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## **Higher Education Corruption in Ukraine as Reflected in the Nation's Media**

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This paper considers corruption in higher education in Ukraine as reflected in the national media, including such aspects as corruption in admissions to higher education institutions and corruption in administering the newly introduced standardized test. The major focus is on the opinions of the leading figures of the education reform on corruption in education. The national media presents points of view of both supporters of the reform and those in opposition to the reform. Despite disbelief that the standardized test faces among the leading educators and legislators, including politicians and rectors of higher education institutions, the government continues implementation of the reform. Even though the standardized test is not expected to solve the problem of corruption in education, as follows from the media reports and comments, its full scale country-wide implementation at this point appears to be a question of time.

Key words: bribery, corruption, higher education, mass media, opinions, Ukraine

## **Introduction**

The Constitution of Ukraine guarantees the right on education (Article 53). The law says that “The state guarantees free access to preschool, secondary, professional, vocational, and higher education in the state and municipal educational institutions.” In reality the positions of the free state-funded higher education in the country have been seriously undermined by growing corruption in entry examinations and grading. Corrupt behavior of some faculty members and administrators is fueled by opportunism and financial survival.

The country’s prominent politicians, educators, and the media pay more attention to the problem of corruption in education now than they did before. The President of Ukraine Victor Yushchenko has asked state universities to curtail the corruption so endemic to admissions processes and called upon rectors and professors to put a stop to the bribery and cronyism that hold sway during entrance exams, a widespread practice that he characterized as “shameful and humiliating.”<sup>1</sup> He pointed out corruption in education in his address to the students of Kiev National University in March 9, 2007: “We are talking about the way to eradicate corruption in higher education institutions, starting from the entry examinations; how to create an independent system of conducting competitive examinations; how to make it possible for the state funds that now extend to 54 percent of all students in higher education institutions, to support those specialists requested by the state who come through truly transparent and honest competition. In one year the state changed its view on the state-funded specialties—from 47 percent of students funded by the state to 54 percent (despite, as you know, according to the law it should be not less than 50 percent).”<sup>2</sup> Somewhat contradictory to the President, the Minister of Education mentions 57 percent of places funded by the state for 2006.<sup>3</sup> The large number of publicly funded places in colleges and universities is considered a merit of the ruling regime. But at the same time it leads

to an increase in abuse of the system, where one has to use personal connections or to pay a bribe in order to study at the public's expense.

The level of tolerance of corruption in higher education in Ukraine is relatively high, as corruption is considered a part of everyday life.<sup>4</sup> On June 12, 2007, the Hall of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in Kiev hosted a conference entitled “The Major Corruption Schemes in the Education System and the Ways to Eradicate Them.” The conference was organized by the Frederick Ebert Foundation and the Ukrainian Student Union. The key-note speaker for the event was the Leader of the Peoples-Democratic League of Youth [Narodno-demokratychna liga molodi] Pavlo Viknyansky. Presenters included Advisor to the Minister of Education and Science Ivan Slobodyanyk and leaders of the Ukrainian Student Union.<sup>5</sup> These two events, the Presidential address and the Conference, are illustrative of the scale of the problem of corruption in higher education and of the level of attention it receives from the country's leadership, the public, and the media.

Although corruption in higher education is part of the news in every country, the ways in which the national media reflects on corruption in higher education differ. This paper considers corruption in higher education in Ukraine as reflected in the national media, including such aspects as corruption in admissions to higher education institutions (HEIs) and corruption in administering the newly introduced standardized test. The major focus is on the opinions of the leading figures of the education reform on corruption in education, including the Minister of Education, the Head of the Department of Higher Education, the leader of the Student Union, as well as law enforcement agencies.

### **Defining corruption in academia**

The word corruption comes from the Latin word *corruptio*, which in Medieval Latin expressed a moral decay, wicked behavior, putridity, rottenness.<sup>6</sup> Milovanovic<sup>7</sup> says that in this context one could talk of bribes, or other dishonest means for achieving particular disgraceful ends, as a symptom of an ailing society. Osborne sees corruption as “a loss of purity and purpose, a social decomposition.”<sup>8</sup> White and Allen point out that “Agreed upon definitions are rare, and definitions of corruption run the gamut of being too broad to be rendered relatively useless to being too narrow and thus be applicable to only limited, rare, well-defined cases.”<sup>9</sup> For Anechiarico and Jacobs, definition of education corruption includes the abuse of authority for material gain.<sup>10</sup> Heyneman adds to this definition by arguing the following: “But because education is an important public good, its professional standards include more than just material goods; hence the definition of education corruption includes the abuse of authority for personal as well as material gain.”<sup>11</sup>

Miller, Roberts, and Spence point to the relativity of the term corruption and apply it to academia: „The notion of a corrupt official or other role occupant exists only relative to some notion of what an uncorrupted occupant of that morally legitimate role consists of. The notion of an academic has at its core the moral ideal, or at least, the morally legitimate role, of an independent truth-seeker who works in accordance with accepted principles of reason and evidence, who publishes in his or her own name only work that he or she has actually done, and so on. So an academic motivated by a desire for academic status who intentionally falsifies his or her experimental results or plagiarizes the work of others is corrupt relative to the ideal or morally legitimate role of an uncorrupted academic. On the other hand, a person occupying an academic position who paid no heed whatsoever to the truth or to principles of reasoning and

evidence and who made no pretense of so doing would at some point cease to be an academic of any sort, corrupt or otherwise.”<sup>12</sup>

