

# HERB



Higher Education in Russia and Beyond

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Cheating and Plagiarism in Higher Education

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## Dear colleagues,

Corruption, fraud and other forms of unethical behaviour are problems that higher education faces in both developing and developed countries, at mass as well as elite universities. While academic misconduct is not new per se, its unprecedented dimensions, the growing challenge of mitigating and preventing it in many academic systems as well as its international aspect are rather new. This tendency requires more attention to be given to promoting ethics in higher education. Ethical behaviour in higher education is a very complex issue, however. It may be perceived differently by insiders and by outsiders; it is also deeply embedded into general institutional and cultural contexts, which makes the problem challenging for comparative analysis.

Why do students cheat? Is it because their secondary school preparation was not sufficient, or are they pursuing a university degree as a mere credential, without regard for how they obtain it? Why do faculty members and administrators ignore or pretend to ignore students' misbehaviour? Are they overloaded with other duties and obligations or is teaching not no longer important (anymore) for their career advancement?

Why do faculty members cheat? Why do they publish in "sham" journals, falsify data, employ professional ghostwriters or even steal papers submitted to them for review and publish them as their own? Were they actively cheating as students in the past, and never taught about academic integrity? Are they just under pressure to publish, otherwise their contracts will be not prolonged or they will be not promoted?

This special issue deals with these and other relevant questions. We have contributions from both scholars and as well as practitioners covering different cheating techniques, from shpargalka to cheating involving technology such as mobile phones, or smart watches, and from simple 'copying and pasting' to more sophisticated 'type-2 cheating' or contract cheating. Some papers are based on within a national context, some are comparative. We also have contributions discussing various forms of plagiarism and some its consequences for the academia and beyond. Last but not least, the issue deals with possible remedies, measures, reforms and other initiatives aiming to mitigate cheating and plagiarism among students and faculty.

***Higher Education in Russia and Beyond***  
***editorial team***  
***and guest editor Elena Denisova-Schmidt***

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# Differences in Understanding Academic Integrity: A Lithuanian Case

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## Introduction

At present, the theme of anti-corruption is relevant for all sectors of the Lithuanian society. Public opinion polls [1] show that almost one-third of the population misinterpret what corruption is. This means that we should raise awareness about academic integrity, educate the academic community, reduce tolerance for cheating and ensure the effective prevention of fraudulent academic behavior.

The Academic Integrity Index 2013 research [2] suggests that teachers believe that dishonest behavior is much less common than it seems to students. It should be noted that the massification of higher education is still a problem in Lithuania. For example, according to the latest data of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (interview with the Minister at Žinių radijas on July 10, 2018), this year, 75 percent of school-leavers have chosen to study at institutions of higher education and many of them might be admitted due the decreasing general numbers of secondary school students (emigration, low birth rates, etc.). Hence, many teachers do not notice or pretend not to notice cheating during examinations for many reasons, such as unwillingness to lose students, indulgence or lack of responsibility. Teachers assess

the situation more mildly than the students themselves in all cases, including falsification, plagiarism, cheating during examinations and improperly carried out independent tasks. Students from different fields demonstrate different forms of dishonesty. Physics students seem to be the most honest ones; art students have the lowest level of trust in the objectivity of evaluation, but this might be due to the peculiarities of art studies. Both students and teachers believe that students' disposition to act honestly is determined by their moral beliefs, the tasks given and the authority of the teacher. Research findings suggest that in the higher education institutions (HEIs) where academic integrity is more prevalent, more students are satisfied with their studies and are confident that the administration and faculty take all possible measures to prevent manifestations of academic dishonesty.

There is no reliable data on whether students are familiar enough with the principles of academic ethics. The public opinion and market research company Sprinter Research showed that students understood and evaluated academic dishonesty manifestations differently (2013). Faculty and student opinions on the prevalence of cheating or criminality for fraudulent behavior also differed. At present, when HEIs undergo an increasing internationalization of education, there is a risk that students will fall into difficult situations due to a lack of academic integrity literacy. It is therefore very important to eliminate the problem of impunity for dishonest academic behavior, ensure the spread of information about academic dishonesty and strengthen awareness-raising on academic ethics at HEIs. Aiming at reducing the number of academic dishonesty cases, we need to pay attention to the differences in understanding academic integrity in order to develop preventive measures.

Academic integrity is founded on the principles of respect for knowledge, truth, scholarship and acting with honesty. It governs the academic activities (studies, research, etc.) of the members of the academic community. Many HEIs both in Lithuania and abroad have codes of academic ethics aimed at ensuring honest academic behavior. A lack of knowledge or a fraudulent intent can never be an excuse for academic misconduct. Forms of academic fraud mentioned in university academic integrity documents include falsification of data, reusing one's own work that has been submitted previously and counted towards another course (self-plagiarism), illegal pre-examination access to examination papers or questions, illegal post-examination alteration of marks or grades, copying from another student or allowing a student to copy from you, copying from notes smuggled into the examination room, using a device to communicate with others in or outside the examination room, improperly using a permitted device to access information, representing another student in an examination, allowing oneself to be represented by another student in an examination, etc. [3]. However, these codes do not guarantee academic integrity; they do not even guarantee academic integrity awareness, which was the point of our study.

Good knowledge of and skills in academic integrity are essential for creating an academic culture that fosters student integrity both in and outside the classroom. Students come to universities with different backgrounds, from different cultures in their families, secondary schools and even countries, where many aforementioned forms of misconduct are tolerated. Thus, the aim of the current research was to evaluate the differences in academic integrity awareness at Lithuanian public HEIs so that the information obtained could help prevent academic dishonesty and educate students and other academic community members.

## Methodology

The study was conducted from September to November 2016. Students (including international students studying in Lithuania,  $n = 600$ ) and faculty ( $n = 40$ ) at five Lithuanian public universities filled in questionnaires constructed by the authors of this study on the basis of academic integrity codes at different universities. The questionnaires consisted of three blocs: 1) information about the respondents (gender, year of studies), 2) questions about the current situation and practices at the universities, and 3) different situations to be evaluated on a seven-point Likert scale (1 – absolutely honest behavior, 7 – absolutely dishonest behavior). The respondents were intentionally not asked about their affiliation in order to ensure greater confidentiality and encourage more sincere and open responses because they would know that no comparisons between universities would be made.

## Results and Discussion

Knowledge is the basis of academic literacy. However, almost half of the surveyed students had never read their university codes on academic integrity (48.4%) or consulted their teachers about unacceptable academic behavior (40.8%). They rely on their school experiences.

Students tend to justify their academic misconduct by being too busy, not having enough time or being too tired to act appropriately (many of them have part-time jobs), though only 6.3% of the respondents admit they do not study hard enough. Failure to cite and reference sources due to fatigue or writing at night was considered to be academic dishonesty by only 6.8% of the respondents. Twice as many (12.6%) of the surveyed students easily justified such behavior. If one does not intend to cheat, their inaccuracy is not considered as cheating. Unfortunately, teachers also tend to justify such behavior: only 14.7% consider it to be absolute plagiarism; 8.8% of faculty respondents would exonerate students.

Students and faculty do not lack knowledge on what academic misconduct is but this knowledge is in many cases not internalized. They believe that if they can find excuses (lack of time, fatigue, possibility of dropping out, etc.), they can justify some kinds of dishonest behavior. Teachers also tend to understand student integration into the university culture and in some cases are not so strict about it.

In the analysis of various academic behaviors, no statistically significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) between students and faculty were found in the evaluation of unauthorized help by students to other students, self-plagiarism and use of external aids during examinations or tests. However, there were statistically significant differences ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the cases when teachers evaluated certain behaviors as more dishonest than students: allowing a student to copy from you (5.85 vs. 4.40), falsification of data in various documents (e.g., health certification) (6 vs. 4.83), unintentional plagiarism due to inaccuracy, exhaustion and lack of time (4.42 vs. 3.35), submitting another person's work as your own (6.76 vs. 5.04), ignoring responsibility for dishonest behavior of another person while working in a team (5.73 vs. 4.86), falsification of data in students' assignments (e.g., laboratory work) (4.61 vs. 3.66), and unintentional plagiarism because of lack of knowledge (5.39 vs. 4.01).

