Education and Corruption

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Summary

Corruption is a societal problem which adversely affects nations' efforts to improve lives of their citizens. It is normally thought to be centered on government procurement, taxation, and legal decisions and not in education. But it is a problem in education. How serious is it? The difficulty of responding to this question is that corruption in education, as with all illegal and unprofessional activities, is difficult to accurately measure. This limits researchers to predicting institutional and systemic levels of corruption by relying primarily on individual perceptions. Measuring direct experience with corruption is more difficult and hence more rare. Since 1993, Transparency International has taken a global pulse of corruption by conducting the world's largest corruption survey to derive the Corruption Perception Index and rank nations from the most to the least corrupt. When it comes to corruption research, participants generally hesitate to share their experiences for fear of repercussions, which is why less corruption is likely to be reported than may be actually occurring within education systems. Corruption is manifest in a wide variety of forms. A broad range of literature on corruption in education has been published in the early 21st century, with the goal of defining corruption typologies and examining the effects which corruption has on education systems and those who depend on those education systems. But anticorruption efforts in education have had limited success and more research is needed on non-pecuniary forms of corruption and their relation to elite formation and institutionalized racism.

Keywords: education, corruption, anticorruption, reform, favor reciprocation, cost, racism, elite, impact, forms of corruption

When and Where Does Corruption Occur?

While corruption happens sporadically in high-income nations, the systemic corruption that impedes educational objectives and expected social mobility tends to be most serious in the middle and low-income nations, more often challenged by political, social, and economic crisis. The breakup of Soviet Union, for instance, triggered corruption in education as that country transformed from a centralized system to an open market economy. This social transformation weakened monitoring features of the centralized structures and allowed individuals holding public positions to abuse their power and benefit even in education sector (Heyneman, 2007, 2010; Heyneman, Anderson, & Nuraliyeva, 2008; Silova, Johnson, & Heyneman, 2007). Bribery is prevalent among Russian parents who often resort to this to

ensure their children gain admission to good schools (Habibov & Cheung, 2016). Overall, corruption in Russia's education system undermines the societal justice and moral systems (Frolova, 2014). Similar challenges emerged when former Yugoslavia fell apart and ethnic violence ensued, leading to the genocide against Bosnian Muslims. As its systems collapsed, newly forming post-conflict and post-communist nations emerged, lacking legal frameworks and supervisory mechanisms and thus becoming highly susceptible to corruption (Moratti & Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009, 2014; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). Studies on educational institutions in the former Soviet Union, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Sub-Saharan Africa (Heyneman, 2004, 2007, 2011a, 2011b; Osipian, 2012; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016a; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016; Silova et al., 2007; Transparency International, 2005, 2013) show the extent to which corruption adversely impacts merited mobility in education both for students and faculty members; how corruption can endanger the quality of teaching, learning, motivation, and participation in education; how it can increase the costs and disrupt the signaling feature of the academic credentials in the labor markets; and the extent to which it can damage national development when it becomes a norm.

What corruption also impairs—irrespective of its manifest form—is the operating principle of fairness that the public expects to undergird the educational apparatus where leaders can be chosen on the basis of skills and performance rather than the ascribed traits with which one is born (Heyneman, 2020). This belief, since the time of Plato's republic, is a shared value. On the other hand, when that principle is broken, teachers, administrators, and students no longer model the societies one hopes to live in. When that happens, finding positions with access to bribes and rent-seeking presents the only obvious path to economic security (Murphy, Shleifer, & Vishny, 1991). The fact that corruption in education is often corruption of minor children and young adults infers that it can be more damaging than corruption in other sectors. Research suggests that witnessing corruption in education affects students' propensity to allow bribery later in life (Liu & Peng, 2015). Using machine learning, an analysis of data from 132 countries with 117 variables demonstrates that having more education was positively associated with lesser corruption (Lima & Delen, 2020). Education can therefore be crucial in helping citizens self-regulate and moralize their behaviors, but education cannot fulfill that role when education itself is corrupt.

