

The Structure and Activities of Student Representative Bodies in Modern Russian Universities

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Abstract One of the key objectives in higher education governance today is to establish mechanisms for effective student representation. Based on a study of the practices of 50 leading Russian universities—federal universities, national research universities, Project 5–100 universities, and universities included in the QS World University Rankings as of summer–fall 2020—this paper reveals and summarizes the key practices of student representation (often referred to as student self-governance) existing in Russia at the turn of the 2020s. The following origins of institutional arrangements for student representation are identified: academic units, thematic clubs, student trade unions, dormitories, and personal teams of student leaders. The major types of student representation activities analyzed in the article include participation in shared governance, provision of information to other students and engagement in public interactions with them, and organization of mass cultural events for students. Most often, functions associated with shared university governance are restricted to formal membership in university boards and fulfillment of federal law requirements regarding local regulations and disciplinary action, rather than actual representation of students' interests in university decision-making on educational, social, and scholarship issues. Therefore, the governance agenda of student representatives is shaped much more by universities and their administrators than by students themselves.

Keywords shared governance, student associations, student councils, student participation in university governance, student representation, student representative bodies, student unions.

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Debate over the role of students in higher education and the limits of its variation has been raging among academics and policymakers over a few decades [Brooks 2018]. Discussions concern the marketization of higher education, its orientation to satisfy the needs of students as customers, and the formation of inclusive university communities that bring students and faculty together on an equal or nearly equal footing. In recent years, a lot of attention has been paid to on-

line learning and the specifics of student status in a digital environment [Efimov 2020]. However, one of the key topics has always been the organizational structures and practices that students use to participate in shared university governance [Klemenčič 2014]: student representative bodies (SRB), which include student councils, student governments, student movements, etc.

There are two reasons why student representation practices in Russian universities are of particular interest. First, SRBs emerge and operate in a highly specific institutional and historical context characterized by the intertwining of Soviet experiences, modern values of the Russian society, and national youth policy goals. Second, unlike in other countries, there has been extremely little research attention to SRBs and no systematic reviews of available studies in the Russian literature [Efimov 2020].

The purpose of this article is to describe the mechanisms of origin and the common activities of SRB in Russian universities. The empirical basis of research includes open sources of information from the official websites of 50 leading Russian universities and transcripts of semi-structured interviews with student council representatives conducted in 25 leading Russian universities in February–March 2021.

The article is divided into five parts. Part one provides a critical overview of Russian and global literature on student representation systems and a brief description of the specifics of the Russian case from the institutional and historical perspective. Part two describes the methodology and design of the empirical study. Parts three and four present findings on the formation and functioning of SRBs. Finally, the last part gives conclusions and outlines possible avenues for future research.

The Current State of Student Representation Research

Broadly speaking, student representation in higher education is part of the shared university governance system that allows key stakeholders including students to participate in the development, articulation, negotiation, approval, and/or implementation of managerial decisions at different levels [Rowlands 2017]. Inclusion of various communities—faculty members, administrators, students—is a central issue in the scientific debate on academic governance [Rosovsky 2015]. However, students have been paid comparatively little attention in this general discourse, student representation being studied comprehensively on its own: as a phenomenon of student socialization and value development and as a component of youth policy, not only as a governance practice [Boland 2005].

In Russia, the terminology applied in this field of research and practice has some specifics to it. The relationship between the most widespread term “student self-governance” and the term “student representation” can be described as the intersection of two different sets. Student representation includes all the opportunities for students

to be institutionally involved in university governance, while student self-governance—in the sense defined by national education policy—embraces various mechanisms of student self-organization around matters of student concern encouraged by the university as part of its youth policy: self-initiated student associations, clubs, squads, event management teams, etc. Naturally, formal SRBs can be at the intersection of the two concepts. However, there are also examples of student representation with no self-governance (direct participation in university governance without differences in status or “corporate” affiliation) as well as student self-governance without representation (various examples of student self-organized activities and related youth policymaking that have nothing to do with university governance decision-making or policy implementation). Below, we mostly zero in on the student representation systems that imply student self-governance, i. e. formal student representative bodies.

