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A PROGRAMME FOR RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERS THROUGH THE NEW PUBLIC MANAGEMENT LENS

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### Thesis abstract

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| Abstract  
| This thesis calls attention to a previously unexplored phenomenon: leadership programmes for educators in support of education reforms. Such programmes, appearing nowadays in different parts of the world, are designed to enable educators to carry out certain activities, and to change their perceptions about newly introduced policies. This study analyzes such a programme for university leaders, initiated and supervised by Russian Ministry of education and science.  
| Theoretically the study builds on a concept of New Public Management (NPM), arguing that this concept is relevant to both Russian education reforms and the programme contents. NPM refers to a complex phenomenon of introducing private sector mechanisms into the public sphere. This thesis shows how Russian higher education reforms since early 1990s are going along the lines of NPM, but at the same time paradoxically combine it with planned economy approaches and tight state control. Apart from internal contradictions, the reforms implementation in Russia is also impeded by public resistance and lack of leadership in universities.  
| The study suggests that the programme in focus served as a means of NPM reform implementation, and provided a concentrated version of the local higher education narrative. Research aims were formulated as follows:  
| 1) to uncover the specifics of NPM narrative in Russian context;  
| 2) to discuss the programme as an instrument of facilitating higher education reform in Russia.  
| Methodologically this research is a qualitative case study. Transcripts of the programme lectures served as the primary data for analysis, complemented by interviews and field notes. The data was processed through a theory-guided qualitative content analysis procedure.  
| The results of analysis show that 80 per cent of the contents were in line with the NPM narrative, which was justified primarily through international competitiveness argumentation. The study reveals the ambiguous role of the state, which was positioned as the main controller or customer, but was also addressed as a barrier for development. It shows how student-centeredness lacked from the narrative, while industries and regions were pictured as important stakeholders. The study also uncovers contradictions within the narrative that can explain difficulties in reform implementation: the call for cooperation contradicts enhanced competition; the orientation to the global market contradicts local functions of universities; and suggested NPM means contradict humanitarian missions of higher education.  
| Basing on a single case with the corresponding limitations to generalization, this thesis contributes to the body of research on NPM, studying it in the previously uninvestigated context of Russian higher education.  
| Keywords  
| new public management, higher education in Russia, leadership programmes  

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1. INTRODUCTION

Educational and political studies come together when researchers discuss the role of education in promoting certain policies, or investigate policies in the field of education. This research does both, studying an educational programme as an instrument of facilitating a particular reform package in Russian higher education. The idea of this study has emerged from the case itself: a programme for one hundred senior university administrators, launched by the Russian Ministry of education and science and executed by a top Russian business school. In the process of searching for a theoretical lens matching the programme contents and placing the programme in the context of Russian educational reforms, a concept of New Public Management (NPM) proved to be highly relevant to both reforms and the programme.

New Public Management refers to the complex phenomenon of introducing private sector mechanisms into the public sphere, including higher education. For several decades already NPM ideas and instruments have been changing educational policies all over the world, though every local context obviously has its specifics. In this thesis I will show how Russian higher education reforms since early 1990s have been going along the lines of NPM, which emphasizes performance-, cost-, efficiency- and audit-orientation of universities. When comparing Russian reform to typical NPM features globally I will discuss specifics of NPM in Russian context, and in particular factors that make reform implementation more difficult. I then study how NPM ideas are transmitted and justified through educating university leaders in the programme which is in the focus of this thesis. On the whole, my research aims are the following:

1) to uncover the specifics of NPM narrative in Russian context;
2) to discuss the programme as an instrument of facilitating higher education reform in Russia.

Methodologically this thesis is a qualitative study, as it strives to develop a complex and context-bound picture of the investigated issues, attends to diverse viewpoints of the research participants, and is based on the researcher’s interpretations of observed phenomena. Case study was chosen as the overarching research method, as I explored NPM in Russian context through a single but significant case of a government-initiated programme for higher education leaders. Case study allows using diverse sources of data about the case, which helps to balance the researcher’s interpretation. In the course of data collection I employed
participant observation, interviews, and document analysis, with transcripts of the pro-
gramme’s lectures serving as the main source of data. These transcripts were analyzed ap-
plying the theory-guided qualitative content analysis method, which means that my analysis
was informed by NPM theory and prior research on Russian education reforms, but at the
same time new ideas emerged from the data.

For a qualitative study researcher’s positionality is utterly important, as it influences the
whole research process and particularly interpretation of the results. As an insider of Russian
higher education system, having studied and worked in public and private universities, I
have for a long time been supporting ideas of bringing more private sector mechanisms to
Russian higher education. I believed competition and intra-institutional quality assurance to
be the main means that, under condition of sufficient funding, could cure ills of Soviet inher-
itance (such as outdated curricula, heavy bureaucracy and nepotism, or lack of customer ori-
entation), and make institutions more sensitive to student needs and more eager to strive for
better quality in education. At the same time, I viewed Russian educational reforms with dis-
trust, particularly those that introduced more standardization and transferred decision-
making on whom, what and how to teach from universities to the state.

Studying in Finland and acquaintance with up-to-date research in education have altered my
views significantly. I currently take a more critical stance towards applicability of neoliberal
ideas to education, see public and commercial sectors as essentially different in values and
motivation of workers, and believe that market mechanisms should be introduced to educa-
tion only partially, with great caution and attention to the context. I also came to see Soviet
inheritance as a valuable resource of governance ideas alternative to neoliberal, which
should not be carelessly thrown away altogether.

For me, this study has been a process of re-discovering Russian higher education system
through NPM theory and case materials. To a reader it can hopefully provide insights about
NPM manifestations in Russian higher education context, and also give food for thought on
how an educational programme can serve as a tool of reform implementation. Both perspec-
tives are novel for NPM studies. There has been no prior research of NPM in Russian higher
education, though there are studies that cover related topics, such as marketization of Rus-
sian university, designing Russian educational reform around transnational organizations’
guidelines, or implementation of NPM in social services. Training programmes for educa-
tion leaders that are launched in support of reform implementation have also so far lacked
attention of educational or political researchers, although such programmes are becoming
more and more common in many countries nowadays, as I show in this thesis. I hope that my study of NPM from this new viewpoint and in a relatively uninvestigated context will add not only to the empirical evidence, but also to the theoretical discussion on NPM.
2. THEORETICAL AND CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 New Public Management

In this section I aim at several goals: to describe what different scholars understand by new public management (NPM); to identify its main elements and features; to discuss how it displays itself in the field of higher education; to review common criticisms of NPM; and finally, to choose and explain the perspective on NPM that I will take in my research.

New public management can be understood as a theoretical concept within a broader framework of public administration, or as a phenomenon in the practice of governing states, that historically emerged in OECD countries after World War 2 as an alternative to the traditional (Weberian) bureaucracy and aimed at overcoming its drawbacks (Hood, 1991). First, traditional hierarchical bureaucracy was considered inefficient in spending public funds because it required a too large bureaucratic apparatus. Next, it was said to be unable to take into account the diversity of public needs and provide accordingly diverse services. It offered the same support to everyone instead of supporting primarily those who needed it. It lacked incentives for being efficient, as there was little if any competition nor control of outputs. Finally, it was considered infeasible any longer to fund the traditional bureaucracy and public services totally through public funds, due to such factors as population growth (also through migration), ageing, and growth of life expectancy, which put more stress on providing pensions and health care services, with concurrent reduction of the number of taxpayers.

From late 1970s new mechanisms in running public services, attempting to address the described challenges, were introduced in many OECD countries (Hood, 1991; Diefenbach, 2009). UK, Australia and New Zealand are often described as pioneers or most clear cases of new public management (Barr, Barr & Crawford, 2005; Barr 2004; Hood, 1991; Ferlie, Musselin & Andresani, 2008). Having started as a set of new practices in governing public services, NPM then needed to be conceived theoretically, partly because similar practices in many countries indicated an emerging new way of thinking that was influencing social life in many respects, and partly because proponents of these practices needed theoretical basis to promote and develop them.
2.1.1. Definition of NPM

The concept of NPM was first brought to detailed analysis in 1991 by Christopher Hood. In his now classical article “A public management for all seasons?” he characterized new public management as a shorthand name for the set of administrative doctrines emerged in 1970s with similar traits (Hood, 1991). Even then Hood mentioned that the term of NPM is loose; ten years later, in 2001, it seemed to become still vaguer: “Scholars broadly agree that NPM exists; what the phrase “really means” is, however, a matter of controversy” (Barzelay, 2001, p. xi). In his attempt to clarify the term for future research and theorization, Barzelay discerned three main interpretations of NPM. One was “a set of highly mobile ideas” that have spread from the source countries (mainly the UK and New Zealand) throughout the globe; the second - a political framework for making decisions, based on theoretical ideas about organization and management; and the third - an empirical style of organizing public services (Barzelay, 2001, pp. xi-xii). Similarly, another scholar at about the same time characterizes NPM as a “coherent theory about how government may deliver services” and a new, ideologically neutral, tool for managing the public sector, applied by neo-liberal as well as conservative and social democratic governments (Lane, 2000, pp.21, 26).

This notion of ideological neutrality of NPM was heavily challenged by other authors. Hood as early as in 1991 indicated that there is an ideological conflict between proponents of NPM that claim a ‘moral bankruptcy’ of the older bureaucracy, and opponents of NPM that see it as “a gratuitous and philistine destruction of more than a century's work in developing a distinctive public service ethic and culture” (Hood, 1991). In a more recent work, another author considers ideological aspects to be at the core of NPM, and defines it as a set of particular assumptions and value statements (Diefenbach, 2009, p.893).

For the purposes of this research, I need to choose a definition of NPM that will take into account its various aspects and interpretations described above. I have found such a definition in an article by Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani (2008, p. 334) where they address NPM as a narrative of public services reform that mixes technical, political and normative elements. This definition is broad enough to accommodate diverse elements and ideas of NPM in the materials of the case: elements that represent particular values (normative), that are connected to interests of different groups (political), and that present concrete measures to be taken (technical). This definition also suggests that NPM is a specific narrative, so comparing it to narratives of the case would be valid.
2.1.2 Nature and elements of NPM

Despite the diversity of definitions, researchers show a relative homogeneity in describing the content and key traits of NPM. Aiming at a better effectiveness and efficiency of public services in the situation of reducing government spending, NPM introduces market institutions and management styles to the public sphere: “The basic idea of NPM is to make public sector organizations <…> much more ‘business-like’ and ‘market-oriented’, that is, performance-, cost-, efficiency- and audit-oriented” (Diefenbach 2009, p.893).

Market orientation of public organizations implies that their services are increasingly viewed as commodities that have certain consumer properties and that have to be tailored to customers’ needs. ‘Business-likeness’ places greater emphasis on management, greater use of contracts, and reconsideration of external parties that interact with the organization as ‘stakeholders’ (e.g., a university views the Ministry of education, local government, students, and partnering enterprises as key stakeholders whose interests are primary and should be incorporated into university’s goals and mission, and who have a right to take part in strategic decision making). ‘Cost-effectiveness’ usually means cost-reduction through such measures as privatization of services, downsizing of organizations, outsourcing, and competitive tendering. When it is the government that introduces ‘cost-effectiveness’ in its spending, privatization of public organizations and of the whole sectors of services takes place.

Performance, efficiency and ‘productivity’ of organizations is defined in functional and technological terms, and measured through quantitative indicators and external evaluation. The government offers more autonomy to public organizations, claiming that less central control will enable organizations to take better care of themselves and of specific local needs. Instead of direct control the government steers them through market mechanisms such as competition, or applies control over prices and costs. Government agencies develop guidelines and standards, often based on national and international ‘best practices’. Other steering mechanisms can include greater control of output and quality assessment, or creating ‘incentives’ for organizations in the form of, for example, formula funding, when public funds are allocated according to specific results achieved by organizations.

One of the most recent sources summarizes key features of NPM as follows: “increased role of markets and competition rather than formal planning; the application of target setting and the vigorous use of performance management linked with new forms of accountability; reductions in public expenditure and a new focus on ‘value for money’; stronger, empowered local management; and a shift towards more demand-driven, rather than supply-driven, ser-
vices reflecting the preferences of the ‘consumer’ rather than the provider” (Taylor, 2013, p. 13).

Three aspects of NPM are sometimes used as synonyms for NPM, or as NPM ‘subtypes’. The first one is connected to the new salient position of managers as key actors in any institution, and the primacy of management compared to all other activities and competencies (Diefenbach, 2009). This phenomenon is labeled ‘new managerialism’ (often used interchangeably with NPM, - cf. Taylor, 2013 or Deem, 2001). It is associated with adopting business management styles in the public sector; with greater responsibility and freedom of action for local managers (‘liberation management’ in Ferlie et al., 2008); and with greater subordination and control for managed professionals.

The second aspect of NPM that is often addressed independently is the new practice and culture of accountability and quality assurance, replacing former culture of trust and professional ethics (‘auditisation variant of NPM’ – Ferlie et al., 2008). The call for greater accountability and output control of public institutions came together with parsimony in public spending and granting greater autonomy to local institutions. For the sake of efficiency and transparency, quality of work and outputs are measured quantitatively rather than qualitatively, which affects the way public services are delivered (for example, teaching primarily to tests, or redistributing working time from teaching to writing reports). An important part of quality assurance is the use of comparing and benchmarking. As a whole, the complex of accountability and quality assurance measures represents a specific way of governance typical for NPM (Fougner, 2008; Novoa & Yariv-Mashal, 2003).

The third essential aspect of NPM that is marked out is the wide use of contracting: “NPM is first and foremost contractualism” (Lane, 2001, p.17). This primarily includes contracting out instead of providing services through government own facilities; and at the same time broader use of contracts and internal competition within and between public institutions.

2.1.3 NPM in higher education

Universities, as state-funded organizations, are experiencing NPM reforms together with the whole public sector, which means profound changes in the ways they are governed and run, and, consequently, a gradual change in their identity and perceived role in society. As Braun and Merrien have formulated this, the idea of universities as “cultural institutions contributing in general and without concrete purpose to social cohesion and economic development of societies” is being replaced by a new view of universities “in a utilitarian
fashion as *public service institutions* subject to concrete social, political and economic goals” (Braun & Merrien, 1999, p. 11). Other authors (Barr, 2004; Ferlie et al., 2008; Taylor, 2013) also point to increased attention of the state to universities. They connect it to massification of higher education, which means greater expectations of the public from the state, and to new understanding of universities as “key actors” (as knowledge diffusers, research producers and innovation inducers) in “knowledge societies” (Ferlie et al., 2008, p. 332).

This intensive attention of the public and seeing universities as a driving force for economy have led to a more active intervention of the state into the higher education sector. The traditional independence of universities is gradually declining, despite the greater autonomy offered to them. This is caused by multiple factors, such as empowerment of executive management, contrary to traditional collegial governance, or stricter control of outcomes, connected to new funding formulas. Another factor limiting independence of universities can be greater influence of local governments and transnational actors, such as OECD. Finally, exposure to market influences, coming with marketization of the sector and commodification of education and research, also limits universities’ independence greatly.

