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Eduard Klein: Academic Corruption in Russia

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Abstract

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the transformation of the Russian state, everyday corruption in Russia has increased considerably and is now an integral part of society. The Russian education system, too, is clearly affected by this development. The ubiquity of corrupt practices in secondary and higher educational institutions could have large-scale social repercussions: It diminishes not only the quality of education, but also detracts from economics, politics, morality and the idea of equal opportunities.

Two central questions guided the author's research on this topic:

1. How can current forms of academic corruption in Russia be defined and described?
2. How can academic corruption in Russia be reduced and which measures are the most effective in solving the problem?

To explain the phenomenon of academic corruption, the author uses a rational-choice based principal-agent model as a theoretical framework. According to this model, corruption must be understood as the exchange of goods between an agent and a client. In the field of education, the agent could be a teacher or a member of the university administration and the client a student considering buying grades or admission. Both parties will choose the alternative of informal action if they come to the conclusion that the benefits of their corrupt behaviour outweigh the negative consequences.

The author undertook an empirical field study in Russia in February and March 2009. This consisted of 28 interviews with students, teachers and experts on corruption. The interview data evaluated provides a detailed overview of current problems and methods of reducing academic corruption. It seems that a reduction is only feasible if several measures are implemented simultaneously. These include effective sanctioning mechanisms, greater transparency, deregulation, internationalisation, democratisation, downsizing, decoupling, de-Sovietisation, changing incentives for students, improving the financial framework and a change in attitude.

The implementation of these measures is highly dependent upon the willingness of political and university elites to reduce academic corruption. Only if they can be convinced that in the long term the negative consequences of academic corruption outweigh the positive ones, can the present crisis be resolved. As these elites are the primary beneficiaries of corruption, the success of anti-corruption measures is in doubt.

1. Introduction

An education system that remains officially free while being fee-paying in practice corrupts both pupils and teachers.

Vladimir Putin, 03.04.2001

This quotation from former Russian president Vladimir Putin points at a problematic development in Russia's higher educational institutions after the collapse of communism: The education system – the international figurehead of the Soviet state – has become utterly corrupted.

Corruption in education is not a new phenomenon as it already existed in Soviet times.¹ However, after communism, its intensity and nature have reached new dimensions. In the old system, academic corruption only occurred sporadically. In the present system, its character is systematic. The latest figures indicate that every second student² is confronted with corruption.³ The market volume of corruption in education rose to 618 Million USD in 2008.⁴

Corruption in higher education appears at three stages:

1. Before a course of study starts/at entrance examinations: to gain admission.
2. During a course of study: to ensure achievement on the course.
3. At the end of/after a course of study: to gain a degree or doctorate.

The admission procedure is generally the first point at which (future) students are involved in corruption.⁵ An admission policy based on corrupt practices subverts the legally defined fair and free access to higher education.⁶ Not the most talented students enter the universities but the wealthiest. This is also true for many universities in the Western hemisphere, but these institutions at least offer scholarships for poorer applicants. Scholarships at Russian universities are almost non-existent and students from deprived families are something of a rarity at prestigious universities like Lomonosov Moscow State University or Saint-Petersburg State University.

During their courses, students become involved in corruption in order to control their grades and to save time. At some universities, corrupt practices are highly institutionalised. The amount of the bribe may vary, but usually the price for grades or course exemptions is affordable for the majority of students.⁷ The quality of education suffers seriously due to these informal practices⁸ and the students – who learn that corrupt behaviour is very effective – are prepared for a later ‘career of corruption’.

¹ As early as 1935, the Soviet magazine ‘Krokodil’ reported corruption during university admissions; see: Simis, Konstantin: USSR. Secrets of a Corrupt Society, London: Dent, 1982, here p. 43.

² From a total of 7,513,000 students in 2008/2009 – the largest student body in the history of Russia – more than 3,250,000 students were confronted with corruption. Federal State Statistics Service: Higher Education Institutions, in: gks.ru, 20.05.2010, http://www.gks.ru/bgd/regl/b09_12/IssWWW.exe/stg/d01/08-10.htm

³ Corruption process in Russia. Level, structure, trends. Corruption increase rate within four years’ period as a result of the recent survey made by the INDEM Fund, in: INDEM.ru, 20.05.2010, http://www.indem.ru/en/Publicat/2005diag_engV.htm

⁴ Morar’, Natal’ja: Korrupcija v VUZach. \$ 618 Mio. i – nikakich problem?, in: Newtimes.ru, 02.06.2008, <http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/4168/>

⁵ Sazonov, Dmitri: Korrupcija v sfere vysšego obrazovanija. Regional’nyj aspekt i tendencii razvitija (na primere Saratovskoj oblasti), Saratov: State Academy of Law, 2007; Saborovskaya, Alina S. (et al.): Vysšee obrazovanie v Rossii. Pravila i realnost’, Moscow: Independent Institute for Social Policy, 2004.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Galizkiy, Efim / Levin, Mark: Zatraty semej na obrazovanie detej. Informacionnyj byulleten’, Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 2008; Galickij, Efim / Levin, Mark: Korrupcija v sisteme obrazovanija/Informacionnyj byulleten’, Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 2004.