Different regions of the world have developed their own traditions of student representation research. A fairly long history of relevant research is observed in the Anglosphere [Raaper 2020], somewhat shorter ones—in some countries of Asia and Africa [Luescher-Mamashela, Mugume 2014] and in continental Europe [Klemenčič 2012]. While case studies are more typical of the Anglosphere countries, other regions produce quite a lot of literature reviews and studies conducted at the national level. Furthermore, student representation and its mechanisms have also been addressed in global (cross-country and supranational) studies [Klemenčič 2014; Brooks, Byford, Sela 2015b; Brooks 2018; Klemenčič 2020a].

The key finding to draw from the abovementioned literature is the fundamental role of two factors: national context (external circumstances in which the education system, universities, and students exist) and university context (objectives and goals of the educational organization and intentions of its community and administrators), which eventually determine how student representation systems function in their various manifestations.

One example of national specifics of education system functioning is the marketization of higher education in the UK in the 2010s, which predetermined many aspects of student representation and activism beyond institutionalized practices. National student representation policy can be manifested in varying degrees of institutionalization and official recognition that the state grants to student representative organizations, from strong centralized coordination and formalization of the entire system to complete non-recognition, with a number of intermediate approaches in-between [Klemenčič 2012]. Furthermore, drawing a clear line of demarcation between student representation and other types of student activism is impossible in a number of countries, where student activities either directly coexist with involvement in socio-political campaigns on other issues or become part of such campaigns over time [Klemenčič 2020b].

University context includes the university's institutional status, organizational culture, and policy as well as the status of the student community as such. In global practice, institutional status of the university is most often interpreted as, but not limited to, whether the educational institution is public or private [Lewis, Rice 2005]. The university's organizational culture and policy imply keeping to a preferred logic (or a combination of different logics) of interaction as well as a preferred style in communication and decision-making within the university. In practice, the choice of policy and logic of interaction is simply the relations between the university and students, who can be perceived as inherently unequal members of the community who have no agency and need to be supervised (traditional paternalistic approach), or as formally required consultants in decision-making (bureaucratic approach), or as useful participants in the development and implementation of particular types of decisions (corporate, or managerial approach), or as fully-fledged members of the community whose opinions deserve to be respected (political community approach) [Klemenčič 2014]. The status of the student community as such is characterized, on the one hand, by its role at the university (students as consumers and users, students as members of the academic community, etc. [Luescher-Mamashela 2013]), and on the other hand, by its involvement in university governance, its internal homo- or heterogeneity in various aspects, and prevalence of specific views and characteristics inside it [Brooks, Byford, Sela 2015a].

In the Soviet era, the functions of student representation were performed to a limited extent by student trade unions and the Komсомол—basically, the “driving belts” of Soviet power—giving rise to path dependence effects. The post-Soviet national education policy was characterized by a somewhat cyclical interest in student representation, with significant milestones in 2001–2002, in 2006–2007, when student representation was actively promoted by the Ministry of Education¹ in its subordinate universities, and in 2012–2014, when the status of student councils as SRBs was formalized by Federal Law No. 273-FZ “On Education in the Russian Federation” of December 29, 2012 (henceforth “the Education Act”)² and extended beyond the Ministry's instructions and its subordinate universities. After the law was adopted, universities received more detailed recommendations on student organizing³ from the Ministry, and the position of the ombudsman for

¹ *Translator's Note:* The Ministry's name changed twice over the period covered in this study: in 2004, it was renamed into the Ministry of Education and Science, and in 2018, it was split into the Ministry of Education (Enlightenment) and the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. For convenience, it is always referred to as the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Science and Higher Education is implied when referring to periods after May 2018.

² http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_140174/

³ Letter of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation No. VK-262/09 “Methodological Recommendations on the Formation and Function-

students' rights was introduced.⁴ However, a nationwide student representative body was never created. Another trend in national policy during that period was the introduction of support programs for the leading universities (e.g. Project 5–100). While it is not directly related to student representation, some scholars believe that one of the goals was to contain possible anti-regime student mobilization [Forrat 2016], while some other academics contest the hypothesis [Chirikov 2016]. The Soviet legacy and the radical reforms of the recent decades have shaped a highly specific context for the development of student representation in Russia.