No statistically significant differences were observed across different gender or age groups.

## Conclusions

Students view the same academic integrity cases differently, and so do faculty members. Despite the knowledge on academic integrity they have, both students and faculty are prone to misconduct. Academic honesty and culture at universities is a reflection of the culture in families, society, and previous educational experiences. Teachers try to help students integrate into the university culture gradually, i.e., by giving them time to internalize the knowledge of appropriate conduct. The fact that there were no significant differences across students of different age groups shows that the process is complicated and long.

It would be advisable for universities to have special credit-earning courses for students on academic literacy knowledge and skills. University teachers could organize in-service education seminars on academic integrity to reduce their perceived ambiguity and to make their requirements for students more consistent. Some institutions have already launched such courses and seminars but we would recommend all HEIs to introduce them.

## References

- [1] Lietuvos korupcijos žemėlapis 2014. Gyventojų apklausa [Lithuanian Map of Corruption in 2014. Population Survey] Vilnius: visuomenės nuomonės ir rinkos tyrimai.
- [2] Lietuvos studentų sąjunga [Lithuanian National Union of Students]. Akademinio sąžiningumo indeksas 2013 [Academic Integrity Index in 2013]. Retrieved from: <http://www.lss.lt/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ASI-tyrimo-pristatymo-medžiaga.doc>
- [3] University of Newcastle. Student Academic Integrity – Policy 000608. (2008) Retrieved from: <http://www.newcastle.edu.au/policylibrary/000608.html>

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# Cheating and Plagiarism in the Armenian Higher Education System: Why Not?

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The results of numerous international and national surveys state that corruption is an important issue at Armenian public universities. According to field research, the various types of corrupt practices that are common in Armenia are not different from the ones prevalent in other former Soviet countries. Moreover, there is a common perception that the roots of current educational corruption go back to the Soviet Union. Cheating and plagiarism appear to be the most often reported forms of educational corruption, alongside nepotism and favoritism. Students cheat mostly during midterm exams and plagiarize academic papers, and sometimes bachelor's and master's theses, too. Cheating manifests itself in different forms, such as copying from unauthorized materials during exams, copying from other peers' work, exchanging information with peers during exams, etc. Moreover, the use of various gadgets makes cheating easy for students and more difficult for faculty members to control. According to one faculty member, "This [cheating] is a widespread practice, particularly during exams, they [students] try to cheat by any means."

Plagiarism is also prevalent among students. Particularly the purchase of academic papers from individuals or agencies is ubiquitous. Besides writing academic papers, doing translations or even preparing cheat sheets, such agencies also offer bachelor's and master's theses. These agencies have complete freedom in Armenia and there is no state control. The most famous of these agencies, kursayin.am ("kursayin" is a type of term-paper that students usually have to submit after the second year of their studies), has been functioning for over a decade. One of its offices is located close to Yerevan State University and a second is next to Armenian State Pedagogic University, both buildings decorated with big banners bearing the company's name. It has a web page in two languages, Armenian and Russian, while its Facebook page has 2,686 likes and 2,695 followers. Page reviews mostly represent the extent of the users' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services provided by kursayin.am. However, they do not question the consequences of those services, namely, lowering the quality of education, on the one hand, and affecting the status of universities on the other, thus lowering public trust in higher education in general. As a result, graduates from those universities are perceived as corrupt and have difficulties on the job market. Moreover, there is an assumption that

they might transfer their study ethics to work ethics and try to apply the same corrupt strategies at the workplace.

Nowadays, Armenian universities struggle with designing and implementing evidence-based anti-corruption plans and regulations, which could prevent and reduce the level of various types of academic integrity violations. Both students and faculty members are inclined to think that one of the main factors that make cheating and plagiarism possible is lack of control and detection means, as well as the atmosphere of impunity. Other factors that foster corrupt behavior are perceived to be a result of the low level of study/teaching motivation. Students are very often overloaded and have to prioritize which subjects to study and which ones to cheat on, especially when they are sure that they will not be caught or that the punishment will not be that strong. They mostly cheat when they either are not interested in the subject or think that it is a waste of time to study it, especially when experiencing time pressures during midterm exams. Thus, if a university itself creates opportunities for corrupt actions by not controlling them, or by not punishing corrupt actors, then students wonder: why not cheat or plagiarize? One of the main reasons for the lack of control by universities could be the fact that tuition fees paid by students account for 80% of a university budget; thus, there is an urgency to keep most of the enrollees. This sentiment is supported by faculty members as well, who reportedly experience pressure from university administration. Moreover, they state that they are "not allowed" to drop students, as their salaries depend on tuition fees. One of the interviewed faculty members stated: "...When our salaries started to depend on tuition fees, as a result, a non-written agreement emerged that we should do everything not to drop students." Thus, for financial reasons, universities try to keep the needed quantity of students, meanwhile sacrificing the quality of education. Another reason for the poor control could be the attempts to implement anti-corruption plans that are not evidence-based and therefore do not represent and tackle the exact needs of a university.

All of the aforementioned motivational and administrative factors lead to an assumption that the perceived irrelevance of academic subjects or financial pressure to keep the needed number of students primarily result from poor university management and regulations. What if, indeed, poor management is the origin of various forms of corrupt practices rather than the post-Soviet culture and/or national mentality that have been perceived to be the core of corruption so far? What if fighting corruption is not as difficult as it appears to be?

Further research is necessary to examine this assumption and to answer the posed questions; for example, this could be research into what kind of role university management plays in corrupt practices, how it shapes students' attitudes towards education and integrity behavior, or what the relationship between university management, study/teaching motivation and corrupt practices is. In other words, deeper studies are needed to shed light onto the institutional context of educational corruption.

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# Student Experience with Academic Dishonesty and Corruption in the Khabarovsk Region of Russia

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## Introduction

Corruption has received considerable attention in Russia over the past decade, not only because of its negative impact on the national economy and society as a whole but also because it has become increasingly politicized. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the 2017 anti-corruption rallies in major Russian cities were attended by many young people, university students and schoolchildren in particular. At the same time, opinion polls indicate that active participants in anti-corruption rallies are not representative of the Russian youth, as the younger generation tends to be apolitical [1]. To the best of our knowledge, no large-scale empirical investigation has yet examined attitudes towards corruption among young Russians.

Our research attempts to fill in this gap by conducting an extensive survey and anti-corruption information campaign among students in the Khabarovsk Region [2]. This paper focuses on the assessment of student experiences with various forms of academic dishonesty and corruption and their attitudes towards it [3].

## Sample

In order to answer the questions at hand, a sample of 2,003 students was drawn from four state universities in Khabarovsk ( $n = 1,501$ ) and two in Komsomolsk-on-Amur ( $n = 502$ ), the largest cities in the region. All participating

universities are major regional educational institutions ranked above average according to the Monitoring the Effectiveness of Educational Institutions rating (Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation, 2017). The total enrollment in these universities accounted for over 70% of all students in the region in 2016. The survey was conducted from November to early December 2016 by a group of students previously trained by our research team. All interviews took place on university campuses. First-year, part-time, remote students and those majoring in disciplines other than the social, technical or natural sciences or the humanities were excluded from the sample. Interviews were conducted in person and included questions on the students' motivation for enrollment, academic performance, previous experience with informal practices, family background and several demographic and socio-economic characteristics.