Ukrainian authors Alina Bazhal, Tetyana Galkovska, Olga Skripnik, and Lidiya Surzhik refer to International Institute for Educational Planning’s definition of corruption in education as a “misuse of public office for private gain that influences access, quality, and equity in education.”<sup>13</sup> Sayed and Bruce<sup>14</sup> and Waite and Allen<sup>15</sup> present a broad social approach to define corruption. This article adheres to Petrov and Temple’s<sup>16</sup> (2004) approach to corruption and applies narrow definition of corruption that regards corruption as such only if it implies illegality. It uses operational definition of corruption in higher education as a system of informal relations established to regulate unsanctioned access to material and nonmaterial assets through abuse of the office of public or corporate trust.

There is a variety of forms of corruption that may be found in higher education in Ukraine. Forms of corruption include bribery, embezzlement, extortion, fraud, nepotism, cronyism, favoritism, kickbacks, cheating, plagiarism, and research misconduct. They rarely appear on their own. Forms of corruption are often connected in bundles. For instance, assigning a high grade to a student in exchange for a bribe implies fraud. A form itself can have different origins. A bribe can be offered voluntarily or extorted. It can be in the form of cash, merchandize, service, or a monetary donation. In addition to classical forms of corruption, gross waste in educational management and sexual misconduct take place in higher education institutions in Ukraine as well as many other countries. Despite the multiplicity of forms of corruption, Ukrainian media tends to focus on the most explicit forms of corruption, often condemned by the public. These include bribery and extortions. At the same time widespread

and not less detrimental nepotism, cronyism, favoritism, and patronage do not receive as much attention from the media.

### **Facts about corruption in higher education**

Corruption in higher education as a part of overall corruption, is a crime, and so inevitably raises concerns of law enforcement agencies. The media, in its turn, report criminal investigations, because they are popular among readers. Criminal chronicles on cases of corruption in higher education are even more popular for a number of reasons. First, just about every family in Ukraine has its interest in higher education, be its students, prospective students, or working instructors. Second, the issue of corruption is always appealing for the reader. Finally, issues of higher education and corruption combined represent the topic of a particularly high interest to the public. The public is well-aware of corruption in higher education institutions, but is eager to read about it again, learning new nuances of the problem. The three major sources that media uses to obtain information on corruption in academia are law enforcement agencies, sociological surveys, and interviews conducted by the media representatives.

The law enforcement uses the media to confine corruption within the certain reasonable limits by deterring faculty members from unreasonably risky or high-scale corrupt activities. For instance, the Chief of the Center of Public Relations of the Ministry of the Interior in Ternopil'ska oblast<sup>17</sup> Sergij Shvornikov informs that a forty year-old Associate Professor in one of the region's HEIs was detained for demanding bribes from the students. The detained professor allegedly distributed the students a price list prior to the spring examination session. "In order to receive C or 'satisfactory' one would have to pay 50 UAH, B or 'good' – 100 UAH, and A or

‘excellent’ was priced at 150 UAH<sup>18</sup>” reported Shvornikov.<sup>19</sup> The professor was caught red-handed and arrested by the agents of the Department of Economic Crimes Prevention while accepting a bribe of 650UAH.<sup>20</sup> The corruption was investigated and prosecuted under the Part 2 of the Provision 368 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine. A representative of the Ministry of the Interior confirmed that the arrested professor admitted to accepting a bribe and pleaded guilty to the charges of corruption.<sup>21</sup>

The national news agency UNIAN commented on the case in piece entitled “The season of bribes in HEIs has began,”<sup>22</sup> pointing to the fact that corruption in HEIs receives a new resurgence twice a year, when semester ends. Another news agency broadly read in Ukraine and Russia, Newsru, titled its report on the case as “There Was an Instructor Detained in Ternopil Who Set a ‘Price List’ for Grades in the HEI.”<sup>23</sup> The media campaign is quite common as it is intended to deter potential corruptioners in academia from demanding excessive bribes from students.

The Head of the Department of Economic Crimes Prevention of the Ministry of the Interior General Leonid Skalozub said in July 2006 that there were 210 cases of bribery registered in higher education institutions in that year, of which 11 were in Kiev.<sup>24</sup> He mentioned a departmental chair in Lugansk who demanded that students pay his bills from electronics and construction stores and he accepted cash as well. The corrupt chair was arrested while receiving a bribe of 10000UAH.<sup>25</sup> In yet another case, deputy-director of the Kiev National University’s college was arrested while receiving a bribe of \$5000 plus 5000UAH.<sup>26</sup>

The number of cases of bribery in higher education, reported by the Ministry, appears to be but a tip of the iceberg for the industry, plagued with corruption. According to the survey conducted by the Millennium Challenge Corporation with the support of the Ukrainian

government, corruption riddled all the spheres of the economy and society, not limiting itself to the public sector. The respondents consider higher education institutions as the most corrupted organizations, followed by hospitals and polyclinics, law enforcement agencies, and tax collection offices. 52 percent of the citizens consider corruption as the easiest and most reliable way of solving many problems. Moreover, such view is more characteristic of the younger generation that constitutes student body and will eventually define the nation's future.

