

nal exam were identical and appeared to represent all that was taught in the course despite an impressive syllabus. Needless to say, not a single student reported this information: the practice was only discovered by accident.

Exam questions tend toward the prescriptive, partly because rote learning is easier for students, but also because simple lists of points are easy to mark. When monitoring exams and marking student work, many lecturers turn a blind eye to cheating and overlook errors, merely checking off the good points.

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Implications

Unfortunately, unethical teaching practices not only detract from the reputations of academic institutions but have serious consequences for Botswana's long-term social and economic future. Already the country is overly dependent on a single resource, diamonds (85 percent of foreign earnings for 2002) and is ravaged by HIV/AIDS. A failure to produce well-educated citizens will merely exacerbate these problems, and it is imperative that training be more than just a paper exercise.

Recent speeches by the state president suggest that the government recognizes that there are problems with tertiary education, in terms of product quality and value for money, but it has yet to publicly acknowledge that issues of staff integrity have, at least in part, contributed to these problems. Sadly, we do not believe these problems are restricted to Botswana. Many of the worst culprits are expatriate staff on contracts who are attracted to Botswana by the regionally high salaries and bring various unethical practises with them. However, permanent local staff are beginning to follow the expatriates' successes and will themselves become evaluators of teaching quality here. The cancer is in danger of becoming truly malignant unless something is done about it soon. ■

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Corruption and Higher Education in Georgia

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The Republic of Georgia, with a population of 5 million, has roughly 240 higher education institutions. On the surface, these numbers would suggest a prospering, highly educated society. However, behind this facade lies the reality of degraded standards, crumbling infrastructure, rampant academic fraud, and overall deteriorating educational quality.

At the center of this predicament is pervasive systemic corruption. Economic, institutional, and organizational inadequacies have brought about a widespread extralegal system of governance, characterized by few ethical norms or standards. The passivity of the Georgian people and their willingness to accept this as the status quo have further exacerbated these deficiencies.

Description of Corruption

Corruption may be defined as an improper use of official authority for personal or material benefit. Corruption in higher education manifests itself at all levels and affects a wide array of institutional activities. Major avenues for corruption include the system of admissions, the professional conduct of teachers and administrators, procurement, and the licensing and accreditation of institutions.

The most corrupt area in the Georgian higher education system is perhaps admissions. The system is unfair and inefficient, often characterized by bribery and high levels of subjective criteria. As a result of biased oral examinations, even the least-qualified candidates can easily gain admission to the university system. Some estimates suggest that the majority of available slots are actually sold to prospective students. By some anecdotal reports, the price for university admission may range anywhere from \$200 to \$10,000, depending on the prestige of a university department and a student's qualifications (average monthly salary in Georgia is \$50).

Corruption is manifested indirectly through a system of private tutors who prepare students for entrance examinations. But unlike private tutoring in Europe and North America, in Georgia the fees students pay are, in fact, bribes passed on through the system to ensure admission to the department of their choice.

Equally important is having connections and simply “knowing the system.” Even though it is still possible to gain acceptance into university without paying bribes, chances of success are inversely related to the prestige of a particular department.

Once admitted, a student can practically buy his or her way through the institution, paying for every exam and, ultimately, a diploma. Examinations (either for a semester or for graduation) can cost as much as hundreds of dollars. Moreover, students can bypass the higher education system altogether by simply buying a diploma from an established university. Another venue is corruption involving educational materials: professors often require students to buy their books, and lack of compliance may result in failing an exam.

Universities should have public approval and recognition through accreditation. In Georgia, however, proliferation of private universities and introduction of new programs at public institutions have not been accompanied by the creation of a fair system of accreditation. Licensing new universities and approving new programs often require bribes, which means that the Ministry of Education may recognize institutions and programs that do not satisfy minimum quality standards. Consequently, those institutions license individuals who may not possess adequate professional qualifications.

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Causes and Implications

There are numerous causes of corruption. One reason may be the dire economic situation in the country. For faculty and administration officials, whose salaries have declined significantly over the last decade, taking bribes has become an alternative source to supplement meager incomes.

In addition, the higher education system suffers from the lack of transparent regulation. The decline in public expenditures and funding for education has encouraged universities to seek ways to generate additional resources. However, the absence of an effective new law on higher education and the lack of an efficient regulatory structure have led to increased levels of corruption. The lack of an adequate accreditation mechanism, regulated tax system, and publicly available comprehensive data on the quality of higher education institutions further compounds the problem.