⁸ Sazonov, Dmitri: Korrupcija v sfere vysšego obrazovanija. Regional’nyj aspekt i tendencii razvitija (na primere Saratovskoj oblasti), Saratov: State Academy of Law, 2007.

Finally, there is a rising demand for postgraduate degrees, resulting into an increasing amount of corruption in the field of postgraduate studies.⁹ Because a doctorate has a positive impact on the holder's social prestige, job perspectives and salary, people are willing to bypass the time-consuming formal procedures by acquiring the title illegally.

Corruption in education has considerable ramifications for the society affected by it.¹⁰ Economic and social prosperity are based on the education of the members of society. If the quality of education falls and unqualified graduates enter the labour market, Russia will lose its ability to compete in the international market. In the globalised world of the 21st century, higher education is essential for the future of a state.

The shortcomings in higher education have also been recognised by the Russian President Dmitri Medved'ev. In his speech to the nation in November 2008, he declared:

[...] that the Russian education system should play a decisive role in shaping a new generation of professionals. Its previous successes were once recognised around the world. Today, despite some positive developments, the situation in education leaves much to be desired. Let us be frank: we were once in the vanguard and have now fallen behind. This has become a very serious threat to our competitiveness. (President of Russia, Official Web Portal)

Two concrete examples illustrate the serious implications of academic corruption:

- How can an architect who bought the grades for his static exams be able to plan a building without constructional faults?
- Can you trust the moral integrity of a judge who only passed his entrance examinations because he bribed the university administration?

In order to combat academic corruption and its social consequences, the government implemented anti-corruption measures such as the new standardised entrance exam ('EGE'). The effectiveness of these measures is disputed.

2. Research Questions and Methodology

The primary research objective is the development of a catalogue of measures which will contribute to the reduction of corruption in Russian higher education. This objective is only achievable on the basis of a profound understanding of the structure of corruption. We must know in detail how academic corruption works if we want to develop effective countermeasures: The definition and description of corrupt practices at Russian universities is a precondition to the definition of anti-corruption tools.

In order to make up for the lack of empirical data concerning corruption in Russian higher educational institutions, the author carried out an empirical survey in Russia. 28 individuals – students, teachers and experts on corruption– were interviewed. The interviews took place in

⁹ Kalimullin, Tagir R.: *Rossijskij rynek dissertacionnyh uslug*, Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 2006; Osipian, Ararat L.: *Corruption in Russia's Doctoral Education*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 2008.

¹⁰ Anti Corruption Research Center: *Corruption in the Education Sector*, in: U4.no, 20.05.2010, <http://www.u4.no/themes/education/main.cfm>

February and March 2009 in three Russian cities – Moscow, St. Petersburg and Samara. Access was difficult as Russian universities are usually not interested in the disclosure of their corrupt practices.

The data collection was based on Andreas Witzel's¹¹ model of problem-centred interviews. This model allows for the reconstruction of social or biographical issues from an individual perspective. The focus is on the respondents' attitudes, actions and interpretations.

The interviewees were divided into three groups: students (16 individuals), faculty members (5 individuals) and experts on corruption (8 individuals).¹² Each group received a questionnaire created for that specific group. The students and the members of faculty were primarily asked about their attitudes towards corruption in education and about their personal experiences concerning corrupt practices. The questions for the experts were more aimed at the description of the social and structural context of academic corruption.

In order to gain an initial overview of the body of data, the interviews were encoded and categorised thematically. Based on the tabulated thematic blocks, a first outline of a hypothesis was possible. After a detailed analysis of the data, assumptions about the motives of corrupt students and teachers could be made and patterns and types of academic corruption elaborated. Gradually, reasons for the susceptibility of Russian higher educational institutions to corruption became more evident.

Finally, the results were interpreted in the context of existing research projects and empirical studies. Only then could a proposed catalogue of countermeasures be formulated.

