**The Determinants of Wage Gap between the Highest University Administrators and Research/Teaching Staff at Russian Universities**

Introduction of the New Public Management (NPM) principles to the higher education (HE) sphere has appeared in a number of countries (De Boer et al., 2007; Hüther & Krücken, 2013). NPM puts a focus on efficiency, accountability, and incentives system aimed at improving organizational performance. Although NPM exerts some positive influence on how organizations function (Schubert, 2009), in other cases its success is limited (Lorenz, 2012). While there is a wide range of studies devoted to NPM methods applied towards universities, I seek to complement existing literature on the topic by assessing whether applying business-like methods in university management has a significant effect on resource redistribution within an organization. Specifically, I analyze changes in the wage gap between university administration, i.e., university leaders (also referred to as rectors) and vice-rectors, and research and teaching staff. I ask whether wage gap is influenced by the effects created by the implemented NPM methods. I use a sample of Russian public universities over a period between 2018-2021 and monthly income of their personnel. The research method used is a panel random effects regression. The Russian case is interesting from a perspective of an authoritarian and very centralized setting where tight control over HE institutions has been established in the 2010s. I believe that such systems create initial favorable conditions for thorough implementation of NPM principles as authorities use a top-down approach when working on reform projects while they also demonstrate modest reform success in some cases (Gel’man, 2016). Just like in other countries, Russia has attempted to modernize its HE system by introducing NPM principles to university management. *First,* the National Research Universities (NRUs) were created and their major goal was to produce high-quality research (Guriev, 2009). Likewise, the Russian University Excellence Program has set similar goals in 2012 (Shibanova et al., 2018). The state has introduced an incentive system which provided universities with vast financial resources to increase employee motivation to publish research in the best international peer-reviewed journals. *Second*, the profile of a university leader has also changed – some new Russian leaders are typically federal/regional skillful managers rather than academics (Guba & Gerashchenko, 2022) who are hired based on their management competence. In addition, even more university leaders are now appointed by higher authorities rather than elected by university community while remaining elections are mainly non-competitive – a clear sign of diminishing academic freedom (Gerashchenko, 2022). While wage gap in the universities just like in any other organization is expected to be observed, I hypothesize that incentive system of the research-oriented universities would lower its magnitude since there is a motivation for university employees to increase their income via doing high-quality research. However, contrary to initial expectations, my main finding is that wage gap between the highest university administrators and research/teaching staff is significantly higher in the research in contrast to non-research universities. I also find that both types of rector background (insider or outsider career track) as well as leader’s appointment/election in an interaction with research status significantly positively correlates with wage gap. That is, university’s research status plays a central role in explaining wage gap dynamics among Russian universities. I also discuss the effects of university research productivity and regional indices exerted upon wage gap between the highest university administrators and research/teaching staff.

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