The scale and scope of corruption in Ukraine's education industry is impressive, indeed. It might be no different from many other countries, and is likely less than in most of the other former Soviet republics, but the rate of growth of the criminal activities in education is alarming. At the same time the number of accused corruptioners is incredibly small, because students, their parents, and colleagues of corrupt faculty members tend not to report cases of corruption. Moreover, an act of corruption is considered as a mutually beneficial agreement. Students often welcome an opportunity to improve their grades by paying bribes while parents offer bribes to secure admission of their children to a HEI. Bribery is very difficult to prove when both sides are satisfied with the results of a corrupt transaction. While complaining about the high level of corruption in general, students are rarely willing to turn in corrupt professors, even in cases of direct extortion.

According to the Minister of Education, many students either create situation for corruption or would not miss a chance of improving their grades in exchange for bribes, if such offer would come from their professor. The survey shows that the share of such students equals to 21 percent in Donetskaya oblast, 29 percent in Kiev, 28 percent in Lviv, 25 percent in Odessa, and 30 percent in Kharkov. Another 15 percent of the respondents said that they would not take an advantage of such offer but would inform their friends of the existing opportunity. Only 21 to

26 percent of all students, depending on the region, would not advise to do this. Finally, only 3 to 8 percent would inform the police. At the same time 42 percent of the parents of the prospective students said that instead of wasting time on preparation of their children for college entry examinations they would rather seek other ways and means, including informal payments and connections.<sup>27</sup> The mass media openly discusses such issues as what gifts and presents might be appropriate for the faculty members and how they should be presented and thus perpetuates corruption in academia.<sup>28</sup>

According to one publication in the newspaper “*Segodnia*” (Today), private tutoring is thought to be a form of corruption in admissions as well. A payment of \$2000 to \$4000 to a private tutor who is also a professor at a leading university may help in gaining admission to the program where he teaches.<sup>29</sup> The article points to the conflict of interest that arises when an applicant takes his oral entry examination with the professor who tutored him before, specifically for this examination. However, private tutoring is legal. Many college professors offer formally registered consulting services and pay taxes from their income. Therefore, it is impossible to say whether the payment for tutoring services, even if unreasonably high, is actually a bribe. Private tutors who are also members of the admission committee are especially popular among the applicants.

The Head of the Department of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine Yaroslav Bolyubash says that the survey of freshmen conducted in 2006 showed that two thirds of them did not face bribery, nepotism, or protectionism. Bolyubash considers this as a good indicator.<sup>30</sup> He apparently misses the point that there are still one third of all freshmen who entered higher education institutions either by paying bribes or through their relatives and other acquaintances. Moreover, half of all freshmen in public HEIs pay full tuition

and enter without competition or bribes. It means that only about 40 percent of all students, who entered state-funded programs, did not pay bribes and that the remaining 60 percent did pay bribes or used their personal connections. This does not seem to be a good indicator, pointing to rampant bribery, nepotism, and other forms of corruption. The picture may turn even more alarming if one is to assume that not all of the respondents admitted the fact of entering college with the help of illegal means.

As follows from the media, corruption in higher education is not limited to academic corruption. Facts of embezzlement, fraud, gross waste, misallocation of resources, and other corrupt activities are found throughout the country. One of the latest investigations reports that former president of the Lugansk branch of the Inter-Regional Academy of Personnel Management [Mizhregionalna Akademiya Upravlinnya Personalom (MAUP)] embezzled 831.9 thousand UAH.<sup>31</sup> The relations between MAUP, one of the largest private for-profit providers of educational services in the country, and the Ministry of Education are quite tense, with challenges and mutual accusations being voiced in the media. The website of this educational institution offers, among other services, a US-format Ph.D. in Psychology through another higher education institution, based in Honolulu, Hawaii. The Hawaii-based “university” is a notorious diploma mill, evicted from the state by the court decision.

Diploma mills and low quality educational programs, previously unknown in Ukraine, can now be found in form of branches of public and private higher education institutions. The Ministry of Education fights diploma mills, producers of fake diplomas, and oversees quality of higher education services through the processes of licensing and accreditation. The State Attestation Commission [Derzhavna Atestatsijna Komissiya (DAK)] withdrew licenses of 116 educational programs, branches, affiliates, and colleges only in 2006. The licenses were recalled,

among others, from Kiev business-college, educational programs of Kharkov National University of the Ministry of Interior in Smila, Poltava, Melitopol, Yevpatoriya, Kerch, Mariupol, Herson, educational branch of Kharkov Aeronautical University in Alushta, and branch of East-Ukrainian University in Feodosiya. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea appears to be a very attractive place for branches and programs of HEIs, some of which are below the standards, set by the Ministry of Education.

The Minister of Education openly discusses problems with quality of higher education and is not satisfied with the quality of educational services provided by many HEIs. Necessity of the state control over the quality of the offered educational programs is undeniable at this stage. Many educational leaders, including the Head of the Department of Licensing and Accreditation of the Ministry of Education and Science Vasily Shinkaruk and Provost of the State University of Economics and Finance support controlling measures in order to protect rights of students as consumers of educational services. Media plays the role of informing the public about recent developments in higher education and problems faced by the industry, including issues of quality of educational programs and corruption.

