



## CORRUPTION AND EDUCATION: IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND SOCIETY

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**ABSTRACT.** The Oxford English Dictionary defines corruption as dishonest or illegal behaviour, especially of people in authority. Education is arguably one of the most important aspects of life as with such a lot of doors are opened for individuals, which are not offered to those without. Generation after generation the power and importance of education is only further highlighted, thus more and more children are pursuing higher education. As such, the number of students enrolled in schooling worldwide has been on an upwards trajectory, with an increase of over 150 million students since 2000 for secondary school and around 82 million since 2000 for primary school (Statista, 2022). Furthermore, the completion rate of primary school was close to 90% in 2019 and 76% for secondary school (Statista, 2022). Education can provide individuals with so many options and aid in their life path by increasing the aspects of stability in life, financial stability, equality between individuals worldwide, self-dependence, confidence, provides safety, and helps one reach their goals (Nair, 2022). In Canada itself, more than 1.4 million students are enrolled in a Canadian University, and 2.2 million students are enrolled in some form of postsecondary education (Universities Canada, 2018).

**Keywords:** Corruption, Education, Society, System, Children, Equality

### INTRODUCTION

Even though the importance of education is highlighted and with such, the statistics of students pursuing education is increasing every year, there are still a lot of children who are being refused education, do not have access to it, cannot afford further studies, and more. Worldwide 16% of girls were not enrolled in secondary school whereas 15% of boys were not in 2018 (Statista, 2022). Africa has the most children not in school, 39% of girls and 36% of boys not in school there (Statista, 2022). Females in particular are also denied the right to education pursuits such as secondary school and postsecondary learning due to the ongoing cycles of exploitation and discrimination, these patterns being more present in poorer countries. Save the Children, Educate Girls, Give, TheirWorld, CARE, United World Schools, We, and more to name a few are all charity-based non-profit institutions that work hard to provide children with the resources, finances, and living conditions to be given their right to education.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Even though the importance of education is highlighted and with such, the statistics of students pursuing education is increasing every year, there are still a lot of children who are being refused

education, do not have access to it, cannot afford further studies, and more. Worldwide 16% of girls were not enrolled in secondary school whereas 15% of boys were not in 2018 (Statista, 2022). Africa has the most children not in school, 39% of girls and 36% of boys not in school there (Statista, 2022). Females in particular are also denied the right to education pursuits such as secondary school and postsecondary learning due to the ongoing cycles of exploitation and discrimination, these patterns being more present in poorer countries. Save the Children, Educate Girls, Give, TheirWorld, CARE, United World Schools, We, and more to name a few are all chay-based non-profit institutions that work hard to provide children with the resources, finances, and living conditions to be given their right to education.

Corruption present in educational institutions only adds to this decline, forcing more students to be unable to access education and stripping them of their basic rights. Corruption in education fosters in many different ways leading to detrimental effects on the students. These aspects include the regulatory systems, teaching roles, admissions, recruitments, assessments, test taking, credentials and qualifications, research roles, and through research publications (Glendinning et al., 2019). Although corruption in education runs worldwide, some countries such as Russia, Nigeria, India, and the 11 countries part of the Western Balkans are more aware

of such corruption compared to more developed countries such as North American and Scandinavian countries (Glendinning et al., 2019).

Corruption usually lies within the regulatory bodies and leadership teams of education institutions, but on the contrary, 64% of respondents from those categories expressed that they did not believe there is any corruption in their regulatory processes (Glendinning et al., 2019). The leadership with confidence believes that their respective organizations have means and methods to ensure there is no corruption in the regulatory processes. A global study conducted for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation International Quality Group concluded after examination of various institutions that to minimize corruption in their regulatory systems it is important to practice transparency: including how officials are appointed and the systems report publications, leadership must follow an integrity code, only select officials who have integrity and no history of conflicts, reducing bureaucracy, have one authority figure responsible for receiving all complaints and appeals, and to start having more random visits to check the quality, as well as how well the rules against corruption are being upheld (Glendinning et al., 2019).

