

Finally, there is very little indication that training programs are undertaking the kinds of assessment activities that yield clear evidence of their mid-term outcomes or longer-term impact. Often, assessment rests on the testimonials of beneficiaries or the organizations offering the training courses, without providing information on the monitoring tools developed to measure the impact of these courses on participants or their respective professional environments. One of the most commonly cited impacts is the importance of the networking opportunities provided, a result that is difficult to translate into any kind of impact assessment.

IS MORE NEEDED? YES

The majority of higher education leaders and managers around the world receive no formal/specialized training for their work. As higher education systems continue to grow and diversify, increasingly pressured to meet key performance indicators while also achieving excellence in education and innovation production, the need to train effective managers and leaders becomes more widespread and more urgent. Yet, the current picture of training opportunities on offer to meet this massive need falls desperately short. Indeed, the CIHE and IAU inventory exercises, albeit tailored to seek out some kinds of programs and not others, collectively identified fewer than 120 such training schemes worldwide. Relatively short, small-scale programs, clustered in (or provided largely by actors based in) the Global North, operating without clear evidence of mid- or long-term impact—collectively, these do not provide a viable roadmap for the kind of large-scale support needed by higher education systems, particularly in the world's low-income and emerging economy countries. There, the needs are urgent to scale up management and leadership capacity through the provision of high-quality, relevant, and equity-enhancing training mechanisms. Significantly more research is needed to make sense of the full census of management and leadership training actors around the world, as well as the scope and real-world impact of their efforts, in order to ensure the deployment of skilled higher education managers and leaders for the twenty-first century. ■

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Predatory Conferences: A Case of Academic Cannibalism

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Less than 20 years after appearing in the groves of academe, predatory conferences now outnumber legitimate congresses held by scholarly societies. Today, one can attend multiple predatory conferences every month of the year in nearly any major city, from Tokyo to Toronto and Sydney to Helsinki. Competition between predatory companies has become so fierce that even smaller cities have become targets. There are even conference alert websites devoted entirely to promoting predatory events. The sheer number of predatory conferences, sometimes called questionable conferences, combined with the increasing sophistication of the organizing companies, means any unknown conference should be viewed as predatory until proven otherwise.

WHAT IS A PREDATORY CONFERENCE?

To be classified as predatory, the conference organizer needs to meet three criteria: the organizer holds low-quality academic meetings for the primary aim of making money—not supporting scholarship; there is no effective peer review, allowing anyone to purchase a speaking slot; the organizer employs deceit, the most common forms being false claims of peer review, hiding the company headquarters' true location, and concealing the for-profit nature of the company.

With few exceptions, this paper will avoid naming specific predatory conference organizers, for two reasons. First, many companies closely follow what is written about them and quickly make cosmetic changes to their websites in an attempt to escape the predatory label. Second, companies frequently change names or rebrand their conferences. For example, OMICS International, currently being sued by the US Federal Trade Commission for deceptive trade practices, organizes conferences under at least four different brands, including: Conference Series, Pulsus Group, EuroSciCon, and Life Science Events.

Some predatory organizers started out as predatory publishers and expanded into conferences. Others focus exclusively on conference organizing, though they may also funnel papers to predatory publishers. University faculty

members own some of the slickest predatory conference companies and manage to convince other academics to join their organizational boards. Many, but by no means all, predatory companies are based in Asia, including China, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, and Taiwan. However, more developed countries including Canada, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States also have multiple predatory conference companies.

THE DANGER

Too many academics think predatory conferences are not worth worrying about, especially if their research field places less importance on conference presentations and proceedings publications compared to journal publications. Nevertheless, predatory conferences do threaten the foundations of the ivory tower. Lacking real peer review, they allow anyone to present and publish poor, plagiarized, or

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phony research. At predatory conferences, the United Nations created AIDS to reduce the world's population, and global warming does not exist.

Predatory conferences typically combine several conferences together in a single hotel conference room, forcing attendees to listen to presentations on topics outside their field, and tricking well-intentioned but ignorant academics into participating and wasting their limited research budgets and time. Their honest efforts may also be tainted by appearing alongside nonsense papers in the conference proceedings. Furthermore, as predatory conference organizers have grown, they have been buying legitimate publishers and conference organizers, blurring the line between predatory and legitimate. Scholarly societies that rely on their annual conference for funds can also find themselves competing with the ever-increasing number of predatory events.

THE ENEMY IS US

The main reason predatory conferences have become such a big problem is that researchers and institutions are doing basically nothing to address the problem. Little action is taken to warn researchers or universities about the danger, and even less to punish those who present at, or help organize, the events. The notion that only young or developing world researchers get tricked into attending provides one excuse

for inaction. In reality, scholars from Western universities regularly present at, and help organize, predatory conferences. Blinded by the excitement of receiving an invitation to deliver a keynote speech, too many overlook red flags out of ignorance. Unfortunately, others knowingly participate. Researchers in countries or fields that place emphasis on conference presentations purposely use predatory conferences to pad their CVs to win university jobs and promotions. Connections between predatory conference organizers and predatory publishers are common, with conference papers accepted for publication in predatory journals for an additional fee. Unfortunately, many researchers view such publication opportunities as a bonus rather than a problem.

