
Academic Dishonesty at Russian Universities: A Historical Overview

E. DENISOVA-SCHMIDT*

***Elena Denisova-Schmidt** – DSc in Philosophy, Research Associate, University of St.Gallen (HSG), Switzerland, elena.denisova-schmidt@unisg.ch, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8234-4437>

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Abstract

*The problem of academic dishonesty at Russian universities is often foregrounded in discussions of contemporary academia, but it is not new. Only its scope, complexity, and pressure from various stakeholders to mitigate or—on the contrary—completely ignore this growing challenge are new. This paper presents a historical overview of corruption at Russian universities, demonstrating that the lack of academic integrity, in many forms, existed in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. In addition to drawing from interviews with experts, the paper examines memoirs about student life edited by Russian historian Vasilii Klyuchevsky, the movies *Operation Y* and *Shurik's Other Adventures* (dir. Leonid Gaidai, 1965) and *Balamut* (dir. Sergei Bodrov Sr., 1979), and literature by Ivan Kuprin ('A Clump of Lilacs', 1894), Lev Kassil (*The Black Book and Schwambrania*, 1928–1931), and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (*The First Circle*, 1978).*

Keywords: *Russia, corruption, university, students, informality*

Introduction

It is difficult to pinpoint the first evidence of corruption in Russian (higher) education. Russian universities have faced significant challenges throughout their development, from a lack of students,¹ to the inability of qualified professors to agree on a common

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¹ This lack of students reflects a deficit in elementary and secondary education. According to the 1897 census, almost 80 percent of the population was illiterate.

language of instruction,² to a questioning of the value of education itself by the Russian Orthodox Church,³ Russian emperors,⁴ and Russian society.⁵ It is apparent that corruption and academic misconduct have been present at all levels, with and without student involvement, throughout Russian history. While the phenomenon of corruption—including corruption in academia—has been the subject of intense academic debate since the 1990s, there is still a lack of knowledge regarding earlier periods [Denisova-Schmidt 2016; Denisova-Schmidt 2020], even though this history informs the current situation. It is crucial, therefore, to look at a historical perspective so as to contextualize the problem of academic corruption and dishonesty today. This paper aims to close this gap.

The term ‘corruption’ has evolved significantly over time. In the current terminology, corruption in academia is understood as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain and a lack of integrity. Here, I focus only on corruption with direct student involvement. Studying academic dishonesty among students is especially crucial: young people spend their last formative years at university; what they learn about cheating there will be transferred into their subsequent professional and personal lives.

I use an interdisciplinary approach to explore academic dishonesty in Russian academia, pulling from a broad range of source materials. I rely on interviews gathered within the scope of the ANTICORRP project,⁶ which surveyed 115 adult respondents, some of whom reflected on their experience in the Soviet higher education system. My sources also include a book of memoirs about student life edited by the Russian historian Vasili Klyuchevsky and colleagues, as well as interviews with experts, two movies (*Operation Y and Shurik’s Other Adventures*, dir. Leonid Gaidai, 1965, and *Balamut*, dir. Sergei Bodrov Sr., 1979), and literature by Ivan Kuprin (*A Clump of Lilacs*, 1894), Lev Kassil (*The Black Book and Schwambrania*, 1928–1931), and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (*The First Circle*, 1978). Together, these far-ranging sources show conclusively that corruption or a lack of academic integrity, in all its possible forms, long existed in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union.

² Kazan State University, for example, hosted a number of foreign visiting professors during the reign of Alexander I (r. 1801–1825). The visiting faculty did not speak Russian, so the lectures were given in Latin and repeated in both French and German, as some students were fluent in French and some in German. Due to the general lack of knowledge of Latin, universities experienced challenges in enrolling enough students, especially in medical schools [Education in Imperial Russia 2002]. In his memoirs, Alexander Kirpichnikov mentions an episode that happened to one of his lecturers: “A new curator came to Klin’s lecture [...] and Klin honored him with a welcoming speech, of course, in Latin. The general burst out swearing, because a professor in a Russian university could not speak the Russian language. Klin seemed to listen to the curator’s reprimand respectfully, but of course, he did not understand a single word of it. [...] Meanwhile, out of two thousand students at least three hundred desperately needed initial training in one of the new languages, and twice as many needed to improve their French and German” [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, pp. 152–154].

³ The Russian Orthodox Church long considered education to be a threat. Many monks were illiterate [Education in Imperial Russia 2002].

⁴ The attempted coup against the monarchy by a group of army officers (the Decembrists) in December 1825 was suppressed, but it left Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855) “feeling threatened and anxious, determined to make no concessions to liberal sentiment” [Hosking 2012, p. 53].

⁵ Home education was more popular among the nobility (for a recent historical overview, see: [Kuzminov, Yudkevich 2021; Kuzminov, Yudkevich 2022].

⁶ ANTICORRP (Anticorruption Policies Revisited: Global Trends and European Responses to the Challenge of Corruption) was a large-scale research project funded by the European Commission’s Seventh Framework Programme, running from March 2012 to February 2017. The study was conducted in Moscow, St. Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, and their suburbs in 2013. See: ANTICORRP (website) // <http://anticorpp.eu/>, accessed 20.06.2022.

Corruption in Higher Education in Tsarist Russia

Russian historians have confirmed the existence of corruption in Tsarist Russia, but they stress its rarity and its condemnation by society. Viacheslav Shatsillo, for example, explains that there was simply no reason for corruption in academia:

First of all, all citizens of the Russian Empire had the right to enter Russian higher educational institutions, irrespective of their background or financial situation. The only prerequisite for entering the university was a completed gymnasium education and a minimal age of seventeen years. Second, admission at the university was free of charge and without any [entrance] examinations. Students paid only twenty-five rubles in tuition fees per semester. Third, students with good performance from low-income families received a decent stipend.⁷

Thus, higher education was largely accessible in the late nineteenth century, and there was no need to pay a bribe for admission.⁸ Some historians mention, however, the existence of such practices as interceding (*chlopota*) on behalf of potential students, or what is today known as the use of connections to secure preferential treatment or placement at elite institutions [Education in Imperial Russia 2002]. Even so, Shatsillo explains further that such practices were uncommon:

Russian universities had a considerable amount of autonomy, although the higher authorities often attempted to reduce it, mainly for political reasons, such as participation in antigovernmental activities. All appointments—starting from the positions at the university or department heads to the order-enforcement personnel—were election-based. Under conditions of overall transparency and openness, a professor with a reputation for corruption had no chance of being re-elected for a second term. The faculty salaries in higher education institutions were quite large. It was a great honour to be a university professor, because professors had an immense and indisputable authority among and across various layers of Russian society. Putting one's own reputation and high social status at stake by taking penny bribes verged on madness.⁹

⁷ Viacheslav Shatsillo is a historian at the Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Science. All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted; personal correspondence with the author, 2016.

