Corruption in Higher Education: causes, consequences, reforms
The case of Georgia

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

 Certain cases from any single country might provide examples for consideration of corruption issues for other countries or regions. Corruption cases and the strategies of fighting them in Georgian flagship universities might be noteworthy and useful for other countries facing similar problems.

The paper discusses the features of corruption in higher education system in Georgia and the ways to decrease its prevalence. It emphasizes the importance of the aspirations of the country to join NATO in its effectiveness to conduct higher education reforms and to fight corruption. The paper also analyses the three interventions that have served to combat corruption in Georgian higher education. These interventions are: the initiation of Unified National Entrance Examinations, a new system to accredit higher education institutions, and the restructuring of higher education staff.

The paper makes a suggestion that these reforms shattered the complacency and confidence of corrupt individuals, decreased the level of familiarity with corrupt systems and channels, increased the risk of bribe taking, and made the re-channeling of corrupt practices risky and expensive.

The conclusion summarizes the key findings, discusses the implications of the reforms, and offers recommendations for further actions.

Introduction

The article discusses the nature of corruption in higher education, the extent of higher education corruption in Georgia and the policy reforms aimed at lowering its incidence. It has been stated that corruption affects three major aspects of education: access, equity and quality (Heyneman, 2004, 2008, 2009). Corruption in higher education hinders all three goals. Therefore, the paper addresses the issue of corruption in relation to access, equity and quality of education. The reforms that began in 2004-2005 (and still continue) have made a significant contribution to fighting corruption. These reforms include: 1) access through the introduction of Unified National Entrance Exams and equity in access by assisting the financing of various ethnic minority and low-SES students through the establishment of governmental grants; 2) quality through the accreditation of higher education institutions and 3) efficiency through the restructuring of academic and administrative staff. The discussion of the three interventions is based mainly on the examples from Tbilisi State University (TSU); references to other universities and institutions are used for comparisons and illustrative purposes whenever relevant.

The information is drawn from scholarly studies conducted on corruption in higher education, from mass media reports, from private conversations with people affected by corruption in higher education in Georgia, as well as from knowledge accumulated through years of experience that could be qualified as participant observation method.

Corruption in Higher Education in Georgia: Prevalence and Interventions

Corruption in higher education is difficult to define. What is considered to be corrupt behavior by some, may be considered acceptable or normal by others. For instance, insisting that a student's opinion mirror that of a professor is considered corrupt by some, but others consider that to be normal. What might be perceived as favoritism or nepotism in one culture might be considered as supporting family, relational or friendship ties in another. Nevertheless, certain cases from any single country might provide an example for consideration of corruption issues for other countries or regions. The present paper sets forth the corruption cases in Georgian flagship universities and analyses the strategies for fighting corruption. This study might be useful for other countries facing similar problems.

Scholarly literature on corruption in higher education is relatively scarce in any country due to the specific nature of the topic. Georgia is no exception. Following are the studies of corruption in higher education in Georgia. Heyneman (2008) offers interview results from professors at Tbilisi State University regarding their experience with corruption. Peuch (2002), Rostiashvili (2004) and Dalalishvili (2006) talk about the spread of corruption in the higher education system in Georgia and its negative influences on society and on the development of the country in general. Temple (2006) offers approaches to fight corruption in Georgian universities. The Decree of Parliamentary Sub-committee of Education of Georgia (2002) acknowledges the existence of corruption in the higher education system and sets fighting it as one of its primary goals, while Stephens and Hellberg (2003) perceive the Tempus TACIS project as a catalyst to initiate reforms and fight corruption in the education sector. The Black Sea Conference (2006) discusses the issues of equity, fairness and access in higher education in

Georgia, while the recent EPPM (International Institute for Education Policy Planning and Management) (2008) study outlines the major challenges facing higher education in Georgia in which the necessity to establish an autonomous peer-reviewed system of accreditation and to increase transparency and access to information in the hiring process of academic and administrative staff in universities is emphasized. The involvement of international experts in monitoring the progress and transparency of implementing new policies is also underlined. The document states that because accreditation is mostly nationally monitored objectivity is not yet achieved. There are no horizontal connections between the universities in order to develop an autonomous peer-reviewed system of accreditation. Lack of information and a centralized process of accreditation are perceived to create conducive environment for spreading corruption in the higher education system. According to the document, 30 court cases were registered during 2007-2008, of which the National Accreditation Center won 27 cases and 3 cases were re-sent for reconsideration (EPPM, 2008: 30).

