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When Corruption Gets in the Way

Befriending Diaspora and EU-nionizing Bosnia's Higher Education

This article investigates the encounter of EU-unionization with a domesticated practice of corruption in Bosnian higher education. Relying on primary data collected in Bosnia's public higher education system, the study finds that the country's corrupt higher education is in conflict with the Bologna-themed reforms that would arguably help harmonize Bosnia's fragmented higher education. As it delineates factors that perpetuate corruption, the study, somewhat surprisingly, finds that the Bologna process—despite its partly failed adaptation in Bosnia—is still perceived as potentially transformative for the country's corruption-prone higher education system. The study further looks into why that may be the case and explores a possibility of leveraging Bosnia's intelligentsia abroad to lessen corruption in higher education.

Appearing in various forms, educational corruption is often systemic and has a profound societal impact on developing countries. In line with Waite and Allen's (2003) and Sayed and Bruce's (1998a and 1998b) definitions of corruption, this analysis flexibly defines educational corruption as any abuse of official position that is pursued by an individual for either his/her benefit or that of his/her class or group. Corrupt behaviors have shaped the interaction between EU-nionizing¹ forces and corrupt practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina's higher education, but have generally remained out of researchers' focus partly due to the phenomenon's clandestine nature and risks associated with the topic's pursuit in a politically fragile setting such as Bosnia.

Though corruption has, to some extent, hindered economic and political develop-

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ment of all states in the Balkans, Bosnia ranked 72nd out of 174 countries based on its 2012's Corruption Perception Index (CPI)² (Transparency International, 2012a). Slovenia ranked notably higher, and was 37th while Croatia and Serbia took 62nd and 80th place, respectively (Transparency International, 2012a). Within the realm of educational corruption, Chapman (2002) finds that 31 percent, 38 percent, and 42 percent of students in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, respectively, believe that corruption is widespread among university professors. More recently, Transparency International has found that one out of every four Bosnian students has been directly exposed to corruption within higher education (Jukic, 2012).

Education in Bosnia is continuously evolving, but the systemic turn that educational institutions have taken toward corruption and particularly servicing of the Bosnian postwar elites is deeply troublesome for the country's long-term stability and development (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2011). Paradoxically, this phenomenon is occurring in conjunction with the internationally rooted expectation that the educational system must yield a capable and more mobile workforce for a new Bosnia. Caught between the two worlds—one proposing meritocratic mobility, harmonization, and EU-integrated educational space and the other holding onto the sponsored mobility model (Turner, 1960) while serving the country's *de novo* elite—emerged a hybrid system that is fragmented and, hence, susceptible to growing corruption.

Though the emerging evidence is symptomatic of corruption's prominence within Bosnia's societal structures, this article confines its discussion to the dichotomy between the Bologna process and corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina's higher education. The study is a part of a broader research project³ that employed concurrent mixed methods and utilized binary logistic regression and content analysis as appropriate. The findings were derived from a 762-participant sample of Bosnia's students drawn from 6 public faculties, as well as data obtained from 15 purposefully sampled and interviewed recent graduates or current students at public faculties in Bosnia. While the broader research relied heavily on binary logistic regression, the select findings discussed herein employed the content analysis of the interviews that was, where relevant, enhanced or validated with some key trends derived from the surveyed sample. Though the study participants see contextualized Bologna as largely failing in harmonizing Bosnia's higher education, they remain favorably inclined toward the external involvement for internal reforms likely in the hope that the international actors would help inhibit if not eradicate corruption. In an attempt to break away from the self-destructive path higher education has taken as it relates to the corruption's long-term implications for the country's overall socioeconomic and political development, the study proposes a diaspora-based infusion that would help mitigate if not halt systemic corruption in Bosnia's higher education.

Bosnia's higher education and institutional fragmentation

Since the cessation of hostilities in the Balkans in the mid-1990s, the independent states of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Macedonia, and most

recently Montenegro and Kosovo have worked, to varied extents, toward ethnic reconciliation, reconstruction, and a transition from formerly socialist to more market-driven capitalist economies. Some have progressed faster than others. Slovenia joined the European Union (EU) as early as 2004 and Croatia recently made its entry in 2013. An ethnically divided Bosnia and Herzegovina continues to face challenges with internal and postwar reconciliation and is years away from entering the EU, with half the population living in or close to poverty (Devine & Mathisen, 2005).

The country's postwar ethnic division allowed for decentralization in all socio-cultural and political domains, including higher education. Though this analysis refrains from suggesting that decentralization is not optimal to structural and organizational challenges in other educational settings, decentralization is highly dependent on how it is implemented. A localized version of Bosnia's postwar decentralized model has fragmented educational space along ethnic lines and created a dysfunctional and costly institutional framework prone to corruption.

When studying the former Soviet Union, Heyneman, Anderson, and Nuraliyeva (2007) found that the weakening of the USSR and its centralized system yielded an educational structure prone to corruption. Their research further validated that the decentralization and privatization processes created a fertile ground for corruption, making transition particularly difficult. It is estimated that in Russia alone, bribes for the admissions to colleges and universities amount to about US \$520 million (Kostikov, 2002, as cited in Temple & Petrov, 2004) while the educational spending totals to approximately US \$2.5 billion (Sergeev, 2002, as cited in Temple & Petrov, 2004). Similarly, corruption in postwar and postcommunist Bosnia has been on the rise. Transparency International (2004) compared general populations' views regarding prewar versus postwar corruption levels and determined that in 2002, one out of ten surveyed citizens in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country's Bosniak-Croat entity, thought corruption was present before the war while the ratio significantly increased to about eight out of ten citizens when referring to the postwar period. The large increase in perceived corruption occurred in the Serb Republic, a Serb entity of the country, as well (Transparency International, 2004). Such a significant differential in the general population's perception of corruption in the pre- versus postwar period is indicative of how prominent corruption has become in Bosnia following the cessation of violence in the mid-1990s.