In hope of advancing the notion of fairness, the United Nations' (UN's) sustainable development agenda has proposed the idea of quality education for all. However, many still lag in resources that would ascertain that quality, or even basic access to any education. As an example, Indonesia's government has instituted a law requiring 20% of the student body in higher education to come from the poorest segment of the country's population, but failed in the provision of adequate financial aid to make that a reality (Ihsan & Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020). Such discrepancies between political aspirations and lack of implementation create competition over limited resources, which explains the pattern of rent-seeking. This is particularly serious in gaining access to and graduation from higher education. When access is limited, students of higher socioeconomic status who possess social and familial connections and are able to use them to reciprocate favors tend to fare better both in gaining access to and graduating from higher education (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016).

In high-income democracies, accountability and legal mechanisms to address corruption usually exist, allowing the public to learn, engage, and act when corruption is discovered (Heyneman, 2010, 2011a, 2014). One example of media scrutiny followed a case in the United States where 50 parents were prosecuted for using their influence, celebrity, and wealth to secure admissions for their college-bound children (Medina, Benner, & Taylor, 2019). In countries where corruption is widespread, the public reacts differently. In low-income nations there is typically a lack of transparency and legal recourse to address corruption. Empirical work confirms that systemic corruption can overwhelm to the point of students' disengagement and loss of agency, often leading students to accept corruption as the modus operandi. The vast majority of those witnessing corruption tend to stay silent and stay put (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014). Heyneman et al. (2008) similarly confirm that very few students are inclined to report corruption. To illustrate, in Bosnia and Herzegovina's higher education institutions (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2011, 2013, 2014), 88.7% of the surveyed students knew corruption existed there, but nearly 60% said they would not leave their institutions because of the complexity and cost of transfer as well as the other institutions' comparable levels of corruption. These studies report that less than 10% of students would complain to faculty and nearly half would limit their action to only quietly complaining to those closest to them rather than seeking to meaningfully address corruption.

This is particularly problematic because societal regulation of the individual or group status has been conditioned on education as a signaling and legitimizing tool. By staying silent and inert, youths accept corrupt education as representative of how their societies function. Within the education systems, "how selection is managed is deeply important for maintaining an equality of educational opportunity (Heyneman, 2004, p. 639). As Turner (1960, p. 859) puts it: "the most conspicuous control problem is that of ensuring loyalty in the disadvantaged classes towards a system in which their members receive less than a proportional share of society's goods." Controlling the education system means controlling who awards and obtains the most prestigious educational pedigree, and educational pedigrees in turn help legitimize and sustain power over masses (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2016a).

Along with youths' acceptance of corruption as the norm, these transactions shape the elite's role within the education systems, allowing the latter to preferentially treat or empower some groups over others (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2016a). This power-regulating role of education lends itself to being a tool of power reproduction when the elite seize full control over educational institutions. Emerging work on radicalization finds that, in some settings, corruption enables the elite's dominion over education, and it leads to a sense of marginalization and exclusion for some youths (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020b, 2020c). This dynamic can favor certain racial, religious, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups at the expense of alienating other identities, magnifying their sense of systemic injustice, which can lead to dropouts (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2019), radicalization, and even engagement in violence. These marginalized youths seek alternative spaces because the "educational displacement" that they feel silences and disadvantages them (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020b, 2020c). Corruption is therefore broad and consequential in its impact on access and inclusion in education and its power to enact elitist, racist, and marginalizing agendas in the classroom. Using Ukraine as an example, Osipian (2010) is concerned that the societal elite holding the highest positions in a state want to control higher education. As he explains, it ensures that the elite control the ideological and curricular content in higher education, which in turn maintains societal hierarchy and the elite's status. He sees corrupt professors as the puppeteers of the state apparatus. What

makes professors' favoring of some students over others so easy is that the grading is typically subjective and unsupervised (Chapman & Lindner, 2016). This type of corrupt behavior within the educational processes has complicated the detection and monitoring of corruption practices, but it has also paved the way to unpack corruption's role in structural racism and discrimination within education, against particular racial, ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and other marginalized groups.

