

Taxonomy of corruption in higher education system of Azerbaijan

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Corruption in higher education is a worldwide occurrence and particularly common in developing countries. Empirical studies of the causes of corruption are fairly new for us. In order to devise anti-corruption programmes in Azerbaijan it is necessary to know the nature, characteristics, patterns and organizational structure of this phenomenon in Azerbaijan. The purpose of this article is to analyze and investigate causes and consequences of corruption, specific character of corruption in education system of Azerbaijan, principles of define the education quality, impact of corruption on high education quality.

This article builds on the available literature and author's knowledge to construct a new taxonomy describing corruption in higher education system of Azerbaijan by distinguishing education-specific and general (administrative) corruption. Five overlapping subcategories were identified within education-specific corruption depending on the participants involved in the act of exchange and the area of its occurrence. Different types of corruption may require different theoretical and methodological approaches if research is to be conducted on educational corruption. Both formal (World Bank, 2003) and informal reports posit that bribes are increasingly necessary to gain admissions into university programs, as well as to obtain high marks for academic achievements. Diplomas and dissertations are available for purchase, and academic mentors charge their students for consultations. According to the evidence presented by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Chronicle, 2002), corruption in academe is a worldwide phenomenon. Developing countries appear to stand out on this measure; however, the developed countries are not immune to it either.

Flourishing of educational corruption has a negative impact on society. It undermines public trust in higher education, exacerbates the quality of education, prepares unqualified young professionals, and teaches them distorted values and culture. The media, student testimony, and a limited body of research on educational corruption (World Bank, 2002, 2003) suggest that corruption in education may be a far-reaching occurrence. Despite the serious consequences that educational corruption forces on society and its possible pervasiveness around the world, this observable fact only recently started to gain the attention of educational researchers. Although significant progress is observed in the field, insight into the structures and processes of educational corruption is still limited.

Corruption in higher education deserves attention for many reasons but in particular because of the negative impact it has on society. For example, analysis of newspaper articles and television news programs about countries in the CIS region implies that corruption in higher education undermines employers' and the general public's trust in the country's colleges and universities. Corruption in higher education may take multiple forms and permeate all areas of the system. Heyneman (Heynman S.P., 2004) provided an overview of the categories of corruption in higher education and distinguished between corruption in selection, corruption in accreditation,

corruption in procurement, professional misconduct, and corruption in educational property and taxes. Chapman (in press) provided a broad classification of corruption in secondary and higher education, which breaks down various illicit activities into groups by the level of occurrence and type of activities. To summarize, Chapman's classification suggested that corruption occurs in the following levels of the educational system: Ministry of Education, region–district, school level, classroom–teacher level, and international agencies. It manifests itself through the following activities: favoritism in procurement, favoritism in personnel appointments, ghost teachers, selling admissions and grades, private tutoring, and skimming from project grants (to name a few). Waite and Allen (2003) dedicated an article to corruption in educational administration where they provide several examples of such corruption. In his overview of corruption in academe, Altbach (2004) distinguished between professorial corruption and corruption in examinations. The first category includes favoritism in hiring and promotion, whereas the second category includes paying bribes for examination grades.

Developing a deep and solid understanding of the structure of educational corruption is necessary for building strong theories on its potential causes and regulatory mechanisms. We intend to expand on the existing understanding of educational corruption by developing a new taxonomy to better describe this phenomenon and to qualitatively distinguish between different types of corrupt activities. In other words, this taxonomy acknowledges the complexity of educational corruption by qualitatively deconstructing corruption, rather than recognizing it as simply one large phenomenon. This method seeks to identify categories of corruption that are unique to education, as well as isolate those that are common to education and other public sectors. The usefulness of such a classification is based on the idea that understanding a particular type of corruption provides more insight regarding its causes and consequences. Therefore, by distinguishing between conceptually different types of educational corruption, this taxonomy serves as a starting point for future studies on its antecedents, consequences, and policy recommendations on anticorruption measures. In addition, a new classification may become a starting point for the development of vocabulary on educational corruption that will facilitate future discussion and research in this area.

What is unique to educational corruption? Does it deserve special attention, or can it be viewed as a subset of corrupt practices common to any public sectors? Perhaps the best way to answer these questions is to analyze the consequences of corruption in higher education on society by comparing them to outcomes of corruption in other public sectors. Chapman (2004) distinguished two different types of consequences of educational corruption. First, educational corruption leads to waste of the financial resources. This is similar to corruption's consequences in other public sectors. Second, costs of educational corruption are incurred when children are denied access to schooling because of corruption in admission; when misallocation of talent occurs as a result of bribery in examinations and tracking processes; and when propagation of culture of corruption, manipulation, and favoritism among the new generation of citizens occur as they personally participate in corruption. These types of consequences are not common to just any public sector. On the contrary, these consequences are interwoven with essential functions of the higher educational system; therefore, the corruption that produces them is education specific.

