



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



International Institute
for Educational Planning

Policy Forum on

Planning Higher Education Integrity

Paris, 18–20 March 2015

www.iiep.unesco.org/integrityforum

Information note

Why this Policy Forum?

The number of countries and universities needing to plan higher education integrity is likely to grow in coming years. Several factors point to this, in particular: the increasing concern of funders that shrinking resources be used appropriately; the need to protect the reputation of higher education institutions (HEIs) and trust in the diplomas that they deliver – in a context of fierce competition to attract the best national and foreign students; and the obligation for public officials and institutions to defend themselves against allegations of fraud and corruption that can now easily spread via the media and the Internet. From a more general perspective, the values of transparency, accountability, and integrity are increasingly seen as necessary to protect higher education as a common good at a time when tertiary education is being commodified.

Although there is no single definition of unethical and corrupt practices in higher education, significant progress has been made over the last decade to map more systematically the major risks that exist at this level in the areas of resource allocation and financial management, staff management, admission procedures, examinations, credentialing, and so on. Misappropriation of funds, fraud in public tendering, selling of academic posts, bribes to secure admission to university, cheating during exams, plagiarism, essay, diploma and accreditation mills, etc., are all problems that have been highlighted in the higher education context. Surveys such as participatory diagnoses have enabled better assessment of the magnitude of such problems, and their impact on access, quality, and equity, and the battle against fraud and corruption has gained momentum thanks to major international events such as the World Conference on Research Integrity.

Moreover, a growing number of countries and HEIs have set an example by adopting ethics charters, codes of conduct, and/or frameworks for academic integrity, thereby highlighting the basic values by which all university staff and students should abide and instituting ethics

committees responsible for enforcement of the standards. Others have decided to reform admission procedures, change staff recruitment mechanisms, or introduce e-procurement systems to promote transparency in management procedures. The adoption of strategic planning in higher education, the professionalization of university managers, combined with more rigorous internal and/or external audits of universities, have also been observed in recent years. Moreover, the development of quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms oblige HEIs to provide more and more factual data on their internal functioning. Public access to information and new innovative uses of ICTs enable more effective tracking of misbehaviour, as well as making this public. Finally, international university rankings and competition for excellence encourage stronger social scrutiny.

Planning higher education integrity might very well become a requirement for a growing number of countries and universities in years to come.

There is a long way to go, however, before integrity concerns are incorporated systematically into the everyday operation of the higher education sector. Indeed, experience shows that priority has been given first and foremost to the prevention and detection of individual misbehaviour rather than to the management procedures that

allow such misconduct to occur. Furthermore, little attention has been paid so far to the role that ministries in charge of higher education could play to help promote integrity concerns despite that they remain major players in many countries – including where universities have gained more autonomy. Traditional regulatory management and evaluation tools have proven insufficient to detect and curb misbehaviour. Furthermore, on these issues the dialogue between public officials, youth movements and civil-society representatives appears quite limited. Increased reflection and exchange are thus required on how to best re-design traditional regulatory management and control mechanisms so that they become more “integrity sensitive”; and on how to build on them with new accountability approaches or strategies that have proven successful.

In this context, IIEP chose to organize a Policy Forum on Planning Higher Education Integrity from 18 to 20 March 2015 in Paris. The Forum will amplify the activities undertaken by the

Institute in the area of transparency, accountability and anti-corruption, within the framework of its project on Ethics and Corruption in Education.

Objectives

The major objectives of the Policy Forum are to:

- pinpoint major integrity risks existing in higher education, and discuss current and future difficulties in overcoming them;
- assess the capacity of traditional monitoring and control mechanisms to enable the more systematic detection of integrity risks;
- share knowledge on recent and innovative initiatives aimed at improving ethics, and reducing opportunities for fraud or corruption at the higher-education level;
- reflect on ways to make better use of public access to information and open data so as to mitigate integrity risks;
- encourage dialogue among regulatory bodies, ministries, HEIs, student movements, and civil society organizations on how to better coordinate efforts towards stronger higher education integrity.

