Local content policies in the Russian Higher Education sector: harming or aiding internationalization?

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Harming or Aiding Internationalization?

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Abstract Tensions between modernization and stability in Russia have been widely analyzed in the economic and political spheres; yet in the higher education sector, studies have mainly focused on the dominant internationalization discourse and left the demand for support and stability in universities understudied. This paper analyzes the friction between modernization and stability in educational policies, identifying the difficulties experienced when internationalizing universities and the opportunities for national governments to support academics. Through a case study devoted to the Russian higher education sector, the authors establish that the rules adopted by the government to ensure that internationalization processes are beneficial to Russian universities and to the country as a whole bear a striking similarity with Local Content policies in other spheres. The survey of Russian academics conducted by the authors reveals that the large acceptance among them of internationalization of higher education is accompanied by expectations that the state will help with capacity building and protect them from the negative aspects of a rapid integration into the international educational space. An analysis of the findings points out the benefits and risks of helping universities and their staff in the transition to international competition. Adequately calibrated LC policies are shown to aid the internationalization of higher education as they help "rub the edges off" an intensive catch-up internationalization program and support what is a "fledgling industry" in its transition to international competition.

Keywords identity, higher education, Russia, internationalization, local content policy

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The global trend of internationalization of higher education sector, while it continues to spread across the globe supported by regional and international organizations, businesses and governments, is also increasingly criticized for the impact of neo-liberal values on the quality of education [Crow, Dabars 2020]. Within universities concern is voiced in different ways, from researchers struggling to meet publication requirements, to lecturers lamenting the standardization of higher education [Gill 2016]. Outside universities, civil society through different vectors objects to the amounts spent by governments on projects to make universities globally competitive and emphasizes the human consequences of accelerated university reform [Gao, Li 2020].

These trends in the higher education sector share many common features with internationalization in other sectors, the liberalization of which can lead to foreign companies overtaking national ones in production and revenue earning on the domestic market. In order to support the national economy, in high-value industries, specific measures are sometimes developed and implemented by the government: local content policies (LC policies) [Kalyuzhnova et al. 2016]. These localization measures vary in their design, wording and lifespan but usually require foreign players while operating on the national market to use domestically manufactured goods or services, employ local people and share their expertise with them [Kalyuzhnova, Belitski 2019]. LC policies have for goal to help a country develop its own industries and assist them in becoming internationally competitive over time, rather than protecting them forever from foreign competition [Tordo et al. 2013].

This paper applies the concept of LC policy to the higher education sector in an attempt to understand how governments deal both with the negative consequences of their internationalization programs and the demand for stability emanating from a large number of universities. National universities in some cases appear as "fledgling industries" unprepared for international competition, and excessive liberalization may lead to the closure of universities, depriving lecturers of their livelihoods and entire regions of motors of economic development. The authors argue that measures adopted by national governments to avoid some of the excesses of intensive internationalization programs, including measures to control the quality of higher education, measures to ensure there are no security breaches, measures to address brain-drain problems and measures to social unrest can be assimilated to LC policies. This in turn helps to understand why these measures are adopted and the way to make them more efficient.

Russia was selected as a case study to determine how LC policies affect the internationalization of higher education for several reasons: the relatively rapid transition from the Soviet higher educational system to the implementation of active government-led internationalization programs means resistance is more visible in Russia than in

countries that have made the transition to internationalization more progressively. Likewise, the need for LC policies is more acute in countries with "accelerated" internationalization programs. While the Russian case provides a concentrated view of the phenomena studied, the findings are generalizable to all countries with recent and ambitious excellence in higher education programs.

Tensions between modernization and stability in Russia have been widely analyzed in the economic and political spheres [Zweynert, Boldyrev 2017]; yet in the higher education sector, studies have focused on the dominant internationalization discourse and left popular discontent with the rapid integration of universities in the global market largely understudied. Through the case study of internationalization of Russian universities, the authors examine how LC policies temper the intense internationalization programs adopted by the government. The paper attempts to determine whether these LC policies negatively impact internationalization processes or whether they support them by helping adapt them to the local context. An original survey of 100 Russian academics from 81 Russian universities reveals that while internationalization is widely accepted along with the assessment of universities' performance based on international rankings; the demand for protection from the state and for the development of Russian content measures remains strong. An analysis of the findings points out the benefits of helping universities and their staff in the transition to international competition.

Theoretical background on LC policies and their relevance to Higher Education

LC policies in the academic literature

The concept of LC policy has primarily been explored in the field of management, with a focus on studying their use in high value-added industries.

The definition of LC policies as "multidimensional and a vehicle for enabling the start up of economic activity, technological catch up, human capital accumulation, and sustaining demand for local goods, work and services. It is also concerned with ownership structure and a transfer of property rights to domestic industrial actors or champions." [Kalyuzhnova et al. 2016. P. 3] guides the authors' general understanding of LC policies as measures created by a government to ensure that the local population benefits more from economic activities than foreign entities. This perspective reveals that LC policies are long-term policies that have for objective to increase over time the part played by local people and resources in the process. LC policy thus appears as a plan to impose and then remove LC regulations depending on the evolution of a specific industry. The need for LC policies depends on the level of development of countries and their ability to compete on the international market, with developed countries being less likely to develop LC policies than less developed economies. A variety of different instruments have been used by governments implementing LC policies, including giving the priority to local employees, home sourcing of goods and services and preferential treatment of local firms.

