2
The Concern with Corruption in Higher Education

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As stated in the introduction of this volume, this book has two purposes: to illustrate that ethical misconduct in the academy should be viewed as a systemic (rather than an individual) issue and to encourage higher education stakeholders to make ethics a strategic institutional priority. This chapter, which surveys the state of ethical corruption in higher education around the world, should help to meet both purposes. While an individual can be corrupt, that is, abusing authority for personal as well as material gain (Anechiarico & Jacobs 1996; Blizek 2000; Kalnins 2001; Victor & Cullen 1988),[1] an ethical academy could handle such individual misconduct without significant damage to institutional integrity (Bertram Gallant, Beesemyer, & Kezar 2009).

However, from the perspective of social development, systemic education corruption (that which is beyond a few individuals "behaving badly") must be of concern because, more so than corruption in the police, customs service, or other areas, it contains both immoral and illegal elements, involves minors or young people, and damages the ability of education to serve a public good, most notably the selection of future leaders on a fair and impartial basis (Anderson & Heyneman 2005; Heyneman 2005; Noah & Eckstein 2001). Much of education corruption might be classified under the term "professional misconduct" (Braxton & Bayer 1999), but corruption may contain implications beyond other professional misbehavior. It may include corruption on the part of universities who bribe officials to become accredited, whose quality of public service may then be compromised and may produce graduates whose skills and professional levels could be a danger to the public (Heyneman 2003, 2004). Corrupt education officials and institutions collect an illegal "rent."[2]

To help readers recognize education corruption and feel a sense of urgency to address it, in this chapter I define educational (i.e., organizational, institutional and systemic) corruption, survey the state of it around the world, examine

the consequences of unfettered corruption, and review possible strategies for reducing misconduct.

What Is Education Corruption?

Corruption, the abuse of authority for personal as well as material gain, can be understood in terms of the stakeholders involved and their actions. In terms of *corruption for personal gain* the categories of victims and perpetrators are generally students and faculty (Table 2.1). When personal favoritism is shown by a faculty member for a particular type of student, the victims are other students. Favoritism may be based on family or friends. The mother of a young faculty member in Georgia might telephone her daughter to observe that her best friend has a son in her class and would she be kind enough to give the boy a high grade. This category is most common in societies that have not yet established the priority of universalistic (based on one's achievements) over particularistic (characteristics set at birth—nationality, class, race, etc.) values.

A faculty member may use his or her position as teacher to exploit a student for sexual or other favors. In this case the victim is the student directly affected. But the opposite may be the case in which a student uses sexual favors to gain an educational advantage (Bakari & Leach 2009; Collins 2009). In the instance of cheating on an examination and plagiarism on term papers both the perpetrator and the victim are students. Likewise, with respect to the falsification of research findings and research plagiarism among faculty, both the perpetrator and the victim are the faculty themselves. Moreover, faculty who plagiarize or who falsify research may adversely affect the reputation of their university, their profession, and, in some cases, their nation, and they may cause irreparable harm to the uses of research (see chapter 6 for details on research misconduct).

In terms of *corruption for monetary gain*, Table 2.2 provides just eight examples of the kinds of misconduct that can occur in education.[3] For example, in the case of procurement and accreditation, the buyer is the educational institution, and the seller of the bribe is the government, usually the minister of education.[4] In the case of obtaining illegal entrance to specialized programs, raising a grade on the basis of an illegal payment, or illegally paying for what should be a normal education service (student housing, borrowing a book from the library, and

Table 2.1 Types of Professional (Non-Monetary) Corruption

Perpetrator	Type of Corruption
Faculty	Research falsification Plagiarism Sexual favors Personal favoritism
Students	Sexual exploitation Exchange cheating Plagiarism

Table 2.2 Types of Monetary Corruption

Sellers	Buyers		
	Rector	Students	Suppliers
Ministry of education	Accreditation		Procurement
Rector		Entrance exams	
Administrators		Bribes needed for: Transcripts Housing Library use	
Faculty		Grades	

administrative procedures such as the transfer of transcripts),[5] the buyer is the student and the seller is either a faculty member or a member of the university administration. The agents vary but can be broadly classified as teachers, rectors, and other university administrators, and the ministry of education.