⁸ That said, the Tsarist government introduced quotas for Jewish students in 1887 which significantly restricted their access (these would be abolished by the Russian provisional government in 1917). Notably, Ivan Davidovich Delianov (1818–1878), minister of education (1882–1897) and a supporter of the quota, would accept bribes from wealthy Jewish families seeking placement for their children. One more restriction was introduced through the *Cookwomen's Children Circular* (1887), also by Delianov, aiming to limit access “for children of coachmen, lackeys, cooks, laundresses, petty merchants, with possible exceptions for those endowed with extraordinary abilities—all those who should not altogether be taken out of the environment they belong to”. This document was a governmental reaction to the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 and was abolished thirteen years later. See: History of Russia // <https://istoriarusi.ru/imper/cirkulyar-o-kuharkinich-detyach-1887.html>, accessed 20.06.2022 (in Russian).

⁹ Personal correspondence with the author, 2016; [Education in Imperial Russia 2002].

Indeed, there is no mention of corruption or a lack of academic integrity with faculty involvement in autobiographies written by Russian intellectuals such as Ivan Sechenov,¹⁰ Nikolai Pirogov,¹¹ Vasilii Klyuchevsky,¹² Vladimir Vernadskii,¹³ and Anatolii Koni.¹⁴

That is not to say that such intellectuals painted an altogether rosy picture of their university years. They often criticized their professors for their conservatism and conformism, and even for their lack of knowledge of particular subjects and poor didactic competencies: *“It seemed like he never prepared for his improvised lectures”*, wrote Sergei Sverbeev about one of his professors [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899].¹⁵ About a professor of world history, he stated *“[he] was a curse on the student race. He eliminated any sort of our intellectual pursuit and curiosity toward history, being the epitome of boredom and mediocrity himself”* [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, p. 77]. Ivan Mitropolskii, describing his years at Moscow University, recalled how one professor *“taught [botany] only theoretically, without any visual aids”*, and how another professor recycled lectures: *“I began to write down lectures [on physiology]. [...] I wrote down the first lecture, it fit in the two pages. [...] As I was writing the second lecture, it felt somewhat familiar, and it turned to be two pages as well. I matched both lectures at home, and they were word-for-word similar. [...] I stopped writing, I stopped going to lectures”* [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, pp. 250, 267–268].

Mitropolskii also related how professors graded more on simple attendance than on participation or graded work: *“Some professors gave credit to students for mere physical presence at their lectures. The students who were always present, or were an eyesore, enjoyed their indulgence and mercy on exams. On the other hand, the students whose faces were unfamiliar to a professor were examined meticulously”* [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, p. 238].

Students seemed to miss classes often, as Mitropolskii related:

The students, often in their search for a piece of bread, abused freedom and regularly “manquer-ed” [French manquer, to miss or skip classes]¹⁶ at their own serious expense, hoping to obtain the professors’ notes and followed the example of their predecessors in this regard. These notes existed for each subject, except for anatomy. Some of them were

¹⁰ Ivan Mikhailovich Sechenov (born 13 August [1 August OS] 1829, Tyoply Stan near Simbirsk, Russia; died 15 November [2 November OS] 1905, Moscow) was one of the founders of Russian physiology.

¹¹ Nikolai Ivanovich Pirogov (born 25 November [13 November OS] 1810, Moscow; died 5 December [23 November OS] 1881, Vishnya, Russian Empire) was a Russian surgeon and anaesthetist.

¹² Vasilii Osipovich Klyuchevsky (born 28 January [16 January OS] 1841, Voznesenskoye, Penza province, Russia; died 25 May [12 May OS], 1911, Moscow) was a famous Russian historian.

¹³ Vladimir Ivanovich Vernadskii (born 12 March [28 February OS] 1863, St. Petersburg; died 6 January 1945, Moscow) was a Russian scientist, one of the founders of geochemistry.

¹⁴ Anatolii Fedorovich Koni (born 9 February [28 January OS] 1844, St. Petersburg; died 17 September 1927, Leningrad) was a Russian lawyer.

¹⁵ Sergei Nikolaevich Sverbeev (born 25 April [13 April OS] 1857, Moscow; died 4 April 1922, Berlin), was a Russian diplomat and the last ambassador of the Russian Empire in Berlin. On a similar note, Anatolii Ivanov emphasized that students appreciated academic excellence. According to Ivanov, there was a saying about a professor of political economy in 1880 named Vreden: *“Vreden is not so much harmful [vreden] as useless [bespolezen]”* [Ivanov 2010, p. 33].

¹⁶ Class attendance seems to have been a significant problem at that time. According to a survey conducted by the students themselves in 1909 at Petersburg Polytechnical Institute, only 2.6 percent of students regularly attended classes, while 57.2 percent occasionally visited lectures by certain favourite professors and 35.4 percent skipped all lectures entirely [Ivanov 2010, p. 26].

handwritten and some lithographed. They were passed on from generation to generation of professors who remained in their departments for too long. The engagement with science on theoretically taught subjects remained motionless and static in the department. Some professors read their lectures from their notebooks. So, if the students followed them with their own notes, they could prompt the subsequent word for a professor, whenever he paused. Coordinating one's own notes with the professors' lectures was necessary in the classes of those professors who kept track of their subject and deviated from the notes or updated them, respectively. Such matching was made collectively. The circle of friends, comprising students who had the professors' lectures and who matched them with their notes, was constantly rotating [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, p. 237].

Such accounts reveal how students recognized weaknesses in the teaching and found ways to use these weaknesses to their advantage.

The memoir of Dmitrii Nikolaevich Sverbeev (1799–1874), a Russian historian and diplomat wrote about his years at a boarding school for boys from the nobility run by Moscow University. Sverbeev mentioned the poor academic level of the young people admitted by the institution:

At that time [a student] who [...] was confused in geography passed the [entrance] exam alongside me. He sent the Volga to the Azov Sea and Dublin to the United States, but this did not prevent him [from entering the university] there were no true and serious exams then [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, pp. 105–106].

Sverbeev also commented on the language competence of some of the professors:

Professor Schlötzer switched the language of instruction three times [...] initially, he made an attempt to teach in German, but all the students said with one voice that they did not understand a single word; then he switched to Latin, [but] the students repeated the same thing, and the professor himself became convinced that teaching new science in an ancient language would be an overwhelming difficulty for him as well. Willy-nilly, he had to use the Russian language, which the professor did not speak and made us laugh at each lecture with his overuse of diminutives [...] very few attended his lectures [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, pp. 82–83].¹⁷

In Sverbeev's account, private tutoring helped make up for the deficit in the educational institutions:

I began to take private lessons with Professor Kachenovskii at his apartment. We must do justice to this true scholar; a hardworking and bitter man; he taught me very thoroughly,

¹⁷ Sverbeev is describing Christian von Schlözer (born 1 December 1774, Göttingen; died 24 November 1831, Wiesbaden), the German national economist and professor of political economy.

and, hence, the fee was quite considerable—twenty-five rubles for a two-hour session. Three times a week I visited him; we read and translated Latin and French authors.