All this is in line with general NPM trends described in the previous section, and is justified by the same logic that underlies reforms in other public sectors. This logic implies that higher education is competing for funding with other public services (first of all, with pensions), and mass provision of higher education that is expected by the public is not affordable if funded solely by the state. Higher education is claimed to be not only public but private good, hence it can and should be funded privately. At the same time, even if universities are funded exclusively by the state, public funds must be used wisely, hence the need for greater control, accountability and transparency, and for better and stronger management. Finally, market forces are said to be able to “add life” to the sector, and make universities more efficient and better serving public and private needs (Barr, 2004; Ferlie et al., 2008).

As public service institutions that should be accountable to their stakeholders and should justify their use of public funds, universities are pushed to change themselves in particular ways, and to meet new demands. They are expected to be more “productive” and offer more applied and “useful” research and teaching; to train specialists directly to the job market; to become more convenient, engaging and supportive in their teaching modes; to contribute to and even to lead the economic development of their local area through en-
hancing innovation, entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and providing the necessary trained workforce (Dill, 1996; Ferlie et al., 2008). Efficiency and transparency is achieved through developing new missions, ensuring student and stakeholder’s participation in the university governance, incorporating multiple performance indicators and opening themselves for external evaluation. Ferlie et al. discuss how the previously recognized monopoly of academia on expertise and the capacity of public servants to define public interest has been critiqued, and how the profane knowledge was recognized as a form of expertise in its own right. They argue that is was the factor that led to a stress on more participation from various stakeholders in the construction of public decisions and defining strategies for public institutions, including universities (Ferlie et al., 2008, p. 333).

At the same time, the traditional collegiality, meritocracy, and bureaucracy in managing universities did not disappear, but became mixed with newer forms. The same can be said about the university-state relationship and governing higher education sector: “There is no one actor who can be held effectively accountable. There is no crude concentration of power in the hands of the upper echelons or disempowering of public sector trade unions or academic faculty who remain important stakeholders. The State holds the ring rather than intervenes directly within the sector” (Ferlie et al., 2008, p. 333). The new public management is only one important component of the complex and confused system of higher education governance, where state control and state steering, network governance and neo-weberian public administration are all mixed, and diverse means of governance (intermediary agencies, contracts, evaluation, benchmarking, etc.) are used (Taylor, 2013; Braun & Merrien, 1999, Ferlie et al., 2008).

In the following table I summarize general features of NPM (derived from Hood, 1991; Lane, 2000; Diefenbach, 2009; and Taylor, 2013) and relate them to more specific signs of NPM in higher education discussed above and described by Braun and Merrien (1999) and by Ferlie et al. (2008). I use this table as guide when developing instruments to compare NPM narrative with narratives of the studied case.
Table 1. Manifestations of NPM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General features of NPM</th>
<th>NPM in higher education (sources: Braun &amp; Merrien, 1999; Ferlie et al., 2008)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Marketization of public services</td>
<td>Role of the state is to develop the thin higher education market. Introduction of more directly economic concerns into research and teaching. Support of research based on concrete proposals and more practical applications of scientific knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Privatization</td>
<td>Encouragement of private sector providers to enter the market; market exit of failed public providers is acceptable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Competition</td>
<td>Stimulation of competition for students and research funding between higher education institutions. Policy stress on diversity and choice rather than integration and planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Demand-driven services reflecting preferences of the ‘consumer’ rather than the provider</td>
<td>Redefinition of existing stakes among the parties or recognizing new interests (for example, students, commerce and local industry, different social parties and government representatives, etc.). Introduction of higher student fees to empower students as consumers and drive up teaching quality levels.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Greater use of contracts</td>
<td>Development of real prices for teaching fees and research contracts as a basis on which trading in this market can take place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Decentralization; central steering; more autonomy for local institutions</td>
<td>The Ministry and its agencies attempt to steer the system vertically, through setting explicit targets and performance contracts. Government insistence that institutions of higher education should assume responsibility for their own futures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Parsimony in public spending. Focus on “value for money”</td>
<td>Universities should demonstrate effective use of public resources. A hardening of soft budgetary constraints: stress on financial control, recovery from budget deficits, efficiency and value for money.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.1.4 Criticisms of NPM

Having started in late 1970s, NPM has spread widely across geographic regions and policy areas, becoming a movement that is ‘both radical and total in its scope as well as in its intensity’ (Diefenbach, 2009, p. 892). A lot of research has been undertaken to evaluate effects and side-effects on NPM reforms, discuss their long-term consequences, and analyze consistency and influence of NPM as a theory and ideology. It seems that in many cases NPM has reached its goals of reducing bureaucracy, achieving greater responsiveness of public organizations to their local publics and changing environment, creating greater awareness of costs and raising motivation to spend funds wisely, increasing productivity and promoting efficiency defined through measurable indicators (Ferlie et al., 2008; Diefenbach, 2009). At the same time, even proponents of NPM warn that it may be inappropriate to apply it to public sectors characterized by strong collegiality, distinctive professional ethos, and pursuit of values such as justice, truth, trust or caring, - in other words, to introduce NPM mechanisms to such sectors as health care, social security, or education (Lane, 2000, p. 27). However, NPM has been broadly applied to these spheres, and there is mounting research revealing negative consequences of that, putting to question the very idea of NPM as applying market principles to public sector.

Diefenbach (2009) in his article offers an aggregated analysis of NPM shortcomings, based on a broad set of studies by other authors. I will briefly review here his findings, as a glimpse of common criticisms of NPM, and will elaborate on what they might mean for the higher education sector. First of all, Diefenbach draws attention to internal inconsistencies of NPM. Thus, institutionalization of idea of continuous ‘change for the sake of change’ contradicts enhanced standardization and formalization of strategic and operational management. Decentralization and granting greater autonomy to organizations (and within them to units and people) is accompanied by greater centralization of strategic activities and increased output control. New regulations come together with plans for deregulation. Empowerment of employees and development of their proactive and entrepreneurial attitudes is claimed, while more hierarchical structures, monitoring and appraisal systems, and control from management are brought in.

Diefenbach claims that basic ideas of NPM (market-, stakeholder- and customer-orientation, concepts of efficiency and productivity, effectiveness and cost reduction) are
defined too narrowly, and are based on too artificially and narrowly designed concepts of measurement and accountability. The “market value” assigned to everything “ignores, reduces, damages or even destroys many other values: the traditional public service ethos and its commitment to impartiality, social equality, integrity, equity and communitarian values, a care for the qualitative dimensions and the uniqueness of each individual and individual case, the socio-philosophical ideas of citizenship, representation, neutrality, welfare and social justice” (p. 895). Hence, the NPM approach actually reduces the scope and quality of public services (James 2003, p. 101, cited in Diefenbach 2009, p. 905).

In line with market principles, NPM stakeholder orientation leads to serving primarily “key stakeholders”, - that is, strong and influential stakeholders, on whom the funding of the organization depends (for a university it can be the government, funding bodies, or categories of students who can afford paying high tuition). Less powerful stakeholders and ‘customers’ are likely to be neglected, - which contradicts the concept of public service that treats all society members equally, if not protects and helps the poorer and weaker ones.

Another criticism of NPM is that cost reduction common for it damages public services that are not profit-making. For universities, this primarily concerns research orientations and decisions about teaching particular subjects and even whole fields of science. In research, preferences are given to applied, rather than theoretical, research in areas that are ‘interesting’ to the market and can be immediately implemented in the industry. It is not only the market or particular companies who influence research orientations, but the state that promotes applied research and innovation as ‘economy drivers’ through specific formula funding (incentivization). In education, universities are also pushed by the state and by the market to offer more programmes in ‘popular’ or ‘important for knowledge economy’ fields of science, and to cut costs, closing down less ‘useful’ and profitable programmes, e.g. in philosophy, philology or arts.

NPM structures and processes are also accused of increasing bureaucracy instead of reducing it: “Excessive formalization <…> [is] creating new layers of bureaucracy engaged in contract specification and monitoring, quality control, inspection, audit and review and diverting the energies of professional staff away from service and program delivery into a regime of form-filling, report writing and procedure following” (Hoggett 1996, pp. 27–8, cited in Diefenbach 2009, p. 898). Apart from being excessively bureaucratic, auditing and standardizing systems are blamed for having limited methodology. Despite attempts to create multi-dimensional performance management tools, the majority of them are still based
on quantifiable, and consequently quite narrow, indicators, leaving out intangible assets such as trust, co-operation, fairness, equality, commitment etc.

Finally, the NPM emphasis on strong management as a ‘key to success’ puts managers in the most privileged position in organizations, and devalues other professional orientations. Portraying managers as “knowledgeable, insightful and skillful”, NPM puts other staff in a position of “those who are not [so knowledgeable], or who oppose the new agenda, and who therefore need ‘guidance’” (Diefenbach 2009, p. 904). In contrast with the claimed empowerment of employees as ‘internal entrepreneurs’ who are granted more freedom in their work, NPM procedures bring greater workload and stress, and tighter regimes of management, advice, measurement, control, and supervision. This leads to demotivation, disillusionment and cynical attitude to yet new improvement initiatives.

The wide spread of NPM ideas in public administration has led to the situation when NPM is often perceived and portrayed as a ‘natural order of things’, that is ‘inevitable, irresistible, and irreversible’ (Jacques, 1996 and Steger, 2005, cited in Diefenbach 2009, p. 895). It is important to remember that alternatives to NPM exist, that there is nothing ‘inevitable’ in social and political realms, and to be careful and considerate about introducing NPM procedures into public spheres.
2.2 NPM and Russian higher education reform

NPM reforms and marketization of public organizations in post-communist countries unleashed together with the change of their political systems. These reforms came from different sources and for complex reasons (Maximova-Menzoni, 2013; Peters, 2008; Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010; Minina, 2013), starting from the overall orientation to democratization and deregulation of previously totally state controlled institutions, and the internal desire to modernize and improve public services, embracing best international practices. In many countries NPM reforms were also enhanced by the need to comply with external requirements and recommendations of international bodies, in order to get financial support or to join European Union. Finally, in some countries marketization was caused by “shock therapy” of switching from socialism to capitalism, accompanied by rapid economic decline.

Common for all post-communist countries were the more rapid pace and radical character of the change of administrative principles, compared to Western countries where this change was more gradual and based on already well-established institutes of democracy and market economy. Guy Peters describes the administrative cultures and histories of former Soviet Republics as “vastly different” from those of “NPM-source” countries (Peters, 2008, p.1). The same can be said about the attitudes and expectations of population of these republics in relation to the power and role of the state, conceptions of equity, social safety, and taking responsibility over own life (Minina, 2013). Peters also mentions that NPM reforms, apart from their usual aims of achieving more efficiency in governance, had the “substantial symbolic value, indicating that the country in question is a part of the modern world of public management” (Peters, 2008, p. 3). Aspirations of population for freedom, empowerment, and Western standard of living, together with somewhat naïve belief that free market can solve everything, legitimized drastic changes of policies. At the same time, they gave way for quick but unwise decisions, abuse, and plunder, which were added to the already ambiguous effects of NPM.

My goal in this chapter is to describe the implementation of NPM in Russian higher education, and to discuss the specific features of Russian socio-historical and cultural context that have shaped educational reform as well as public attitude towards reform. In order to do this, I will overview the main changes that this sector has experienced in recent decades in Russia; try to discern diverse internal and external forces that are promoting NPM reforms; and discuss what is specific about the way Russia is adopting NPM. Due to the fact that there has been no prior research juxtaposing Russian educational reform against NPM,
I will use sources that cover similar topics: marketization of education, neoliberal ideology and educational reform, or changes brought to national education system by global policy actors. I will also offer original analysis of similarities and differences between Russian higher education reforms and indicators of NPM in higher education discussed in the previous chapter.

2.2.1 1990s: radical changes in Russian education

Public and professional educational community demands for change in Russian education started already in the 1980s in the spirit of “perestroika” movement towards more democratic climate and reduction of bureaucracy in Soviet society. The change was sought for primarily in the content and pedagogy of Russian comprehensive school (that needed to become more up-to-date and pupil-centered), but also in the ways schooling and teacher training was organized (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010, pp. 159-160). However, a considerable reorganization was impeded by conservative bureaucratic forces, and a genuine reform became possible only after the transformation of political order and replacement of old bureaucrats with liberally inclined administrators (mostly with economic background). The new Law on Education in 1992, formulated in such terms as “humanization”, “differentiation”, “democratization” and “pluralization” (Rust, 1992, cited in Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010, p. 161) made way for radical changes in both comprehensive and higher education.

The liberation of Russian university from state control was enabled by the new regulations that allowed higher education institutions much more freedom in strategic, financial and operational management: for example, the land and property was transferred from the government to HEIs (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013; Zajda, 2007). Among the main tasks in higher education the new Ministry of Education saw: developing competitiveness within the sector, creating the export of educational services, allowing universities to benefit from alternative and non-government sources of funding, and allowing for new types of educational structures (Zajda, 2007, p.29).

At the same time, severe economic crisis caused abrupt cuttings in state funding, and pushed universities to use the new freedom in order to get money ‘from the market’ (as new markets were rapidly emerging after the dismantling of command economy). In her study of the Russian university path “from state to market”, Tatiana Maximova-Mentzoni shows how financing from federal budget was reduced from 87 to 44 per cent in the university income during the period 1994-2004, and how other income streams from tuition
fees, training services, research, and even renting out own premises, became important. All these new activities, however, were not sufficient to cover university expenses on salaries and household running, let alone development needs. So universities had to largely implement cost-cutting and learn to become parsimonious, even though there was no strict state control of budgeting and spending (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, pp. 34-37).

Privatization of the higher education sector began from several directions. Private institutions were opening, while public institutions started to charge tuition fees from less academically strong students (by 2006 up to 60 per cent of public HEIs students were tuition-paying, according to Zajda, 2007). New totally or partly ‘commercial’ programmes in popular specialities of economics, management, law, etc. were opened in most higher education institutions, turning specialized (technological, medical, teacher training) institutes into universities. As more students willing and able to pay chose the new popular faculties, those started to serve as a source of funding for other, less fortunate departments that used to be core for their universities, such as engineering or natural sciences. The overall number of state HEIs increased from 535 in 1993 to 1300 in 2006, with number of students also nearly tripling from 2.5 to 7 million (Zajda, 2007, p. 23). This was meeting the demand for higher education, giving everyone the opportunity to obtain some kind of diploma, though not necessarily quality education.

Understanding of educational aims and academic ethics was also contested in the course of these changes. In Soviet times the university was primarily serving the state, producing specialists according to the economic plans, and professing communist values. In the 1990s higher education institutions and their staff were busy trying to survive by all means. Together with new social guiding lines of individualism and money-making it evoked corruption on many levels. Abandoning old ideology left universities with ‘moral vacuum’ and no ideas for students’ moral upbringing (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, p. 34). At the same time, universities were forced by harsh financial situation to reconsider their activities as services or products that can be sold. In the absence of clear state regulations and without any marketing expertise universities were setting prices, developing contracts, promoting themselves against other ‘competitors’, and otherwise adapting to the market (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, pp.37-38; Zajda, 2007, p. 21).