3. Theoretical Framework

The research project is based on the theory of informal institutions.¹³ Informal institutions are 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels'.¹⁴ Douglass North¹⁵ describes them as the rules of the game in a society. They coexist with formal institutions – constitutions, laws, regulations, decrees etc. – and to a considerable extent shape social interaction. Informal institutions are typical for post-Soviet societies, where practises such as clientelism¹⁶, corruption¹⁷ and 'blat'¹⁸ already existed under the old system.

¹¹ Witzel, Andreas: The Problem-Centered Interview, in: Forum: Qualitative Social Research, (Online Journal), (Vol. 1), No. 1, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1132>; Witzel, Andreas: Auswertung problemzentrierter Interviews: Grundlagen und Erfahrungen, in: Strobl, Rainer / Böttger, Andreas (eds.): Wahre Geschichten, Baden-Baden: Nomos, pp. 49–75, 1996.

¹² See Appendix.

¹³ O'Donnell, Guillermo: Illusions about Consolidation, in: Journal of Democracy, 1996, (Vol. 7), No. 2, pp. 34–51; Helmke, Gretchen / Levitsky, Stephen: Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda, in: Perspectives on Politics, 2004, (Vol. 2), No. 4, pp. 725–740; North, Douglas C.: Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

¹⁴ Helmke, Gretchen / Levitsky, Stephen: Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda, in: Perspectives on Politics, 2004, (Vol. 2), No. 4, pp. 725–740.

¹⁵ North, Douglass C.: Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

¹⁶ Lauth, Hans-Joachim: Informelle Institutionen politischer Partizipation und ihre demokratietheoretische Bedeutung. Klientelismus, Korruption, Putschdrohung und ziviler Widerstand, In: Lauth, Hans-Joachim / Liebert, Ulrike (eds.): Im Schatten demokratischer Legitimität. Informelle

Corruption is a subcategory of informal institution. In the context of this work, it is defined as ‘the abuse of entrusted power for private gain’.¹⁹ The research on corruption, offers different theoretical frameworks. Models from criminology,²⁰ psychology,²¹ sociology,²² economics,²³ the theory of governance²⁴ and the political sciences²⁵ compete with each other.

An orientation towards the political sciences narrows the choice of models to three approaches:

1. normative/traditional
2. functionalist
3. rational-choice

According to the normative or traditional approach, represented among others by Carl J. Friedrich,²⁶ corruption is a lack of political culture, a kind of moral ‘disease’ which leads to the decay of normative values: ‘Corruption is a kind of behaviour which deviates from the norm actually prevalent or believed to be prevail in a given context, such as the political’.²⁷ The normative approach prioritises the mere description of behaviour, neglecting the motives and reasons for corrupt behaviour. It is therefore not adequate for our purposes and will not be further considered.

Functionalist models stress the positive functions of corruption. Corruption is primarily defined by its ability to improve the performance of inflexible formal rules. ‘Corruption can and does have numerous consequences that are anything but evil – providing welfare services for disadvantaged

Institutionen und politische Partizipation im interkulturellen Demokratievergleich, Wiesbaden: Opladen, 1999, pp. 61-84.

¹⁷ Levin, Mark/Satarov, Georgy: Corruption and Institutions in Russia, in: European Journal of Political Economy, 2000, (Vol. 16), No. 1, pp. 113–132.

¹⁸ The Russian term ‘blat’ means reciprocal exchanges within informal networks which were used to gain personal advantage. See Ledeneva, Alena V.: Russia’s economy of Favours: Blat, Networking and Informal Exchange, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998; How Russia Really Works: The Informal Practice that Shaped Post-Soviet Politics and Business, Ithaca [et al.]: Cornell University Press, 2006.

¹⁹ Transparency International: Frequently asked Questions about Corruption, in: Transparency International Online, 20.05.2010, http://www.transparency.org/news_room/faq/corruption_faq

²⁰ Bannenberg, Britta: Korruption in Deutschland. Ergebnisse einer kriminologisch-strafrechtlichen Untersuchung, in: von Arnim, Hans-Herbert (ed.): Korruption. Netzwerke in Politik, Ämtern und Wirtschaft, Munich: Droemer Knaur, 2003, pp. 204–234.

²¹ Richter, Horst-Eberhard: Die hohe Kunst der Korruption. Erkenntnisse eines Politik-Beraters, Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1989.

²² Luhmann, Niklas: Gesellschaftsstruktur und Semantik. Studien zur Wissenssoziologie der modernen Gesellschaft, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1999; Höffling, Christian: Korruption als soziale Beziehung, Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 2002.

²³ Shleifer, Andrei / Vishny, Robert W.: Corruption, in: Quarterly Journal of Economics, 1993, (Vol. 108), No. 3, pp. 599–617.

