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Education in Post-Soviet Russia: Does the Federal Government Have a Regional Policy for Higher Education?

Ildar Zulkarnay and Ellen Rosskam

OCCASIONAL PAPER # 308

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Introduction

ABSTRACT

The Russian Constitution guarantees "equal and universal rights for all citizens irrespective of sex, race, ethnicity, language,… place of residence and other circumstances." Equal rights and access to higher education for all citizens regardless of place of residence are among these fundamental prescribed rights. In this paper, we attempt to demonstrate that these guaranteed social rights, in fact, are not applied equally across the country's population, resulting in some groups benefiting from social advantages while others suffer from disadvantages. Although unequal access to higher education existed during the Soviet period, it did not create as many social problems as this inequality does today.

Key words: social rights, access to higher education, ethnic minorities, rights to maintain ethnic languages and ethnic cultures.

As is widely known among Russia's population, the country's Law on Education establishes the right of every citizen to receive education, provided for free by the state. With regard to higher education, the state guarantees citizens access to free higher education on a competitive basis—with the condition that the individual is pursuing that level of education for the first time. Those who designed, debated, and voted for or against this legislation understood the different possible interpretations of the term "accessible" (Belyakov 2005; Katrovskii 2003; Kolesov 2006; Shvetsov 2007). In its narrow sense, accessibility implies the absence of specific legislative restrictions, which legislators under the USSR were aware of having been imposed in other countries and during different periods, targeting particular nationalities, ethnic groups, or castes (e.g., in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh). Where a national consensus or the political will of the authorities has led to free universal access to higher education, then it should follow that the abolition of any discriminatory laws should suffice in achieving this desired outcome.

It appears, however, that this goal is very difficult to achieve. For example, following the legislative removal of all racial segregation restrictions on African Americans' access to schooling in the United States, white federal authorities resorted to the use of armed force to control the public expression of "collective voice." This illustration highlights the need for a broad understanding of the term "accessibility," one that includes the absence of institutional barriers, such as traditions or covert resistance. "Accessibility" must also be understood to include recognizing and redressing both socially constructed and objective physical barriers, such as the geographical remoteness of potential consumers of educational services from the locations of service provision.

This broad understanding of "accessibility" is written into the Russian Constitution, which declares equal rights for all citizens independent of different circumstances such as sex, race, ethnicity, and language. The Constitution also mentions place of residence. Thus, according to the Russian Constitution, access to higher education should not depend on a citizen's place of residence.

In the area of social rights, the Russian Constitution is a successor of the Soviet Constitution, and part of the data we have used in this paper are related to the Soviet period.[1] As we show in this paper, regional disparities in higher education existed in the USSR and were even more pronounced than they are now. During the Soviet period, however, two principal central policies leveled to a considerable extent the effects of these imbalances.

First, during the planning and financing of institutions of higher education, the Soviet government accorded importance to the development of dormitories for students. This system was particularly developed in the universities located in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. During the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, however, state funding for dormitories imploded. This funding was reduced both absolutely and relatively, in terms of the total number of student places. One may ask whether further development of the dormitory system in Moscow and Saint Petersburg would have solved problems of accessibility to a university education for people from other regions. It is unlikely because the cost of living in these cities remained much higher than in other regions, even if students lived in dormitories.

Second, in the Soviet period there was a federal program to train citizens of ethnic minorities. To comply with this program, metropolitan universities allocated a quota for the admission of applicants from the ethnic republics. But as a result of neoliberal reforms in Russia, this program also ceased to exist.

During the Soviet period, both systems—developing dormitories and training citizens of ethnic minorities—were relatively effective: Most nonresident and even resident students, after having graduated from Moscow and Saint Petersburg universities, were directed to jobs in different regions of the USSR, according to the plans for the "assignment of young specialists," and as a result of the work of the command-administrative system. Since the neoliberal reforms were implemented, however, only a small share of nonresident students return to their regions after graduating from universities in these two capital cities.

A student from a noncapital region of Russia attending a university in a capital region usually indicates that the student is unable to access an equal level of higher education in his or her home region. Although students should have the option to attend a university wherever they choose, they should have, first and foremost, the option to access an equal level of higher education in their home region.

If attendance at a capital region university by students coming from noncapital regions contributed to the principle of equal accessibility to higher education, then we should also count the immigration of Russian citizens abroad getting higher education as a contribution to the development of accessibility to higher education for Russian citizens. Thus, in terms of the place of residence, the regional differentiation in accessibility to higher education is an indicator of the implementation of the constitutional guarantee of equal social rights for all citizens.