During these lessons, Sverbeev came to know about broader breaches of academic integrity among faculty members and scholars.

Here Kachenovskii with malicious joy pointed out to me how the father of our literature had stolen pages from Cicero and published them as his own work in his “words of praise to Peter the Great and Elizabeth” [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, p. 103].¹⁸

But the most interesting story related by Sverbeev involved the varying encounters he had with faculty members while attempting to graduate early. This account, which I quote here at length, sheds light on how students could ‘negotiate’ their grades in order to get them in advance, ahead of the academic schedule, on the one hand, and without regularly attending classes and learning something about the subject, on the other.

By the end of 1817, I decided to go to Chisinau, the capital of Bessarabia region, to fill the vacancy prepared for me in the civil office of the deputy governor, Bakhmetev. Getting out of university with a candidate degree was not possible because all exams were suspended, and I started visiting all my professors requesting grade certificates from each of them.¹⁹ Sandunov, who always distinguished me from the rest, gave me long, eloquent feedback on my knowledge of jurisprudence and blessed me to join the civil service. [...] All the others [...] reacted favourably, but here is what happened to me with Schlötzer. He lived in the [Moscow district of] Devichye Pole in a wing of the house of Prince Shcherbatov. [...] My coachman, Michailo, dashed me to his house on a magnificent carriage with a pair of horses. An elderly man was sitting on the porch, and with contemptuous courage, I asked him, “does Mr. Schlötzer live here?” He accompanied me humbly into the first room and he turned out to be the professor himself. Throughout all three years of studies I had shown up to his lectures only five times and, therefore, did not recognize him. Schlötzer did not know me at all. He began searching in his lists and did not find my name. He was always somewhat scared of his colleagues and his students, and, “not daring”, as he put it, to hurt my feelings with doubt about my attendance and ignorance with the subject matter; he gave me an excellent grade certificate. An honest man was this German. Encouraged by such an unexpected success, I went for a grade certificate to the physics professor Dvigubskii, whose lectures I attended very rarely, and about whose physics I “did not know B from a bull’s foot”. There I ran across a different kind of reception. “I, my dear, do not know you at all”, he said. I suggested that he look into a roster. “Why do I need a roster? Come tomorrow to the lecture, I’ll examine you”, he responded. Things went badly! I did not want to remain without a grade certificate in physics, so I decided to do this: I went to the Treasury

¹⁸ The author is referring to Lomonosov in, for instance, his ‘Ode on the Day of Accession to the Throne of Elizaveta Petrovna’ (1747); there are some borrowings from Cicero’s ‘The Speech in Favour of Licinius Archias’ [Medvedeva 2014, p. 726].

¹⁹ This practice was not abnormal at the time, but today it would be considered preferential treatment.

Chamber of students [a students' association] and turned to the eldest and best students in the physics and mathematics department; I asked for their advice and assistance. They said: "you do not have enough time to prepare for the exam now, you do not know anything, and how can one guess what your professor will ask? Sit down on the first bench with the two of us, and we will give you prompts." On the second day, not without fear, I went into the largest lecture hall and sat down between the "two patrons". In front of the lecture podium on a long table there were some kind of glass jars. The patrons told me that these were Leyden jars.²⁰ The professor sat down, called me, and started asking about these Leyden jars--I could tell him only about jars of jam. Very vaguely, inconsistently, incoherently, and disconnectedly I repeated the words that my patrons whispered in my ear. "Well, you my friend, do not know anything and cannot respond, even though you receive prompts. Stand in front of the desk and explain to me the easiest experience about the way these jars can be charged." I walked over to the table. "Well, then?" he encouraged. At that point one could hear only silence. The young students began to laugh, and the professor announced decisively that there wouldn't be a grade certificate for me and that I should leave. I was ashamed to go out of the room after such a defeat, and approaching the front door, I put on my hat, and said aloud: "I do not need any grade certificate, I already have a lot of them." Such an excess almost left me completely without a diploma. The professors who patronized me stood up for me in front of chancellor Antonskii, and this great man [...] persuaded Dvigubskii to give me a grade certificate on his behalf. Antonskii [...] was valued as the chief director of the university boarding school, where, under his great leadership, several generations, including Bludov,²¹ Dashkov,²² Zhukovskii,²³ the Turgenev brothers,²⁴ Prince Odoevskii,²⁵ Shevyrev,²⁶ Titov, and others were brought up and educated [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, pp. 108–111].

When entering a university, students submitted a written statement that they would comply with all its rules and laws—a kind of code of conduct. The elected student council (the Treasury Chamber of Students) was there to ensure low-level enforcement. This council was composed of the most respected and authoritative students. If a student violated the university code of honour by cheating on exams or by 'ordering' a course paper for payment from a brighter but impoverished classmate, he was subject to collective ostracism and was immediately expelled from the university without the

²⁰ A Leyden jar is a "device for storing static electricity [...] a prototype of capacitors, which are widely used in radios, television sets, and other electrical and electronic equipment". *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 2011.

²¹ Count Dmitrii Nikolaevich Bludov (born 16 April [5 April OS] 1785, Romanovo, Vladimir province, Russia; died 2 March [19 February OS] 1864, St. Petersburg) was a Russian imperial official who held top positions in the Education and Justice ministries, as well as the Academy of Science.

²² Dmitrii Vasil'evich Dashkov (born 7 January 1789 [25 December 1788 OS], Moscow; died 8 December [26 November OS] 1839, St. Petersburg) was a Russian literary figure and minister of justice.

²³ Vasilii Andreevich Zhukovskii (born 9 February [29 January OS] 1783, Tula province, Russia; died 24 April [12 April OS] 1852, Baden-Baden, Germany) was a Russian poet and translator.

²⁴ Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev (born 9 November [28 October OS] 1818, Oryol, Russia; died 3 September [22 August OS] 1883, Bougival, France) was a Russian novelist, poet, and playwright.

²⁵ Prince Vladimir Fedorovich Odoevskii (born 13 August [1 August OS] 1803; died 11 March [27 February OS] 1869) was a Russian philosopher and one of the founders of Russian music criticism.

²⁶ Stepan Petrovich Shevyrev (born 30 October [18 October OS] 1806, Saratov; died 20 May 1864, Paris) was a Russian literary historian and poet, a critic of 'the rotting West', and one of the leading exponents of nationality theory.

right to pursue higher education in the future. Memoirs about student life in Russia in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contain discrete records of such cases. After they were exposed for forgery, students tended to commit suicide by shooting themselves, or they finished their lives through an alcoholic escape in the urban slums.

