

freedom and democracy around the world show a falling tendency. Democracy, the respect for the rule of law and human rights seems to have peaked about ten years ago. Add to this the many large-scale corruption, tax evasion and fraud scandals that have been revealed recently, such as the Panama-papers and in the International Football Association (FIFA). Despite many ambitious anti-corruption campaigns and programs, established measures of this particular social ill show no tendency for it to decline. On the contrary, in many countries, corruption seems to be on the rise. We have also seen ethically dubious behaviour in the business world, not least from large companies in countries known for their low levels of corruption such as Volkswagen in Germany and TeliaSonera in Sweden and Finland.

Survey measures show that there is a perception that current society is deeply unjust, because the political and economic elites are not acting for the common good, but are instead arranging things to benefit themselves and their allies. As an example, almost eighty percent of the population in the United States agrees that there is widespread corruption in their government. And a fairly high level of interpersonal trust is essential to a well-functioning and prosperous society.

The elites that have become distrusted have one thing in common: they have almost without exception been trained at leading universities. In other words, there is not necessarily anything wrong with their knowledge, technical competences and intellectual abilities. Instead, the deficiencies are in their ability to understand and practice critical ethical behaviour. Some universities and colleges have recently come to realize the importance of this issue. However, the central questions of ethics are either missing or given a very modest role in most higher education institutions.

Transparency International estimates that 6bn people live in countries with a serious corruption problem. Internationally, the health sector is particularly hard hit by corruption, from medical personnel requiring bribes to companies who sell fake medicines. One can literally say that many people in the world are dying of corruption. In addition, one of the main reasons that people say they are dissatisfied with their lives (aka “unhappy”) is that they perceive themselves to be living under unjust and corrupt public institutions. The lack of ethics and the prevalence of corruption in the public sector is probably the biggest obstacle to social and economic development. Conversely, one can say that the most important asset of a society is the ethical quality of its public institutions.

The well-known American political scientist Francis Fukuyama has argued that it is a “natural instinct” for people with a public position of power to use it to benefit his or her self, family, friends, clan, tribe, allies, co-ethnics or economic interest. To not indulge in favouritism, but to act impartially, in the public interest and in accordance with laws and regulations is, says Fukuyama, something that must be learned and trained.

This is why the values IAU promotes – equity, ethics, integrity, solidarity and the principles of sustainable development need to be practiced. Core values such as democracy, legality, integrity, fairness, freedom of opinion, and freedom of information form a solid basis for a good society and for health and wellbeing of its citizens. This corresponds closely to the IAU Strategic Plan 2016-2020. Our joint challenge spells implementation.

With this in mind, a few years ago, the Compostela Group of Universities, an international network of 68 higher education institutions took an important decision based on an initiative from us. In its so called Poznan-declaration, this university network recommended that critical ethical thinking should be included in all educational subject areas—for example, for doctors, economists, lawyers, teachers, economists, and biologists. It should thus not be confined to special courses in philosophy but integrated in all forms of professional educations. This declaration was unanimously adopted at the network’s General Assembly in Poznan in 2014, and has therefore been named the Poznan Declaration. It has since been supported by several other key organizations, including Transparency International, the World Academy of Art and Science, the World University Consortium and the Library of Alexandria.

It is now important that this initiative can be moved from vision to reality. Given the above mentioned situation of increasing distrust in expert knowledge, in research, and in many professions, not to say in the democratic system as such, it is now time to urge all universities and colleges to make sure that critical ethical thinking becomes an integrated part of all their educational programs. When the next generation of leaders starts meeting the challenges and dilemmas they will encounter, it is our responsibility as educators that when they leave our universities and colleges, they are equipped with a working “ethical compass”.

The **Poznan Declaration** can be found at <http://revistas.usc.es/gcompostela/en/activities/PoznanDeclaration.html>

07 The Global Challenge of Corruption in Higher Education



by **Elena Denisova-Schmidt**, Research fellow at the Center for International Higher Education, Boston College, United

States and Lecturer at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, and **Hans de Wit**, Professor and Director of the Center for International Higher Education, Boston College, United States.



Transparency International, one of the leading think tanks working on corruption

worldwide, defines this phenomenon as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.” Corruption in higher education means also lack of academic integrity. Corruption may be perceived as such and not, grand and petty, monetary and nonmonetary, directly involve students or not. One might not be aware of doing anything corrupt—one might even have the best of intentions. Nevertheless, corruption leads to reputational damage and distrust for higher education among society in general.