LC policies are commonly associated with the oil and gas sector and the automobile sector but the concept could be used beyond the spheres it is traditionally applied to. Research on specific aspects of LC policies has led to discussions regarding the utility of developing local requirements for foreign aid procurement [Warner 2017], for renewable forms of energy [Kuntze, Moerenhout 2013], in the healthcare industry [Hufbauer et al. 2013]. Many authors focus on the economic and financial aspects of LC policies, however LC may be guided more by political imperatives than financial reasons. Indeed it would seem most countries did not consider the "costs and benefits of alternative policy options" before implementing LC policies [Tordo et al. 2013. P. xiii]. This consideration opens the door to a wider understanding of LC policies, which may be designed for political, security or other reasons.

LC in Higher Education sector

While any sector could have elements of LC policy, history provides the most examples in the mineral sectors, the automotive and the pharmaceutical industries. One can draw a parallel between LC requirements in the energy and resources industry, and policies designed to enhance the local contribution to projects realized in the educational, environmental or any other spheres. While the huge financial impact of projects in high value-added industries can explain a country's decision to implement LC policies; it may be that LC regulations, under another name, are also being implemented in other spheres. While the financial incentive to promote LC policies in the realization of educational, cultural or other projects may be less decisive, governments may have political or other reasons to encourage firms, universities and other players to choose local rather than international players when carrying out projects.

LC policies are currently emerging in a variety of different fields such as the higher education sector as revealed by this study. While LC policies in all sectors share common characteristics, the circumstances of their emergence and the main actors involved in their realization may vary. The researchers developed a targeted definition of LC policy for the higher education sector to address the specificities of this sector. LC policies in the sphere of higher education can be defined as measures developed by the government to ensure that the internationalization process serves the interests of the national education system and the country as a whole. LC policies in higher education resemble those in other spheres in that they provide privileges to domestic players [Ovadia 2014], aim to increase the value of their products [Kalyuzhnova et al. 2016], promote local inputs at different stages of the value-chain [Sturgeon, van Biesebroeck 2009] and are considered a means of enhancing socio-economic development [Kalyuzhnova, Belitski 2019]. LC policies in higher education differ from those in other spheres in that they focus more on security and social issues and comparatively less on economic ones. Universities, regardless of higher education becoming a market, still differ from firms as their mission

goes beyond profit-making to educating a population and being both a consolidator and generator of a country's knowledge. While higher education has been affected across the globe by a wave of liberalization and privatization, it remains in most countries a public good due to the impact it has on the social capital of a society and on the socio-economic development of a country [Locatelli 2019]. Additionally, while LC measures are often explicitly named in other industries; in the sphere of higher education, the idea of promoting national content is not explicitly formulated, at least among the documents relating to current LC policy in the Russian Federation. The reason for this is multifold: the concept of LC policy has not yet been applied to the sphere of higher education nor has its benefits been analyzed, the dominant international discourse focuses on the limitless internationalization of higher education [De Wit 2017] and the idea of promoting national/local content in any sphere, which is not economic, may attract criticism.

Context of internationalization of the Russian higher education sector and LC measures adopted by the government

Context of internationalization of Russian higher education sector

The internationalization of the Russian education system began with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Russia, as it transitioned to a market economy, experienced an economic crisis in the 1990s, which had a significant impact on the higher education system. Universities lacked funding to function properly and lost many qualified lecturers and researchers to other spheres and other countries. The 1992 Federal Law "On Education" offered a new legal framework for the changes, which had been taking place in the educational system and overturned the previous system in several significant ways: It allowed for the creation of private higher education establishments, paid educational services and partnerships with foreign universities in education and research. While the 1990s were focused on restructuring and overcoming the economic crisis, the liberalization of the Russian economy during that period led to a demand for economists and lawyers capable of meeting the needs of the market economy. Innovation became a priority in the higher educational system starting in the 2000s and Russia was assisted in its post-crisis reform by international organizations (OECD, World Bank). Russia's involvement in the Bologna Process from 2003 led to a harmonization of its educational standards with EU universities with the implementation of a two then a three-cycle degree system and the adoption of ECTS credits. Russia also created roadmaps on the other key Bologna objectives including the mobility of students, teaching staff and university administrators, developing quality assurance, and encouraging student-centered learning. The Russian government launched in the 2000s a series of projects aimed at improving the quality of higher education and supporting the emerging economy. The Federal Universities project launched in 2006 merged several universities in the Russian regions and had for goal to improve the standards of education and develop the links between universities, businesses and federal authorities. Promoting partnerships and joint research

projects between universities and businesses allowed for an inflow of private funding and for more dynamic technological innovation. The 2009 National Research Universities project had a more international orientation with participating universities selected on a competitive basis receiving funding to increase their research activities in order to be able to compete with universities on the global arena.

