U4 Helpdesk Answer

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Corruption and anti-corruption within the research sector and higher education system in Mozambique

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There has been a rapid rise in the number of Mozambican universities in the past two decades, but corruption risks in these institutions and the research sector more broadly remains an under-examined area. Identified risks include political manipulation of university affairs by government, mismanagement of research grant funds and a lack of independence of the country's quality assurance body. There are also reports of other forms of corruption such as bribery, plagiarism, academic fraud and sextortion for grades within universities. Several mitigation measures can be put into place to strengthen the integrity of the system, and these include accountability mechanisms within universities and research institutions, independence and increased capacity of the CNAQ, anti-plagiarism policies and tools, sanctions for academic dishonesty, anti-corruption clauses in research grant agreements, compliance assessments of universities and research institutions, and enhanced whistleblower protection.

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Query

Please provide an overview of the corruption risks in the research sector, higher education and quality assurance bodies in Mozambique. Which anti-corruption measures can be put into place to mitigate these risks?

Contents

Background

Mozambique is currently experiencing economic instability and slow development, with job creation, poverty reduction and limited human capital accumulation (World Bank 2023). Most of the country's wealth benefits only limited sections of the economy (World Bank 2023). Mozambique ranks 185 out of 191 countries on the 2021-2022 Human Development Index, with a life expectancy of 59.3 years (UNDP 2021-2022). In most recent estimates, the public sector debt-to-GDP ratio stood at 102.9% (World Bank no date a). And, according to the

MAIN POINTS

— Mozambique's number of higher education institutions have been rapidly increasing over recent decades, but there are concerns over political influence, inequality of regional access, academic dishonesty and acts of petty corruption.

— The research and innovation sector remains under-funded, and there are issues of a lack of publicly funded financial incentives for academics.

— The national quality assurance body (CNAQ) is reported to be influenced heavily by the government and lacks independence and technical capacity of its staff.

— These factors may increase the risks of types of corruption in higher education, research and innovation and quality assurance bodies, namely: bribery, sextortion, political interference, embezzlement and plagiarism or academic dishonesty.

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International Monetary Fund (IMF), Mozambique has US$444.93 million in outstanding purchases and loans as of March 2023 (IMF 2022).

In terms of the extent of corruption, Mozambique ranked 142/180 in the 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) with 35% of public service users reporting having paid a bribe in the previous 12 months (Transparency International no date). Widespread fraud was denounced during the 2019 elections without consequences for the ruling elite (BTI 2022), and sectors such as the security sector, land management, the justice sector and extractive industries remain vulnerable to corruption (Bak 2020). Mozambique is also considered a fragile state, with violent extremism in the north and severe levels of stress in public services identified as the main drivers of its fragility (FFP 2022).

A robust education system remains one of the most efficient means to drive sustainable growth in a country and, like most countries, Mozambique has committed to ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all, in line with Goal 4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (UN no date). However, recent metrics show that quality of education remains a distinct challenge. Mozambique scores a mere 29.1 out of 100 for the quality of its education on the Ibrahim Governance Indicators (Mo Ibrahim Foundation no date). In addition, 31.9% of respondents in another recent country-wide survey stated that the government is handling their educational needs badly or very badly (Afrobarometer 2021). These results seem to be at odds with the relatively high share of national wealth which Mozambique spends on

education. At 6.3% of its gross domestic product (GDP) (World Bank no date b), spending for the sector is above UNESCO recommended levels[1] and also above the average of 5% (2021) for the continent (World Bank Development Indicators). Perhaps more important than total spending is the question of where and how resources for education are being spent. For instance, in recent years, the percentage of budget allocated to higher education institutions has decreased (Mindosa and Yotamo 2021).

In a parallel and possibly interconnected development, the number of higher education institutions and universities in Mozambique has drastically risen in recent decades, which since the mid-90s have been restructured in response to the labour market, political forces, economic and educational market forces (Miguel et al. 2021). Starting with one university in 1962, Mozambique today has 22 public and 34 private higher education institutions, most of which are in the capital, Maputo (Videira 2020), but are also in other provinces as well as the cities Beira, Nampula and Quelimane. Despite the plenitude of higher education providers, in 2018 enrolment in higher education stood at mere 7.3%, way below the global average of 35% (UNESCO 2021 a).

Public universities in Mozambique are financed by the state budget, bilateral or multilateral donors, and through the institutions' own income generating activities, including the charging of student fees (Videira 2020). Private universities are funded by donor support, capital venture and student fees (Videira 2020).