While these ‘shock therapy’ conditions facilitated the rapid spread of market ideology and development of education markets in the country, and offered many opportunities to new educational entrepreneurs, few if any old universities profited from them. Decline of state
funding was too sharp, and universities were totally unprepared to meet it. It resulted in widespread damage to both material (maintenance and renewal of libraries, laboratory equipment, auditoriums) and professional (paying salaries and creating healthy working conditions and motivation for the staff) university resources. Equipment was wearing out, libraries were becoming outdated, so humanitarian specialities were missing the opportunity to benefit from the lift of ‘iron curtain’ and acquaintance with Western science achievements and viewpoints. Faculty members emigrated abroad or changed profession, or otherwise were combining work in several institutions and business at the same time. About 75 per cent of students in the absence of financial aid had to study and work at the same time (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, pp. 50-54). No wonder that marketization of education is up until now perceived as a very negative trend in Russia, and its consequences are “automatically understood as critics” in the universities (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, p. 125).

Another dimension of change in Russian education governance in the 1990s was its decentralization and shift of selected administrative and fiscal responsibilities to regional and local authorities. Regional authorities also took some part in funding their universities; however, their share remained small compared to commercial activities and federal funding (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010; Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013). The initial idea of decentralization was to enable regionally- and locally-tailored education that would better serve local needs in the culturally, ethnically, economically and geographically diverse territory of Russia. However, actual implementation of decentralization led primarily to increasing inequalities between regions, and within them – between rural and city areas, and made education sector less manageable: “Legislation was enacted before the regions had a chance to develop appropriate decentralized administrative structures for its effective implementation. <…> Rapid decentralization only served to aggravate administrative and financial chaos at the regional and local levels. <…> [As a result] regional inequities intensified emergent local disparities in the quality of education” (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010, pp.163-167).

Summarizing the research about the educational reform of the 1990s in one sentence, we can say that the reform was inspired by liberal ideas but lacked careful and considered implementation. It led to major changes, particularly in higher education that was rapidly commercialized, but these changes were perceived by educators and the public as destruction of national education system. Marketization was “unpredictable” and “unmanageable”, new legislation was controversial and lacked elaboration, and the decade of rapid
change has ended in the wide acknowledgement of the “crisis for state educational policy” (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, p.43).

2.2.2 From 2000s up until now: the state “return” to education

The change of political leadership in 1999 and rapid improvement of the economic situation in early 2000s opened a new phase in the state policy-making, including educational reform. Answering the economic concerns in education, the new government attracted massive loans on educational reform from the World Bank, and increased federal funding for education, for the first time in Russian history allocating more money for education in the state budget than for military needs (Gounko & Smale, 2007; Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, p. 43). The new National Doctrine for Education (2000), Concept of Modernization of Russian Education (2001) and Federal strategic program for the development of education (2005) stressed the role of education in securing the nation’s economic growth, global competitiveness and human capital development. They also promoted the introduction of market mechanisms into education sector, and emphasized the importance of improving efficiency and accountability of educational institutions (Gounko & Smale, 2007, pp.540-541). According to Gounko and Smale (2007) and Minina (2013), the striking similarities between the new reform rhetoric and global agenda in education can be explained by the influence of international organizations: “Since late 1990s, the national strategy for modernization adopted by the Russian government has been based on technical, financial and conceptual assistance provided by international financial organizations (IFOs). <…> The standard package advocated by [IFOs] centered around the concepts of cost-effectiveness, market-driven quality control, educational standardization, outcome-based education, decentralization of governance and finance and privatization of higher education” (Minina, 2013, p.21). Researchers claim that borrowing (from the West) became the major strategy for educational reform in Russia as well as in other post-socialist countries (Silova, 2010; Gounko & Smale, 2007; Minina, 2013).

Higher education sector was chosen as the primary object of the reform. Its modernization started with joining Bologna process, which was called to enable Russian universities to compete in the global market and increase international academic cooperation (Gounko & Smale, 2007, p. 541). Another major change was the introduction of national school-leaving exam (Unified State Exam, or USE), that would serve also as a unified entrance test to HEIs. This measure, which became mandatory in 2009 after years of experimenting, was called to make examinations more transparent, and to promote equal access to higher
education. It replaced the ‘inefficient’ traditional system when each university had its own (often oral) admission tests. USE also served as a means of external quality control for secondary education, ensured national educational standards, intensified universities’ competition for students (who now could apply to several HEIs simultaneously), and reduced opportunities for corruption in admission process (Gounko & Smale, 2007; Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013; Minina, 2013).

Together with introducing USE the state attempted to reform the higher education financing scheme, tying it to the new Exam. Instead of traditional cost-based funding, where each HEI estimated its costs and claimed them to the Ministry, the state proposed scheme known as GIFO (Government Individual Financial Obligations), based on ‘money follows the student’ principle. The scheme linked budget funding to individual students (the sum depended on their results in USE), thus promoting competition between HEIs and rewarding the most popular universities, chosen by many high-performing students (Belyakov, 2005; Osipian, 2009). The GIFO scheme did not pass the experimental stage and was cancelled in 2005, but the state continued to search for new funding formula that would reflect enrollment figures, quality of education, and research output (Zajda, 2007, p. 32).

In 2010 the new concept of “state assignment” to “perform educational service” was implemented in order “to enhance efficiency of public expenses and secure accessibility and quality of public services” (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, p. 168). The state assignment connects financing to the number and type of specialists that the state finds necessary to train in particular regions for developing national economy. This innovation paradoxically combines contractualism of NPM (public education as a ‘service’ that is delivered according to a ‘contract’ with the state), emphasis on the economic function of education, and Soviet planned economy tradition.

The latest reform of higher education funding has been undertaken in 2013 (to be fully implemented in 2015), still increasing state control over the sector. From now on the government will decide about the costs of educating students (taking into account specifics of profession, region, programme, and the status of HEI) and will distribute public funds accordingly, catering for national priorities and needs. The state also sets the ‘price floors’ for tuition fees in public HEIs – they cannot be lower than costs pre-estimated by the Ministry (which essentially means that they will rise significantly). Universities, on the other hand, gain more freedom in choosing how to spend public funds. The reform is said to increase the government and universities efficiency, stimulate cost optimization in HEIs, reduce the
space for lobbying and corruption in public funds allocation, and ensure realization of state priorities (Yastrebova, 2013).

Optimizing spendings on higher education and introducing more ‘healthy competition’ to the sector, the Ministry of Education and Science undertook several attempts to classify numerous public HEIs into categories that would somehow indicate the quality of teaching and research within each group, and would accordingly justify greater or lesser state support to these HEIs. Around year 2006 universities were divided on competitive basis into three main groups. The first group was “leading universities” (between 15 and 20 HEIs) that deserve to be totally state-funded. Second came “major universities” (“sistemaobrazujuschie vuzy”, 150-200 HEIs) that would receive public funding for teaching in Bachelor and Master degrees. The rest should be paid by the state only for the Bachelor programmes. Such categorization, mirroring UK or Canadian universities league tables, represented “a new way of monitoring accountability, performance and standards of the higher education sector” and gave the state additional instruments of control over HEIs (Zajda, 2007, pp. 31-32).

In 2009-2010, again after an open contest, 29 universities were selected to become “national research universities” that would put priority on research activities rather than teaching, and would be accordingly supported by the state (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, p. 165). Between 2006 and 2012 sets of geographically close universities were grouped to form nine “federal universities” that again were given priority in redistributing public funds on higher education. The most recent categorization initiative was implemented in 2010, when all educational institutions including HEIs were announced to be gradually transformed into government (“kazennye”), “budget” and “autonomous” institutions (Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013, p.168). Government instututions are fully financed by the state, but also have to transfer all own commercial revenues to the state. Budget institutions have more freedom with financial operations and commercial activities, but are only partially subsidized by the state. Autonomous institutions receive public funds only for accomplishing state assignment, and are allowed to use commercial revenues to their own discretion. This measure resembles the first categorizing efforts of 2006. Similarly, it reduces responsibility of the government to support all public institutions, but now it also gives incentives for HEIs to choose less state funding and enjoy greater operational freedom. As a whole,

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1 In Soviet higher education system teaching was the primary university function, while research was delegated to “scientific research institutes” associated with universities. In the course of marketization many of these institutes were closed or turned into high-tech companies. Universities had to develop research function anew (again, mirroring the Western university model).
these categorization manipulations enable the state to carry out cost-cutting measures, enhance competition through numerous contests, tie funding to particular indicators or outcomes, and promote the ‘value for money’ discourse.

These policies are combined with persistent claims of the Ministry representatives that the overall number of public universities must be reduced, for the sake of quality improvement and reasonable spending of limited public funds. To set the stage for the sector curtailment another project was launched in 2012 by the Ministry: the yearly ‘monitoring of quality’ of HEIs, assessing their work against a set of criteria defined by the government. According to results of this monitoring in 2013, 7% of public HEIs are inefficient (Ivojlova, 2013). Based on results of this assessment, decisions are taken about closing most inefficient HEIs or merging them with more efficient ones. Results of the first monitoring scandalized the public, provoking a vivid discussion about validity of efficiency criteria and performance indicators. Initiators of the monitoring promise to take into account public concerns and correct the methodology; however, they do not accept questioning the very idea of this monitoring.

2.2.3 Specifics of Russian implementation of NPM

In the previous chapter I explained how NPM framework which I am using in this research combines normative, political, and technical elements. The above description of changes in Russian higher education over last two decades concentrates mostly on the technical side of reform (measures that were taken by the government). It also touches upon normative side, discussing which concepts were used for justification of reforms: securing economic growth and developing human capital, promoting efficiency and accountability, improving quality and enhancing global competitiveness, and so on. The scope and focus of this research does not allow investigating the political side of changes, i.e. whose interests were served by reforms. Some authors of previous research mention that educational reform was undertaken in a distinctive top-down manner, and the direction of reforms was defined in the course of power struggles between elites rather than through consultations with pedagogical community and the public (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010; Minina, 2013).

The majority of recent changes in Russian higher education have been in line with NPM principles and recommendations. The initial changes were driven primarily by the opening of market for education services, and by reductions in state funding, which meant the need for universities to become parsimonious and to attract funding from the market, becoming
more ‘business-like’. Liberalized regulations enabled privatization and commercialization of higher education, greatly widened use of contracts, and promoted diversification of education. State control over institutions was decentralized in the 90s, when federal government delegated it to regional and local authorities, and granted institutions more autonomy.

Since 2000s NPM-style reforms in Russia have been proceeding at an even faster pace, arguably because of greater involvement of international organizations, which now provided funding in addition to recommendations. Almost all of the elements characteristic of NPM in higher education are present in Russian policies:

- Universities are encouraged to take responsibility over own futures; they are urged to use public funds effectively and provide value for money;
- The government is positioned as a supervisor rather than direct manager of education. Its task is to set targets, develop incentives, and control outcomes, while universities enjoy greater operational freedom;
- Public funds flow primarily to the highest performing institutions. Performance is monitored through specific measurements;
- The state stimulates development of higher education market through enhancing competition between universities for students and research funding, rewarding commercialization, consolidation of ‘market players’, and raising tuition fees in public HEIs. ‘Market exit of failed public providers’ is not only acceptable, but desired.

The missing elements are, first of all, those concerning the empowerment of university management and adoption of private sector HR (human resource) management styles in HEIs. The aspects of internal university governance were not tackled by reforms, although greater operational freedom and emerging performativity culture might eventually lead to change in governance structures inside universities. New stakeholder-orientation also does not seem to be directly pushed. The state insists that universities should recognize national interests, including economic growth and development of human capital, but does not intervene to secure interests of students or industry, or to ensure their participation in university governance. Increasing role of central planning and tightening state control over the sector that take place in Russia are also atypical for NPM. However, the controversy around control and autonomy is itself characteristic of NPM reforms, as discussed in the previous chapter. Also, the reality of higher education governance in any country represents a complex mix of different forces and traditions, and cannot be reduced to one ‘clear’
model, be it NPM, weberian or neo-weberian bureaucracy, or any other theoretical frame. In Russian case, the newly introduced NPM orientation seems to mix with traditions of Soviet planned economy and long history of tight grip of the state over education, which can be explained through the need to ensure the huge country’s unity, as well as through authoritarian political culture.

Overall, international organizations recommending NPM to transition societies assessed Russian achievements in decentralization, diversification and privatization of education as relatively successful (Minina, 2013, p. 22). However, despite the rapid progress of NPM reforms in Russia, grave concerns are being expressed since late 1990s and up until today about the actual progress towards their ultimate goals - improvement of the quality of higher education, satisfaction of customers’ and stakeholders’ needs, efficient spending of public resources, or positive effect of education and research on economy. Universities do not seem to effectively use the opening opportunities; to the contrary, experts and public continuously describe the quality of higher education as deteriorating, and the gap between public (or industry) demands and universities supply as widening. While international experts characterize poor state of education as the ‘failure of reforming project’, national public and experts ascribe the ‘catastrophic’ state of education directly to the reforms: “Promoted by the government as a panacea to the ills of Soviet-era education, the modernization reform has paradoxically come to be perceived as anathema to the indigenous system of education. Despite universal dissatisfaction with outdated educational infrastructures and practices, the neoliberal reform package met fierce resistance in various societal circles, from school teachers and parents to university administrators and the intelligentsia” (Minina, 2013, pp. 24-25). The majority of authors note that since late 1990s government initiatives in education were consistently met with distrust and resistance.

Researchers offer different explanations for these problematic results. Many refer to the devastating effect of underfunding and economic constraints (Zajda, 2007; Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010; Maximova-Mentzoni, 2013). Inadequate funding during the first liberal reform wave has undermined the very idea of reforms: by the end of 90s many Russian educationalists were emphasizing that it is not another reform, but simply ‘money and stability’ that is needed (Zajda, 2007, p.25; Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010, p.165). Funding issues were the reason for the next reform wave to focus primarily on economic concerns, and for the government to seek support from international funding organizations. Apart from insufficient funding in the 1990s, researchers also point to the lack of legislative base that would support the new Law on Education and give clear instruments and guidelines to the education-

Another set of explanations is emphasizing the lack of leadership, or inadequate support of grassroots ‘change agents’. OECD report (1999, p.17) sees the ‘lack of capacity to give direction and urgency to change’ as the major problem in introducing the needed reform. Polyzoi and Dneprov describe how reform enthusiasts in regions and municipalities were working in isolation, without any efficient networking: “Educational consultants/entrepreneurs were anxious about the lack of federal and regional support for truly new educational approaches and fearful of a return to centralized system” (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010, p. 161). Successful guiding universities through all the new challenges would require strong and agile leadership, equipped with knowledge about the market, and able to manage in the situation of constant change and scarce resources. In the 1990s in Russia not only education, but all spheres needed to urgently find or breed such leaders, and universities were losing this competition to more financially rewarding and less bureaucratic organizations, primarily emerging businesses. People who stayed in higher education administration were mostly those for whom it was their whole life career, those deeply committed to education, or those who were not successful in business sphere. “What severely hindered the University from becoming more market-oriented was a lack of young energetic managers, a generation gap in University staff, and a plenty of passive, pessimistic employees maintaining managing positions. The main management body should have been systematically renewed, but it was not,” – concludes Maximova-Mentzoni (2013, p. 40). People who stayed were more comfortable with and committed to Soviet values and norms, rather than those of the market economy. Some people, however, have found ways to grab new opportunities and make their units financially successful, thus becoming influential leaders for the whole institution. An interviewee in Maximova-Mentzoni’s study provides an example of this: “Only a few individuals at the university are capable of taking advantage of the situation and succeeding. Everything at <our university> holds its ground based on the enthusiasm of such leaders”. (2013, p. 106)

Yet other authors speak about tensions between ideologies, and contradictions between values underlying ‘old’ and ‘new’ policies. In their analysis of Russian educational transformation Polyzoi and Dneprov (2010) introduce the concept of “reculturing” (changing
norms, habits, skills, and beliefs) that needs to go along with structural change, and emphasize the importance of constructing a “bridging” intermediate state between old and new practices. They show how this much-needed type of “bridging” lacked in Russia’s case, and “ideological breaking away has been even more problematic [then breaking through economic barriers] because it challenges the values, attitudes and mentalities of the Russian people” (Dneprov, 1999a, cited in Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010, p. 174). Other observers view the public opposition to reform as an effect of crude de-ideologization of society, where traditional values collapsed and the newly proposed ones were not internalized (Sutherland, 1999).