Eliminating or at least leveling barriers is necessary to implement a policy of universal access to higher education (Zulkarnay 2003; Zulkarnay and Rosskam 2009). In the Russian Federation, the financing and provision of management services to higher education is the prerogative of the federal government. This paper attempts to identify indicators of the state's regional policies through an analysis of interregional differences in the federally mandated universal access to higher education. The reality reveals quite a different picture from that which was initially declared and desired.

Methods

The extent of the challenge faced by Russia's federal government in implementing this constitutional right of all Russian citizens who want higher education to receive it may reflect, to a great extent, the actual costs to the federal level for higher education in the regions (i.e., the subnational units of the Russian Federation). Attempts to identify data on the actual costs to the federal level were not successful due to limitations in data availability. The budgets for various key areas of federal spending as well as the budgets of the regions are available (at www.minfin.ru). The budgets for federal spending contain data on the financing of higher education in the Russian Federation. These data, however, are provided in terms of costs to regional budgets rather than as overall federal costs related to an individual region. Such data are, of course, also of interest, but not in terms of analyzing the federal policy. Attempts to obtain such data from the Russian Federation's Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education were also unsuccessful due to limitations in data availability.

Given these limitations in the available data, in order to assess the regional policy of the federal level, we chose another indicator: the number of students per 10,000 residents among the population of the Russian Federation, using existing statistical compilations.[2] The data we use do not specify the numbers of students enrolled on regular budgetary[3] and extrabudgetary bases[4] (in this paper, the term "extrabudgetary" basis also is referred to as "commercial" basis). In this context, the question is raised as to how far this indicator can be used as a proxy measure for federal spending in the regions. Additional research would be required to arrive at an accurate answer for this question, but for the purpose of the analyses in this paper we justify our use of this indicator with two arguments. First, half of state university students are enrolled on a budgetary basis (universities also have the right to enroll students on an extrabudgetary basis). Second, the percentage of extrabudgetary activities of individual institutions of higher learning varies, but not very widely, and when averaged over individual regions, the variation of the proportion of extrabudgetary students in the regions is even smaller. Taking this extra share of students among all students of state universities as a constant value for all regions, one can assume that the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants among the population of the Russian Federation is a fairly reliable equivalent for per capita federal spending on higher education in the regions.

Our calculations to assess the affordability of higher education are based on the number of students in the region per 10,000 residents:

$$N_i^{per\ capita} = \frac{N_i^{students}}{N_i^{residents}} * 10000 \qquad (1)$$

where $N_i^{students}$, $N_i^{residents}$, respectively, refers to the number of students and residents in the region i.

Based on this index, for the purpose of the present analysis, we expected several indicators. One of the major indicators identified is the ratio of the maximum availability of student places to the minimum availability among the subjects of the Russian Federation, which is calculated as

$$I_{min}^{max} = \frac{N_{max}^{per\ capita}}{N_{min}^{per\ capita}} \qquad (2)$$

where $N_{max}^{per\ capita}$ refers to the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants in the subject of the Russian Federation, with a maximum value of this indicator among all regions, and where $N_{min}^{per\ capita}$ refers to the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants among the population of the Russian Federation, with a minimum value of this indicator among all regions.[5]

Calculating this ratio revealed a limitation due to the fact that in the early 1990s, in some regions, the federal level did not offer higher education services. This finding probably is due to the fact that in Soviet times it was considered inappropriate to place higher education in towns of the regions that were close to the centers of higher education. The city of Saint Petersburg, located in the middle of the Leningrad region, for example, was already saturated with institutions of higher education. This is, therefore, the most likely reason that the federal level did not offer higher education services in the Leningrad region in 1990, as one can see from the statistics that indicate $N^{students} = 0$ for this region. Accordingly, formula 1 gives for these particular regions $N^{residents} = 0$ and $N_{min}^{per\ capita} = 0$ for all regions. As a result, the index formula 2 cannot be calculated for 1990. In this context, to evaluate the minimum limits for the provision of student places, we used, in addition, the average of the provision of student places in the four regions with the minimum values, including zero:

$$N_{4\ min}^{per\ capita} = \sum_{j=1}^{4} N_{j\ min}^{per\ capita} \Big/ 4 \qquad (3)$$

On this basis, the index was calculated as

$$I_{4\ min}^{max} = \frac{N_{max}^{per\ capita}}{N_{4\ min}^{per\ capita}} \qquad (4)$$

having the same meaning as the index I_{min}^{max} but avoiding the limitation mentioned above.

If one builds a formula for all regions by descending indicators, then it is interesting to note the findings of the ratio of average values of this indicator for the upper half of the list to the average of this indicator for regions of the lower half of the list:

$$I_{2\ HALF}^{1\ HALF} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{N_{HALF}} N_{j\ max}^{per\ capita} \Big/ N_{HALF}}{\sum_{l=1}^{N_{HALF}} N_{l\ min}^{per\ capita} \Big/ N_{HALF}} \qquad (5)$$

Here, N_{HALF} equals half the total number of subjects of the Russian Federation, in general, different for different years, since the number of subjects of the Federation changed; and $N_{j\ max}^{per\ capita}$ equals the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants in the regions from the top of the list of regions; and where $N_{1\ min}^{per\ capita}$ equals the number of students per 10,000 inhabitants in the regions from the bottom of the list of regions.