Higher education has a strong influence on the selection of the elite and, thus, the nation's future leadership. The importance of these functions of higher education for the well-being of society is tremendous. When corruption interferes with the core tasks of higher education, it tends to undermine the welfare of society by ultimately affecting its youths. Does educational corruption always interfere with the core functions of the educational system? Does any type of corruption directly affect a student's opportunities in life or change his or her values and beliefs? An affirmative response will perhaps be an unreasonable exaggeration. Some types of corruption,

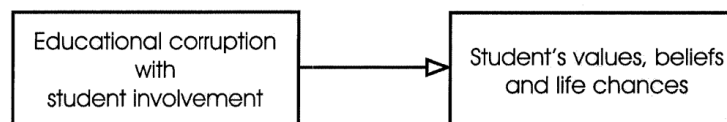
primarily those occurring in administrative or ministerial levels (Chapman,2004), may prove harmful for system’s financial well-being or accreditation status, but it may be too remote from the students to directly affect their values, beliefs, and opportunities.

As a result of this discussion, two types of educational corruption emerge: corruption that involves students as agents and has direct affect on their values, beliefs, and life chances, and corruption that does not involve students as agents and has limited direct affect on them. To clarify these definitions, consider the following two hypothetical scenarios.

First scenario: A faculty member demands a bribe in exchange for a grade or admission to a university. Consequence: The student faces two choices. If the student cannot pay, then his or her chances of acquiring a university degree are threatened, or the student receives an unfair grade that does not properly reflect his or her knowledge. If the student pays for a grade, it puts him or her in an unfair comparative advantage over other students and develops a belief that there is no need to study to get a good grade. Both of these choices have the potential to mislead possible employers, grant-giving agencies, and other parties interested in students’ merits. Ultimately, the result of this situation damages low-income students’ future opportunities and nurtures the belief in all students that academic success may be purchased and hard work is a worthless investment.

Second scenario: An administrator embezzles school funds. Consequence: Public funds are not used effectively, and the overall amount of resources available to the university has diminished. These types of corrupt activities influence students through the damages done to the institution’s finances. Fewer scholarships may be available to students, or the quality or quantity of essentials such as books, technology, or equipment available to students may diminish. Although the effect on students is present, it is indirect and realized through various mediating factors. Figures 1a and 1b provide visual representation of the two types of corruption and its effect on students.

a. Model that directly involves student.



b. Model that does not directly involve student.

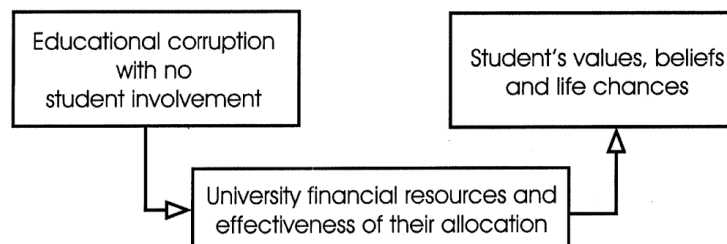


Figure 1. Models of the consequences of educational corruption.

The remaining discussion on taxonomy of corruption is focused on corruption that involves students as agents and is termed, from now on, *education-specific corruption*. Although identification of a subset of corrupt activities that involve students as agents of corruption is a useful tool for analysis, it does not provide sufficient precision in definitions. Students may be involved in many different subcategories of education-specific corruption. A student may be asked to, or voluntarily offer to, pay a bribe to a faculty member for a grade or to pass an exam; a student may be coerced by an administrator to pay a “fee” for a good grade on a number of examinations

(this may be paralleled with cases when a student seeks an administrator's help to obtain satisfactory grades), or a student may be asked to pay a bribe to a librarian for the right to borrow a book. Depending on the participants involved in education-specific corruption, we distinguish between the following types of educational corruption: student–faculty exchange, student–administrator exchange, and student–staff exchange. Examples of all types can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Examples of Categories of Educational Specific Corruption