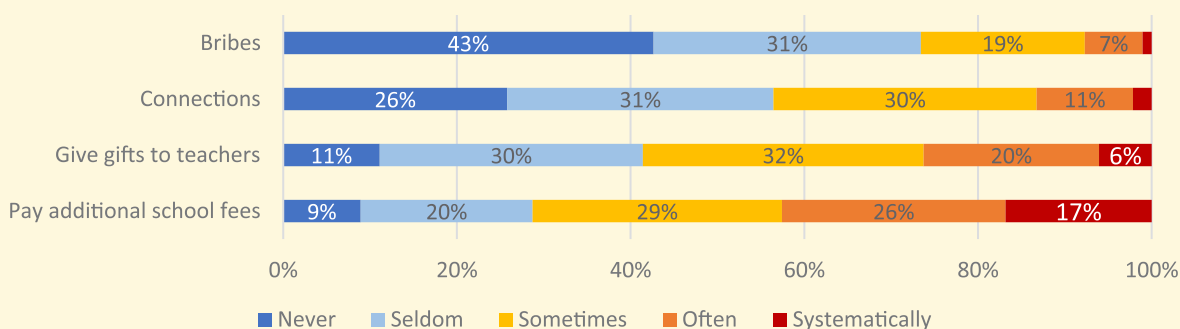
The respondents are, on average, 20 years old and the sample is fairly balanced in terms of gender (55% are female). The distribution of majors is as follows: 38% study humanities, 30% social sciences, 24% technical sciences and 8% focus on natural sciences. Regarding the respondents' financial situation, the majority (55%) spend 10,000 to 20,000 rubles (about \$155 to \$310) a month, a third (33%) report spending less than 10,000 rubles (\$155) a month, while another 12% have average monthly expenses of over 20,000 rubles (\$310) [4]. The education of just over half (53%) of the students is state funded.

Item non-response is low with the maximum of 4% of the students' year of birth missing. About 3% of the students chose not to answer the question on bribery at their universities or talk about their own corrupt academic practices.

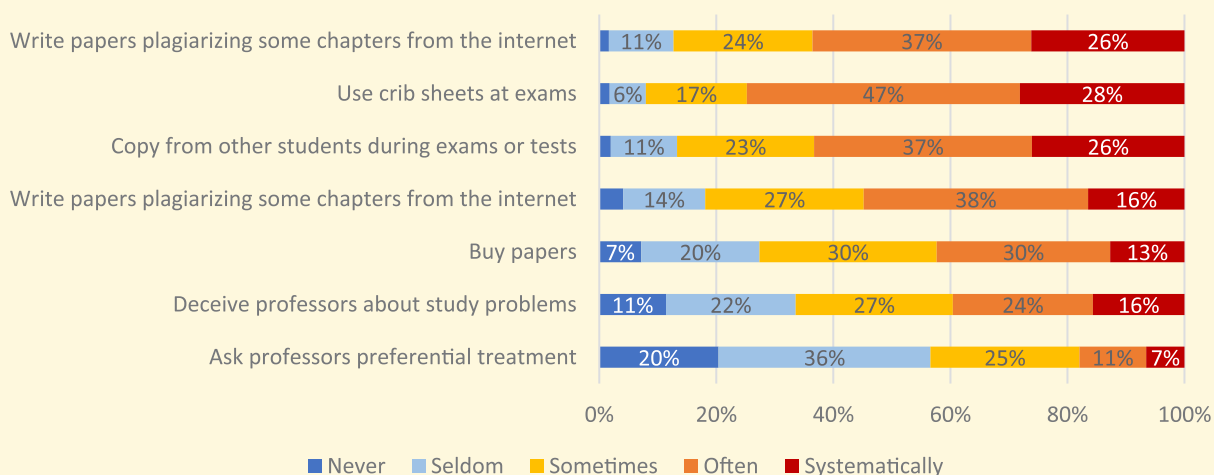
## Findings

Assessing student exposure to corruption and wrongdoing, we discover that the use of connections is more common than bribery for solving problems among students' friends and relatives (Figure 1). At the same time, a substantial proportion of the interviewees indicate having given gifts to teachers at school, which is, however, slightly less widespread than paying additional school fees (e.g. fees for school repairs, security, etc.) [5; 6] (Figure 1).

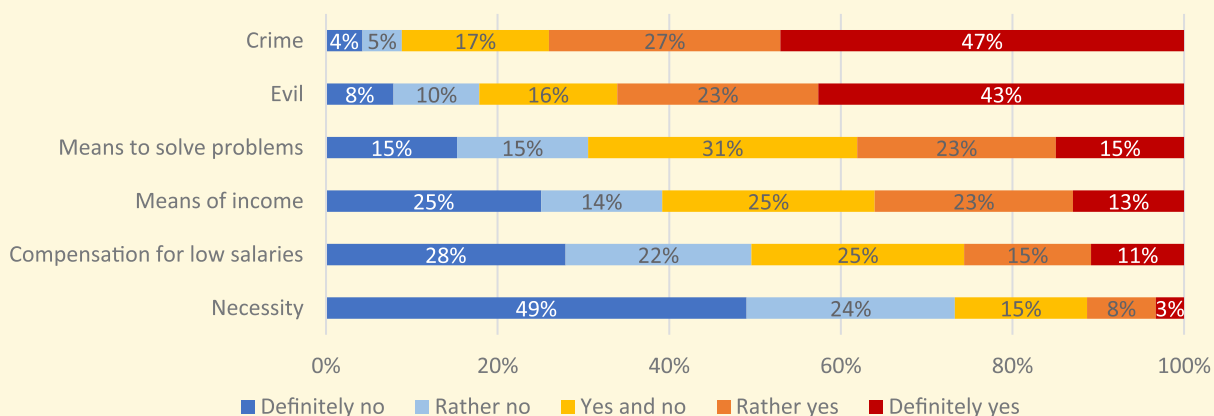
**Figure 1.** Frequency of using connections and bribes to solve problems, paying additional school fees and giving gifts to teachers ( $n$  is between 1,993 and 1,999).



**Figure 2.** “In your opinion, how often do students use the following practices...?” (n is between 610 and 615). [7]



**Figure 3.** “What does ‘corruption’ mean to you?” (n is between 609 and 612).



Over one-third (34%) of surveyed students encountered various forms of corruption, such as bribes, gifts and help from on-site proctors, during the Unified State Exams. About 20% of the respondents witnessed some wrongdoing during the university admission process. The incidence of bribery at universities after admission appears to be less of an issue, since nearly 84% of students who answered this question claim to have never or seldom witnessed bribes at universities.

Turning to dishonest academic practices, students generally believe them to be prevalent at all universities (Figure 2). Partial plagiarism from the internet, the use of cheat sheets during exams and copying from other students during exams are the three most widespread examples of dishonest academic behavior according to our survey, often or systematically reported by over 60% of the respondents. The least common practices are those involving direct communication with professors, such as asking them for preferential treatment.

Despite their exposure to corruption and dishonest academic practices, survey participants demonstrate a predominantly negative moral assessment of corruption (Figure 3). When asked about what corruption means to

them, students tended to choose “crime” and “evil” as the strongest associations. Perceiving corruption as a necessity is uncommon. It is worth noting that the respondents perceive the impact of corruption on the national level (i.e., its effects on the Russian economy, politics, education and health systems and the police) more negatively, on average, than on a personal level (i.e., its effects on their own career opportunities, quality of life, education, health and safety). Students seem to be rather skeptical when asked about whether corruption can be eradicated in Russia, as over half (51%) of respondents selected negative answer options to this question.

The interviewees express little interest in taking part in future corruption-awareness activities. About 12% were willing to take part in a next-year survey about corruption and only 5% agreed to join a roundtable discussion about corruption.

## Conclusions

The attitudes of Russian students towards corruption and dishonest academic behavior are examined in this paper based on a large sample from the Khabarovsk Region. Analyzing the collected data, we find that various forms

of dishonest academic practices are perceived by students as common. At the same time, the students' moral assessment of corruption is predominantly negative. The impact of corruption is viewed to be especially detrimental on the national level, and slightly less so on the individual level. Finally, the majority of respondents do not believe that corruption can be eradicated in Russia, nor are they particularly interested in participating in future corruption-awareness activities.

