Combating Corruption in Tertiary Education: a Case-Study of Third-Party Monitoring

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Romania

- 1997-2000, the University of Medicine and Pharmacy „Grigore T Popa” issued 63 forged diplomas of stomatology to Italian citizens
outline of the presentation

- what types of unethical behaviors?
- how to combat fraud and corruption?
- a case study of third-party reporting
• “unethical or corrupt behavior” used to refer broadly to all forms of improper and/or illegal actions in tertiary education
inventory of corrupt practices

- admission process (exam fraud, bribery, favoritism, discrimination)
- teaching and learning (cheating, plagiarism)
- false credentials
- quality assurance (false data, bribery, favoritism)
- research (standards, falsification of results, conflict of interest, theft of ideas)
- academic staff career (bribery, discrimination, harassment)
- financial management (theft, embezzlement, student loan fraud)
informal payments for education

% of households that make informal payments
outline of the presentation

- what types of unethical behaviors?
- how to combat fraud and corruption?
preventive measures

- legislation and other government policies

- institutional policies and governance arrangements
  - diversified, independent Board
  - strong leadership
  - transparent decision-making
  - honor code

- standardized / automated procedures
survey of corruption in Kyrgyz universities

KTU: 68
KAU: 67.5
NGU: 64.9
BGU: 62
Bishkek Medical: 59.6
KGUSTA: 59
KRSU: 51
MUK: 49.5
KGAFKIS: 34.3
AUCA: 5.1

Percentage
detecting and monitoring

- computer programs and other IT instruments
- tip lines and other reporting venues
- surveys
- audits
punitive measures

- legal action
- career / status sanctions
- academic / professional sanctions
- protests and violence
multi-purpose mechanisms

- accreditation systems
- education / awareness raising
- transparent reporting / publicity
  - integrity ranking
outline of the presentation

• what types of unethical behaviors?

• how to combat fraud and corruption?

• a case study of third-party reporting
integrity challenges in the Romanian tertiary education system

the role of the Coalition for Clean Universities
Coalition for Clean Universities

• background:
  – 2007 survey 77% of students and 35% of lecturers consider that level of corruption is high
  – autonomy without accountability (no sufficient mechanisms, and Ministry not enforcing existing ones)

• 14 coalition members from civil society, including students and professors associations: watchdog and benchmarking
CCU

- **aim**: monitor and rank 42 public universities vis-à-vis integrity and transparency standards
- “naming and shaming” strategy, and publicize **good practices**
- second round: 2010
evaluation criteria

• **administrative probity:** transparent institutional practices

• **academic probity:** professors’ performance and meritocracy in career management
• **democratic governance**: enforcement of codes of ethic (plagiarism, nepotism, cronyism), students’ participation into decision-making process

• **sound financial practice**: transparent and honest public procurement practices, transparent budget
evaluation tools

- public information requests
- analysis of existing data (incl. available reports from oversight institutions and media reports)
- information from whistleblowers
- interviews with stakeholders (students, academics, management)
methodology

• 20 evaluation teams, each one with one teaching staff (experience abroad) and one student

• evaluators could not evaluate universities from their own city

• one faculty from each of the 42 universities was randomly selected for academic probity issues

• each report was reviewed by an external reviewer

• final ranking reviewed by external reviewers and by the Coalition for Clean Universities
information requested

- by-laws
- activity reports
- code of ethics and activity of ethics commissions
- University Charta
- budget
- wealth and interests statements
- teaching positions and salary lists, including bonuses
- ISI publications and international patents
- student evaluations of professors and courses
- list of public acquisitions exceeding 10,000 Euros
scoring sheet

- administrative probity 30 points
- academic probity 20 points
- democratic governance 35 points
- sound financial practice 15 points
penalties:
10 negative points each

- University has lost trials on issues of fairness
- more than one prosecuted case of corruption, sexual harassment, discrimination in past 4 years
- negative reports by oversight institutions in past 4 years
- proofs of serious acts of forgery in the past 10 years (ex. false diplomas)
criminal case: Oradea U

• sending false information to government on number of students
  
  – between January 2000 and January 2004, reported between 17,000 and 33,000 state-budgeted students, while only 14,000 were actually enrolled
  
  – approximate damage to the state budget was 24.3 million euro
results

• administrative probity
  – only 38% of state universities are transparent as regards to administration
  – 16 have all assets statements published and updated, 13 published in an incomplete form, and 13 plainly refused to make them public

• academic probity
  – total lack of enforcement of any basic rules at 70% of the universities
results (II)

- **democratic governance**
  - in 95% of the universities, a great number of families identified within faculty and administrative staff.
  - only 20% comply with the conditions of participation of student representatives in the decision-making process

- **sound financial practice**
  - 38% of universities refused to provide evaluators with the necessary financial documents or provided incomplete documentation
integrity ranking

universities divided from 5 stars to 0

- no university received 5 stars
- 3 universities received 4 stars
- 18 universities received 3 stars
- 10 universities received 2 stars
- 5 universities received 1 star
- 6 universities received 0 stars (“you don’t want to study there!”)
lessons learned

• implementation difficulties
  – consistency and objectivity of evaluators
  – access to information

• complete lack of awareness of accountability requirements
impact

- more transparency (websites, internal procedures, etc.)
- draft higher education law to define autonomy and accountability
- ranking used to put pressure for good governance
conclusion
the integrity imperative

- proper use of public resources
- danger to the public
- potential loss of talent
- trust in the meritocratic process
- social justice (moral dimension)
the way forward

- more documentation and closer monitoring (surveys, reporting mechanisms)
- more systematic assessment of which policies and instruments work