Furthermore, the system of examinations and tests at Russian universities in the late Tsarist period was complex and multifaceted, hindering students' ability to cheat even if they had wanted to. This system consisted of written work combined with oral exams, practical assignments, and other forms of assessment. In such cases, a crib sheet in an oral examination and/or written work copied from someone else would hardly be of any help because the students were unequivocally required to demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of a subject. In fact, the main reason for student expulsion from higher education institutions was not violating the code of honour or engaging in any forms of academic dishonesty but rather participating in antigovernmental activities, demonstrations, or secret societies:

[The student was] *expelled from the philosophical class for publishing a critical report in Moskovskie vedomosti and now was preparing for the integrated university examination all alone, without any books or guidance* [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, p. 161].²⁷
For major offenses, the students were punished with conscription. For a first offense, the guilty was only dressed in a military uniform instead of his official student dress to demonstrate a threat and a warning to others and was exposed to shame, but if he was found guilty again, his forehead was shaved [i.e., he was conscripted] for real. In addition, students could be punished for drinking alcohol: A student was put in jail for being dead drunk. [Klyuchevsky et al. 1899, pp. 187, 182].

Russian literature suggests some evidence that might aid in our understanding of this phenomenon. The Russian novelist Aleksandr Kuprin²⁸ offers in one of his stories (*A Clump of Lilacs*, 1894) an inside look into the daily life of a young officer studying at the Russian Military Academy. After passing all of his other final exams, Nikolai Efgrafovich Almazof seems to fail in the last, most difficult one: a survey of the neighbourhood. While preparing his drawings late at night, he becomes tired and leaves a spot of green paint by accident. To hide his mistake, the student draws some bushes. The professor, knowing the location very well, rejects the work, arguing:

*I know this neighbourhood as well as I know the five fingers of my own hand; there can't be any trees there [...] you've either done your work carelessly, or [...] you've copied it from a three-verst-to-the-inch map.*²⁹

²⁷ *Moskovskie vedomosti* was one of the largest newspapers in Russia and belonged to Moscow University in 1756–1819.

²⁸ Aleksandr Ivanovich Kuprin (born 7 September [26 August OS] 1870, Narovchat, Russia; died 25 August 1938, Leningrad) was a Russian novelist and short-story writer, one of the last exponents of the great tradition of Russian critical realism.

²⁹ Published in translation as Alexander Kuprin, *A Clump of Lilacs*, in [Kuprin 1916, p. 190]. Three versts is about two miles.

Nikolai, afraid to lose face in front of the other officers and be expelled, insists on the existence of the flora in this location. The professor, “*an accurate German [...] a pedant*” [Kuprin 1916, p. 192], relents and suggests going together to visit the spot the next day. This dramatic situation is resolved thanks the creativity of Vera, Nikolai’s wife, who pawns her jewellery in order to hire gardeners to plant trees in this place. The next day, when they arrive in the neighbourhood, the professor has to admit his mistake. He apologizes to Nikolai, stating, “*I must be getting old, that I didn’t remember those bushes.*” Though Nikolai feels “*quite sorry to deceive him*”, as he is “*one of the best professors [at the institute]*” [Kuprin 1916, p. 196]. Nikolai passes his last exam and graduates from the academy.

This story is not about academic dishonesty; rather, it is about happiness and family support. The readers get to know that Nikolai entered the academy only on his third try and likely would not have been able to study without the support of Vera, who “*denied herself everything so that her husband might have all the little things so necessary for a man engaged in mental labour.*” Vera was his “*secretary, draughtsman, reader, lesson-hearer and note-book all in one*” [Kuprin 1916, p. 191]—roles that might resemble the job description of a modern-day ghost-writer. The story shows that copying and pasting (as suspected by the professor) as well as the outsourcing of homework (as assisted by the wife) existed already in the late nineteenth century.

Another Russian (Soviet) novelist, Lev Kassil (1905–1970), described in his autobiographical novel *The Black Book and Schwambrania (Konduit i Shwabramaniia)*, (1928–1931) daily life at a school during the transitional period from the Tsarist era through the Revolution (1917) and the Russian Civil War (1918–1921) to the early Soviet Union (1922):

During classes they [the students] cribbed and prompted each other outrageously and with great imagination, inventing the most complex and outlandish devices. Desks, floorboards, blackboards and lecterns were all rigged. There was a special delivery service and a telegraph. During written tests they even managed to get the answers from the senior classes. The author describes a math competition that takes place between two classes: the team whose members correctly solve a problem first wins. One of the organizers of the competition appeals to the students’ integrity: I’m counting on everybody’s honesty. [...] I’m warning you: as long as I’m here and watching, nobody’ll ever crib anything and get away with it. [Kassil 1978, n.p.].

One of the students, Stepan, seems to be insulted by such a comment; he replies: “*What d’you think we’re going to do? Cheat on our own side? We were cut to the quick. Indeed! This wasn’t Tsarist times.*” Stepan’s team wins, and Stepan is named ‘the school’s math champion’. While his team is throwing him into the air as a sign of homage to a victor, a pocket-book with the title *Key to All Problems in Algebra II by Shaposhnikov and Valtsev* suddenly falls out. It is obvious that the champion has cheated. He did it, however, for his team: “*I was only doing it for your sake anyway. If that’s the way you want it, to hell with you! Go on and lose. See if I care.*” [Kassil 1978, n.p.]. It is interesting that Stepan refers to ‘cribbing’ as an issue from ‘Tsarist times’, suggesting that it would hardly be possible under the new order. Stepan is mistaken: student dishonesty also existed in the Soviet Union.

Corruption in Higher Education in the Soviet Union

In his autobiographical novel *The First Circle* (1978), Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn³⁰ describes the university life of some of his protagonists. Consider, for example, the way Simochka used to prepare herself for exams:

To Simochka and her friends, preparation for exams meant preparing a lot of crib sheets, hiding them in articles of female attire inaccessible to males, then pretending that it was rough work produced on the spot. The examiners could, of course, have shown up the inadequacy of their students' knowledge by supplementary questions, but they were overburdened themselves with committee work, open meetings, proliferating plans, progress reports to the dean and to the rector, so that redoing the exam would have been one chore too many. What is more, they would have been under attack for a high failure rate, just as though they had turned out defective goods in a factory: Someone would have quoted Krupskaya³¹ [...] to the effect that there are no bad pupils, only bad teachers. The examiners therefore did their best not to shoot the candidates down but to bring the exam to the quickest and most favourable conclusion [Solzhenitsyn 2009, pp. 29–30].

Solzhenitsyn alludes to several problems here, among them the prevalence of student dishonesty due to a lack of appropriate school preparation (“*the girls had arrived from school knowing no mathematics and no physics [...] then, in the institute, [...] the girls sat down to work at their math and radio technology as if they were lost in a bewildering, pathless, alien forest*” [Solzhenitsyn 2009, p. 29])³² and the lack of sufficient time for homework (“*for a month or more every autumn, students were whisked off to collective farms to dig potatoes, so that for the rest of the year they had eight or even ten lectures a day, with no time to go over their notes. Monday was political education day, and there would be another compulsory meeting of some sort later in the week. Then “social work”: wall newspapers, amateur concerts*” [Solzhenitsyn 2009, p. 29]). Solzhenitsyn also refers to what we now know as ‘academic collusion’ [Titaev 2012], situations in which professors ignore or pretend to ignore the student cheating.