<i>Participants</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Area of Occurrence</i>
1. Student–faculty exchange	<p>Student offers money for examination grade that professor accepts and gives a good grade to the student although he or she does not know the subject.</p> <p>Faculty member sells a student a term paper.</p> <p>Professor gives a low grade to a student who knows the subject and recommends private tutoring. Later he/she passes the student regardless of how much the student learned.</p>	<p>Academic corruption</p> <p>Academic Corruption</p> <p>Academic corruption</p> <p>Academic corruption</p>
2. Student–administrator exchange	<p>An administrator “helps” a slow learner to obtain good grades in all subjects by ordering relevant faculty members to grade him or her favorably. Student pays an administrator a “service fee.”</p> <p>Administrator charges student’s family a fee for guaranteed admission to his or her university.</p> <p>Administrator charges student a fee for guaranteed access to the university dormitory with limited space availability bypassing the official process.</p>	<p>Academic corruption</p> <p>Academic corruption</p> <p>Corruption in services</p> <p>Corruption in services</p>
3. Student–staff exchange	<p>A librarian charges student a fee for the right to borrow a book, when the number of copies of this book is limited.</p> <p>An administrative assistant charges a student for transcripts that are supposed to be free of charge.</p> <p>Student services representative charges a student a fee for guaranteed tickets of limited availability to a major recreational event.</p>	<p>Corruption in services</p> <p>Corruption in services</p> <p>Corruption in services</p>

Student–faculty exchange occurs in the classroom, admissions (this is especially pertinent to educational systems where faculty are involved in admission processes), examinations, and routine

tests. Material gifts, monies, and favors get exchanged for grades and other academic achievements.

By definition, participants in this exchange are students and professors. The exchange may be either student driven or professor driven. Student–staff exchange occurs in the area of student services such as in the library, in the student dormitories, the acquisition of transcripts, and gaining access to student benefits (stipends or scholarships, discounted tickets for recreational events, etc.). Material gifts, monies, and favors are exchanged for favors to obtain access to student services. By definition, the participants involved in this type of corruption are students and members of the staff. It may be student driven or staff driven. Student–administrator exchange may occur both in academic and service areas. By definition, the participants are students and administrators.

The objects of exchange are academic achievements and privileges in using student services and receiving favorable treatment from the administration. The currency of exchange may be monies, gifts, and favors. When an administrator charges a student for a guaranteed admission into the university, we say that an exchange occurred in the academic area of the university. When an administrator charges a student for a guaranteed spot in a university dormitory (this is especially relevant to the countries where dormitory access is limited), this is classified as corruption occurring in the area of student services. Full taxonomy of corruption in higher education is presented in Figure 2.

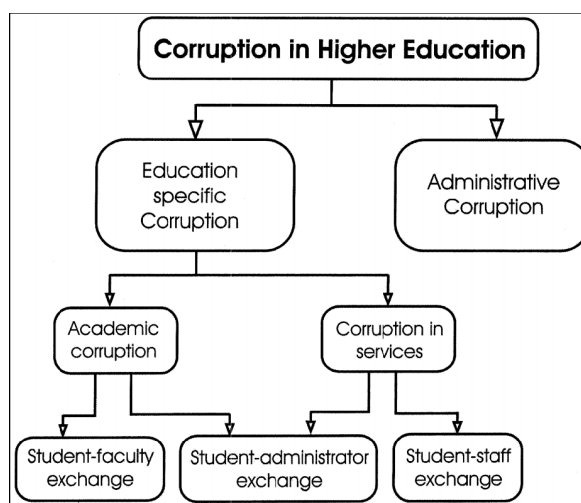


Figure 2. Taxonomy of corruption in higher education.

Although at first it may seem that the last category is an extension of the first two, it is, in fact, different. Student–administrator exchange clearly sets aside the cases of corruption that are mediated by administrators as opposed to those initiated by professors or staff members. Cases involving a faculty member deciding to take a bribe in exchange for an undeserved grade raises issues regarding norms of academic profession as well as formal codes of conduct (Goode, 1957) and professional misconduct (Braxton & Bayer, 1999). Cases involving the coercion or invitation to collaborate with a faculty member by an administrator to give an undeserved grade demand a discussion on administrative ethics, quality of leadership, and distribution of power between administrators and professionals. A similar (but not identical) distinction may be drawn in cases when administrators bypass, coerce, or collaborate with staff members on education-specific corruption. Although both staff and administrators violate the law when engaged in corruption, involvement of an administrator indicates the depth of penetration of

corruption in the organization and decayed leadership of the university. It is clear that this distinction has consequences for future studies in educational corruption as well as choices of intervention mechanisms.

Three types of education-specific corruption possess similarities that allow for regrouping them into two categories based on the area where exchanges occur. First, student–faculty exchange and some cases of student– administrator exchange occur in the area directly related to academic activities. These cases might be grouped into a category termed *academic corruption*. On the other hand, student–staff and some cases of student–administrator exchange occurs in the area of student services and may be termed *corruption in services*.

Therefore, by distinguishing between conceptually different types of educational corruption this taxonomy serves as a starting point for future studies on its antecedents, consequences and policy recommendations on anti-corruption measures.

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