The government appears to be working towards a more equitable and sustainable higher education

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[1] Paris Declaration 2021: A Global Call for Investing in the Futures of Education. The full text can be found here (UNESCO 2021 b).

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system. For example, in 2002, an agreement with the World Bank and the Mozambican government was signed to implement the Strategic Plan for Higher Education (Videira 2020). The focus of this was to increase access, relevance and quality of higher education (Videira 2020). However, analysis on admissions to universities since the signing of the Strategic Plan indicate that there has been little progress in achieving these goals (Zimbico 2021). In more recent years, the government of Mozambique has stated it is focusing on improving access for women to universities, improve geographical asymmetries in student registration and increase enrolments in priority fields such as engineering, natural sciences, health and agriculture (Tambe and Miguel 2021).

Mozambique is also focusing on increasing its domestic research capacity through contributing financially to regional initiatives such as the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund[2] (Sawahel 2021; RSIF no date). The research and innovation sector comprises of universities which engage in research, government research institutes, private sector entities and of not-for-profit research entities (UNESCO 2021 a). However, Mozambique has a low share of active researchers in part due to low levels of PhD funding, which is primarily provided by donors (Sawahel 2021). In common with many developing countries, and, because of colonial underdevelopment, the innovation system[3] has evolved unevenly, being dominated by one university and one branch of research (health sciences) (UNESCO 2021 a: 62). Moreover, "structural adjustment" policies, which sought to roll back the state's involvement in development

initiatives and impose austerity, were devastating for most public institutions in the African continent (Gonçalves 2019: 423). These policies led to underfunding of public research and salaries of higher education staff stagnated or shrank, as did overall working conditions (Gonçalves 2019: 234). In Mozambique, there is now a weak connection between the public and private sectors, with private businesses employing new graduates, but engaging in only limited innovation activity (UNESCO 2021 a: 62).

In response to the expansion of higher education, a number of regulatory institutions have been established by the Ministry of Education (Langa 2014). These include: the Higher Education Council (HEC), the National Council for Higher Education (NCHE) and the National Council for Quality and Guarantee in Higher Education (NCQGHE-CNAQ) (Tambe and Miguel 2021). These bodies have their legislative basis in the higher education law, Law No. 27/2009 which is the primary legislative device that regulates the higher education system (Langa 2014). The Council of Rectors also exists as a civil society entity which influences government policies (Langa 2014). It was more recently brought into the higher education governance structures through the National Council on Higher Education (Langa 2014).

For external quality assurance, the National Council on Quality Assurance in Higher Education (CNAQ) was established in 2007, with the Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (SINAQES) then established to integrate clear and consistent standards,

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[2] For a list of innovation and research funding instruments, see UNESCO's information on science technology and innovation grants and programmes in Mozambique.

[3] The innovation system refers to the national flow of technology and information among people, enterprises and institutions (OECD 1997). These primarily include private industry,

universities and government research institutes and can include non-profit organisations focusing on research (OECD 1997).

procedures and mechanisms to ensure delivery of quality services in the higher education sector (Butcher, Chetty and Hoosen 2017). CNAQ is funded by the state budget, the World Bank and the Dutch higher education aid agency, Nuffic (Langa 2014), and is responsible for the implementation of the country's qualifications framework for higher education (QUANQES) (ETF 2021). Its responsibilities also include evaluating and accrediting universities, programmes, and the related qualifications in higher education (ETF 2021). There are also some internal quality assurance bodies[4] set up in individual universities in Mozambique (Butcher, Chetty and Hoosen 2017). To consolidate the universities internal quality assurance mechanisms, CNAQ also established the CeRQES, to provide training and technical assistance. However, these bodies were set up in just three universities.

Academic integrity in the higher education system and research sector has been gaining attention in recent years, particularly after scandals on the falsification of data (Camacho 2021). In the higher education system, large amounts of financial investments are made, and without adequate oversight, this can make it vulnerable to corruption (Camacho 2021). Importantly, corruption in education threatens the well-being of society as it erodes social trust, worsens inequality and undermines the formation of educated and competent individuals for future leadership and the labour force (U4 no date a).

