

relationship between the Ministry of Education, particular institutions, the student body, and the wider public. Greater autonomy is required to determine curricular content for faculties and individual departments. Basing the allocation of funding for university programs on individual student grades needs to be ended since it can lead to grade inflation. A substantial cut is needed in the number of courses that students are expected to take and teachers are expected to teach, which leaves little time for assimilating and preparing material, and encourages a “memorize-recite-forget” approach to learning. Perhaps most importantly, it demands that curricula and individual courses at all universities, especially those catering to a predominantly rural student body, be configured to meet the needs of today’s school leavers, taking into consideration actual rather than imagined levels of preparation and available rather than hypothetical course materials. ■

## Higher Education in Kazakhstan: The Issue of Corruption

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According to multiple reports from students, corruption has hampered higher education systems in the post-Soviet region. Faculty members charge students for exam grades; administrators charge for admissions. Anecdotal evidence suggests that academic corruption may be a pervasive phenomenon in higher education in the region.

Higher education in Kazakhstan provides an illustration of corruption in the sector. According to a 2002 World Bank survey, higher education in Kazakhstan is perceived as corrupt by the public. One out of four surveyed households that had a student at a university reported paying a bribe for higher education services. Seventy-four percent of reported bribes were made to a specific person associated with a university. When asked about why they paid a bribe, 69 percent of respondents said they did it to obtain admission to a university and 10 percent to receive better grades.

The existence of corruption inhibits the ability of educational systems to serve the economy and society. It misleads employers and evokes mistrust among the general public. Corruption deprives civic culture by generating the impression that universities are unfair to

young people, while breeding a culture of cynicism about the nation and its claimed civic virtues. When higher education is corrupt, young people come to believe that cheating and bribing may advance their careers.

Despite the possible pervasive and serious consequences, educational corruption has only recently drawn some attention in higher education literature. The current discussion of educational corruption is largely supported by anecdotal evidence. This article is based on a survey and interviews with students in the Republic of Kazakhstan in spring 2003 on their personal experience with and perception of corruption.

Two survey instruments were administered to 1,000 university students and 250 faculty members at a large state university in Kazakhstan with about 10,000 students and 900 faculty. To ensure reliable responses, respondents were guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality. Additionally, interviews were conducted with top university administrators, to obtain their views on corruption at their institution.

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### *Evidence of Corruption*

The findings of the survey support the claim that corruption in higher education exists. Although few students (10 percent) and faculty members (6 percent) explicitly admit personal involvement in educational corruption, the vast majority (88 percent of faculty and 74 percent of students) agree with the statement that corruption in higher education is a widespread occurrence. Areas perceived as most corrupt are admissions and exams. Some 78 percent of students and 62 percent of faculty report that corruption most frequently occurs during examination sessions. Seventeen percent of students and 28 percent of faculty in the sample consider admissions the most corrupt area in higher education. The interviews of administration officials revealed that they are rather reluctant to acknowledge the issue and choose to deny it, at least to the external observer.

### *Control Mechanisms*

The state of formal control mechanisms that explicitly regulate corruption appears to be weak. About 80 percent of faculty members report that they have never read rules explicitly regulating activities such as charging students or accepting gifts or services for grades. Similarly, about 90 percent of students report they never read any rules that explicitly regulate faculty-student exchange of money, gifts, or services for grades. University offi-

cials largely refuse to acknowledge that corruption is an issue at their institution and, as a result, found the need for rules unnecessary. Occasionally, they mentioned that they did not believe that any formal rules could prevent bribery.

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The state of informal norms related to corruption is difficult to detect, and the findings reported here should be interpreted with caution. Some organizational participants consider money exchanges for grades between students and professors acceptable and appropriate. Seventeen percent of faculty members see nothing wrong with educational corruption and about 12 percent of faculty think that charging students for a grade is either an acceptable or generally ignorable behavior. Although these numbers are not high, they may describe the beginning of a disturbing trend.

Interestingly, about 70 percent of students think that educational corruption is a disturbing phenomenon requiring administrative intervention. However, over 65 percent of students report that if a teacher requests payment for a grade they will satisfy the request without complaining to the administration. Apparently, students' expectations that administrators will support their complaints about teachers' demands for bribes are rather low. This may be interpreted as indirect evidence of administrators' turning a blind eye to corruption.

According to students' responses to open questions in the questionnaire, they are likely to comply with teachers' demands for a bribe at the exam because a refusal might hurt their chances to get a satisfactory grade regardless of their performance. Others may agree because it gives them an opportunity to obtain an "easy grade." This is especially pertinent for the poorly prepared students who are able to afford a bribe. Students say they are not likely to complain to the administration out of fear of an aggressive reaction by officials and a possibility of being expelled from the university. This raises questions about the nature of the leadership culture of the university.

#### *The Impact of Corruption*

There appears to be some agreement among faculty, and to a lesser degree among students, regarding the consequences of educational corruption. The majority of fac-

ulty members (about 72 percent) and half of the students surveyed consider educational corruption harmful to society and in general a problem. But 50 percent of students and 28 percent of faculty do not see any negative impact on society from corruption in the higher education system.

The general picture presented here is troubling. Feelings and beliefs about the impact of educational corruption and the necessity for policies targeting its prevention and eradication are greeted by both students and faculty with mixed feelings. Administrators appear to ignore the problem, which leaves little opportunity for students to raise it as an issue. Further research on corruption in the post-Soviet region is necessary to understand the causes and consequences of this phenomenon and to develop effective policy recommendations. ■

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## The End of Civic Diplomacy and International Education

**Philip G. Altbach**

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Half the battle in the Middle East is for the hearts and minds of the Islamic world. A longer-term goal for the United States is to build relations of respect not only with nations but with people around the world—especially with students, scholars, and intellectuals—the opinion makers of today and tomorrow. Last week, a symptomatic event occurred—evidence of how the United States is putting itself in a position that makes it completely impossible to win that battle. The State Department suddenly revoked the visa already granted to Professor Tariq Ramadan, on the basis of undisclosed information supplied by the Department of Homeland Security. Professor Ramadan is not just one of the many individuals caught up in the machinations of the post-September 11 world. He is one of the most visible, if controversial, Muslim scholars in Europe. His work on Muslim-Christian relations and the role of Muslims in Western nations is at the cutting edge on a set of issues central to contemporary society. He is a professor in Geneva, Switzerland, and was invited by the University of Notre Dame to teach a course on Islamic ethics. He had already arranged for his children to attend schools in Indiana.

The Ramadan case is yet another example—widely reported in Europe and internationally—of how foreign individuals are treated by an American government fearful of people and perhaps ideas it does not completely