What Is the Current State of Education Corruption?

As a problem, education corruption is universal. Transparency International monitors the perception of corruption in general and in education specifically. Of the eight regions being monitored, the region perceived as having the most corrupt education systems was the Middle East and North Africa. Seventy percent of the respondents described education systems in the Middle East and North Africa as being either "corrupt" or "extremely corrupt." This was followed by Latin America and the Caribbean where 60 percent of the respondents described the education system as "corrupt" or "extremely corrupt." In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, 55 percent of the respondents described the education systems in this manner; in the low-income countries of Asia and Europe and the Central Asia Region (including the fifteen republics of the former Soviet Union) it was 50 percent; in North America it was 40 percent; and in the high-income countries of Asia it was 35 percent. The region where the perception of education corruption was least was Western Europe, but even there 20 percent of the respondents described the system as "corrupt" or "extremely corrupt" (Heyneman, Anderson, & Nuraliyeva 2009: 14).

The type of corruption differs from one region to another. A major problem in North America appears to be student and faculty plagiarism and cheating on examinations (Cizek 1999; McCabe 1999, 2005). There are also illustrations of breaches in institutional ethics (Kelly, Agle, & DeMott 2005; Louis, Anderson, & Rosenberg 1995). This may include mistrust, misconduct, and misbehavior in conducting research (see chapter 6), the ethical questions with regard to raising funds and sports supporters (see chapter 7), misconduct in admissions and testing (see chapter 4), and ethical dilemmas in academic governance (see chapter 8), as well as classroom improprieties—showing up late for class, unfairly assessing

homework assignments, showing preference to specific genders, nationalities, or opinions (see chapter 5).

Outside of Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, the prevalence of education corruption is more frequent, but more importantly, it occurs in different ways. In Vietnam, Cambodia, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union, the main problem appears to be corruption for monetary gain and on the part of both individuals and institutions. This includes the propensity to seek bribes in exchange for higher grades, accreditation, and entrance to selective programs of study (Dawson 2009; Heyneman 2009a; McCornac 2009). On the other hand, in sub-Saharan Africa, corruption includes frequent instances of professional misconduct and sexual exploitation in the classroom (Bakari & Leach 2009; Collins 2009).

Some might argue that corruption and cheating is cultural, that it is imbedded within the moral standards of the community. This might suggest that students are in favor of it and have no shame when participating in it. It is common, however, for some students to express shame and remorse with respect to cheating (Heyneman, et al. 2009). Is the degree of remorse common from one country to the next? In Croatia 89 percent of the students asked said that it was "wrong" to cheat on an examination, approximately the same proportion (90 percent) as in the United States (Table 2.3). On the other hand, the Josephson Institute reports that American students who cheat also say that they are satisfied with their personal ethics (Josephson Institute 2009). This suggests that, in certain circumstances, cheating can become a cultural norm, "disconnected" in an individual's mind from personal ethics.

But however common it might be for a student to feel remorse, it is also common for students to participate. In Croatia, 76 percent of the students said that they would cheat on a test if they would not get caught. In the United States, 97 percent of the students claim to have seen another student cheat and 75 percent admit to having copied from the paper of another student (Table 2.4). Some evidence would suggest, moreover, that the propensity to cheat has increased in the United States. According to one estimate, 20 percent of the students admitted to having cheated in high school in 1969, but this increased to 27 percent in 1979 and to 30 percent in 1989 (Cizek 1999: 18). The fact that

Table 2.3 Is It Wrong to Cheat on an Examination?

Country	% Answering "Yes"
Bulgaria	79
United States	90
Croatia	89
Moldova	77
Serbia	87

Sources: Heyneman, et al. (2008: 5); Cizek (1999: 15).