Alongside these projects, more specific initiatives were developed such as the Mega-grants project (project 220), launched in 2010 with substantial funding (400 million $ over three years). Project 220 aims at improving the quality of research in Russia by instituting monetary grants made available on a competitive basis to support scientific research projects implemented with the world's leading experts in the field. In order to achieve world-class research results and with the help of world-renowned scientists, Russian universities should set up research laboratories of a global importance, create links with leading universities worldwide and commercialize the research results and new technologies which have been developed.

The initiatives of the 1990s and the 2000s to reform Russian Higher Education lay the foundations for the more ambitious reforms, which flourished in later decades. The Russian government launched in the 2000s a series of projects aimed at improving the quality of higher education and supporting the emerging economy (including the Federal Universities and the National Research Universities projects) which laid the foundations for the more ambitious reforms, which flourished in the 2010s and led to the transition of a number of universities to a Western 'managerial' model [Yatluk 2020]. 2012 stands out as a rupture date in Russian higher education, with the launch of Project 5–100, an initiative which not only has internationalization as an aim but which reflects a new set of values including a focus on research, global competition for students and faculty members, a strive for excellence and the adoption of a new stakeholder-oriented business model in universities. While the projects before 2010 share common characteristics such as promoting structural reforms, supporting the national or regional economy, solving internal migration and employment issues, Project 5–100 openly states the ambition of building highly competitive world-class universities capable of excelling on the world stage. Launched by the Presidential Decree of the Russian Federation No. 599, Project 5–100 uses international expertise at each stage of its development, from its design with the participation of World Bank Experts J. Salmi and P. Altbach and the creation of roadmaps for universities with international consultants to the assessment of university performance by the international expert committee based on international rankings and criteria such as the proportion of foreign students and faculty. Project 5–100 reinforced the competition between Russian universities from the outset, by selecting out of a wide pool of candidates the universities with the best potential for international growth. While the majority of participants improved their positions both in nation-

al and international rankings; non-participants either followed closely the new trends and benefited from spill-over effects of the project or became marginalized, with a number being closed down by the government.

LC measures adopted by the government

The tension between governmental ambitions of modernization and globalization on the one hand and stability on the other has been described in studies of Russian economics and politics [Zweynert, Boldyrev 2017]. Although the Russian government is perceived as having aggressively promoted the internationalization of higher education; it has also developed a number of measures aimed at dealing with contestation and at managing the risks associated with the internationalization of the higher education sector. An extensive reading of primary and secondary sources, including Russian legal acts and the media reports, covering the period 2000–2020, enabled the authors to identify a wide range of measures by which the government attempted to address resistance to the internationalization of universities and solve the problems linked to the implementation of excellence in higher education programs. The information collected was manually coded in three stages with the last stage allowing for the emergence of four main themes, which became the original categories presented in the study. The four main categories each target a specific challenge: measures to control the quality of higher education, measures to ensure there are no security breaches, measures to address the brain-drain problem and measures to uphold traditional Russian values and avoid social unrest. There is no existing literature on LC policies in higher education as it is a novel application of the concept, however a number of scholars have explored some of the key issues making up these categories, as illustrated in Table 1.

While the structure and the content of what is taught at Russian universities have undergone significant changes in order to be compatible with the international higher education system, the Russian government has preserved a high degree of centralization and control over the organization of higher education. While neo-liberalism and international best practices point to the advantages of allowing universities to be regulated by market mechanisms, the Russian experience of decentralization was originally largely unsuccessful. In the 1990s, the state lost its credibility and the power to finance and control social structures including higher education: regional authorities acquired the right to authorize and regulate higher education activities and the expanding demand for higher education led to a sudden increase in the number of universities. The period was also characterized by a lack of funding, a growth of private universities, a diversification of programs on offer, a mismatch between the demands of the market and the training programs and a decline in the quality of higher education [Androushchak, Kuzminov, Yudkevich 2013]. In the 2000s, the government proceeded to recentralize higher education,

Table 1. **LC Policies in Higher Education and existing literature**

Types of LC measures in Higher Education	Existing literature
Measures to control the quality of higher education	Androushchak Kuzminov, Yudkevich, 2013; Yudkevich Altbach, Rumbley, 2015; Sterligov, Savina, 2016; Agasisti et al., 2018; Chirikov, 2021
Measures to ensure there are no security breaches	Persson 2021; Denisova-Schmidt 2016.
Measures to address the brain-drain problem	Kniazev, 2002; Torkunov 2017; Subbotin & Aref 2021
Measures to uphold traditional values and avoid social unrest	Abramov et al. 2016; Oleksiyenko 2021

Source: Authors' compilation

establishing state standards in order to improve the quality of education. Most universities are currently directly attached to the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Health and Social Development and have to report to them. A dedicated department was created inside the federal ministry, the Federal Service of Inspection and Control in Education and Science which is in charge of opening, merging and closing universities, accrediting and monitoring the quality of educational programs, financing higher education and allowing universities to create fee-paying programs, establishing quality standards (Law 29.12.12 273-FZ. 2012). Every year, all universities have to report on around 150 performance indicators related to their educational and research activities, financial management, human resources and international activities; following which the figures are compiled to determine their efficiency. From 2012, the state proceeded based on this data to close, reorganize or merge a significant number of universities. This trend of recentralisation and state control over higher education is a LC policy, which brings back a Soviet practice of unification, considered to be the only reliable way in the current context to maintain the credibility of the Russian educational system as a whole.