In line with the ethnic fragmentation of the country, the fragmentation of the complex educational system followed the end of war, creating a setting in which corruption could grow. The Higher Education Law in Bosnia was passed in 2007, providing the legislative foundation for the key common standards in higher education. However, most of the educational policymaking and implementation occurs at the local level, creating palpable obstacles to the harmonization of higher education at the national level and implementation of national reforms in higher education. Fragmentation is further evident in the absence of a national ministry of education in lieu of fourteen ministries or departments of education at various levels (National Tempus Office Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012).

To be more specific, the country is divided into two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (“Federation”) and the Serb Republic, in addition to having an independent administrative unit of Brcko. Each of these three territorial units has its own ministry (or department, in the case of Brcko District) of education. While the Serb Republic is an ethnically homogeneous unit, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina is marginally more ethnically diverse, being populated by Bosniaks, Croats, and—to a lesser degree—Serbs. To mirror these internal divisions among ethnic groups, the Federation is further divided into ten cantons. It also has a federal ministry of education that supports the cantonal ministries, but the federal ministry has no jurisdiction over the creation and implementation of higher education policies (National Tempus Office Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012).

The Serb Republic has no further organizational subdivisions, given its greater ethnic homogeneity. Consequently, educational matters in the Serb Republic are under the jurisdiction of the entity’s ministry of education while much of the decision making in the Federation transpires at the cantonal level. Such ethnic division is a legacy of the Dayton Peace Accord, which brought ethnic partition yet fragile peace to Bosnia in 1995. In the absence of a national level ministry, the Ministry of Civil Affairs supports participation of Bosnia’s higher education in international initiatives while ministries of education at the entity level act as *de facto* state ministries, reflecting the continued ethnic tensions and the Serb Republic’s accessional aspirations toward bordering Serbia.

This internal tendency to differentiate under the banner of a popularized notion of decentralization extends throughout the country’s system of higher education, complicating the funding mechanisms and prompting a unique classification of the country as having “12 different higher education ‘systems’ . . . that is to say 10 in FBiH [Federation], 1 in RS [Serb Republic] and in Brcko District” (National Tempus Office Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012, p. 3). In terms of funding, state funding for education is negligible while entities, cantons, and Brcko District provide funding for their respective areas of jurisdiction, reflecting further structural complexities in Bosnia (Magill, 2010). The Serb Republic uses about 6 percent of its GDP to finance education while the Federation spends only 4 percent, but Brcko District’s spending as a percentage of GDP is much higher than that of the two entities (*ibid.*). With this extent of political, ethnic, and financial fragmentation and differentiation, the overall system is complex, creating opportunities for corruption not only to emerge, but to solidify. For instance, Hasib Gibanica, from the canton of Sarajevo’s Ministry of Finance, characterized communication between his Ministry and faculties financed through his Ministry as “poor” (Center for Investigative Reporting, 2004). Gibanica further remarked that the Ministry was unable to validate the financial information provided by the faculties the Ministry was obliged to oversee (*ibid.*). There is also an apparent lack of regulatory framework that would, if defined, help specify and guide the manner in which faculties spend their revenues (*ibid.*). As it relates to corruption, specifically in this highly fragmented higher education system, neither the Serb Republic nor the Federa-

tion's cantons have any regulatory frameworks to explicitly address the issue of corruption (Bubalo et al., 2013).

The country's systemic tendency to maintain mono-ethnic structures bolstered by the noted lack of regulatory framework and oversight over Bosnia's public faculties obstructs the effective EU-nionization of Bosnia's higher education. While the EU-nionization of Bosnia provides no guarantees that corruption would end or even decrease, harmonization of educational standards and normalization of expectations throughout the country's higher education domain would likely ease detection of corrupt behaviors that are deviant from the established rules and norms. To date, the Law on Higher Education has not been fully adopted by each canton nor has the country clarified ways in which accreditation of higher education institutions would take place (National Tempus Office Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2012). Coupled with the weak and flawed legislative framework, the multiple and fragmented higher education "systems" (ibid., 2012, p. 4) face difficulties in building a collaborative and unified approach to first detect and then rectify corrupt behaviors. Therefore, while the EU-nionization process—primarily dealing with student mobility, curriculum, and access to higher education—in no explicit ways tackles educational corruption, its standardization and mobility compass would likely direct the country to move closer toward addressing the issue of educational corruption in higher education.

Theoretical framework: Educational corruption and external impact

The literature leveraged in this research gravitates toward works on educational corruption in the developing world given its extensive impact on the institutional functioning and progress in new or developing states. However, this work's defined centrality does not eliminate the potential need for such research in the developed world. In the developing contexts, consequences or even definitions of educational corruption may appear more elusive as such societies may lack guidelines, laws, and/or regulatory frameworks to account properly for all the complexities of educational corruption. For instance, it may be socially acceptable to give gifts to teachers in some cultures, but such gestures might affect teachers' behaviors and possibly translate into a tendency to privilege some students at the expense of others.

A major danger of corruption in the developing world rests on its systemic utilization for self-preservation by powerful elites. It is only when schools are functioning efficiently that the most qualified candidates are matched with the most demanding positions in a country's economy (Shaw, 2008). When educational corruption is present, the most capable individuals may not be allocated to those jobs that require their talents; in other words, "the misallocation of talent . . . is accelerated in countries that do have corruption in education" (p. 32). Overall, students' willingness to bribe is a function of how broadly practiced and acceptable corruption is, as well as whether they characterize it as criminal (Shaw,

2008). Similarly, Confalonieri, Leoni, and Picci (2007) find that one's proneness to corruption is often dependent on one's aversion to reputational risk. In other words, classification of corruption, its extensiveness, and the degree of tolerance for corruption have become important determinants in whether corruption perpetuates itself: when students believe corruption is widespread and acceptable form of behavior with no consequences, they may be more inclined to engage in it. Such conditionalities, however, are more likely to exist when higher education systems are fragmented and when institutional leadership is motivated by ethnic or political aspirations rather than by a quest for academic excellence. It is for these reasons that the EU-influenced yet ethnically fragmented Bosnia is a distinctly appealing place for educational corruption inquiry.