The fact that students condemn corruption but still observe and likely participate in dishonest academic practices may appear conflicting. It might be that students do not perceive corruption and dishonest academic practices as related phenomena. Mass media tend to focus on high-stakes cases of political corruption, usually involving large sums of money and/or massive abuses of power by high-level politicians and business elites. Giving gifts to teachers or asking professors for preferential treatment might not be viewed by students as serious cases of corrupt behavior as it is of relatively minor importance compared to examples of grand corruption.

From a slightly different angle, compartmentalization might be another explanation. Students know (from mass media, social anti-corruption campaigns, word of mouth, etc.) corruption is bad but they do not think critically about their own behavior. From their point of view, everyone does some dishonest things, such as deceiving professors, downloading papers from the internet and using cheat sheets at exams, so this becomes normalized behavior and part of how students survive their studies.

However, other explanations could exist. Future studies should explore the links between attitudes towards petty corruption, particularly corruption in education, and people's own experiences with corrupt activities.

## References and Notes

- [1] Kasamara, V., Sorokina, A. (2017) Rebuilt Empire or New Collapse? Geopolitical Visions of Russian Students. *Europe-Asia Studies*. 69(2). pp. 262-283.
- [2] The Khabarovsk Region was chosen for the study because it has a well-established infrastructure that allowed us to organize a full-scale survey. Issues of corruption in education and academic dishonesty are not region-specific but are endemic to the entire country.
- [3] We also evaluated the effectiveness of anti-corruption information materials in a randomized control trial setting, which, however, is not the focus of this article.
- [4] Based on the average of daily exchange rates from the Russian Central Bank in the period January 1 to November 1, 2016 (Central Bank of the Russian Federation, 2017). Average income in the Khabarovsk region was 37,461 rubles (\$581) in 2016 (Administration of the Federal State Statistics Service for the Khabarovsk Region, Magadan Region, the Jewish Autonomous Region, and the Chukotka Autonomous District, 2018).

[5] While gift-giving to teachers is prevalent, attitudes towards it are ambivalent, as it is commonly considered to be part of the Russian academic culture (Denisova-Schmidt, E. (2016) Academic Dishonesty or Corrupt Values: the Case of Russia. In: Torsello, D. (ed.) *Corruption in Public Administration: an Ethnographic Approach*. Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar. pp. 105-137).

[6] Additional school fees have been ruled legal if they are contributed on a voluntary basis (Federal Law No. 135 – FZ). However, anecdotal evidence suggests such fees are often coercive in nature.

[7] Hereinafter, we present results based on the answers for the control group of our randomized corruption-awareness intervention rather than the full sample. Answers in the treated group might have been affected by the corruption-awareness information presented to them; for that reason, they are excluded.

## How Secondary School Practices Contribute to the Acceptance of Plagiarism in Russian HEIs

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In recent years, plagiarism has become a topic attracting the attention of social researchers as well as the media and the general public. Russia has achieved some results in gaining control over plagiarism in the sciences. Even though this problem has not yet been resolved, the situation in higher education is even worse. Students – even at elite universities – continuously copy texts from the Internet as though there were nothing wrong with it, and there is already quite a body of empirical research on this topic [1; 2]. It has also been shown that students actually grow more tolerant towards plagiarism over the course of their studies. In fact, senior students accept and practice plagiarism much easier and more often than first-year students [3].

All of the existing research positions plagiarism as something decidedly negative, as a dishonest practice, as a breach of academic ethics. However, such an implicit judgmental attitude towards students who copy other people's texts misses a key point: many researchers treat plagiarism as if it were something that only emerges in tertiary education and ignore the fact that college students



just continue the routines and practices for working with texts that they adopted in school. The inertia of school routines and practices that are later reproduced in college is strongest when it comes to plagiarism.

School norms regarding the use of additional materials do not contain any requirements as to how process 'borrowed' texts, so a simple 'copy and paste' procedure is seen as totally legitimate at the secondary school level. In theory, secondary education does not imply the use of any additional sources of information besides standard textbooks, so when students have a need to address other sources – which actually happens rather often – there is no procedure to regulate this kind of work. This means that nothing of what students find online and use for educational purposes is seen as 'appropriated illegitimately.' On the contrary, reports that students prepare based on the information found online and present in class receive high grades; it is very rare for teachers to ask for a bibliography, and the concept of references is totally foreign to high school students. Still, as children feel encouraged to use additional sources of information, many of them do that in order to get better grades. So, at school they actually learn that copying other people's texts and using them in their own presentations is something positive – and this is the attitude they go to college with.

Unsurprisingly, most first-year college students do not know what the correct way of working with information is; on the contrary, they believe that they should continue with the same approach they learned at school. It is not about 'low moral standards' or being 'prone to cheating', but quite the opposite: many students are very diligent. They simply do not realize that the way of processing information they were taught at school for eleven years (or rather, the way they weren't taught) is wrong, that there are quotes and references, that there are correct and incorrect ways of using other people's work.

What is most surprising in all of the debates around plagiarism that are shaking the academic community is the existing consensus among the learned members of academia who expose cheaters. Of course, plagiarism is a kind of cheating, but let us ask ourselves: are all the 'cheaters' equally culpable? Maybe there is a kind of 'cognitive dissonance' between the two parties of the learning process: teachers think they are being deceived, but many students, especially first-year students, are genuinely surprised by such an interpretation of their actions. Moreover, it is not self-evident that a recent high school graduate, especially one coming from an ordinary school in a small town or even in a rural area, who has been admitted to college should know that downloading texts from the Internet is something bad and that it is called 'plagiarism.' Even when HEIs offer special courses or workshops aimed at teaching students how to correctly handle information and write academic papers, they cannot quickly break the routines that took years to evolve.

In other words, different behavioral models can explain dishonest behavior, and there is more than one model that

is applicable to plagiarism. Most research papers offer only one view: 'devious students deceive teachers.' I suggest another model: 'teachers think they are being deceived, but students do not agree.' Researchers rarely consider this model, but I think it has substantial explanatory capacity when it comes to plagiarism.

All this leads to two conclusions and, therefore, some recommendations, which, unfortunately, are not very easy to implement. First of all, before starting a crusade against plagiarism, one should find out whether students actually know what plagiarism is and why it is bad. This is an issue that requires thoughtfulness and commitment from teachers. Finding out why students plagiarize means approaching them one by one and spending some time talking to them, which is already difficult, since many teachers are overloaded. So a dilemma emerges: for teachers, it is easier either to treat everyone as a cheat and to be tough, or to turn a blind eye to this problem and still believe that everyone is a cheat. These are the two most common approaches used in practice. A tougher stance on academic honesty does not change much; for example, requirements for all student papers to be uploaded into the public domain or for a certain minimal share of original text to be introduced do not lead to any real changes and only motivate students to search for new loopholes. Not only do teachers know about this, they don't even criticize such behavior, which only proves that they just prefer not to interfere.

Secondly, the crackdown on plagiarism should start at the secondary school level. Usually HEIs only approach schools for utilitarian reasons: they come to recruit prospective students. There should be a dialogue between tertiary education and secondary schools about their long-term mutual interests. It is actually in kindergarten that children are taught not to steal.

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# Ukraine: A Thousand Reasons to Cheat the System

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During a recent stay in Ukraine, a driver shared that he had enrolled his son in a university in the south of the country. When asked about the reason behind this choice – perhaps that university offered a specialization that was not easy to find in Kiev – he candidly admitted “it was cheaper to get him into a university there. He does not really want to study but, without a degree, he would not even be allowed to work as a shop salesperson.”

This short statement may be regarded as the quintessence of the stalemate the higher education sector in Ukraine has been facing for some years. If, in order to get a job, people need a university degree, then virtually anyone is willing to enroll in a university. There are, of course, a number of private universities, but many go bankrupt after a few years or do not have a sufficiently good reputation to attract students. As a result, public universities – and even more faculties – that are perceived as offering more opportunities on the job market are largely under assault by hordes of potential students convinced (sometimes by their parents) that some sort of degree is needed to get any job, regardless of the qualification needed.