Disturbingly, during my research, it has been incredibly rare for any of the academics involved with predatory conferences to admit wrongdoing, either on their part or by the company. Even when faced with evidence such as faked peer review, hidden for-profit companies, and stolen identities, the researchers involved have refused to distance themselves. Instead, current and former employees, feeling disgusted by the actions of their companies, have proven to be the most valuable source of information on predatory organizers.

Universities throughout the developed world regularly host predatory conferences, their desire to rent out conference rooms seemingly outweighing any risk to their reputation. For example, at the end of September 2016, I notified Clare College at the University of Cambridge that the predatory conference organizer, the American Society for Research (ASR), was scheduled to hold its International Conference on Educational and Information Technology (ICEIT) at their institution in March 2017. I pointed out that while the ASR claimed to be a nonprofit, it was a registered as a for-profit company and its headquarters was based in China. I also warned that one of its conferences had previously accepted a machine-generated nonsense SCIGen paper that I submitted, and that the owners could be linked to at least eight other predatory publishers and conference companies. Forcing the company to remove the college logo from the conference website proved to be the strongest action the college's conference administrator took. Renamed "the Asian Society for Researchers" after being exposed in a newspaper article, the March 2018 ICEIT is scheduled to be held at St. Anne's College, University of Oxford.

Far too many researchers view the plethora of predatory conferences as opportunities to spend research funds on junkets. There is a reason so many predatory conferences take place in locations like Bali, Miami, and Hawaii. After a presentation on the topic that I held at a conference in Japan, an attendee complained bitterly to me that I risked ruining the party for everyone. The "party" being the abil-

ity to travel someplace warm every winter using research funds. At the predatory conferences I attended in Tokyo, I found it rare for presenters to stay after finishing their own presentations. Exiting with family members carrying guidebooks suggested they had important data collection duties to perform at Tokyo Disneyland.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

There is no magic answer. University faculty, graduate students, and administrators all need more education about the dangers of predatory conferences. Those making an honest mistake and accidentally presenting at a predatory conference need to warn colleagues and the wider academic community. Universities need to take greater steps to avoid hosting predatory conferences and to start refusing to hire, promote, or give funding to researchers attending and doing the organizing. ■

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Combating Academic Corruption: Quality Assurance and Accreditation

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When the Council for Higher Education Accreditation/International Quality Group (CHEA/CIQG) issued its *Advisory Statement for Effective International Practice: Combatting Corruption and Enhancing Integrity* in 2016, the intent was to focus the attention of the quality assurance and accreditation community on the vital issue of academic corruption. Positioning itself as "... a wake-up call to higher education worldwide—particularly to quality assurance bodies ... in both developing and developed countries ... to challenge and overcome these corrupt practices," the *Advisory Statement* provides an opportunity to move forward and to engage this important topic.

But deciding how quality assurance and accreditation, our primary means of assuring quality in higher education worldwide, can play a more creative and constructive leadership role in fighting this phenomenon is not easy. Even establishing the boundaries of what we mean is a major challenge. "Academic corruption" in higher education is complex and can include many things, from bribery to fraud to extortion and more, as is clear from examining the

Transparency International definition, turning to various reliable dictionaries, or adopting an operational definition (as done by the *Advisory Statement* and UNESCO's ETICO, a web-based resource platform targeting the issue of ethics and corruption in education).

CENTRAL ISSUES

Moving forward, three issues are central to the quality assurance/accreditation community. First, we tend to view fighting corruption through the familiar lens of sustaining academic integrity. It would be useful to address whether tools to enhance academic integrity are the same as tools to fight corruption. Arguably, the tasks are not the same. Second, we may not yet be fully aware of the extent of the role played by corruption in the lives of institutions and programs. Perhaps we need tools to expand this awareness. Third, we need additional means to understand and address the inherent cultural variations in what does and does not count as "corruption" in various countries around the world in order to fight it successfully.

Examining the role of quality assurance/accreditation in addressing corruption primarily through the lens of academic integrity has led to the belief that we are already fighting corruption and there is little more that we need to do. We point to our existing laudable commitment, with quality assurance/accreditation standards and policies that require institutions and programs to demonstrate that they support and take steps to enhance integrity. This includes standards and policies that call for, e.g., honesty in working with students and the public, dedication to the highest of ethical standards in teaching, learning, and research, and full transparency in the conduct of college or university business.

However, are existing standards and policies adequate? Is not fighting corruption more than urging faculty and administrators to affirm academic integrity? Are there practices in place, for example, to make sure that plagiarism does not occur with students or faculty—beyond calling for honesty in assignments, research, and writing, as important as this is? Are steps taken to preclude falsification of transcripts or other credentials using today's technology, going beyond assertions that such practices should not occur? What steps are needed to block the sale of grades or admissions, beyond condemning such practices? The aspirations and exhortations associated with academic integrity are vital, but they are not a substitute for needed action against corruption, as described by the various suggestions in the *Advisory Statement*.

With regard to increasing the awareness of the importance of addressing corruption, some in the quality assurance/accreditation community, when asked, say that there is no need—corruption has yet to emerge as a significant