In susceptible environments, the competition to socially advance can stimulate corrupt behavior across all socioeconomic groups. Nevertheless, the form of corruption typically depends on the political context, demand for education, individual resources, elite status, elite's hold on education, and the overall ethnic, racial, and religious milieu. As Sabic-El-Rayess and Mansur (2016, p. 31) find in Bosnia's higher education: "those of the lower socioeconomic status are likelier to bribe if and when needed while the elites rely on their access to power and influence over the higher education." Lomnitz (2002) agrees that those of the equivalent social status presume favors rather than moneys should be exchanged, undergirding Sabic-El-Rayess and Mansur's (2016) finding that the elite's ability to reciprocate favors is emblematic of their elite status, privilege, and power. Sponsorship by the elite is an instrument of control and mobility when corruption in education becomes systemic. Depending on the context, those elite engaging in systemic corruption could constitute a dominant racial, religious, ethnic, or socioeconomic group working to limit the power and representation of the underprivileged groups through favor reciprocations among the privileged (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). These structurally embedded circles of power and their networked corruption have a lasting impact on education systems and their role in societies. Such complex interactions between elites, inclusion, racism, and corruption have only begun to be looked at by researchers in the field of education.

What is Corruption and What Forms Does it Take?

Educational corruption first emerged as a notable area of research in the early 2000s when researchers began to look into inefficiencies and problems in education systems created by individuals who engaged in corruption, which we define as the abuse of authority for monetary benefit, professional prestige, or other non-pecuniary benefits to themselves or to groups to which they belong and whose interests they wish to advance (Heyneman, 2020; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013). This more expansive definition of corruption has resulted from the growing awareness that individuals do not engage in corruption solely for their own benefit but often to advance their group's interests and strengthen its position of power, which in return shields the individual's own privileged status and continues to enable corrupt behavior (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). This new definition of corruption in education accounts for the favor reciprocation theory that provides researchers and policymakers with a new theoretical framework to examine how non-pecuniary corruption interferes with the mechanisms of meritocracy in education and legitimizes elite power. Sabic-El-Rayess and Mansur (2016) were the first to articulate this perspective by demonstrating empirically that favor reciprocations can include intentional efforts to undermine the power of non-elites and maintain the status quo.

But more work is needed to examine the role of favor reciprocations by the privileged to solidify their racial, ethnic, or religious group's power both in developed and developing nations. Though the Supreme Court made a decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* to end racial segregation in the United States, racism in education remains a crucial barrier to building a socially cohesive American society. Institutionalized racism necessitates that corruption be examined in broader terms than has been done in the past. In particular, research should extend to looking at how the elite corrupt the education systems by putting their members into administrative and faculty positions in order to perpetuate racial injustices. This is where the favor reciprocation framework lends itself to exploring how faculty and administrative powerholders ensure that education systems operate in service of their narrative and power while keeping the faculty and students from the disadvantaged and racialized groups at the outskirts of inner circles of power (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). For example, the mechanisms of how teachers can abuse their power to engage in discriminatory practices to elevate their privileged group while disempowering students of a Muslim background is explored in a self-study and memoir by Sabic-El-Rayess (2020a). Her innovative exploration of the intersectionality between corruption, education, religion, and racism aims specifically at educating young adults on these issues and their impact on racialized youths' mental and physical well-being, but other work within the broader scholarly community on these topics is noticeably absent and therefore urgently needed in education research.