In the scientific literature, student representation in Russian universities is still largely a frontier: few studies are available, most of them being limited to specific cases, statistical reports, or a formally legal perspective. The ones of particular interest include a paper analyzing a number of student representation practices in Russia as deeply rooted in the institutional structure of the Soviet higher education system by performing an in-depth qualitative analysis of the current state of student trade unions [Chirikov, Gruzdev 2014], and a few publications based on surveys of students or student representatives, including student council census and ranking data [Popov 2009; Stegnyy 2016; Fatov, Kulikov, Sarukhanyan 2018]. Legal analysis is also important in assessing student representation practices [Shalamova, Fatov 2014; Fatov, Matvienko 2016]. Such works investigate quite extensively the adaptation of the existing guidelines and sample documents laid down by the Ministry of Education, analyze the relevant legal practice and case law, and propose some measures to incorporate best practices into law. Student representation research should also use data from rankings, censuses, and analytical reports produced by relevant public organizations.⁵

Using qualitative empirical data, this study analyzes the current structure of SRBs in Russian universities. Taking into account the available information about the national and university contexts, some inferences are made about the factors contributing to particular statuses of SRBs.

Methods and Data

Analysis of the situation with student representative structures is based on a sample of leading Russian universities with a special sta-

ing of Student Councils in Educational Institutions" of February 14, 2014: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_159460/

⁴ <https://iz.ru/news/542048>

⁵ All-Russia Census of Student Councils: https://studorg.ru/assets/media/Materialy_po_itogam_perepisi.pdf; NUST MISIS Student Council Tops the First Student Council Ranking in Russia: <https://misis.ru/university/news/life/2016-12/4348/>; Consolidated Analytical Report on the State of Student Representative Bodies in Russian Universities (2018): https://studorg.ru/assets/media/image/SSU/Tvoyvibor/Analiticheskiy_otchet_o_sostoyanii_OSSU.pdf

tus: federal universities, national research universities, Project 5–100 universities, and universities included in the QS World University Rankings as of summer–fall 2020. Characteristics of the sample impose certain limitations on result interpretation. It is no use denying the possible effects of regional or industry-specific (in the case of specialized universities) contexts, not to mention that student representation practices can differ across universities with different educational levels of students [Kouba 2018]—only quite selective institutions are addressed in this article. Student representation research can thus be taken further by considering less selective colleges and going beyond higher education to focus on regional-level representation (municipal and regional student councils), secondary schools, etc.

The Education Act enables student councils to assume the functions of a representative structure. While the present study is focused on the former, findings show that such a division turns out to be artificial in many cases, both forms of student representation being closely intertwined.

The sample was comprised of 50 universities (Table 1). For each of them, open sources of information about student councils were analyzed: relevant pages on university websites, social media profiles of student councils and student trade unions (where applicable), formation procedures, and scope of activities.

At the next stage, the heads of the student representative bodies (presidents, ex-presidents, vice-presidents, and heads of other SRBs performing similar functions) of all the 50 universities were contacted (via social networking services) an invitation to participate in semi-structured interviews. With a response rate of 50%, 25 interviews were carried out. Personal characteristics of the respondents are shown in Table 2.

Every interview was conducted on the basis of a guide which covered the following aspects:—interviewee's overall background;—their personal journey in student representation;—characteristics of the university's institutional structure and practices;—interviewee's personal opinion on the university's organizational structure and the structural role of students;—the relationships between SRBs and university administrators as well as other external and internal actors;—perceived value of student representation;—personal and social reasons to participate in student self-governance. Additionally, the relationships between the SRB and the local student trade union (where applicable) were analyzed. Interviews were conducted in Zoom and recorded for transcription purposes. An average interview lasted one hour and 34 minutes, with the shortest of 55 minutes and the longest of two hours and 44 minutes.

As interview recordings were transcribed, thematic content analysis of the transcripts was performed, which involved identification and generalization of common themes and comparative assessment of frequencies of mention for different themes. Transcript content

Table 1. Universities included in the sample.

