International and local students should also be involved in supportive activities for newcomers. So-called “peer programs” that pair newcomers with compatriots, or local students with English proficiency, for close communication and interaction have been proved to be an efficient supporting activity (Abe et al., 1998).

For the purpose of this research, an experiment was conducted to confirm the importance of support and assistance for sojourners. During the experiment, a number of procedures supporting international newcomers were developed and implemented in two Belarusian universities. As a result, the comparison analysis of students from control and experimental groups enabled us to experimentally demonstrate that supporting procedures help international students successfully overcome difficulties during their study abroad (Marinenko, 2015).

Conclusions

Belarusian sojourners faced a number of problems during their study. They were primarily concerned about psychological and health-related challenges: homesickness, health disorders, loneliness and social isolation. Despite the fact that the main activity of international students is education, the surveyed population ranked educational challenges second, and the main dilemmas in this category were lack of understanding of the Belarusian educational system and taking exams. Sociocultural problems, including communication with native speakers, understanding the foreign culture and others ranked third in the study. Finally, general living challenges such as the climate, the ban on part-time work, dietary restrictions, etc., were the least problematic category for the student newcomers.

The problems experienced by international students should encourage institutions of higher education to shape a supportive learning environment for them and motivate administrators, faculty, counsellors, international volunteers and local students to become more aware of investigating sojourners’ needs and to provide facilitation and assistance.

References