Another source of corruption is an inadequate organizational structure, which does not provide incentives for improved performance and does not have control mechanisms and sanctions in place. Even though efforts have been made to restructure and modernize universities, the system still remains very authoritarian and centralized. Such an atmosphere fails to create opportunities for professional growth and prevents faculty and the administration from developing identification and loyalty with the organization.

Although a number of anticorruption measures have been approved, no substantial changes seem to have taken place.

Yet some instances of corruption are very hard to explain just by economic or regulatory difficulties. Corruption in education is a reflection of a general problem in post-Soviet Georgian society, where cheating and bribery are widely accepted practices. During the Soviet era Georgians mastered the art of beating the system, and sadly the bad habits do not go away easily.

Although a number of anticorruption measures have been approved, no substantial changes seem to have taken place. Corruption is widely acknowledged by university staff and government officials, but offending professors or administrators are rarely punished. The reason is that those at the top have a stake in sustaining the status quo because they are part of the corrupt system themselves and greatly benefit from it.

The implications of pervasive corruption are very serious, and the price of not combating it in a timely manner may turn out to be very high in Georgia. Higher education is a linchpin of a country’s economic and democratic development. It is through higher education that a country educates and chooses its leaders. When the selection is based on a person’s ascriptive characteristics and bribery rather than on academic abilities, a country greatly endangers its economic and social future. Corruption in higher education may have even greater repercussions across Georgian society because it encourages and legitimizes corruption in other spheres. When universities fail to convey to students the importance of such values as “integrity,” “civil society,” and “civic obligations,” they compromise their graduates’ ability to work professionally in their fields and contribute to the democratic and social progress of their country.

What Can Be Done?

There are no simple solutions to combating the problem of educational corruption in Georgia. To start with, it is important to engage in an ongoing systematic study of the phenomenon and its causes through research; student, faculty, and administration surveys; and to encourage public interest and involvement in higher education. Higher education reform should include not only changing systems and regulations but also empowering students and faculty to take initiatives to combat corruption.

Systemic changes may include reforms in state financing of education that encourage private-sector development and competition among universities; creation of a transparent accreditation system; design of standardized national examinations; reform of regulatory and tax systems and procurement procedures; decentralization of management to individual institutions; establishment of professional ethics codes for university faculty and administrators by encouraging professional associations; supporting student anticorruption movements; and strengthening and empowering student governments.

There are no simple solutions to combating the problem of educational corruption in Georgia. To start with, it is important to engage in an ongoing systematic study of the phenomenon and its causes through research.

At the institutional level, possible reforms may include redefining institutional missions and drafting honor codes that place emphasis on quality, academic integrity, and honesty; improved remuneration that provides incentives for better productivity; developing structures that reward achievement; establishing sanctions against corrupt practices and prosecuting offenders; developing internal rules and regulations for administrative practices; redesigning and rationalizing academic programs and establishing performance targets. Equally important is the need to develop systems that monitor and evaluate progress toward reduced corruption.

Georgia, in transition to democratization and economic development, can no longer afford to waste its limited resources. Every effort should be made to eliminate corruption in higher education, and it is crucial to ensure that every policy or structural change is an informed decision based on empirical research and systematic study. ■

Graduate Employment: Issues for Debate and Inquiry

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Recent European studies have shown most graduates to be in quite reasonable employment situations a few years after graduating. While concerns continue to be expressed by some employers that many graduates do not possess the right skills and competencies, there is also considerable industry in many universities to improve the employability of their graduates. Does the evidence justify optimism?

Unquestioned Assumptions

Graduates are rewarded (or not) by the actions of employers. We must assume that these are the actions of rational and fully informed men and women. Thus, we must also assume that salaries reflect nothing but the balance between demand and supply. We must further assume that employers have perfect information on which to set wage levels, to make recruitment decisions, to train or to promote, and that they behave entirely rationally. Much of the analysis of graduate employment data explicitly or implicitly rests on assumptions of this sort. Occasionally, sceptical voices are heard.

Averages Are Averages

The positive image currently associated with graduate employment prospects should not hide the possibility that the rosy futures of the majority may not be shared by all. A recent U.K. study (*Access to What? Analysis of Factors Determining Graduate Employability*, by the Centre for Higher Education Research and Information) attempted to identify some of the social and educational factors associated with employment success. Overall, the differences in terms of social background were not as great as might have been expected from previous work. It remains the case, however, that the generally positive picture on graduate employment may be hiding some quite negative experiences for some graduates.

Perceptions Are Perceptions

Most of our knowledge about skills and competencies comes from the perceptions of employers and the graduates themselves. While these are certainly interesting data, they should not go unchallenged. How many employers keep records about the relative success of