Corruption in this sector can take the form of political corruption, whereby political actors may influence university or research affairs for their own gains, such as influencing the outcome of research to suit their own agenda. Similarly, if companies privately fund research there is a risk that they can jeopardise the research integrity through manipulating the outcomes to suit their work. Financial corruption can occur regarding the research grants given to universities and research institutions. Finally, petty corruption remains a risk where staff can be bribed, for example by extorting students in exchange for grades, including sexually.

This Helpdesk Answer draws on the publicly available sources as well as local expert knowledge[5] to identify potential areas of corruption (or conditions that may facilitate corruption) in the higher education system, research sector and quality assurance bodies in charge of higher education in Mozambique. As the body of literature is scant, this paper then relies on assessing the corruption risks in the sector more broadly, drawing from other available sources on corruption in the relevant sectors. Finally, mitigation measures are proposed in the final section, provided from the body of literature that focuses on instilling integrity into the higher education system, research sector and quality assurance bodies.

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[4] Internal quality assurance systems refer to the practices used by higher education institutions to monitor the quality of their own education (Dias, Santos and Zavale 2016). Currently, the establishment of an internal system is optional in Mozambique (Dias, Santos and Zavale 2016).

[5] Written input provided from the staff of Centro de Integridade Pública (CIP) (Transparency International Mozambique).

Integrity risks in the research sector and higher education system in Mozambique: An overview of the evidence

This section provides a summary of the publicly available information and input from local experts on integrity risks in the research sector and higher education system in Mozambique. It should be noted that while these do not all necessarily constitute acts of corruption, many are integrity risks that could create the pre-conditions for later acts of corruption.

Higher education institutions

Blockages in access and progress in education

There have been reports that petty corruption is a pervasive issue in Mozambique's public and private universities. Researcher Elísio identifies, through citizen surveys, that petty corruption is widespread in the education sector and manifests in three main forms: the sale of student placements, sale of grades, and sextortion (Elísio 2013). The conclusions from these citizen surveys were that petty corruption thrives in the sector as there are no preventative measures or sanctions for engaging in corruption (Elísio 2013). They conclude that this is in part caused by the low salaries of teachers in the public sector (Elísio 2013). Some evidence suggests that public officials with higher salaries are less likely to engage in corrupt practices (Dimant et al. 2017). However, this cannot be determined as the sole driver of corruption, as high levels of bureaucracy, lack of press and economic freedom are also important

factors (Dimant et al. 2017). These additional drivers are all present in the Mozambican context.

Other cases have been made that professors at Eduardo Mondlane University have assigned low grades to students and pressured them into sexual favours in exchange for passing their exams (Sitoe 2023). Recently, reporting mechanisms have been introduced at the university, but students still claim that they are not safe from harassment as the university protects its staff over students (Sitoe 2023). While some professors have been suspended after the harassment was reported, many others still go unpunished. The gendered violence that is reported in the education sector in Mozambique is rooted in gender norms and power inequities. Domestic violence is legitimised by family ideologies where men are expected to exert control and reporting violence poses a threat to women's identities as wives and mothers (Heslop and Parkes 2011). At all levels of society, gendered violence is seen as normal and inevitable (Heslop and Parkes 2011).

Local experts also raised concern of fraudulent admissions to universities. Students who have failed the entrance exams can be admitted fraudulently by the professors and admissions officials who were overseeing admissions. There have also been claims that the relatives of public officials are admitted even if they do not meet the qualification requirements.

Academic fraud

Reports have also been made of plagiarism in higher education institutions in Mozambique. Figures show that 75% of master's dissertations and monographs from both public and private universities contain significant or very serious plagiarism (Coughlin 2015).

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There are sanctions in place for plagiarism, but there are rarely enforced. For example, at the Pedagogical University, the academic regulation states that the tolerable margin of similarity for the work is 5% for the doctorate, 10% for the masters and 15% for the bachelor's degree, and the work will be rejected if it is above the acceptable margin (Ferrão 2016). However, this is assessed through anti-plagiarism systems and the academic supervisor's work, and local experts raised concerns that the supervisor's assessment may be too lenient and favourable to the student (Ferrão 2016). This also raises concerns that the supervisor may demand favours from the student in exchange for their approval.

Political influence

Additionally, the literature raises the point that the overall governance of universities is too centralised and that the government has a high level of influence over higher education in the country due to its governance structure (Videira 2020). This is because the oversight bodies are top-formulated by the Mozambican government and down-implemented, with many higher education issues being decided and determined at national level by the Ministry of Education, the National Council for Higher Education and the National Council for Assessing the Quality of Higher Education (Langa 2013). Experts also noted, as of 2013, that there was no formal mechanism for making higher education institutions accountable for the funds they receive (Langa 2013).