Furthermore, higher education systems also have a lot of corruption in the form of political interference including overriding research funding decisions, putting a ban on subjects from the curriculum, and even imprisoning those in the education system who do not abide by the rules and beliefs of the prevailing politics (Glendinning et al., 2019). Some countries that had the highest prevalence of such include Australia, Brazil, Hungary, Poland, Russia, Turkey, India, and the USA (Glendinning et al., 2019). With teaching positions becoming scarcer, academics feel hopeless and begin to accept bribes as a means to secure a job. For example, in India, 1200 colleges are affiliated with the same university, and with the rotation of teachers, not many jobs are available (Glendinning et al., 2019). In Russia, a prominent issue of postsecondary institution leaders and professors having fake or unqualified doctorate degree is also leading to corruption (Glendinning et al., 2019). Injustices are more likely to occur as the institution representatives themselves do not respect ethical practices, and they lack the academic qualification and accreditation where they monitor others' responsibility to set the academic standard. Not only this but when higher education institutions are made aware of the fake degree or thesis, the committee members responsible for verifying and awarding such doctoral degrees should also be held

accountable (Glendinning et al., 2019). For example, a committee consisting of the same advisors who approve doctoral dissertations in Russia were linked to support more than 50 other plagiarized or fake dissertations, in Russia (Glendinning et al., 2019). Problems with charging and acknowledging these forms of corruption as an abuse of authority is difficult as institutions do not want to shed light on the fact, nor do they want to use any finances for such. Additionally, a lot of in-breeding occurs within educational places, where they favor their own graduates and students rather than having a fair system for students within their population and from outside. In-breeding in institutions is a major issue in Western Balkan countries and Russia (Glendinning et al., 2019).

Another aspect where corruption may play a part is that the standards set for higher education systems are not consistent worldwide. This system does not allow for the same quality, preparedness, and ability of differing professionals worldwide. For example, in India even after obtaining a university degree, there are various tests needed to be taken to be able to perform jobs, whereas this is not the same in all other countries (Glendinning et al., 2019). Another example included medical school, as in North America you have to finish university to apply, but in other countries, you can apply straight after high school; and the length of medical curriculum and requirements also differ greatly throughout (Glendinning et al., 2019). Moreover, gender discrimination leads to corruption as well and is still present to this day. An example of such is that in a few Japanese universities there is a system that officials have placed that do not allow for more than 30% of the medical graduates to be females (Glendinning et al., 2019). In Africa, a survey was conducted where over 1200 participants commented on gender-based corruption and the results were that 42.6% stated it was present in higher education institutions, and 57.3% stated it was present in private education institutions (Mbonyinshuti, 2022).

Corruption within the teaching role itself accounts for a lot as well, and the issues can be due to trying to massify education systems, increase the school's reputation, increase ranking, financial pressures, and more. Due to teachers' salaries not being very high, even though the amount of work deserves a much higher salary and the fact that not many teaching positions are open, this leads to a lot of job insecurity. Forcing academics to have multiple short-term or more casual teaching options, the susceptibility of accepting bribes increases to change students' grades or overall report cards as well (Glendinning et al., 2019). There is also the aspect of absenteeism by

academics which entails leaving teaching and supervision tasks to teach assistants, research students, and junior colleges, which is highly unfair and is taking advantage. This phenomenon termed ghost advising is very prominent in Kosovo due to a shortage of qualified academics with the right credentials (Glendinning et al., 2019). Corruption also occurs through teachers by harassment, whether that be bullying, verbal, sexual, or otherwise. For example, teachers will be found to demand sexual favors from students if they want their grades to be changed, which leads to a lot of sexual harassment issues. Students are also known to physically abuse their teachers due to various reasons in Uganda (Glendinning et al., 2019).

In order to further explore corruption in education, looking at the admissions process and requirements in higher education institutions is one of the main areas where corruption exists. In a global study conducted in 2018, the highest concern in this area was regarding the advertising and recruitment process being misleading of higher education institutions (Glendinning et al., 2019). After such, the following concerns were regarding falsified transcripts, falsified or nonauthentic recommendation letters, and cheating in admissions tests (Glendinning et al., 2019). Favoritism misleading and making decision-making unfair for students have been highly reported in both Japan and Slovakia (Glendinning et al., 2019). A series of highly organized and systematic corruption in education was investigated and reported on by journalists working from Canada, USA, Australia, and the UK. These corrupt practices include faking qualifications in order to get a visa to get admission abroad, having student admissions based on bribery, using one political connections for admission, nepotism, allowing sports stars admission without them having the relative academic requirements, and cheating by having someone else take English language tests needed for acceptance (Glendinning et al., 2019). Corruption in the admissions process is a major issue as when students are accepted using the various forms of corruption discussed above, they are in reality underqualified for the program (Glendinning et al., 2019). This means that they do not have the language skills, academic experience, or knowledge in order to succeed. These students tend to suffer a lot after their admission leading to their mental health plummeting, feeling vulnerable, feeling depressed, and may even resort to cheating to just get by (Glendinning et al., 2019).

Based on the global questionnaire completed, the most common forms of corruption within student assessments were plagiarism and cheating in

assessments, cheating in examinations, and having paid another person to do the work; thus, the work is not authentically by the student which deems them unworthy of the mark as well (Glendinning et al., 2019). These forms of corruption can play out by when teachers allow it to happen by accepting student bribes and favors. Additionally, leaking test information and helping students discreetly during examinations by academics in higher institutions also occurred. Students themselves add to this corruption by having a third party take the examination for them, having them complete an assignment, stealing notes from peers, and going to the various, and building in popularity essay writers who do the work for them for a fee. With the growth of students plagiarizing and cheating institutions have also increased their use of credibility-checking systems. For example, in the majority of Canadian universities and secondary schools as well any work turned in online is automatically checked by Turnitin. Slovakia, Slovenia, and the UK have started to purchase plagiarism detection software as well to decrease corruption and increase both the credibility and reliability of student assessments (Glendinning et al., 2019). Moreover, Australia and the UK are creating strict guidelines, New Zealand and Ireland are adding new legislation that states companies that promote and advertise cheating are illegal, New Zealand and the USA are prosecuting more corruption in student assessments by taking it more seriously, and lastly, worldwide there is more research being conducted regarding how to address academic corruption and to increase academic integrity (Glendinning et al., 2019). South-East Europe has found that when corruption through bribery have higher consequences established through institutions such as police involvement, it is effective in decreasing such (Glendinning et al., 2019). Based on the global questionnaire it was reported that participants believe institutions need to be strict and have serious consequences in regard to examination security, detecting plagiarism, handling plagiarism, enforcing fairness, and ensuring fraud does not take place.

Another major corruption sector in universities and higher academic institutions is regarding graduation, qualifications, and credentials. Based on the global questionnaire this category was one of the highest on what corruption mainly entails in education (Glendinning et al., 2019). Types of corruption in this area include degree mills, accreditation mills, falsified degrees, fake transcripts, and false information put on resumes, plus applications (Glendinning et al., 2019). A degree or accreditation mill is when a company or an organization is claiming to be an academically

credited educational institution, but in reality, produces fake degrees, qualifications, and diplomas. These places are very harmful as they lead to the decrease in credibility of real academic places and lower the quality, plus the importance of such degrees, qualifications, and diplomas given out by actual credited educational institutions. One of the ways that the degree and accreditation mill issue is being solved is with the GDN, the Groningen Declaration Network (Glendinning et al., 2019). In the GDN, they have an international network of credited academic organizations and educational institutions from which they are able to support various reviewing processes by verifying whether academic qualifications are falsified or real (Glendinning et al., 2019). Furthermore, this issue of having fake qualifications becomes extremely pressing when these individuals who do not deserve it are hired and become active practitioners of responsible jobs such as in healthcare and engineering. Potentially, corruption in this sense can also lead to the loss of life of multiple innocent individuals, due to one corrupt one. Society understands that this is a major issue and as such many researchers, journalists, and others have investigated individuals in high positions' accreditations (Glendinning et al., 2019). The results led to a lot of falsified degrees being identified with the consequence of their master's and doctoral degrees being revoked (Glendinning et al., 2019). More examples include Germany relocating Ph.D. awards to unqualified medics, discovering the scam of the Pakistan diploma mill which a lot of individuals from the USA, Canada, and the UK for caught, Russia taking back degrees that were wrongfully obtained, and over 8'000 plagiarized dissertations found thus far (Glendinning et al., 2019).

The lowest form of corruption in higher education institutions is through research and academic publications. Although, for many universities, their research and publications are one of the main contributors regarding how they are ranked globally for their qualifications and academic standing. In this section of corruption, it is expressed through academic publication plagiarism, supervisors crediting their student's work as their own, the peer review process being unethical, and the inability to present results that were inconvenient (Glendinning et al., 2019). The peer review process is very important in research and education as by such plagiarism is caught, studies are held up to the highest professional levels, and only accurate data conclusions made through credible studies are then published for the world to review (Glendinning et al., 2019). The peer review process becomes unethical

where bribery is used and where peer reviews actively suppress the research done by their rivals. One of the biggest scandals regarding corruption within research and academic publishing occurred in the US NIH (National Institute of Health), where rules and restrictions had to be made to Duke University in 2015 (Glendinning et al., 2019). These sanctions and restrictions were necessary as financial irregularities and irresponsible supervision of many of their research projects, one of them being cancer research led to malpractice incidents. In China, Sweden, and the UK, even the national government has been made aware of these corruption issues in which they are starting to strengthen the codes of ethics in research in order to address the delinquency in academic research and publications (Glendinning et al., 2019). The USA also has their own office called the ORI, the Office of Research Integrity which is responsible for investigating misconduct and unethical research (Glendinning et al., 2019). Research can be retracted due to a variety of causes such as research being conducted in a non-standardized manner, framing the research data to meet what the research wants the results to show, the inability of other research papers to duplicate such fabricated results, plagiarism, and lastly, falsification. In order to reduce the stigma of humiliation and career-ending through retractions, when a genuine mistake has been made, authors are encouraged to retract and fix their mistake. This way other papers and research conducted on the basis of such papers will not be affected. The research publication industry also has many journals that are like the previously mentioned degree and accreditation mills as they are not real journals with a real peer review process (Glendinning et al., 2019). Publishing in this kind of journal or any disreputable journal is highly discouraged as through such the corruption in research and publishing increases.

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the chapter, methods of how corruption in higher education systems can be countered, addressed, and fixed have been discussed. Moreover, networking with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Body, also known as AQAB is one of the best ways to get help in managing such corruption (Glendinning et al., 2019). The AQAB's often times collaborate with other educational organizations and academic institutions on a local, national, and global level which means that they have ties to higher powers and are able to spread the word easily (Glendinning et al., 2019). Journalists are also a great networking tool to fight corruption in higher education systems as they spread awareness of such and also are known to aid the AQAB's in the

investigative process to find issues, plus find strategies to counteract them (Glendinning et al., 2019). Organizations such as the Committee of Publication Ethics, also known as COPE, PubPeer, and Retraction Watch all are working hard with their volunteers in order to combat corruption (Glendinning et al., 2019). Thus, it is important that institutions, journalists, and the AQAB's all work together in order to raise awareness about concerns and the immense amount of corruption that occurs in education, research, and publication. Based on the global questionnaire completed regarding corruption in various higher education institutions the following 11 conclusions were made in recommendation for accreditation and quality assurance practices: to review terms regarding corruption in the organization, report and make further changes to the terms in order to better address corruption when malpractice is taking place, explicitly make it a point to talk about corruption to combat it, allow for transparency in order to uphold accountability and integrity in the institution, to be vigilant about corrupt individuals and not be afraid to go against them in order to keep a higher standard, being proactive and responsible by responding to any corruption, have the AQAB's come for an inspection at short notice, providing the AQAB's support in developing standards and rules for educational and research quality, use higher education leadership to promote integrity, network internationally not only locally to find ways to fight corruption as many places in the world are going through similar situations, be a leader to advocate against diploma mills and accreditation mills, and lastly, conduct more research on corruption within higher education systems in order to inform others, better the policies, and better address exactly what forms of corruption, misconduct, and unethical behaviors are occurring in these institutions (Glendinning et al., 2019).

Thus, corruption is a huge problem in the higher education and research systems, and it is imperative that these areas be addressed and further researched so that solutions can be found. The categories discussed include the regulatory systems, teaching roles, admissions, recruitments, assessments, test taking, credentials and qualifications, research roles, research publications, and methods to combat such corruption.

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