Table 2.4 Incidence of Cheating on Examinations

Country	% Answering "Yes"
If you could cheat without getting caught, would you?	
Bulgaria	60
Croatia	76
Moldova	68
Serbia	69
Have you seen another student cheat?	
United States	97
Have you ever copied from another student?	
United States	75

Sources: Heyneman, et al. (2008: 5); Cizek (1999: 15).

almost all students feel remorse but almost all would cheat if they would not be caught suggests that the resistance to cheating is not autonomous or embedded as a moral principle, but rather based on the fear of sanction.

What Are the Systemic Causes of Education Corruption?

Because illegal or unprofessional actions are often regretted by those who participate in them, in one sense, every illegal or unprofessional action has a single cause—the absence of sufficient self-control (Stein & Baca 1981; Waite & Allen 2003). But there are ancillary characteristics that help explain frequency. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the subsequent privatization without precedent or regulation caused distortions in many parts of economic and social life. There was an upsurge of general corruption in the public sector. This was exacerbated by an absence of tradition concerning legitimate areas for private enterprise and what are essential public goods. Agricultural and industrial property was suddenly privatized, the lines between public and private having been drawn from scratch, creating confusion and misunderstanding in addition to outright corruption behavior (Hallak & Poisson 2007; Heyneman 2000; Heyneman & Todoric-Bebic 2000; Heyneman, et al. 2009). In Asia the penchant for individual achievement at any cost is one explanatory cause of education corruption (Dawson 2009). In North America, and many other parts of the world, cheating and plagiarism are motivated by a demand to acquire qualifications over the knowledge on which the qualifications are based. In chapter 3, Bertram Gallant and Kalichman describe in detail a systems framework for understanding the causes and solutions to corruption caused by misconduct. The chapters in Part III will then apply that framework to elaborate on the causes of corruption in various functional areas of the academy.

What Are the Consequences of Education Corruption and Why Should We Care?

Since the time of Plato it has been understood that a key ingredient in the making of a nation/state is how it chooses its technical, commercial, and political leaders. In general it is agreed that no modern nation can long survive if leaders are chosen on the basis of the ascriptive characteristics, that is, the characteristics with which they are born (race, gender, social status). On the other hand it is common for families to try to protect and otherwise advantage their own children and relatives. Every parent wishes success for their own child; every group wishes to see the success of children from their particular group. This is normal.

Schooling provides the mechanism through which these opposing influences can be carefully managed. It is the common instrument used by nations to "refresh" the sources of leadership. Economists have tried to estimate the sacrifice in economic growth if there is a serious bias in the selection of leaders (Klitgaard 1986). It has been estimated that developing countries could improve their gross national product (GNP) per capita by five percentage points if they were to base their leadership upon merit as opposed to gender or social status (Pinera & Selowsky 1981). In fact, by some estimates, the economic benefit to developing countries of choosing leaders on the basis of merit would be three times more than the benefit accruing from a reduction in OECD trade restriction on imports (Kirmani 1986).

Success in one's schooling is one of the few background characteristics seen as necessary for modern leadership. Although it is possible for leaders to emerge through experience or just good fortune, getting ahead in schooling itself is seen as essential.

But what if schooling itself is not fair? What if the public comes to believe that the provision of schooling favors one social group? What if the public doesn't trust in the judgment of teachers on student performance? What would happen if the process of schooling had been corrupted (Heyneman 2007a)?

The fact is that, in a democracy, the public takes a very active interest in the fairness of its education system. If the public does not trust the education system to be fair or effective, more may be sacrificed than economic growth. It might be said that current leaders, whether in commerce, science, or politics, had acquired their positions through privilege rather than through achievement. If the school system cannot be trusted, it may detract from a nation's sense of social cohesion, the principal ingredient of all successful modern societies (Heyneman 2000).