Indeed, there are also claims by local experts that many of the large private universities are owned by politically influential people, which can hinder the oversight by competent authorities. This could lead to cases such as professors who are inappropriately qualified to teach undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, who are instead appointed by public officials (as well as through

other patronage networks) (Integrity Magazine 2023). It could also lead to political influence over other decisions in universities, such as admissions of students and subjects taught by staff.

Private industry influence

Structural readjustment policies led to a reduction in public funding for institutions such as universities, leading to an increase in the need for private funding. Mindosa and Yotamo in their analysis on the expansion of higher education and its financing in Mozambique highlight that the rapid expansion of and gradual withdrawal of public funding has led to many universities being hybridised and acting with public-private logic (Mindosa and Yotamo 2021). Other researchers have drawn conclusions that this change in funding has led to the commodification of education in Mozambique (Langa 2012). Privatisation of higher education risks increasing existing inequities and can impact access through serving predominately higher-income groups. Given that university provides better opportunities, this could create an incentive for people to enter higher education at any cost.

Regional inequalities

Researchers also find that there are regional inequalities in access to higher education. Through examining government policies and official documents, they note that originally, universities were concentrated in the capital city, Maputo, after which others (including the first private university) were established in Quelimane, Nampula and Beira (Mindosa and Yotamo 2021). There has recently been a move to increasingly establish universities outside of the capital city (Mindosa and Yotamo 2021). However, there is still a significant inequality of effective possibilities of education in different regions, with a 37.7% participation rate in

Maputo, compared to 1.4% rate in the province of Cabo Delgado and 1.3% in Zambezia (Mindosa and Yotamo 2021). While this is not an act of corruption, inequalities in access and the commodification of education can create some of the pre-conditions that facilitates corruption.

Low financial incentives for staff

Finally, Langa et al.'s study on academic incentives in Mozambique and Kenya note that, while mechanisms exist, no direct monetary incentives are given in practice by the state to researchers in Mozambique (Langa et al. 2015). Since 2006, the Ministry of Science and Technology approved new regulations for research incentives, including a 35% subsidy of the basic salary for full-time researchers and an entitlement to the research income they generate (Langa et al. 2015). Additionally, a fund was proposed to support the publication of research results (Langa et al. 2015). However, these incentives have not been implemented (Langa et al. 2015). The authors conclude that this lack of incentives from the state means that other incentives may be considered by researchers in Mozambique (Langa et al. 2015). Additional risks may occur when university academics need to seek funds elsewhere, such as through consultancy work, which can include negative implications on the quality of teaching and research quality (Kwiek 2003; Mora 2001; Gonçalves 2019).

Fraud in procurement

Some projects are usually rigged to favour top university staff or political elite. For example, an investigation made by Centro de Integridade Pública (CIP) showed that there were irregularities in the procurement process for the operation of a university clinic with the company Affinity Health SA and the Eduardo Mondlane university (CIP 2020). CIP raised questions that the contracting had occurred as a direct agreement had been made with the company without following the correct procurement processes (CIP 2020). The contract has since been suspended (CIP 2020).

The procurement processes at Eduardo Mondlane University were reviewed by Sida and were found to be long and a serious constraint on university work due to systematic delays (Kruse et al. 2017). Such delays and long bureaucratic processes can increase the risk of corruption in the procurement process.

Research grant-giving organisations and research councils

The literature on corruption on research grants giving to organisations and research councils in Mozambique is limited. However, experts have raised concerns that cannot be fully categorised as corruption but could potentially facilitate corruption.

Gender imbalances

In 2021, UNESCO produced a mapping exercise on the science, technology and innovation sector in Mozambique that raised several risks facing the sector. The report identifies the primary weakness in the system, which is that there are gender imbalances in research and innovation, with social exclusion and gender bias most experienced in STEM fields (UNESCO 2021 a). Nonetheless, women are being encouraged to participate more in research programmes, largely driven by donor demands. For example, Fundo Nacional de Investigação's 2023 call for research and innovation-SGCI stipulates that applicants should have at least 30% women researchers on their team (FNI 2023). A risk of

gender imbalance is that this may lead to the possibility of sextortion.