Some features of fighting corruption in higher education in Georgia

One unique feature of fighting corruption in higher education in Georgia is the aspiration of the country to join NATO. This aspiration put pressure to implement new (and oftentimes radical) measures and monitor the process of fighting corruption. The intense nature with which the reforms were conducted was often criticized by certain academics, particularly of the older generation. However, it was exactly this intensity of the reforms which might have brought about certain results in fighting corruption. The reforms, especially the Unified National Examinations and institutional accreditation, received the support of the wider public. The reason behind the support could be that people were able to see the benefits of the new policies, of transparent

examinations and of high quality institutions, and that academic degrees could then become competitive on the national and international job market. The desire to join NATO made fighting corruption, increasing transparency and enhancing quality of education more important.

According to a recent survey, unlike Russian and Ukrainian respondents, Georgian respondents perceived joining NATO as a positive step. This fact might be a contributing factor for the overwhelming support for reforms in different public sectors, and most importantly, in higher education in Georgia. As the survey revealed, 'The majority of Russian and Ukrainian respondents perceive NATO as a threat to their country, while the majority of Georgians see it as protection'[1]. Therefore, it might be assumed that for instance in Russia, new policies such as the introduction of unified testing (EGEs), have been more controversial due to skeptical attitude of the public to the reforms (http://scepsis.ru/library/id_2167.html).

Another interesting feature of fighting corruption in higher education in Georgia is that the three policies had different levels of success and public support in terms of their implementation and results. The Unified National Entrance Examinations received high support, while the process of accreditation was controversial. This was due to the fact that there was only institutional accreditation. Its criteria are still under discussion. As for the accreditation of study programs, it is just being initiated. Moreover, prioritizing certain programs of study over others

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[1] Results are based on face-to-face interviews with at least 491 adults, aged 15 and older, conducted between 2006 and 2008. Gallup most recently polled in Russia in April-May 2008 and in Georgia in June 2008. For security reasons, Gallup did not poll in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. For results based on this sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of error attributable to sampling, weighting, and other random effects is ±3 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls. Source: http://www.gallup.com/poll/110035/Findings.aspx

might turn into another tool for corruption spread, if the process is not monitored strictly. These facts diminished the success of accreditation process in Georgia.

The third policy, dismissals and hiring of staff, was the most controversial in public and most debated in the mass media. Staff restructuring at Tbilisi State University brought about new requirements for re-hiring, and raised the issues of professionalism, accountability and transparency. The criteria of re-hiring were oftentimes ambiguous and the transparency of the process was questioned. However, in spite of the drawbacks, the process itself shattered the complacency of corrupt individuals, increased the degree of uncertainty and made engaging in corruption risky.

Bribe prices during the 1990s and the probability of engaging in bribery

Bribe costs during the 1990s in higher education reached $15,000-$20,000 depending on the prestige of the department. Law, business, medicine and international relations were usually priced the highest followed by humanities, social sciences and technical disciplines.

The members of the entrance examination committees had to share the portion of bribes with the chairs of the committees to guarantee the high grades of their private students, as well as to enhance their chances of being selected to the examination committee in the following year. In fact, the examination committees were analogous to cartelized firms. As Rose-Ackerman (1978) states: 'Firms that can cartelize may be able to obtain benefits through corruption that no individual firm would attempt on its own' (Rose-Ackerman, 1978: 87). Accordingly, disclosing and reporting corrupt actions was difficult due to the complexity and ambiguity of operations of such examination committees.

Entrance exams generally covered four subjects. Private tuition costs per subject ranged between $1,000 - $ 2,500 depending on the 'prestige' of a subject, Georgian and foreign languages having the highest costs. That meant parents would have to pay more than $9,000 to get a child into college. In prestigious departments such as law, economics, and international relations, the cost in indirect bribes often reached $15,000. Such sums were incredibly high in a country where the average monthly salary was about $14 per month (Data based on *The Higher Education Chronicle Article by MacWilliams, B., 2002*; Expert Knowledge; Observations and Anecdotal Evidence, 1992-2004).

Grades at the end-of-the-year or graduation examinations at various departments cost between $20-$150 per subject depending on their difficulty, prestige and the level of preparation of the student. Naturally, less-prepared students had to pay more.[2]

Being familiar with the channels and systems of corruption considerably increased the probability of academics or administrative staff becoming engaged in taking bribes. The degree of confidence and complacency was directly related to the probability that the individual would be involved in illegal practice. Such individuals possessed the skills of decreasing the risk of being detected to the minimum[3]. Therefore, the present study makes a suggestion that the level of familiarity with the ways the corrupt systems, channels and structures operate is directly connected with the degree of probability of a person getting involved in corrupt practices (naturally, all the other factors being equal, e.g. not considering the beliefs and morals of a

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[2] Students who were diligent and capable and prepared for the examinations well had no necessity to pay bribes, as in the majority of cases their capabilities and perseverance were duly assessed by the professors irrespective of the professors' engagement in bribe-taking.