Education potentially serves two labor market functions. It is an investment in human capital and it develops the productivity of labor. One expects each additional year of education to increase earnings because a student will acquire new knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are transferable to employment. Both individual students and society gain from higher education in this way. Second, completion of education can signal to employers that the student is of high ability and integrity and has great potential to be a productive employee (Heyneman

2002/2003) or a status group selectivity market (Collins 1979). Only the most able students may complete higher education because the costs of completion (in time, resources, and effort) are lower for the more able than for other students. Higher education may not increase the productivity of labor directly, but it may help employers sort out the most productive and reliable from other more costly candidates (Heyneman, et al. 2009: 9).

Corruption affects the private and social returns to education investment through two avenues. If students obtain grades through corrupt means, they have less incentive to learn. Because economic growth is associated with the quality of education and the acquisition of skills (Behrman & Birdsall 1983; Dale & Krueger 2002; Griliches & Mason 1972; Hanushek & Wobmann 2007; Solmon & Wachtel 1975; Wales 1973), if students buy grades and exam scores, the economic rates of return for higher education investments will be degraded (Heyneman, et al. 2009). The signaling function of education is also reduced if there is significant corruption among faculty or administrators.

If entry into select programs and high grades are for sale, then the completion of education cannot be linked to student ability. The employer will not know whether a student completed the program and did well because she was a high-ability, low-cost student or because she acquired grades illegally or unfairly. The variance in ability for students completing a corrupt program is higher. Even if an individual student from a relatively corrupt institution is honest and of high ability, the signaling value of the degree is reduced. An employer with a choice of candidates reduces the risk of hiring an unproductive employee by avoiding graduates of corrupt institutions and programs and hiring only students from institutions, departments, or programs with a reputation for honesty. For this employer to hire a student from a corrupt program, the student would have to accept a significantly lower salary and prove his or her economic value through on-the-job experience.

Corruption as part of the undergraduate experience may affect the probability that a student can obtain a graduate degree. Graduate schools, particularly the selective ones, discount applicants from institutions in which corruption is perceived as common. Admission committees look carefully at statements of purpose and letters of reference that may be plagiarized or forged; and they constantly note students with a wide divergence in grades and Graduate Record Examination (GRE) scores on the grounds that the former may have been subject to artificial manipulation.

There are some who have argued that corruption and bribery serve a purpose; that bribes may help make weak institutions more efficient. In instances in which prices (tuition, fees, or wages) are distorted by regulation or lag in application, corruption has been known to improve efficiency (Ahlin & Bose 2007). On the other hand, because the purpose of education is to provide a way for society to model good behavior for children or young adults, allowing an education system to be corrupt may be more costly than allowing corruption in the police

or the customs service. By design, one function of education is to purposefully teach the young how to behave in the future. If the education system is corrupt, one can expect future citizens to be corrupt as well (Bruhn, Zajac, Al-Kazemi, & Prescott 2002).

Efficiency also fails within an educational institution if corrupt officials are affected by non-monetary factors such as favoritism towards one's own ethnic, regional, or religious group or by pressure to show favoritism for relatives. In this case, university officials may admit unqualified students or faculty, and education becomes a high-priced, low-quality good. Instead of increasing competition within the university, bribery limits competition and reduces quality (Bardhan 1997).

If a college or university acquires a reputation for having faculty or administrators who accept bribes for entry, grades, or graduation, the power of the university in the labor market may be adversely affected. In the public sector and in domestic labor markets, particularly those with state-run enterprises, the risk is less because the job choices of graduates are fewer. But in the private sector and particularly with companies that draw from international labor markets, the effect of a reputation for corruption of a university may be more serious.

Thus, economic consequences occur to the individual, the employer, and the community or nation. Higher education becomes a less effective means to obtain a higher income and it lowers the effect of higher education on poverty. Corruption in education changes the ability of education to increase income, by as much as 50 percent in one estimate, and lowers the returns to the wider community or nation from public investments in higher education (Heyneman, et al. 2009: 20). Corruption also adversely affects employers. Not being able to trust the signaling mechanism of higher education, many employers construct their own selection mechanisms. They extend offers of employment but new employees then enter "as interns," which requires proving effectiveness over time. Moreover, employers may be reluctant to place employees with suspect abilities in sensitive positions or to promote them (Heyneman, et al. 2009: 21).