We also calculated decile ratios and Gini coefficients. To calculate these factors, we used the indicator of the number of students in universities in regions. For all regions, we ranked and grouped students into decile groups by number of students per 10,000 inhabitants in a region ($N_{i}^{per\ capita}$). Decile groups were different for different years. For example, in 2000 there were 146 million people in Russia, and therefore each decile group should include approximately 14.6 million people. The first decile group included eleven regions with a total population of 14.8 million. The last decile group included four regions with a total population of 16 million.[6] The list of regions included in each decile group and the total population of each group was different according to the year. Notwithstanding, we attempted to distribute regions among groups to fit the size of each group as closely as possible to one-tenth of the total population of Russia for a given year.

Results and Discussion

INTERREGIONAL INEQUALITY: PUBLIC SECTOR

To reveal the dynamics of regional differentiation in accessibility to higher education in Russia, we used statistical data for the period 1990–2009. Our findings indicate that in the last year of the USSR's existence, the delivery of higher education services was very uneven among regions (table 1). The saturation of students in Moscow was nearly 6,000 times more than the average value of saturation in the four regions having the lowest saturation of students.[7] Also, significant territorial unevenness in providing these services in per capita terms is found through an analysis of the Gini coefficient. This finding is striking when we consider that the Soviet state's regional policy was aimed at the balanced development of regions across the USSR and a high level of equalization.

The finding that interregional differentiations were high during the Soviet era (in 1990) leads us to ask whether such differentiation changed in the post-Soviet era. As shown in table 1, from 1990 to 2009 there was a downward trend in interregional differentiations between those regions provided with the most in universal access to higher education and those regions provided with the least in terms of services, per capita. This trend is revealed by all the factors and indices. Thus, the coefficient $I^{max}_{4\,min}$ fell from 5863 in 1990 to values of between 6 and 7 in 2005–9. A significant reduction in interregional differentiation also is made evident by the decile ratio (from 9 in 1990 to 5 in 2009), the coefficient $I^{1\,HALF}_{2\,HALF}$ (from 2.3 in 1990 to 1.8 in 2009), and the Gini coefficient (from 0.312 in 1990 to 0.222 in 2009).

In this context, the question arises as to whether these findings are evidence of the ex-

Table 1. Public and Private Universities of the Russian Federation Compared with Canada and the United States, Various Years

INDEX	CANADA,* 1998–99	UNITED STATES, 2007	RUSSIA				
			1990	1995	2000	2005	2009
Gini coefficient	0.116	0.058	0.312	0.270	0.264	0.226	0.222
I^{max}_{min}	1.91	2.07	—	18.3	29	9.3	11.6
$I^{max}_{4\,min}$	1.71	1.81	5863	35	13	6	7
Decile coefficient	2.9	1.7	9.4	5.2	5.0	4.9	5.2
$I^{1\,HALF}_{2\,HALF}$	1.47	1.17	2.31	1.90	1.86	182	1.80

* *Canada's Northwest Territory and Yukon province are not taken into account due to their small populations dispersed across large territories.*

istence of and implementation of the regional policy of the federal level aimed at equalizing the provision of services across the country. Our analysis leads us to conclude that the answer to this question is negative. We draw this conclusion based on the sum total of the following three explanations.

First, the general public has not been informed about the presence of such a federal program aimed at equalizing the provision of and access to higher education services across the country. Of equal importance, the federal authorities have not even articulated an understanding of the existence of this problem of unequal access, believing, apparently, that the presence of the constitutional provision is equivalent to the realization of the principle of equal access.

Second, notwithstanding the fact that the interregional differentiation in access to higher education has been reduced, it still remains significant. The high degree of uneven provision of services by region is demonstrated by the indicator I_{min}^{max}, which reveals a difference of 11.6 in the provision of student places per 10,000 population among regions, even in 2009. The different and highly unequal degree of accessibility to higher education services between the regions becomes even more evident when analyzing the distribution of the number of students by decile groups. This analysis reveals that in 1990, 28 percent of the total number of students enrolled in state universities belonged to the last decile group, which included only two cities—Moscow and Saint Petersburg—while the first four decile groups, consisting of 41 regions (half of the Russian Federation, where there were eighty-nine regions in 1990), represented 20 percent of the total student population. This picture had changed slightly by 2009, when the last decile group, which included just over 10 percent of the whole population of Russia, accounted for 21 percent of students matriculating in institutions of higher education, while the first decile group accounted for only 5 percent of students. This demonstrates a high degree of inequality in access to higher education between the regions, which again confirms the thesis that the federal law on universal and equal access to higher education has not been thoroughly implemented, and regional policies have not rectified these inequalities (Zulkarnay and Rosskam 2009).