### **Opinions on corruption in education**

The Minister of Education and Science Stanislav Nikolaenko is most popular with the media when it comes to higher education. Leader of the Ukraine's education system comments on the issues of corruption as well as numerous other problems in education. He acknowledges presence of corruption in education and points out corruption in regard of obtaining good grades in secondary and higher education, and corruption in entry examinations in colleges. The Minister deserves a credit for not avoiding tough questions and giving straight and precise

answers. At the same time the head of the Ministry is not pleased with the fact that different US educational agencies and commissions comment on corruption in Ukrainian education. He says that US education is corrupt as well.<sup>32</sup>

The official position of all of the rectors and other college leaders voiced in the media is that there is no corruption in their HEIs and that the highest consideration is given to knowledge of the applicant. Head of the highly prestigious Institute of Journalism of Taras Shevchenko Kiev National University Vladimir Rizun says that only those parents seek for illegal ways of gaining admission for their children, whose children are not strong enough to enter the university based on their knowledge. He says that many children are underperforming in secondary and high school. Rizun does not see any reason to pay bribes: “There is no need to seek different ways of gaining access to the Institute or to the other faculties of the University. One can make a formal payment and study. We have for-tuition programs. This year tuition is \$2500 for one year. But admission to Kiev National University will not be granted to an applicant whose academic knowledge is not strong enough, even if he is ready to pay the tuition.”<sup>33</sup>

The Leader of the Peoples-Democratic League of Youth Pavlo Viknyansky thinks that openness and transparency may become a good tool in fighting corruption.<sup>34</sup> For that he uses one of the key terms from the Perestroika-time terminology, *glasnost*.<sup>35</sup> Viknyansky also points out that not only faculty members are responsible for corruption in higher education, but students as well. He repeats a commonly held opinion that students contribute to corruption by choosing an easy but illegal way of receiving good grades. The positive role of students in sustaining corruption is certainly not the only topic discussed in the media when it comes to corruption in academia. The fate of the standardized test as a part of the recent educational reform is of at least

equal concern. The nation's media offers a place for discussion on the possible impact of the national test on corruption in higher education and all the pros and cons of the reform.

The Head of the Department of Higher Education considers the independent external testing as a good and effective tool in fighting corruption in admissions to publicly funded higher education institutions.<sup>36</sup> He confirms that the test is intended to provide independent estimates of the high school graduates' knowledge and that the test score should be the major or the only criterion in admissions decisions in colleges and universities. Many believe that the standardized test will not solve the problem of academic corruption not only in educational process, but even in admissions to the state-funded places in the state colleges and universities. Academician of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine Volodymyr Semynozhenko thinks that independent testing will not solve the problem of corruption in higher education. He says that "Corruption in our country is not a narrow phenomenon confined to a particular branch or an industry. This is a countrywide problem. Hence, fight with corruption should start with the independent testing of state bureaucrats and politicians."<sup>37</sup> This opinion places the issue of corruption in academia in a broader context, pointing to a widespread corruption in many areas of economic and social life of the society and corruptness of the political structure. However, not every educator shares such pessimistic view. For instance, the Head of the Center of External Evaluation Igor Likarchuk and Minister of Education Nikolaenko guarantee the terms and conditions for the standardized test and its timely and unbiased grading.

Other educational leaders are not that optimistic. And not only in terms of time, but in terms of universality of the test as well. The President of National University "Kiev-Mohila Academy," a leading higher education institution, Vyacheslav Brjuhovetsky expresses his concerns in regard of the test. He says that despite the University was the first HEI in the country

that made admissions decisions based on the testing and is known to be a strong supporter of the concept of independent testing, the standardized test will need at least ten years to prove successful. Brjuhovetsky says that the idea of the test has been misunderstood. The real meaning of the external or independent testing in his view is in selecting students with certain characteristics needed for each specialty, and not granting admissions based simply on the higher scores obtained by the test-takers. He also points to the necessity of fully equipped test centers, computerized networks, and specialists.<sup>38</sup>

As the test will become a powerful tool in replacing entry examinations in colleges and a major criterion in making admissions decisions, public opinion turns more toward this soon-to-become-national standardized test. So far opposition to the introduction of the test, as well as critiques of its design, implementation, and administering, expressed in the media sources were not very loud. No doubt, this is not because the media tends to support the government's position in this issue. Rather, the test itself is not taken seriously. Despite all the discussion about the pluses and minuses of the test and promises to run all the college admissions based solely on the test results, the fact is that the Ministry's Annual Order about the terms and procedures of admissions to the country's HEIs has not changed. It states clearly that the admissions are made based on the entry examinations and mentions no standardized test.

Comments in the media indicate that the majority of rectors of colleges and universities are against the test. The President of "Kiev-Mohila Academy" anticipates clear sabotage in the future on the side of some of the rectors in order to compromise the test. He points out that there were cases when the test score of 96 out of 100 possible was considered as B instead of A, as it was suppose to. Above all, Brjuhovetsky does not believe that the test will somehow reduce corruption in higher education.

The Minister of Education recognizes that he also had concerns about the test, but states that the test is going to be successful. He says that some of the rectors refused to acknowledge the test and to run test-based admissions. Nikolaenko had to explain to these rectors that if they will not recognize the test and will not agree with the policies of test-based admissions, he will find others, who will.<sup>39</sup> What he meant by that is that those educational leaders who will refuse to comply with the new state policies, will be dismissed or removed from their offices. At the same time Nikolaenko has to negotiate the test as well. Replacement of the rectors would not be an easy task. The Minister agrees that the tests will not replace the entry examinations completely. Some oral examinations will be preserved. This *a priori* leaves some space for corruption in college admissions.