This pressure also occurs in spite of the lack of any substantial extra injection of funding. And yet, the cost of living in Ukraine is growing fast, public salaries are not being adjusted, scientific equipment becomes quickly obsolete and buildings undergo little renovation.

## The Visible and Invisible Effects

The most visible consequence of this stalemate is possibly a widespread perception of the educational sector as highly corrupt. A popular explanation of the phenomenon is that universities and teachers are in the need of extra cash, and they squeeze students to secure a better income. Indeed, with regards to informal practices, educational institutions are regarded as second only to healthcare (69%).

In several surveys, a large number of respondents (64%) reported that interactions with secondary school teachers and higher education staff (49%) result in some kind of corrupted practices [1].

From the teachers' side, the situation is no better. 57% of representatives of secondary education institutions said they had received some kind of offers over the past few years and independent reports rate corruption in higher education institutions (universities and university educators) at 47%, with 44% of university undergraduate and graduate students and 36% of students at highly specialized schools claiming to be willing to fight this tendency.

In addition, in a 2012 survey [2], only 3% of the respondents considered informal payments to teaching staff as necessary, while 28.7% had a more fatalistic position, considering them a “part of the system”. Negative attitudes, however, were prevalent. Only 9.3% of the respondents considered informal payments as the only survival option for university teaching staff, and 59% saw it as a sign of the degradation of the country. In a subsequent question, informal payments were also associated with shame by 44.1% of the respondents.

If these figures can help us somehow quantify the phenomenon economically, they provide an overview of the tip of the iceberg – something that is visible or somehow measurable. However, the awareness that people cheat the system says little about why they tend to do so, what their motivation is and whether they perceive their attitude as socially acceptable, honest or something else. Our research on informality, in Ukraine and beyond [2; 3; 4; 5; 6], is an attempt to explore the systemic nature of informal practices. In other words, starting from a transaction that may be considered illegal or unlawful from a state perspective, we try to reconstruct the “story behind” it using some sort of Geertz-like thinking descriptions. In this respect, we regard informality as the aggregate of all the practices that can be regarded as a deviation from a “standard path”. There is a way rules are supposed to be applied, according to (civil, penal) codes and laws, and there is a way things work in reality. The gap between two can be regarded as informality and includes practices that are unlawful, illegal or illicit. But it also includes practices that are perceived as socially acceptable, and thus not necessarily stigmatized socially.

## Systemic Cheating vs Cheating the System

Why might people – and the Ukrainian in our case – want to cheat a given system? Think of informal payments to pass an entrance exam, to be admitted to the next year in spite of bad results, but also the teacher-vs-student attitude that leads some teachers to demand money to pass an exam or some students to cheat at an exam. Although apparently different in form, we see them all as coming from the same matrix. They are manifestations of discontent, or even dissent, with a system and the way things work in one or more given sphere of public life.

We maintain that all these ways of cheating the system can be regarded as acts of resistance, or dissent, against a state that, in the eyes of the performers, is not acting the way it should. It is a sort of denial of the symbolic power of the state, of the hierarchies and order a state is built upon, or of its functions, in a particular aspect of public life.

This might be, at least, a possible interpretation of the results we received from a recent survey according to which 84% of our respondents nationwide did not think that the Ukrainian state was acting in their interest. This was matched by 79% of them thinking that the current government is not doing what is best for the country and 76% feeling that the state is not protecting them. Equally interesting, these tendencies were matched by another one to trust fellow citizens instead of the state. Indeed, up to 100% of the respondents (in the regions of Vinnitsa, Ivano-Frankivsk and Kirovograd) declared that it is important or very important to help one another and 84.1% believed that connections are crucial to gain access to services or information [7].

When the percentage of unlawful or illegal practices is low, one can consider it a deviation from an otherwise functioning and acceptable path and way of living in the state. When these acts come from the majority of a population, we regard it – in a Scottian framework of everyday resistance or infrapolitics [8; 9] – as a way to maintain a distance from the state, its actions, its institutions – and in brief to deny (at least partly) its legitimacy.

We regard these practices as originating from a gap between state and individual morality – from how the state sees things and how these same things are perceived and lived by its citizens. In a 1959 study on factory workers in the US, it was found that some firms would turn a blind eye to workers taking home some small items from the workplace. This was considered to be a concession to make up for a low salary, or a perk of working in a particular environment that would not reward workers as much as they expected. This example can explain the perversity of the Ukrainian situation. Teachers are underpaid but the state turns a blind eye to informal practices. Students need a degree only pro forma but then it becomes easy to get one by simply cheating or buying one.

So, what will be the fate of our taxi driver's son? What are the odds that he will find quickly a decent job with his degree? Chances are that he will eventually tick the box by somehow getting a degree and then getting a job somewhere through someone in his, or his father's, network. The "system" works, just not the way it is supposed – or declared – to be.

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## Why Blacklists Matter

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This note outlines the global trends in research evaluation that lead to the use of journal or publisher blacklists. The author suggests that the business models of Clarivate and Elsevier and the overuse of Web of Science and Scopus by developing nations are leading to their infiltration by potentially predatory publishers. This means that, in order to use them in a mechanistic way, one has to introduce and maintain blacklists.

One of the dominant trends of research policy is drastically simplistic: scholarly outputs are judged by the name, status and citations of the venue in which it is published.



Got a first-author paper in Nature? The Ivy League welcomes you as a tenure-track assistant professor. Got a middle-author paper in Nature Communications? Our middle-tier German university welcomes you as a postdoc. Got a history book published by Cambridge University Press? Our tenure committee wholeheartedly approves you as a candidate. Got a paper in an edited volume indexed in Web of Science? That's enough to pass a regular assessment somewhere in Central Europe. Got a paper in a journal with a journal impact factor (JIF) of 5? Please take this money, China is proud of you. Got something in Scopus? We probably won't read it, but you are welcome at our regional Russian university.

This list of slight exaggerations could go on forever. No matter what discipline and level, it is basically all the same across the globe: your creative work gets evaluated indirectly. Senior faculty pretends not to be happy (the Declaration on Research Assessment <https://sfdora.org/> stresses "the need to assess research on its own merits rather than on the basis of the journal in which the research is published"), but what about the early-career researchers? The rules of the game have never been so simple and transparent, and they perfectly suit our individualistic career-driven age. One Recent case study highlights that "...academics have bought into this [metrics] competition, thus becoming complicit in their exploitation. Instead of resisting the demands placed upon them, academics primarily complied and openly challenged management only when an unfavorable evaluation was perceived to be jeopardizing their chances for promotion" [1]. Such an approach also is very appealing to research managers of all levels, who themselves usually cannot evaluate publications directly and are often either reluctant to outsource it to specialist reviewers or are just underqualified to do so. Also, both the authors and research managers are subject to heavy top-down indicator pressure, when metrics devised explicitly as KPIs at the national and organizational level are naturally starting to be used on the lower levels both as output indicators and planning goals. Besides, outsourcing the evaluation of unique objects by using judgment devices [2] is currently widespread everywhere, not only in scholarly world.

In short, this is why the indirect, lists-based approach is flourishing and will prevail. The lists we are talking about, however, are essentially whitelists. So why do blacklists matter? This is because of the inevitable opportunistic behavior that is stimulated by formalist evaluations eliminating trust from the research assessment. The other cause is the widespread lack of awareness of predatory publishing, which exploits mechanistic evaluations. Such a lack is fueled by the approach itself: even experienced scholars in prestigious universities now often pay more attention to the formal characteristics of the journal (JIF or indexing status) than to its actual contents.

The simple answer, however, is that blacklists matter because some whitelists are flawed. Let us take a look at them, using a simple classification.

