The Structure of Chinese Higher Education Corruption: A Case Statistical Analysis

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Corruption in the Chinese higher educational sector is an increasing concern but it has not been systematically studied. This paper distinguishes three major intermingled structural typologies of corruption in the Chinese higher education sector: academic specific, non-academic specific and a combination of the two. Data supporting this conceptualization come from a case statistical analysis of a non-randomized sample of 215 court decisions on corruption cases detected in Chinese universities during 1994-2009, complemented with a perception-based survey in different Chinese universities. The result postulates taxonomy of the distribution of corruption among the three typologies, which reveals a disproportionately high portion of corruption compared to that of academic specific corruption in the Chinese higher education sector. None of the scholarly academic corruption cases was detected from the case statistical analysis though there is obvious reflection of scholarly academic corruption in the perception-based data. What has been neglected is the lack of sector-specific Chinese central government anti-corruption initiatives, especially those that are scholarly academic related even though the consequences could be more detrimental than corruption in the non-academic field.

INTRODUCTION

Corruption became an issue in China and appeared to flourish since 1978 as the country embarked on a market-driven economic reform. It is so pervasive that it extended to every corner of the society in China. The higher education sector is not immune. In general, a corruption climate in a country affects higher education. The society civic educational system is corrupted as the corruption of values in the wider society becomes apparent and the profession of teaching itself becomes an undervalued occupation in education sector corruption is even more hideous and more difficult to be corrupted as the corruption of values in the wider society becomes apparent.

Evidence indicates that corruption in higher education in China is widespread and has become an important and increasingly recognized problem. The number of corruption cases investigated in the higher education sector has been increasing. Not enough attention had been paid to this issue. Little systematic empirical evidence is available, especially in the scholarly academic corruption sphere. To address the problem more effectively, the structure of corruption in the higher educational sector is the prioritized issue that needs to be explored. In order to better target the problem and define the issues effectively, we need to find out from the empirical analysis the types of corruption that exist in Chinese higher education sector, which areas and what positions are the most vulnerable to corruption in this sector. We have to know who are corrupted as well as the specific corrupted areas in order to design effective policy to curb this problem in the higher education sector.

This article typologizes the structure of Chinese higher education corruption from the aspects of who are corrupted, what the specific corrupted areas are, and customizes the definitions of each term in the Chinese context. It explores the manifestations of corruption in the Chinese higher educational sector, mainly universities, in contrast to that of the non-educational sector corruption in China, by looking at the similarity of the forms and the differences in nature, the dynamic interrelationships between education related corruption and non-education related corruption in the higher educational sector. Finally, this study provides policy implications for corruption in higher education sector.

METHOD

Due to the limits of the data available, currently, this study can only focus on the detail structure of the corruption in academia or higher education administrative corruption though it will also cover the discussion of academic corruption. That is, as mentioned previously, the legal approach of the administrative corruption structure analysis is based on empirical analysis of the 215 higher education corruption cases. Since large-scale data on the academic corruption phenomena and on their causes are unavailable, we rely on the social approach of perception-based data, on what little formalized research exists, on newspaper accounts, and on anecdotes to explain it.

REFERENCES


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