Third, and finally, a comparison of Russia with the United States and Canada using the Gini coefficient and other indicators shows that even after substantial equalization occurred in Russia between 1990 and 2009, the inequality of higher education service provision in Russia was still much greater than that found in countries comparable to the Russian Federation in terms of size and diversity of population and regions. The decentralized system of financing higher education in the United States, where the roles of both the state and corporations are prominent, provides a fairly high level of uniformity of these services across regions of the United States. Indeed, the difference between the states having the highest number of students per capita in the United States and those having the lowest is only two times. The same degree of difference—two times—exists in Canada for its provinces and territories (see index I_{min}^{max} in table 1).[8] These findings allow us to conclude that both the United States and Canada, as large countries with a federal system, have implemented much more effective regional policies in the field of access to higher education than has the Russian Federation.

Summarizing these three arguments, one may say that the federal government has not developed an effective regional policy in higher education, although the general tendency toward the equalization of universal access to higher educational services across the Russian Federation, as shown in table 1, would appear to be the result of a federal policy implemented in a relatively effective way.

We posit that, in actuality, the following four main causal factors are at work in Russia,

and that these factors are the catalysts for any real improvements achieved in equalizing universal access, recognizing that gross inequality continues to exist:

- increased and strengthened regional pressure at the federal level for the development of services within the subnational territories;

- funding additional higher education services from regional budgets in order to increase the number of student places in the territories of the subnational units of the Federation;

- intensified effort by individual universities to increase the number of student places through the development of the "extrabudgetary student" system and;[9]

- a growth in the natural market process, whereby universities open branches in other regions to develop new markets.

It would appear that the last three reasons are the most significant. During the Soviet period, tuition-based and private education did not exist. As such, students did not have to pay for higher education services; they studied only on a regular budgetary basis in the state universities of Russia. It is our view that any reductions in interregional differentiation in the years following 1990 and the collapse of the USSR can be explained by the fact that during the introduction of neoliberal reforms, the public universities captured an opportunity to raise extrabudgetary funds, allowing for the additional intake of students on an extrabudgetary basis. These extrabudgetary funds have, in turn, enabled many universities to open branches in the regions where the demand for higher education previously and consistently exceeded the supply. As a result, access to higher education services has increased, albeit inequality of access persists (Hill and Rosskam 2009; Rosskam 2009a, 2009b).

In addition, the post-1990 neoliberal reforms resulted in the state offering opportunities to create a private sector in higher professional education (Rosskam 2006). This action could be regarded as an outcome of regional policy implementation driven at and by the federal level, but is not clearly related to any policy of alignment, or equalization, because such policies could lead to both increased and reduced regional disparities in access to public higher education. In this regard, we assessed the effects of deregulation, which facilitated the growth of the private sector in higher education.

INTERREGIONAL INEQUALITY: PUBLIC OR PRIVATE?

The analysis of table 1 is based on the data for state and private universities taken together. To assess the effects of deregulation, we need to analyze interregional imbalances in the amount of higher education services provided separately by the private sector and the state sector, in per capita terms. However, we also need to take into account the fact that state universities represent not only the state (public) sector but also the private sector, given that state universities deliver education services on a free basis (budgetary students) as well as on a commercial basis (extrabudgetary students).

In 2000, extrabudgetary students in state universities represented 48 percent of the total number of students, and this share became 57 percent by 2009. Thus, the increase in the number of students per 10,000 population from 179 in 1995 up to 438 in 2009 in state universities is explained mostly by the rapid development of extrabudgetary education (line 1 in table 6). The number of students in nonstate universities per 10,000 population increased ten times—from 9 in 1995 up to 92 in 2009 (line 5 in table 6). The total number of university students per 10,000 population rose from 189 to 530.

Whereas higher education was free in the Soviet period and up to the end of the 1980s, since 1990 state universities have begun delivering education on a commercial basis due to deregulation in this sphere. In 2000, extrabudgetary students in state universities accounted for 48 percent of the total number of students, and this share became 57 percent by 2009. Thus, the increase in the number of students per 10,000 population from 179 in 1995 to 438 in 2009 in state universities is explained mostly by the rapid development of extrabudgetary education (line 1 in table 6). The number of students in nonstate universities per 10,000 population increased 10 times: from 9 in 1995 up to 92 in 2009 (line 5 in table 6). The total number of university students per 10,000 population rose from 189 to 530.