²⁴ Homann, Karl: Unternehmensethik und Korruption, in: Zeitschrift für Betriebswirtschaftliche Forschung, 1997, (Vol. 49), No. 3, pp. 187–209.

²⁵ von Alemann, Ulrich / Kleinfeld, Ralf: Begriff und Bedeutung der politischen Korruption aus politikwissenschaftlicher Sicht, in: Benz, Arthur / Seibel, Wolfgang (eds): Zwischen Kooperation und Korruption. Abweichendes Verhalten in der Verwaltung, Baden Baden: Nomos, 1992, pp. 259–282.

²⁶ Friedrich, Carl J.: Corruption Concepts in Historical Perspective, in: Heidenheimer, Arnold J. / Johnston, Michael (eds): Political Corruption. Concepts & Contexts, New Brundwick: Transaction Publishers, 2001, pp. 15–24.

²⁷ Ibid., here p. 15.

citizens that otherwise would be without them'.²⁸ The functionalist approach, therefore, does not suit the research's focus on the negative effects of corrupt behaviour.

Recent research on corruption has been increasingly based on rational-choice models. These provide a value-free assessment of corruption and prioritise an examination of its causes. Hence they are a suitable theoretical framework for projects interested in the motives and causes of corruption and the development of countermeasures.

Table 1: Political Science Approaches and their Assessment of Corruption

Approach	Assessment of corruption	Focus on
Normative/traditional approach	Negative	Continuous monitoring of corruption
Functionalist approach	Rather positive	Consequences of corruption (ex-post)
Rational Choice approach	Value-free	Causes of corruption (ex-ante)

Source: Höltge, Kristin: Governance in Transition: What Makes Georgia's Higher Education System so Corrupt?, Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2008, here p. 69.

Within the field of rational-choice-based research on corruption the stakeholder-specific principal-agent model proved to be the most suitable. It was originally developed by Rose-Ackerman.²⁹ She defines corruption as an exchange of goods between three participating actors – the principal/superior, the agent and a third person:

*While superiors would like agents always to fulfil the superior's objectives, monitoring is costly, and agents will generally have some freedom to put their own interests ahead of their principals'. Here is where the money enters. Some third person, who can benefit by the agent's action, seek to influence the agent's decision by offering him a monetary payment which is not passed on to the principal.*³⁰

Robert R. Klitgaard expanded upon Rose-Ackerman's model.³¹ His theory involves the same actors changing their names only slightly – the third person is now called an *agent*. Klitgaard's *principal* is defined as the head of an institution who is supposed to embody the public interest. He employs several *agents* who are to act on his behalf when dealing with *clients*. An agent might not only serve public interests but also be tempted to misuse his position in order to pursue his/her private interests.

The following example illustrates how Klitgaard's *principal-agent* model can be transferred to the object of this research:

²⁸ Smelser, Neil J., quoted in: Höltge, Kristin: Governance in Transition. What Makes Georgia's Higher Education System So Corrupt?, Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2008, p. 68.

²⁹ Rose-Ackerman, Susan: Corruption. A Study in Political Economy, New York [et al.]: Academic Press, 1978.

³⁰ Ibid., here p. 6.

³¹ Klitgaard, Robert E.: Controlling Corruption, Berkeley [et al.]: University of California Press, 1991.

The *agent* is a university teacher who is employed by the *principal*, in our case the university rector. Several students – who take the role of the *clients* in our model – plan to make informal payments to influence the results of their course examinations. They offer money or gifts to their teacher in exchange for high marks. The teacher, who has to decide whether or not to act corruptly, makes the following considerations:

If I am not corrupt, I get my pay and the moral satisfaction of not being a corrupt person. If I am corrupt, I get the bribe but 'pay' a moral cost. There is also some chance I will be caught and punished, in which case I will also pay a penalty, and lose my pay. So, I will be corrupt if: the bribe minus the moral cost minus [(the probability I am caught and punished) times (the penalty for being corrupt)] is greater than my pay plus the satisfaction I get from not being corrupt.³²

If he refuses his students' offer, he guarantees his professional position and his salary and receives moral satisfaction for his exemplary behaviour. At the same time, he abandons the opportunity to receive extra payment. If he chooses the informal path, he makes a considerable profit but risks being caught and punished and experiencing feelings of guilt in the light of his moral failure.

A student who offers his teacher a payment for high marks must have made similar considerations before he decided to adopt the informal approach. He weighed his personal costs and his likely benefits and came to the conclusion that high marks and saving time outweigh his payment, his sense of guilt and the potential hazard.