Knowing more about typologies of educational corruption and quantifying the corruption or the perception of it is a salient and evolving research area in education, but understanding how educational corruption functions to help perpetuate power of the elites in weak states is another area in educational research that calls for further investigation. Broadening the research agenda on educational corruption, Waite and Allen (2003) were among the first to inquire into the unexplored interplay between power and corruption in education, and ways in which seeking a collective benefit for a group can be categorized as corruption. In their notable piece on the topic, the authors look into "an ethnology of corruption and abuse of power in educational administration" (p. 281). While educational corruption is viewed as often pursued for individual benefit, Waite and Allen (2003) expand this definition to include acts for collective benefit by leveraging Sayed and Bruce's (1998b) notion of collective benefit in their work on societal corruption.

Other education researchers have also worked to define and classify corruption and to determine the facilitators of corruption-related behaviors (Chapman, 2002; Heyneman, 2004; Romyantseva, 2005). In his classification effort, Chapman (2002) looked into educational corruption as occurring at any level of the educational governance: at the ministry, school, region, or classroom level, and among international agencies. By introducing a new set of actors in corruption, Chapman (2002) adds value to corruption research by pointing to the possible corruption among the international actors that are, often and almost instinctively, presumed to be benevolent actors in education. Romyantseva (2005) contributes to this discussion by suggesting that educational corruption emerges in various forms, including, but not limited to, "favoritism in procurement, favoritism in personnel appointments, ghost teachers, selling admissions and grades, private tutoring, and skimming from project grants" (p. 84).

Though it is indispensable to achieving a deeper understanding of educational corruption, literature on the interplay among power, social mobility, and corruption in the educational sector, in particular, has been conspicuously missing. It was only a few years ago that Waite and Allen (2003) pioneered such an effort. If a society embraces non-merit-based mobility, it arguably accepts corruption-related behavior, since some other mechanism rather than merit plays a key role in deter-

mining social standing in a society. Those who have the power will likely remain in power, and educational corruption may partly be credited with the maintenance of this elite status.

Thus, the elites of developing countries where favors are often exchanged through social networks may not be predisposed to adequately sanction educational corruption because of the power reinforcement that it provides to their social classes and closed circles of power. This corruption-preserves-class-power notion emerges from Chapman's (2002) writing, wherein he purports that "[gatekeepers'] . . . motivation is often economic—to supplement income—but may also be an effort to *extend* their status or power" (p. 8; emphasis added). Furthering the work on the interplay between power, mobility, and corruption, this study theorizes that the linkages exist between elites in the political and educational leadership and the benefits of corruption to them make opposition to educational corruption unlikely in the absence of a fundamental political change or massive external pressure. As Chapman properly reasons, "when top leadership is corrupt, they lack the moral platform to demand honesty in others" (p. 11). Therefore, corruption at the political or educational top, either directly or indirectly, signals the approval of educational corruption. Indeed, extensive educational corruption would be more difficult to perpetuate in the presence of uncorrupt political leadership, underlining the earlier point that the connections among corrupt leaders in all spheres often exist and are maintained through mutual support and tolerance of corrupt behaviors.

Together with other forms of social, economic, and political power, educational corruption in the developing world has gradually become a systematic and acceptable behavior (Altbach, 2004), allowing universities to turn into likely mechanisms of elite status preservation. To keep themselves in power and secure reciprocation of favors by others holding equivalent positions, the academic elites have often fostered or not opposed corrupt activities in universities. It is not uncommon to exchange favors by passing friends or relatives within the elite circles. Altbach (2004) similarly recognizes that educational corruption by the privileged is tolerable in countries with a general deviation from meritocracy-based mobility. It is this self-interest of the elites that likely undermines their—and therefore the government's—motivation to halt corruption in education and elsewhere. This research similarly hypothesizes that the course of corruption development can be usurped only if prominent and influential community members are actively involved in countering it: those with "necessary skills and *social status* [added emphasis] to stand up against corruption" (Transparency International, 2007, p. 3). Along the same lines, Chapman (2002) rightly asserts that "commitment of top leadership to honest operation" (p. 12) in the educational infrastructure is essential to the diminishing of corruption.

However, the question remains as to what alternatives, if any, exist when effective institutions, sound legal framework, and transparent leadership are absent, as is the case in Bosnia. In such settings, a public and political voice calling for change is often absent among youth (Sabic-El-Rayess, in press); therefore, instigators of change could be looked for elsewhere. Indeed, this research argues that, in

Bosnia-like contexts, obtaining a commitment to transparency and meritocracy in higher education is hardly possible without significant external pressure or shifts in political interests of the elites. In other words, unless the most prominent and powerful decision makers are collectively dedicated to halting corruption, any internal force short of a broad communal consensus or forceful push would not suffice to end corruption. In line with such a conceptual mindset, this article looks at whether any hope rests with the external actors in the country.

Research design and methodological framework

The broader study (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012) that includes the work presented herein employed the concurrent mixed methods, with primary data being collected on students' perceptions of corruption, EU-nionization, social mobility, and elite formation in Bosnia. Constituting only a subsegment of the broader research, this article focuses on the findings specifically pertinent to the relationship between the EU-nionization process and corruption in Bosnia's public higher education. As others have noted (Creswell, 2009; Neuman & Benz, 1998), the qualitative and quantitative methods are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. So the findings presented here rest on the content analysis of the data collected via interviews while also drawing on the complementary and relevant descriptive analytics extracted from the student surveys.