## Anything Goes

The most widely used "list" includes everything: in this case, every publication provided by the subject under evaluation is counted as a legitimate output. Such an approach is used either when subjects are working on such a level that any attempt of filtering submitted works will lead to an insufficient number of outputs (a case for thousands of universities in developing countries), or when submitted outputs are going to be peer-reviewed. The latter is the case for the UK's Research Excellence Framework, which will eagerly accept anything in the worst predatory journal imaginable and pass it on to reviewers. But if there's no peer review ahead, such an approach is clearly begging for a blacklist.

## Bibliometric Databases

Bibliometric databases are tools for the quantitative assessment of publication metadata and citation networks. They are modelled after the Science Citation Index (currently part of Web of Science (WoS)), which was grounded in the idea that it is possible to index only the best journals, because they publish what matters [3], and the relative standing of the journal could be assessed by the average number of citations to it coming from the other pre-selected journals (JIF). This concept of "journal core" interwoven with citations turned out to be highly productive. In the 1970s-90s, the Web of Science steadily grew, eventually including social sciences, humanities, books and conferences. The journal selection process, particularly for STEM disciplines, was rigorous and citation analysis was well-suited for them. So the WoS-indexed status, along with the JIFs, gradually became a popular means of assessment in biology, chemistry, physics, economics and many other disciplines, both by researchers and research administrators [4].

Then in the 2000s came Elsevier with its Scopus. The name rings of its main marketing difference: scope. Using the same wording (rigorous, etc.) when describing its journal selection process, Scopus offered almost twice as many indexed titles. Such a marketing innovation coincided with the explosive growth of bibliometrics usage as a research evaluation tool. Using this crucial difference in scope, Scopus was able to both capitalize on its rival's reputation and reach new markets where people just do not have enough WoS papers. Asia, Africa, Latin America, Russia and Eastern Europe were eager to buy into such a product. Commercial university rankings are also very interested in these markets, so they switched to Scopus and abandoned WoS, which allowed them to include more universities from the developing countries that overestimate such rankings. The dark side of such an approach was a surge of potentially predatory journals managing to get into Scopus. This was possible because of the lax quality control, used to increase the volume difference between WoS and Scopus, and also because of the dissemination of the open access "author pays" model. This model means that you do not need readers or reviewers at all if your authors only want to get a paper in the proper database.

WoS started to lose ground even in more established markets like Australia and Italy, where they lost several contracts as data providers for national assessments. As a response, in 2015, they decided to create a lower-tier Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI), but included it in its Core Collection package, which is a standard tool for WoS-based evaluations. ESCI journals do not have a JIF, but in the other aspects they are treated the same, and citations from them count towards JIFs of journals in the higher-tier parts. While older indices in Core Collection were populated slowly, over decades of rigorous review, ESCI managed to get 7,500+ journals in just three and a half years. Many of them are of dubious quality and some are clearly predatory.

To sum up, strict journal quality control started contradicting the business models of Clarivate (who owns WoS) and Elsevier, both aimed at rapid market expansion. These two bases are so widely used in research evaluation that those who continue to use them are eventually starting to use blacklists.

## National and Local Lists

The rest of the whitelists are generally good because they are not involved in increasing profit or market share [5]. They are produced by scholars for scholars or research managers and usually every journal is scrutinized by a panel of experts. The most widely used lists in Europe are made in Scandinavia and form a backbone of so-called Nordic Model of university research evaluation [6]. For example, the Norwegian Register of Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers has 25,800 serials and more than a thousand book publishers, divided into two tiers (the top tier is less than 8% for journals). Each item was surveyed by a subject-specific panel of experts, and the list is constantly reviewed.

The same process in Russia, however, has failed completely. The so-called “Spisok VAK”, a Higher Attestation Commission (HAC) List of the Journals, where PhD candidates have to publish articles in order to get a degree, has rapidly deteriorated into a mess of predatory paid journals and in-house local university bulletins. Somehow (and this topic begs for a study by both STS scholars and police investigators) the disciplinary panels of the HAC have included in this list many predatory megajournals, which started pumping out thousands of papers per year without any proper peer review [7]. In effect, such an easily penetrable and performative list created the contemporary Russian pseudoscience market. In 2012 Kazakhstan adopted a similar policy that each PhD candidate has to publish a paper in Scopus. This quickly led to Kazakhstan becoming the world leader in the share of Scopus papers published by predatory journals. The same applies to India, where a majority of 480 surveyed authors of papers in predatory journals acknowledged that one of the main reasons they published was due to the rules of having minimum number of papers to obtain a PhD [8]. One possible countermeasure for those who care is a blacklist – a semi-secret one, of course: we need to minimize the legal and political risks of

acting against the national trend, so our own HSE blacklist is available only for HSE faculty and staff [9]. This blacklist is used in internal research assessments and is populated using an elaborate procedure: first, suspicious journals are evaluated using ca. 40 formalized objective criteria; then results are discussed by a panel of experts from the different fields of science and humanities, which makes the final decision. Journals and publishers can be delisted after two years, following a re-examination.

The last and the most populous group of whitelists is comprised of various discipline-specific lists produced for local evaluation needs or limited to a single discipline. They are especially popular in management science and economics. Such lists usually are highly selective and thus eliminate any need for a blacklist. They are often used in an informal way at the departmental level and lead to problems of a different kind: they are too short and strict.

## Final Remarks

So who needs blacklists? Primarily those who use all-inclusive or flawed whitelists in a mechanistic way, especially in an academic environment where the majority of scholars do not regularly publish in highly regarded international venues. Currently the most used flawed whitelists are those of the Web of Science and Scopus. Xia et al [10] showed that “Those who publish in ‘predatory’ journals are, for the most part, young and inexperienced researchers from developing countries”. I have identified several official country-level blacklists, and they are produced by ministries of science from the regions badly affected by the predatory publishing boom after introducing simplistic bibliometrics: Malaysia, Iran, Syria and Indonesia. To quote a relevant ResearchGate discussion thread: “In Syria, the situation is similar to Iran and Thailand: i.e., we have to publish in accredited journals by our Ministry of higher education. Actually the ministry publishes a black-list of unacceptable journals some of which have even IF in ISI/JCR [aka WoS] or Scopus. Both acceptable and unacceptable journals are renewed periodically (each 6 months)” [11].

China is already on the way: in 2018, the Communist Party of China required the Ministry of Science and Technology to establish a blacklist of academic journals. It seems a high time for Russia with its Scopus/WoS obsession to enter the club. The problem is that we will not have a chance of reaching the new presidential goal of 5% of WoS world output by 2024 without maintaining the surge of lower-quality papers in ESCI. Currently, we stand at 2.3% in 2017 in the traditional WoS Core Collection indices (15th in the World), or 5.5% in ESCI (3rd in the World). With no national blacklist ahead, this could mean that, for now, Russia has chosen quantity instead of quality.

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## Academic Dishonesty: A Symptom, Not a Problem

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### Introduction

In a recent post on her Facebook page, a good friend of a friend engaged in a lengthy discussion with her other friends about the advantages and disadvantages of using a wireless earpiece to cheat in the heat of her summer exam session. "Is the weather outside too hot for an earpiece?", she asked. As a well-off student in one of the elite universities of her country (Ukraine), she could afford to purchase various solutions to her exam "problem" – unlike many of her Facebook friends, who seemed equally determined to pass their exams, but had to earn the money for their earpieces first. Some had a McJob and posted pictures of the colorful tip boxes they put on the café counters where they were serving, labelling them "tips for my exam session".

The university in question appeared to be well aware of the earpiece dilemma of its students and the fact that the problem has been around for a while. The institution featured a prominent statement about a year-long commitment against cheating on its website, corroborated with references to a code of conduct and news of recent acquisitions: radio jammers for the exam halls and an expensive ICT solution against plagiarism. A quick online search confirmed that, within the limits of their PR and procurement budgets, other universities in the country had similar disclaimers and activities. Apparently, cheating was not only a popular exam "solution" for students, but also a favorite anti-corruption target for their universities, at least as far as their websites went.