With its focus on the actors' personal motives, Klitgaard's theory provides a suitable framework for the explanation of the reasons for academic corruption in Russia. Klitgaard's model also deals with the problem of omnipresent informal institutions. It considers how informal institutions affect the choices made by the actors: According to Klitgaard, the moral costs of corruption can be zero if actors operate within a completely corrupt environment.³³ Given the ubiquity of corrupt structures in Russia, this approach might enable an analysis of the ways in which omnipresent informal institutions have an effect upon the social assessment and acceptance of corrupt behaviour. Finally, Klitgaard's model provides a catalogue of anti-corruption measures, whose applicability for higher education in Russia will be discussed .

4. Empirical Results

An analysis of the answers in the survey reveals that the present problem of academic corruption in Russia is primarily a result of three developments:

1. Economic reasons: Most universities have lacked financial resources since the transformation period and the financial crisis of the 1990s.³⁴ As Tagir Kalimullin puts it:

The scale of corruption, which we observe today, is a logical consequence [of] the changes that have occurred since the 1990s. (Interviewee 2, male, expert, Higher School of Economics, Moscow)

³² Ibid., here p. 70.

³³ Ibid., here p. 69.

³⁴ Teichmann, Christine: Nachfrageorientierte Hochschulfinanzierung in Russland. Ein innovatives Modell zur Modernisierung der Hochschulbildung, in: HoFArbeitsberichte, No. 1, 2004.

2. Structural reasons: Corruption is firmly anchored in the educational system and already a part of it. Without corruption, the current system of higher education would not survive. Effective sanctions do not exist.

If we would eliminate the corruption, many of the hierarchical structures that have already been created would break together. [...] And then the whole higher education system would collapse. (Interviewee 9, female, graduate, MGU State University, Moscow)

3. Historical/socio-cultural reasons: Corruption has a long tradition in Russia, starting from the 11th century, where it was already known as 'kormlenye' ('feeding').³⁵ Informal institutions were established at universities during the Soviet era³⁶ and are socially accepted today.

The omnipresence of corruption in social intercourse is one reason why experts question the effectiveness of anti-corruption measures. Most respondents believe that a change is only possible if reforms are implemented in all social areas affected by corruption and not only in the education sector.

It will not be effective because it was just decided, as everything is decided in Russia. This means that the law was not run past experts, it was not discussed in society [...] no academics or lawyers, but only officials [...] but without society, without journalists, without any media, a victory against corruption is impossible. (Andrey Kalich, interviewee 5, expert, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights, Moscow)

All respondents affirmed that education is of major importance, though the answers showed that the decision to study at university is mainly based on practical reasons. Experts have identified changing conditions in the labour market which they hold responsible for the students' attitudes: As long as employers give priority to formal criteria and value mere certificates more than expertise, students will undervalue the quality of education.

Because they need formal records to enter the job market, more and more high school graduates register for university courses. Many Russian universities cannot cope with the increasing number of students. The basic conditions – financial resources, teaching staff etc. – are insufficient. It is a paradox that people are showing an increasing interest in education while the quality of education is continually worsening.

The high demand for university places – predominately for places that are state-subsidised – affects fair access to academic institutions negatively. Prestigious universities often choose students according to their financial means and/or their social standing and not their skills and ability. The greater the demand for places, the greater the value of the reward a student has to provide for his acceptance. A student reports:

Not everyone has a right to higher education. I personally, as a man from the countryside, as well as my fellow students with whom I went to school in the village – just three went on to the university out of 30. [...]

³⁵ Holm, Kerstin: Das korrupte Imperium, München: DTB, 2006; Schattenberg, Susanne: Die korrupte Provinz? Russische Beamte im 19. Jahrhundert, Frankfurt a.M. et al.: Campus, 2008

³⁶ Konstantin Simis wrote in 1982: 'Corruption enters the life of the Soviet citizen at a very early age, even before he or she is old enough to be aware of it. [...] As they climb higher and higher up the pyramid of the education system [...] they are psychologically prepared for the corruption they encounter at this stage of their lives', in: Simis, Konstantin: USSR: Secrets of a Corrupt Society, London: Dent, 1982, pp. 163. See also: Friedberg, Maurice: How things were done in Odessa. Cultural and Intellectual Pursuits in a Soviet City, Boulder/CO: Westview, 1991.

currently, university entrance is undermined by corruption and not everyone can start a course. One must have connections, i.e. any personal contact to the university. [...] I've heard that our University will soon assume the status of a commercial university [...] and then only rich people who can afford it will study here. (Interviewee 18, male, student, State Technical University, Samara)

A graduate of a very prestigious faculty of the Lomonosov Moscow State University adds:

In practice, I can say, that at my faculty, this law [the right to free education and fair access, E.K.] has not been implemented. I know very well that when I began to study, there was not a single person who enrolled without money or relationships. (Interviewee 9, female, graduate, MGU State University, Moscow)

Universities that are less popular face a different situation: The number of applications sometimes does not even meet the number of state-subsidised places.