Mixed methods framework

The primary rationale behind reliance on content analysis as a qualitative methodological approach, in addition to the frequency-based trends derived from the survey-based data as the quantitative component, is its suitability to analyze the finer contextual issues. Qualitative research uncovers the contextual idiosyncrasies of educational corruption that could have been missed had the study exclusively relied on analyzing trends from the survey-based data. Not focusing on a particular method, Marvasti (2003, p. 88) underscores the relevance of three different stages in every type of the qualitative research; Huberman and Miles (1994) have labeled these stages as: "'data reduction,' 'data display,' and 'conclusion: drawing/verifying.'" In the data reduction stage, the pool of information obtained via interviews is reduced to optimize management and interpretation of the data collected (ibid). Next, researchers often review the interviews and summarize their notes (ibid). With the quantitative research, this would be equivalent to looking for overall trends stemming from the survey data.

By using the content analysis, this study examined the interview content to derive relevant themes, patterns, and determine whether there was any concept recurrence. The content analysis was first developed by Gottschalk and Gleser (1969). It is generally defined as "the manual or automated coding of documents, transcripts, newspapers, or even audio of video media to obtain counts of words,

phrases, or word-phrases clusters” for further analysis (Garson, 1998, p. 1). For this research, the individual student interviews were first transcribed in detail, then analyzed for any potential patterns that could further complement survey-based findings. For the findings detailed in the study, the quantitative component similarly looked for frequency of trends and notions discussed during the interviews, aiming at mutual cross-checking and potential validation. Gorard and Taylor (2004) saliently observe that even qualitative analysis, in searching for patterns, rests on the frequency concept.

The main data collection tool on the qualitative side of this research was the Student Interview Guide. The guide consisted of four subsections with approximately 47 key questions and concepts—of which about 14 directly related to the EU-nionization concept. These questions guided the in-depth interviews, but were ultimately subservient to the participants’ answers that in the end determined the length, nature, and content of the in-depth interviews. The four sections included: “Perceived Corruption, Corruption Facilitators, and its Persistency”; “Socioeconomic Differences”; “Coping with Corruption”; and “EU-nionization,” with the last section being most obviously relevant to the findings presented herein.

Similarly, this research defined and categorized 73 variables derived from 39 survey questions providing information on students’ demographic, educational, and socioeconomic background, but also—and more importantly—their views on student and faculty mobility, corruption, students’ coping with corruption, and Bologna-related changes. While other segments of the broader research that are outside the scope of this article relied on logistic regression modeling, the findings stemming from the quantitative analysis were based on the interpretation of the observed trends through frequencies of students’ responses to the questions specifically relating to the EU-nionization’s interaction with corruption and power players in Bosnia’s higher education.

As was the case with the Student Interview Guide, the Student Survey had several categories of questions, including those on “Demographics,” “Education,” “Mobility,” “Mobility & Coping,” “Mobility & Voice,” “Mobility & Exit,” “EU-nionization,” “Ethnic-fragmentation,” and “Socioeconomic Background.” Given the intricacies of corruption-related behaviors, employing both quantitative and qualitative methods to explore students’ experiences with educational corruption and EU-nionization was crucial for an improved understanding of educational corruption in Bosnia.

Sampling approach

This study’s focal point of inquiry was the public higher education of Bosnia and Herzegovina as the country had no private higher education institutions prior to the war, and public education continues to play the primary role in higher education arena. Similarly, the study looked at students as the primary beneficiaries of higher education and, therefore, was keenly interested in their perceptions rather

than those of other stakeholders. According to the Bureau for Statistics of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the country's most notable public universities are University of Sarajevo with the student population totaling 32,343 students; the University of Tuzla with 13,896 students; the University of Mostar with 12,909 students attending either the Bosnian or Croatian branch; the University of Bihac with 5,008 students; and the University of Zenica with 4,463 students.

In the course of this research, however, the faculty selection process was solely dependent on whether permission could be obtained to conduct field research. Given the sensitivity of this topic and absence of research on the EU-nionization process, power, and corruption in higher education in Bosnia, the permission process to conduct research at the selected public faculties was a lengthy prelude to the actual data collection. In recent years, two additional pieces of institutional research on corruption in higher education in Bosnia have been conducted. Most notably, Transparency International (2012b) surveyed 2,000 students in Bosnia and its work focused on evidencing corruption in higher education as only a segment of the broader societal corruption. Similarly, the Special Representative of the European Union in Bosnia has supported a project led by the law students in Bosnia, where students had interviewed 299 of their peers on the existence, forms, and likelihood of the students' participation in corruption (Bubalo et al., 2013). However, no known scholarly research of this work's magnitude and on the more complex interplay between EU-nionization, elites, and corruption in higher education has been conducted in Bosnia thus far. In total, 762 students were surveyed at 6 public faculties, with a subset of more than 100 observations at 4 of those faculties. Logistical constraints relating to the faculty size and enrollment precluded collection of similarly sizable subsets at 2 of the 6 participating faculties.

The study initially aimed at applying "stratified random sampling" (Muijs, 2004, p. 39) within each faculty with the goal of obtaining a representative subgroup of students from each year of study (around 75 freshmen, 75 sophomores, etc.) under the assumptions that the corruption and EU-nionization related views may vary depending on the length of students' experiences within corrupt faculties. However, this sample design could not be utilized as some faculties did not have graduating classes sufficiently large to make that subset comparable to others. In addition, 2 faculties, despite their earlier written approval to collect the data, ultimately opted out of the study due to their faculty members' resistance to the topic tackled in this research.

In addition, high dropout rates have reduced subsequent classes in most public Bosnian faculties partly due to the corrupt practices and filtering of students as noted by the participants in the broader research (Sabic-El-Rayess, 2012). Also, perfect stratification was not possible, as in many cases a sophomore, for instance, may have been attending a course typically taught during the first year of studies because he/she was retaking a course failed during the first year, a frequent practice in Bosnia's public higher education. Of the total surveyed students, 48.0 percent, 23.9 percent, 11.7 percent, and 6.7 percent were in their first, second, third, and

forth year of studies, respectively. Only 0.7 percent of the sample did not answer the progression status question.