Private industry influence

There is also the threat that the research and innovation space has been captured by multinational companies through employing graduates but not contributing to any joint innovation activities (UNESCO 2021 a). It also finds that corruption is one of the primary threats to the innovation system, although the report does not identify any specific corruption risks (UNESCO 2021 a). Finally, shortfalls in science and technology innovation policy implementation are noted, particularly regarding good governance, limited monitoring and evaluation (UNESCO 2021 a).

Similar to the point made by UNESCO's report, Zavale and Macamo find that university-industry links are weak and informal, with researchers engaging with the private sector through meetings but no formal structures to link and collaborate (Zavale 2017; Zalvale and Macamo 2016). A risk that can come of informal links is that this could raise the scope for industry influence over research outcomes.

Limited funding for research and innovation

In terms of research funding councils, the Fundo Nacional de Investigação is the primary national granting body (UNESCO 2021 a). Fundo Nacional de Investigação is funded by international donors such as Sida, the UK's Department for International Development (now the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office) and South Africa's National Research Foundation (IDRC no date). However, UNESCO's report maintains that levels of research funding is still low in Mozambique and needs to be increased (UNESCO 2021 a).

Mouton et al.'s study on scientific granting councils (and equivalent bodies) in sub-Saharan Africa notes that Mozambique's research councils are still in the early stages of its establishment and faces a variety of challenges, including resource constraints, governance issues, lack of clarity on institutional differentiation, lack of coordination within science systems and marginalisation of influence (Mouton et al. 2014).

Quality assurance bodies

Lack of independence

In a 2014 analysis of Mozambique's quality assurance body, CNAQ, concerns were raised that there were issues around its powers, autonomy and accountability (Langa 2014). CNAQ should have autonomy in its oversight of the higher education system, being accountable only to parliament, but in practice this does not happen (Langa 2014). The report also raises concerns about a lack of operational independence from the World Bank and the Dutch agency Nuffic, who have the power to withhold its funding (Langa 2014).

Similarly, Bailey's case studies of councils and commissions in eight sub-Saharan African countries also finds that political interference in the decision-making of management is an issue and that its independence is potentially undermined (Bailey 2014). The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) also analysed the quality assurance system in Mozambique in 2015 with the same conclusions, finding that that CNAQ lacks autonomy from the government, which reflects a long legacy of centralised governance in Mozambique (Cross et al. 2015). There are competing lines of accountability, and the quality

assurance system in still government-driven (Cross et al. 2015).

In December 2022, a new higher education law was approved to further extend the power of CNAQ for accrediting distance learning courses and registering higher education qualifications within the country's national qualifications framework (Muchanga 2023). This has led some to raise concerns over the increased authority of CNAQ, that this will allow increased government intervention on universities' work and that it ignored concerns about corruption in higher education in the country (Muchanga 2023).

Capacity issues

In Uetela's later assessment of higher education in Mozambique, the report additionally highlights the concern that, although quality assurance bodies have emerged, they lack the experts in the field of quality evaluation and assessment and are at risk of misguiding the country's education system (Uetela 2015). Similarly, Bailey finds that CNAQ lacks capacity due to shortages of staff, most commonly in institutional or programme accreditation (Bailey 2014).

Corruption in the research sector and higher education system in Mozambique: A risk assessment

This section draws on the body of literature on the corruption risks in the research sector and higher education system more broadly. As the literature on corruption in these sectors in Mozambique is limited, these known corruption risks are applied to the Mozambican context, with reference to the specific integrity risks identified in the previous section. This aims to bridge the gap where the literature on Mozambique is limited through identifying the corruption risks likely to be present (now or in the future) to the country's research and higher education system.

Higher education institutions

Political manipulation of university affairs

As identified by the literature on the Mozambican higher education system, universities are at risk of political manipulation. As a general risk, ruling parties often interfere with their management, which can be captured for political or financial gain (U4 no date b). This is because universities have political and religious patronage networks in many countries that are used to extend a support base among the country's emerging educated class (Curbing Corruption no date). The politicisation of higher education also extends to political involvement in the appointment of university managers, such a heads of state being selected as chancellors of universities (Curbing Corruption no date).

Another corruption risk to the sector is that unearned credentials and qualifications may be granted to politicians and their networks (Curbing Corruption no date). Other political manipulations include favouritism in staffing decisions, such as the redistribution of public resources in the form of employment contracts, employment related promotions and benefits in favour of relatives, friends or colleagues (OECD 2018). The use of personal favours can also be used to obtain a licence to operate, degree-awarding powers and programme accreditation (OECD 2018).