Education corruption also has a social and a political cost (Maricik 2009). If rampant, corruption may reduce the prestige of a nation's higher education system, reduce the ability to negotiate joint degrees and credit transfers, and limit the ability to attract new employers. If corruption were to reach a "tipping point" (when over 50 percent of the students have participated), the system itself is at risk of implosion, which raises the specter of social unrest and national insecurity (Heyneman 2010; Silova, Johnson, & Heyneman 2007).

What Can Be Done about Education Corruption?

However common it is to cheat or to take bribes, there remains a portion that refuse to participate. In the former Soviet Union, faculty leaders exist, even in

the most austere and debilitating environments. There are some who lead by virtue of moral principle. There are others who rise to the occasion and lead on the basis of practical assessment of risks and benefits. Regardless of the source of strength, given the commonality of this resistance, it can be said that there is in fact a universal standard of the professoriate. The standard is parallel to that identified by Braxton and Bayer (1999). It includes the promise to treat all students with fairness and impartiality. It includes selecting a common hierarchy among differing moral principles. In particular it requires that faculty choose the principle of fairness (to students and colleagues) over the principle of loyalty to family, friends, and ethnic brothers. In this small but important way, certain faculty, even in remote parts of the globe, may lead the way for other local officials in government and business. These "quiet heroes" of the university classroom, those who stand up for their principles without legal or administrative support, in their own way, these resisters are upholding the principles associated with development and freedom. They do this without the possibility of reward; on the contrary, they do this in spite of making enemies and enduring the criticism of their corrupt administrative superiors. They do this for one reason: because it is right (Heyneman 2007b).

On the other hand, simply because there are resisters does not imply that combating the problem can be left to isolated individuals. A more systematic approach is necessary. The chapters in Part III of this volume will deal in detail with specific ways of moving forward on the agenda of reducing corruption and enhancing educational integrity. However, at this point, it may be fruitful to introduce some ideas that can be reflected upon throughout the reading of the remainder of the volume. In particular, there are four measures that seem to be necessary regardless of country or maturity of education systems. Those four measures are (1) structural reforms, which may be necessary to change the environment that makes corruption more common; (2) measures to isolate and prevent corruption behavior; (3) measures to adjudicate cases in which infractions may have occurred; and finally (4) measures to inflict sanctions and effectively translate the implications of those sanctions to the university community and the public at large (Table 2.5).

Structural reform may be a necessity in all countries, but not identically. Structural reform is particularly necessary where mechanisms of land ownership and taxation are still developing and where the mechanisms of licensing, accreditation, and higher education selection have been neither modernized nor professionalized. Structural reform includes paying close attention to the quality and honesty of the national standardized entrance examinations (Heyneman 2009b,c); the mechanisms for procurement of textbooks and educational supplies (Heyneman 2006); and better legal clarity in distinguishing between for-profit and not-for profit educational institutions. These issues raise questions of several kinds:

Table 2.5 What Can be Done About Corruption?

Structural Reform	Adjudication and Management	Prevention	Sanction
Autonomous examination agency	Professional boards	Blue ribbon committee evaluations	Criminal penalties for economic and professional corruption
Licensing and certification process separated from higher education	Boards of trustees for each higher education institution	Annual reports on educational corruption	Public exposure
Land ownership by educational institution	School boards	Public access to higher education financial statements	Dismiss all from employment
Tax differentiation between profit-making and non-commercial education institutions	Public ombudsman	Codes of conduct for faculty, administrators, and students	Fines payable to the victim for professional misconduct
Income generated by non-profit educational institutors not subject to taxation	Faculty/student code of conduct boards	Public advertisement of all codes of conduct	Withdrawal of license to practice
		Anti-corruption commissions	
		Free and active education press	

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- What structures exist for reducing ethical misconduct and corruption?
- Has there been an "audit" of the university ethical infrastructure?[6]
- As one reads through the chapters in this volume what ideas can be found for structural reform to deal with specific areas of misconduct?