[3] See Rose-Ackerman, 1978, on corruption and the risk of detection: 'Both the probability of detection and the punishment if caught may depend upon the number of corrupt transactions, and the total volume of bribes collected' (Rose-Ackerman, 1978: 139). However, to calculate the risk of detection in academia, its specific nature would require the inclusion of other variables such as bribe-taking professors promising potential bribe-paying students future professional prospects in order to dis-incentivize them form reporting illegal acts to higher administration.

person, or other characteristics[4]). Robbins (2009 in Browne and Milgram, 2009: 43-58) even talks about the presence of cynicism in the process of exchange during illegal transactions. The individuals most familiar with the informal channels feel most comfortable with corrupt systems and naturally resist the reforms criticizing the new policies with cynicism[5]. Despite this fact, new policies that started in 2005 in Georgia shattered the foundations of confidence of such individuals and increased the risk of engaging in bribe-taking.

The years 2000-2002

During 2000-2002, the commoditization of education raised the issues of the legitimacy of a number of practices. The public good value of education vs. market-oriented tendencies contributed considerably to the reconsideration of the definition of legal-illegal actions.

In 2001/2002 government officials became aware of the critical situation in higher education. A task force of Georgian and European experts was set up. Eleven papers were prepared on Georgian higher education, including such topics as accreditation, attestation, licensing, quality assurance, student admission, financing, evaluation, governance, private higher education institutions, and labor market. In March 2002, the Parliament adopted a *Decree on the Main Directions of Higher Education Development in Georgia*. The decree contained the objectives and principles of the Georgian higher education system. Corruption in higher education was also recognized. The Decree (2002) confirmed that, 'The current admission system that uses entrance examinations to decide enrollment to public institutions of higher education contradicts the objectives of transparent access and high quality. It indirectly favors

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[4] Moral and ethical values of the individuals should also be considered in this respect. There are staff members (both academic and administrative) who are familiar with the informal channels and are aware of the ways the corrupt systems work but still refuse to engage in such activities because of their moral and ethical beliefs and values.

[5] Rose-Ackerman, 1978, talks about corruption and the risk of detection, which depends upon the size of the bribes that bureaucrats accept in addition to other risk factors.

those with more money over those with less, produces non-transparent outcomes, facilitates corruption and is thus, by definition, not meritocratic. The outcome is elitist' (The Decree, 2002). Although the corrupt system was officially recognized by the *2002 Decree*, it was not until the 2005 reforms that the first steps were taken to address the issue on a practical level.

Post-2005 period – reforms and struggle for scarce resources

The Corruption Perception Index 2004 listed Georgia among 60 countries suffering from serious corruption. In order to decrease the level of corruption and increase access, equity and quality, new education policies had to be introduced. Increased transparency and objectivity in university admissions, transparent accreditation of higher education institutions, and objective procedures for hiring university academic and administrative staff became the top priorities for education policymakers. However, these policies encountered certain challenges and achieved uneven degree of success in fighting corruption.

NATO accession aspirations intensified the fight against corruption in socioeconomic, political and legal spheres. It can be even stated that Georgia could serve as an exemplary case of conducting efficient reforms in higher education sector. The new policies were implemented under collective national and international monitoring. This fact engendered positive outcomes in achieving a certain degree of transparency and objectivity, particularly for entrance examinations to higher education institutions.

Unified National Entrance Examinations (UNEEs)

The first major policy that influenced the fighting of corruption in Georgia was the introduction of the Unified National Entrance Examinations (UNEEs) in 2005. This new higher education access policy significantly decreased the level of corruption in admission to higher

education institutions. Since 2005 the Unified National Entrance Examinations (UNEEs) have been the only way to enter any accredited higher education institution in Georgia.

'Until 2004, students were able to purchase not only their university admission, but also passing grades and eventually a diploma. Individual universities administered their own admissions exams. Admissions bodies, composed of university lecturers, would sit in on oral exams and grade written papers. No independent observers were allowed to monitor the process. Previously, there were two ways to obtain a university place. The first involved students in their final year taking private classes offered by the same lecturers who sat on the admissions body at his or her chosen university. The second required the parents of a university applicant simply to bribe the admissions body before the entrance exams. In both instances students would be "fed" pre-agreed questions in the oral exam and given advance warning of the subjects (i.e. topics, exam questions) in the written exam' (Karosanidze and Christensen, in TI, 2005: 36-37).