Heyneman (2005, 2020) classified corruption as occurring with selection, accreditation, taxes, and procurement practices. With procurement, it is not unheard of that only a fraction of students receive textbooks or school uniforms despite governments providing or promising funding for the most or all of them (Gupta, 2000; Hallak & Poisson, 2001; Sabic-El-Rayess & Otgonlkhagva, 2012; Sabic-El-Rayess, Mansur, Batkhuyag, & Otgonlkhagva, 2019). Local contexts dictate the form of corruption, which can range from favoring certain individuals as teachers, professors, administrators, or students (Heyneman, 2020; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016) to diverting funds during school construction projects (Heyneman, 2020), paying salaries to ghost teachers (Hubbard, 2007; Reinikka & Svensson, 2004), imposing consultancy fees (Frolova, 2014), compensating teachers for tutoring after school (Dawson, 2009; Heyneman, 2011; Ille & Peacey, 2019), misallocating funds intended for research (Julián & Bonavia, 2020b), diploma mills (Heyneman, 2014), using school property for personal profit (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012), purchasing admissions, grades, diplomas, assignments, or school projects (Frolova, 2014; Heyneman, 2011; Osipian, 2020; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012, 2014, 2016a), or professors forcing their students to buy their own books (Frolova, 2014; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014). In many instances university accreditation depends on kickbacks or bribes to the organizations responsible for institutional accreditations (Heyneman, 2003, 2004, 2010, 2011, 2014). In addition to the context, a faculty member's, administrator's, or student's racial, ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic background can also play a crucial role in determining the type of corruption the parties engage in, as well as the extent to which one can benefit from bribery or favor reciprocation (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016).

When it comes to bribes—whether they are exchanged in cash or in kind for a grade, desired outcome, or preferential treatment—some blame low teacher salaries and the difficult conditions in which many teachers around the world function. Working without sufficient supplies in overcrowded classrooms and being poorly trained are the typical factors used to justify some teachers' low threshold for accepting bribes. For instance, Shaw, Chapman,

Nataliya, and Rumyantseva (2011) find that declines in government spending on education adversely impact teacher salaries, triggering a rise in corrupt activities that supplement teachers' income. But bribes for grades and diplomas tend to be even higher within the postsecondary institutions that train professionals who are the most in demand by the labor markets (Heyneman, 2004; Heyneman et al., 2008), suggesting that low salaries are not the primary predictor of corrupt behavior. In systems where repercussions for accepting bribes are minimal or non-existent, bribes are more likely to occur (Becker & Stigler, 1974; Sosa, 2004). Confalonieri, Leoni, and Picci (2007) confirm that individuals are more likely to engage in corrupt behaviors if such engagement would not adversely affect their reputation. In Bosnia, where one's reputation is unaffected by being corrupt, faculty members are more likely to engage in wider forms of corrupt behavior. For instance, in a case of law professors who sexually exploited their female students for several years in exchange for providing their exams' answer keys, universities banned these professors from teaching at their primary institutions but not elsewhere within the higher education system (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012). Bribes still remain one of the primary forms of corruption in education that is closely related to fraud, which involves deception, and embezzlement or knowingly stealing the public funds (Julián & Bonavia, 2020b).

Social values, rules, and norms also impact variability in corruption, making some behavior unacceptable and corrupt in one circumstance, but culturally appropriate in another (Julián & Bonavia, 2020a). A study surveying students in Portugal confirms that most young adults are able to distinguish between corrupt and non-corrupt practices in their educational environment (Gama, Almeida, Seixas, Peixoto, & Esteves, 2013). If corruption appears acceptable in other domains of life, it often becomes acceptable in education as well. In education, beyond different types of monetary transactions, Heyneman (2020, p. 131) finds that there are other unique articulations of corruption that represent a violation of professional conduct, including:

> selection to specialized programs, assigning grades on the basis of a student's race, social class or other ascriptive characteristics, insisting on a student's adopting of an instructor's values or philosophy, disclosing student confidential information, sexually or otherwise exploiting, harassing or discriminating against particular students, adopting text or other educational materials on the basis of bribes from manufacturers, forcing students to purchase materials copyrighted by the instructor and utilizing school property for personal profit.
>
> (Heyneman, 2020, p. 131)