Conflict of interest and/or conflicts of commitment from staff

Externally funded research is more susceptible to integrity issues that compromise the credibility of their findings (Merkle 2017). As noted in the above section, researchers in Mozambique have little financial incentives, so may seek these elsewhere, such as in the private sector. Academic researchers can design the research to find the results that will support what they want to find (Petkov and Cohen 2016), and this can be influenced by the interests of those financing the projects, such as private industry.

It has been shown that industry sponsored research often draws industry conclusions (Stelfox et al. 1998). When research is unduly influenced by a secondary influence, this is referred to as conflict of interest and/or conflicts of commitment (OECD 2022).

This may be done through biased research design that manipulates research design and protocols, change sample size or control groups (The Union of Concerned Scientists 2015). Additionally, findings can be presented in a misleading light, and/or research sponsors may attempt to terminate, suppress or discredit any research produced that is unfavourable to their interests through threatening to terminate funding (The Union of Concerned Scientists 2012).

Interference from political actors can also affect the integrity of research, through manipulating findings to suit a specific agenda. Additionally, in some developing countries, government authorisation is required to conduct research, meaning that researchers may have to convince government officials of the value of their work, increasing opportunities for bribery (Peil 1993).

Embezzlement/fraud and finance and procurement fraud

Financial resources in education are known to be an area of risk due to the size of public spending on the sector (U4 2006). They are at risk of embezzlement in the management of these funds, and a lack of control systems and transparency can result in deviations of resources from submitted plans, misuse of research training grants, and the falsification of data to get access to more funding (McCook 2016). Fraud can occur at any level of the purchase or stage of the procurement process for universities and can involve funds being diverted through fraud linked to payroll and stipends, procurement and travel (U4 no date b).

Academic fraud

Institutional pressure to publish can incentivise forms of misconduct such as academic dishonesty (cheating or fraudulent research) and academic collusion (cheating) and non-monetary corruption (Denisova-Schmidt 2017). As an example, a descriptive study of research in Nigeria showed that 68% of researchers admitted to scientific misconduct, including authorship conflict, plagiarism, data falsification (Aiyebelehin 2022) and a similar study in Kenya showed 68% of HIV researchers were involved in at least one misconduct including falsification, plagiarism and authorship disputes (Were, Kaguiri and Kiplagat 2020). There are no data points from Mozambique on levels of academic fraud, but these figures can give an indication of what those levels might be.

Bribery

As touched upon in the review of literature on corruption in the higher education system in Mozambique, petty corruption is a common risk

in many contexts. This can take the form of lecturers or professors grading higher than deserved in exchange for personal benefits or to create an artificial demand for additional (and paid services) such as private tutoring (OECD 2018).

Sextortion

Sextortion occurs when those entrusted with power use it to sexually exploit those dependant on that power and is usually a silent form of corruption (Feigenblatt 2020). It is an issue in higher education systems around the globe and involves the sexual harassment of students, faculty and staff (U4 no date b). This can manifest in a professor refusing students a good mark if they fail to comply with their teacher's sexual demands (Feigenblatt 2020). University spaces can be conducive to sexual harassment due to lengthy bureaucratic procedures for registration, for obtaining exam results and transcripts, and for other routine aspects of university that create opportunities for sextortion (Kirya 2019).

Research grant-giving organisations and research councils

Financial mismanagement and procurement fraud

The size of research grants brings risks that these funds can be misused at any point of the research cycle, particularly in the procurement of goods and services, human resources, and finance and auditing (Transparency International 2008). At the call for proposals stage, there is a risk that corruption can occur from those organisations giving research grants. For example, there may be limited dissemination of the call for proposals

where only a few favoured potential bidders are invited to participate, which can facilitate the use of bribery, abuse of power and conflict of interest (Søreide 2002). Additionally, the call for research proposals may be tailored with one specific university or research institute in mind.

Quality assurance bodies

Political manipulation

One of the purposes of quality assurance bodies is to ensure that there is integrity in the higher education system (UNESCO 2016). Nonetheless, their responsibilities mean that they are at risk of corrupt practices. As the government oversees the quality assurance body, this means that they may appoint unqualified staff that pose a potential conflict of interest (UNESCO 2016). This will enable them to interfere with the decisions of the quality assurance body and this may pass corruption further down to the higher education institutions that they oversee (UNESCO 2016).