In 2004 the Parliament of Georgia adopted a new law on Higher Education:

'The law targets specific reforms in the higher education system: improvements in administration and governance at all levels (including removing elements of corruption lingering from the previous system); decentralization to address the diversity of local needs, and promote fiscal and administrative accountability; in-service training for teachers and administrators to reform instruction; parent education to encourage community engagement; on-going student assessment and program evaluation for multi-level accountability; standardization in testing toward grade promotion, 11th grade graduation and university admission' (Karosanidze and Christensen, in TI, 2005: 37).

The important difference between the UNEEs and the entrance exams of the previous years is that while in previous years each university had its own entrance requirements, the

UNEEs are uniform in structure. Special examination centers have been set up in several places in the capital and other cities in the regions of Georgia. All students have to register for the exams and sit for the tests at one of those examination centers, which are assigned to them during their registration process.

The tests are a combination of achievement measuring, or curriculum-based tests, and skill / aptitude measuring tests. In contrast, during previous years the majority of tests and exams were purely knowledge-based, moreover, they were based on the knowledge that each individual university required, and that was acquired from private tutors, and not on the knowledge acquired at secondary schools. Therefore, the chances of entering higher education institutions for ethnicities, low-SES students and residents of the regions have significantly increased after the introduction of the UNEEs.

Grant and loan schemes were introduced to cover full or partial tuition of entrants with high exam scores. However, there were certain impediments in implementing the grant and loan schemes to the full extent. While 30%, 50%, 70% and 100% merit-based grants provided a partial solution to equity of access problem (as still not all ethnicities had equal opportunities of high-quality preparation), the income-contingent loan system was more difficult to implement since it was directly related to income declarations of families as a proof for the eligibility for study loans that often presented barriers.[6]

Public perceptions of the Unified National Entrance Examinations (UNEEs)

It is interesting to view the perceptions of the public about the transparency of the UNEEs and about their impact on decreasing levels of corruption in the university admissions process. 'Transparency International Georgia carried out three separate surveys with a total of 973

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[6] These issues pertain to another large problem of inefficient banking system in Georgia and to still existing 'hidden income' from private sector that hinders the development of efficient loan system in the country.

students, 764 parents and 340 administrators across Georgia. Parents were interviewed outside the testing site while their children sat the exam inside. TI Georgia monitors interviewed test-takers as they exited the test centre. Only students who volunteered to be interviewed were included in the survey. A large majority of respondents (80% of students, 79% of parents and 96% of administrators) felt confident that the new process would eliminate corruption in university admissions. Interestingly, only 19.5% of students made use of a special information hotline that was put in place in Tbilisi' (Karosanidze and Christensen, in TI, 2005: 37).

Bar chart 1 below illustrates the results of the survey conducted among students, parents and administrators.

**Bar chart 1: Do you feel confident that the new processes will eliminate corruption in university admissions? Percentage of respondents answering 'yes"**
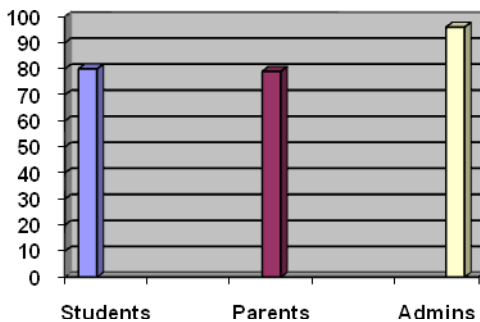
Source: TI, 2005

Bar chart 2 presents the results of the survey that was conducted among students and parents on how understandable the process of university admissions was. The survey revealed that a high percentage of both students and parents understood the system and procedures of the newly-introduced examinations.

Bar chart 2: Do you understand the process of university admissions?
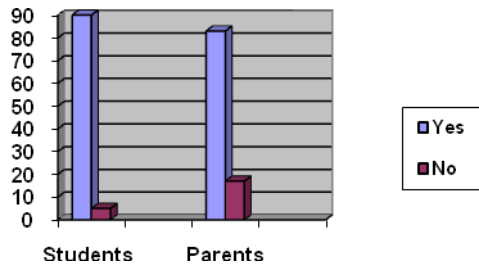
Source: TI, 2005

Implications of 2005 Unified National Entrance Examinations (UNEEs)

Implementation of the UNEEs created a uniform and more transparent testing system understandable and accessible for ethnic minority, low-SES and regional students and decreased the rate of corruption in the admissions system. The most important finding is that the enrollment representation share from different regions increased. Table 1 below illustrates the enrollment percentages of students from different parts of Georgia in 2006.