Elena Minina (2013) conducted a thorough study of public perceptions of the post-Soviet educational reform in Russia to uncover differences between local culture and educational modernization agenda: “Policy interpretations of choice and competition have been premised on the moral supremacy of the market that celebrates elitism, selfishness and the triumph of the strong over the weak. As such, the official rhetoric effectively refutes the values of social solidarity. <…> The newly proposed educational ethic has continued up to date to fuel public resistance at a fundamental level” (p. 228). She has shown how the logic of ‘value for money’, private interest, economic orientation, and competitiveness, characteristic of the NPM reform, are confronting what she describes as “traditional Russian worldview” that emphasizes collective decision-making to preserve social balance and discourages personal ambition (p. 226).

Minina reveals more factors provoking public opposition to NPM reform in Russia. One factor is the official rhetoric of ‘radical break from the past’ and rejection of the existing structures (the manner generally typical for Russian reforms, but nevertheless provoking resistance). Another is the fear for ‘mechanistic standardization’ and tightening of state control, which would jeopardize the experimental, learner-centered, individually-tailored pedagogical practice of upbringing (“vospitanie”), valued by educators. Finally, it is historically ambivalent relations with the West, where the desire to ‘catch up’ with the ‘progressive’ Western civilization is combined with suspicious attitude to external advice and devotion to own unique course of development. This latter aspect is also noted by other observers of Russian education reform (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010; Elliott & Tudge, 2007).
2.2.4 A programme to address the challenges

The marketization of higher education in Russia, that has started in 1991 and has been further shaped by continuous reforming, is going along the lines of the global NPM reform which introduces business and market mechanisms into public sector. However, in Russia this reform has met numerous obstacles that hinder and debase its implementation: from the lack of financial resources and institutional capabilities, to ideological tensions between reform proponents and wide groups of experts and public.

The government has addressed the problems of underfunding in 2000s, increasing the percent of GDP spent on education and attracting funds from international organizations on education reform purposes. Necessary legislation was also developed to support the major structural changes. However, the challenges of leadership shortage and resistance to reform are still there to be tackled. The state desperately needs “agents of change” that would be more favorable towards NPM. My hypothesis is that through the New Leaders of Higher Education programme which is in focus of this study the state hoped to obtain such agents on leading administrating positions in universities, who would be not only trained and inspired to bring the change, but also connected within a single network of influential leaders in Russian higher education. I also assume that study of the case programme can shed light on specifics of NPM narrative in Russia and through this widen our knowledge on NPM reforms in Russian higher education.
2.3 Leadership programmes for promoting reforms

Linking success of educational reforms to the ability of policy-makers to persuade and support other actors and overcome public resistance is nothing specific only to Russian context. Theorists of public administration recognize the collaborative character of modern public action worldwide. They assert that governments are not anymore able to impose their will alone, but have to work together with many actors who intervene in decision processes on all stages of reform implementation (Salamon, 2002; Pons and von Zanten, 2007). Hence, public administrations should be capable of the “cooperative action orchestrated through complex networks” (Salamon, 2002, p. 15) and need to motivate targeted groups, persuading them to recognize the reform legitimacy and making them implement the proposed rules (Mayntz, 1993).

Involvement and motivating of reform implementation actors takes multiple forms. As “experts” they are invited to assess and contribute to regulative documents, to consult governing bodies, or to participate in law hearings. At the same time they play the role of “students”, being informed and trained to work in line with government policies for their institutions. Organizations affiliated with or contracted by the state develop guidelines, conduct educational sessions about new regulations, collect and disseminate information on “best practices”, and offer training programmes that claim to develop managerial and leadership competencies in specific areas of public services. It is important to notice that this is not the familiar training for government employees, but a relatively new phenomenon of government-initiated training for leaders and “managers” of public institutions, which indicates the attention of the state to other actors, described by Salamon (2002) and other authors.

In the field of education, leadership of school and university administrators is often addressed as a crucial factor of reforms implementation. Bolden, Petrov and Gosling (2008) describe how leadership is perceived as a “panacea for organizational ills” and placed by national governments at the heart of education reform as a “fundamental driver of national competitiveness” and a “key pillar of the modernization of public services” (p. 359). This great emphasis put on leadership explains the emergence of multiple government-affiliated programmes preparing leaders for education and offering them diverse support. I will provide several examples.

In New Zealand the Ministry of Education runs the “Educational Leadership” website (www.educationalleaders.govt.nz) through which it distributes guidelines, articles, docu-
ment templates and examples, and other resources suggesting who the “effective leaders” in education are and how they can implement effective pedagogy and assessment, ensure cultural awareness in schools, build networks and partnerships, and so on. There are also specific professional development programmes for school leaders, including the National Aspiring Principals programme, the First-Time Principals programme, and the He Kākano: culturally responsive leadership programme. The website emphasizes that New Zealand education system “requires that principals work as chief executives of their boards of trustees to support the development of policy, then take responsibility for carrying policy into practice”.

In UK leadership in universities is supported through the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in UK, funded by the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE) “to help universities and colleges develop skills and good practice in leadership, governance and management” (“Leadership and governance development”, 2011). The Leadership Foundation carries out research and consulting for universities, and runs Top Management Programme (TMP) for university administrators: “Over 50 of the current UK vice-chancellors/principals are TMP alumni, with many of the other past participants of TMP holding some of the most senior posts throughout higher education” (“Top Management Programme”, 2014).

Most frequently found in NPM flagship countries, programmes of this kind are also present in other parts of the world. In Singapore the Ministry of Education selects local participants for the Leaders in Education Programme (“Leaders in Education Programme”, 2014). Palestinian Ministry of Education has recently launched the Leadership and Teacher Development Program with the help of foreign aid agencies, claiming that it is “time to achieve Ministry’s aims in education” (“Palestinian Ministry of Education”, 2013).

Leadership programmes for public sphere administrators initiated by the state seem to have become a specific sort of capacity tools of policy-making in the widely used classification by Schneider and Ingram (1990), where they define capacity tools as providing “information, training, education, and resources to enable individuals, groups, or agencies to make decisions or carry out activities” (p. 517). At the same time, these training programmes also bear some characteristics of symbolic and hortatory tools in the same classification, as they are arguably used as “persuasive communications that seek to change perceptions about policy activities and goals” (p. 519) and to transfer values and priorities of the government to public actors. Labeling the programmes as “leadership” and “offered
only to the leaders’ can itself be translated as an association of particular policies with positive symbols and images.

Surprisingly, though, such government activities appear to be out of focus in current research on policy implementation in education. Leadership centers and programmes are sometimes discussed in the literature on educational leadership and management (see e.g. Bush and Jackson, 2002; or Bush, Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2011). However, researchers of this area are primarily interested in particular qualifications and characteristics of leaders or conditions influencing leadership, and do not discuss leadership programmes as mechanisms of reform implementation. At the same time, researchers of governance in education concentrate on governing through quality assurance procedures, benchmarking, guidelines, networks, etc., but they hardly pay any attention to training programmes in discussion of indirect political tools (see Chanut, 2004 for a rear exception). The present research fills this gap by studying a case of a government-initiated leadership programme from a perspective of facilitating implementation of the NPM reform in Russian higher education.
3. THE CASE

3.1 Presenting the case

Launched in November 2012, New Leaders of Higher Education programme was presented as a unique training for “100 top managers” of public universities in order to make them capable to implement changes in higher education and improve quality of management in Russian universities (New Leaders of Higher Education [Brochure], 2012). The programme was initiated and funded by the Ministry of education and science, which paid all the costs and took active part in the education process, with deputy ministers and other government representatives conducting lectures and giving feedback on participants’ presentations. The programme was also supported by the prime minister Dmitry Medvedev, who characterized the project as very important for modernizing the country’s system of higher education (Kuzmin 2012).

Moscow School of Management “Skolkovo” was chosen as the programme provider. The school itself was established as a public-private partnership in 2006 within one of the government’s “Priority National Projects” – the “Education” project (“Priority National Project “Education”, 2011), with the ambition to become an internationally recognized business school contributing to Russia’s economic development. Financed by private investors, the school runs Executive MBA (master of business administration) programmes for corporate clients as its core activity, but is also involved in consulting and training for public sector. The dean of the Skolkovo school announced that the new programme is not simply about improving qualifications of university leaders, but “will be a tool for creating a future higher education concept”, and predicted that participants will “become co-authors of the future educational landscape” (New Leaders of Higher Education [Brochure], 2012).

More than one hundred programme participants, coming from all over Russia (see Appendix 2), were selected on the basis of their position in universities (rectors, vice-rectors, faculty deans and other “senior managers”), work experience outside of higher education, quality of applications where they presented their vision of most significant challenges for higher education, record of leading projects “outside of immediate responsibilities” (such as implementation of new educational technologies or collaboration with business), proficiency in English, and, preferably, age below 50. According to the programme coordinator, such participants profile was to ensure that they would be open to new ideas, proactive, and capable of changing their thinking about higher education.
The programme was designed as a one-year course with eight week-long educational modules, each having a specific theme (see Appendix 1) – however, themes were not exactly followed. As the outcomes of the programme, participants needed to develop a range of “breakthrough projects, based on the best practices and international expertise”, that would become “points of growth for the whole system of higher education” and create “principally new educational landscape in Russia” (New Leaders of Higher Education [Brochure], 2012). The programme also aimed at building a network community of these progressive university managers. To reach these goals, the programme was designed around group projects that participants were to develop, with topics for the projects being predefined together by the Ministry and the business school. To complement the group work, the school also offered lectures from Russian and international experts, training sessions, and several field visits. For the list of projects topics and typical structure of an educational module see Appendices 1 and 3.

3.2 Research aims and justification of the study

The New Leaders of Higher Education programme was designed to influence the whole higher education system in Russia. With the exceptionally high status of the programme and broad participation of senior university administrators from all over Russia we can assume that it indeed had the potential to transform to the sector. But what transformation did it seek to bring? Selection of influential participants with the aim to “change their thinking” provokes the question of what the organizers imagined being wrong with their thinking, and in what ways it needed to be changed. Similarly, it is interesting to study how the organizers facilitated the development of “principally new” and “breakthrough” ideas of participants. Was it only the traditional ‘revolutionary’ rhetoric described by Minina (2013) that accompanies all Russian reforms, however incremental they in fact are, or was the programme launched by the Ministry truly open to diverse ideas? Given that education reform in Russia has been very much in line with NPM, which ideas and thinking are now accepted as “innovative” and “promoting growth”, and which are criticized?

The case is also interesting as the first training of such kind for university administrators in Russia, initiated directly by the Ministry (or, to be more precise, by the new governing body of the Ministry, appointed in 2012), and provided by a business school and not a public university. This, together with the themes of programme modules and projects, already positions the programme within the logic of NPM, which puts emphasis on business mechanisms, empowerment of “managers” of public institutions and granting them greater au-
tonomy, and at the same time keeping the change under the state control. It is interesting to trace what elements of NPM were present within the programme contents, and which of them were stressed, as it can be speculated that these very elements are perceived by the Ministry as most important for higher education development in Russia. Studying the programme can also shed light on how the government envisages the role of university leaders in education reform, which is particularly interesting in Russian context, where the state has traditionally been the primary and sometimes the only decision-maker. Finally, investigating the programme can help learn more about what is specific about Russian interpretations of NPM, see how NPM is justified and promoted, and which alternatives to it are discussed.

Linking theoretical framework of this thesis to the reasons for studying the programme, I summarize my research aims as follows:

1) to uncover the specifics of NPM narrative in Russian context;

2) to discuss the programme as an instrument of facilitating higher education reform in Russia.
4. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

4.1 Methodological approach

The aim of my research is to better understand phenomena (NPM, and leadership training as a political tool) in a natural social setting. I interpret the programme contents in terms of meanings that programme organizers and teachers brought into them, connect my interpretation to cultural and social context, and reconstruct the programme narrative in a different way, informed by theoretical discussions on NPM and previous research on Russian education reform. This positions my research as a *qualitative study*, capable of taking into account multiple perspectives of research participants and developing a complex and context-bound picture of the issue under study. Qualitative methodology also allows for the emergent research design, usage of multiple data sources, and abductive data analysis (Creswell 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Within the qualitative methodology my research paradigm is based on *constructivism*. It means that I approach reality as a socially and experientially based construction that can alter with acquiring more information, although I also acknowledge that there is an objective reality, of which every person has his or her own constructions. In these terms, in line with how Guba and Lincoln (1994) explain what constructivism means in research, I regard scientific inquiry of social phenomena as a process of elaborating and changing constructions of reality, and believe the resulting knowledge to be intrinsically subjective, dependent on the researcher’s background, values, and theory chosen for interpretation of research results.

According to Creswell, 2012, when investigating an event or programme it is most appropriate to design research as a case study. Case study approach allows a researcher to explore a context-bound system (a case) over time, using multiple sources of evidence, and benefitting from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2012). Hence, this approach fits my research goals, given that I had the opportunity to follow the case programme in real time and use diverse sources of data. My research can also be classified as an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2000), as it is focused on a single case, with the ambition of describing its complexity.

Results of a case study are normally organized as a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2012), which means that a researcher typically applies qualitative content analy-
sis as a data analysis method. In this method the inquirer becomes the primary instrument of investigation: "[Qualitative content analysis is] an approach to documents that emphasizes the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of data and on recognizing the significance for understanding the meaning of the context" (Bryman, 2004, p.542). I use the theory-guided type of qualitative content analysis which synthesizes two contradictory methodological principles: openness to what emerges out of data and theory-led investigation (Kohlbacher, 2006). This method makes it possible to place the identified ideas in context and arrive at holistic understanding of complex narratives, taking into account also what did not appear in the text.

The central instrument of the qualitative content analysis is the category system developed right on the material employing a theory-guided procedure (Kohlbacher, 2006). As Creswell (2012) suggests, in a “good” qualitative study the researcher uses multiple levels of abstraction, moving in the process of analysis from more particular to more general categories (p. 46). In my research I needed to build a category system that would incorporate ideas and themes appearing in the gathered material, linking them to elements of NPM and features of Russian reform context. Ideas not falling into any category described in the theoretical part of this thesis would constitute their own categories that can be understood through further theoretical research or presented as original findings.

4.2 Research questions and case materials

Interpreting the programme as a tool of supporting reform, I was interested primarily in the messages sent from the programme organizers to participants, rather than in studying participants’ perception of these messages. I assumed that these messages can be discerned from the lectures that were called to inspire and inform participants’ group work, and occupied about half of the programme contents.