Mitigation strategies

Internal accountability mechanisms

In their report on research integrity, the OECD recommends that governments encourage responsible self-management by universities and support capacity building to understand, identify and mitigate potential risks to ensure academic integrity (OECD 2022).

An example of good practice for an internal accountability mechanism in a public research institution is that of the French public research organisation, Inserm. This organisation created

the role of scientific integrity referent, which has grown to a two-person team that reports directly to the president of the institution (Filliatreau 2022). This team is responsible for promoting research integrity, organising conferences and workshops, and supporting staff to ensure integrity in their work (Filliatreau 2022). Finally, staff can report serious breaches of research integrity (such as the falsification of data or results) to the team (Filliatreau 2022).

Bain et al. similarly recommend the solution of raising awareness and educating university students, researchers and professors on research integrity (Bain et al. 2022). They point out that most research and academic institutions in sub-Saharan Africa lack systems, procedures and programmes to enhance awareness of research integrity. In response, education programmes and courses on transparency and accountability should be implemented (Bain et al. 2022). These should adhere to local norms and contexts and work with local data where available (Bain et al. 2022).

Similarly, local experts recommend that public universities should be de-politicised to avoid political influence over their affairs and ensure academic integrity. This would mean public officials and other top political actors no longer being involved in the decision-making process of appointing top members of university staff.

Policies on plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty

Alongside awareness raising of academic integrity, specific policies should be introduced and strengthened within the universities to counter plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Studies show that the implementation of robust anti-plagiarism policies and procedures for students and research staff, a structured education module related to plagiarism, Turnitin

plagiarism software and support from the university's writing centre results in significant decreases in the level of plagiarism detected in work (Levine and Pazdernik 2018). Universities should also involve students in the anti-plagiarism boards or committees to ensure their buy-in (Kirya 2021).

However, as identified in the above risk assessment, many degrees may be awarded to high-profile individuals without them completing the relevant degree. To ensure policies on plagiarism and academic dishonesty in these cases are enforced even when political actors are involved, several measures can be put into place. Firstly, the independence of the external quality assurance bodies is important (this is expanded on in the later section). Anonymising the peer review and certification process can also be implemented by both the quality assurance bodies and the universities to ensure protection and objectivity in their processes. Finally, anti-plagiarism software can be used to detect any excerpts of text taken from other sources.

Finally, individual donations may be made by politicians or other high-profile individuals that can lead to academic dishonesty (such as the falsification of degree certificates). To prevent this, universities should implement a code of ethics and a conflict of interest policy for all staff, including research agreements (Transparency International 2013). This should also include a due diligence policy that is used in practice to vet funding sources (Transparency International 2013).

Protection for whistleblowers

Whistleblowers (internal and external) are one of the most important control mechanisms to prevent corruption in higher education institutions (Mohamed et al. 2019). In

Mozambique, the Law on the Protection of Victims and Witnesses 15/2012 was enacted to protect whistleblowers and victims who report corruption (PPLAAF 2021). It contains provisions for the relocation of witnesses (if the whistleblower's case goes to court) where this is necessary, as well as the relocation of witnesses' families (PPLAAF 2021). Reports can also be made anonymously to the Gabinete Central de Combate a Corrupcao (GCCC) which provides an additional measure of protection for whistleblowers (PPLAAF 2021).

However, PPLAAF identifies that there are weaknesses in the whistleblower protection system, such as judges being bribed and political interference of the judiciary (PPLAAF 2021). Furthermore, protections such as relocation and reassignment of identities is a costly exercise and funds are not fully allocated to these activities (PPLAAF 2021). As a solution, PPLAAF proposes that the state needs to place greater emphasis on upskilling the judiciary, apply stricter criteria in the appointment of judges and other judicial officers, and adequately fund the agencies tasked with the witness protection programmes (PPLAAF 2021). Mozambique would also benefit from setting out specific anti-corruption legislation targeting the higher education and research system.

In terms of internal whistleblower policies within universities, research grant-giving organisations, and quality assurance bodies, these should be strengthened with the specific risks to higher education and research in mind. These could include a guarantee of continued financial support to the student or researcher if their project is cancelled due to their disclosure or protection from retaliation in the form of loss of employment occurred (Gross 2016). Moreover, higher education institutions have a duty to educate students on their rights to encourage reports of corruption and other staff misconduct.