Enrollment percentages of students from the regions of Georgia, 2006:	
Tbilisi	65%
Abkhazia	38%
Adjara	42%
Guria	51%
Imereti	65%
Kakheti	58%
Mtskheta-Mtianeti	45%

Racha, Kvemo Svaneti	51%
Samegrelo - Zemo Svaneti	45%
Samtskhe – Javakheti	60%
Kvemo Kartli	44%
Shida Kartli	54%

Table 1. Source: www.naec.ge

Another important consequence was that the UNEEs not only raised the standards and quality of testing, but they prompted the revision of secondary school study programs. However, the revision was not conducted equally at all secondary schools. The majority of secondary school teachers were unaware of the exact requirements of the new exams (though the requirements became more uniform compared to previous years). This fact necessitated teacher-training courses that would help school teachers upgrade their skills and meet the new challenges. But unfortunately, these training courses lacked preparation, since there were not many professionals who were qualified to train those teachers.

The Unified National Entrance Examinations (UNEEs) had wider social consequences as well. Each ethnicity felt a part of a wider community under the conditions of a single unified policy. 'People are more likely to adhere to social contracts under certain conditions. They are more likely to adhere to contracts when they do not consider each other as cultural "strangers"' (Heyneman, 2003: 2244). Therefore, through the reduction of the corruption rate, the UNEEs raised public trust that in itself contributed to social cohesion (Heuser, 2008). Education institutions are considered as creators of public goods through the production of human capital that is realized through knowledge enhancement and skill mastery. Human capital, in its turn, directly and indirectly, i.e. through social capital (networks, norms, trust), produces and strengthens social cohesion (Heyneman, 2003).

University accreditation procedures

Another significant higher education policy was the introduction of accreditation. The policy was directed mainly at improving the quality of higher education institutions and reducing the level of corruption that had plagued the institutions since the late 1990s.

During soviet times, all higher education institutions were established by the state. There was no such formal procedure as 'accreditation'. However, there was regular state control of the quality of teaching, research and administration. In the instances of fraud, misconduct or any illegal action, the individuals involved in the process were punished. But the institution itself would not be closed, because it was state-controlled. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in the 1990s, under the influence of market forces, the government started issuing teaching licenses to newly opened private universities. However, since bribery for acquiring licenses was widespread, many questioned the credibility and quality of those institutions.

The accreditation process aimed to improve institutional quality was introduced alongside other education reforms that started in 2004-2005.

The Unified National Entrance Examinations (UNEEs) were to be conducted along with national accreditation and quality assessment processes. The number of students to be accepted at the universities and the number of universities entitled to accept a new cohort of undergraduates would be directly related to the results of accreditation and quality assessment processes. *Numerus clausus* was introduced in the Georgian higher education institutions as a consequence of the accreditation process: each accredited university was restricted by the number of students that it could accept.

Monitoring expenditures by institutions was another major criterion for being accredited. A number of institutions were closed down as a result of failing to meet accreditation criteria

largely because of insufficiency of resources or such corrupt practices as money laundering, misappropriation of university property and funds by academic or administrative staff. For example, a flagship State Technical University was disqualified from accepting any freshmen in 2007 because the university premises were used for illegal business purposes by top administrative staff.

This case sent shock waves to corrupt top administrators of not only the State Technical University but also warned other universities. It was a shock to the academic staff who misused the university premises. Failing the accreditation process had a graver consequence for former students who had received degrees and diplomas at the failed institution. Their degrees and diplomas were devalued on the job market. This devaluation hurt their chances for employment.

Failing the accreditation process at State Technical University pushed other universities to make their activities more transparent and accountable, to upgrade standards and reconsider a number of curriculum and teaching-level issues. Besides, the devaluation of diplomas on the job market raised the awareness of wider public regarding the costs of corruption in higher education.

There are certain issues in the accreditation process in Georgia that need to be tackled to decrease corruption. At present The National Center of Accreditation is highly centralized. According to the latest information, a new board of accreditors was appointed by the Prime Minister on September 24, 2008. The board consists mainly of the top officials appointed by the Prime Minister: Deputy Minister of Education, the Head of the Department of State Property Management at the Ministry of Economic Development, the Head of the Quality Management Department at Tbilisi State University, the Head of the Department of Education Programs at the

Ministry of Culture, Protection of Monuments and Sports, to name just a few (www.nea.ge/default.aspx?sec_id=20&lang=1).

There is no peer-reviewed system of accreditation of higher education institutions. Although the institutions are required to present the results of self-evaluation to the Board of National Accreditation Center, the system is still highly centralized with top government officials in charge of the accreditation process. Therefore, there is a greater chance of corruption in the form of bribe-taking for lobbying.

One recommendation would be to decentralize the system and set up independent accreditation agencies that would promote a peer-reviewed accreditation process. This recommendation was offered by the EPPM (International Institute for Education Policy Planning and Management) in its recently published report (EPPM, 2008).

