Session II(a): Corruption in Higher Education

Fraud & Corruption in Higher Education: Why, How & What Role for Leadership

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Outline of Presentation

1. Context
2. Why Corruption in Higher Education?
3. Actors in Corruption
4. Forms of Corruption
5. Global Scan of Corruption in Higher Education
6. Roles for Higher Education Leadership
I. Context

- Existence of corruption in HE known for decades, but its magnitude & extent not realized until recently
- With the ever-expanding HE sector, globalisation, commodification of HE, etc. corruption in HE is set to increase
- “Corruption for resources, fame and notoriety place extraordinary pressures on higher education institutions……..In some instances, corruption has invaded whole systems of higher education and threatens the reputation of research products and graduates, regardless of their guilt and innocence”.


- Corruption in HE is prevalent in both developing and developed countries, although the factors and actors may be different
2. Why Corruption in Higher Education?

- Dramatic increase in output from secondary sector, HEIs cannot accommodate all the students
- Pressure for admission to best universities and to professional programmes – medicine, law, engineering
- A university degree now a prerequisite for most white-collar jobs – many jobs even require a Masters or PhD
- A degree enables moving up the social ladder and increasing family income
- Failure at university regarded as a societal stigma
- Insufficient funds in public HEIs - need to generate income in a competitive environment
- Commercialization of HE – private HEIs operate as corporate, profit-making entity
- Dramatic improvement in ICT
3. Actors in Corruption

- **External Actors:**
  - Politicians
  - Recruiting agents
  - Suppliers of goods
  - Accreditation bodies
  - Parents of students
  - Business & industry
  - Donors & sponsors
  - Diploma/degree mills

- **Internal Actors:**
  - University leadership
  - Procurement staff
  - Examination officers
  - Researchers
  - Staff in finance section
  - Students admissions staff
  - Academic teaching staff
  - Students
4. Forms of Corruption in Higher Education

Corruption can take place at every stage of operation of a HEI:

- Setting up of institution (especially private one) – corruption at level of regulatory agency
- Political interference in governance of the HEI
- Admission of students: fake documents, corrupt foreign recruiters & agents, bribery of admission officers
- Fraud in internal financial management of HEI
- Nepotism/favoritism in appointment & promotion of faculty
- Cross-Border Higher Education: bogus institutions, non-accredited programs, diploma/degree mills, fake certificates
- Cheating at examinations, plagiarism in PhD theses, faking of research results
- Sexual harassment by faculty
- Pressure from industry (e.g. pharmaceutical) to manipulate results of sponsored research
5. Global Scan of Corruption Cases in HE (1/3)

Australia

- Degrees of Deception video on ‘Four Corners’ program, ABC, 2015
- Pressure on universities to recruit foreign students & ensure they pass e.g. graduating unqualified nurses
- Fraudulent recruitment agents
- Widespread plagiarism, cheating, exploitation
- Standards of Australian universities being compromised

Russia

- 2014 paper in online Journal International Education Studies
- 50% of the 7.5m students in 2008/09 had faced corruption
- Dean accepted bribe of Euros 30,000 for admission of a PhD
- Moscow Police report 30-40 Profs caught each year for accepting bribes for awarding good grades
5. Global Scan of Corruption Cases in HE (2/3)

China

- 2015 article in *International Higher Education* refers to corruption in China’s HE system as malignant tumor
- Widespread plagiarism, researchers pocketing grant funding
- Favoritism in appointment of research staff
- Corrupt practices in approval of doctoral programs by Ministry of Education & in appointment of doctoral advisors

India

- Shocking *Vyapam* scandal surfaced in 2015, involving politicians, businessmen, senior officials & 2,500 impersonators in exams
- *Vyapam* – govt. body in State of Madhya Pradesh responsible for entrance exams for govt. jobs & admission to HEIs, especially medical colleges
- More than 2,000 arrested, dozens of those directly involved have died, under suspicion of murder or suicide
- Case still being investigated by India’s Central Bureau of Investigation
5. Global Scan of Corruption Cases in HE (3/3)

Africa

- 42 bogus HEIs in *South Africa* closed for offering fake programmes, including 3 bogus US-based univs awarding degrees in 15 days
- Most common cases of corruption in *Nigeria*: promotions, journals & book publications, money extortion for handouts & marks, sexual harassment
- In an IUCEA survey, of 475 students surveyed in 3 *East African* univs, 1/3 admitted to plagiarism, 25% to collusion in exams, 5% to impersonating another student in exams
- In 2016 *Mauritius* closed down branch campuses of 2 private Indian univs offering degrees not recognized in India or Mauritius

Most cases of corruption brought to light by the media – an important player in the fight for corruption – but they become vulnerable to repression
6. Roles for Higher Education Leadership (1/3)

- Be informed of activities at international level & use available resources:
  - **Advisory Statement** for Combatting Corruption & Enhancing Integrity - by CHEA International Quality Group (CIQG) and UNESCO/IIEP in July 2016
  - **Webinars** organised by CIQG on corruption in HE (3 so far)
  - Council of Europe’s platform – **ETINED** – for promoting ethics, transparency & integrity at all levels of education
  - **Anti-Corruption Helpdesk** of Transparency International – provides on demand research on anti-corruption issues
  - **ETICO**: web-base resource platform on issues of ethics & corruption in education by UNESCO/IIEP
  - **HE Corruption Monitor** by Boston College, US – provides updated resources on corruption in HE worldwide
6. Roles for Higher Education Leadership (2/3)

- Set up a robust, integrated Management Information System
  - Access to reliable data and information is vital for detecting corruption
  - But MIS requires strong IT system, is very costly & difficult to implement, but worth the investment
  - Seek advice and guidance from other institutions

- For greater transparency involve independent external experts, students & other stakeholders in all decision-making processes

- Develop an anti-corruption policy document covering all institutional activities – most Kenyan public univs have such a document but effective implementation may be wanting

- Set up a transparent, if possible computerised, student admissions system e.g. at Univ of Mauritius
6. Roles for Higher Education Leadership (3/3)

- Create an Academic Honesty Unit to inform, educate and sensitise students about integrity & create awareness of negative impact of corruption e.g. at Botho Univ in Botswana
- Embed ethics and integrity in all programmes
- Make wide use of software for detecting plagiarism e.g. Turnitin and free online tools such as PlagTacker or Anti-Plagiarism
- Set up an Internal QA system
  - Policies & processes should not only ensure quality but also promote integrity and discourage academic fraud
- Private HEIs should not use profit as their sole motivation; they should operate not as a business entity but as an academic institution
The guiding principle in fighting corruption should be that higher education is neither a business nor an industry, but a public good impregnated with values.

THANK YOU