The programme did not offer any coherent courses, and every lecture was devoted to a specific topic and given by a different speaker, as a master-class. The organizers recorded all the 57 lectures given within the programme, and transcribed most of them, with an average transcript consisting of 20-25 pages. In order to make the analysis feasible within a master’s thesis, and also to concentrate on the lectures that organizers themselves considered to be most important, I analyzed only those 31 lectures that were identified as ‘key’ by the programme coordinator.
I aimed at designing research as both theory- and data-driven. Research questions were formulated so as to connect the programme narrative to NPM framework and Russian context, and at the same time ensure that the programme would be analyzed in its diversity and authenticity, and that unexpected results could emerge from the data. The following questioned were posed:

1. What are the main ideas of the key lectures of the programme?
2. How ideas of the key lectures relate to NPM narrative?
3. Which non-NPM (opposing or distinctly different) ideas appear in the key lectures?
4. How is Russian context discussed in the lectures?

In order to identify key lectures and start the analysis I conducted an interview with the programme coordinator (see interview questions in Appendix 4). I then used the key lectures’ transcripts as the primary source of data, from which findings were derived. ‘Main ideas’ were identified on the basis of frequency of their mentioning in the text.

At the same time, I also consulted secondary data: my field notes, resulting from participant observation and informal interviews with programme organizers and participants that I had carried out during three programme modules (third, fifth, and the final eighth module). These data helped to shape my theoretical framework on the first stages of research, and later in results interpretation, contributing to my understanding of the content of key lectures.

4.3 Data analysis process

To make it possible to juxtapose complex lecture narratives with my theoretical and contextual framework, I summarized the framework in a two-page guide. The NPM part of the guide was composed of the statements about typical NPM manifestations in general and in higher education, including the Table 1 (page 10 of this thesis), and of summarized criticisms of NPM. The part representing Russian context contained characteristics offered by different authors (first of all, Minina (2013) and Polyzoi and Dneprov (2010)) as specific features of Russian culture and social context conditioning implementation of education reform. In the process of data analysis other ideas emerged from the data that could be interpreted as a manifestation of NPM or related to Russian specifics. These ideas I included into the guide, marking them red to signify their origin from the data. Finally, when I encountered an idea alternative to NPM elements and ideas and unrelated to Russian specifics, I added it to the guide in the “Other” section. So the guide was being developed throughout the whole process of analysis. Elements of the guide were phrases and sentences rather than
brief category names, which helped me to keep in mind the meaning of each category, and connect meanings to meanings rather than words to words in the process of reading the data. This was particularly important as the data was mostly in Russian, while categories were formulated in English. The resulting guide can be seen in the Appendix 5.

The process of analysis happened in three stages. On the first stage I worked with the just described guide, developing it as I processed the transcripts. I read through a lecture transcript, marking out passages that I identified as conveying significant thoughts. After that I compared ideas from the lecture to elements of the guide, and when I saw a correlation I marked the coded name of the lecture beside the element, sometimes adding a short comment on how exactly the lecturer interpreted the element. When the speaker’s idea was contrary to the meaning of the element, I also made a corresponding mark beside the element. After checking all the elements in this way, I added the ideas on how university should be organized that were left uncategorized (if any) to the “Other” section and proceeded to the next lecture, which was to be juxtaposed with all guide elements, including newly added “Other”. This way I aimed to ensure that all sound ideas related to the ways of organizing and managing higher education will be compared both with my theoretical framework and with the categories that emerged from the data.

As a result of this process I got a long and diverse list of categories. Some categories that emerged from the theory remained completely empty; some were supported by only one or two mentions in the data; while other categories were discussed in many lectures. So, on the second stage of analysis I grouped categories of similar or related meanings into larger blocks, relating these blocks to my research questions: 1) main themes that were most frequently discussed within the programme; 2) NPM-related themes; 3) ideas opposing or alternative to NPM; and 4) ideas related to Russian context specifics. The resulting lists are specified below in the Table 2.
Table 2. Categories grouped by research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main</th>
<th>NPM-related</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• International competitiveness</td>
<td>• University as a tool for economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• University contribution to regional development</td>
<td>• Applied research and job-related training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Restoring connections between university and industry</td>
<td>• Higher education sphere as a market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Independent and external evaluation of quality</td>
<td>• Commercialization of science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attention to other stakeholders apart from the state</td>
<td>• Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tight state control as a barrier</td>
<td>• Diversity and choice for consumers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Complex forms of cooperation</td>
<td>• Stakeholder participation in university governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Specialization and diversity of universities</td>
<td>• Accountability and quality assurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning from foreign experience</td>
<td>• Autonomy of universities from the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Transformation of universities as inevitable</td>
<td>• Private sector management styles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opposing and alternative ideas</th>
<th>Related to Russian specifics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• University mission is to transfer worldviews</td>
<td>• Lack of necessary culture(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• University mission is to change social reality</td>
<td>• Demographic challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• University is founded on the ‘true research’</td>
<td>• Leading role of the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• University will soon disappear with automatizing of research and teaching</td>
<td>• Building on indigenous traditions and achievements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Life expectancy as main measure of development</td>
<td>• New understanding of moral upbringing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Education as opposed to training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I noticed that most main themes were compatible with NPM-related ones, or could be discussed in connection to them. Hence, on the third stage of my analysis I grouped main and NPM themes together to create still larger blocks; updated the Table 1 that I initially used within the guide to reflect specifics of NPM narrative in Russia as they manifested themselves in the case; and included the main themes that were left outside the NPM blocks into general description of the data. The conjunction of themes that resulted in creating larger blocks is shown below in Diagram 1. The updated Table presenting manifestations of NPM in higher education is provided in the Results section.
Diagram 1. Conjunction of “main” and “NPM-related” themes

**Main**

- University contribution to regional development
- Restoring connections between university and industry
- Independent and external evaluation of quality
- Attention to other stakeholders apart from the state
- Specialization and diversity of universities
- International competitiveness
- Complex forms of cooperation
- Tight state control as a barrier
- Learning from foreign experience
- Transformation of universities as inevitable

**NPM-related**

- University as a tool for economic development
- Applied research and job-related training
- Performance management and quality assurance
- Stakeholder participation in university governance
- Private sector management styles
- Higher education sphere as a market
- Commercialization of science
- Competition for students and resources
- Diversity and choice for consumers
- Autonomy of universities from the state
5. RESULTS OF THE DATA ANALYSIS

The programme director characterized the lecture part of the programme as “a supermarket of ideas” from which participants could take whatever they found useful, if anything. This metaphor referred to the diversity of lectures content, and positioned them as an optional rather than compulsory part of studies, despite the fact that they occupied about half of the programme’s time, and that many speakers had a high status and significant authority in Russian higher education sphere. It is interesting to see what exactly was offered in this “supermarket”, what lacked from the assortment, and whether organizers were offering a truly free choice to participants rather than inclining them towards particular offers.

The description of research results in this chapter follows the logic of research questions. After explaining which lectures were identified as ‘key’ and analyzed, I will picture the processed material in general, and then proceed to the NPM-related themes, ideas alternative and critical to NPM, and references to Russian context within the analyzed lectures.

5.1 Identifying the key lectures of the programme

The 37 ‘key’ or ‘important’ lectures out of 57 given in the course of the programme were identified by the programme coordinator in the research interview (see Appendix 4). He listed multiple criteria of each lecture’s importance. The first criterion was a good feedback from participants, who assessed each lecture in feedback forms. Next, it was the correspondence with the topic of the programme’s module in which the lecture appeared. Another criterion of importance was correlation between the lecture’s content and the key messages of the programme, which the coordinator formulated as follows:

- education has own essential value that cannot be limited to its market value;
- the state no longer has ‘monopoly’ in education, and it is necessary for universities to recognize diverse players and build relationships with all of them.

The lectures helping to transfer these messages were particularly significant for the programme, said the coordinator.

He also explained that different lectures were important for different reasons, apart from the aforementioned criteria. Some were offering expertise or up-to-date insights in a particular field. Others were facilitating and accelerating participants’ project work, hence they had methodological importance. There were several lectures (or, rather, sessions)
training management skills necessary for university leaders. Still other were politically im-
portant as reaffirming high status and uniqueness of the programme through the high status 
of the speakers. The organizers sought to offer participants diverse viewpoints, so some 
lectures (e.g., those from business speakers or from NGO leaders) were important as repre-
senting an original view on higher education.

5.2 Description of speakers and lectures

I have analyzed 31 key lecture which detailed transcripts were available. As the pro-
gramme coordinator has rightfully pointed out, profiles of the programme speakers were 
diverse (see Diagram 2). Out of the analyzed lectures, some of which were conducted by a 
pair of speakers, 10 were given by senior university administrators; 10 by experts (includ-
ing consultants, university professors and business coaches); 6 by business representatives, 
including two from educational businesses (but not universities); 4 by government repre-
sentatives (either from the Ministry of Education and Science, or from the Agency of Stra-
tegic Initiatives, - an institution subject to the Government); and 1 by an NGO representa-
tive. Many of these speakers had blurred affiliation, engaged or experienced in several 
spheres, which made it difficult to categorize them. One could also identify a group of 
‘methodologists’, who worked in different areas but shared a common background as fol-
lowers of the Moscow Methodological Circle - an indigenous philosophical and intellectu-
al school of thought, that “has worked out an original analytic approach to the broadest 
range of socio-cultural and intellectual phenomena” and developed methods nowadays 
used in consulting and strategic planning for diverse social projects in Russia (“Moscow 
Methodological Circle”, 2005).). The presence of ‘methodologists’ in the programme was 
significant, as not only 8 of the key lectures were given by speakers with different kind of 
affiliation to the Methodological Movement, but participants’ project work was designed 
with the use of its specific methods.
Lectures could be roughly categorized into several types by their content and goals, with many lectures having diverse contents and falling into several categories at once. First, one could distinguish lectures describing trends in higher education and generally in society with implications for the strategic development of universities. Different speakers identified different trends as important (e.g., technological developments, increasing life expectancy, or changing forms of interaction between universities and industry). While some lecturers concentrated on the recent period of last 20-50 years, others traced the history of university development in relation to societal needs within several centuries, or tried to envisage future changes. Still other lectures, e.g. by business or Ministry representatives, did not aim at showing a universal picture, but rather presented needs and expectations to Russian universities from a major industry player or from the government.

Second, many lectures depicted specific cases, ‘best practices’ or role models. Higher education institutions presented by their presidents were mostly recently established Russian schools, either of economics and management, or technological, that have successfully implemented Western practices and instruments. Speakers from outside higher education
brought examples of successful cooperation with universities, or showcased education-related businesses. ‘Experts’ spoke of practices from foreign, primarily US, higher education, to support their argument. Most important of all ‘examples’ in the programme were, as one of the organizers pinpointed, the university speakers themselves, serving as role models for participants.

Third, about one fifth of the key lectures was devoted to philosophical issues. Speakers were raising questions about the nature and meaning of higher education, ultimate aims of university activities, changing of university roles and models (or ‘ideal types’ of universities) throughout the history. Interestingly, these issues were brought not in the beginning but in the second half of the programme, and were presented almost exclusively by the ‘methodologists’. Often their lectures contrasted sharply with very practical and narrow-focused lectures of the same module.

Finally, some lectures had a strong motivational component, empowering participants to take action and develop ‘essentially new’ solutions. Speakers discussed the potential role of participants in shaping the future of higher education, and stressed the value-laden character of their choices. Some lecturers attempted to evoke participants’ reaction with harsh expressions about bleak prospects of Russian universities and poor abilities of their leaders.

With lectures’ contents and perspectives being very diverse, there were still arguments that they shared, and themes that were not problematized within the programme. One of these shared themes was the international competitiveness of Russia as a country and of Russian higher education that is to be achieved (or restored). It was positioned as a major goal of the Ministry of Education and Science, and discussed in relation to recent Ministry initiatives and to Russia joining WTO. The notion of international competitiveness was connected by many speakers to the “global division of labor” where Russia and Russian companies need to find their place. Still, speakers of different affiliation had different images of an internationally competitive university.

Another shared idea was that transformation of universities (globally, or specifically in Russia) is inevitable and irresistible. Speakers gave many reasons for this transformation, from new demands of global market to the aftermath of destruction of Soviet system. And again, no universal direction for transformation was offered.
(Expert): The calm time, when one could encapsulate oneself and mind one’s own business, is gone for the country’s educational system. <...> Challenges are brought primarily by technological shifts, with global leaders of educational market starting to develop these new technological opportunities. We have last ten years when we can solve tasks like growing five world class universities, ignoring these new factors. And then a very big change in the rules of the game will come to us.

(Government representative): For about 5 more years those who want to live in their old arrangements and tease poor students and be new leaders of old education, - I think, if a university is decent and has a strong brand name, they don’t need to worry. Then you will swiftly fall apart, but there are still 5 years to live peacefully.

5.3 Ideas related to the New Public Management

NPM-related ideas played significant, or even leading, role in the programme content. Most lecturers addressed university as subject to concrete social and economic goals and as a player on the higher education market rather than a state-funded public institution. Speakers stressed economic role of education and importance of competition and performance management.

As one could anticipate, the way NPM-similar elements were discussed within the programme was different from the general NPM theory. Summarizing the NPM manifestations in higher education as they could be discerned within the programme, I updated the Table 1 (see page 10), with broad categories presented in the order of the frequency of their appearance in the lectures (from most to least frequently discussed). The resulting Table 3 is presented below.
Table 3. NPM manifestations in higher education discerned from the programme narrative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Broad categories</th>
<th>NPM manifestations in higher education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Universities are subject to concrete social, political and economic goals | Universities should: *strategically plan and lead the economic and social development of their local area*  
• *train specialists directly to the job market*  
• *offer more applied and “useful” research and teaching*  
• *be more “productive”*  

2. Performance management, quality assurance and improvement  
• *universities should open themselves for external evaluation*  
• *elaboration of explicit measurement and monitoring of performance in both research and teaching*  
• *performance related pay for faculty*  
• *concentration of funds in the highest performing higher education institutions*  
• *need for transparency in governance and teaching*  
- Ambiguous attitude to rankings and publications in foreign peer-reviewed journals

3. Marketization and commercialization of public services  
• *universities should become more ‘business-like’ and ‘market-oriented’*  
• *services reflecting preferences of the ‘consumers’ – students and industry*  
• *diversity and choice, specialization of HEIs*  
• *more practical applications of scientific knowledge*  
• *competition for students and research*  
• *role of the state is to steer the higher education market – also through indirect and ‘voluntary’ measures*  
• *introduction of more directly economic concerns into research*  
Not discussed:  
- Privatization of higher education  
- Commercialization of teaching

• *recognizing new interests (students, commerce and local industry, different social parties)*  
• *new governance structures and actors: advisory board, consultants, international and business people in executive and advisory boards*  
• *developing new missions*  
• *development of stronger managerial structures*  
• *performance-related pay (“effective contracts”) for faculty*  
• *ensuring stakeholder’s participation in university governance*  
• *need for better and stronger management*  
Opposition towards:  
- Abandonment of democratic-egalitarian model of governing universities  
- Reduction in influence of local government  
Not discussed:  
- Standardization and formalization of operational management

5. Central steering with greater autonomy for local institutions  
• *higher education is not affordable solely by the state*  
• *insistence that HEIs assume responsibility for their own futures*  
• *new (non-state) sources of funding as a means towards greater autonomy*  
• *state steers higher education also through indirect and ‘voluntary’ measures*  
• *decentralization of central power*

In the following subsections I describe intersections of lectures’ content with traits attributed to NPM in more detail, seeking to reflect the diversity of viewpoints within the pro-
gramme. I will also highlight the aspects of NPM that were left out of the programme discussions, though present in the Russian educational reform.