Safe and secure reporting mechanisms are also important for survivors of sextortion, and these should contain accessible information and signpost to physical and psychological services for victims (Feigenblatt 2020). Provisions for anonymity is also important so that survivors can report without their identity being exposed. Furthermore, legislation could be adopted that is similar to the Title IX of the Education Amendments in the US, whereby educational institutions are required to develop policies to deal with sexual assault and provide assurances to victims (Lebitse 2018). Non-compliance of Title IX results in the loss of funding for the institution (Lebitse 2018).

Assessing institutions for compliance before awarding grants

Before awarding a research grant to a university or research institution, several factors should be assessed by the grant-giving organisation to ensure that risks are mitigated. The IBM Center for the Business of Government offers examples of the factors they assess before awarding funds, which include the risk factors of a history of poor performance or poor business practices, financial instability, and/or lack of a management system that meets the required financial management standards (Hoon Kwak and Keleher 2015). If a grantee is designated high risk after an initial assessment, legal advice should be consulted, and additional grant conditions should be implemented if the funding goes ahead (Hoon Kwak and Keleher 2015). Gender imbalances and history of non-compliance with anti-corruption and anti-inequity/harassment legislation should also be grounds for withholding funding.

Anti-corruption measures in research funding agreements

Anti-corruption provisions in funding agreements can also be added to any research grant agreement. Anti-corruption measures in funding agreements have been found to be more effective when they address both prevention and detection, as well as establishing an escalation mechanism and sanction regime (Chêne 2010). Chêne sets out several principles for effective anti-corruption provisions in contracting:

- Explicit assessment of corruption risks of the sector including those associated with capacity, administrative and financial management systems.
- Guidelines and regulations to strengthen the recipient's own management policies with an emphasis on the vulnerable areas of financial management and procurement rules.
- Specific mechanisms to promote transparency, citizen accountability and participation through information disclosure policies, access to information and transparency of operations.
- External audit of projects.
- Effective complaints mechanisms and protection for whistleblowers.
- Sanctions for corruption that are explicit and systematic, including the corrective actions that will be taken (Chêne 2010).

Research funding councils and research institutions should also establish clear and transparent systems to ensure that researchers declare information about potential risks, with clear checklists or toolkits to help guide the risk identification (OECD).

Strengthening the capacity and independence of external quality assurance mechanisms

A 2017 assessment on quality assurance in Southern Africa found that quality assurance in Mozambique should be strengthened through building capacity and ensuring that CNAQ be independent of politics (Butcher, Chetty and Hoosen 2017). Similarly, a 2015 Sida report states that long-term commitment from development partners is needed for institutional funding, as well as technical assistance for training and research into quality assurance agencies to increase their capacity (Cross et al. 2015).

External quality assurance bodies remain the best defence against quality weaknesses and corrupt practices in the higher education system (UNESCO 2018). To mitigate the corruption risks of government interference of quality assurance bodies, UNESCO recommends that:

- Transparent processes be in place for the appointments to governing councils of all state bodies involved in the regulation and administration of higher education.
- Exclude individuals in conflict of interest cases as members of quality assurance panels and emphasise the importance of integrity in quality assurance standards.
- Impose sanctions on politicians, government officials and HEI staff who present phony qualifications.
- Ensure due process is observed in licensing, granting degree-awarding powers and in the process of accreditation.
- Legislation for the protection for whistleblowers.
- Expand awareness of the notion of conflict of interest (OECD 2018).

In ensuring the independence of the quality assurance body, Halford and Wells gain insights from the experience of the Australian system. These include ensuring that the role of the regulator is established under legislation to make regulatory decisions according to the law, decisions should be defensible, evidence-based and afford full procedural fairness, and that all regulatory decisions are reviewable under an appeals tribunal (Halford and Wells 2023). They also emphasise the use of external expertise when arriving at decisions and that its commissioners are drawn from the senior ranks of higher education (Halford and Wells 2023).

Civil society

Civil society, such as professional associations, trade unions and other civic organisations working in education have a role to play in ensuring academic integrity, verifying professional qualifications and enforcing professional standards (Kirya 2021). For example, the Council of Rectors currently exists in Mozambique as a body of the heads of different universities that monitor and produce recommendations for higher education institutions in the country (Tembe 2019; Augusto 2020). Such a body could be further strengthened and used as an accountability mechanism for academic integrity. This could also be used to address issues such as regional inequalities to access to education and other problems facing the higher education sector.

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