Topics

Topics of discussion will include the following:

- **Risks and costs of fraud and corruption at the higher education level:** What are the major integrity risks at the higher education level involving management and academic issues? What are the costs of fraud and corruption in higher education for students, parents and society at large?
- **Usefulness of ethical frameworks and regulations:** Which implementation structures and arrangements are needed to make ethical frameworks and regulations effective? How efficient are guidelines to discourage site-based and distance-based degree mills in higher education?
- **Improving integrity in the management of the higher education system: What does experience tell us?** How can we review regular control and audit mechanisms to better take integrity concerns into account? How do we mobilize external and internal quality-assurance mechanisms to promote transparency of HEIs?
- **Improving academic integrity: What does experience tell us?** Has the creation of independent testing centres helped improve the fairness of university admission and examinations? Are universities successfully countering plagiarism and academic fraud? How can student movements contribute to the efforts being made by HEIs?
- **Public access to information and open data:** How can university report cards be institutionalized to improve HEI accountability? How can adequate public access to information and open data serve to raise citizens' awareness of corrupt behaviour in higher education?

Major expected outcomes

- Dialogue between decision-makers, practitioners, civil-society representatives, and researchers will be enhanced through a topic of shared interest that will gain impetus over the coming years, especially because of the new emphasis being put on higher education both at the international and country levels.
- A synthesis report including the various papers prepared for the Forum will be

published and widely disseminated by IIEP in order to encourage best practices awkward: integrating integrity planning in higher education? A policy brief summarizing the major conclusions of the report will be prepared.

- The information collected during the Policy Forum will feed into the work being done by

the IIEP as part of its 2014-2017 Medium-Term Strategy on the issue of integrity planning, and more specifically its work on assessment of the risks to integrity in the education sector, the use of open data on education for improving integrity planning, and the design and effective use of codes of conduct.

Target audience

The participants – from developed and developing countries alike – will include high-level decision-makers and administrators in charge of higher education; university rectors and academic staff involved in integrity initiatives; members of auditing, quality-assurance, and accreditation

bodies; and representatives from youth movements and civil-society organizations active in the area. International experts, researchers, and representatives from development agencies dealing with higher education will also attend.

Provisional agenda

Wednesday 18 March

- a.m. Opening session
Fraud and corruption at the higher-education level: What are the risks? What are the costs?
- p.m. Ethics frameworks and regulations: How useful are they?

Thursday 19 March

- a.m. Improving integrity in the management of higher-education systems: Learning from experience
- p.m. Improving academic integrity: Learning from experience

Friday 20 March

- a.m. How to make the best use of public access to information and open data?
- p.m. What did we learn?
Closing

Venue

The Policy Forum will take place in Paris at the International Institute for Educational Planning: **UNESCO / IIEP**
7-9, rue Eugène Delacroix
75116 Paris, France
Tel: + 33 1 45 03 77 04
Fax: + 33 1 40 72 83 66

Working languages

The working languages will be English and French, with simultaneous interpretation into both languages. All papers drafted in French for the Policy Forum will be translated into English.

Travel and accommodation

Travel and accommodation will be at participants' own expense or covered by the organizations that sponsor them. Participants should also arrange for their own medical/travel insurance coverage for their stay in Paris.

IIEP Contacts

Ms Muriel Poisson
Head a.i., Research and Development
Tel.: 33 1 45 03 77 13
E-mail: m.poisson@iiep.unesco.org

Ms Florence Appéré
Administrative assistant
Tel. 33 1 45 03 77 04
E-mail: f.appere@iiep.unesco.org

If you wish to participate in the Policy Forum, please go to:
www.iiep.unesco.org/integrityforum.

Please note that registration will be subject to availability. Your application will be examined and, if successful, you will receive notification by e-mail along with the information needed to attend the Policy Forum.



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