**University as a major tool for economic development**

Discussing roles of university, speakers emphasized its influence on the development of particular industries, regions, and country as a whole. Many lecturers underlined economic functions of universities, from training professionals and conducting research for local industries, to serving as a node for local businesses and authorities to create economic clusters, to nurturing entrepreneurial culture and promoting development of small & medium enterprises. Economic role of HEIs in Russia was damaged in the process of transition from planned to market economy, explained some speakers. They suggested that the disrupted connections between universities and industries are to be rebuilt, but in a bottom-up way, rather than from the center.

Speakers with business background called for the involvement of universities into global projects and networks, in order to prepare globally competitive specialists that will in their turn boost innovative economy and facilitate the competitiveness of their Russian employers. On the other hand, education itself was positioned as an industry that has a potential to prevail in the new economy based on services.

Ministry representatives and experts made particular emphasis on the social-economic role of university for its region. Speakers called for the closer cooperation between regional authorities and universities, and suggested that universities play more active role in territorial development, not only as workforce providers, but as strategic planners and consultants.

*(Ministry representative): It is an utterly important question – how the map of the country is covered by educational institutions, and in what condition they are. When we were taking decisions about reorganizing or supporting this or that institution, the most important factor for us was the territorial distribution of all this potential, and relationships of federal subjects with these institutions.*

Other speakers stressed social or even spiritual functions of university in its region, as a force that can unite region around common ideology and goals for development. Drawing on the functions of universities in tsarist Russia, these speakers suggested that university could take responsibility for organizing all levels of education in its region, and controlling the education quality. “University as a leading agent of social development” was presented
as a new role for the university, different from just providing workforce or breeding loyal citizens.

**Applied and useful research and teaching**

Within the broad category of university subject to concrete social and economic goals, the theme of training specialists that will fit industry needs and increase labor productivity was particularly high. Neither speakers nor participants questioned the existing mismatch between qualifications granted by HEIs and actual needs of enterprises. A Ministry representative claimed that labor productivity is unacceptably low in all sectors of economy, and described the whole system of measures that are being taken by the government to increase practical training within higher education and develop new applied science degrees. Other lecturers discussed competencies that need to be trained, how practical training can be provided through new educational technologies, or how university can and should create not separate specialists but rather working entrepreneurial teams that will be ‘bought’ by corporations and help boost innovative economy. A business representative claimed that if Russian universities fail to produce graduates with up-to-date competencies, Russian corporations will employ foreign graduates, or train own specialists in foreign universities.

Applied research was discussed primarily as a way for university to raise funds from the market, and secondly as an innovation function for society. To attract customers for research and promote economic development, universities were suggested to build clusters connecting HEIs, businesses and regional authorities. Within these clusters diverse forms of scientific cooperation with business would emerge, including business incubators and spin-offs. The biggest obstacle for development of applied research in Russian universities is the reluctance of faculty to ‘debase’ themselves and ‘abandon’ fundamental science, as well as inability to cooperate with business, claimed some speakers. They suggested that new ‘managers of science’ that would serve as organizers and mediators can solve this problem.

*(University president): Everyone [among faculty in technical fields - G] wants an awfully creative life. Because of that they often do not commercialize obvious scientific developments that could bring money.*

**Marketization and commercialization**

The idea of higher education sphere as a market was prevalent in the programme, with different speakers putting forward different sides of it: search for own market niche; working
for the global market; what is ‘selling’ best in the world knowledge market; what are in-
ternational market standards in education and science, and so on. Universities were recom-
mended to understand their competitive advantages (such as cheap scientific workforce or
expert knowledge about own region) and to embrace business approach to management,
which would help to ‘move quicker’ and create a healthier, more transparent and competi-
tive, working environment. At the same time, there was no consensus on the degree of
business rules applicability in the education sphere. Some speakers insisted that business
and market rules are very relevant for education, as there is no principal difference be-
tween a university and a corporation. Others, to the contrary, emphasized that education
market is a quasy-market, involving values and ideas of public good apart from monetary
interests, and that university is a specific organization – a ‘democratic’ or ‘voting’ corpora-
tion, with strong collegiality, balancing between state, market and academia.

Commercialization within universities was discussed almost exclusively as commercializa-
tion of science. Speakers promoted American and European models alongside rare ‘best
practices’ from Russia. Participants eagerly discussed tensions between fundamental and
applied science, with some speakers suggesting to fund ‘purely theoretical’ research
through applied projects, and others claiming that there is no intrinsic conflict between the-
se two types of research as long as universities can commercialize science. Commercializa-
tion of teaching was discussed only in connection to educational start-ups outside universi-
ties; ‘earning’ non-core faculties of HEIs were addressed rather as a source of poor quality
teaching that universities should gradually get rid of.

(University rector): We in HEIs need to discern those, who work, from those, who do not
work. It means, first of all, a strict auditing of the so-called ‘earning’ departments of HEIs.

Another topic within the marketization theme was specialization of universities. HEIs were
suggested to specialize in order to better position themselves on the market and better serve
local needs. Maintaining diversified range of services at any price was disapproved as
‘natural economy style’ by some speakers. At the same time, lecturers welcomed the over-
all diversity of higher education field with many university models:

(University representative): Hundreds of universities [that are neither ‘leading’ nor
‘backward’ – G] are out of government’s sight. We should not take it easy. <...> We will
inevitably have to deal with these universities, to treat them differently depending on their
functions, models of development, and state support modes.
Competition versus cooperation

In general, competition was described in a positive way, as a major driving force for bringing necessary changes and improving quality. Most often competition was mentioned in relation to the global educational market, international competitiveness of the country, or to the planned reduction of the number of Russian public universities.

Speakers had different images of an internationally competitive university. For example, a speaker from a major Russian research university defined a competitive university as the one combining talents, resources and good management, with basic conditions for success being: research, links to business, flexibility, internationalization, and a developed infrastructure. Another speaker, with a business background, gave the following ‘simple indicators of competitiveness’: quotation index, partaking in global projects, participation in global networks for solving specific problems (e.g., development of particular technological platforms).

Interestingly, complex forms of cooperation were also presented as a way to stay competitive. Cooperation was positioned as a wise strategy and a necessary condition for meeting the challenges of globalization and knowledge economy. Cooperation with other universities and research centers, with businesses and entrepreneurs would provide necessary resources and increase efficiency of teaching, research, and commercialization of science, suggested lecturers. However, one of the speakers pointed out that little cooperation exists at the moment in Russian higher education sector, due to the conditions of competition imposed by government regulations, and to the Soviet habit of top-down regulation of all cooperative relationships.

Stakeholder and customer orientation

While different parties interacting with universities were presented as stakeholders rather than customers, often these notions were used interchangeably. Corroborating one of the ‘key messages of the programme’ as identified by the programme coordinator, many speakers drew the participants’ attention to the importance of other stakeholders apart from the state: first of all, industries and regions as economic and social entities, but also regional authorities, businesses, students and faculty.

Nevertheless, the state was still recognized as the main player and customer of the educational service, whose demands and influence it is impossible to ignore. Building relationships with other stakeholders was depicted as a way of gaining more independence from
the state, and at the same time becoming an ‘efficient project’ which the state will be more eager to fund.

In the discussion on students as customers different views were presented. Some lecturers argued that in order to survive in the educational market university has to become more engaging and entertaining, adjusting to new learning habits of students. Other speakers insisted that primary task of the university is to offer high-quality teaching in relevant subjects, which will attract able and motivated students.

**Quality assurance and performance management**

The issue of quality enjoyed utmost attention in the programme, with instruments of quality assurance discussed more than any other typical NPM instruments. Speakers described quality assurance instruments as capable of ensuring transparency in university governance and teaching, promoting fair competition within and between universities, and bringing necessary change in higher education.

Within this topic, independent evaluation and external advice were depicted as the main means of providing good quality. Many speakers recommended universities to form advisory boards, attracting international education experts and business people to work in them, or partner with other ‘market players’ that would offer external evaluation. Others promoted performance related “effective contract” for faculty members that would be based on independent and objective assessment on their productiveness and quality of teaching. Some experts asserted that introducing external measurements of quality is the only way for the state to make sense of Russian diverse higher education field, and to govern it, as ‘manual controlling’ is impossible when the number of universities is great. Hence, universities that want to ‘stay safe’ should voluntarily go through external evaluations and introduce quality assurance measures, before the state will come to assess them.

However, contradictions aroused in the discussion of international rankings and number of publications as external measures of quality. Many speakers described them as proven indicators of quality and a way to internationalization, recognized and supported by the government. However, the same speakers mentioned that the idea of measuring quality through international rankings and publications is old and wearing out, so despite its current influence it should not be uncritically taken on board.

*(Public university president): We will not get a real reformation of higher education before we get external measurements of university performance. Not only scientific results – it is*
only one part. The second part is whether the university is really working for the market, has its market of graduates, or it is working for nowhere.

(Private business school dean): I feel relaxed about any rankings. I would even say I disregard them. It is my personal attitude. Our school is not working for the rankings, at all. I think one should work according to the old wisdom: do what you must, and come what may. I would want that someday in history they would say that our case was an interesting world case.

**Shift of responsibility from state to university**

The frequently voiced concern of participants was that the state in Russia regulates education so heavily that little independent change is possible, especially in the situation of hard competition over public funding. State control was also discussed as a heritage from Soviet times when a culture of dependence was built in public institutions, which impedes the current efforts to reduce and decentralize control. Recognizing tight state grip as a barrier, speakers encouraged universities to take initiative in becoming less dependent from the state. The most common recommendation was to diversify funding sources, and to develop desired alternatives without state support – which will probably be recognized as a ‘new standard’ and rewarded by the state afterwards.

Speakers from the Ministry emphasized the scarcity of public funds, and also encouraged universities to act without government instructions and support. One of them described an ‘ideal university’ as the one that can successfully attract students and money, and manage those efficiently. Balancing between development and social security, the state sees its main task in promoting development, which means less protection and more market mechanisms in education, explained a Ministry representative:

*(Government representative): Our task is to create such conditions in the system that a real competition between universities would emerge. It will force management teams of universities, if they have any ambitions and thoughts, work differently with their personnel. <...> In the project mode you [pedagogical universities – G] will have to make steps in the direction of development, and not some general keeping social guarantees.*

Speakers from a state think tank university drew attention to the need of decentralization and delegation of state authority. They also suggested that the state should steer universities though creating ‘fashion’, running contests and assigning special statuses to universi-
ties. At the same time, universities should assume active position in defining their own needs and negotiating them with the state:

(University representative): Every university has fields of knowledge, departments, laboratories, - that are unique in their history, contribution, developed scientific schools, but that will not necessarily find a customer or a stakeholder that will invest in them. It is the state task [to support them – G], but it should be solved not only on the state, but also on the institution level.

**Private management styles**

Speakers admitted that the practice of elaborating mission statements and developing strategic plans, which Russian universities have recently adopted, is not working properly. ‘Mission’ and ‘strategy’ become buzzwords, with little true strategizing taking place. However, it is crucially important for university leaders to be strategic, urged speakers:

(University representative): We need to develop the institutional level of management, to cultivate ambitions and claim that “this is who we are”. You cannot be an appointed national research university. It is a worldview, a mission, which is correctly elaborated and accepted by the staff.

New governance structures such as advisory boards and executive committees were promoted as a means for university to become more efficient, transparent and sensitive to the needs of stakeholders. Suggested members of advisory boards would be drawn from business, international education experts, or sometimes regional authorities. However, the participatory model of governance with strong influence of faculty members was also supported by some lecturers.

(Expert): The sooner you, guys, will get active boards that influence rector’s position and opinions, the easier it will be for you to collect money from the market and from the state. You can argue with that or not, but this is life.

(Expert): The degree of consensus and involvement of people who manage and who are the core of the institution – good teachers and others, - is actually more important than quickness and good composition of strategy.

The discussion on human resource (HR) management in university was dominated by the idea of ‘efficient contract’ (the type of contract that ties wages to measured productivity of faculty members).
Some trends that can be interpreted as NPM and that are widely present in Russian higher education transformation were barely mentioned in the key lectures of the programme. One of these trends was privatization of higher education and commercialization of teaching. Although more than 60 per cent of public university students are paying tuition fees, the programme lacked discussions on these students as specific customers, or on developing this source of funding. The traditional justification of NPM through the ‘value for money’ argumentation also missed from the content of key lectures.

Another trend not presented was state standardization of educational services provision, which has been increasing since early 2000s. To the contrary, lecturers emphasized diversification of university models and services they provide. In terms of standardization and formalization of operational management, described by many authors as a typical feature of NPM, the discussion was limited to performance-related pay instruments. Before starting studying the programme, I expected that it would concentrate on training particular management skills of university administrators, and suggest ‘correct’ ways of financial, project, operational, HR, etc. management in universities. However, the programme turned out to offer ideas for strategic development of universities rather than operational management, and was doing it in more subtle ways than direct guidelines and trainings.

5.4 Ideas critical and alternative to NPM

The majority of non-NPM ideas appeared in the talks given by ‘methodologists’ in the second half of the programme. These speakers were discussing higher education from philosophical points of view, posing questions about its essence and ultimate goals, rather than practical issues of managing universities. Within the philosophical discussions I identified the following themes that can be viewed as alternative or opposing to NPM.

The core of university opposed to training and applied research

Several speakers argued that the essence of higher education is transferring a holistic worldview, or ontology – interpreted as a system of ideas about the world that allows explaining and connecting different phenomena, and understanding one’s own position and influence. Examples of such ontologies would be a religious (Scholastic) worldview, or a rational scientific worldview. Training particular working skills lies outside the true goals of higher education, claimed speakers, though such training is also necessary. Continuing
the reflection of the nature of education, another lecturer suggested that excessive knowledge provided in universities is not ‘inefficiency’, but is indispensable to human thinking and activity.

Yet another speaker insisted that the foundation of universities is the ‘true research’ (study of essentially new problems and objects), as contrasted with the ‘inspections’ of already known problems with old methods, dominating current research. Portraying university as an institution undergoing a deep crisis, he suggested that to restore university we need to restore the true research.

**Non-economic dimensions of development**

Discussing the role of universities in transferring and developing ontologies, speakers also claimed that the current dominating (rational) ontology is in crisis, which shows itself in multiple social and ecological problems; and it is the task of universities to develop a new one, balancing technological development with humanitarian issues. One of the lecturers suggested that life expectancy could be used as a measure of development, rather than economic welfare. He showed how life expectancy depends on values, culture, and life meaning, and suggested that university needs to reorganize itself so as to enable longer life and to support people who live long, helping them to go through crises on different life stages.

**Technocratic approach to education**

A couple of speakers offered a distinctive point of view that cannot be reduced to NPM measures, although it is not opposing to NPM. This was the technocratic viewpoint, putting MOOCs (mass open online courses) in the center, and envisaging future of higher education as automatized and dominated by artificial intelligence in teaching and research. The speakers predicted that traditional modes of teaching in universities will vanish completely as inefficient, while MOOCs will perform the filtering and signaling functions of education for students and employers. To survive universities need to master new technologies, incorporate MOOCs in curricula, and build strong brands, urged the speakers.