	Universities
Open data analysis only	Altai State University, Belgorod State National Research University, Bashkir State University, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University, ITMO University, Kazan Federal University, V. I. Vernadsky Crimean Federal University, Moscow Aviation Institute, Moscow State Institute of International Relations, Bauman Moscow State Technical University, Pirogov Russian National Research Medical University, National University of Science and Technology (MISIS), National Research Nuclear University MEPhI, Moscow Power Engineering Institute, Lobachevsky University, Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University, Russian State University for the Humanities, Gubkin Russian State University of Oil and Gas, Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Saratov State University, Amosov North-Eastern Federal University, North-Caucasus Federal University, National Research Tomsk State University, Tomsk Polytechnic University, Ufa State Aviation Technical University
Open data analysis + in-depth interviews	Voronezh State Technical University, Voronezh State University, Far-Eastern Federal University, Kazan National Research Technological University, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, Novosibirsk State Technical University, Novosibirsk State University, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Perm State University, Perm National Research Polytechnic University, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), MIREA—Russian Technological University, RUDN University, Samara University, Northern (Arctic) Federal University, Sechenov University, Siberian Federal University, Saint Petersburg Mining University, Saint Petersburg State University, Saint Petersburg Electrotechnical University "LETI", Tyumen State University, Ural Federal University, South Ural State University, Southern Federal University

Table 2. Interviewee characteristics.

	Interviewees
Gender composition	20 males, 5 females
Years of admission	2011–2014 (1 from each year) 2015–2016 (5 from each year) 2017 (4) 2018 (6) 2019 (1)
Fields of study	Social and Economic Sciences (13) Physical, Mathematical, and Computer Sciences (6) Life Sciences (6)

was divided into two major pre-determined categories:—the way respondents described the processes of SRB formation at their university;—and the way they described the structure and functioning of SRBs in their organization.

Below, we present the results of our qualitative study, summarizing the respondents' main ideas about the formation and functioning of student councils and other SRBs.

**Formation
of Student
Representative
Bodies in Russian
Universities**

It would be rather hard to present a universal model of SRB formation in Russian universities. Among the diverse university practices, there are five major origins of institutional arrangements for student representation, the structure of representative bodies being contingent on how the finite and limited power is distributed among the different types of origin, which are described in more detail below.

Faculties, departments, and other institutional units, including student groups, that bring students together on the academic grounds. One of the most widespread principles of SRB formation is based on the distribution of all students among communities as a function of their institutional unit and field of study: faculties, departments, majors, student groups, etc. Technically, the formation procedure of student representative bodies can take various forms: direct election, report-and-election conference, multistage voting with group presidents as delegates, etc. In any case, student representation works to serve the specific faculty, department, or student group, and every student is formally involved in such representation—no membership or any other additional proof of status is required.

Thematic student organizations. In Russian higher education, student representation is very often based around self-initiated membership in organizations established to promote or celebrate common interests within the university. Originally, such interest clubs are focused more on self-governance but assume the functions of student representation over time.

Student trade unions, in practice, may be either independent SRBs or constituent units of larger representative structures such as student councils or governments. Student trade unions are partly related with thematic student organizations—in term of self-initiated membership and, therefore, the lack of inclusion of all students in representation processes—and with academic communities—in terms of certain objectives and principles of operation, such as orientation toward both self-governance and representation, faculty-based “union bureaus”, etc. Most often, university student trade unions descend directly from the respective system of the Soviet period. While not being available in all universities, they are represented quite widely in Russian higher education. Contrary to expectations based on current law and some previous research, student trade unions are not a separate “branch of government” in student representation that is roughly equal in its power, potential, and influence to student councils or governments, but rather an important part of the relevant councils—which is why they are classified in this study among the five “origins” of student representation. The range of possible relations between student trade unions and

other student representative structures is extremely wide: from equal partnerships with student organizations or faculty representatives, to antagonism and competition for students and resources.

Dormitories. A substantial proportion of students live in dormitories and need self-organization at their place of residence [Dremova, Shcheglova 2020]. Most often, dedicated dormitory councils are created for this purpose. This type of student representation is less common than the ones discussed above: some universities have no large non-resident student enrollments; in others, dorms are assigned to faculties, so no additional intermediation is required; and yet in others, the functions of dorm councils are assumed by thematic student organizations.