The issue of quality control is not new. Alongside institutional accreditation, program accreditation should be implemented with competence and objectivity to minimize violations, abuse of power and corruption of accrediting agencies. At present The National Center of Accreditation in Georgia is working on the issue of program accreditation. The results are yet to be seen.

Staff Restructuring at TSU and University Adaptation Strategies

Due to the chaotic situation in post-Soviet Georgia, the majority of universities had overstaffed their departments in the 1990s. Hiring relatives, friends, and acquaintances through favoritism and bribery had been a common practice. Therefore, artificially created positions and duties had produced *dead wood* that became almost impossible to regulate. These hiring practices presented a number of staffing problems that needed to be addressed.

Problems that could exist in a university regarding staffing are as follows: older professors may refuse to accommodate curriculum changes or shoulder increased workloads; staff members might adapt to new technology with difficulties; staff might be performing redundant tasks; besides, there might exist an atmosphere of antagonism and tension between academic and administrative personnel.

Hence, university officials might consider certain solutions such as: budget cuts that focus on "low performers"; decision on a merit-pay protocol and whether it should reward seniority or achievement; merging of redundant departments, and consequently, the dismissal of redundant faculty and staff. These issues are naturally controversial and usually lead to tension and adversity.

Universities have been traditionally considered as organizations that are slow to respond to changes in the external environment. As Sporn (1999) notes, 'Universities are among the oldest organizations in the world and have proven resilient over several centuries of socioeconomic and political change' (Sporn, 1999: 6). Compared to other types of organizations, universities are usually resistant to any type of change or innovation. It can be assumed that resilience to change is, in the majority of cases, caused by various bureaucratic structures that exist in universities. It is common knowledge that any organization possesses bureaucratic features. As Mintzberg, et al. (2003) state, this is because organizations are created to replace uncertainty with stability that is usually achieved through adhering to rules and regulations. This fact in its turn breeds bureaucracy.

Universities are considered as functioning on professional bureaucracies (Mintzberg, 1980). They are characterized by highly specialized and minimally formalized jobs carried out by 'functional groups based on knowledge or skills' (Mintzberg, 1979). In addition, the

environment in academia is stable. And the pace of change is slow because academic staff is considered particularly resistant to innovations.

Regarding horizontal and vertical decentralization, universities (especially in the U.S.) are highly decentralized organizations. Weick (1976) even refers to the university as a loosely-coupled system (that could be perceived as an extreme form of decentralization), where the introduction of innovation in one unit (department) might not affect other units (Weick, 1976). Weick states that functional loose coupling refers to the low level of cooperation and coordination required by teaching and research activities within higher education institutions (Weick, 1976).

Therefore, it can be assumed that a professionalized bureaucracy (that strengthens the resilience of academia) and loose-coupling (that distorts interdepartmental coordination for implementing new policies) are two factors that might cause confusion and paradoxes for universities when trying to adapt to a changing external environment. The paradox is that while a professionalized bureaucracy (Mintzberg, 1979) might lead to extreme authoritative power and constrained organization, loose-coupling might engender another extreme of unregulated system and chaos (Musselin, 1996; Weick, 1979). It is at this point that the strategy of *organizational isomorphism* (DiMaggio, Powell, 1983) might be useful. As DiMaggio and Powell (1983) suggest, an optimal way to deal with the problem is through one type of *organizational isomorphism,* called *mimetic isomorphism*, which involves adapting business strategies to academic institutions (DiMaggio, Powell, 1983). Through *mimetic isomorphism*, academia decreases the level of bureaucracy and makes itself adaptable to the external environment.

Another strategy to transform the highly-bureaucratized university has been introduced by Burton Clark (1998). According to him, there is an imbalance between environmental demand

and institutional response. Therefore, he proposes *an interactive instrumentalism,* which implies the creation of a climate of innovation within the university.

Sporn (1999: 280-281) analyzes the development of universities from the perspective of influencing the external environment and presents *a comprehensive theory of adaptation*. As she (1999) states, 'successful organizational adaptation for colleges and universities will require new and innovative strategies to respond to the changing environment for higher education' (Sporn, 1999:6).

Staff restructuring at Tbilisi State University (TSU) can serve as an illustration of how the above-discussed theories interplay. The majority of staff were made redundant, both on the academic and on the administrative levels. The tensions and controversies intensified particularly in the summer of 2006 when all academia was dismissed from the University. 'Corruption', 'ambiguous and biased criteria for re-hiring', 'degree of transparency', 'objectivity' - became buzzwords.