Empirical work by Sabic-El-Rayess and Mansur (2016) further advances our understanding of the non-monetary forms of corruption and demonstrates that the exchanges in favors can be as damaging as direct bribery. Their work shows that the corrupt behaviors do not solely yield individual benefits, but may also produce gains for the group whose interests they work to advance. When the elite collectively abuse power, they interfere with education's primary function: to secure merited mobility for the most competent. For instance, favors can be reciprocated between faculty members, as the academic elite, and either students themselves or the political actors who may demand that professors promote specific students (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). This praxis closely relates to the ways in which institutionalized racism operates, opening a new intersection in research on corruption and racism in

education because the elite leverage favor reciprocations by placing their members into faculty positions and administrative positions to solidify their ethnic, racial, or religious group's power. Graduating students become newly emerging elite members by joining the elite ranks based on belonging or loyalty to a dominant political, economic, ethnic, racial, or religious group rather than competence. In fact, quantitative and qualitative studies (Osipian, 2007; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016; Temple & Petrov, 2004) concur on the relevance of non-pecuniary forms of corruption in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (Gere, Papajorgji, Moskowitz, & Milutinovic, 2019). Transparency International (2013) confirms that access to political or social connections is repeatedly exchanged for high grades on exams. Data suggest that non-pecuniary forms of corruption can prevail in some settings: in one study more than 62% of the participants viewed passing exams via connections as occurring in their institutions (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). In the same study, using bribery to gain grades and diplomas was common, albeit less popular than favor reciprocations.

The elite engage in favor reciprocations not only to individually benefit but to collectively perpetuate their group's hold on power. They "expect to benefit from each other's social equivalency and power, otherwise they would likely engage in bribery rather than favor reciprocation" (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016, p. 32). This type of non-pecuniary corruption in a school setting extends beyond student–teacher or student–administrator interaction. It includes faculty promotions, when they occur due to a faculty member's political, social, ethnic, racial, or religious favorability rather than competence (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2016a; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). Awarding faculty positions to members belonging to privileged racial, religious, and ethnic groups is how the elite ensure that the narratives favoring the privileged populate the mainstream curricula while non-elite racial, religious, and ethnic voices remain marginalized. For this reason, Sabic-El-Rayess (2020a) has used her own self-study of discrimination to enrich the curricula and counter the prevailing anti-Muslim bias in the classrooms of the Western societies in particular (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020c).

The poor have a limited capacity to exchange favors, given their lack of access to networked power, leaving them with one option: to bribe for grades or diplomas. In contrast, the elite's "subversive system of control cannot occur without a systemic and broadly designed net of corrupt activities, difficult to detect yet highly sustainable as it involves well-regulated corridors of networked power, disseminated and encouraged through a top down process" (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016, p. 21). The elite sponsor members of preferred ethnic, racial, religious, or political groups, by giving them either diplomas or professorships, which in turn allows powerholders to maintain the existing social, economic, racial, and religious stratifications. Sabic-El-Rayess and Mansur (2016) work in particular brings research on corruption closer to exploring groups' involvements in advancing and preserving their privilege and status within the educational system and thereby within the society at large. Such work calls for additional research in this domain, in the United States and internationally, to better assert the role of non-pecuniary corruption in racializing societies and perpetuating differences in privilege between ethnically, racially, religiously, and socioeconomically dominant groups and the marginalized. This work should be brought to the forefront of the research on corruption as the world examines the consequential impact of the 2020 antiracism protests, sparked by the police brutality and repeated killings of Black people. Under such circumstances, education fails in its broadly assumed role of the societal equalizer and instead converts into a mechanism that legitimizes power and protects the

status quo. In doing so, certain groups are marginalized and seek their place and sense of belonging outside formal education, adversely impacting overall development and long-term social cohesion (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2020b). For these reasons, the impact of corruption is not only economic in nature, but extends beyond what can be measured in monetary terms.

Individual and Societal Effects of Corruption

Declines in enrollment and increases in dropouts resulting from hidden fees and bribes imposed on students and their families in developing societies are some of corruption's important effects (Cockroft, 1998; Sabic-El-Rayess & Otgonlkhagva, 2012; Sabic-El-Rayess et al., 2019). Heyneman et al. (2008) find that throughout Africa, North America, and Western Europe, prevalence of corruption in education significantly correlates with lesser capacity to earn higher income, putting even those with higher education degrees at risk of poverty. Corruption adversely affects the quality of teaching as well, particularly when favoritism is prevalent. When students experience high-quality teaching, they view the system as less corrupt and faculty members as hired based on merit. But when professors fail to perform in the classroom, students believe the existing powerholders sponsored and hired the faculty members (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2016a). The quality of teaching clearly matters beyond the obvious need to ensure that learning takes place in schools and universities because the poor teaching quality shapes students' perceptions that there is favoritism in the hiring of the faculty members.