How does the coexistence of lively Facebook discussions on how to be dishonest and of rigid university commitments to prevent dishonesty play out in practice? Not so well, it seems. Over 90% of the students in a recent survey in Ukraine admitted to engaging in some form of plagiarism; 67% said they were using cheat sheets, half relied on illicit access to the Internet during exams and over a third noted that they prefer resorting to more traditional forms of cheating, such as copying from other students. It is unlikely that this situation evolved overnight. It is indicative of a problem that persists and might be getting worse.

Ukraine is not alone, either in having a critical mass of universities that readily declare cheating as the main target of their integrity and anti-corruption efforts, or in the fact that these efforts remain unimpressive in terms of impact. There is hardly an academic institution in Eastern Europe



without some form of reference to cheating in its internal regulations, and some countries (e.g. Kazakhstan, but also Ukraine) have even defined plagiarism as a violation in law. Still, earpieces and similar “solutions” are very much sought after at most universities.

In Central Asia, for instance, the Kazakh national Agency for Civil Service and Corruption Prevention considered cheating and plagiarism to be pervasive enough to be quoted among the top corruption risks in national education, while in the Caucasus, in Armenia, two-thirds of the student respondents in a representative survey admitted to copying up to a third of their written work on a regular basis without attributing authorship. Their other favourite forms of “support” included the use of crib notes or ICT, the purchase of papers, impersonation of exam-takers and resubmission of the same paper in different written assignments.

All of this narrative is hardly new and the data it quotes probably comes as no surprise, especially to those who are familiar with the subject. The question that emerges from all this is predictable as well: How come cheating is such a “stubborn” problem? Why do the efforts of authorities and university administrations against it fail to make a difference, as the perceptions and experiences of participants in higher education continue to suggest?

A common response to this common question is that cheating is an inevitable risk, a type of conduct to which students are likely to always be drawn to when there is an opportunity. We think that this is simplistic and want to share a more nuanced interpretation, one which is closer to the Facebook conversations of students than to the websites of their faculties. The research which we describe next treats academic cheating as the symptom, not the cause of institutional and system problems. Our findings suggest that targeting these failures may be a better prevention strategy than targeting cheating itself.

## **An Alternative Angle or Research into Academic Cheating**

Some years ago, we – a group of education and anti-corruption experts – started exploring how to improve the effectiveness of corruption prevention in education in countries of the OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia (ACN) [2]. It quickly became evident that the most valuable and difficult-to-gain insights are those into the connection between corruption, the motivation of people to engage in it and the conditions in which education takes place. We wanted to understand what in those conditions makes corruption possible and necessary in the first place, in a sector which is meant to do what is somehow the opposite of corruption – develop the youth, the future of every nation, as responsible and honest citizens.

This goal led us to the development of a methodology for the identification of the conditions in education that encourage and motivate participants to resort to corruption. The methodology, which became known as INTES

(Integrity of Education Systems) [3], was used in several countries on behalf of their authorities and/or civil society (e.g. Serbia, Tunisia, Armenia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan) and delivered interesting results that can illustrate our point. In this contribution, we provide a snapshot of the findings from three of these countries: Armenia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine.

## **Some Findings**

Perhaps predictably, in all three countries, our research confirmed the presence of professional environments in which cheating is routine and disrespect for genuine academic achievement is widespread. In all three, higher education was plagued by concerningly diverse and pervasive violations involving cheating in formal academic exercises. However, in most of the cases we came across, cheating was also a type of response by students and faculty to problems in the academic operation of their institutions – a sort of remedy for these problems. These included curriculum overload, multiple job-holding by faculty, admission procedures which did not account for student aptitude and interests as well as regulatory gaps and impunity for those who cheat.

To start with the last point first (regulatory gaps and impunity), in Armenia, only 12% of a sample of students from major national universities have ever been reprimanded for plagiarism. 42% of them expressed certainty that they will not be sanctioned if caught cheating and close to 60% were convinced that their plagiarized work will be accepted “no matter what”. In Ukraine, sanctions for cheating were ill-defined and enforcement was entirely in the remit of teachers, some of whom would act, while many others would not. Finally, in Kazakhstan the only sanction for cheating was expulsion, which universities rarely applied as they (rightly) considered it to be too severe for frequent and trivial forms of cheating such as plagiarizing portions of regular written assignments.

Part of the challenge with impunity is that laws and regulations may fail to capture the diversity of the problem. In Ukraine, plagiarism is the only form of academic dishonesty that was described as a violation, although cheating in that country includes a much broader array of practices, such as false authorship and illicit copying. In Kazakhstan, each university was left to define cheating as a violation as it pleases, and most did so in generic terms, while in Armenia, universities provided no guidance on what constitutes cheating whatsoever. Close to 89% of a sample of Armenian students felt that they are left to decide on their own what conduct might be crossing the line.

As to the point about study content, in Armenia, cheating was a direct response to what students perceived as an otherwise unsurmountable challenge with overloaded, outdated or incomplete study curricula, which in their view promoted rote learning and predominantly theoretical knowledge. Overload was a challenge for their teachers as well, who were allowed to (and had to) hold multiple jobs in order to improve their income, thus rarely find-

ing time to enforce standards of academic integrity and to check all written assignments properly. An additional reason in Ukraine as well as in Armenia was the lack of intrinsic motivation to study among a substantial share of students who engaged in cheating, which could be traced back to the way in which undergraduate admission procedures and criteria were set. They encouraged prospective students to make study choices that prioritize access to state-funded places over their study interests and aptitude.

## The Way Ahead

The discussion on how to prevent academic cheating should not be limited to a reflection about the manifestations of the problem and its regulation. It should include a consideration on how to improve higher education in ways that reduce the need to cheat. The expectations, hopes and professional conditions of participants in higher education hold important clues in this respect, particularly about the reasons why cheating persists, despite all rules and campaigns against it.

Certainly, such targeted improvement may be costlier, more difficult, and time-consuming for an academic institution than a website update or the purchase of radio jammers for the exam hall. Yet an informed effort to address the root causes of dishonesty is also more likely to make the summertime discussion of wireless earpieces in exams eventually a thing of the past.

## Notes

[1] The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the organizations with which the author is affiliated.

[2] Retrieved from:  
<https://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/>.

[3] For more information on INTES, see the corresponding OECD publication at <https://www.oecd.org/corruption/acn/preventionofcorruption/>.

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# Are Russian Students Becoming More Dishonest During College?

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One of the biggest challenges for the Russian higher education system is to combat academic dishonesty among students. In 2014, almost half of the students at Russia's most selective universities indicated that they cheated on exams [1]. Furthermore, international comparative studies show that Russian students are more tolerant of academic dishonesty than students from other countries [2].

It is not clear, however, whether students obtain tolerant attitudes towards cheating before coming to university (in high school) or develop these attitudes over the course of their university studies. Existing US-based research shares a consensus that universities contribute to the progress in the students' moral development: senior students tend to cheat less than freshmen [3; 4]. Researchers attribute this effect not only to the maturation but also to the specific college experiences that promote the values of academic integrity and honesty. But does it work the same way in Russia?

We will address this question using the data from two large-scale student surveys recently conducted in Russia. The first is the survey of more than 2,200 undergraduate students within the annual Monitoring of Education Markets and Organizations Project (MEMO Survey) in 2014. The second is the nationally representative survey of more than 2,300 first-year and third-year engineering students conducted in 2015 as part of the Study of Undergraduate Performance (SUPER-test) [5].

## From Bad to Worse

In the MEMO Survey, students were asked two questions: if they were cheating during exams in the past academic year, and if they were plagiarizing in their academic papers in the past academic year. While nearly 30% of

the students indicated that they were cheating during exams, there is a striking gap between the first-year students (17% were cheating) and the fourth-year students (36% were cheating). The gap is a bit smaller for plagiarism (24% in the first year and 34% in the fourth year). A positive correlation between the year of study and both cheating and plagiarism is still significant, even if controlled for a number of individual and institutional characteristics.