Thus, to assess the effects of deregulation, we performed two types of comparisons:

- a comparison of interregional imbalances in the amount of student places in per capita terms, provided by state universities and private universities separately; and

- a comparison of interregional imbalances in the amount of budgetary student places (provided by state universities) on one hand and the sum of extrabudgetary student places provided by both state and private universities on the other hand, in per capita terms.

Both analyses were performed using the same pattern as that used in the analysis of interregional differentiations in the delivery of higher education services by both the state and private sectors.

Table 2 helps us to make the first analysis. In the table, one can see that all indices for the private university sector are rather high, and higher than what one sees in table 1 for total higher education. This finding indicates that the interregional differentiation in the provision of higher education by the state

Table 2. Private Universities in the Russian Federation, 1995–2009

INDEX	1995	2000	2005	2009
Gini coefficient	0.366	0.276	0.226	0.213
Decile coefficient	-	77	23	21
$I^{1\,HALF}_{2\,HALF}$	38	6.5	3.8	3.3

universities across the regions is more than the provision of higher education by private universities. The reason for this distinction in the early 1990s is that the private universities developed primarily in a few regions, emerging from the complete absence of a private sector in all regions. This caused high interregional differentiation in the numbers of private students.

The dynamics of the Gini coefficient for the period 1995–2009 reveal a steady downward trend, indicating a decrease in the amount of differentiation of higher education services between the regions in per capita terms (table 2). This trend is confirmed by other coefficients introduced in this study, which indicate an alignment of interregional differences in access to higher education services on a commercial basis.

Table 3 helps us to analyze how private universities affected interregional differentiation in the total provision of higher education in the Russian Federation by state and private universities taken together.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the private university sector developed in regions with low public sector provision because the demand for higher education consistently exceeded the supply. In theory, rapid growth of the private sector in such regions could have created some balance vis-à-vis the total supply of higher education in Moscow and could have reduced interregional differentiation in

Table 3. Contribution of Private Universities to Interregional Differentiation in Total Provision of Higher Education in the Russian Federation, 1995 and 2009 (based on the sum of state and private universities)

INDEX	1995		2009	
	STATE UNIVERSITIES	STATE AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES	STATE UNIVERSITIES	STATE AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES
Gini coefficient	0.2748	0.2750	0.2104	0.2246
I_{min}^{max}	16	18	9	11
$I_{2\,HALF}^{1\,HALF}$	2.09	2.10	1.84	1.85

the provision of higher education services, in comparison with the differentiation created by the state sector alone.

The reality, however, was that the development of private universities—facilitated by deregulation—grew faster in those regions that already had a highly developed public sector providing higher education, such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg. These are also the regions that have a high concentration of private wealth, accumulated after the introduction of neoliberal reforms after 1990. As a result, the private universities contributed to the increase in interregional differentiation in total provision of higher education in the Russian Federation.

The contribution of the private universities to increasing interregional differentiation was not high in 1995; the Gini coefficient was practically the same (0.2748 for state universities and 0.2750 for state and private universities), and the index I_{min}^{max} was 16 and 18, respectively. But this contribution became high by 2009; state universities contributed to the interregional differentiation by as much as 9 times, while private universities increased this differentiation up to 11 times (I_{min}^{max} in table 3).

However, the influence of the private sector on interregional differentiation was a rather complicated phenomenon. While the development of private universities increased this differentiation, at the same time the development of other parts of the private sector—in particular, the extrabudgetary student system by state universities—had the effect of decreasing the differentiation. Thus, as one can see in table 4, in 2005 the ratio of the maximum saturation of students to the minimum saturation (I_{min}^{max}) was 18 times with budgetary students and only 8 times when also taking into account extrabudgetary students of the state universities.

Based on the analysis of interregional differentiation in the volume of higher education services provided both by the state and by the private sector, one can draw the following conclusions:

1. In general, interregional differentiation in the volume of higher education services—those provided both by the state and by the private sector—diminished between 1990 and 2009. Notwithstanding, interregional differentiation is still considerable when compared with that found in the United States and Canada.

2. However, interregional differentiation in the volume of higher education services is higher in the private sector compared with the degree of inequality found to persist in the public sector. Facilitated by deregulation after 1990, the private sector has received intensive development in those regions that exhibit the least amount of higher education services

Table 4. Contribution of Private Universities in Interregional Differentiation in Total Provision of Higher Education in the Russian Federation in 2005 (sum of state and private universities)

INDEX	STATE UNIVERSITIES (BUDGETARY STUDENTS)	STATE UNIVERSITIES (BUDGETARY AND EXTRA-BUDGETARY STUDENTS)	PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES	PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES AND EXTRA-BUDGETARY STUDENTS OF STATE UNIVERSITIES	STATE AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES
Gini coefficient	0.220	0.110	0.452	0.384	0.226
I_{min}^{max}	18	8.0	—	—	9
$I_{4\,min}^{max}$	6.4	5.2	68	81	6
Decile coefficient	4.4	5.9	23	22	4.9
$I_{2\,HALF}^{1\,HALF}$	1.9	1.8	3.8	2.7	1.82

provided by the public sector. Together, these factors have led to an increase in social inequality in the population's access to higher education services.

