (Rostov finift)

– the task of maintaining student enrollment acquires critical importance directly linked to the preservation of these very crafts themselves.

The aim of this article is to analyze possible measures aimed at ensuring the retention of students in regionally-historical centers of traditional art crafts using the experience of the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting as an example.

Among such measures are the implementation and improvement of secondary vocational and higher education (bachelor's degree – master's degree) through updating content focused on preserving and developing specific regionally-historical types of traditional art crafts; opening a base department for Zhostovo decorative painting at a partner enterprise (LLC "Zhostovskaya fabrika") with synchronization of educational and production processes [4]; learning through involving students in the production process via internships at specialized enterprises; intensive career guidance work combining immersion of applicants in the regionally-historical and cultural context of traditional art crafts and clarification of concrete employment prospects in the profession.

The research was conducted at the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting. Data collection and analysis included:

- monitoring admissions (analysis of dynamics of admission quotas, geography of applicants and budget place occupancy rates between 2000 and 2025);
- studying the interaction experience of the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting with specialized folk art enterprises (JSC "Fedoskino" and LLC "Zhostovskaya fabrika", including outcomes of activities at the base department in Zhostovo).

The set of measures proposed by the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting encompasses three interrelated elements.

Firstly, it entails enhancing continuous professional education directly within the regionally-historical center of traditional art crafts. This ensures step-by-step professional development without necessitating relocation to major cities. The institute provides an alternative to migration by offering quality education, guaranteed employment and integration into the professional community. In Fedoskino, a comfortable environment has been created for living and creativity: support from enterprises (flexible schedules, tuition payment); a professional community of artists specializing in various forms of this art. Students become involved in the production process through the activities of the base department and industrial practices. Education and work in Fedoskino reduce financial costs associated with moving, renting accommodation and living in a megapolis.

At the stage of secondary vocational education, students acquire artistic and technological traditions under the guidance of a teacher who is a bearer of a particular form of art. Higher education (bachelor's program) aims to develop future artists' authorial style in Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting and Zhostovo decorative painting while taking into account artistic and technological traditions, as well as deepening professional specialization. Higher education (master's program) focuses on preparing artist-researchers who not only master a type of traditional applied art but also have the ability to further its development based on independently developed and conducted research. This sequence of training allows

graduates who have completed both secondary vocational and higher education levels to acquire a wide range of professional competencies that ensure successful employment in the regionally-historical center of the craft, thereby contributing to youth retention in the region.

Secondly, cooperation with specialized folk art enterprises is implemented through the creation of base departments directly at partner companies. Establishing a base department for Zhostovo decorative painting at LLC "Zhostovskaya fabrika" enabled blended part-time study for company employees, integrating learning harmoniously with daily production activities. Combining education with practical work on creating art pieces enhanced not only learners' motivation towards acquiring skills and creative self-realization but also improved the quality of their preparation, evident in refining professional expertise, complexity of executed tasks and independence when producing original works. Interaction is facilitated by organizing internships at enterprises like JSC "Fedoskino" and LLC "Zhostovskaya fabrika". During these internships, students gain practical skills, gaining insight into the nuances of technology used in creating traditional art craftworks, understanding the logic behind organizational processes, requirements placed upon workers and standards for produced items.

Thus, industrial practice becomes an integral part of shaping an artist as a highly skilled specialist – a bearer of traditions. It incorporates: observing the work of mentor-artists; direct communication with artists and copying their works as a method of transmitting unique traditions; performing real production assignments; strict adherence to technological norms, quality requirements and deadlines, fostering discipline and responsibility; testing new artistic solutions (Figs. 1³⁸, 2). Students undergoing industrial practice not only acquire practical skills and abilities but also develop a sense of professional identity, understanding corporate culture and market demands in the fields of Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting and Zhostovo decorative painting.

This guarantees job offers by graduation, eliminating the need for graduates to migrate and search for employment. For applicants from remote regions (Kazan, Sakhalin), the decisive factors are the desire to master a unique form of traditional applied art and the opportunity to receive education without relocating to a megapolis.

Thirdly, career orientation based on demonstrating the cultural, aesthetic and ethical value of the craft along with actual employment opportunities in the region plays a crucial role. It is multi-level because it includes events tailored to different target groups: excursions, creative classes and professional competitions for students of children's schools of arts and workshops and playful activities for preschool children and schoolchildren; advanced master additional education institutions [7], designed to foster a conscious interest in a future profession and a specific form of traditional art craft; lectures and seminars for parents and teachers explaining the cultural-historical significance of the crafts and career possibilities in this sphere.

³⁸ Figs. 1-6. Photos by the author of the article.



Fig. 1. Chief artist M.V. Lebedev of LLC "Zhostovskaya fabrika" conducting a workshop session for a group of students on Zhostovo decorative painting



Fig. 2. Industrial practice at JSC "Fedoskino" factory in 2025

A priority direction in the institute's career orientation development strategy became targeted work with residents of small towns and villages in Moscow region. The effectiveness of this effort is ensured through partnerships with children's schools of arts, creative centers and cultural institutions, as well as active use of formats such as exhibitions of works by students of the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting, masterclasses led by prominent artist-teachers and thematic "Lukutinsky lecture hall". Their combined efforts provide direct exposure to regionally-historical artistic and technological traditions during interactions with artist-teachers who carry forward traditional art crafts (Figs. 3, 4).