The second category of LC measures elaborated by the Russian government aims at ensuring that there are no security breaches linked to the internationalization of the higher education sector. Indeed, education at all levels is a tool in the hands of states, which they use to maintain and expand their political power. Education appears in this light as a security issue and external influence on the higher education system

affects states in different ways. Globalization has limited the autonomy of the state in many issues, including education and has led to «shifts in solidarities within and outside the national state». When encouraging the intervention of foreign players in Russian universities, the government remained conscious of the fact that internationalizing a country's educational system carries some risks because when a country opens up to an external influence it is hard to assess what it consists of, who the actors behind the scene are and what the long-term impact will be [Crowley-Vigneau, Baykov, Kalyuzhnova 2020]. Internationalization programs funded by the government are generally designed in such a way as to ensure that control of the project remains on the Russian side. The government seeks to protect higher education projects from unsanctioned foreign influence. In Project 5–100, foreigners contribute their know-how at all levels and inform strategic decision-making, but the final word always belongs to the Russian Ministry of Higher Education and Research and to members of the 5–100 Project Office with both structures being entirely controlled and populated by Russian citizens. This national control remains controversial as inefficient universities that are strategically important in their region continue to receive funding in Project 5–100 in spite of their worsening performance in international rankings. The government's decision to shield inefficient universities from the reputational risks of being excluded from the project is a LC decision, which takes into account the ripple economic and social effects of stripping a university of its reputation.

For security reasons, the government has also created a number of LC measures in order to ensure it maintains control on research related to strategic or confidential topics and on their funding. The void experienced by Russia during the 1990s led to foreign actors playing a decisive role in internal issues and acquiring confidential information. The Yeltsin government during its first years in power made developing relations with the West its absolute priority. The first Soviet-American private Foundation "Cultural Initiative" appeared in 1988, «opening an opportunity of direct application for Russian scholars to the Western funding source of academic activities, bypassing government structures». International organizations (World Bank, OCDE) and non-governmental organizations (the "Open Society Institute", the Aga Khan Foundation) also had a significant influence on national higher education systems in the Post-Soviet space, and the funding offered to Russia "came with strings attached in the form of certain conditions". By the end of the 1990s a large number of US organizations (McArthur, Ford, Carnegie etc.) were operating in Russia, providing funding to Russian researchers to carry out specific research which in some cases revealed Russia's inside state information or data related to the state of its natural resources or defense system. Disillusionment with Western-style reform and the 1993 upheaval of the political system led to a progressive change in Russia's foreign policy, which became more assertive, and the desire to protect its national interests.

In order to ensure that the new wave of internationalization did not result in the disclosure of confidential information, the Russian government has taken a number of LC policy measures to ensure that research is funded by approved sources. The controversial law "On Making Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Regarding the Regulation of Activities of Noncommercial Organizations Performing the Functions of Foreign Agents" implemented in 2012 requires organizations "to inform the federal agency for state registration about the amount of funding and other property received from foreign sources <…> as well as about the intended and actual uses" and states that the information provided will be analysed by the anti-terrorist government institutions. Non-commercial organizations receiving funding from foreign states or citizens and which attempt to influence political or strategic decision-making or to shape public opinion are considered to be foreign agents and as such are submitted to more rigorous checks of their activities. A number of organizations funding independent scientific research shut down their activities in Russia after being labeled foreign agents, among them the Mc Arthur foundation. Universities do however benefit from some exemptions from the legislation on foreign-agents when engaging in educational and scientific activities. Federal Law № 121-FZ of 2012 is an LC policy, which allows the government to control the information about Russia, which is provided to other countries and to prevent foreign governments or individuals from gaining control over political and social processes in Russia. Other measures aimed at reducing espionage, such as a February 2019 directive, which encouraged scientists to inform their superiors about and take colleagues to meetings with foreign scientists proved too restrictive and were cancelled[1]. Striking the right balance between protective LC measures and internationalization measures requires constant trials and adjustments.

The Russian government has also developed LC measures in order to counter one of the side effects of the internationalization of the higher education sector: the outflow of qualified students and experts. Russian official statistics reveal that around 35 thousand scientists left Russia in the 1990s, which had a serious impact on the development of science and higher education in the country. This problem remains vivid today with Russian President Vladimir Putin declaring in April 2020 his intention to draw up additional measures to stop the outflow of scientists and university professors from Russia. Existing measures for funding research aim at preserving Russian and attracting foreign human capital. While encouraging Russian students to study abroad, the government strives to ensure that they return and contribute their know-how to the development of their home country.