The design of the MEMO Survey is not ideal to identify a change in student dishonest behavior and attitudes, since students from different majors and universities are surveyed at each year of study. The SUPER-test data has a better design for this purpose – first-year and third-year students from the same departments were selected to participate in the study. They were asked indirect questions measuring their attitudes towards academic dishonesty (what the faculty member should do if a student is caught cheating or plagiarizing). And again, tolerance to academic dishonesty increases during college: 88% of third-year students demonstrate dishonest attitudes as compared with 82% of the first-year students. Both figures are high, so it seems that Russian students are going from bad to worse when it comes to academic dishonesty.

### **What is Wrong with Higher Education Institutions?**

The data from the two surveys show that Russian higher education institutions in fact implicitly encourage academic dishonesty among students. Students cheat more and develop tolerance towards academic dishonesty over the course of their studies. We identify at least four factors at the institutional level of Russian higher education institutions that allegedly contribute to developing student academic dishonesty.

First, higher education institutions do not develop and enforce policies aimed at academic integrity. Honor codes or similar documents are virtually non-existent at Russian universities (with few exceptions). Students are largely unaware of what constitutes dishonest behavior, especially when it comes to plagiarism. Faculty are not informed about the actions that they should undertake when they encounter student academic dishonesty and usually act very leniently.

Second, there are no incentives for faculty to combat cheating. Conversely, since university budgets depend on the number of enrolled students, university faculty are pressed by the institutional environment to tolerate cheating. Very often they are advised by administrators not to give students failing grades for academic dishonesty so that they can continue to be enrolled at the university.

Third, there are no incentives for honest students to help maintain academic integrity among their classmates by reporting cheating students. Russian students study in administratively assigned study groups (20-25 people) throughout the whole period of their education and at-

tend all classes together. This leads to the development of a sense of belonging to the group and strengthens feelings of solidarity. Cheating is therefore regarded as much less unethical action compared to whistleblowing or a refusal to help a fellow student during an exam.

Fourth, outdated teaching and grading methods contribute to the development of academic dishonesty. The learning process emphasizes “the replication of authoritative knowledge” [7]. Russian students spend a lot of time at lectures, taking notes, copying or taking pictures of PowerPoint slides. Their major goal as learners is to memorize material and correctly reproduce it on exams in a way that their instructors expect from them. Therefore, it is not surprising that copying from cribs or from others during the exams or while preparing a term paper becomes so widespread.

### **What is to be Done: Reactive or Proactive Approach?**

There is a wide range of actions that policymakers and university administrators can undertake to prevent the increase of academic dishonesty among students. The reactive approach is aimed at increasing the costs from cheating by enhancing monitoring and by making sanctions stricter and inevitable. Chinese policymakers are moving progressively in this direction: cheating on the national exam (gaokao) is currently punished with a prison sentence.

The proactive approach [8] aims at developing a culture of academic integrity and highlighting the shared responsibility of the students, faculty and university administrators to maintain it. This approach also seeks to make cheating costlier, but emphasizes the educational component. Decreasing the number of high-stakes exams and introducing courses on academic and research ethics as well as formative assessments may potentially produce the long-term effects of student honesty at universities and beyond.

It seems that Russian higher education needs a combination of these approaches to reverse the worrisome trend of increasing dishonesty among students. The newly established Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia needs to set the goal of combating academic dishonesty as one of its top priorities, since dishonesty undermines the investments in human capital. Russian higher education is a top-down system; thus, universities need a strong signal from the Ministry to prioritize this aspect of their work. Universities should be incentivized to develop policies and programs against dishonesty, such as honor codes and research ethics courses, as well as stricter punishments for cheating and plagiarism and improved assessment practices. Finally, universities should create support structures for faculty and students who report academic dishonesty. All these measures are a bare minimum that is required, considering the current state of academic honesty in Russian higher education.



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## A Cheat Sheet Exhibition: Is It Promotion or Prevention of Cheating Among Students?

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The Ural Federal University, located in Ekaterinburg, has been hosting an annual exhibition of cheat sheets for several years. The collection has nearly 150 items, all of which have been 'tested' in real life at secondary schools and ter-

tiary education institutions. According to Ivan Kolotovkin, a journalist and the mastermind behind the exhibition, it is not in any way aimed at promoting cheating among students; rather, it highlights the important problems in the sphere of higher education that need to be discussed.

Kolotovkin says he began collecting cheat sheets in 2010 or so. Still a student then, he was working on a piece for the local media about how students take exams. That was when he learned about various creative ways of cheating and decided to start his collection. His own classmates were among his very first 'suppliers', but nowadays his collection is expanding with the help of students and teachers from all over Russia. Here is what he says:

— The exhibition takes place every year during winter break. This is the time when first-year students take their first midterms. Items on display change all the time, because so does the examination process. With the advance of technologies, some kinds of cheat sheets have become extinct, so they can only be viewed at the exhibition. On the whole, cheat sheets have become simpler. Nevertheless, each cheat sheet represents an individual story — a story of a person who had to make it while preparing for exams. It does not necessarily mean that the person was stupid or wanted to find an easy way to pass. Many people perceive cheat sheets primarily as a sort of safety harness, as a talisman that they take with them in order to mitigate agitation. You know that even if you forget everything, you might get a chance to look into your cheat sheet. And this is what helps you calm down and regain composure before entering the exam room.

— Does your exhibition feature any sophisticated items based on modern telecommunication technologies?

— Yes, though it is all pretty straightforward: very small earbuds, mobile phones, tablets, smart watches, etc. Unfortunately, the use of devices eliminates any kind of studying for exams. In the past, students used to write or type their cheat sheets, thus actually learning what they had to learn, but nowadays they simply use the information they find online. People who do this probably don't study day and night before the exams in an attempt to learn everything.

— Have you ever seen cheat sheets of high artistic merit?

— What has always surprised me most is how some girls can hide cheat sheets under their nails, especially when they manage to hide a response to a whole test question per nail. Actually, I know that is quite effective, because at some HEIs, teachers used to force students to empty their pockets before starting the exams, and that is why female students came up with such a creative solution.

— In your opinion, are cheat sheets still relevant?

— Indeed, cheat sheets are becoming digital and cheating on the whole has become more difficult because of the introduction of the Unified State Exam for secondary school leavers. Still, college applicants and students do find ways

to cheat, so as long as they continue to do that, my collection will stay relevant. It is the very education system itself that gave rise to the emergence of cheat sheets, so they will prevail unless we change our approach to education.

— Do you agree with the following statement: ‘Students have grown so lazy that they are even too lazy to make cheat sheets’?

— They are not lazy — they are smart. Cheat sheets are not bad for students. Unfortunately, it is not cheat sheets that are the problem. Indeed, students use various devices to make their life easier. But I believe that this is a systemic problem. I think that the main goal of education in the modern world is to teach how to find information, process it and use it in practice.

Interestingly enough, such an exhibition is not unique to Russia. In 2009, for example, a school museum in Nuremberg did a mobile exhibition of cheat sheets; it featured over 1,000 items from all over the world and was shown in Germany, Austria and later Italy. In addition to ‘traditional’ paper cheat sheets, the exhibition included some unusual items that were written in invisible ink, or on a chocolate bar, or hidden in a lip moisturizer. Among the highlights of the exhibition were the cheat sheets that Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967), the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, used during his final exams at secondary school [1].

So what is a cheat sheet exhibition? First of all, it is about art: both the Russian and the German exhibitions surprise the viewer with how creative and innovative the cheat sheet authors can be. Secondly, such exhibitions give a signal to teachers that maybe there is something wrong with the content, volume, usefulness or relevance of what they teach. Last but not least, cheat sheet exhibitions create a natural opportunity to discuss such difficult issues as the massification of higher education and its consequences; it is a kind of art therapy for all of the representatives of the academic community and the relevant stakeholders, including students, their families, teachers, public officials and other decision-makers.

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