The research dealt with academic corruption during entrance examinations and during courses. Informal actions before the start of a course usually serve the purpose of securing a state-subsidised place at a certain university or faculty. In Russia, this has become a real 'business' (Georgy Satarov, interviewee 7, Expert, INDEM-Foundation, Moscow). In the majority of cases, the parents of future students are the initiators. They believe that a place at a popular university will help their children to succeed on the job market. In order to achieve their objective, they use their economic capital (bribery) or social capital (blat). The so-called 'repetitorstvo', where parents engage university staff to 'prepare' their children for entrance examinations is very widespread³⁷ – this practise seems dubious when the same tutors are simultaneously in the admission committees. Bribes for enrolment have become more prevalent over the last few years. In Moscow, the average bribe for university admission amounts to around 5,000 USD³⁸ and may climb to 20,000 USD³⁹ or more. The total amount of corruption connected to entrance examinations was 520 million USD in 2008.⁴⁰

During their courses, students act corruptly to improve their performance. At certain universities, this form of corruption has become institutionalised to such an extent that students get price lists or remittance slips which determine the bribes for high marks. Compared to the bribes paid for enrolment, the bribes that students pay during their courses are rather low and usually amount to between 3,000–4,000 roubles.⁴¹ As gifts up to a value of 3,000 roubles are legal,⁴² they are a frequent form of bribery.

The best variant of corruption – is a bottle of cognac. It is a pleasant gift, it is fine and it is innocent. (Interviewee 9, female, Graduate, MGU State University, Moscow)

³⁷ According to Galitsky and Levin, 36% of Russian parents paid between 18,600 roubles (on national average) and 54,700 roubles (in Moscow) for the 'repetitors' per annum. Galitsky, Efim / Levin, Mark: Zatraty semej na obrazovanie detej. Informacionnyj byulleten', Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 2008, here p. 33.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Interviewee 6, female, Professor, MGU State University, Moscow.

⁴⁰ Morar', Natal'ja: Korrupcija v VUZach: \$ 618 Mio. i – nikakich problem?, in: Newtimes.ru, 02.06.2008, <http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/4168/>

⁴¹ Galitsky, Efim / Levin, Mark: Zatraty semej na obrazovanie detej. Informacionnyj byulleten', Moscow: Higher School of Economics, 2008, here p. 36.

⁴² Article 575 of the Civil Code of the Russian Federation legalises 'gifts, except for common gifts, whose value does not exceed the statutory five-fold amounts of the minimum wages or salaries: [...] to the workers of medical treatment, educational, social protection and other similar institutions by individuals who are treated, maintained or educated by them, and by spouses and relatives of these persons', 20.05.2010, <http://www.russian-civil-code.com/PartII/SectionIV/Subsection1/Chapter32.html>

In total, 98 million USD were spent in bribes during courses in 2008.⁴³

Table Nr. 1 summarises the different forms of corruption that are present in Russian higher education.

Table 1: A Typology of Education Corruption at Russian Universities

Before a University Course Goal: (State-subsidised) places at selected universities and departments	During a University Course Goal: Credits, exemption from classes
‘Repetitorstvo’ Directly bribing selection committee members ‘Rektorskie/Dekanskie spiski’ ⁴⁴ Preparatory classes Purchasing the results of the standardised entrance exam ‘EGE’	Cash payments to teachers Presents for teachers, for example alcoholic drinks, chocolates, etc. ‘Certified’ corruption: payments to university pay offices (sometimes via bank transfer) Optional preparatory classes (with costs) Payments exacted from students

References: created by the author. Due to the existing interferences, it is not always possible to view these forms separately in practice.

At the majority of Russian universities, corruption is institutionalised. The dimension of corruption varies from university to university and between different departments at the same university. Departments of the humanities show a higher degree of corruption than departments of natural sciences. Only a few universities – primarily the Higher Schools of Economics in Moscow and St. Petersburg, the New Economic School in Moscow and the European University St. Petersburg – seem to have found measures to banish academic corruption.