[1] *'Russia scraps criticized restrictions on scientists foreign contacts'//The Moscow Times, 10 February 2020.* https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/02/10/russia-scraps-criticized-restrictions-on-scientists-foreign-contacts-a69220

An example is the Global Education Program, funded by the Russian government, which offers Russian citizens the opportunity to enroll in full-time graduate or post-graduate studies in the areas of science, engineering, medicine, education and management in the social sphere and has for target to develop Russian human resource potential. In order for the program to serve its final purpose, the program comprises a clause, which requires students to return to Russia upon completion of their studies to work for a period of three years in an approved list of companies and thus aims to avoid a brain drain. Russia's National Technology Initiative launched in 2014 aims to make the country a technological leader by bringing back emigrated scientists among other measures. Projects like Megagrants give priority de facto if not de jure to Russian emigrated scientists for the role of leader of the laboratory, promoting their return home.

The fourth category of LC policy measures was designed to uphold traditional Russian values and avoid social unrest. The need to defend Russia's history, culture, language and values remains a priority in Russia as demonstrated in studies of Russian presidential addresses. Russian values are linked to the country's Soviet history. The belief in equal opportunities and a paternalistic state leads to expectations that the government will fund higher education and not only provide free tuition but also stipends to talented students. Soviet education was free for anyone who had the ability to enroll and higher education was an effective social elevator. The introduction of tuition fees in Russian universities in the 1990s led to the creation of a dual tuition track system in which students can apply for highly competitive state-funded places or for less competitive fee-paying places. While students with the means to pay for their education have better chances of being admitted to the program and university of their choice, "budget" places are more prestigious and wealthy students may strive to enroll in them for this reason. The impact of neo-liberalism on Russian higher education is highly controversial and the demand for more equal chances appears in public debates and academic articles. While internationalizing universities, the Russian government decided to maintain subsidized places with around 40% of all students studying for free in 2019.

The federal government also develops and protects the main universities in the Russian regions for economic and social reasons. The Federal Universities project seeks to ensure that each Federal District can train the experts required by the local economy. In Project 5–100, universities were selected not only based on their objective performance during the competition, but also on the government's strategic goals and the need to develop different Russian regions. Some universities may not have had a huge international development potential, but were included because they provide experts for a specific industry, which needs to be developed (such as Samara University for the aerospace industry and Sechenovsky University for healthcare development). The development of some regional universities was also

supported in order to stop huge immigration flows towards universities in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Rather than allow market mechanisms to take their course and possibly lead to a fundamental redistribution of people on the Russian territory, the government seeks to control these processes with LC policies aimed at slowing the liberal transition of the higher education system.

The Russian state also faces some resistance to internationalization by academics nostalgic of the Soviet system or those averse to change because they cannot be competitive on the international stage. A study of post-soviet countries showed that 'resistance identities' are common among those who have the most to lose from globalization processes, and this applies to university faculty members. While the Russian government aims to bring research into universities and seeks alignment with the international model of research universities, rather than risk direct confrontation, it has elaborated a step by step approach taking into account the interests of all parties. This type of LC policy is motivated by a tactical choice to preserve some traditional practices and ensure a smooth transition to international best practices. While in 2004, by creating a joint Ministry of Education and Science, the Russian government showed the intention to unite these two fields (which in 2018 was split into a Ministry of Education and a Ministry of Higher Education and Science), a significant portion of research is still performed in stand-alone think tanks and institutions. The first efforts to reform the Russian Academy of Science and its affiliate institutions were undertaken in the 2000s and led to a confrontation between a group of academics resisting reform and the government. While the Minister of Education and Science D. Livanov noted in 2013 that in the XXI century organizing academic research separately from universities was pointless and the Academy was reproached with a lack of transparency, prioritizing fundamental research over innovations output and an age distribution problem, the government recognized the need to pace out the reform over several decades. The prestige and reputation of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which is 296 years old, the high level of trust of the Russian population towards it and its values (that fundamental science should be funded by the state and performed per se and not to reap economic benefits) make it difficult for the government to engage in a radical reform. The LC policy in this case takes the form of a moratorium on change.

Survey of Russian academics: methodology and findings

Survey methodology

In 2020 in order to determine whether there is, under the conditions of successful internationalization, a demand for LC policy measures in Russian Higher Education we carried out a Survey. The goal was to clarify academics' attitude to LC policy as an instrument to help promote and protect Russian content in the sphere of higher education, which is currently undergoing a rapid internationalization process. The survey sample included representatives of Moscow universities as well as

of regional universities. The sample size was 100 experts, who are part of an informal all-Russia network of scholars, which works on jointly developing research projects in different fields. The list of surveyed academics, even though it was created based on a pre-existing database, was designed to be representative of the country as a whole and includes lecturers, associate professors and professors from 81 different universities in 35 different federal subjects. Even though a deliberate attempt was made to represent various types of scholars and lecturers, specialised in a myriad of subjects and at different stages of their career, their participation in this academic network testifies to high levels of motivation and activity. While this limitation may have a moderate impact on the results of the study, it makes the surveyed scholars less likely on average to support LC policies than scholars outside the network. Rolled out during the first half of 2020, it reflects current trends in academics' perception of internationalization processes and LC policy. The survey results were processed through Google forms and R-Studio.