Dismissal of all the staff from Tbilisi State University (TSU) and re-hiring caused protests, controversies and often questioning of the fairness of re-hiring procedures. There were instances of professors being dissuaded to re-apply for the positions by the pressure of competition. There were even cases when the heads of departments recommended the possible candidates for professorship positions. Application deadlines, re-hiring competition dates and requirements were modified several times at different departments. These shortfalls caused further uncertainty, ambiguity and tensions between academic and administrative personnel. The re-hiring process raised the most tension between the administration and academic staff and caused a blame-game and power struggle between opposing sides. There are still certain issues to

be tackled in this respect. In particular, hiring criteria and procedures need to be refined and further elaborated.

Cahn (1986) offers recommendations on conducting an efficient, objective and transparent hiring process of new staff in academia. Strict, objective criteria for the evaluation of candidates' teaching and research potential, as well as rigid and professionally-designed questions for the interview are among many other recommendations that should be implemented at TSU when hiring academic or administrative staff. 'At the interview, hard questions should be asked and cogent answers expected. Those candidates who do not provide them should be eliminated from consideration, not out of animosity but from a firm commitment to maintaining excellence. The road to mediocrity or worse is littered with the excuses offered by department members for candidates whom they liked but who performed poorly in interviews. While an interview situation, like a musical audition, can be misleading, in both cases false notes signal trouble' (Cahn, 1986: 71).

Staff restructuring at Tbilisi State University increased the risk of engaging in corruption both for academic and administrative personnel. Due to the constant reshuffling of administrative positions, administrative personnel kept changing continuously and made it risky to identify potential 'trustworthy' co-thinkers to form the safe corrupt channels with them. This fact contributed to the dismantling of the corruption hierarchies, channels and structures. Re-channeling of illegal transactions became more expensive and risky.

Dismissal of the rector of Tbilisi State University Roin Metreveli at the wide-scale public demand shortly after the Rose Revolution of 2003 shattered feelings of self-complacency and security among top administrative staff in academia not only at Tbilisi State University (TSU) but at all other flagship institutions of higher education. It also raised public awareness that their

scarce resources could be spent on better purposes (like better academic preparation) than on bribes in order not to support the 'second income' of corrupt individuals in academia. The article from www.caucaz.com describes the notorious case.

Rector Roin Metreveli resigns

Article published in 17/10/2004 Issue

By Tarel GUSEP in Paris
October 5th 2004 –

Roin Metreveli, who has been the Rector of the Tbilisi State University (TSU) for the past 13 years, filed his resignation to the University's Great Council on October 1.

At a session of the Great Council, the governing body of the TSU, Roin Metreveli denied accusations that he was pressured by President Mikheil Saakashvili to step down.

Roin Metreveli has been a target of criticism of a portion of the TSU students who accuse Metreveli of heavy-handed rule **and corruption**.

It is likely that Georgia's current Ambassador to Italy, Rusudan Lortkipanidze, will replace Metreveli. The outgoing Rector announced on October 1 that he has appointed Dr. Rusudan Lortkipanidze, the Deputy Rector, as his replacement, thus paving the way for her participation in the elections of a new Rector by the Council.

Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili has already expressed his support for Rusudan Lortkipanidze's candidacy.

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The dismissal of Rector Roin Metreveli was a turning point in the fight against corruption and delivered the message that times had changed and under the ongoing reforms nobody would be immune from prosecution for illegal actions, corruption or abuse of power. This dismissal dealt a serious blow to the corrupt institutions, channels, systems and individuals.

The process of dismissals and re-hirings also raised further issues. As a result of dismissals, retrenchments and department mergers the demand for new disciplines that would be better suited to new socioeconomic developments became clear. This fact necessitated the creation of new syllabi and teaching methodologies. The possibility of corruption became clear when choosing potential candidates to monitor the quality of new academic programs or design

new syllabuses. Therefore, academic quality control and reconsideration of curricula in the majority of disciplines presented a challenge for Tbilisi State University (TSU). This issue is still under discussion.

Recent developments and anti-corruption policies

According to the recent decision of the Minister of Education, Nikoloz Gvaramia, through the decrease of administrative expenses, it will be possible to finance at least 500 Master's Degree students out of 3,500-4,000. The grant-recipients will be selected on the basis of test results. The selection tests will be conducted in two phases in order to improve transparency and objectivity and to decrease bribery to raise grades. The first phase of tests will be conducted by the Ministry of Education. The second phase will be conducted by the respective universities. This way the practice of a two-tier examination system will establish 'cross-checking', and this monitoring practice will enhance the level of transparency and increase the risks of engaging in corrupt practices of bribery, favoritism and nepotism (Joint Session, 02/03/2009).

Therefore, through the decrease of administrative expenses, the funds could be directed towards increasing affordability, access and transparency.