3. At the same time, the nonstate, or private, sector has also evolved in areas where there is already a high level of provision of educational services by the state, among these being Moscow. This development is explained by the fact that such areas have a greater proportion of people able to pay private tuition than do the regions.

4. The observed interregional differentiation in the volume or availability of higher education services—those provided by both the state and by the private sector—is, in our view, a result of the federal level's passive policies toward the regions. Indeed, we observe that such differentiation is the result of the complete absence of a specific policy for state-provided higher education services at the regional levels.

INEQUALITY OF ACCESS: AN ETHNIC PHENOMENON?

Given that Russia is a multiethnic country, it is of noteworthy interest to explore interethnic accessibility to higher education services. Russia is administratively and regionally divided into two main categories. One category includes the "ethnic republics," such as the Republic of Tatarstan, the Republic of Bashkortostan, and the Republic of Chechnya. The other category includes administrative districts of Russia, called "oblast" and "kray." The majority (approximately 80 percent) of the population of Russia is ethnic Russian (i.e., people having purely Russian ethnicity).[10] Nonethnic Russians (i.e., Russian citizens who belong to other ethnicities that are not of purely Russian ethnicity) are located primarily in the ethnic republics and autonomous regions; but they also are found in other regions and territories, where they make up the ethnic minorities of those particular regions and territories. Nonethnic Russians constitute a significant proportion of the population of the ethnic republics. All these factors complicate any analysis of the question of

Table 5. Number of Students per 10,000 Population in Public Universities in the Ethnic Republics for 1990 and 2009

REPUBLIC	1990	REPUBLIC	2009
Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	71	Republic of Ingushetia	159
Republic of Komi	85	Republic of Tuva	185
Republic of Tuva	95	Altai Republic	234
Karachay-Cherkessia Republic	96	Republic of Chechnya	250
Republic of Khakassia	112	Kabardino-Balkar Republic	281
Republic of Chechnya	117	Republic of Karelia	304
Republic of Adygea	121	Republic of Komi	318
Republic of Karelia	126	Republic of Khakassia	336
Republic of Bashkortostan	135	Republic of Kalmykia	338
Altai Republic	138	Republic of Mari El	353
Republic of Ingushetia	143	Karachay-Cherkessia Republic	356
Republic of Chuvashia	144	Republic of Bashkortostan	367
Dagestan Republic	149	Dagestan Republic	382
Udmurt Republic	150	Republic of North Ossetia–Alania	423
Republic of Kalmykia	153	Republic of Buryatia	424
Kabardino-Balkar Republic	156	Republic of Sakha (Yakutia)	428
Republic of Tatarstan	189	Republic of Adygea	438
Republic of Buryatia	196	Republic of Tatarstan	442
Republic of Mari El	200	Udmurt Republic	445
Russia, without the republics	201	Russia, without the republics	452
Republic of Mordovia	228	Republic of Mordovia	467
Republic of North Ossetia–Alania	288	Republic of Chuvashia	538

whether equal access to higher education is found among ethnic minorities.

For the purposes of our analysis, we make the following assumptions: Because nonethnic Russians (people of non-Russian ethnic background) are a minority in all nonethnic districts and constitute a very small percentage of the population of all nonethnic districts (on average, 7 percent across all nonethnic districts), we assume that higher education services in nonethnic districts mostly characterize accessibility to these goods for ethnic Russians rather than for non-Russian ethnicities/minorities, such as Tatars, Bashkirs, and Chechens.

In general, nonethnic Russians are concentrated in the ethnic republics. For example, nonethnic Russians account for up to 60 percent of the population of the Republic of Tatarstan, which is an ethnic republic. Similarly, nonethnic Russians account for up to 40 percent of the population of the Republic of Komi, 66 percent of the population of the Republic of Bashkortostan, and 96 percent of the population of the Republic of Chechnya. Although ethnic Russians may make up considerable proportions of the populations of the ethnic republics, we assume that the saturation of student places in the ethnic republics reflects the access of

ethnic minorities of Russia to higher education services.

To test the hypothesis of whether ethnic Russians have any advantage in access to higher education compared with nonethnic Russians, we have treated all nonethnic districts as one entity, which we denote as "Russia without the republics." Within this category, we include the general population and students of all regions of the Russian Federation with the exception of the ethnic republics.

