13 The Russian Federation

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13.1 THE NATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

The Russian Federation is located both on the European and Asian continents, with the dividing line of the Ural Mountains between the two. The country's land area is 17,075,400 km^2, with 78 percent of the population living west of the Ural Mountains. The country's population is more than 146 million, three-quarters of which live in cities, making for an urban nation. Russia has one of the world's most diverse societies, with as many as 160 ethnic groups. The two major cities are the capital Moscow, with over twelve million people, and St. Petersburg, with over four million.

The Russian Federation is a federal presidential republic with the president being the head of the state. According to the constitution, the president is elected for six years. Government duties are split between several ministries, some of which, in turn, have federal services and federal agencies. The head of the government, the prime minister, is appointed by the president and approved by the State Duma (lower chamber of the parliament). Russia has a two-chamber legislative power. The parliament, the Federal Assembly, is composed of the Council of the Federation (upper chamber), with 170 seats, whose members are appointed by the regional governors and legislative institutions for a four-year term of office, and the State Duma (lower chamber), which has 450 seats elected by direct election for a four-year term.

The country is grouped into seven federal districts; however, federal districts are not established by the country's constitution and are not the constituent units but exist for federal government agencies' convenience of governing and operation. Each district includes several federal subjects, and

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each federal district has a presidential representative. According to the constitution, the federation is divided into the federal subjects, or areas, of Russia. Since March 18, 2014, the Russian Federation constitutionally consists of eighty-five federal subjects.

According to the WEF Global Competitiveness Index, the Russian Federation ranks 43rd out of 141 countries. As of the burden of regulations, it ranks 90th with a score of 37.0 for 2018–2019 (Schwab, 2019). Russia has increased the quality of its research institutions and R&D expenditures (1.1 percent of GDP, ranking 34th). In terms of skillset, Russia ranks 54th among 141 countries with a score of 68.3 out of 100. Regarding the skillset of graduates and ease of finding skilled employees, Russian ranks 77th with the score of 50.1 and 47th with scores of 58.7, respectively. In the past year, Russia revised down its assessment of the skillset of secondary education graduates by 0.1 points, indicating that the quality of education is not keeping up with the needs of a modern economy (Schwab, 2019). Regarding corporate governance, which arguably is different from public University governance, WEF ranked Russia 75th with a score of 59.2.

According to the World Bank Governance Indicators, Russia's ranks are all below the 50th percentile, except for government effectiveness. The rule of law, voice and accountability, and regulatory quality have dropped over the five-year period of 2013 to 2018 and are in less than the 20th percentile. These indicators suggest that Russia does not have a robust context for University governance and has a high burden of regulation (Figure 13.1).

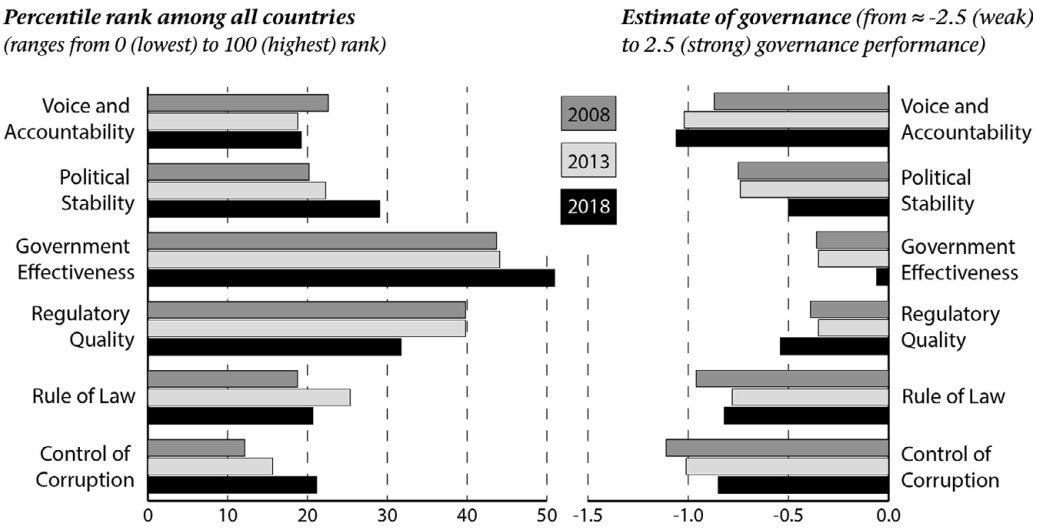
Shape and Structure of Higher Education

The collapse of the Soviet Union has significantly impacted the economy of Russia. From 1990 to 2002, key sectors of the economy lost up to one-third of the total number of employees: the industrial sector (about 36 percent), agriculture (20 percent), construction (23 percent), and transport and communications (16 percent) (Platonova et al., 2019). These changes in the labor market resulted in reducing the demand for natural science training with higher education and have led to a decrease in the popularity of engineering universities. At the same time, the social and financial sectors of the economy increased significantly. For example, employment in the trade sector increased by 85 percent, in the financial sector by 103 percent, and in public administration by 85 percent (Platonova et al., 2019).