Summary and implications

Standardized entrance examinations, accreditation, transparency and objectivity in hiring staff, might be the first steps to decrease corruption. Raising public awareness through showing the positive results of the reforms could trigger the struggle for scarce resources between university staff and student body that might again lessen corruption level.

Some interesting facts in the Georgian case of corruption in higher education are the following:

- Post-2005 reforms triggered the struggle for scarce resources that was intensified by the aspirations of the country to join NATO, and by the increased public awareness of the benefits of collective action against corruption in higher education.

- The paper assumes that the degree of familiarity with corrupt channels increases the confidence and probability of individuals in engaging in corrupt practices. The case of the 1990s in Georgia could serve as a good example.

- The reforms of 2005-2007 brought shock effects to corrupt individuals, institutions and structures. They shattered confidence, and increased the risks of bribe-taking. Although corruption is a highly fluid and adaptable practice, new policies dismantled it and made the re-channeling of illegal transactions risky.

- While the Unified National Entrance Examinations received overwhelming support, accreditation and university staff restructuring were more controversial. Therefore, criteria, procedures and monitoring of these policies should be further refined and improved.

Questions that policymakers in Georgia might need to answer for future improvements could be as follows: How socially equitable are the present exams? How efficient are they in terms of quality of administration? How could socially-equalizing policies be further refined in the preparation process of Unified National Entrance Examinations? Which testing models are preferable? How should the Unified National Entrance Examinations' effect on fighting corruption be further researched? How should programs' accreditation be implemented alongside the institutional accreditation to guarantee efficiency, objectivity and unbiased evaluation of individual programs? How and who should monitor the objective, transparent, non-corrupt and rigorous selection process of academic and administrative staff in higher education institutions?

There are many anti-corruption reforms in higher education that need to be implemented in Georgia. The measures offered by Heyneman (2004, 2008, 2009) could be implemented to make fighting corruption in higher education more effective. For instance, such mechanisms for adjudication and management as 'the establishment of public ombudsman, of professional boards, of faculty / student code of conduct boards to hear cases of infractions and to recommend consequences' would significantly increase transparency in academia. In addition, such preventative mechanisms as the introduction of 'Blue Ribbon' committees, codes of conduct for administrators, faculty and students, annual reports to the public on corruption in education, public access to financial statements of educational institutions, anti-corruption commissions and a free and active education press should be implemented. 'Clear ownership of educational property, tax differentiation between for profit and not-for-profit educational institutions to seek monetary support without being subject to taxation' are structural reforms that need to be carried out. 'Sanctions such as criminal penalties should be introduced for economic and professional corruption. Public exposure, dismissal from employment, fines payable to victims of misconduct, withdrawal of license to practice' should be widely institutionalized (Heyneman, 2004; Heyneman, Anderson, Nuralyieva, 2008: 22; Heyneman, 2009: 6).

Another significant issue that policymakers should consider is the effect that corruption in higher education can have on the Bologna Process. 'Many countries in the Europe and Central Asian region are participating in the Bologna Process with members of the European Union. One objective of that process is to make university degrees equivalent in hopes of facilitating the transfer of students and greater mobility in the labor market. Whether experienced or perceived, universities or university systems with reputations for corruption will likely end the Bologna

Process. Were this process to actually take effect it would constitute the educational equivalent in the European Union of unilateral disarmament. It is difficult to imagine why a country or a university with a high reputation for excellence would allow its degrees to be made equivalent to a university or a university system with a reputation for corruption' (Heyneman, 2007: 6).

Policymakers should spend more time and effort on monitoring and evaluating new policies. Quality evaluation should be the top priority in order to analyze how well these policy strategies are applicable to the Georgian context and how they could be further implemented to achieve a maximum decrease in the level of corruption.

As for the accreditation, at present the introduction of program accreditation is planned in order to improve not only the quality of facilities and guarantee the purposeful use of university infrastructure but to provide instruction that meets the demands of the new requirements as well. Favoring certain disciplines over others because of biased attitudes of officials (deans, rectors, vice-rectors) should be minimized in order to raise the objectivity of programs' evaluation. Multiple types of agencies will provide wider choice, will decrease dependence on any single agency, and hence, will hamper corrupt practices by curbing absolute power.

Regarding staff reorganization, more rigorous, fixed, transparent and objective selection criteria should be used for hiring. National and international experts should be invited to monitor the objectivity and transparency of this process.

Despite a number of policies that still remain to be implemented, the fact of conducting reforms that brought about many changes to academia helped to dismantle the corrupt mechanisms and channels to a certain degree. These ongoing processes in the Georgian higher education system possess certain important features that could be generalized and helpful to other countries.

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