Fig. 3. Masterclass "Playful filigree" for participants of the Planet of talents club at the municipal educational institution for children and youth creativity palace in Lobnya



Fig. 4. Graduates of grades 9-11, Mytishchi city district. Campaign "State final examination. Consciousness. Career orientation" held at the gymnasium No. 16

In addition to face-to-face formats, digital tools such as social networks and educational platforms are actively utilized in career orientation initiatives. These allow distant audiences to learn about technological processes and the history of Fedoskino lacquer miniature painting and Zhostovo decorative painting, providing access to information about the specialty regardless of geographical location for potential applicants.

Participation in international forums addresses another important goal – it serves as a tool of public diplomacy, positioning cultural values and the uniqueness of Russian art crafts globally. This enhances the prestige of the acquired education, instills pride in one's chosen profession, contributes to forming a conscious motivation for studying, ultimately working toward retaining students.

Partnership relations between the Fedoskino institute and enterprises enable the development of a professional trajectory for young artists in traditional art crafts: "professional education – employment – career growth". Partner enterprises (JSC "Fedoskino" and LLC "Zhostovskaya fabrika") demonstrate high interest in human resources and offer comprehensive support for their professional development: from covering tuition fees to flexible scheduling allowing for balancing work and studies.

An important outcome of the Fedoskino institute's activity has been the expansion of recruitment geography compared to the early 2000s, when the majority of students came from Fedoskino village and nearby areas. A qualitatively new "portrait" of an applicant has emerged – primarily young people from municipal districts of Moscow region (Lobnya, Dolgoprudny, Dmitrov), as well as individual cases of admission from regions far from Moscow (Sakhalin, Kazan, Gelendzhik). The main factor driving the increase in non-local applicants has been proactive and systematic career orientation work with cultural and educational institutions in Moscow region. The institute achieved significant successes: licensing programs for higher education and obtaining state-supported places for full-time bachelor's programs in 2025, sustained interest in undergraduate programs and most importantly, establishing a unique system of continuous professional education.

Career orientation work has reached a qualitatively new level: social media is actively employed, mobile master classes are organized, sessions of the Lukutinsky lecture hall take place and tours of the institution are conducted to expand coverage of the target audience (Figs. 5, 6).



Fig. 5. Tour of the institute as part of career orientation activities, students of school No. 19, Mytishchi city district



Fig. 6. Lecture series "Lukutin's traditions"

Despite achieving control numbers for admissions, the lack of competitive selection for these educational programs indicates their narrowly specialized nature.

Effective transmission of unique technologies for creating works of traditional applied art and artistic traditions, as well as formation of a profound internal connection with the profession (professional identity), are only possible through education in the regionally-historical center of this art and direct collaboration with leading artists of Fedoskino lacquer miniatures and Zhostovo painting [1; 8].

Retention of students remains one of the top priorities for the Fedoskino institute. The solution lies in building a comprehensive system of student preparation that integrates the development of continuous professional education, close collaboration with specialized industries and clear career prospects for students.

Analysis of the measures implemented by the institute shows positive trends, yet the effectiveness of work on retaining students requires constant monitoring and consideration of changes in social, educational and developmental environments. A significant challenge faced by the institution is that only half of its graduates find employment in their field of study. This fact suggests that efforts focused solely on improving teaching methods and curriculum content are insufficient.

To enhance efficiency, more precise diagnostics are needed. Instead of focusing on overall dropout rates, it would be beneficial to identify problem points in students' educational trajectories (for instance, initial months of adaptation to the academic process, transition from copying to independent creativity, pre-diploma phase) and develop targeted support measures. This implies introducing a system for early identification of at-risk students (based on monitoring performance, attendance and engagement), as well as regularly surveying and interviewing withdrawing students to understand the true reasons for attrition and subsequently adjust educational policies accordingly.

The issue of retaining students is multidimensional and extends beyond the classroom. Its resolution is directly connected to creating a comfortable socio-leisure environment that fosters emotional attachment to the place of study and future employment. Equally important is the personal example and deep involvement of faculty members as bearers of tradition. They not only impart knowledge but also create an attractive model of professional and personal growth right in the heartland of the art craft.

Therefore, the core task regarding student retention lies in shifting from fragmented initiatives to constructing a unified educational-cultural system where the educational process, social environment, mentors' personal examples and clear career prospects form a single mechanism holding talented youth within the realm of traditional applied arts.

Although the regional-historical and institutional context of Fedoskino is unique, the proposed set of measures – development of continuous education, cooperation with enterprises and targeted career orientation – represents a universal foundation for enhancing the stability of workforce supply across traditional art crafts as a whole.

In an international context, the experience of the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting could also be adapted for traditional craft centers in other

countries, emphasizing local cultural identity and employment guarantees in the area where the tradition originates. Evidence of this is seen in the interest shown by the international community – universities in Africa, China, Mongolia and Rossotrudnichestvo representation in France – in the International forum "Russian culture in the 21st century: past in present, present in future", as well as signing a cooperation agreement between the Russian university of traditional art crafts and the Higher institute of arts named after Mory Kante (Republic of Guinea) [3].

The experience of the Fedoskino institute of lacquer miniature painting in retaining students in regionally-historical centers of traditional art crafts merits further study, analysis and reflection.

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