Corruption is not a recent phenomenon in higher education, but massification, internationalization, privatization, and commercialization have placed ethics higher on the agenda of universities. The term “corruption” has changed significantly over time. In the Middle-Ages, students at European universities paid the salaries of teachers and university officials directly. These expected fees and gifts were not large, but they eventually became burdensome to the students, particularly in their later years of study. This was most likely one of the main reasons for the limited number of masters and doctors at that time: many potential candidates could simply not afford it. At the same time, there were numerous examples of students from more affluent families obtaining their degrees through illicit or duplicitous means. Plagiarism was not considered a critical issue, at least among authorities in Germany, who deemed it “a purely scientific issue” early in the last century (Denisova-Schmidt, 2017b).

Today, corruption in higher education takes place in various settings: among students, faculty, and administration. Academic misconduct where students are involved includes various types of cheating, such as plagiarism and attending classes or sitting for exams on another student’s behalf (impersonation), as well as services, gifts, informal agreements, or payments in exchange for admission, grades, advance copies of exams, preferential treatment, graduation, and “sham” degrees. Faculty members may themselves be involved in various unethical activities, such as publishing papers in “sham” journals, falsifying data, bribing co-authors, plagiarizing, paying ghost-writers, or even stealing papers submitted to them for review and publishing them as their own. University staff and administration may violate academic integrity by wilfully ignoring the students’ misbehaviour, selling admissions, manipulating accreditation, or creating degree mills (Denisova-Schmidt, 2017a).

Whistleblowing and social activism, including using social media, as well as raising awareness of academic integrity, are successful tools to remedy this problem. But they only cure the symptoms and seldom the disease as such. Corruption is a very complex issue, and one of the complexities is its

ambivalence. Corruption may be perceived differently by those who participate in it and by outsiders. A former influential government official, for example, might be employed as a university rector; is this a case of revolving-door affiliation? Similarly, the child of a faculty member might study at the institution where his or her parent works; is this always nepotism? Is supporting a young colleague in his or her academic career merely favouritism? Is an international student unknowingly using a corrupt agent, a criminal or a victim?

Corruption is becoming increasingly more international. Students, agents, intermediate service providers, and institutions can be either perpetrators or victims. The rising mobility of students and scholars, in particular, has increased the number of cases of unethical behaviour, fraud, and corruption. The type of actors involved is diverse: providers of language and other tests; credential evaluators; visa regulators; pathway providers; admissions officers; and more. As the stakes for each of these actors are high and competition intense, the likelihood of corruption along the chain is enormous. Although in many cases the blame rests on the individual, intermediate actors such as agents are more likely to be tempted by corruption and fraud, as they gain the most from it.

For more information about corruption in higher education, follow @BC_HECM for news and trends. The Higher Education Corruption Monitor collects news and research on various types of corruption and anticorruption policies and initiatives from all around the world. The Center for International Higher Education will publish ‘The Challenges of Academic Integrity in Higher Education: Current Trends and Outlook’ by Elena Denisova-Schmidt as issue 5 in its CIHE Perspectives series, www.bc.edu/research/cihe.

References for the papers published in the In Focus section are available on page 34.

08 Fighting Corruption in Tertiary Education through Good Governance



by **Jamil Salmi** and **Robin Matross Helms**, respectively global tertiary education expert and director, Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement, American Council on Education. Contact emails: jsalmi@tertiaryeducation.org and rhelms@acenet.edu

In 2016, the MoE's latest policy concerning the issue was launched, entitled *Preventive and Treatment Measures of Academic Misconduct in Higher Education Institutions*. I am pleased to see that many of the suggestions in my paper coincide with this document, including separating administrative power and academic power at Chinese universities, so as to further promote academic reviews and criticism, nurturing a strong and supportive ethical leadership, and establishing an effective accountability and a firm-and-fair penalty system. As highlighted in my paper, this policy also emphasizes the importance of education in academic ethics as well as research guidance for junior academics and university students. In fact, scientifically sound referencing methods have been made part of the compulsory curriculum in most Chinese universities, and duplicate checking system has been highly successful in reducing cases of plagiarism.

Like any kind of corruption, academic corruption will always exist in one way or another and cannot be totally avoided in academia, as noted by Dr. Ernst-Ludwig, President of the German Research Foundation (China Daily, 2006). It seems that the Chinese MoE has realized that and is striving to cultivate an ethos in HE where the traditional values of the university are honoured by the majority of its stakeholders. In its latest policy document as mentioned above, the term 'academic corruption' has been replaced by 'academic misconduct', which appears to be a major step forward, but the war must go on.

References for papers published in the In Focus section are available on page 35.

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Footnotes

[1] Programmatic Cooperation Framework for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus 2015-2020; website: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/yerevan/70>

[2] See the website: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/yerevan/publications1>

[3] A Code of Practice for Ethical Conduct in HEIs, Council of Europe, 2016; website: *ibidem*

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