Solzhenitsyn also provides some details on writing a dissertation. Students were expected to cite only ‘appropriate’—Soviet or Russian—scholars; no others should be mentioned. His protagonist Nadia has to revise her thesis several times due to this rule:

Weeding the foreigners out meant going through the text and replacing “Laue has shown” with “scholars have succeeded in showing”, or “as Langmuir has conclusively

³⁰ Aleksandr Isaevich Solzhenitsyn (born 11 December 1918, Kislovodsk, Russia; died 3 August 2008, Troitse-Lykovo, near Moscow) was a Russian novelist and historian, as well as the Nobel laureate for literature in 1970.

³¹ Nadezhda Konstantinovna Krupskaya (born 26 February [14 February OS] 1869, St. Petersburg; died 27 February 1939, Moscow), a revolutionary, was the wife of Vladimir Lenin, one of the ideologues behind the Soviet system of education and upbringing.

³² Single-sex education was abolished after the October Revolution in 1918, reintroduced in 1943 during World War II, and eliminated again in 1954. See: Russian Pedagogical Encyclopedia // <https://rus-pedagog-enc.slovaronline.com/1411>, accessed 29.06.2022 (in Russian).

demonstrated” with “as has been demonstrated.” Whereas if any Russian, or for that matter any German or Dane in Russia’s service, had distinguished himself in the slightest degree, it was essential to give his name in full and to emphasize his uncompromising patriotism and his immortal services to science [Solzhenitsyn 2009, p. 363].

Nadia has one additional problem, however: her dissertation is based on a theory developed by Aleksei Balandin, who “*had suddenly sunk into [...] the [...] subterranean world*” [Solzhenitsyn 2009, p. 363].³³ Accused of spreading anti-Soviet propaganda (article 58),³⁴ he was sent to Norilsk Corrective Labour Camp, a part of the GULAG,³⁵ and spent a few years there (1949–1953).

In addition to needing to have the ‘correct’ citations, students, especially in the humanities and social sciences, might have different problems. For example,

a girl in the Literature Department defended her thesis on [Stefan] Zweig³⁶ four years ago. She’s been a senior lecturer for some time now. But they suddenly realized that she’d called Zweig a “cosmopolitan” three times in her thesis and used the word approvingly. So the Higher Degrees Examination Board [VAK]³⁷ sent for her and took the diploma away. What a nightmare! [Solzhenitsyn 2009, p. 364].

It is also challenging to choose an ‘appropriate’ topic in political economy. Solzhenitsyn describes how his protagonist Dasha chose the topic ‘Problems of Communal Catering under Socialism’:

Straightforward enough twenty years earlier, when every Young Pioneer, Dasha included, knew for certain that family kitchens would very shortly be a thing of the past, that the home fires would go out, and that emancipated women would get lunch and dinner from “cooking factories”. But as the years went by, the subject had become opaque and indeed dangerous. It was quite obvious that anybody—Dasha herself, for instance—who still are in a dining commons did so out of dire necessity. Only two forms of communal feeding flourished: eating in restaurants—but there, socialist principles were not conspicuously upheld—and in scruffy little snack bars selling nothing much except vodka. In theory the “cooking factory” continued to exist, inasmuch as the Leader of all Toilers had not found time in the past

³³ Aleksei Aleksandrovich Balandin (born 20 December 1898, Eniseisk; died 22 May 1967, Moscow) was a Soviet chemist and member of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR who was famous for the multiplet theory of catalysis.

³⁴ Article 58 of the Criminal Code of the RSFSR refers to counterrevolutionary crimes, terrorism, espionage and suspicion of it, and anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda, as well as economic sabotage, including, for example, any failure to perform a task.

³⁵ From the 1920s to the mid-1950s, the Gulag (Glavnoe upravlenie lagerei) was a system of Soviet labour camps and accompanying detention and transit camps and prisons that housed the political prisoners and criminals of the Soviet Union.

³⁶ Stefan Zweig (born 28 November 1881, Vienna; died 22 February 1942, Petrópolis, Brazil) was an Austrian writer who was widely translated and published in the USSR.

³⁷ VAK (Vysshiaia attestatsionnaia komissii; Higher Attestation Commission) was established in 1932. It was subordinated to the Ministry of Education (1932–75) and later the Council of Ministries of the Soviet Union (1975–1991). VAK was responsible for verifying and ultimately approving advanced degrees.

twenty years to address the subject. Which made it dangerous to express an opinion of your own. Dasha suffered endless torment until her supervisor gave her a different subject—thoughtlessly, however, taking it from the wrong list: “Retail Trade in Consumer Goods under Socialism”. There proved to be a dearth of information on this subject, too. Speeches and directives invariably stated that consumer goods could and indeed must be produced and distributed, but, in practice, figures for the output of such items had begun to look rather pathetic in comparison with those for rolled steel and oil products. Would light industry grow and grow or gradually contract? The Academic Council itself did not know, and it turned the subject down in good time. Well-meaning people put another idea into Dasha’s head, and she obtained permission to work on “the nineteenth-century Russian political Stuzhaila-Olyabyshkin” [Solzhenitsyn 2009, pp. 364–365].

Sexual harassment was also possible at this time:

When [Olga] entered the History Department, she had no such thought [to study Iran] in her head. But her young (and married) supervisor, for whom she wrote a term paper on Kievan Russia, had begun to press his attentions on her and was very insistent that she should specialize in medieval Russian history as a graduate student. Olenka had taken fright and defected to the Italian Renaissance, but the Italian Renaissance man wasn’t old either and, when alone with her, behaved like a true Renaissance man. Whereupon Olenka, in despair, asked for a transfer to the decrepit professor of Iranian Studies and was now writing a thesis under his supervision. She would have brought it to a successful conclusion by now if the problem of Southern Azerbaijan had not surfaced in the newspapers. Olenka’s leitmotif was not, as it should have been, that the province had since the beginning of time gravitated toward Azerbaijan and then Iran was completely alien to it. So, the thesis was returned for rewriting [Solzhenitsyn 2009, pp. 363–364].

In addition to sexual harassment, the episode reveals one more problem: how the geopolitical situation could influence the careers of young scholars.

The Soviet regime brought about one more phenomenon, *blat*, “the use of personal networks and informal contacts to obtain goods and services in short supply and to find a way around formal procedures” [Ledeneva 1998, p. 1]. The practice was important for education at all levels starting from kindergarten:

Blat was useful for getting a child into a nursery, especially into one with well-trained staff and better facilities, or into a specialized school. [...] At the entrance exams blat was again needed. The efforts of parents could be decisive in choosing between two students having the same grades. The struggle for entrance into a high school was especially dramatic for the parents of boys, hoping to exempt their sons from military service [Ledeneva 1998, pp. 32–33].