Looking at table 5, where we have listed all the ethnic republics, together with the artificial category named "Russia without the republics," in the order of increasing number of students per 10,000 population, we are able to make some interesting observations and conclusions. First of all, the unevenness of accessibility to higher education services among the combined populations of the ethnic republics is striking: The ratio of the maximum to the minimum of number of student places per 10,000 inhabitants across the ethnic republics was 1 to 4 in 1990 and 1 to 3 in 2009. Once more, this is a finding indicating that the principle of universal access to higher education has not been implemented, this time measured by access to higher education by ethnic minorities, even when taking into account the nonethnic Russian populations of the ethnic republics. However, it should be noted that this gap has decreased during the post-Soviet period. The decrease in this gap may be a result of pressures from those republics that had the least provision of these services—such as pressures levied by Sakha (Yakutia), Komi, and Tuva, who were very active in lobbying for the development of education services in their territories after neoliberal reforms started in the 1990s.

In Soviet times, a great deal of attention was paid to accelerating the development of the nonethnic Russians, because many of them were less developed compared with ethnic Russians. This unequal development was the result of restrictions that existed in Tsarist

Table 6. Number of Students per 10,000 Population in Public and Private Universities in the Ethnic Republics

TYPE OF UNIVERSITY AND LOCATION	1995	2009
State (public) universities		
Russian Federation	179	438
Russia without ethnic republics	187	452
Russia without ethnic republics, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg	150	392
Ethnic republics	144	374
Private sector (nonstate universities)		
Russian Federation	9.1	92
Russia without ethnic republics	10.3	97
Russia without ethnic republics, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg	5.1	64
Ethnic republics	3.8	66
Total (public and private) sector		
Russian Federation	189	530
Russia without ethnic republics	197	550
Russia without ethnic republics, Moscow, and Saint Petersburg	156	457
Ethnic republics	148	440

Russia before the 1917 Revolution. Despite the extra attention paid during Soviet times, however, "Russia without the republics" still appears to have enjoyed a greater degree of provision of higher education services than most of the ethnic republics, in both 1990 and 2009 (see table 5).

The category "Russia without the republics" includes, of course, Moscow and Saint Petersburg, and one can say that not all ethnic Russians, but only the 10 percent of them who live in these cities, have such an advantage above nonethnic Russians.[11] To be precise, we counted the category "Russia without the republics, Moscow and Saint Petersburg" that includes the general population and students of all regions of the Russian Federation with the exception of the ethnic republics and the two Russian capitals—Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In other words, this category includes "usual," noncapital regions. However, the number of students per 10,000 population in this category is also higher than in the category "Russia without the republics" (table 5).

This finding suggests that most areas with dense settlements of ethnic Russians are more secure in their number of available places for students than most areas where there are significant proportions of nonethnic Russians. We can, thus, conclude that in spite of the seventy-year history of the Soviet policy designed to ensure equal access to higher education for all citizens, ethnic Russians have continued to maintain greater access to higher education than nonethnic Russians.

Interestingly, some republics nevertheless have appeared to remain ahead of the artificially collapsed category called "Russia without the republics." This finding leads us to posit that the population of these republics has greater access to higher education than even the ethnic Russians, on average, in Russia. In 1990 the republics of Mari El, Mordovia, and North Ossetia–Alania remained ahead of the category "Russia without the republics," while in 2009 the republics of Mordovia and Chuvashia remained ahead. It is noteworthy that none of these republics had any great economic, scientific, or technical potential, nor large populations or large geographic areas, such as those found in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan. For example, the populations of the republics of Mari El, Mordovia, North Ossetia–Alania, and Chuvashia vary from 0.7 million to 1.2 million people, whereas 3.7 and 4.1 million people live in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, respectively.

We conducted the same study for the private sector, the results of which showed that the ethnic republics have fewer students enrolled on a commercial basis than "Russia without the republics" has in per capita terms (lines 6 and 8, table 6). The most significant contribution to this difference is made by the cities of Moscow and Saint Petersburg. This can be clearly seen when we subtract from the category "Russia without the republics" these two economically developed cities, which are saturated with universities (lines 7 and 8, table 6), and where there is a dense accumulation of wealth compared with the rest of the country.

It would appear, therefore, that the nonstate—that is, the private sector of higher education—has developed less in the ethnic republics than in the nonethnic "Russian" regions. Further exacerbating the growth in inequality, this difference (97/66 = 1.47 times) is even more than the difference that was found in the state sector (452/374 = 1.21 times). As a result, the private sector of higher education does not diminish or eliminate but rather *increases* the difference in the saturation of student places between the ethnic republics and the nonethnic "Russian" regions (from 1.21 to 1.25 (550/440)). Although this is not a very significant increase, it is still an increase and, perhaps more important, a trend in the direction of increase. These findings indicate that the inhabitants of the ethnic republics have been, therefore, directly and negatively affected by policies generated at the federal level.