Personal teams of SRB leaders. In some universities, leaders of student representative structures have the right to invite a team of their own to join the SRB and even grant them decisive votes. While this formation procedure is not as widespread as the ones described above, it persists in a variety of forms, from mandatory approval of candidates nominated by the leader, to the leader's unlimited power.

The five origins of institutional arrangements for student representation are not necessarily present in all universities or share their spheres of influence. Coexistence of various types of student organizations is also possible, even if sometimes it involves antagonism and competition for resources and students; another possible alternative is when all the roles are performed by a single structure formed by one or two of the five ways. The structure, balance of power, and self-designation are determined by the university context. Faculties (or other academic units), thematic student organizations, and student trade unions are the most powerful origins of institutional arrangements for student representation.

**Activities and
Functions
of Student
Representative
Bodies in Russian
Universities**

The method of formation of a student representative body determines the kind of people who participate in it and, consequently, whose interests they represent in the first place and what they do most of the time.

Table 3 presents the key categories of student representation agenda and activities in Russian universities, grouped by the frequency of mention in interviews: (1) mentioned by an overwhelming majority (16–17 or more mentions), (2) mentioned by nearly (or slightly fewer than) half of the interviewees (10–12 mentions), (3) mentioned by nearly one third of the respondents (7–9 mentions), (4) and mentioned less often but regularly (3–5 mentions).

The most widespread domains of activity. The three most prevalent functions performed by SRBs include participation in shared governance, provision of information to other students and engagement in public interactions with them, and organization of mass cultural events for students. The first function—the central one, stipulated by the Education Act—involves mandatory consideration of local regulations and

Table 3. **Domains of student representation activities in Russian universities.**

Category	Domains of activity
1	Bureaucracy and formalized participation in governance; provision of information to other students; organization of mass cultural events for students
2	Education quality; social and living infrastructure; scholarships and allowances; legal support; career guidance and counseling
3	Science and research; freshman and international student orientation; sports
4	Student group presidency; volunteerism; external partnerships; applicants; finance

decisions regarding student disciplinary action. In addition, shared university governance implies participation in university boards and commissions of various kinds as well as routine interactions with the university administration. In nearly all the universities, SRBs engage with structural units administering extracurricular activities and/or youth policy implementation. Less often, they also engage with a broader range of university administrators on relevant matters. Whether student representatives interact with the rectorate depends solely on the rector's preferences, each university being a special case in this regard.

Quite often, the student council becomes the main aggregator of information and events for students, especially if representatives of student organizations participate in the council on a regular basis.

"First of all, it's cultural activities and arts: working with freshmen and other activists to engage them in socialization, socially significant events, organization activities, and to encourage them to develop and improve their soft skills. Second of all, it's communications and social media community management: getting information from the dean, administrators, or president of the student council to inform students about changes, whether it be a recent decree on the transition to distance learning, a decree on some scholarship issues, or information on all the current and upcoming events." (male, 4th year of Bachelor's studies, Mathematical and Computer Sciences)

Domains of activity mentioned in nearly half of the cases. Slightly less often, student representative structures address the issues of education, social and living infrastructure, legal help for students in case their rights are infringed within or outside the university, allocation of scholarships and other financial aids, career guidance and counseling, and other enriching events and experiences. Monitoring of education quality has lately become a priority issue in student representation activities and is likely to move up to the "most widespread" category, as this domain was mentioned most often among the areas of focus for future development.

“Three domains: education, scholarships, and infrastructure. We took active participation in the transition to distance learning, collected complaints, and tried to help faculty members when necessary. We developed guidance on distance learning tools and practices, monitored the process across faculties, and tried to make adjustments in cooperation with the administrators. Regarding scholarships, we invested a lot of effort in student support, developing lists of students eligible for additional aid and negotiating emergency funding options with the university. As for the infrastructure, we had less work in this domain because the campus was virtually empty last year. Usually, it’s routine work on building-specific issues. One of the big initiatives we accomplished was turning the library in one of the campus buildings into a co-working space. We often work on students’ requests when they have problems. Faculty student councils also participate in disciplinary and scholarship committees on a mandatory basis.” (male, 2nd year of Master’s studies, Mathematical and Computer Sciences)

Domains of activity prevalent in one third of the cases. Among the SRB activities aimed at encouraging student research, providing orientation for freshmen and international students, and promoting sports and physical activity, the highest growth potential is observed for research promotion—a large proportion of the respondents refer to it as one of the most promising avenues of their representative structure’s development. Quite probably, this domain of student representation activity will soon become more widespread.