Hence *blat* was sometimes crucial for securing enrolment even in cases of positive entrance exam results.

Sergei Tretiakov (1956–2010), a top Soviet intelligence officer who defected to the United States in 2002, stressed the importance of good connections during his year at the KGB's post-graduate training school (1984–1985). As his biographer noted:

Only three hundred new candidates were admitted each year for training. They came from KGB departments across the USSR. Competition was fierce because the school was the gateway to overseas assignments. From the start, Sergei noticed that many of his classmates were the sons of top KGB and party officials, and the institute would later come under fire when it was discovered that one of the generals running it had accepted bribes for approving admissions [Earley 2007, pp. 44–45].

Monetary forms of corruption were rare in Soviet higher education, but nonmonetary corruption was widespread, as the ANTICORRP survey data reveals. One respondent (male, Moscow State University, history, graduated in 1975) recalled:

In those years [the early 1970s to the late 1980s], only a few people out of hundreds could enter prestigious educational institutions like the Moscow State Institute of International Relations³⁸ without the right connections, and for that they had to be exemplary workers or farmers or act “correctly” while serving in the army.³⁹

Another respondent (female, Sverdlovsk Institute for National Economy, economics, graduated in 1975) remembered that some students received preferential treatment:

We had two fellow students who never made any oral presentations. If a professor asked them a question, they refused to answer and asked to answer the questions in writing. They were always offered these opportunities. One girl was a heavy stutterer, she was hardly able to speak, but the other girl did not have any visible disabilities; during oral exams she was always the last one who was left in the class with a professor alone [...] and during the entire study we were always surprised how she managed to graduate. We had also one young man who was not very smart but was a great painter. He used to decorate the office of the rector, of the dean. He was really good at it. He did not really study, but he always received a satisfactory mark. [...] Later I heard he worked in management positions at a large enterprise in the region.

According to another respondent (male, Moscow State University, history, graduated in 1975), little presents were sometimes given in exchange for grades or preferential treatment in the late 1970s and early 1980s:

³⁸ Established in 1944, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations operates under the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a university for students pursuing their careers in diplomacy or related fields.

³⁹ All quotations in this paragraph are from the ANTICORRP data set, 2013.

If you want to receive a good grade without taking an exam, you might give the professor a bottle of scotch or a carton of American cigarettes. Of course, it was not everywhere and not always, but it happened quite often. This practice was virtually non-existent only in the most prestigious universities, such as Moscow State University,⁴⁰ Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology,⁴¹ and some others, which prepared the humanitarian and scientific-technical elite for the military and space industries, and whose students were required to have actual knowledge of the subjects, and not just a diploma.

The reasons for giving presents in exchange for grades varied. The Soviet movie *Balamut* (1979), for example, shows Petr Gorokhov, a student from a village school enrolled at a prestigious Moscow university. Due to a lack of teachers, he did not get an opportunity to learn a modern foreign language at school (see Box 1 below).⁴² He had to make up the missing six years of English instruction at the university, so he once tried to get a better mark by taking a present to a lecturer (Box 2). In addition, impressed by Petr Gorokhov's athletic abilities and his achievements in economics, some faculty members and even the rector occasionally ask Beatrisa Bernardovna Suniakina, the English lecturer, to be more tolerant of him. Beatrisa Bernardovna did not want to close her eyes to his weak performance, however, and argues that every educated person should speak at least one foreign language. Petr Gorokhov is a hard-working young man, and after many laborious hours of learning the language, he finally earns an excellent mark (Box 3).

Another Soviet movie, *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures* (1965), is a comedy about the student and social life of a Soviet student, Shurik. The movie also shows Shurik during his exams. On the day of the exam (which is scheduled for late afternoon), he is walking on campus and looking for good lecture notes. Good summaries are not easy to get. He encounters a large group of students standing in a circle and reading notes. Even after several tries Shurik cannot enter the group; some students are even sitting in a tree and reading the same notes using binoculars. Shurik continues looking and, after a while, gets lucky and finds fantastic notes. A female student, Lida, is reading them; Shurik follows her everywhere: in a tram, on the street, to her home, and then back to the university, all the while reading over her shoulder. Neither of them even see the other.

One of Shurik's fellow students decides to pass an exam another way, however. He, and probably some of his friends, invented a prototype of a modern device with a headset. The headset is attached to one ear and covered by a scarf; the microphone is located in an upper jacket-pocket and covered by a flower. In this way it is possible to talk with a person outside of the room who can dictate the correct answers to the exam questions. (In common practice, Soviet students received exam questions in advance and were expected to learn the materials by rote for reciting orally during the exam. This practice continues to this day at many Russian universities.) In the film, the student looks

⁴⁰ Established in 1755, Lomonosov Moscow State University is one of the oldest and best-known universities in Russia.

⁴¹ Established in 1946, the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology is one of the leading Russian universities of mathematics and physics.

⁴² The movie addresses this problem indirectly. Despite the system of *raspredelenie* (in which all graduates were assigned a position in the Soviet Union and were obliged to work for a certain period of time for a particular employer), teachers who were assigned positions in villages were underprivileged: there were almost no places to live, and even getting enough food represented a significant challenge.

a little bit strange with his scarf, but he explains his appearance by referring to a severe pain in his ear, and his dressing style by describing the exam as a big event:

Student (S): Hello, professor!

Professor (P): Hello! ... What's wrong with you?

S: My ear hurts.

P: And won't it be a problem for you?

S: No, professor, don't worry, on the contrary, it will help me. The noise will not distract me from the exam.

P: And what is this about? (*pointing at the flower*) Are you having a celebration?

S: An exam for me is always a celebration, professor.

P: Very good. Take a question-card, please.

The student chooses a card and then, dictates secretly into the microphone:

S: Ticket number 9. *Priom!* [Over!]

But the professor notices this.

P: What, what did you say?

S: What?

P: Which '*priom*'?

S: I did not say '*priom*'! I said '*pri niom*' ['with it']: card number 9, and with it there is a problem.

P: I see, go and get ready.

S: OK.

The professor switches on his radio and is able to hear the conversation between the student and his assistant: 'Well, how is the connection? How do I sound? Does the idiot not realize? I am dictating the answer to the first question on the ninth card. So...' Then the professor creates interference, and the student sitting in the room grows nervous:

P: What's the matter with you?

S: I just had severe pain in my ear.

P: Well, well, well. ... I give you an A for your ingenuity, and a D for subject knowledge. (*The professor takes out the flower from the student's pocket and speaks into the microphone.*) The professor is, certainly, an idiot, but the equipment is *pri nom* [in his hands]. How do I sound?