Of 762 surveyed students, 102 students came from faculty F1; at faculty F2, 68 students participated in the study; at faculty F3, 201 students participated; at faculty F4, 167 students participated; at faculty F5, 195 students participated; and at faculty F6, 29 students participated. Faculty F6 had a small population, which limited the sample size. Of the total surveyed sample, 64 percent of the participants were females, 34 percent were males, and 2 percent did not specify their gender. For 2011, 62 percent of graduates in Bosnia were females and 38 percent were males while 56 percent of the full-time students were females and 44 percent were males (Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2011). Overall, national data on higher education participation suggest that there are more female students and graduates than males, which is in line with the gender split in the data collected for this research. Slight variation may be due to the fact that the sample was not collected nationally nor did it include both private and public institutions. Similarly, the sample did not include all different types of faculties as some may have greater representation of women relative to men or vice versa. More importantly, the survey sample selection was random, independent from the interviewed sample, and was large and representative of the population at the selected faculties.

The data were collected concurrently, with a portion of the researcher's time dedicated to conducting surveys when large groups of students were available and the remaining time spent on in-depth interviews. An attempt was made to both survey and interview students at each participating faculty. However, given the limitation of the interviewed sample's size, not all the interviewed students came from faculties where students were surveyed. Some came from faculties where survey data was not collected. Most notably, students or recent graduates were interviewed only when there existed a sufficient level of trust between the researcher and interviewee to ensure that each interviewee was comfortable discussing educational corruption. As a result, 15 participants were purposely selected and later interviewed as either current students or recent graduates of public universities in Bosnia. More importantly, all the interviewees came from public universities in Bosnia and data was consistent irrespective of the faculty attended. While interviewees were not randomly sampled given the topic's sensitivity, the quantitatively collected data benefited from the specificity added via interviews, as well as complementary examination and, in some instances, validation of the broader trends.

Corruption: In the way of EU-nionization and mobility

This analysis deconstructs the conflict between Bosnia's implementation of the Bologna process and the established corrupt practices in the country's higher education. Though Bosnia is a 2003 signatory to the Bologna Declaration, the institutions of higher education are characterized with limited student mobility and dated practices. The Bologna process is supposed to be "all about—mobility, recognition,

efficiency, competitiveness and attractiveness of European [h]igher education,” but it has been only sporadically and selectively incorporated into Bosnia’s higher education (Adam, 2007, p. 2). If genuinely implemented, the Bologna process would, one could argue, redirect higher education in Bosnia to structurally yield greater transparency and, at least in indirect ways, obstruct flourishing corruption. In other words, the Bologna process would likely allow for earlier interruption and detection of nontransparent deviations within the system as the Bologna process favors more transparent and efficient educational practices.

Some faculties in Bosnia have taken first steps toward bridging the gap between the current state of Bosnia’s higher education and the EU-propagated model of education. However, at the present, the country’s higher education has a wide spectrum of localized interpretations of the EU-nionizing higher education model. For instance, the Faculty of Economics has introduced a Quality Assurance System that evaluates professors and teaching assistants, but the question remains whether such changes that nominally resemble the structures and organizational patterns of the Western European universities have a significant effect on changing corrupt behaviors, if any, at the faculty level. This research evidenced surveyed students’ dissatisfaction with the teaching practices within their faculties: specifically, 18.3 percent of the surveyed students thought professors are promoted based on their connections, 34.8 percent believed that their professors do not know their subject matter, and 48.5 percent said their professors do not explain the material they are expected to teach. Other research has similarly indicated that students in Bosnia perceive Bologna-based reforms as either not being implemented or implemented only in part (Brennan-Krohn, 2011).

The challenge of implementing a model reflective of the EU’s higher education parallel to addressing continued reliance on bribes, personal connections, and social networks to obtain higher education degrees is seemingly insurmountable for those directly affected by systemic corruption. A recent arrest of a prominent Bosnian Croat leader and current president of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zivko Budimir, on charges relating to drug trafficking (Sito-Sucic & Zuvela, 2013) points to the intimidating extent of corruption that impacts Bosnia’s youth daily. The rest of the Eastern Europe is not immune to systemic corruption either, likely proving this research relevant well beyond confines of the country in question. A particular example that comes to mind is that of Romania. Romania joined the EU in 2007, but nearly faced EU sanctions over widespread corruption that has infiltrated the highest of its political ranks (EurActiv.com, 2008).

Though the forces that shook up the political untouchables in Bosnia remain unclear and subject to further examination, it is likely that the pressure was, at least in part, externally sourced in an attempt to signal to the highest political echelons that their corrupt practices have often suffocated attempts to constructively move toward Bosnia’s socioeconomic development and political stability. The salience of introducing Bosnia to a more transparent operational model has increased with Croatia’s 2013 entry into the EU and, therefore, Bosnia’s newly shared border

with the EU. When political leadership is corrupt, decisiveness to address corruption is expectedly absent. To exemplify using the above-noted case of the Bosnian president's arrest, Budimir obstructed the appointment of the constitutional court judges in 2012 (Sito-Sucic and Zuvela, 2013). As governing elites fail to act, any internal efforts to end corruption are limited at best. Consequently, today's Bosnia is where one finds parallel universes with politicized claims of higher education's EU-nionization representing mobility, effectiveness, and transparency coexisting with students' contrasting claims of corruption, limited mobility, and elite-centered higher education.

In such a challenging context, this study unsurprisingly finds that the students' perceptions of corruption in Bosnia's higher education remain somewhat unaffected by the Bologna process. As one of the students said, prior to Bologna, the exam prices [referring to bribes] were in "convertible marks [Bosnian currency] and now they are in euros" (Interviewee 6C). The Bologna process aims at achieving comparable quality of education regardless of the institution's geographic origin. However, the political unwillingness—coupled with consequent institutional inability to define and implement adequate rules and procedures—makes a positive change difficult in Bosnia.

As a result, one of the main challenges of the Bologna process in Bosnia has been its inconsistent implementation across various faculties and even among different professors within the same faculty. Some professors have introduced more interactive teaching while others remain loyal to a teacher-centered approach (Interviewee 5C). In fact, the lack of clarity as to what constitutes Bologna persists. A study participant noted that she was a first-generation Bologna student at her faculty, and that "no one ever said what *that* [added emphasis] is" (Interviewee 7C). Another interviewee reaffirmed that the Bologna process is being implemented without educating professors and students on what the Bologna process "truly is" (Interviewee 1C). This is supported by the fact that about one in three—out of 762 surveyed students—did not know if they were a part of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)-based system. This statistic is reflective of the lack of knowledge about the Bologna process among the students directly affected by it. The finding is further indicative of poor differentiation between the past and current teaching and procedural practices.

Though this research showed that most students lack awareness of the Bologna process and what it exactly means for their education, a student who is involved with the Bologna implementation at the student's faculty was quick to illustrate Bosnia's limitations relative to the Bologna requirements by juxtaposing the Bologna space requirement of what he estimated as 12 square meters per student against what he approximated as only 1 square meter per student at his faculty (Interviewee 1C). To fully and successfully implement the Bologna process, greater attention should be paid to the financial limitations of the implementing country (Interviewee 1C).

Others have pointed to nominal changes brought about by the Bologna-induced reforms. Interviewee 7C observed that, based on her understanding of Bologna, the

option of part-time studying would be eliminated; however, there are now “parallel students” instead of “part-time students.” The differences between “part-time” and “parallel” students are negligible, as “parallel students” continue to pay the same tuition and have the same number of exam periods as part-time students did (Interviewee 7C). The “parallel students,” unlike the “part-time students,” are expected to attend lectures regularly (Interviewee 7C). In other words, “they [institutions] took from Bologna what suits them while also keeping from the old system whatever suited them before” (Interviewee 7C).

Interestingly, some study participants pointed to the issue of degrading quality that, in their view, correlates with the instructional changes introduced by the Bologna process. For some, the Bologna process means easing of the educational standards by replacing difficult in-class exams with take-home essays (Interviewee 3C and Interviewee 5C), a practice not used frequently in the past. Introducing essay writing as a performance measure has also had negative implications as many students plagiarize the work of others (Interviewee 5C). In Bosnia, professors have been noted for their tendency to not only plagiarize but also sell plagiarized works. Consequently, Bosnian students are accustomed to plagiarism and, therefore, may not hesitate to mirror their professors’ behaviors.

The exam dynamics have also changed to some degree: some courses were previously taught for a year with one cumulative exam being offered at the end of the year, but now there is an increasing number of one-semester-long courses with exams offered at the end of each semester (Interviewee 7C). Similarly, classroom participation, which earlier played no consistent role in grading, is being gradually incorporated into the evaluation process. If a student has a borderline grade between 6 and 7 (on a scale from 5 to 10), the student will likely earn a grade 7 if an active class participant (Interviewee 7C). While some students see these changes as positive, others believe they have only resulted in lower expectations and less knowledgeable students (Interviewee 14C).

Narrowing down to the most relevant aspect of the Bologna process as it relates to this research specifically, the changes—regardless of how inconsistent or marginal they may be—that are taking place in Bosnia’s higher education have had a somewhat positive effect on the students’ perceptions of the transparency levels in their faculties relative to the pre-Bologna period. Of the total surveyed sample, 14.5 percent of students believe that the ECTS-based program is “definitely” more transparent than the old program (Figure 1). In addition, 24.5 percent of the surveyed students perceive it as “probably” more transparent than the old program while 26.4 percent of the surveyed are less convinced but still think that the new ECTS-based program is “maybe” more transparent than the old one (Figure 1). Even with all of its limitations as contextualized within Bosnia’s higher education, a surprising 65.4 percent of the surveyed students believe that, to some degree, the Bologna-based program helps improve transparency. Only 26.1 percent of the surveyed sample is “not sure” whether one program is more transparent than the other, while, interestingly, a negligible 6.4 percent of the sampled students said “no” when asked

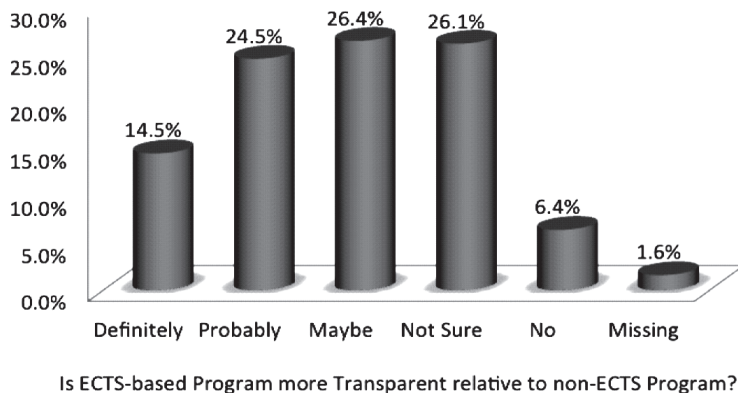


Figure 1. **Transparency of ECTS-Based vs. Non-Bologna Programs**

whether the ECTS program is more transparent than the old program.

The study finds that the ECTS-based programs were generally deemed more transparent, indicating that Bosnian students' perceptions of higher education are not stagnant and, to state it with a cautious degree of optimism, *can* change. This is contrary to other elements of the broader research that have classified students in Bosnia's higher education as passive, disempowered, and unwilling to pursue action to change the status quo and effectively react to corruption within their faculties (Sabic-El-Rayess, in press).

Specifically, the corruption coping theory (Sabic-El-Rayess, in press), built on Hirschman's (1970) theory of exit, voice, and loyalty, models reactive behaviors among youth in corrupt higher education and points to *low voice* and *mental exit* as the most prevalent reactionary behaviors currently practiced by Bosnia's students. These behavioral modes suggest that students limit their reactions to complaining to their most immediate family members and friends without any intent to instigate broader change; that is, students are most likely to mobilize a *low voice*, characterized as low because it lacks political ambition aimed at lessening corruption either short-term or long-term (Sabic-El-Rayess, in press).

As to the *exit* and despite students' dissatisfaction with corruption in Bosnia's higher education, students refrain from physically leaving their institutions partly due to costly transfer to other, potentially equally corrupt, alternatives; instead, students often remain within their institutions but *exit mentally* by disengaging from the higher education experience (Sabic-El-Rayess, in press). For this reason, finding even slightly detectable level of trust in the EU-instigated changes—despite any and all implementation-related faults—is a remarkable finding. Such a finding is seemingly surprising given deterministic attitudes and consequent passivity espoused by the vast majority of Bosnia's youth. The question that arises is how

the youth's pessimism can be reconciled with the glimpse of hope that stems from the faulty Bologna process.

The youth's indolent behavior is suggestive of their lost hope in *their own* capacity to change the status quo. As theorized earlier, in a discouraging and corrupt higher education space such as that of Bosnia, internal change can occur either as a result of the significant shift in the political mindset of the country's leadership away from the corrupt activities or achieved through external stakeholders' pressures for change. Whether subconsciously or not, Bosnia's youth appears aware of this dynamic and, therefore, hopeful that, with the corrupt elites in power, the international push may be the instigator of change. The more prominent external support for internal changes the likelier political awakening and participation of the presently indolent youth.

Overall decimation of individual empowerment is a consequence of the societally ingrained corruption that is systemic and poignantly exemplified by the above-noted arrest of the Federation's president. However, finding that students believe in the Bologna process can help in devising ways to improve systemic transparency though such structural and reformative pursuit certainly requires research beyond the confines of this study. This finding also underlines students' awareness that corruption has profoundly influenced institutions within Bosnia's higher education and society at large so that the only hope for positive changes is linked to the *external* actors. In the absence of viable alternatives, even a partly and poorly implemented Bologna process seems a more desirable alternative to systemic corruption. This finding is fundamentally important in pointing to the necessity of the external pressures for internally desired anticorruption reforms.

Though Western institutions and related initiatives are often criticized for their role within developing contexts, this research accentuates continued relevance of external actors if and when systemic corruption pervades and disables local actors. However, what the precise balance should be between the external and internal stakeholders is a question worth revisiting with each initiative or project to be explored. This in no way presumes that Western institutions are free of corruption, but in agreement with prevalent school of thought (Altbach, 2004; Heyneman et al., 2007) on the differential between the developed and developing societies, it does assume that the corruption is less systemic and widespread relative to the state of corruption in Bosnia. In a politically tense and systemically corrupt setting, educational issues cannot be analyzed away from the local context, but they similarly cannot be addressed without considering roles of external actors.

Many of the administrative roles in the educational system of Bosnia are currently decided upon by the political actors with merit playing no significant role, a trend due to which many see politics as not only intertwined with educational processes but as in control of them (Interviewee 2C, Interviewee 3C, Interviewee 4C). For instance, some study participants elaborated on how they fear the corrupt and dominant circles, as well as how some instructors may face threats because they refrain from corruption. There are instances where professors have had to

“pass a student because the professor was afraid” (Interviewee 3C). The same study participant stated that “there are professors who would do as they should but cannot say no to politics and are forced to pass . . . regardless of their own moral and ethical principles” (Interviewee 3C). Others reiterated that “favor for favor, you will need me later” is the *modus operandi* of Bosnia’s corrupt educational system while political pressures and threats are also utilized when academics act less obediently (Interviewee 4C).

Some professors who attempt to distance themselves from the most corrupt echelons go as far as to require a student to find a witness for a one-on-one exam to send the message to the student population and faculty administration that a passing grade for their exam cannot be bought or awarded via connections. In one instance, a professor refused to examine the candidate without at least one student witnessing the oral examination (Interviewee 3C). This participant had to walk through the faculty building looking for a random student who would be willing to volunteer and listen in on the exam. This approach exemplifies ways in which individual faculty members attempt to address corruption. Such dysfunctionalities are also reflective of the systemic failure to address corruption as well as of logistical burdens placed on individual students as some faculty members attempt to differentiate themselves from the corrupt circles.

Another element of the postsocialist culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina that shapes corruption’s interaction with the Bologna process is the old socialist mentality that ideologically resists the popularized notions of student-centered and interactive education. The notions of control, discipline, and dominance play an important role in the behaviors and attitudes of the faculty educated within the old socialist paradigm. Those who are socially relevant seek some type of control and frequently feel driven by their own self-importance (Interviewee 4C). In academia, this type of self-centered behavior is often exhibited by pointing to the inferiority of others. In other words, “we in the postsocialist society suffer from the syndrome of having the need to show power in order to satisfy ourselves . . . and professors manifest this syndrome by exercising their power and authority through their professorships and their grading” over the susceptible and vulnerable student population (Interviewee 4C). The gradually acquired and internalized sense of inferiority, combined with the fear of taking action against corruption publicly, ensures that students “only talk but do little” (Interviewee 5C). Another key source of fear is students’ awareness that the mechanisms to prosecute the perpetrators of corruption are either absent or established by the individuals likely involved in corruption themselves (Interviewee 4C, Interviewee 5C). Over time, the verbal and systemic intimidation secures students’ silence.