In the case of changes in the mechanisms of *adjudication and management*, it may be necessary to initiate university boards of trust to distance the university from the ministry of education, and to professionalize those boards to avoid them from becoming financially irresponsible and corrupt themselves. It may be required to initiate the office of an educational ombudsman, create codes of conduct boards to hear cases in which infractions may have occurred, and report the frequency and category of those infractions to the university population and the general public.

In terms of *prevention* there need to be codes of conduct for administrators, faculty, and students. They need to be written with clarity and openly displayed on university websites.[7] Active governments might sponsor blue ribbon commissions (consisting of eminent scientists and well-known figures) to assess the problem and issue public reports. A ministry of education might issue public statistics on the frequency and nature of education corruption. It helps too to have an active press interested and informed about corruption issues. There is also an important external role for professional associations and international organizations (Bergan 2009; Sahlberg 2009).

Sanctions may include public exposure of those who have been found guilty, penalties of jail or detention for those who have committed criminal acts, dismissal from employment, fines payable to victims, and the withdrawal of a license to practice. Key to success is the general knowledge that sanctions exist and general respect that rules will be enforced.

Summary

Some might suggest that plagiarism and cheating are more common in the internet era. Some might suggest that bribes for university entrance and to augment one's grades are more common given an overall environment of economic stringency, administrative transition, and the weakness of other societal institutions. The assessment of these influences is correct, but inadequate. The only reasonable barrier to honest conduct of university affairs is the character of the actors themselves. To the extent that they are socially cohesive and have internalized the norms and mores of their functions as teachers and students, corruption can gain no ground. Colleges and universities can help to create such social cohesion and internalize norms and mores and they have an ethical responsibility to do so. There are many universities where corruption is almost unknown and there are millions of students who, if given the opportunity to cheat, won't. To turn around a circumstance from one in which corruption is common

to one in which it is unknown requires consistency in action and diligence in policy, but it can be done.

Notes

1. Like any illegal or shameful activity, the measurement of corruption is complicated by respondent embarrassment and fear of sanction. In general, acquiring accurate information on actual participation in corrupt activity is more difficult than acquiring information on the perception that corrupt activity exists and in what amount (Heyneman, Anderson, and Nuraliyeva 2009). For instance, Transparency International ranks countries on the perception of existing corrupt activity. By this method, Romania ranks 69 (out of 91 nations) in terms of corruption perception, Uzbekistan ranks 71 and the Russian Federation ranks 79. See http://www.transparency.org/ (accessed 27 March 2010).
2. "Illegal rent" denotes the tendency to use one's administrative position to collect an illegal income from the public who need the service.
3. Based on Heyneman, Anderson, and Nuraliyeva (2009: 2).
4. In one instance a ministry of education required all universities in the country to suddenly re-apply for accreditation. This was explained to the public as a quality assurance mechanism but was widely interpreted as a shakedown for bribes.
5. Students may have to pay a legal fee for these services. Corruption occurs when employees of a university will not provide the already paid for service without a bribe. In the case of a university library for instance, the librarian "will not find" the book requested without a bribe. In the case of transcript transfer, the administrator will delay the service until a private bribe is collected. In the case of a PhD candidate, the signing of the dissertation will be put "on hold" by the committee chair until a bribe is paid privately.
6. There are three audits of this kind: (1) compliance audits, which assess the degree to which a university adheres to legal codes; (2) cultural audits, which assess the degree to which a university understands how employees and students feel about the standards and the university's approach to maintaining them; and (3) a systems audit, which assesses the degree to which a university has integrated ethnical principles into its organizational structure (Bertram Gallant, Beesemyer, & Kezar 2009: 214).
7. Universities that do not display a code of conduct on their website are suspected as not yet having understood the implications of corruption for the quality of education. The perception of corruption is sufficient evidence to affect the decisions of a potential consumer; therefore, a university that is officially silent about corruption is automatically suspect.

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