Several interviewees have been told about cases of academic corruption by friends and acquaintances. Others have already been personally involved in corrupt acts. Some students buy their way out of classes if they believe that the effort for a class is not proportionate to its benefit. One of the teachers interviewed admits that her position was the decisive factor in her younger sister’s acceptance to an older university where she taught.⁴⁵

Academic corruption is seen as dysfunctional and affects Russian society negatively. The interviewees’ main criticism is the unequal access to higher education, which sharpens the gap between the socially deprived and the privileged classes. It also damages the quality of higher education and is likely to create a shortage of well-educated specialist workers. Georgy Satarov speaks of a ‘de-intellectualisation’ of society (Interviewee 7, expert, INDEM-Foundation, Moscow).

⁴³ Morar’, Natal’ja: Korrupcija v VUZach: \$ 618 Mio. i – nikakich problem?, in: Newtimes.ru, 02.06.2008, <http://newtimes.ru/articles/detail/4168/>

⁴⁴ These terms are used to describe the system of ‘dean lists’: Deans have the right to select students on their own initiative. Usually they sell university places or assign them to close friends, family members etc.

⁴⁵ Interviewee 25, female, Professor, European University, St. Petersburg.

Russian universities prepare their students for a later 'career of corruption': They present corruption as a legitimate and socially acceptable way for the achievement of objectives.

Recently, the Russian Government initiated some anti-corruption measures, for example the introduction of standardised entrance exams ('EGE'). While some respondents hope this will have a positive impact, most do not believe that these measures are efficient. There are already reports of corruption during the new exams that confirm this evaluation.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Klitgaard's principal-agent-client model serves as a useful framework for analysing academic corruption in Russia. His model is based on the rational choices of the individuals involved in corruption.

A university teacher (agent) has two choices: to be corrupt or not to be corrupt. His decision is based on the calculation of the risks, costs and likely benefits. He will act corruptly if he comes to the conclusion that the benefits outweigh the risks and cost.

Four determinants affect the teacher's decision-making:

The sum of the bribe: The higher the bribe, the greater the likelihood of corruption.

The moral attitude of the agent: The fewer his objections to corruption, the greater the likelihood of corruption.

The risk of being caught: The higher this risk, the smaller the likelihood of corruption.

The strictness of the sanctions: The less strict the sanctions, the greater the likelihood of corruption.

The student (client) who has to decide whether to be or not to be corrupt makes similar considerations to his teacher:

- *If I am not corrupt, I have to invest time and effort in order to receive credits. As a reward I acquire knowledge and the moral satisfaction of not being corrupt.*
- *If I am corrupt, I save time and effort, but I do not acquire knowledge and risk being caught and penalised.*

Accordingly, the student will choose corruption if the time and effort saved minus the moral and economic costs minus the risk of being caught and penalised outweighs the satisfaction of having acquired knowledge and of not being corrupt.

The student's decision-making is also affected by the four determinants named above, the only difference being the sum of the bribe: The *lower* the amount of the bribe, the higher the likelihood of corruption. In addition, the student's choice is influenced by a further determinant: the time and effort saved. The greater the value he places on an early diploma and the lower the value he places on the acquisition of knowledge, the higher the likelihood of corruption.

Due to historical and cultural factors, informal institutions in Russia have become more institutionalised than in many other industrialised countries. In addition to economic and political corruption, the field of everyday corruption has expanded considerably and is now present in several social subsystems. Corruption is no longer a deviant act by particular individuals but rather a daily routine. Obviously the moral costs of corruption only play a subordinate part in the social conscience.

Higher education is a part of Russian society seriously affected by corruption. At many universities, corruption takes place in public. Apparently the fears of sanctions are minimal. Indeed, the risk of being caught and penalised is relatively modest. In 2007, only 500 cases of academic corruption which resulted in judicial proceedings were reported. Students, in particular, do not have to fear severe sanctions. If they exist at all, legal consequences apply to academic teachers. They often escape sanctions for taking bribes only in cases where they received non-monetary presents. Presents are legal if they are worth less than 3,000 roubles. This sum corresponds to the bribe for marks on courses (3,000 to 4,000 roubles) that is customary in the market of academic corruption. As it is affordable for most students (or at least for their parents), the amount of the money demanded is usually no hindrance to corruption.

Apparently, the current situation regarding all four determinants favours corrupt behaviour. As a result, the general likelihood of academic corruption in Russia is very high.

- The amount of the bribes assures an appealing extra salary for the teachers. Yet, the sum is still affordable for the majority of students/parents.
- The moral objections to corruption are weak.
- The risk of being caught and penalised for academic corruption is minimal.
- Sanctioning mechanisms are ineffective.