The elite's sponsorship of particular faculty members lowers the general quality of teaching and negatively affects student learning (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2016a; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016). When the elite selection is not based on merit, the cost can be about 5% of the country's gross national product (GNP) (Pinera & Selowsky, 1981). If favoritism is a norm rather than exception, the lack of merit in the system degrades trust in education and society at large, with many believing that corruption is a way of life rather than an isolated incidence. When a public believes that the education system is rigged against the students who are hardworking, the role of credentials in signaling competence becomes degraded. This negatively affects social cohesion, stability, and overall development (Heyneman, 2002–2003, 2003, 2011; Sabic-El-Rayess, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016a; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016; Temple & Petrov, 2004). Concerns with corrupt systems can trigger frustrations among youths, where, due to the lack of employment or familial and social connections to move up the societal ladder, they instead turn to self-isolation and radicalization, with adverse impact for long-term security and development (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2016b, 2020b, 2020c).

One study applied Hirschman's (1970) theory of voice, exit, and loyalty to determine how students cope with systemic corruption (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014). Typically, when institutions, businesses, or organizations deviate from their expected performance, customers tend to "exit" the relationship or "voice" their dissatisfaction. Less frequently, they may remain loyal in hope that the businesses or institutions providing goods or services to them will revert back to their original level of performance. For Hirschman (1970), "voice" and "exit" are mutually exclusive, but when students are dissatisfied with corruption in their higher education institutions, they are affected in ways that differ from the predictions of Hirschman's theory (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014).

Some students do exit highly corrupt institutions because of the increased cost associated with having to pay bribes or being repeatedly failed at exams when they are unable to afford bribes or offer favors in exchange for passing grades. When students have alternative options, they exit and begin studies or seek employment abroad, at least partly explaining the brain drain observed in some corrupt countries. The study also finds that one in five students give in to corruption and start searching for social connections to help them pass an exam. However, nearly 60% of the surveyed students cope with corruption by "keeping up with the required work" and neither exit nor voice their concerns (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014, p. 78). Awareness that corruption is systemic alters student behavior and inclination to fight against this or even voice their dissatisfaction. This occurs not because they are unaffected by the impact of corruption, but precisely because they are. As one student explained (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014), keeping up with their work is a way of coping with and resisting corruption because the ultimate goal of the corrupt elite is to lessen the competition for those they sponsor by having the non-elite students drop out. To put it simply, youths lacking a sense of agency and fearing for their spot in a corrupt apparatus accept the lower quality education and disengage from actively disrupting and ending corruption. Denisova-Schmidt (2020) agrees that the students' exposure to corruption during higher education influences their lives and behaviors long term.

Though difficult to quantify, a study (Ruiz Estrada, 2020) argues that the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to a significant expansion of corruption in less developed countries. How exactly the global health crisis may impact corruption in education is less clear, but it would be reasonable to assume that an increase in societal corruption would substantively impact corrupt behaviors in education as well. The most comprehensive study estimating the cost of corruption in education thus far was conducted by Heyneman, Anderson, and Nuraliyeva in 2008. In terms of its economic impact, follow-up studies of graduates and surveys of employers suggest that the cost of education corruption is high. Heyneman et al. (2008, p. 21) summarize their findings this way:

> We hypothesize that the cost to a student who attends a university characterized by a high level of corruption would be the equivalent of sacrificing the economic impact of higher-education quality. Using data from Transparency International on perceptions of corruption in education in 68 countries, we find that a nation's perceived corruption significantly reduces the payoff to higher education; when corruption is pervasive, highly educated persons are much less likely to report high income in high-income countries and Africa and are more likely to be poor in Europe and Central Asia, Africa, and lower-income countries of Asia. The reductions in these high-income returns to higher education ranges from 25 to 70 percent.

How Do We Address Corruption?

Corruption can penetrate any segment of society, and when that occurs, the only effective strategy can be to alter human behavior and motivate self-regulation (Heyneman, 2010). But to alter human behavior in the absence of the political will or an influential leader intent on socially transforming societal norms and values is nearly impossible. Examples of Russia and Azerbaijan confirm only countrywide efforts can work to reduce corruption (Denisova-Schmidt, 2020; Temple & Petrov, 2004). In 1970s, the anticorruption efforts in Hong Kong accomplished that type of societal change. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Hong Kong

was highly corrupt, but by 2019 it ranked as the 16th least corrupt territory out of 180 countries evaluated by Transparency International. Hong Kong socially transformed by creating the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), a powerful anticorruption agency that built community trust and empowered citizens to safely report corruption (Man-wai, 2006). The questions remain as to how these prior efforts in curbing corruption will be affected by the political developments and protests in Hong Kong throughout 2020, but despite the uncertainty of what future may bring, the past record suggests ICAC's comprehensive and community-based approach to changing mindsets effectively lessened corruption and changed the susceptibility of the local environment to it.

Other studies find that if students could report corruption anonymously nearly 80% would do so (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014). But the manner in which students use their voice to express their frustrations with corruption indicates how extensive corruption is in their institutions. For instance, in the same 2014 study, less than 30% of the survey participants knew a student who had officially complained about corruption and only 4% said the complaint was satisfactorily addressed. The "official voice" where a student formally complains was clearly ineffective. The same study notes that only 10% of the surveyed participants knew that a committee tasked with addressing corruption complaints existed. Thus, the onus is on the educational institutions to adequately inform and formalize their internal processes for corruption complaints, but such infrastructure's functioning is typically obstructed by the many stakeholders involved in systemic corruption.

When the incidence of corruption is high, the formal complaint process tends to fail. On the other hand, pressure to reform can be felt thorough mass protests and media campaigns, in the form of "public voice" (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014). Corrupt regimes tend to have authoritarian tendencies, disincentivizing the public from protesting against corruption (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014; Sabic-El-Rayess & Seeman, 2017). For this reason, the power of voice is weakened within corrupt settings (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014).

An alternative to these internal weaknesses of the corrupt system is the external influence in the form of the institutional or individual actors that can disrupt the status quo. For instance, the Bologna Process that calls for greater transparency created a perception of lesser corruption among students at reforming higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013). Using the funding of the international aid agencies to bring back members of diaspora as visiting faculty members may help initiate a change within local institutions and environments impaired by brain drain (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013). When hope in reforms fails, youths in corrupt systems cope in silence, relying on their own resilience via "internal voice" and "mental exit" (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2014). "Internal voice" means only complaining to one's closest friends and "mental exit" means maximally disengaging from the institution.

Coupled with having its community's trust, the ICAC built a prevention model largely based on both formal and informal education. The agency created curricular content by collaborating with schools and media outlets to fight corruption along with prosecuting some of the corruption cases to demonstrate how consequential engagement in corruption is. These collective efforts to change the mindsets of its citizens improved self-regulation and lessened corruption. Denisova-Schmidt, Huber, and Prytula (2019) shows that creating engaging video content on corruption cases increases awareness of corruption and its adverse impact. In

short, in the technologically evolving environment, leveraging non-formal outlets may be a necessity to produce an impact among youths. An example of this innovative approach is Sabic-El-Rayess' (2020a) engaging memoir targeting young adults and addressing the themes of discrimination, corruption, Islamophobia, ethnic persecution, war, and education. In addition to leveraging technology and enriching curricula, some strategies may be highly context-specific. For instance, in Indonesia, the morality framework undergirding Islam could help justify and expand anticorruption education (Suyadi, Sumaryati, Hastuti, & Saputro, 2020). In countries with systemic corruption, ethnic divisions, and significant brain drain, research suggests leveraging diaspora to broaden support and help implement anticorruption policies (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013).

In general, levels of corruption tend to negatively correlate with education levels, which suggests that education itself can limit if not eradicate corruption (Truex, 2010). Hong Kong exemplifies education's power in altering individual behaviors and societal norms to transform corrupt societies. But it also confirms that systemic corruption can be addressed only by taking a generalized approach to changing local culture. Even in a highly corrupt culture, simply joining a reformative movement with a more transparent education system, such as the Bologna Process in the European Union (EU), has been shown to lessen the overall perceptions of corruption in higher education (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2013).

While research on corruption since the turn of the century has significantly advanced our understanding of this unique challenge in education, gaps in the empirical work on corruption's effects and effective anticorruption efforts remain given the clandestine nature of this social phenomenon. Gere et al. (2019) point out that only limited work (Heyneman et al., 2008; Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016) has relied on "statistical or a combination of different approaches" to study corruption. While some research has argued in favor of improving professional conduct, increasing teacher salaries, and improving supervision and legal frameworks, no singular intervention can prove effective without both contextualized analysis and data on corruption as well as the genuine commitment and political will by the national leadership to transform a corrupt society. As Waite and Allen (2003, p. 294) claim: "Corrupt systems are difficult, if not impossible, to challenge and change from within, especially since the power operant in such systems is self-protective and self-perpetuating."

Addressing corruption has to be targeted to the type under study. The type of corruption which is illegal, such as procurement, can be addressed through the courts (Heyneman, 2020). However, corruption which is not covered by legislation and the court system must be addressed by strengthening professional regulations and the institutions which oversee them. These include universities themselves, faculty and student councils, and professional associations of lawyers, accountants, doctors, and the like.

Heyneman et al. (2008, p. 22) put it this way:

There are many mechanisms that a country or a university needs to adopt to lessen the possibility of corruption and to lower the perception that it is corrupt. These include codes of conduct for faculty, administrators, and students; statements of honesty on public Web sites; university “courts” to hear cases of misconduct; and annual reports to the public on changes in the number and types of incidents. These mechanisms may well be requirements for universities in those parts of the world hoping to have their degrees declared equivalent to those of universities in the European Union or having the support of international development assistance agencies.

Conclusion

This article reviewed 20 years of key literature on corruption in education with the goal of presenting a coherent argument on when, where, and in what forms corruption happens. The secondary goal, once the broader trends were reviewed, was to ascertain the impact corruption has on educational systems and determine what can be done to end corruption in education. Some key points include the following:

1. While corruption is difficult to measure, the perception of corruption as present and systemic is equally damaging on societies, particularly for those in earlier stages of their development or when nations are challenged by their economic, political, and social transformations.
2. Corruption is impossible to effectively address without fully understanding local political interests and forms of corruption. These tend to be driven by economic and social loyalties. The manifest form of corruption often depends on the education demand, resources, elite status, the elite’s hold on education, and the overall ethnic, racial, and religious demographics of the stakeholders involved.
3. Early research on corruption principally centered on the pecuniary forms of corruption along with professional misconduct, but the research on non-pecuniary corruption (Sabic-El-Rayess & Mansur, 2016) has broadened this primary definition of corruption to include the praxis of favor reciprocations among elites.
4. Earlier research argued that corruption benefited an individual who engaged in corrupt behavior, but a deeper examination has unveiled that corruption can be pursued by privileged groups to their collective benefit. Here, the context predetermines who is in the privileged category based on specific racial, religious, socioeconomic, or ethnic affiliations. The importance of this group tendency suggests that future work should focus on the favor reciprocations which perpetuate privilege, racism, and social injustice, and which, in turn, may trigger radicalization.
5. When education corruption occurs only sporadically it can be quickly addressed. But when education corruption is systematic it then becomes expected behavior and normal. In that instance, corruption can only be curbed through sweeping changes in human behavior, changes which require external pressure from the economy or international professional organizations and the political will to respond.

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