Everyone is deeply engaged in tutoring first-year students. It’s very popular today, and everyone has those freshman tutoring programs, which vary a lot across faculties. The first term of the freshman year is the required minimum, everyone does this. Next, the research function: popularization of science is trending today, and we’ve launched a large-scale project recently. Then, international students: we accept any request or complaint from foreign students, consider it, and help them solve the problem. (male, 3rd year of Bachelor’s studies, Social and Economic Sciences)

Domains of activity typical of specific university clusters. Among their SRB activities, some interviewees mentioned coordination of work with student group presidents, promotion of volunteerism, cooperation with external organizations and partners and university applicants, and elaboration of the financial base of student representative bodies and universities. The latter type of activities, namely the desire to participate in the audit of the university’s funding allocation mechanisms and to ensure the possibility of attracting external funds (grants) for SRB operations, is a key point of growth in this category with the potential to move to a higher prevalence category: a significant num-

ber of respondents would like to develop student representation in this direction.

When describing the working conditions of SRBs, a number of respondents emphasized two problems. One of them is the high degree of bureaucratization: student representatives have to spend a lot of time on filling out huge amounts of paperwork in the prescribed ways instead of doing meaningful work and defending students' interests before the administration. The other problem is that university administrators ask SRBs to help them with event organization all the time. In a situation like this, SRBs basically become executors of technical functions, or, at the best, are "assigned" to administer events.

"As an institutional unit of the university, the student council should formulate its opinion on paper prior to expressing it. Sometimes, we receive an executive document to provide feedback on, and it's such bafflegab that our specialized department just can't make sense of it. You can spend tons of time trying to figure out what those papers say just to realize down the road that you got it all wrong. Way too much time is wasted on translating from officialese into comprehensible Russian." (female, 4th year of Bachelor's studies, Social and Economic Sciences)

"The university uses student activists to perform tasks that it needs, which may be of much less interest to students themselves and the student council. Moving tables, carrying speakers in and out, and so on. This is what often scared people away: instead of doing mental work, they had to do physical exercise. And it's hard to say no because everyone wants to maintain a good relationship. (male, graduate, Life Sciences)

Therefore, the functions of SRBs are largely contingent on the university's student representation policy, its legal framework, and real-life practice. Formation procedure also plays a significant role: if student clubs have a lot of weight in student representation, then provision of information and organization of mass cultural events are likely to be a priority, whereas SRBs based on institutional units and academic communities will pay attention to a wider range of issues. The main trend in the development of student representation functions, judging by our findings, is the strengthening of their academic and research capacity, which is reported as desirable by many interviewees.

Naturally, it should be kept in mind that this study was conducted on a sample of leading universities, and interviews were carried out with the leaders of those universities' SRBs, most of them being students or graduates in social and economic sciences. A broader and more diverse sample could produce a different distribution of opinions on the most and least common domains of student representation activities. Still, the four domains identified in the present article

most probably reflect nearly the entire range of student representatives' perceptions of what they do, which makes this finding a fairly good initial outcome of exploratory and descriptive research.

**Specifics
of Student
Representation
in Russian
Universities
and Avenues for
Further Research**

The system of student representation in Russian universities is a curious and distinctive example of thematic student communities being deeply and directly integrated into the overall representation hierarchy and often being substituted for the direct election mechanism which is more widespread in the global practice [Klemenčič 2020a]. Members of Russian SRBs are much less likely than their counterparts from other countries to be local "politicians" and opinion leaders but are more likely to be managers of self-initiated activities within student organizations. Even in cases where the leader is elected, it has almost zero effects on the system as a whole.