It is then no surprise that students in Bosnia typically remain within their faculties. Based on the survey data, corruption is the key deterrent of horizontal mobility nationally: specifically, 18.5 percent of the surveyed respondents do not wish to transfer because other schools are corrupt as well (see Figure 2). The second most frequently cited cause of not transferring is that transferring is “too complex”:

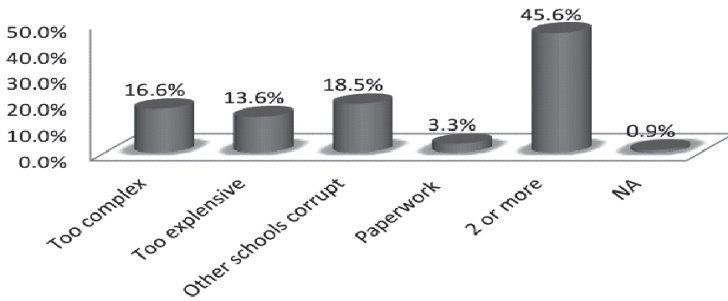


Figure 2. **Reasons Behind Not Transferring Faculty-to-Faculty**

16.6 percent of students thought it was the complexity of the administrative processes that precluded them from transferring. Third is the cost of transferring: 13.6 percent of students viewed the transfer process as too expensive while 3.3 percent were discouraged by the paperwork involved. Almost half the surveyed respondents or 45.6 percent, said that two or more of the above-listed factors jointly affected their decision not to transfer.

Engaging diaspora

Implementing policies that jointly foster competence and meritocracy would positively impact Bosnia's higher education, gradually improving students' views of corruption within their faculties. Corruption can be addressed effectively only through a multistructured approach with a diversity of stakeholders, but in highly corrupt settings policies that directly address corruption may be resisted and, hence, never implemented. Given the prevalence of corrupt behavior in the country, improving teaching process, already promoted by Bologna through student-centered learning, may be a subtle first step to addressing a much broader corruption problem.

The International Organization for Migration (2007) estimates that 38 percent of Bosnians live abroad, and Bosnia's diaspora should be leveraged as a source for a new, uncorrupt, and qualified class of Bosnia's professors. Even the returning diaspora members could arguably succumb to the pressures of corrupt environment, but those diaspora members—whose success within the American or European educational systems was likely secured through competence and hard work—would likely gravitate toward espousing merit-based mobility rather than one dependent on students' individual social standing. Unfortunately, Bosnia's higher education institutions often rely on contracting consultants from the neighboring countries rather than offering incentives to Bosnians educated abroad to return and teach at Bosnia's universities. If Bosnia's faculties were able to attract more foreign-educated Bosnians as their full-time professors instead of outsourcing Bosnia's education to foreign consultants, teaching processes would likely improve given the quality of Bosnia's academics abroad. Incorporating Bosnians educated abroad into

the country's public education would likely bring the sense of accountability and quality to teaching practice in Bosnia. Having quality professors within Bosnia's public education would expose students to the grading standards, practices, and methodologies used by the foreign-educated faculty members.

Over time, a new set of methods and behaviors could emerge and serve as a reference point for an internally led change. Such an approach would facilitate a true EU-nionization of Bosnia's higher education. Adequately covering the course curriculum and evaluating students' knowledge fairly would help improve students' satisfaction with the teaching processes, consequently improving students' perceptions of upward mobility processes in academia. With meritocracy infused, though likely not without obstacles, a more transparent educational space for Bosnia's students would at least become a possibility. There would exist a definitive resistance locally that would necessitate the US and EU support. The resistance would be a local response by the corrupt circles fearing the influx of the qualified members of Bosnia's diaspora. However, this competition is precisely the push needed to move the local institutions and networks away from their reliance on favor-reciprocation processes and move them toward a merit-based modality.

In light of the recent financial crisis and the United States' proposed aid cut to \$40.85 million for 2013 in Bosnia (Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina, nd), this effort would be fairly cost-effective as compared to significant aid that the international community has poured into Bosnia over the years. By directly funding a defined number of professorships at Bosnia's public faculties, the United States and EU could begin the change. The selection process for these professorships should be broadly publicized in Bosnia to exemplify the merit-based selection. Propagating this faculty selection process publicly would assist in increasing Bosnian students' sense of transparency in the process. Continued involvement by the external actors coupled with the leveraging of the country's well-educated diaspora would be most effective if the political parties' involvement, directly or indirectly, in faculty selections and nominations could be eliminated. This change would have to come from within the corrupt system, but is least likely to occur independent of external pressure. Therefore, greater insistence by the international actors that faculty leadership and selection be based on academic credentials rather than political profiles would be necessary and, if successful, would have a crucial impact on students' changing perceptions of corruption and mobility mechanisms in Bosnia's higher education.

Conclusion

The ethnic and political fragmentation in Bosnia have helped foster a fertile ground for corruption, a phenomenon that conflicts with the transparency and mobility that the Bologna process aspires to bring to Bosnia's higher education. To allow for the effective re-engagement of the educated diaspora in hope of instigating internal change, a significant support from international actors for a successful implementa-

tion of the diaspora-engagement policy is necessary. This need for external support has been clearly expressed by those who participated in this study, as otherwise the viability of the diaspora-based, or for that matter any, solution would likely be jeopardized in Bosnia's corrupt higher education. Despite the contextualized and partial implementation of the Bologna process in Bosnia, Bosnian students continue to see the EU-sourced initiatives as relevant and important in moving Bosnia ahead. Providing EU- and US-based support for the educated diaspora to begin transforming education locally would be an optimal blend that would not guarantee but would likely initiate a desperately needed first step toward transparency at public faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Notes

1. The term EU-nionization was coined by Sabic-El-Rayess (2009, p. 427) and it "refers to a set of political, social, cultural, and educational forces that are tasked with synchronizing the family of European societies."

2. CPI scores represent the perceptions of the level of corruption in a specific country as perceived by businessmen/businesswomen and analysts. The highest score of 10 suggests that the country in question is "highly clean" while a CPI score of 0 suggests that the pertinent country is "highly corrupt." The CPI is published by Internet Center for Corruption Research and is available at http://www.icgg.org/corruption.cpi_2007.html.

3. This article is a part of the author's doctoral dissertation, defended at Teachers College, Columbia University in 2012 and titled "Making of a Voiceless Youth: Corruption in Bosnia and Herzegovina's Higher Education." This research was conducted thanks to funding from the International Research and Exchange Board and Columbia University's Harriman Institute for Russian, Eurasian, and Eastern European Studies.

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