As of 2018–2019, the higher education system consists of 741 higher education institutions – 496 state universities, including 10 federal universities,

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Figure 13.1 Worldwide governance indicators for Russia



29 national research universities, and 247 non-state and private universities. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian higher education experienced substantial growth in the number of universities between 1991 to 2011. In addition, the legislation adopted in 1992 allowed the establishment of private HEIs (the Law on Education). The number of private HEIs grew to 358, an eight-fold increase, although only 7 percent of students were enrolled in the private sector (Platonova & Semyonov, 2018). In addition, the system witnessed the establishment of HEI branch campuses that allowed wider access to higher education in the regions.

After a relative decline in the mid-1990s, the number of students has grown every year. In 2000, the number of students per 10,000 was 327, significantly higher than in 1995 at 189 students per 10,000 population (Platonova et al., 2019). As of 2020, the total number of students is 4.7 million. The age cohort participation among 17 to 25-year-olds in higher education is about 32 percent. The tertiary enrolment rate among 20 to 24-year-olds increased from 28.8 percent to 30.3 percent between 2005 and 2014 (Platonova et al., 2019). Russian universities train specialists in more than 350 specialties. The number of faculty of state universities includes 265,000 people, of which 153,000 people are highly qualified specialists (candidates and doctors of sciences). Non-state universities employ over 42,000 faculty.

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From federal and regional budgets, governmental support for higher education is approximately 55 percent of the total cost (as of 2012). However, 97 percent comes from federal funding and only 3 percent from regional budgets. The regions do not receive funds from the federal budget for the organization or provision of higher education, since seventy out of eighty-five areas are subsidized and federal subsidies cannot be spent on higher education. The legislation does not clearly regulate this issue; there are actually no incentives for regions to interfere in the University sector (Froumin & Leshukov, 2015). According to Froumin and Leshukov, "Under such circumstances, market mechanisms of higher education organization are virtually absent in some regions" (Froumin & Leshukov, 2015, p. 6).

Higher Education Governing Context

The First Law of the Russian Federation "On Education" (1992) provided the legal foundation for new funding mechanisms. Institutions were granted the right to carry out financial and economic activities independently. State universities received the right to attract extrabudgetary funding, predominantly through students' tuition fees. The system was introduced under which the state funds student places in state universities, but these universities can enroll additional students via privately funded places. Most students with tuition fees choose popular programs and areas, such as economics, management, information technology, and Law (Platonova & Semyonov, 2018).

Starting in 2000, higher education became a priority for the government. New policies aiming at transforming the higher education system were introduced, including the Unified Entrance Examinations for the universities. In addition, Russia signed the Bologna Declaration in 2003 and introduced bachelor's, master's, and PhD degrees. For instance, Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University have the right to award their own PhD degrees instead of the centralized Higher Attestation Committee of the country. The government also encouraged a so-called new type of University, which aimed to become centers for attracting talented youth and contributing to the development of Russian regions. Many universities since then have been merged and transformed into federal universities.

Another project initiated by the government was creating the network of universities having the status of national research universities. Following the current Law on Education, these universities have a special status granting them the right to establish educational programs without ministerial approval. Additionally, the Lomonosov Moscow State University and

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St. Petersburg State University were recognized in 2009 as the leading universities by a special law allowing targeted funding and further developing new academic programs outside of traditional regulatory mechanisms.

To increase the international competitiveness of leading Russian universities, the government launched an effort known as the Project 5-100. Its goal was to ensure that at least five Russian universities are included in the top one hundred leading world rankings by 2020. The project was based on a competitive procedure for selecting programs to improve the competitiveness of universities. The first round of competition with fifty-four universities was held in 2013, in which fifteen universities were recognized as winners. In 2015, another six universities were selected for the program. However, the project did not include Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University because of their already granted special status. In total, twenty-nine universities participating in Project 5-100 received targeted funding for increased research output from the government (Gryaznova, 2018).

According to the Law on Education, the governance of higher education in Russia is carried out at three levels: federal, regional, and municipal. At the federal level, governance is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. The functions of the ministry include approval of federal state educational standards, licensing, state accreditation and liquidation of educational institutions, development, and implementation of state and international programs and other regulatory functions. However, Platonova and Semyonov argue that in reality, at the level of regional and municipal levels, higher education is basically not included in the authority of these government agencies (Platonova & Semyonov, 2018).

HEIs report directly to the various bodies of executive power. By the end of Soviet times, twenty-eight different ministries were supervising other HEIs. Today, twenty-one different bodies, including the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), govern most of higher education, which enroll approximately 60 percent of all students. The two other major ministries are the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health and Social Development (medical HEIs) that oversee HEIs offering degrees in their areas of responsibility. Although Russia is a federal state, there is little decentralization of state authority regarding higher education, as was mentioned earlier (Platonova & Semynov, 2018).

The current higher education governance model in Russia results from the chaotic transformation period of the entire higher education system following the dissolution of the Soviet system (Froumin & Leshukov, 2015). The ratio of regional and federal universities has actually remained unchanged over twenty years. Only one-third of all regions have subordinate

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universities; most of them only have one such University, and 20 percent of those regional universities are arts universities rather than comprehensive ones (Froumin & Leshukov, 2015).

According to Froumin and Leshukov

> the current federalism organization in higher education almost completely coincides with the model characteristic of the Soviet socialist state, which was supported by absolutely different principles – the state character of higher education, job placement system, economic planning, etc. The real regionalization of higher education that is currently supported by many stakeholders has never taken place in the country.
>
> Comparison to comparable large countries (the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, Germany, Brazil, India, China) demonstrates that Russia is characterized by the most centralized management model in higher education. (2015 , p. 15)

13.2 GOVERNING BODY PROFILE

The Russian higher education system illustrates a multifaceted example of governing models of higher education institutions. There are three governing models: one for state universities; another for "flagship universities" that include autonomous and national universities; and a third for two universities of special status, Moscow State University, named after MV Lomonosov, and St. Petersburg State University (Table 13.1)*.

The Law on Education states that the governance of universities is harmonized throughout the country and is described in detail in each University charter. Overall, one of the essential parts of the Russian University governance is the General Conference, composed of elected researchers, teaching staff, and students. The General Conference approves the internal regulations of the University and elects a labor dispute commission. Conference delegates are elected among faculty, administrators, and students. The representation of scientific and pedagogical workers (faculty/academic staff), following the charter of the University, should be at least 80 percent of the total number of delegates to the conference. The election of conference delegates is made by a simple majority of votes by open or secret ballot with at least 50 percent of the number of employees or students of the respective units participating in the vote. The voting results are drawn up in a protocol that is submitted to the Election Committee.

* An overview of the governance of Russian universities can be found online at http://www.cambridge.org/Eckel

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One of the tasks of the General Conference is electing the Academic Council. In turn, this governing body is responsible for setting the main directions for University development, including its educational and research activities, and approves financial and economic plans. In addition, the Academic Councils in Russian higher education institutions regulate specific operational issues, such as approval of rectors' annual reports, the setting of the University's educational standards and requirements, the hiring of professors, and the establishment of faculty workloads. The Academic Council is always headed by the University's rector, who is also responsible for the direct administration of the University. Thus, while the General Conference makes collective decisions about the main direction of universities, Academic Councils are responsible for and are in charge of daily decision-making and strategic priorities of universities. The members of the Academic Council of the University should not exceed 50 percent of the total number of General Conference delegates.

Delving deeply into the Russian higher education landscape and types of governing structures, we tried to identify the main governing models:

First, Moscow State University, named after MV Lomonosov, and St. Petersburg State University, have special status according to the Law on Education. The rectors of these two universities are appointed by the president of the Russian Federation and not elected by the Academic Councils. The main governing body of these universities are also Academic Councils elected by the General Conference.

These two universities also have advisory Boards of Trustees (*Popechitelskiy Soviet*) appointed by the Academic Councils headed by the rectors. The Boards of Trustees consist of representatives of the government and state businesses of the country. For example, the current chair of the Lomonosov University Board of Trustees is the president of Russia. The current chair of St. Petersburg State University (SPSU) is a deputy chair of the Security Council and a former prime minister who is a graduate of SPSU.

The second category includes flagship universities that consist of autonomous universities comprising of ten federal universities and the recently added Crimea Federal University, making in total eleven, and the twenty-one national research universities participating in 5-100 projects as well as leading higher education institutions in the regions. One of the features of these universities is the Board of Overseers (*Nablyudatelniy Soviet*) that operates in addition to the General Conference and Academic Council. The legal status of an autonomous organization was introduced by the federal law "On Autonomous Organizations" (2006) to increase the quality of services of

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public institutions and the efficiency of public spending through the easing of specific excessive state control mechanisms in the areas of daily financial management, procurement, and budgeting (Gryaznova, 2018). This reduction of the bureaucratic burden was accompanied by the introduction of new forms of University governance, based on more autonomy, involvement of various external stakeholders through involvement in governance, continuous monitoring of the key performance indicators, and competitive financing (Gryaznova, 2018). The Law requires each autonomous organization to have a Board of Overseers in its governing structures. Boards of Overseers consider the proposals of head of organizations (in this case rectors of universities) related to changes to the charter of organizations, their restructuring, and financial matters of organizations. The Law indicates explicitly that some of the issues proposed by the rectors can be supported/declined by the Board of Overseers, but the rector can still make the final decision. However, significant financial transactions, transactions in which there is a financial benefit, the auditing of the annual financial statements, and approving the selection of audit organizations are final decisions that rest with the Board of Overseers.

Rectors of autonomous universities such as the Financial University under the government of the Russian Federation, the Russian Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture Ilya Glazunov, as well as the Higher National Research University School of Economics are appointed by the government of the Russian Federation (The Government Decree No. 33 of January 16, 2014 "On the Procedure for Appointing Rectors of Educational Organizations Subordinate to the Government of the Russian Federation"). However, recently the minister of Science and Higher Education announced that the Board of Overseers should elect the rectors of national research universities participating in 5-100 projects. Boards of Overseers will be the primary entity responsible for the overall governance and election of rectors. This was announced as a pilot project, and the Ministry is deciding whether it should be required to select rectors by Boards of Overseers at other autonomous institutions.

As indicated on their websites, several autonomous universities and national research universities have both a Board of Trustees and a Board of Overseers in the governing structures. For instance, in the case of National Research University Higher School of Economics, the governing bodies consist of the Board of Overseers, the Conference of Employees and Students of the University (General Conference), the Academic Council of the University, the Presidium of the Academic Council, the rector of the University, and the Board of Trustees.

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The third category is Russian State universities. Most of these universities have budgetary (not autonomous) status, but there is a competitive program where state universities can compete for autonomous status. The Federal Law on Higher and Professional Education requires all state budgetary accredited universities to establish a Board of Trustees consisting of academics and students in addition to General Conferences and Academic Councils.

The appointment of rectors of state universities involves several stages. First, they include getting an attestation from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education confirming their abilities to be nominated and elected. Next, their candidacy is nominated for election by the General Conference, and the winning candidate must get approval from the Academic Council. Then the University submits its election results to governments of cities, regions, and the federal government for approval. The final step is receiving final approval from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation.

Body Structure and Membership

According to the Law on Autonomous organizations, the Board of Overseers should consist of five to eleven members. The specific structure of the board is defined by the institution's founder (i.e., MoES, the Russian government, or the regional or municipal authorities). According to the Law, each board should include representatives of the Russian government, the Federal Agency of State Property Management, and civil society, including individuals with proven records in related content and professional areas, such as health or agriculture. Institutions have the right to nominate their own representatives for board membership where the Ministry of Education and Science finalizes and approves/disapproves nominations.

Members of the Boards of Overseers are appointed by the institution's founder (the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). As the founder of federal and national HEIs is the government, the members of these organizations, in most cases, are appointed by the government. The term of the Board of Overseers is established by the charter of the autonomous institution but cannot be more than five years. A person may serve as a member of the board for an unlimited number of terms. The rector of an autonomous institution and his deputies cannot be members of the Board of Overseers. The rector of an autonomous institution participates in meetings of the Board of Overseers with an advisory vote.

The number of members of the Board of Trustees varies from institution to institution. The Board may include employees of the higher educational

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institution and students, representatives of the founder of the higher educational institution, representatives of employers, executive authorities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, local government bodies, and, following the charter of the higher educational institution, representatives of other organizations. The Law specifies that the procedure for the formation of the Board of Trustees, its term of office, competence, and process for its activities should be determined by the charter of the higher educational institution.

Member Appointment Processes

The chair and members of the Boards of Overseers of autonomous organizations are appointed by the founder (Ministry of Science and Higher Education or the government). Usually, the chair of the Board is the governor of the region or ministers of sectoral ministries, or other high-profile public officials. However, the ministerial decree states that during the appointment of the chair and members of the Board, the ministry will take into account nominations provided by the Academic Council of HEIs.

Under the Russian legislation, the head/rector of the HEI can either be elected by

(1) the general Conference of the HEI (subject to approval by the founder of the HEI), or

(2) appointed by the founder of the HEI,

(3) the president of the Russian Federation, or

(4) the Government (Law on Education 2012).

According to the Law, the Board of Trustees includes employees of a higher educational institution and students, representatives of the founder of the higher educational institution, representatives of employers, executive authorities of the constituent units of the Russian Federation, local government bodies, and, following the charter of the higher educational institution, representatives of other organizations. The procedure for forming the Board of Trustees, its term of office, competence, and process for its activities are determined by the charter of the higher educational institution. For instance, the charter of Voronezh State University states that the members of its Board of Trustees are approved by the Academic Council nominated by the rector and approved by the decree of the rector of the University.

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Chair Appointment Processes

The members of Boards of Overseers elect the chair; however, it should be approved by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. Typically, the chair of the Board of Overseers is the governor of the region or ministers of sectoral ministries or other high-profile public officials.

The members elect the chair of the Board of Trustees at the first session of the newly formed Board of Trustees.

Board Accountability

As mentioned earlier, Boards of Overseers of autonomous universities are accountable to the founder of the higher education institutions that are either the government, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, or other relevant ministries. However, the recent reforms of giving more power to the Board of Overseers may shift accountability.

Academic Councils headed by the rector are accountable to the Board of Overseers and the founder of the institution (the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, government)

Boards of Trustees are accountable to the Academic Council headed by the rector.

Scope of Work

According to the Law on Autonomous Organizations, the Board of Overseers of autonomous organizations considers proposals of the founder of the head of the autonomous institution regarding organizational, financial, and administrative issues. As mentioned earlier, some of the problems proposed by the rectors can be supported/declined by the Board of Overseers, but the rector makes the final decision; however, items 9, 10, and 12 of Article 11 state that the decisions made by the Board of Overseers are mandatory for rectors. These items include activities related to proposals of the head of the autonomous institution on the conclusion of significant financial transactions, transactions in which there is a financial interest for the institution, and issues of auditing of the annual financial statements of an autonomous institution approving selecting audit organizations.

The scope of work of Boards of Trustees (Law on Higher and Postgraduate Education), while advisory, is to assist institutions in solving current and future problems of the development of a higher educational institution; to attract financial resources to ensure the activities and development of a

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higher educational institution, as well as to control the use of funds; and to participate in the development of educational programs of higher and postgraduate vocational education implemented by a higher educational institution and to ensure that these programs take into account the requirements of interested employers. In addition, the Boards of Trustees work in close contact with the University administration and its founder.

Commentary

For the past decades, Russian higher education has experienced many transformations – including several reforms to build a quality and competitive higher education system. Significant policy changes resulted in mergers and the creation of federal and national research universities. The government also launched Project 5-100 to ensure that at least five Russian universities are included in the top hundred leading world rankings by 2020. The project was based on a competitive procedure for selecting programs to improve the competitiveness of universities. Selected universities received direct funding from the government for restructuring, building research capacity, publications, and other concerns.

The University governance structure in Russia presents a multilayered example of University governance that is regulated by several laws and depends on the status of universities. For instance, Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University have special status regulated by a separate law. The president of the Russian Federation appoints the rectors. Federal autonomous universities and national research universities having autonomous status must have Boards of Overseers in their governing structures consisting primarily of external stakeholders. State-accredited universities must have a Board of Trustees. The general conferences and Academic Councils are parts of governing structures in all universities.

In our observation, the Russian government created multiple avenues to regulate and oversee higher education governance. Although Russia continues its attempts to move toward decentralization and autonomy of higher education and more HEIs will be granted the status of autonomous organizations moving toward having Boards of Overseers and Boards of Trustees, the Russian higher education system still reflects a centralized model of University governance.

This chapter was written before Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the University rectors' statement uniting behind the president and his actions, whereas students and academics are risking much to speak against the war. In addition, Russia has suspended its membership in the Bologna Process arguing there has been a lack of positive changes in the education system.

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