**Critique of NPM**

Only one lecturer presented a comprehensive critique of NPM and, broader, marketization and neoliberal orientation in education. He started from the argument that university needs to orient itself on the ideas of the future, and not of abstract excellence or market, and warned that changing organizational forms without changing meanings will lead to mean-
ingless results. He criticized the concept of human capital, suggesting that universities should rather adopt concepts of ‘human resource’ and ‘human potential’; claimed that market relationships should not be leading in education; and called not to abandon knowledge for the sake of competencies.

The speaker presented the following challenges for higher education: 1) increasing life expectancy which requires longer-term life meanings than ‘career’ or ‘money-making’; 2) destruction of professional communities and their worldviews by market relationships; 3) simplification of communication, which means that education either needs to become simpler, or to protect itself as a complex multi-meaning communication; 4) reduction of diversity and rise of ideology of universality and standards; and 5) threat to university as a social institution, because it is no longer influencing the intellectual condition of society – this role has been taken by the media, with information taking forms of ‘news’ and ‘show’ rather than knowledge. In general, the speaker called for restoring traditional research university model and for cautious attitude towards innovations.

Apart from this one critical lecture, two other speakers also mentioned that the value of education cannot be reduced only to its market value, and that administration of public services is essentially different to business management. However, there was no broader discussion of these thoughts, even though the programme coordinator named them among the key messages of the programme.

5.5 Russian context in key lectures

The specifics of Russian context were not in the focus of the programme, and local reality was approached as something that all participants know well, so there is no need to discuss it separately. Only few characteristics of Russian context that I derived from theoretical sources were also mentioned in key lectures: ambiguous relationships with the state, combining expectations for state paternalism with fears of too tight state control, and importance of moral upbringing as a function of education, with morals being interpreted in line with neoliberal values (fair play, competition, entrepreneurial spirit). Cultural or ideological specifics of Russia were mentioned mostly as barriers for implementing foreign models, or as an absence of necessary culture. For example, lecturers explained that directly copied foreign practices would not work in Russia context due to lack of entrepreneurial, cooperating, or donating culture, conditioning achievements of Western universities.
Among contextual factors conditioning the development of Russian higher education emphasis was put on demographical challenges (population decline and ‘brain drain’ of most academically able people to the West), generation gap in academia, size of the country limiting its manageability from the center, and aftermath of the Soviet education system, such as separation of research units from universities. Examples from Soviet and Empire times were also referred to as something to build upon: e.g., a tradition of project-based education, a unique teaching methodology, efficient planned cooperation systems, or ‘educational regions’ governed by universities.
6. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The breadth of the programme and its richness in ideas and viewpoints made it a very difficult material to analyze. Choosing a similarly broad theoretical lens, on the one hand, made it possible to demonstrate this complexity in the research results, contributing to the trustworthiness of the study. One the other hand, such broad lens made the analysis still more difficult and dependent on the researcher’s judgment.

The appropriateness of the broad focus can be justified by the argument that before making sense of the whole program and uncovering its broad themes, discussions, complexity and contradictions, - narrowing research to one particular topic could easily skew the picture and give reader a false idea of the case. A narrow lens, chosen before obtaining the big picture, could in the end prove to be irrelevant for the programme, or wrongly interpreted without links to other themes and discussions. These were the reasons I chose to keep a broad focus; but once this general overview and theme analysis is obtained within the scope of this thesis, it opens opportunities to develop this research further through focusing on specific topics and studying them more thoroughly.

Having so justified my choice of NPM as a theoretical lens, I recognize that choosing a different theory would result in a different picture of the case. Uniqueness and merit of the programme was that even a single lecture sometimes represented its own, integral and well-developed idea of higher education. As a consequence, this study cannot claim to offer a complete and adequate picture of the programme, let alone display of NPM in Russian higher education reform. What it offers is the author’s perspective on the case, highlighting some of its important themes and ideas, juxtaposing them against worldwide executed policies, and through this casting light on the underexplored domain of Russian education governance.

A limitation to validity of this study is also that the ‘key’ lectures were defined by a single person – the programme coordinator. Although he justified his choice by referring to the participants’ opinion on the significance and usefulness of the lectures (recorded in surveys in the end of each module), there is still high possibility that some important lectures were left out, or that 26 “unimportant” ones put together also transferred influential messages.

Suggesting directions for a further development of this research, I would find it both important and interesting to study the participants’ views on the key messages and ideas of the programme, and to find out which of these ideas were actually taken on board, and which
left behind. Another object for further research could be the authentic teaching methodology of the programme which, in the judgment of the organizers, was more important for reaching the programme’s goals than all lectures put together. This methodology, developed in Russia in 1960s, is up to date actively used for training business and public administration teams in Russia, but so far there has been no published international research on it.

According to the criteria for goodness of qualitative and constructivist research discussed by Guba and Lincoln (1994), the research should be educative, meaning that it should enlarge personal constructions of social reality and improve understanding of constructions of others (p. 114). I feel that after conducting this research my understanding of what is happening in Russian higher education has greatly expanded. This case study has definitely provided me with many new ideas of what a university can be, and proved that views of decision-makers in Russian higher education are much more diverse and informed than I have imagined.
7. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This case study became possible thanks to the programme coordinator that has granted me access to the programme materials, including participant observation of educational modules. When conducting interviews (only one of which was used in this report) I made sure that my respondents are aware of my status of the external observer and independent researcher, that they know the goals of my research and contexts in which its results will appear. For the content analysis of lectures I used only the information that was recorded with the consent of speakers, and that was available for wide use by all participants of the programme.

In presenting the results of this research I strived to provide accurate translation of quotes that I used. I also obtained the permission of the programme coordinator to publicize this text and its parts. As it was unfortunately not possible to check the contents of the thesis with all speakers who were quoted in it, I sought to protect their privacy through ensuring anonymity of the quotes.
8. DISCUSSION

Initiated and supervised by Russian Ministry of education and science, the studied programme provided a concentrated version of the local higher education narrative. Analyzing this narrative in relation to NPM, I aimed to understand what is specific about discussions around NPM in Russia. I was also interested to see how an educational programme can be used as a political tool, assuming that the Ministry wished with the means of this programme to create loyal and active agents of university reform implementation.

I have partly described specifics of the local NPM narrative in the Results section, summarizing ideas voiced by the programme speakers. Now I will complement this picture, highlighting elements that are different to the theoretical descriptions of NPM, and revealing contradictions within the narrative. Given the complexity of the analyzed material and the NPM concept itself, the resulting picture is going to be partial and mosaic rather than uniform. Instead of providing answers, I will aim at posing questions and identifying points that could benefit from further investigation.

8.1 Specifics of NPM narrative in Russian context

Studying a case through the NPM lens contributed not only to the theoretical reconstruction of the case, but also to better understanding how NPM can look ‘in reality’. For example, this study has revealed that not only individual entities like students or enterprises can be depicted as ‘stakeholders’, but also industries and regions, and even the world economy. Attracting private funds to university was discussed not only as a way to get additional resources for development, but primarily as a means to get more independence from the state control. Collaboration was promoted not as an alternative to competition, but as a way to increase competitiveness. These and other alterations of NPM narrative are discussed below.

With little previous research on NPM in Russian context it is difficult to assert that the specifics of NPM narrative that I have found within the programme are connected to national conditions. Still, I will highlight those elements that appeared different from the global NPM traits described in the literature, and reflect on how they could be connected to a broader Russian context. In line with the definition by Ferlie et al. (2008) that regards NPM as a narrative of public services reform combining diverse elements, I will discern normative, political and technical elements of the lectures.
Normative elements

Discerning normative components gives a lot of space for speculation. The same ideas from the programme could be interpreted as normative or technical, depending not only on how they were presented, but also on my own attitudes and norms as an interpreter. I identified particular elements as normative when they appeared at least in several lectures and were not problematized, but offered as an imperative. For example: Russian universities need to be internationally competitive; university leaders need to behave proactively; education should be of good quality.

The literature shows how NPM ideas are usually grounded on the necessity to be parsimonious in public spending and to better cater for customer needs (Diefenbach, 2009; Barr, 2004). In the programme the logic of parsimony was also present, especially in the lectures given by government representatives, while business speakers emphasized that universities must meet their needs. However, these were not leading ideas. The prevailing reason to introduce changes into higher education sphere was striving for international competitiveness - of the country in general, of national industries, or of individual universities and enterprises. The necessity to ensure a good place for Russia in the dynamic ‘world division of labor’ was maintained by speakers of all backgrounds.

(University representative): The so-to-say “customer” [of new educational methods – G] is the new, forming before our very eyes, global division of labor system. It is a very serious challenge for our country.

The logic of international competitiveness resonates well with a Soviet slogan “Overtake and surpass America” and traditional Russian ambition to “catch up with the West” (Minina, 2013). It can also be explained through the search for one’s own place in the world economy and politics that is still in progress since the dismantling of Soviet socialism. At the same time, subjecting higher education to the goals of economic development is common for many other countries, and is also interpreted as one of the key traits of NPM. So the dominance of international competitiveness idea in the programme can be seen as local specifics only in terms of its prevailing over the ideas of parsimony, ‘value for money’, or ‘serving the customer’, that were much less present.

A related normative guideline of the programme was the ‘global thinking’ and ‘proactive position’ that university leaders need to adopt. While the necessity to think globally is understandable in the situation of international competition for students, faculty and non-
government funds, - conditions related to Russian membership in WTO, development of MOOCs, and academic migration, - the question is: can this global orientation be combined with attention to local needs, or universities will have to compromise? And what is understood by ‘global’, when most foreign practices presented in the key lectures were drawn from US and Europe? The call for ‘proactive position’ in the programme can be interpreted as the empowerment of local management, a typical feature of NPM, with simultaneous shift of responsibility over universities’ future from state to institutions themselves. The specific of the programme was that university leaders were urged to be proactive not only within their institutions, but also on the level of state policy development – to uncover the problems in higher education and offer alternative solutions to the Ministry.

The somewhat paradoxical promotion of cooperation, networking and connectedness as a means to become more competitive is another interesting normative element of the programme’s narrative connected to international competitiveness. Contrary to the assertion that altruism and collectiveness are inherent in Russian worldview (Minina, 2013), speakers regretfully stated that Russian universities lack cooperative culture and university leaders try to secure their own interests rather than seek collaboration with others. One could even argue that the very justification of cooperation through competitiveness confirms the more competitive than cooperative orientation of Russian educators.

The value of quality, common to NPM narrative, was discussed only in relation to quality assurance and accountability, without reflection on what constitutes good quality. Elena Minina (2013) suggests that the holistic and unproblematic interpretation of quality as ultimate excellence is typical for Russian educational discourses. The emphasis on quality assurance, transparency, accountability and external evaluation in the programme can be explained through the widely spread corruption and nepotism in Russian universities, against which speakers wanted to fight with NPM instruments. Unfortunately, the lecturers left out of discussion the well-known ‘dark sides’ of quality assurance measures, such as inadequacy of indicators, excess bureaucratization, increasing stress and disempowerment of faculty. Avoiding these topics they thereby weakened their argumentation for participants who know these ‘dark sides’ from everyday work.

In discussions on what must be taught in higher education surprisingly little attention was paid to the normative aspects. One could explain this through a disorientation of educators because of the ‘moral vacuum’ left in the post-Soviet space. Another explanation could be that ‘moral upbringing’ got equated with propaganda during the Soviet period, so many
Russian educators now disapprove of the very idea of vospitanie in higher education. Finally, the scarcity of moral aspects mentioned can be related to the overall rational and economic orientation of programme contents. This last explanation is supported by the fact that when speakers mentioned some values to be taught to students, these values were perfectly in line with the neoliberal and NPM agenda: fair competition, entrepreneurial spirit, self-management.

At the same time, normative elements opposed to NPM were also voiced in the programme. As the programme coordinator pinpointed, one of the key messages of the programme was that education has its own essential value, not only market value. This idea was supported by ‘methodologists’ who stressed the value of knowledge and humanitarian roles of education. The importance assigned to these lectures by the programme coordinator, as well as high appreciation of them by participants, proves the relevance of the discussion on value conflicts in NPM implementation.

**Political elements**

Political component of NPM narrative refers to interests of different groups secured through the reforms. The programme’s second key message, claiming that universities need to recognize interests of other stakeholders apart from the state, was clearly political. In the analyzed lectures the emphasis was put on such parties as industries (represented by leading enterprises) and regions (represented by regional authorities), and to a less extent on students, faculty and small businesses. Also, the state was still positioned as the leading stakeholder and customer of education, enjoying not only financial and legal, but also symbolic power, even though speakers tried to convince universities to seek greater independence from the state.

*(Head of a private business school): The state, in the person of a minister or deputy minister, is to come and say: “We will do it. <...> The country wants it.” And in the absence of this phrase, it is very difficult to orientate yourself in many things in our country. <...> But the state cannot come to our Executive board meeting and tell [us what to do - G]. <...> In this sense, without the state or, rather, without leaders of particular type, bearers of particular ideas we cannot work and live. But it is very important to make sure that they are not the chief people in the argument.*

As observed from the lectures, concentration of different sorts of power within the state impeded the empowerment of other stakeholders. Thus, the state remains the biggest mar-
ket player in many industries in Russia through state-owned corporations, which undermines the influence of other enterprises. Federal funding and steering of universities conflicts with their regional tasks and disempowers regional authorities as stakeholders. Decentralization of power is needed, urged speakers, but it is hindered by the lack of trust. And as long as the state has so much power, catering for other stakeholders can seem meaningless, even when the government itself is promoting it.

(Government representative): Inability and unwillingness to attract private investments into public education system – is, as I call it, the unwillingness of HEIs to invest in their infrastructure.

(University rector): It is very difficult to persuade rectors who think that it is easier to travel to Moscow and ask for some money. Especially, when you see how [rectors of leading universities – G] go to [the Ministry] and come back with another million, you think: why should I invest in these development activities, talk to these alumni?

Students and alumni were indeed scarcely mentioned as stakeholders in the programme discussions. While speakers talked about interests of industries and regions, students were mostly addressed as a category to manipulate with and to decide for. Some lecturers regarded students as consumers, and talked, in line with ‘classical’ NPM, about the importance of their engagement and the need to please them. Others viewed them as a valuable resource, e.g., for attracting funding from industry. Students were hardly ever positioned as a powerful independent party in education.

The same can be said about faculty members that were rarely discussed as stakeholders and decision-makers, although several speakers mentioned the importance of faculty involvement in university governance, and the significance of teachers as the ‘keepers of professional values’. At the same time, a specific category of academics appeared as particularly powerful: foreign experts invited to advisory boards or to ‘independent evaluation’ procedures. The disproportionate influence of foreign faculty and experts (compared to local), as well as of large corporations (compared to smaller businesses) in the proposed model of university governance was not problematized within the programme discussions.

**Technical elements**

The majority of NPM-related topics presented within the programme can be categorized as technical elements, because they offered concrete measures to be taken. Some of these topics appeared particularly high on the programme agenda, such as external (‘objective’)
control of education quality, commercialization of science, or university as a center of a regional economic cluster. These ideas were described in detail in relation to NPM in the Results section.

