

Who governs Russian universities? The sources and effects of polyarchy

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Main terms

- Academic power – ability of agents in educational organization to take part in decision-making process achieving their own goals
- Structural characteristic of university – such variables as size, age, income sources of organization etc.

The concept of polyarchy

Is the power a zero-sum game?

- Polyarchy - state in which multiple agents have access to policy formation in each sphere (Dahl, 1971)
- Polyarchy - a measure of a de facto inclusiveness
- Polyarchy indicates a responsibility shared between different structural levels of organization
- Polyarchy appeared as inductive generalization from an anomaly (influence of any agent raise the influence of any another)

Existing approaches

- ***Strategic contingency framework*** - division's ability to cope with uncertainty is the source of its influence (Hickson et al, 1971)
- ***Resource-dependency*** - the ability of each group to win the power game depends on how large is the share of vital resources, first of all, economic ones, the inflow of which it controlled by particular group (Salanchik and Pfeffer, 1974; Pfeffer and Salanchik, 1978; Pfeffer and Moore, 1980)
- ***Organizational citizenship*** - participation in university governance is an expression of readiness to serve the institution "voluntary, exceeding job expectations and without expectation of reward" (Bolino et. al, 2002; Farris, 2018)

Research questions

- Does the degree of polyarchy in particular university depends on its structural characteristics? If yes, how?
- Can academic power distribution be predicted by polyarchy?
- How structural characteristics of university are connected with academic power distribution in it?

Data and research design

Data

Survey study on Russian university politics* (2006) - survey of higher administrators of 501 Russian universities (477 observations of dependent variables). The respondents were asked to specify who of the nine agents (trustee, rector, university council, deans, faculty council, heads of departments, academics, student unions, students and their parents) have influence over which of six spheres of university politics (admissions, educational programs, budget, research, personnel, investments).

Design

1. Constructing a “polyarchy” variable by summing all mentioned powers of all agents
2. Predicting polyarchy (linear regression modeling)
3. Constructing the equal measures of academic power distribution for each decision-making agent (binarization by the median)
4. Estimating a set of logistic regression models in order to predict the high or low level of agent’s participation in decision making process.

**-Monitoring of education markets and organizations. Data had been previously researched by Ivan Pavlutkin and Anna Panova*

Polyarchy prediction

Polyarchy							
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7
Intercept	16.269***	16.997***	14.524***	6.625***	19.252***	13.537***	9.203**
Branch	-3.226*** (0.087)						-1.141 (1.113)
Private		-3.387*** (0.445)					-0.339 (1.057)
Age			0.028*** (0.007)				0.010 (0.009)
Size				1.795*** (0.295)			1.078* (0.482)
Economy diversif.					-0.001*** (0.0001)		-0.001 (0.0002)
Research activity						0.083*** (0.020)	0.064** (0.023)
Adj. R ²	0.0002	0.05	0.03	0.07	0.04	0.03	0.09
N	477	477	475	459	359	473	349

Findings | Polyarchy

- Polyarchy has significant structural predictors
- Holding other variables constant, size and research activity are significant predictors of polyarchy
- The effect of size may be regarded as the recognition of the fact that quality of centralized governance diminishes significantly as an organization grows bigger, and more and more agents feel that they need to get involved to avoid major mistakes on the part of the university leaders. The more complex structure organization has, the more collegiality and decentralization it needs to be governed effectively.
- The effect of research activity probably has more to do with an organizational citizenship approach (research culture positively influence readiness to participate in a university's affairs)

Findings | Academic power

- Polyarchy is the most significant predictor for academic power for all agents
- In cases of trustees, rectors and university councils polyarchy is the only one significant independent variable
- Holding other variables constant, age of university, economy diversification and research activity are not significant in any model

- Is university private or state – significant predictors for deans, student unions and students and their parents
- Is institution a central office or a branch is significant for faculty council and heads of departments
- Size is significant for deans, faculty council and academics

Conclusion

- Results are coherent mostly with organizational citizenship approach
- Our main achievement is the extension of existing debate by constructing polyarchy and using it for power distribution prediction
- We shown that polyarchy is not just a product of subjective perception and can be predicted by structural characteristics of organization
- We shown that polyarchy can predict the power of particular agent (often even better than abovementioned structural characteristics)

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