Conclusion

This brief historical overview shows that corruption in its modern definition and in many forms—both nonmonetary and monetary, with and without direct student involvement—existed in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. Vasilii Klyuchevsky and his colleagues reveal several fascinating episodes from their time as students regarding preferential treatment in grading, patronage, and private tutoring, among other practices. The story *A Clump of Lilacs* by Ivan Kuprin (1894) provides some additional examples of ghost-writing, copying and pasting homework, and outsourcing. Although one of the main characters of Lev Kassil's *The Black Book and Schwambrania* (1928–1931), Stepan, acknowledges the existence of academic dishonesty, he puts it in the context of the

Tsarist regime by arguing that all such practices would disappear with the new world order. Stepan's assumption is naive and wrong—many of these practices remained prevalent in higher education in the Soviet Union, with some of them remaining in the same format, some being modernized (as with the fanciful headset in *Operation Y and Shurik's Other Adventures*, 1965), and some new forms emerging with the new system (such as bringing presents to faculty members to mitigate a bad grade on an exam, as is shown in *Balamut*, 1979).

Despite this variety of academic misconduct, it is crucial to differentiate between single cases and systemic trends. While cases like the story of Dmitri Sverbeev, who left university early and requested his grade certificates in advance, might be instructive, it is highly unlikely that this was a common practice in Tsarist Russia. The use of *blat* to negotiate admissions and placement after graduation during the Soviet era, on the other hand, was systemic, openly discussed in Politburo sessions, and repeatedly mentioned elsewhere [*Ledeneva* 1998; *Tromly* 2014]. It should be kept in mind, however, that *blat* was not available to everyone, and that the existence of *blat* did not guarantee success—which might depend on the power of those networks, their willingness and capacity to intervene, and on the question or problem that needed to be solved.

History suggests that it is important to understand the reasons behind academic violations. Students might cheat, for example, in order to compensate for their insufficient secondary school preparation, as in the case of Simochka, described by Solzhenitsyn in *The First Circle* (1978), or of Petr Gorokhov in the Soviet movie *Balamut* (1979). While Simochka, like many other female students at that time, was rather poorly trained in mathematics and physics, Petr was not trained in modern languages at all because he went to school in a village. Students (or actually their parents) might engage in bribery or other questionable techniques in order to secure a university placement if access to higher education was restricted based on quotas (as for Jews in 1887–1917) or if there was only one chance for enrolment during the entire academic year and additional support was needed.

It is important to consider all these examples in their context. For example, the common language of instruction presented a challenge in the early years of higher education in the Russian Empire. Today, students often have to demonstrate sufficient language skills when entering university if the language of instruction is not their native language,⁴³ and language skills are also expected from faculty members involved in teaching. This does not always go smoothly—just consider any of the possible violations during the language exams—and the rise of English as the dominant language in many fields around the globe does not guarantee a good command of English on the part of everyone involved in higher education, although it does function as a standard for universities enrolling international students and recruiting international faculty. This was not the case in the past, when universities in the Russian Empire were in their formative stage. At that time, lectures might be given in Latin and translated into French and German, the languages most students believed they were confident in. Sooner or later, some of them realized that they had overestimated their abilities and needed to improve their modern language skills. Some international faculty attempted, but with only partial success, to lecture in Russian. This problem was acknowledged by stakeholders and eventually solved, but if someone had questioned this practice of instruction, deemed

⁴³ Although this depends on national context and each university's internal policies and procedures, the native language is often defined as the language of secondary school education, which may or may not be the student's heritage language.

it inappropriate or corrupt, it might not have been possible to establish any higher education institutions in the country at all.

One trend that can be observed throughout Russian history is the fact that virtually no antigovernmental activities and oppositional political engagement among students was tolerated. In Tsarist Russia, such activities at university might be punished by expulsion from classes, which usually led to conscription or future challenges with regard to access to higher education, as was the case with the ‘*Cookwomen’s Children Circular*’ (1887–1900). In the Soviet era, students had to belong to or support the Communist Party, and young scholars were expected to cite only ‘appropriate’ sources or risk needing to rewrite their thesis, which, during the time of handwritten texts or typewriters, represented a challenge. In these revisions, they were obligated to replace (unacceptable) proper names with more neutral phrasings, such as ‘scholars have succeeded in showing’ or ‘as has been demonstrated’—a practice that might explain some of the problems with citations in the academic work of many scholars educated in Eastern Europe.

A historical overview of Russian higher education shows that corruption is a complex issue. It may be perceived differently or completely ignored by insiders and outsiders alike, and can only be fully understood within a particular historical and cultural context, stipulating some other factors such as its frequency, its embeddedness in higher educational institutions and society at large, and the possible reasons for the lack of academic integrity.

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Box 1: English Entrance Exam

The scene shows a university entrance exam. Students are taking the oral English exam. Valentina Nikolaevna Romashova, the lecturer, is sitting on a desk and holding a conversation with one of the candidates. At the same time, she is eating an apple and reading the book *Baby and Child Care* (1946) by American paediatrician Dr. Spock (1903–1998) in translation. She is expecting a baby; later in the academic year she will go on maternity leave, and her colleague Beatrisa Bernardovna Suniakina will fill in for her. The reading and eating do not draw her attention away from her conversation with the potential students; she is nodding and correcting mistakes when necessary. The candidate she is examining is apparently retelling a story he just read. He has a very thick Russian accent but speaks confidently. She gives him a good mark but recommends that he improve his pronunciation. Then she asks Petr Gorokhov whether he is ready to start:

Teacher (T):	<i>in English</i>	Comrade Gorokhov, are you ready?
Student (S):	<i>in English</i>	OK.
T:	<i>in Russian</i>	Are you ready?
S:	<i>nods</i>	
T:	<i>in Russian</i>	I am listening.
S:	<i>in English</i>	My name is Petya ... Pardon ... Pete ... In Moskau gibt es viele Sehensquardikeiten [sic, should be Sehenswürdigkeiten; ‘In Moscow there is much sightseeing’].
T:	<i>in Russian</i>	What language did you study? English or German?
S:	<i>in Russian</i>	Well, both.
T:	<i>in English</i>	How old are you?
S:	<i>in English</i>	OK.
T:	<i>in Russian</i>	Did you understand what I’ve just said?
S:	<i>in Russian</i>	No.
T:	<i>in English</i>	It is very bad. <i>In Russian</i> , Did you understand?
S:	<i>shakes his head no.</i>	
T:	<i>in Russian</i>	But you know absolutely nothing. Who taught you?
S:	<i>in Russian</i>	You, Valentina Nikolaevna.

- T: *in Russian* I?
- S: *in Russian* Village Diadkovo, do you remember it?
- T: *in Russian* Yes. I was transferred there after my university graduation.
- S: *in Russian* And we also remember you. Despite the fact that you ran away half a year later.
- T: *in Russian* Yes, I left.
- S: *in Russian* And we were not sent a new teacher afterwards. Filimonov, our supply manager, taught us a little bit of German. He remembered some of it from the war. That's all we learned.
- T: *in Russian* And how in the earth did I survive in your village for half a year? Did your *kolkhoz* [collective farm] head give us a place to stay? Did he even once provide us with food? And there were no young people in your village at all.
- S: *in Russian* Wasn't the club manager after you?
- T: *in Russian* What a fiancé!
- S: *in Russian* You are hard to please.
- T: *in Russian* And what kind of roads you have! It was not even possible sometimes to get to the district centre!
- S: *in Russian* You simply got scared of the difficulties!
- T: *in Russian* But why did you decide to enter this particular institute?
- S: *in Russian* Is it allowed to know less in other institutes? I must help our *kolkhoz* develop. ... But don't worry, I am leaving. Goodbye.