The research instrument was a questionnaire that included 5 closed questions (See Appendix 1) designed to reflect current trends in Russian academics' perception of internationalization and understanding of LC policy. The Survey examines three key issues: whether respondents believe that the participation of Russian universities in the international educational space is necessary, whether the success of this participation should be assessed through a system of international ratings and whether the Russian higher education system should be supported and protected by the state. Indeed the purpose of the survey is to establish whether, in conditions of successful internationalization, academics are ready to by-pass LC policies or whether the demand for them remains strong. This helps to further clarify whether internationalization and LC policies are indeed compatible.

The first question focuses on the respondents' perception of the level of internationalization of the Russian higher education sector. It considers to what extent Russian universities form a part of the international higher education system. The opening question does not aim to reflect an objective reality but the subjective perception of each respondent. The second and third questions focus on international ratings, the former considering whether an external and foreign evaluation is needed to assess the work of Russian universities and the later reflects the respondent's opinion on whether these ratings should formally be used by the government to assess their performance. The third question, while in appearance similar to the second, contains a key distinction linked to the involvement of the state. Indeed while the second question deliberately remains vague when invoking "educational status" and determines whether respondents think international rankings could be used as a general reference point; the third question asks respondents whether the Russian state should use international rankings to determine whether universities are efficient,

Figure 1 **Degree of Integration of Russian universities in the global system**

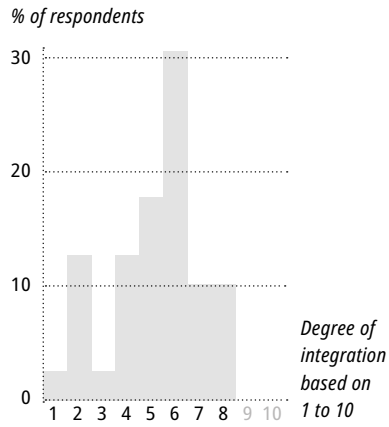
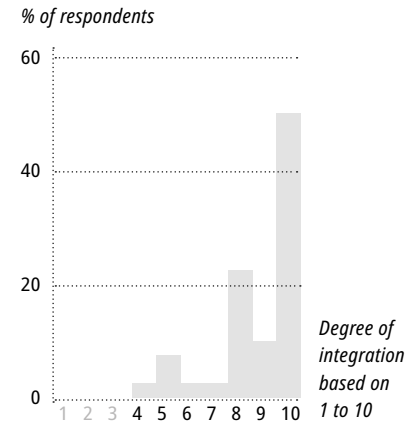


Figure 2. **On whether Russian Universities should participate in international ratings to confirm their educational status**



Source: Authors illustration

which would have a direct impact of the funding universities receive. The first three questions reflect the respondent's perception of how internationally oriented Russian universities should be, revealing their attitude to internationalization and the ways it has affected their profession. Questions four and five concentrate on two aspects of LC policy, the first looking at whether the state should create rules to ensure that the findings of Russian scholars and the specificities of Russian education are represented to a certain level in educational programs to avoid a complete westernisation of the content of Russian higher education. The last question considers whether Russian higher education should be protected by the state against external influences, such as foreign funding and control.

Depending on the question, respondents were required to choose on a scale from 1 to 10 to assess the degree of a phenomenon or to choose one of five different options. The answers to the questions were first processed separately and then the linkages between them were explored.

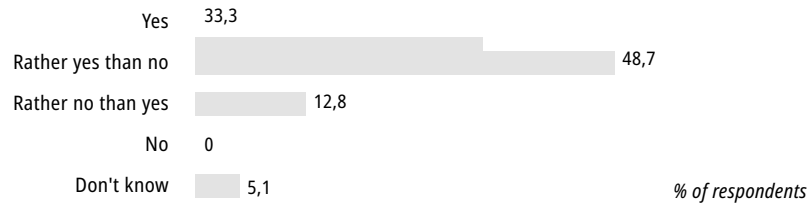
Survey findings

The survey reveals that while there is a shared belief that Russian universities should strive towards international integration, that Russian content should nevertheless be protected by state policies.

Answers to question 1 (Figure 1) reflect the fact that the level of integration is perceived as average by the majority and as low by a small proportion of respondents. No one defined the Russian Higher Educational sector as fully integrated in the global system.