The Ministry of Education is extremely concerned about the success of the test. Correspondents of the news portal *Osvita* report that the Minister of Education issued order #375, according to which The Center for Educational Quality Evaluation is to present the entire electronic database to the Ministry of Education's group, lead by the Minister's deputy Victor Teslenko. The data should include all the information about each test-taker, including name, school, region, etc. It is not clear why the Ministry would need this information at hand, while at the same time emphasizing the independency of the country's testing agency. The media source points out that potentially, the database may be used for corrupt activities. School grades and test grades may be different, and in case of a significant differential some schools and regions may fall under the scrutiny of the state. The order itself was found to be illegitimate, because it violates certain Ukrainian laws that protect child privacy and well-being. As a result, the Ministry of Justice refused to register this order. Some critics of the test suggested creation of an independent commission that would conduct evaluation of the results of the modernization

projects in education. The situation reveals a number of potential problems, including miscommunications between the Ministries, unclear regulations and structural frameworks for implementing the reform.

### **Estimates of corruption in education**

Numerous accusations of corruption as related to higher education, including admissions and academic process, and, more recently, the standardized test, necessitate presenting some estimates about corruption's scale and scope in the nation's education industry. Such estimates may be found in the media. The national media is eager to report available numbers on educational corruption, because publishing corruption estimates drives the media sources' ranking up.

The Minister of Education refers to the survey conducted by the Institute of Social and Political Psychology of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in 2006. The survey targeted students in the leading educational centers of the country, including Kiev, Kharkov, Donetsk, Lviv, and Odessa. The following responses were obtained to the question "How in your opinion the situation with corruption in entering higher education institutions has changed compared to the previous years?": around 20 percent of the respondents point that they know of the cases of bribery, but the number of such cases has declined; around 27 percent of students said that bribes were accepted by the faculty members at about the same level, as they were in previous years and that nothing has changed; 7 to 8 percent think that bribery is now flourishing. Number of students who admitted paying bribe for entering the college or university declined from 19 percent in 2005 to 13 percent in 2006.<sup>40</sup>

Such estimates are, of course, a very rough approximation to the real numbers. Moreover, the numbers presented do not reflect all of the aspects of corruption in higher education. First, there is always a significant number of those who decline to respond to surveys on corruption even on the conditions of anonymity. If one is to combine all the percentage attributed to different types of responses, one may find that the total is only 75 percent. It is not clear what the responses of the remaining 25 percent were? Second, the responses are normally based on people's perceptions. Hence, they reflect perceptions, and not necessarily the reality. Third, the decline in the number of those who admitted entering college in exchange for a bribe does not necessarily reflect the decline in corruption in admissions. The risk of admitting such misdeed may be higher now, than it was in previous years, despite the claimed anonymity of the survey, or the willingness of the respondents to admit the fact of corruption may be lower. Fourth, bribery is not the major aspect of corruption in admissions. The more widespread and more secure practices are nepotism, favoritism, kinship, personal relationships, etc. There may be many more reasons for which the results of the surveys that focus on the time trends in corruption in higher education may be put under the doubt. Difficulties in presenting the realistic assessments or estimates for the total volume of corruption in the education industry are faced by all who comment on the issue and at the same time try to be more or less reasonable and credible. Credible information in the sphere of corruption is traditionally lacking.

A leading news media source *Segodnya* presents somewhat different perspective on the trends in academic corruption. The authors, Kseniya Grishina and Vadim Korchinsky, state in their article entitled "How to enter the HEI without a bribe" that an associate professor of one of Kiev's HEIs informed them that in their faculty there is already a list from the rector with 15 names, another list from the dean with 21 name, and the faculty will add around 60 more names

of their relatives, friends, and bribe-givers.<sup>41</sup> These are the names of applicants to be admitted to the state-funded places. The total of the state-funded places is 120 for the entire faculty. Hence, the real competition will take place not for 120 places, but for only around 20 places. This makes competition for the state-funded places six times tougher than it supposed to be.

The authors also state that there are no improvements in the corrupted business of admissions to colleges. The things only become worse. All trends point toward increasing sums of bribes paid and development of more sophisticated schemes of bribery. They refer to another faculty member, who estimates that in 2006 average bribe in admissions increased about 15 to 20 percent. This is directly related to an increase in tuition in for-tuition programs. The higher is the size of tuition in the for-tuition program, the higher is the “price” of admission to a state-funded place in the same school. The cost of attending Kiev Institute of International Relations reaches \$4000 a year, i.e. \$20000 for a standard five-year program. The size of a bribe adjusts accordingly. The size of every bribe varies depending upon parents’ wealth, degree of connections with the person, who arranges the admission, etc.

In some of the most elite HEIs even a bribe will not help to gain admission. In these universities places are thought to be distributed among the children of politicians, businessmen, and top bureaucrats. A bribe can only help in receiving admission to a for-tuition program. The most expensive HEIs are Kiev Institute of International Relations, Taras Shevchenko Kiev National University, Bogomolets Kiev National Medical University, Kiev-Mohila Academy, Kiev National Economic University (Narhoz). There is a ranking within each of these institutions as well. The most expensive schools and specialties are law, international economics and management, dentistry, pharmacology, information technology and informatics, and international business. *Segodnya* comments that the price of entering most prestigious specializations is

around \$10000 to \$15000. Less prestigious specializations are priced much lower, around \$5000. According to the source, the price is meant to be a bribe.