Here I would like to highlight one particular instrument: strategic planning in universities. In a sense, teaching university leaders to think strategically was the core idea of the whole programme. This idea can be interpreted as an introduction of private management styles into public institutions in the spirit of NPM. At the same time, strategic thinking can be viewed as a neutral instrument, inherent in any type of intentional human and, particularly, institutional activities. It is important to understand why the Ministry and programme organizers view current university leaders as lacking the skill of strategic planning, and in what ways the interpretation of this skill suggested by the programme differs from strategic planning already used in universities. However, to answer these questions content analysis of lectures is not sufficient: one would need to analyze training sessions and project work of participants in the programme, and to conduct interviews with organizers and participants.

8.2 Contradictions within the programme narrative

The analysis of key lectures revealed numerous contradictions in the narrative. One of the most ambiguous themes was the relationship between university and the state. Lecturers offered different and even conflicting interpretations of the role of the state. Some presented it as the key stakeholder or main customer of educational services, whose needs and demands should come first in public universities. Also those speakers who drew attention to other players admitted that the state so far has the greatest power in the educational market. Yet another viewpoint was that universities are to assume some of the state functions, taking the initiative of strategic development of industries and regions. This ‘delegating of responsibility’ was justified by the arguments that universities better understand their local conditions and needs, and that the state cannot afford supporting everyone, so it will sup-
port the projects already functioning successfully. In this case the state was positioned as the head of a large enterprise with universities being its departments (as one of the speakers put it – “the minister is the CEO of our corporation”), or as an investor choosing profitable projects.

These multiple interpretations left space for every university leader to form own understanding of the university-state relationship, fit for his or her case. At the same time, the contradictory picture presented in the programme arguably reflects the everyday challenges faced by Russian public universities when they have to switch between different and conflicting roles.

Another essential contradiction of the programme was between promoted means and ends for higher education. The presented ultimate aims for universities involved strong humanitarian component. Speakers were talking of sustainable social and ecological development, and emphasized non-monetary values transferred through education. What lacked in the ‘philosophical’ presentations was the discussion on the alternative to NPM instruments of implementing these principles, or examples of universities that took these goals on board.

At the same time, numerous ‘best practices’ and instruments complying with NPM principles were offered as ‘neutral’ and useful regardless of the value orientation of a university. This argument of ideological neutrality of NPM was also present in early theorizations of this concept (Lane, 2000), but was challenged and disproved in later discussions (Diefenbach, 2009; Ferlie et al., 2008). Some researchers of Russian education reform attributed problems of the reform to conflicts of values (Polyzoi & Dneprov, 2010). One can see such a conflict present, but unresolved and even unaddressed in the current educational debate within the programme.

A similar contradiction arose between the call for original thinking, voiced by government representatives and programme organizers, and homogeneity of the provided “supermarket of ideas”, with eighty per cent of the ‘products’ of this shop falling into the NPM paradigm. What kind of innovations were the organizers expecting and ready to accept, with the ‘menu’ of food for thought being so familiar and in line with already implemented policies? Continuing the reflection on means contradicting ends, we can suppose that truly new results can hardly grow out of using well-known instruments, conforming to a particular (in this case, neoliberal) ideology.

Speakers of diverse backgrounds advocated cooperation between universities as a move that would increase efficiency, bringing examples from Soviet times and from abroad.
Simultaneously government as well as university representatives explained how competition is necessary for the market development, and predicted the increase of competition due to foreign universities coming to Russia in the near future, development of MOOCs, and numerous contests organized by the government.

(Expert): WTO is an important thing. Major teaching organizations that own universities and schools worldwide will be here in 5-7 years. There will be a real competition. Can the government resist this pressure and stand up staunchly [for Russian universities – G]? It cannot.

How are universities expected to cooperate, when they are set against each other in the struggle for students and resources? This dilemma has shown itself not only theoretically, but in the group work, when leaders of competing universities were put together to develop common solutions. While group members could agree on declarative level, decisions on implementation strategy of their projects came much harder, also because of their competing interests.

These and other contradictions (between diversity and standardization; between competitiveness and the urge to learn from each other and from abroad; between global orientation and local needs; between collegial governance and introduction of advisory and controlling committees) revealed the complexity of higher education reform narrative in Russia. They served as a source of confusion for participants about what programme organizers and the Ministry want them to do within and outside of the programme. But at the same time they offered opportunities to participants to choose priorities and course of action, arguably making the educational field more diverse and less manageable for the state.

8.3 The programme as an instrument of reform promotion

According to the organizers, the programme was designed as a leadership course, rather than a training of managerial skills or an educational event explaining government policies. Organizers intended to evoke in participants capabilities that would let them implement principally new and ‘breakthrough’ projects in higher education. For these reasons the programme was project-based, and the lecture component was designed as a set of presentations from diverse role-model speakers, rather than traditional courses. Design of the programme resembled corporate Executive MBA programmes run by the same business school. At the same time, the programme director and business coaches admitted in their lectures that educational and business organizations have “different principles of exist-
ence” because of value-based rather than profit-making goals of educational institutions, and that training for public administrators must be designed differently than for business leaders.

Having said all this, we still need to remember that it was the Ministry of Education and Science that initiated the programme, approved its design and contents, paid tuition fees for participants, and expected certain results to be achieved. So even if, as it seemed, organizers had a significant amount of freedom in shaping the programme, the Ministry involvement might be the reason that contradictions around university-state relationships were not openly addressed, state policies in education in Russia or any other country were not brought to discussion in the lectures, and no open criticisms of the state were present. The Ministry also provided directions for innovative thinking of participants:

*(Ministry representative)*: The main components of the programme are group projects in the areas that the Ministry considers important. Project themes are the very themes that lay the foundation for future modernization in education.

Despite this important role assigned to the projects, during the whole programme participants were consistently encouraged to suggest such initiatives that would require minimal state support. Essentially, the state initiated a programme to make public university leaders more independent from the state, and at the same time let them voluntarily carry on some of the state functions.

Self-governance of universities and their ‘controlled autonomy’ is a characteristic feature of NPM. As follows from the content analysis of key lectures, the programme reinforced the NPM traits of Russian educational reform, discussed in the chapter on Russian context, and also tackled the aspects of NPM that were absent from the reform: empowerment of university management, change of internal governance structures and stakeholder orientation. In this sense, the programme can indeed be viewed as a means of facilitating NPM reform. On the other hand, the absence of such topics as privatization and standardization in the programme discussions provokes many questions. Why were these processes considered unimportant by the Ministry or organizers, even though they are so sound in Russian higher education? Does the Ministry see them as already accomplished tasks that do not need additional discussions and initiatives? Probably, they are already taken for granted by everyone? Or are these issues too painful to touch?
It is also notable that not a single case of a ‘failed project’ was brought to discussion, even though there have been many problems in the history of implementing NPM mechanisms to Russian universities. Neither was any case from an old university analyzed, with the majority of ‘best practices’ coming from young economic or technological higher schools. Participants’ questions about the adaptability of suggested practices to ‘brownfield’ universities and HEIs of less ‘economically applicable’ specialization were answered in a way that they should “take proactive position and try out”.

A distinguishing feature of the programme was that it left many questions open-ended, providing contradictory answers or inviting participants to decide for themselves. This can be interpreted as a poor design of the programme; a clever manipulation, especially given the predominantly NPM-favorable contents; or as a sincere attempt to empower participants and evoke their independent thinking. In appreciation of the programme one can admit that the majority of speakers avoided black-and-white simplifications, so common in Russian discussions around educational reform, and offered diverse and complex picture.
9. CONCLUSION

This case study of a government-initiated programme for educational leaders has aimed to broaden the discussion on NPM in higher education, and in particular in Russian context. Given that NPM lens has not been applied to Russian higher education reform in earlier research, this study has provided novel results in several respects.

The comparison of Russian higher education reforms of last two decades with NPM traits globally in Chapter 2 has revealed that Russian reform generally follows the NPM lines, but paradoxically combines them with planned economy approaches and tight state control, which is only increasing over time. For example, the state since 2010 steers universities through “state assignment”, which specifies the number and type of specialists to be trained in order to “perform educational service” according to university-state contracts. New funding mechanisms also enhance state control, justifying it by “increased efficiency” and “cost optimization”. Another specific feature of Russian NPM reform is that some typical NPM elements are missing it: it does not seek to empower university management, and does not push the stakeholder orientation.

The analysis of the programme content, discussed in Chapters 5 and 8, has confirmed the ambiguous role of the state as the main controller, powerful stakeholder, but at the same time the barrier for development. It has additionally shown how concentration of different sorts of power with the state in Russia impedes the empowerment of other stakeholders and intervenes with universities’ fulfillment of regional development function. The case study has also demonstrated how international competitiveness is positioned as the ultimate goal for Russian universities, justifying introduction of NPM mechanisms. At the same time, student-centeredness is missing from the discourse, while attention is concentrated on the interests of industry and securing the role of Russia in world economy.

More specific features of Russian NPM narrative were revealed in the course of analysis of the programme. For example, attracting private funds to university is not only a way to get additional resources for development, but primarily a means to get more independence from the state. Cooperation, networking and connectedness are fashioned as a means to become more competitive. Tightening conditions for local faculty are combined with increasing influence of foreign faculty and experts in university governance. These findings are relevant not only to Russian context, but contribute to the overall understanding of possible manifestations of NPM in higher education.
The study has uncovered many contradictions in the programme narrative, arguably reflecting conflicts and complexities of the ‘real life situation’ in Russian higher education. Apart from contradictions around university-state relationships, cooperativeness being coupled with competitiveness, and shifts of power distribution within university, already mentioned above, more conflicting statements were revealed. For example, university leaders were urged to adopt ‘global thinking’ and compete on the international market, which arguably conflicted with the also promoted attention to local needs. Speakers also called participants to be ‘original’ and ‘innovative’ in their thinking, while programme contents were mostly falling into the NPM paradigm. Similarly, while one fifth of the key lectures of the programme carried the message about the primacy of humanitarian mission of higher education, the suggested instruments for university development and examples of ‘successful’ universities all lied within the market (NPM-related) ideology, which is essentially different from humanitarian orientation. These contradictions raise the doubts on what kind of thinking and value orientations are truly expected and accepted from university leaders in the course of Russian NPM reforms.

Apart from contributing to the body of research on NPM, this thesis called attention to the previously unexplored phenomenon: leadership programmes for educators in support of education reforms, appearing nowadays in different parts of the world. As I argue in Chapter 2, these programmes can be viewed as capacity and at the same time hortatory political tools in the classification by Schneider and Ingram (1990). They are designed to enable educators to carry out certain activities, and to change their perceptions about newly introduced policies.

This study has provided a detailed description of such a programme, showing how it transferred particular ideologies to its participants. Interestingly, the programme paid specific attention to those elements of NPM that were missing from the reform: stakeholder orientation and university governance. At the same time, the programme lacked open critical discussion of state policies and university-state relationships, or examples of failed NPM projects.

Focusing on a government-initiated leadership programme for educators, this thesis calls to further investigation of this new kind of political tools in education. It would be particularly interesting to study what actual effects such programmes have on introducing specific policies in the work of institutions, and on changing public perceptions of reforms.
References


Appendix 1

**Planned topics of educational modules**

1. Tertiary education development trends
2. Strategy of higher education institutions development
3. Reforming international systems of higher education (in developed and developing countries)
4. Development of higher education systems in Russian regions
5. Modernization of the basic processes in higher professional schools
6. Business and university partnership
7. Approaches to human capital development in universities
8. Change management in universities

Source: programme brochure

**Topics for group project work**

- International competitiveness of Russian universities
- Federal universities: role in macro-region
- Research universities: raising the quality of research
- Industrial educational clusters
- Interaction of universities and business
- Regional educational clusters
- Commercialization of research in Russian universities
- Creating an entrepreneurial environment at the university
- Modern engineering education
- Modern pedagogical education
- Student environment at the university
- Attracting and developing faculty and researchers
- Modern educational technologies
- New models of university governance

Source: programme presentation
Appendix 2.

Representation of participants by regions

Leading regions:
- Moscow – 17 HEIs
- Novosibirsk – 6 HEIs
- Tomsk – 5 HEIs
- Omsk – 5 HEIs

Source: programme presentation
Appendix 3.

Approximate structure of an educational module

Source: programme brochure
Appendix 4

Interview questions

Which lectures in every module can you identify as ‘key’ or ‘important’ for the programme?

What are the criteria for a lecture to be identified as a ‘key lecture’ for the programme?

Why do you consider other lectures in this module* to be less important?

*asked for every module separately, after the respondent identified ‘key’ lectures in the module
Appendix 5

Stage 1 of analysis: initial categorization
Appendix 6.

Stage 3 of data analysis: summarizing manifestations of NPM in higher education

| 1. Universities subject to concrete social, political and economic goals | • Universities are public service institutions subject to concrete social, political and economic goals (11) *  
• contribute to and even to lead the economic development of their local area through enhancing innovation, entrepreneurship, technology transfer, and human capital (9)  
• train specialists directly to the job market; (10)  
• offer more applied and “useful” research and teaching; (6)  
• be more “productive”; (3)  
• become more engaging in their teaching modes; (3) |
|---|---|
| 2. Performance management, quality assurance and improvement | • universities should open themselves for external evaluation (8)  
• elaboration of explicit measurement and monitoring of performance in both research and teaching; (9)  
• importance of rankings and publications in PRJ (5 – for; 3 – against) **  
• growth of performance related pay for faculty (5)  
• concentration of funds in the highest performing higher education institutions (4)  
• need for transparency, (2) |
| 3. Marketization of public services | • universities should become more ‘business-like’ and ‘market-oriented’ (11)  
• services reflecting preferences of the ‘consumers’ – students and industry (5)  
• diversity and choice, specialization of HEIs (5)  
• more practical applications of scientific knowledge (2)  
• stimulation of competition for students and research (3)  
• market forces can “add life” to the sector (1)  
• role of the state is to steer the higher education market – also through indirect and ‘voluntary’ measures; (2)  
• introduction of more directly economic concerns into research and teaching (1) |
| Privatization - no | --- |
| 4. Stronger, empowered local management. Private sector management styles. | • recognizing new interests (students, commerce and local industry, different social parties) (8)  
• advisory board, international consultants, international and business people in executive and advisory boards (6)  
• Private sector management styles (5)  
• developing new missions (5)  
• development of stronger managerial structures (4)  
• performance-related pay (“effective contracts”) for faculty (4)  
• ensuring stakeholder’s participation in university governance (3)  
• need for better and stronger management; (2)  
- Abandonment of participatory (democratic-egalitarian) model of governing universities (against – 4)  
- Reduction in influence of local government (against – 2) |
| Standardization and formalization of strategic and operational management. - no | --- |
| 5. Central steering with greater autonomy for local institutions | • higher education is not affordable solely by the state, (4)  
• insistence that institutions of higher education should assume responsibility for their own futures (2)  
• to become more autonomous universities are to diversify funding (find other sources apart from state) (9)  
• role of the state is to steer the higher education market – also through indirect and ‘voluntary’ measures; (2)  
• decentralization of central power; (2)  
• universities should demonstrate effective use of public resources (1) |

* numbers in brackets signify the number of lectures where the category appeared  
** red color signifies categories that emerged from the data