CONCLUSIONS

Our analysis of interregional differentiation in the provision of higher education services allows us to draw several conclusions. The regional policy for higher education does not fulfill the requirements prescribed by the Russian Constitution in terms of assuring implementation of the principle of universal access to higher education for all citizens of the Russian Federation, regardless of the region or territory where they live. Violation of the principles embedded in the law is manifested in the significant differences in the availability of these essential public services for the populations of different areas of the country. In addition, different ethnic groups exhibit significant variation in access to state-provided higher education services. Where equal access to higher education for all ethnicities does not exist, the ethnic Russian population has, in general, an advantage in access to publicly funded higher education compared with most ethnic minorities in Russia.

A final and fundamental conclusion that can be drawn from the analyses presented in this paper is the following: Violation of the constitutionally guaranteed right of universal access to higher education is the result of the absence of a regional policy for higher education that must be implemented by the federal government. In essence, the problem is that the federal government has not developed a regional policy to support achieving the goal of universal access to state-provided higher education for all areas of the country, and for all ethnic groups in the Russian Federation.

The federal level's nonimplementation of the constitutional right to universal, equal, and free access to higher education is not an isolated example of discrimination against particular groups and regions, rooted in the absence of a sound regional policy (Zulkarnay 2003). Similarly, no regional policies exist for other areas of social and economic development in the Russian Federation. The absence of such policies in other areas does not in any way diminish the essential need for the federal government to develop a regional policy for higher education.

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Notes

1. We use data starting from 1990. The USSR was disintegrated and ceased to exist at the end of 1991.

2. Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation; Regions of Russia, Socio-Economic Indicators, 2009; Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation, http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b08_11/IssWWW.exe/Stg/d01/08-10.htm.

3. The so-called regular budget students are those who do not pay for education and even are provided with a monthly stipend. Expenditures for their education are funded by the federal government. The number of such students is high in Russia; they account for about half of all students in higher education.

4. The "extrabudgetary" basis refers to funds separate from those provided by the federal level. The so-called "extrabudgetary students" are those who pay for education from their pockets and who do not receive stipends. In reality, these students' fully out-of-pocket payments, which range from $1,000 to$3,000 per year, do not cover university expenditures for one student. The actual cost to a university for one student is on average $5,000 per year. Nonetheless, universities are interested in having "extrabudgetary students." The universities easily recuperate the difference through more intensive exploitation of the university's rooms and equipment. The only real additional cost to the university is in hiring additional staff. In recent years half of all students in Russia are "regular budget students" and half are "extrabudgetary students."

5. The terms "residents" and "inhabitants" are used synonymously throughout this paper.

6. Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Novosibirskaya Oblast, and Tomskaya Oblast are the regions with the greatest number of students per 10,000 inhabitants.

7. Coefficient $I_{4\,min}^{max}$ indicates this number for the year 1990. With regard to the ratio of maximum saturation to the minimum saturation of students (I_{min}^{max}), it was not possible to calculate this coefficient for the years 1990–2000 due to the existence of regions with zero student places. Notwithstanding this limitation, a proxy measure was used: see formulas 3 and 4.

8. Canada's Northwest Territory and Yukon Province are not taken into account in calculating all indicators for this country due to their small populations dispersed across large territories. These two provinces have very small populations, more specifically two orders of magnitude lower than the populations of other Canadian provinces. For example, in the Northwest Territory there are 42,000 inhabitants but only 269 students, a ratio of 0.006, indicating a low availability of higher education services in the region. It is clear however, that increasing the number of institutions of

higher education in Canada's northern states of the Northwest Territory and Yukon Province would not increase the accessibility of education services due to the small populations in those regions. In addition, because the populations of these two regions are dispersed and the geographical size of the regions is great, it is much easier for people to go to southern regions of Canada for higher education. Based on this reasoning, it is logical to drop these two regions when assessing the degree of uniformity of service provision of higher education in the country.

9. The "extrabudgetary student" system, which refers to tuition-based education, has introduced a different and broad set of problems contributing to unequal access based on family means, and which serves to create an entrenched class-based system of access to higher education. Additionally, acceptance of the "extrabudgetary student" system would appear to be a mechanism for the commodification of higher education. This new system already has led to the marketization of higher education.

10. In this paper, the terms "ethnic Russians" and "ethnic Russian population" refer to those who belong to purely Russian ethnicity. The terms "nonethnic Russians," "nonethnic Russian population," and "ethnic minorities in Russia" refer to people who are Russian citizens but who also belong to other ethnicities that are not purely Russian—for example, Tatars, Chechens, and Bashkirs.

11. Russians call Moscow and Saint Petersburg two Russian capitals as they were both capitals in different periods of Russian history.

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