Kiev National Technical University (Polytechnic), Kiev National University of Aviation, Kiev National University of Technology and Design, Kiev National University of Food Processing, Kiev National Agricultural University, and Kiev National University of Transport are in the second tier. Here admission may cost around \$3000 to \$8000. The cost of admission to the most prestigious specializations of the elite universities outside Kiev, located in large cities, varies around \$2000 to \$7000.<sup>42</sup> The list of HEIs and prices of admissions are similar in different media sources. *Glavred* adds to the list Yaroslav Mudry Kharkov National Law Academy and gives the estimates of \$10000 to \$20000 for the most prestigious majors and around \$3000 to \$5000 for the less prestigious ones.<sup>43</sup>

An attempt to estimate the total potential volume of corruption in Ukraine's higher education has yet to be made. Neither surveys nor mass media reports set any estimates of the overall corruption in higher education. The media estimates are speculative, and the reports may be designed to discredit some HEIs or their leaders. Only after the readers have familiarized themselves with different estimates presented by the state officials, politicians, educational leaders, faculty members, students, and the public, can they approach the truth and decide for themselves what the corrupt practices might be.

## **Discussion**

High cost of education and growing demand on higher education from the population, along with the low salaries of the faculty and staff create a necessary ground for corruption. An increase in public perceptions of corruption in higher education, oftentimes supported by the

media, facilitates a further increase in corruption as well as in the total amount of corrupt benefits accumulated by the faculty and staff. Newly designed and gradually implemented rules and mechanisms of admissions policies and administering entry examinations may not be working well.

Perceptions about high level of corruption in bureaucracies and public sector in general, shared by the population, are found to increase actual corruption.<sup>44</sup> In the corrupt environment of higher education in Ukraine, where the level of prosecution is low and the risk of being prosecuted is low as well, one of the major problems that corruptioners in academia face is informational vacuum. The problem of asymmetric information, well described in economic literature, is a big issue in corrupt agreements and negotiations. The parents do not know what the prices are and the corrupt faculty and administrators face difficulties on conveying the prices to the potential customers. In this sense the media does an excellent service to the corruptioners by informing the public of average prices, influencing factors, and the ways and mechanisms bribes can be paid in exchange for admissions and grades. In fact, the country's mass media more and more often sets the prices, present a rationale for them, and even describes possible mechanisms for these specific transactions.

The media points toward a leading role of education corruption in creating the culture of corruption in the society, where one has to make informal payments and gifts in kindergarten, school, and college. Corruption in academia is acknowledged and broadly discussed by the media and the public. Such a discussion urges public officials, responsible for the situation in education, to voice concerns and to present a set of measures that would adequately respond to growing corruption in the education industry.

Educational leaders do have something to offer. For example, the Minister of Education Nikolaenko claims to have developed a set of anti-corruption measures, including organizational, economic, and legal means.<sup>45</sup> Organizational measures include better and clearer admissions process as well as the newly established office within the Ministry that follows the cases of corruption in education throughout the country. The Ministry also has its representative in each of the country's regions, who, along with the civic committee, responds to the cases of corruption. Nikolaenko relies on the emerging civil society, switching the focus from the investigation of specific cases of corruption to enhancing legal literacy through the educational work among the population and increasing people's awareness of the issue. Students are also more involved in fighting corruption. The Minister points out that the students are no longer a mere object of educational process but its participants. The student council works closely with the Ministry. This allows for a better informational flow from HEIs to the Ministry.

Among the economic measures the key focus is on the instructors' salaries. Nikolaenko points out that just 2-3 years ago the instructor's salary was equal to 400UAH<sup>46</sup>. He says that "In order to buy an apartment a professor would have to work for 126 years without eating and drinking. This created economic ground for corruption that still exists now... During the last two-and-a-half years the salaries almost doubled. A college instructor now earns around 1370UAH<sup>47</sup>. This process will continue and economic ground for corruption will disappear."<sup>48</sup>

According to the Minister, the legal measures include an increasing vigilance and awareness among the law enforcement agencies, rectors, and the public that resulted in around 400 cases of bribery being disclosed, investigated, and prosecuted.

Technicalities are popular in discussing corruption as they are considered as legitimate tools of fighting corruption and at the same time do not change the essence of the existing

system. The Minister of Education makes emphasis on such technical measures in fighting corruption, as working closely with rectors and faculty, meeting regularly with student leaders, conducting anonymous surveys, and undertaking numerous controlling measures and investigations. At the same time Nikolaenko accuses students and their parents in perpetuating corruption by presenting excessive demand on higher grades and admissions, supported by bribes. He also defends faculty members, pointing out that many of them, including himself, never took a penny while working tirelessly and creatively with devotion and dedication.