Petr stands up to leave the room. Valentina Nikolaevna calls him to come back:

- T: *in Russian* Gorokhov! I am giving you, Petya, a C, but keep in mind that it is not going to get easier for you in the future.
- S: Thanks!

It is shown very clearly that this was not an easy decision for her. It is also very clear that Petr Gorokhov was serious about leaving the room.

Box 2: English Exam

The scene shows an oral English exam at the end of a semester. Students enter the room one at a time, and it seems that every student has an individual conversation with Beatrisa Bernardovna Suniakina, the lecturer. Fellow students give Petr Gorokhov

a present and push him into the room, saying ‘Follow our instructions!’ The instructions include the statement that, by giving the present—in this case, sturgeon wrapped in paper—the grade will be guaranteed:

Student (S): *in English* May is it come in?
Teacher (T): *in English* Oh, Gorokhov, come in, come in, please.

Petr enters the room resolutely and sets the present and then the students’ record book on the table in front of Beatrisa Bernardovna.

T: *in English* What is it?
S: *in English* A present.
T: *in Russian* What?
S: *in Russian* A present.

Petr opens the paper; Beatrisa Bernardovna is surprised.

T: *in English* Oh! Oh! What a lovely fish!
S: *in Russian* They sent it from the village.
T: *in English* Are your parents fishermen?
S: *in Russian* What?
T: *in English* Listen to me carefully: Are your parents fishermen?
S: *in Russian* Ah, well, yes, pickled, hot smoked.

Beatrisa Bernardovna does not give up. She jumps off the table, runs to the middle of the room, and starts talking while showing exactly what she is saying:

T: *in English* To fish. This is a fish. ... Look here. ... You take a little worm and put it on the hook, and cast into the water. Do you understand me now?
S: *in Russian* What?

Then she shows how one can get a fish from the water by buzzing (she imitates the sounds a fishing rod might have).

S: *in Russian* An airplane.
T: *in English* Why (*in Russian*) airplane?

She is very disappointed, goes back to her desk, and asks again:

T: *in English* Can you explain [to] me: what is it?
S: *in English* Ich verstehe nicht [I do not understand].
T: *in Russian* This is terrible. What a terrible lack of knowledge! I asked you: ‘Are your parents fishermen?’

- S: *in Russian* Why fishermen? [My] father is a mechanic. [My] mother works on a farm.
- T: *in Russian* Take your fish. You have nothing to do at the institute. (*in English*) Out of here.

Petr takes his fish and leaves the room.

- S: *in Russian* Why are you yelling then? If you don't want it, don't take. I will eat it myself, with pleasure. ...

By the door, he stands and speaks.

- S: *in Russian* When it comes to teaching in a rural school, you are not there, but when it comes to complaining, you are more than happy to do it.

Beatrisa Bernardovna does not say anything. She looks after him for a long time.

Box 3: Before the English Exam

Petr Gorokhov is on his way to his English exam. He takes the lift. A young international student is running to the same lift and just manages to enter it. This is Noris, apparently an exchange student from Cuba. During the entire movie, Petr has shown strong romantic feelings toward her. He did not dare approach her before, however. Then the lift doors close. In the next scene, there is a group of faculty members waiting for the lift, which has been going up and down for a long time. Beatrisa Bernardovna Suniakina, who is on her way to the English exams, pushes the button and solves the problem. Suddenly the lift stops, the doors open, and Petr and Noris are sitting on the floor, holding hands, and talking in English. They do not notice the other people and continue talking:

- Noris, you cannot imagine how glad I am to meet you.
- I am very glad too.
- You are very beautiful.
- A little bit.
- I am going to my exam in English *ine boom-boom* [colloq., am not feeling confident].

Noris is also on her way to a language exam— Russian as a foreign language—and does not feel very confident either. Petr suggests:

- Let us meet again in hour after we both failed. ... And in the whole night we will walk about Moscow.
- I am leaving tonight.
- Leaving? Where are you going?
- Home.

Beatrisa Bernardovna observes this scene. She is very impressed by Petr Gorokhov's achievements and gives him an excellent mark.

Академическая нечестность в российских вузах: к истории вопроса

Е.В. ДЕНИСОВА-ШМИДТ*

*Елена Викторовна Денисова-Шмидт – доктор философских наук, научный сотрудник, Университет Санкт-Галлена, Швейцария, elena.denisova-schmidt@unisg.ch, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8234-4437>

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Аннотация

Академическая нечестность в российских вузах – явление не новое, однако новыми являются ее масштабы и сложность, а также давление со стороны различных заинтересованных сторон с целью сглаживания или, наоборот, полного игнорирования этой проблемы. В данной статье представлен исторический обзор коррупции в российских университетах, демонстрирующий, что академическая нечестность во всех ее возможных формах долгое время существовала как в царской России, так и в Советском Союзе. Помимо материалов, взятых из интервью экспертов и очевидцев, в статье анализируются сборник «Воспоминания о студенческой жизни» (1899) под редакцией российского историка Василия Ключевского, фильмы «Операция “Б1” и другие приключения Шурика» (режиссер Леонид Гайдай, 1965) и «Баламут» (режиссер Сергей Бодров-старший, 1979), а также литературные произведения Ивана Куприна («Куст сирени», 1894), Льва Кассиля («Кондуит и Швамбрания», 1928–1931) и Александра Солженицына («В круге первом», 1968).

Этот краткий исторический обзор показывает, что, во-первых, коррупция в ее современном понимании и во всех ее возможных формах (как немонетарных, так и монетарных с непосредственным участием студентов и без) существовала на протяжении всей истории развития высшего образования в стране. Во-вторых, несмотря на такое разнообразие академических проступков, крайне важно различать единичные случаи и системные тренды; к последним же следует относиться очень серьезно. В-третьих, изучение истории демонстрирует, насколько важно осознавать причины академических нарушений. Но самое главное, исторический обзор российского высшего образования свидетельствует, что коррупция – это сложная проблема. Она может восприниматься по-разному: или полностью игнорироваться как непосредственными участниками процесса, так и сторонними наблюдателями, или может быть понята только в конкретном историко-культурном контексте, обуславливающем некоторые другие факторы, такие как частота коррупции, масштабы ее укорененности в высших учебных заведениях и обществе в целом и различные причины отсутствия академической честности.

Ключевые слова: Россия, университеты, студенчество, коррупция, неформальность

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