To change these determinants in a way that will reduce academic corruption effectively, strict and intensive anti-corruption measures must be implemented. The research suggests the following recommendations for action:

Effective sanctioning mechanisms: Academic corruption must have legal repercussions for all the parties involved. The strict application of the law and the removal of legal loopholes are obligatory. A compromise between hard and soft sanctions should be found.

Growing transparency: Non-transparent procedures, for example oral entrance examinations or 'dean lists' must be abolished. Standardised entrance exams, which have been introduced recently, could help fight corruption. Their actual success remains to be seen. Independent media should have a reporting and controlling function. Independent ombudsman need to be introduced as direct contact persons for students.

Deregulation: State control and influence must be reduced. Universities should be involved in important decisions in higher education policy.

Internationalisation: Significantly, universities with a strong international orientation face less problems with corruption. Their strategies (subsidies and teaching staff from abroad) could be adapted by other institutions. The integration into European education systems (through the Bologna Process) seems to be worthy of support.

Democratisation: The Russian education system is based on strict hierarchical structures. Most universities do not involve their students in decision-making. Student self-governing bodies are the exception. They must be strengthened to act as a counterbalance to the power of headmasters, administrations and teachers.

Downsizing: The Russian academic sector needs 'healthy downsizing'. Reduction is a precondition for improving learning conditions and a high quality education. A system of vocational training, similar to that in Germany for instance, could compensate the loss of university places.

Decoupling: Places that are state-subsidised and private places must be decoupled. Study programs with costs should be restricted to private universities.

'De-Sovietisation': Old-fashioned educational structures from the Soviet system (for example the status of physical education as a compulsory subject) must be finally abandoned.

Changing incentives for students: The current Russian labour market is, on the whole, only open to people with a degree. As a consequence, many students value exam results more than the quality of what they studied. If the conditions in the labour market are changed and courses are not only pursued in order to obtain certificates, there would be less incentive for corrupt practices.

Improving the financial framework: Public expenditure on education fell seriously after the collapse of the Soviet system. Universities had to deal with permanent underfunding which is still evident. All too often, the wages of academic teachers do not cover their living costs. If they cannot or do not want to take on more than one job at the same time, corruption becomes the easiest way out. A considerable pay rise and better retirement provisions would help to diminish the incentives for corruption among teachers.

A change of attitude: The social consciousness of the immoral and criminal aspects of corruption must be increased. Information campaigns which sensitise people to these aspects are needed. Non-governmental organisations, for example *Transparency International*, should be involved in this process.

All these measures cannot operate if the universities refuse to play an active part in the reform process. The Higher School of Economics in Moscow and St. Petersburg or the European University in St. Petersburg serve as positive examples for Russian academic institutions following a strict anti-corruption policy – with increasing success.

Appendix 1: Interviewees

Interviewee's Designation	Interviewee's Gender	Interviewee's Affiliation
Interviewee 1	female	Professor, University of Industry and Finance, Moscow
Interviewee 2	male	Tagir Kalimullin, expert, Higher School of Economics, Moscow
Interviewee 3	male	Andrey Kolesnichenko, expert, Newspaper 'Novye Izvestiya'
Interviewee 4	male	Leon Kosals, expert, Higher School of Economics, Moscow
Interviewee 5	male	Andrey Kalich, expert, Center for the Development of Democracy and Humand Rights, Moscow
Interviewee 6	female	Professor, MGU State University, Moscow
Interviewee 7	male	Georgy Satarov, Expert, INDEM-Foundation, Moscow
Interviewee 8	female	Student, MGU State University, Moscow
Interviewee 9	female	Graduate, MGU State University, Moscow
Interviewee 10	male	Student, MGU State University, Moscow
Interviewee 11	male	Mark Levin, expert, Higher School of Economics, Moscow
Interviewee 12	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 13	male	Professor, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 14	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 15	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 16	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 17	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 18	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 19	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 20	male	Student, State Technical University, Samara
Interviewee 21	female	Student, State University, Samara
Interviewee 22	male	Lecturer, State University of Architecture and Civil Engineering, Samara
Interviewee 23	male	Student, ENGECON, St. Petersburg
Interviewee 24	male	Aleksandr Sungurov, expert, Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg

Interviewee's Designation	Interviewee's Gender	Interviewee's Affiliation
Interviewee 25	female	Professor, European University, St. Petersburg
Interviewee 26	male	Kirill Titaev, expert, Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg
Interviewee 27	male	Student, ENGECON, St. Petersburg
Interviewee 28	male	Student, Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg