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Deviant Behavior in Higher Educational Institutions of the Central Federal District and the Northwestern Federal District

Causes, Scale, Varieties, and Prospects of Control and Prevention

Corruption and other forms of unacceptable behavior in Russian universities frequently is the result of poor conditions of work, low salaries, and inadequate administrative and oversight structures. A thorough reform and reorganization of institutions of higher education should go a long way to reducing the incidence of this behavior

Vigorous efforts are being made to combat corruption in the country. Numerous sociological surveys have revealed that corruption has become widely prevalent in the State Inspectorate of Road

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Safety, in state and municipal purchases, the health care system, and the education system. In this article we confine the analysis to the study of the phenomenon of corruption in the system of higher education.

To determine the situation in regard to corruption in the system of higher education, from 2008 through 2012 we conducted sociological surveys in the Central Federal District and the Northwestern Federal District (CFD and NWFD).

The empirical base of the survey

The object of the survey consisted of former members of the staff of professors and instructors in a number of higher educational institutions in the CFD and NWFD who had been convicted of committing various crimes after 1991 (Article 290 “Receiving Bribes”; Article 289 “Illegal Participation in Entrepreneurial Activity”; Article 133 “Coercion to Engage in Acts of a Sexual Nature”; and other articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation).¹

The sample ($N = 62$) was of the quota type. The quota variables were: region, higher educational institution, sex, and job position at the time of the conviction.

In-depth interviews with the convicted individuals (former instructors) were conducted:

—in federal budget-funded institutions of the criminal enforcement inspectorate of the Directorate of the Federal Service of Execution of Punishments;

—in a neutral location.

By design, this article does not cite a list of the higher educational institutions in which instructors have been apprehended in connection with receiving bribes, as well as a number of other crimes over the past few years. Accordingly, for those surveyed we do not cite to specific institutions, so as not to undermine the reputations of those universities.

Further, we cite only the list of higher educational institutions in which students (and former students) were surveyed. The students were not asked whether they had given bribes (whether there was

corruption in their institutions); the purpose was to determine their opinions regarding how corruption needs to be combated.

In this quota sample, the sampling population is $N = 884$. The quota variables are: region, higher educational institution, sex, and family structure. Experts in official positions ($N = 8$) were questioned—personnel of the procuracy, authorized agents of the department to combat corruption, the police, the Federal Security Service, and judges.

The higher educational institutions in which the students were questioned are:

- Iaroslavl P.G. Demidov State University;
- Iaroslavl K.D. Ushinskii State Pedagogical University;
- Russian Academy of the National Economy and State Service Under the President of the Russian Federation;
- Moscow State Academy of Water Transportation;
- Rybinsk State University of Aviation Technology;
- State Academic University of the Humanities;
- St. Petersburg State University;
- Novgorod Iaroslav Mudryi State University.

In conducting the sociological survey a number of difficulties arose in connection with:

- determining the sampling population, since it was difficult to determine the general population owing to the high latency of the phenomenon in question;
- the fact that a number of the convicted people (instructors) did not want to give interviews.

Results and analysis of the survey

The data of the statistics show that the crimes that are most widely prevalent in higher educational institutions relate to the following articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation:

- Article 290 “Receiving Bribes”;
- Article 289 “Illegal Participation in Entrepreneurship”;
- Article 133 “Coercion to Engage in Sexual Acts.”

Our survey made it possible to classify crimes in higher educational institutions (corruption) on the basis of these factors:

Motives for the commission of the crime:

- greed;
- sexual passion;
- self-affirmation.

The data show that all three motives are equally prevalent.

Method of commission:

- use of threats;
- use of coercion;
- without threats or coercion.

The survey demonstrates that crimes in higher educational institutions are most often committed with the use of threats. For the most part, crimes in higher educational institutions are committed by individuals or, in rare cases, by a group of people in the course of an advance plot.

—*Gender:* In higher educational institutions, women are three times more likely than men to commit crimes. The main types of crimes are fraud, bribe taking, and illegal entrepreneurial activity;

—*Position:* The lower the job position in the institution, the greater the likelihood that a crime of the corruption type will be committed²;

—*Age:* People between the ages of twenty-seven and thirty-five are most likely to have criminal proceedings instituted against them for taking bribes. Regarding other kinds of deviation in higher educational institutions—for example, writing a “ready to go” dissertation for money—instructors age fifty and older, generally people who are members of the dissertation council, are more likely to be involved;

—*Place:* as a rule, crimes are committed on the campus of the higher educational institution;

—*Time:* Although criminal proceedings are instituted against bribe-taking instructors for one or several episodes, the reality is that, according to criminal investigation departments and departments engaged in combating corruption, as a rule a teacher has

been able to commit a number of crimes over many years before being apprehended.

The diversity of corruption

Corruption is a social and legal phenomenon. For us, as sociologists, it is important to look at the phenomenon not so much from the juridical point of view but, rather, from the angle of the moral foundations of society. Until the present day specialists have debated what elements of crime ought to be classified as corruption. We suggest that any unlawful actions committed against students by personnel of a higher educational institution and members of the corps of professors and instructors constitute corruption.

In our opinion, deviant behavior in higher educational institutions can provisionally be divided into two basic kinds:

- “aggressive” deviant behavior;
- “light” deviant behavior.

What we mean by “aggressive” deviant behavior is an act that a person in authority commits for personal enrichment, to obtain sexual gratification, or other reason by means of extortion, threats, and so on.³

“Light” deviant behavior is considered an act committed by those in authority for the purpose of profitable gain, sexual satisfaction, or other reason by means of general patronage, connivance, or deception.

An example of “aggressive” deviant behavior

A person in authority (an instructor) seeks out a student in a group who will offer other members in his group a way to “solve” semester exam problems. This student collects money from the other students who are willing to pay a bribe and turns it over to the instructor. Sometimes the bribe-taking instructor will receive it through an intermediary, not just from students who are failing; he will also extort money from the entire student group, even from those getting top grades. In such a situation, the corruption becomes well

known quickly, not only to students of the entire faculty but also to the administrators. Generally, the rector's office will deal with the problem without bringing in law-enforcement agencies, since they are worried about the institution's reputation. As a rule, the instructor in question will be asked to write a letter [of resignation], but if he or she refuses they can utilize their administrative power to annul their labor contract with that teacher on the grounds of being late to work or failing to complete the individual plan and report work, and so on. In either of these cases, this is not a bad scenario for the instructor, because it will not be hard to get another job in a different higher educational institution, even in a different city and sometimes in a more prestigious institution. This is linked, first and foremost, to the low pay that professors and instructors receive.

Corruption in institutions of higher learning is manifested in so many ways that it is not possible to list all the schemes in one article. Very often, for example, a bribe-taking instructor will offer to act as an intermediary between, say, an instructor named Ivanov (supposedly a bribe taker) and the students. This Ivanov actually never asked for a bribe and never has intended to do so, but from time to time monetary sums are demanded, supposedly in his name, to take care of some problem.

As noted, the manifestation of "aggressive" deviant (delinquent) behavior is quickly halted, since it becomes quickly known to a broad circle of people, including law enforcement. A problem arises when it comes to the detection and prevention of "light" deviant behavior, especially in the form of sexual extortion.

Usually the corrupting teacher does not ask a female student to engage in intimate relations with him so as to pass an exam. It tends to be more subtle. During a scheduled counseling session on the student's course project or final paper, the instructor will suggest they get together in a café or go to the movies. If the student agrees, the instructor begins to court her, saying he has fallen in love with her. He stresses that he is not married, or is married but not living with his wife, and that he wants a divorce or is already divorced. The young woman may accept his wooing, for various reasons (she is flattered by the attention of an older man with status;

she has fallen in love; it provides an adrenaline rush; it is an act of defiance to society).

This teacher will cohabit with her or meet her to have intimate relations. The young woman does not think she is doing anything wrong, because she assumes that she has an established relationship and will soon marry; she will tell all her girlfriends how lucky she is. But then the “teacher” will dump her at the end of the semester and establish relations with a new female student. This does not become widely known; the student who has been dumped usually would rather not say anything.

Such a teacher, depending on his teaching load (number of faculties and groups) may be engaging in intimate relations simultaneously with three to five female students in a semester, then abandon them and start again. He will have told each young woman that she is his girlfriend. As a rule, the female students receive some patronage and protection from that “teacher”: he solves exam problems for them, writes papers for them, and in quite a few cases, writes scientific papers for them to enter into competitions so they can receive higher stipends. He will travel with them to scientific conferences, where they stay in the same hotel room, and so on. In some situations, the affair may continue into postgraduate education. The “teacher” can help the young woman enroll in her graduate studies, write a dissertation for her, help her in its defense, and get her a job in his own department, thus gaining “his own person” who is faithful to him in the department and will always vote in his favor.

The question that arises is not why there are so many diverse criminal schemes (of corruption) in higher educational institutions, but where such “teachers” are coming from.

Sexual advances on the part of female instructors toward male students are less prevalent. For the most part, corrupt female instructors take bribes and write papers for money, and act as intermediaries for passing on bribes.

Generally, recruiting for graduate school is conducted among students in the same institution of higher learning. Sometimes

young men enroll to avoid military service or to acquire a higher status and socially important connections. Young women tend to go to graduate school for different reasons.

Understandably, most people enroll in graduate school in order to make a significant contribution to science, to devote themselves to the service of others, to teach the rising generation what is good, and so on. However, we have to look at things realistically. In recent times, unfortunately, some young women have enrolled in graduate school not to develop science but just to acquire a high social status so as to avoid a factory job, to have a yearly paid leave of fifty-six days, a free work schedule, and extensive connections, so that later on, their own children will find it easy to be accepted in the same institution of higher learning.

Examples of the most common statements by respondents

Mikhail, a former associate professor in the department of political science, provisionally convicted of five episodes (taking five bribes):

Society and the state are to blame because instructors receive such low, humiliating compensation. The extra pay for an academic degree and a title is laughable; the cost of living is going up constantly; everyone has a family and obligations to his friends and relatives. What is a man supposed to do in such a situation? You know, if they paid a decent salary, say 30,000 for an associate professor and 60,000 for a doctor of science and professor, no one would ever take a bribe.

Eduard, a former senior instructor in the department of physical education, provisionally convicted of making sexual advances: "In some higher educational institutions in Israel, in particular Bar-Ilan University and Ben-Gurion University, the institutions' bylaws do not forbid students and instructors to have intimate relations. I just do not understand why I have been convicted. And female students are willing to engage in sex with instructors so as not to have to take a test."

Anna, an associate professor in the department of economics, provisionally convicted of taking bribes: "People are always say-

ing it does not cost the applicant anything to defend his or her dissertation; in fact, there is constant extortion: money for little gifts, fees to pay for articles in journals recommended by the Higher Certification Commission of the Russian Federation, money to the publishing house to publish a monograph, and so on. It takes three years to write your dissertation, you have spent a lot of money, yet with zero effect, because the extra pay for an academic degree is laughable. Everyone takes bribes, the same as I do, and how could you survive otherwise?"

Sergei, a professor in the department of mathematics, convicted of making sexual advances: "I was the victim of slander, I am not guilty. I just told a female student that I was going to give her a grade of 2 on her exam, and she decided to slander me. And the rector didn't even look into the facts of the case, he just fired me."

As we can tell from these examples, those convicted justify their criminal acts: somebody must be guilty, but not them. Moreover, of the sixty-two respondents (convicted instructors), forty-seven⁴ stated that they were not guilty but had been set up (targeted):

- because of their political differences with the rector;
- because they repeatedly reported violations in their institution, and the rector's office did not like that;
- because of competition, because they aspired to rise to the position of department head or dean of a faculty;
- because of people's envy of their successful scientific career (they have more articles and monographs than everyone else).

Generally, when an instructor in a higher educational institution had been caught receiving a bribe it appears in the mass media, especially in the case of a higher educational institution in the provinces. Such information can easily be found on Internet websites and in the newspapers.

According to our calculations, about once every twelve years an instructor is caught taking a bribe in a higher educational institution of the Central Federal District [CFD].⁵

Considering that on the average, there are about 600 instructors in an oblast institution of higher learning (including instructors holding down more than one position), the situation is not critical.

In the CFD there are higher educational institutions in which, in twenty years, not a single instructor has had criminal proceedings brought against him.

On what basis is the system of education considered to occupy a position of leadership (on par with the State Inspectorate of Road Safety and the system of health care) in terms of the amount of corruption? The system of education includes preschool institutions, schools, vocational schools, technicums, higher educational institutions, and postcollegiate education. We have analyzed the official statistics for the entire system of education, and the situation is not catastrophic. Considering that we are living in a time of vigorous transformation of basic social institutions (and this, as is well known, inevitably leads to a rise in deviation), things are not that bad.

Bearing in mind the high latency of the phenomenon of corruption, it is not systemic and massive in institutions of higher learning. As a rule, a crime is a normal response by a normal individual to non-normal conditions. Thus it is clear why there is a low level of “aggressive” corruption in higher educational institutions. Most instructors have learned how to adapt to their difficult situation (low salaries, high teaching loads, and so on). There are some who have actively sought grants, while others have gotten jobs in companies or factories as supplements to their regular jobs. Some teach in more than one institution simultaneously (which has an adverse effect on the quality of their teaching); others have taken up official tutoring; and so on.

However, it needs to be noted that there has been an upsurge of “light” deviant behavior. In a number of institutions of higher learning, a certain percentage of instructors have been writing dissertations “ready to go,” graduation qualification papers, course papers, and test papers.

The prospects of combating deviant behavior

In spite of its material, cadre, and other difficulties, the system of higher education demonstrates its ability to cleanse itself of various kinds of corruption. Higher educational institutions certainly do not want corruption to become more prevalent.

The experts in official positions made it clear that they usually receive information about some crime being committed from instructors, students, and the rector's office, in that order! It is most often the case that instructors supply the information, voluntarily and anonymously. This may be due to an active civic stance, or a desire to get rid of a rival in order to take over his job, or some other reason. What is important is the fact that law enforcement agencies (the Federal Security Service, the procuracy, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and others) promptly receive information about crimes.

When someone applies for a job in a higher educational institution he has to supply a reference attesting that he does not have a prior conviction, even if it was dismissed. Moreover, such a reference is required even for an applicant already working at another job. But not having a prior conviction does not guarantee that the individual has a high moral character. Not long ago we proposed that when considering whether to hire someone to work in a higher educational institution, it would be useful to test him for drugs, give him a psychiatric evaluation, and administer a polygraph (lie detector) test. A number of studies were conducted to determine what is essential first and foremost:

- to triple the salary of instructors, and to calculate the median salary only on the basis of a single rate instead of the way it is done now, when an hourly rate and a 0.5 rate are added for extra work in another department, and so on;

- to introduce strict monitoring of the activity of instructors and auxiliary personnel (an anonymous questionnaire survey of students at the end of each semester, video recorders in the corridors and lecture halls, and so on);

- to exercise more rigid control over admissions to graduate school, selecting only the most worthy applicants, and only on the basis of competitive selection;

- to carry out recertification in higher educational institutions in order to get rid of unqualified people in the system of higher education;

- to exercise stronger monitoring over nonstate higher educational institutions; the difference between state and nonstate insti-

tutions of higher learning ought to relate to their financing rather than the monitoring of their activity.

In some institutions of higher learning the rector holds his position for life. Formally a rector is supposed to be reelected regularly, but it is very easy for an incumbent rector to be reelected. Accordingly, it is necessary to limit a rector to two terms, no matter how good he may be. The loss of his position should not in any way adversely affect either his scientific achievements (the number and quality of his publications) or his school of science: in fact, it ought to be the other way around.

In our case, however, what happens most often is that the higher the position is, the larger the indicators for the work are. This is strange, even considering the decline in the teaching and academic research load of office holders (especially those at the top).

Conclusion

The Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation is attempting to change the situation radically by rating effective and ineffective institutions of higher learning. The reality is such that it will be necessary to close a number of institutions or combine them with stronger ones. In particular, the Ministry of Education and Science has proposed that administrators be replaced in a number of institutions, since a great many unqualified people have made their way into the system of education in the past twenty years, and, as a consequence, in a number of institutions the value of education has declined.

If, in spite of negative reactions in society, the Ministry manages to determine objectively which institutions of higher learning are weak (it will be necessary to have an expanded system of rating criteria) and close them, manifestations of deviant behavior in institutions of higher learning may decline significantly.

Notes

1. The numbers and titles of the articles have changed as a result of the adoption of the new Criminal Code of the Russian Federation in 1996.

2. Statistics and data of departments of internal affairs [the police] show that it is mostly assistant professors, senior instructors, laboratory heads, and methodologists who commit crimes.

3. Examples include taking bribes, coercion to engage in acts of a sexual nature, and so on.

4. These forty-seven respondents readily consented to taking part in the survey.

5. Prior to the formation of the CFD, territory which now belongs to the CDF was included.

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