Answers to the second question (Figure 2) indicate that the ma-

Figure 3. **On whether the State should use international ratings to evaluate the work of Russian universities**



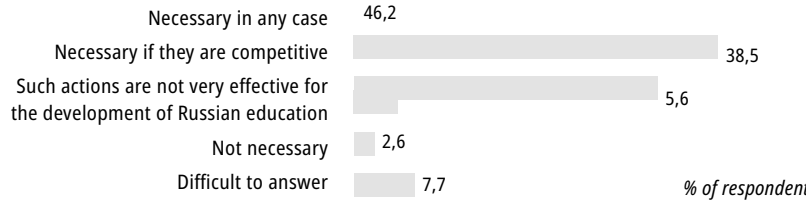
Source: Authors illustration

jority of respondents believe that Russian universities need to use international rankings to assess their performance, with the majority of answers falling into the 8–10 range. The lowest grades corresponding to a rejection of the use of international rankings were not selected. A minority of respondents selected middle range answers, reflecting the need to use occasionally, but not systematically, international rankings to confirm the educational status of universities. This dominant acceptance of international rankings among academics could be linked to an absence of authoritative Russian rankings or to a real desire to see Russian universities develop in an international competitive environment and meet those criteria set forward by international rankings.

Answers to the third question (Figure 3) reveal that over 80% of respondents agreed completely or to some extent with the fact that the Russian state should use international ratings to assess the performance of Russian universities (with 0% of respondents being in complete disagreement with this fact). Taken together, responses to questions two and three reflect a high level of acceptance of the fact that Russian higher education should be integrated in the international arena, revealing an agreement with the state policy to make Russian universities competitive in the international arena. Answers to these two questions also reveal a consistency in academics' responses: international rankings are important reference points for Russian universities and as such should be used by the state to determine their efficiency and track their progress.

Reponses to question four (Figure 40 reflect a strong support among academics of the fact that the state should legislatively and normatively ensure that the findings of Russian scholars and the specificities of Russian education are represented in Russian educational programs. These findings reflect the strongly anchored belief that Russian content should be protected by the state, with almost half considering that this support should be given regardless of whether Russian scholars and their ideas are competitive and 38.5% considering that support should be given only if they are competitive. These answers can be explained by a need to see Russian content (ideas, authors) in Russian educational programs and possibly the desire to give

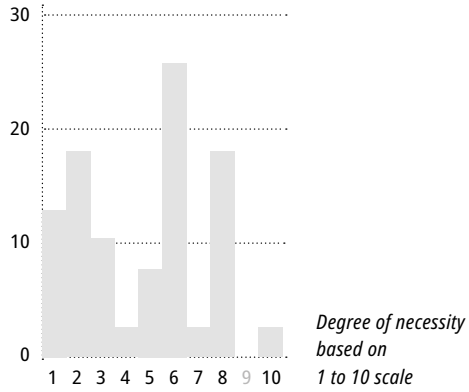
Figure 4. **On the need to legislatively and normatively support the use of the achievements of Russian education and science in the Russian higher education sector**



Source: Authors illustration

Figure 5. **On the need to legislatively and normatively protect the Russian educational sector from international influences**

% of respondents



Source: Authors illustration

Russian scholars the support they need in order to become internationally competitive.

While the first three questions reflect an acceptance of international integration, answers to the fourth question reveal that the majority of academics view the support of the state as key in this process, to ensure that Russian scholars, principles and ideas are given "a fighting chance" in the new competitive environment. The survey findings show a clear demand for the protection of Russian content and for the state to implement LC policies. Concretely, it means that the state should offer priority to Russian content, to Russian scholars over foreign ones in the realization of different projects and when creating educational programs not because they are more competitive but because it is necessary to support a national "industry".

The fifth question (Figure 5) reveals a lack of majority consensus among academics about whether the state should protect the Russian higher education sector from international influences. The distri-

bution of answers to this question is the most disperse among all the questions, with two statistically significant and polarized groups of respondents becoming apparent: one that believes the Russian higher education sector requires protection and another assessing that by and large it does not. These results reveal that half of respondents believe that there is an international threat to the Russian higher education sector requiring state intervention.

Two conclusions can be made based on these findings: There is a common understanding among respondents that the participation of Russian universities in the international educational space is necessary and that the success of this participation should be assessed through a system of international ratings. There are common expectations that Russian higher education should be supported and, to some extent protected, by the state. This survey reflects the fact that while the policy of internationalization of the Russian state is accepted; there is a significant demand for the development of LC policies aimed at promoting Russian scientific and education content and, to a lesser extent, at protecting Russian higher education from uncalled for foreign intervention.

Discussion: LC policies help an "infant industry" adapt to international competition

The analysis of Russia's current LC policy in the sphere of higher education and of the results of the survey on demand for LC policies among academics suggests internationalization and LC policies can harmoniously co-exist and even that the later can help support an active internationalization process. First, because de facto existing LC measures have not disrupted the implementation of Project 5–100 and second because successful internationalization has not eliminated the demand for LC policies as reflected in the Survey findings.