While university student representation in global practice is multivariate and involves socialization and youth policymaking (the experience of representation at this level can be later used by graduates to defend their rights in their career and civic life), in Russia it basically has the status of a managerial unit within the university. Furthermore, the central functions of SRBs in this managerial role are most often reduced to formal execution of legal requirements regarding local regulations and disciplinary action (including the related bureaucratic paperwork), participation in the work of university governing bodies, and maintenance of some university processes, mostly organization of mass cultural events for students and keeping them informed. Less often, SRBs actually represent students' interests in managerial decision-making on educational, social, infrastructural, scholarship, and other issues.

The governance agenda of SRBs in Russia is thus much more dependent on universities, university administrators, and higher-level policies and bureaucracy than on students themselves. A similar trend in the role of student representation (professionalization, bureaucratization, disengagement from regular students as voters) is being observed in a number of other countries, which researchers explain by the increasing marketization of higher education [Brooks, Byford, Sela 2015b].

Analysis of respondents' opinions in this study confirms the assumption drawn from a review of literature that national and university contexts are the main factors that shape the role of SRBs. The extremely strong influence that the state has on the entire system of higher education in Russia affects student representation practices among other things. Formalization of SRBs and their different types in federal law, development and progressive implementation of guidance on student organizing, and attempts to make some of the representative positions elective were part of a consistent policy that radically transformed the phenomenon of student representation during

the 2010s. According to the typology of national student representation systems [Klemenčič 2012], Russia belongs to the corporatist model with a bias for the statist model in some of the aspects.

Within the overall trend, the whole variety of student representation practices is explained by university specifics. The model of student representation adopted in a particular university is largely contingent on how strongly the university depends on the Ministry of Education, both on paper (whether the ministry is a founder) and in real life (financial relations, etc.). A significant number of universities use a distributed model of student representation which is *de facto* stipulated in the Ministry's guidelines and brings together multiple actors, predominantly thematic student organizations. Models that differ a lot from the distributed one and sometimes emphasize the election principle at different levels are more likely to be found in universities that are less dependent on the Ministry either because the latter is not their founder or due to some other reasons for a special status: Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University, Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, National Research University Higher School of Economics, and some others.

Along with university status, factors such as the intentions and views of administrators and students play a significant role, too. The structure of SRBs is an important factor that determines their functions: different origins of such student bodies naturally contribute to the prevalence of different types of activity (e.g. faculty-based SRBs prioritize educational and social issues, while those built around thematic clubs focus more on mass cultural events and keeping students informed). Whether a particular function survives or not depend on student-university interactions: the broader representation on both sides (not restricted to the vice-rector for youth policy and the head of the student council but involving a number of individuals who represent different opinions and deal with issues that they are specialized in) and the more regular and productive their interactions, the more likely the range of student representation functions will be to solidify. According to the taxonomy of forms of relations between university and student representative structures [Klemenčič 2014], managerial (or corporate) governance model and authoritarian-paternalistic approach prevail in Russian universities.

Associations between the functions of SRBs and their formation procedure as well as their relations with the university administrators are important in terms of education policy. Taking into account the high priority that universities assign to student feedback on the quality of educational processes, it appears a promising strategy to apply and promulgate the principle of student representation based on faculty or other academic affiliation (which may be combined with other principles, provided that they are equally important for the university's purposes) and to ensure that student representative structures engage on a regular basis not only with youth policymakers but also

with the administrators who are directly involved in coordination of educational processes. Every factor affecting the context of university development may and should be reflected in the structure of SRBs. In particular, the critical role of student dormitories necessitates representation of dormitory residents.

The purpose of the study performed was to summarize the existing practices and provide a basis for further discussion on student representation in Russian higher education. New qualitative studies will be needed, in particular, to ensure a more detailed analysis of national student representation policy—for the time being, we can only cautiously hypothesize about the driving forces behind certain initiatives. Furthermore, we definitely need quantitative studies as well to cover a much broader range of colleges (not only leading and selective universities) and describe models of student representation adopted in specific universities. Related areas such as student activism and student representation outside university deserve attention, too. Students are mobile, and student representation in Russia is constantly evolving, expanding the spectrum of research opportunities day by day.

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