The Ministry of Education and Science regularly reminds college faculty and administrators that they do not have a right to collect fees and fines for retaking the test or missing classes, as well as the necessity to conduct examination sessions in a set period. The Ministry also maintains a hot line during examination sessions, so everyone can call and report suspicious activities that may take place in HEIs. The Head of the Department of Higher Education in the Ministry says that “The ministry does everything to make bribery and protectionism in higher education impossible.”<sup>49</sup> He also points out to an introduction of “hot lines”, when anyone can call to the Ministry and report law violations. This, however, may lead to the opposite reaction. In one of the HEIs the Student Council posted numerous information posts with the hot line phone number to report possible cases of corruption. As a result, students took down these posters and called to complain that faculty members now are afraid of taking bribes and so it is more difficult to pass the examination session.<sup>50</sup> Also, the Education Ministry’s “hot lines,” for some reason, are only open during the admissions sessions.

Sophistication of corrupt schemes increases along with the development of different techniques aimed at reducing corruption. Fraud becomes commonplace in educational industry and even within the corrupt activities. For instance, the law requires all the HEIs to provide

complete, reliable, and truthful information about the educational programs offered, as well as license number and level of accreditation. In practice, however, some HEIs provide incorrect or incomplete information, fail to maintain the state license or pass the state accreditation. Trust as a necessary prerequisite of transactions in the marketplace is abused not only on the market of educational services, but within the corrupt transactions as well. One of the techniques used by the corruptioners is a promise of helping an applicant to gain admission to a state-funded program in exchange for a bribe. The faculty member who might not be even in the admission committee or in a position to influence admissions decisions takes money and then simply waits if the applicant will pass the entry examinations. If the applicant is successful, the money stays with the faculty member. Otherwise he returns the money. All of such techniques are described in the mass media.<sup>51</sup>

Every institution and educational leader may be found lobbying certain interests. In Seminozhenko's view "The school tests can simply lead to the redistribution of corruption flows in education and nothing else. Under the current circumstance in the country, where an objective law of perpetuation of corruption works, the loopholes will be found any way. Moreover, the level of knowledge children receive in schools, for which the Ministry of Education and Science is responsible, is tested by the Center for Educational Quality Evaluation, which also reports to the Ministry. The first step toward the honest education evaluation should become creation of a truly independent testing institution."<sup>52</sup>

The Leader of the Peoples-Democratic League of Youth Viknyansky advances his agenda of receiving more rights and powers under the umbrella of a common good of fighting corruption in education. He points out that the active role of students and collective action will

make involvement in corrupt activities less attractive and more risky. Viknyansky calls for a law that would delegate more authority to the student union.<sup>53</sup>

In order to sort out the most important determinants from the rest, one should consider first of all economics and demographics in the country and in the education industry. While the economy is now booming after a decade-long crisis and stagnation, the number of school students declines, as does population overall. Stable decrease in population will inevitably lead to a drastic decline in the enrollment numbers in higher education institutions. So far this process is being slowed down by the numerous specialists who study for the second degree, including some former engineers who now need a degree in economics, because they serve in the tax collection services, or former philosophy majors who need a degree in accounting, because they work in small private firms. However, in the long run, the lack of students will only be partially compensated by the inflow of students from the other former Soviet republics and from the developing nations. The projections point out to the fact that the number of places in higher education institutions in Ukraine, licensed and accredited by the government in accordance with all the requirements, is already higher than the number of those who are willing to pursue higher education, including distance learning, correspondence programs, re-training, etc.

There are 680 thousand licensed places for freshmen in higher education institutions in Ukraine, of which there are 80 percent in public HEIs and 20 percent in private HEIs. In addition, there are numerous community colleges and vocational schools. At the same time there are only 450 thousand high school graduates. There are also 400 thousand high school seniors who will graduate next year. This means that there are more places in colleges and universities, than high school graduates. In the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, a very attractive region for

branches and programs of different HEIs, there are more places, licensed by the Ministry of Education, than population on the entire peninsula.

In the future, number of potential applicants may decline even more, since there were only 380 thousand freshmen entered elementary schools in 2006. Already some of the schools and numerous kindergartens are being closed for there are not enough children to educate. In 2006 there were 97 schools closed out of 20 thousand.<sup>54</sup> This process will continue. While their relative proportion of the state-funded places in the state HEIs is regulated by the law and is set at 50 percent, the absolute numbers will decline and so will financial responsibilities of the state.

One of the fundamental processes that take place in the Ukrainian education is de-facto privatization of the supply of educational services. Tuition in the leading universities in Ukraine increases steadily. The cost of one year of studies in the most popular majors, including economics, finance, management, international business, and public relations grew approximately 25 percentage points in just one year, from 2005 to 2006. Cost of economics education in the Institute of International Relations in Kiev National University named after Taras Shevchenko increased from \$3000 to \$4000 per annum. In Kiev-Mohila Academy cost of education varies between 13.5 to 15 thousand UAH, i.e. around \$3000 and is expected to increase in 2007. The number of applicants per one state-funded place in such majors as economics, banking, and finance in the elite HEIs is around 10 people per place and higher. Computer sciences draw 5 to 7 applicants per place, and even humanities, including cultural anthropology, history, philosophy, and political science, enjoy large numbers of applicants.<sup>55</sup> Media reports point to HEIs earning money on the enrollment rush and expect the size of average bribe to increase accordingly.

### **Concluding remarks**

There are few major changes coming in the higher education that can change the way mass media reports on corruption. First, an introduction and nationwide implementation of the standardized test along with the adjustment of the admissions policies will change the focus of the media accordingly. When the test will partially replace the entry examinations in colleges and universities, corruption will extend to secondary education and testing centers. The spillover effect will likely make the media pay more attention to the growing corruption in schools as well as in standardized testing.

Second, possible privatization of higher education services will likely leave less corruption in state-university relations, including embezzlement, fraud, gross waste, and misallocation of resources, typical for a centralized state-funded system. At the same time corruption in customer-provider relations may increase. Provision of false information and fraud may grow. Corruption in licensing and accreditation can increase as well. Here the media will expand its presence by highlighting the growing number of cases of corruption in an increasing number of the reports.

Third, further decentralization of the nation's higher education system, along with growing privatization and an expected increase in the cost of education will lead to an increase in the total volume of the market of educational loans. The media will reflect not only on the availability of such loans and the characteristics of private banks providers of educational loans, but on the possible corruption in this sphere as well.

Finally, the declining monopoly of the Ministry of Education and the emerging multi-centricity in higher education will facilitate broadening of the media's scope of interviews and comments. The number of educational leaders who would like to comment on corruption in

higher education as well as the diversity of their affiliations, including non-governmental organizations, civil society institutions, student unions, and consortiums of public and private HEIs will increase. For this reason, to present the best analysis or assessment of corruption and corruption trends in higher education, it is important to offer different groups an opportunity to voice their concerns and to present several different opinions, even if some of them do not go in line with the authorities' views and policies or those of the media source.

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<sup>5</sup> “U Kyevi vidbulasya konferentsiya ‘Osnovni koruptsijni shemi v sistemi osviti ta shlyahi ih podolannya,’” *Osvita*, 12 June, 2007. Retrieved 13 June, 2007, from <http://www.osvita.org.ua/news/28874.html>

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<sup>14</sup> Taleh Sayed, David Bruce, "Police Corruption: Towards a Working Definition," *African Security Review*, 7:1 (1998). Retrieved May 20, 2002, from <http://www.iss.co.za/ASR/7No1/SayedBruce.html>

<sup>15</sup> Duncan Waite, David Allen, "Corruption and Abuse of Power."

<sup>16</sup> Georgy Petrov, Paul Temple, "Corruption in Higher Education: Some Findings from the States of the Former Soviet Union" *Higher Education Management and Policy*, 16:1 (2004): 82-94, 92.

<sup>17</sup> Oblast - territorial unit, similar to a large district or a region.

<sup>18</sup> The exchange rate is currently around 5UAH for \$1. Accordingly, C costs \$10, B costs \$20, and A costs \$30. For comparison, the average monthly wage in Ukraine in 2006 was equal to \$200.

<sup>19</sup> "Rozpochavsya sezon habariv v vuzah," *Unian*, 13 June, 2007. Retrieved 13 June, 2007, from <http://www.unian.net/ukr/news/news-199511.html>

<sup>20</sup> 650UAH equals approximately \$130.

<sup>21</sup> "V Ternopoli zatrymaly vykladachku, yaka vstanovyla "taryfy" na ocinky v vuzi," *Osvita*, 13 June, 2007. Retrieved 13 June, 2007, from <http://www.newsru.ua/crime/13jun2007/wr.html>

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<sup>23</sup> "V Ternopoli zatrymaly vykladachku, yaka vstanovyla "taryfy" na otsinky v vuzi,"

<sup>24</sup> Kseniya Grishina, Vadim Korchinsky, "Kak postupit v VUZ, ne davaya na 'lapu'?" *Segodnya*, 17 July, 2006. Retrieved 13 June, 2007, from <http://www.osvita.org.ua/articles/123.html>

<sup>25</sup> Around \$2000.

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<sup>32</sup> Alina Bazhal, Tetjana Galkovska, Olga Skripnik, Lidija Surzhik, “Znannya optom i vrozdrub,”

<sup>33</sup> Nataliya Shamrai, “V VUZ lyuboj tsenoj,”

<sup>34</sup> “U Kyevi vidbulasya konferentsiya”

<sup>35</sup> Glasnost is one of the key terms used during Gorbachev-era Perestroika. The term does not have a direct English language translation and may be roughly translated as openness, publicity, transparency, or free speech. The term means ‘making your voice heard and discussing problems openly’.

<sup>36</sup> Nataliya Shamrai, “V VUZ ljuboj tsenoj,”

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<sup>38</sup> Yana Adzhimuratova, “Esli v nazvanii uchebnogo uchrezhdenija est' slovo ‘mezhdunarodny’, ‘planetarny’ ili drugie podobnye slovesa, to eto – vsego lish ‘mylny puzyr’,” 4 May, 2006. Retrieved 13 June, 2007, from <http://www.osvita.org.ua/articles/64.html>

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<sup>44</sup> See, for instance, Inna Cabelkova, and Jan Hanousek, The Power of Negative Thinking: Corruption, Perception and Willingness to Bribe in Ukraine, *Applied Economics* 36:4 (Fall 2004): 383; and B. Olken, Corruption Perceptions vs. Corruption Reality. Paper presented at the annual conference of the NEUDC, Cornell University (Ithaca, NY, November 2006).

<sup>45</sup> Alina Bazhal, Tetyana Galkovska, Olga Skripnik, Lidiya Surzhik, “Znannya optom i vrozdrub”

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<sup>47</sup> 1370UAH approximately equals to \$274.

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