The effect of these measures on internationalization depends on their design and wording. LC policies in the higher education sector in Russia do not seek to limit the number of foreigners as the emphasis is currently put on internationalizing universities. On the contrary, international actors are being brought into Russia to share best practices and help Russian universities to become globally competitive. However, LC policies are constantly being elaborated by the government with several aims: to protect the country against security threats and breaches in confidential information, to control the brain-drain of qualified academics, to ensure that its higher education system is efficient and adapted to local needs and values. While the concrete LC measures taken in the sphere of higher education may differ from other sectors, they are used for similar reasons: to protect the region/country from excessive foreign interference and to ensure a smooth transition to conditions of international competition. The Russian higher education system appears in this light to be a "fledgling industry" in need of state support. LC policies allow the educational system some extra time to mature: indeed the highly ambitious Project 5–100 is tempered by a

series of cross-measures aimed at preserving social stability. LC policies appear as an effective way to protect a country against some of the repercussions of an intense "catch-up" internationalization program. While LC policies are often designed to be limited in time, the Russian transition away from these measures appears to not yet have started.

LC policies are often categorized as protectionist measures and undergo criticism for being an obstacle to internationalization (Warner 2017). Their use in the field of higher education is understudied, but from the academic literature they appear to be more frequently employed in countries that have adopted "catch-up" strategies as regards the internationalization of higher education and government-led programs aimed at promoting the global competitiveness of their universities (e. g. China, Taiwan, South Korea, Russia) than in countries that progressively internationalized their higher education systems (e. g. the U.S., Great Britain). Measures that can be qualified as LC policies in higher education have been documented in Taiwan [Lo, Hou 2019] and in China [Lin, Wang 2021; Wei, Johnstone, 2020] and focus on promoting quality over competitiveness in the teaching process, social responsibility towards regional economies and on preserving national values. LC policies are more likely to be developed in countries where resistance to internationalization is the most robust and where internationalization is viewed as and likened to westernization, but they come across as measures to address resistance rather than as an attempt to overturn the internationalization of higher education, as reflected by the Russian case study presented in this paper.

As Russian Project 5–100 comes to a natural close by the end of 2021, the upcoming launch of the ambitious new "Priority 2030" initiative (Governmental Decree 3697-p, 2020) reveals that while the Russian government intends to maintain its course of rapid internationalization of higher education and to support its global competitiveness, it also plans to integrate into the design of the new project LC policy measures aimed at addressing some of the concerns of Russian academics. Priority 2030 shares many common features with Project 5–100 [Appendix 2], including the fact that universities are to be selected to participate on a competitive basis, the focus on developing research and state funding. However, Priority 2030 is being designed to support a larger number of universities, to encourage inter-university cooperation through the creation of consortiums of universities, to contribute to the development of Russian territories and the local economies, to meet nationally defined goals rather than just progress in international rankings. While the projects share the final goal of internationalization and becoming globally competitive, the second aims to promote a more even development of regions with its wider coverage (100 versus 21 participating universities) and has changed its reference points to national ones; responding to some degree to academics' demands to support the growth of less competitive universities and to shield university staff from excessive competition.

Conclusion

This paper analyzes the tensions between modernization and stability in the higher education sector, identifying the difficulties experienced when internationalizing universities and the opportunities for national governments to support academics. Through a case study devoted to the Russian higher education sector, the authors establish that the rules adopted by the government to ensure that internationalization processes are beneficial to Russian universities and the country as a whole bear a striking similarity with LC policies in other spheres. The survey of Russian academics reveals that the large acceptance among them of internationalization of higher education is accompanied by expectations that the state will help with capacity building and protect them from the negative aspects of a rapid integration into the international educational space. LC policies are shown to aid the internationalization of higher education as they help "rub the edges off" an intensive catch-up internationalization program and support what is a "fledgling industry" in its transition to international competition. The changes accompanying the transition from Russian Project 5–100 to the Priority 2030 initiative reflects the desire to meet the popular – and academic according to our findings- demand for more LC policies all the while maintaining the previous trend of internationalizing universities.

Appendix 1

Survey Questions

Q1: Rate the degree of integration of Russian Higher education in the global system
Q2: To what extent do Russian universities need to participate in international ratings to confirm their educational status?
Q3: Should the Russian state use international ratings to evaluate the performance of Russian universities?
Q4: To what extent should the state legislatively and normatively support the use in the Russian educational field of the achievements of Russian education and science?
Q5: How necessary is it to legislatively and normatively protect the Russian educational space from international influences?

Appendix 2

Comparing the features of Project 5–100 and Priority 2030

	Project 5–100	Priority 2030
Project participants	Individual universities	Consortiums of universities
Coverage	Limited (21 universities)	Wider (100 universities)
Selection method	Competition	Competition
Official goal	International competitiveness of universities	Reaching national priorities/development of Russian territories
Performance reference point	Progress in international rankings	Reaching nationally defined goals
Financing	State (minimum 20% co-financing of university)	State (co-financing to be defined case by case by the government)

	Project 5–100	Priority 2030
Key features	Developing university-based research and international publishing	Developing university-based research and teaching quality
Summary	International goal, international wording	International goal, national-priorities wording

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