



**TRANSPARENCY
INTERNATIONAL
ZIMBABWE**

the coalition against corruption



**A Diagnostic Assessment of
Corruption in the Higher and Tertiary
Education Sector in Zimbabwe**

2024

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AMC:	Accountability Monitoring Committees
CMA:	Community Mobilisation and Advocacy
CPI:	Corruption Perception Index
CSO:	Civil Society Organisation
DFAT:	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GESI:	Gender and Social Inclusion
HEIs:	Higher Education Institutions
HTE:	Higher and Tertiary Education
KII:	Key Informant Interviews
MHTESTD:	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development
NACS:	National Anti-Corruption Strategy
NBPI:	National Bribe Payers' Index
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
OAG:	Office of the Auditor General
PWD:	People with Disabilities
SBU	Special Business Unit
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goals
STEM:	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
STI:	Sexually Transmitted Infections
STM:	Sexually Transmitted Marks
TAI:	Transparency, Accountability and Integrity
TI Z:	Transparency International Zimbabwe
TVET:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UN:	United Nations
UNCAC:	United Nations Convention against Corruption
UNCRPD:	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
US:	United States
UZ:	University of Zimbabwe
YTI Clubs:	Youth for Transparency and Integrity Clubs
ZACC:	Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission
ZIMCHE:	Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education

FOREWORD

This publication on corruption in the Higher and Tertiary Education (HTE) sector in Zimbabwe falls under Transparency International Zimbabwe's (TI Z's) flagship Annual State of Corruption Research (ASCR) series. TI Z was motivated to carry out this exploratory assessment of corruption in the country's HTE sector after our interactions with various communities and stakeholders around the country showed that corruption in the education sector is a matter of deep concern to citizens.

Our outreach infrastructure includes such programmes as the Community Mobilisation and Advocacy (CMA) desk, through which we promote citizen participation, in the spirit of Article 13 of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) which promotes the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector in the prevention of and the fight against corruption (UN, 2004).

We do this by providing community-level committees with information on various topics, and technical support to enable them to monitor institutions operating in their areas and give TI Z feedback on issues of concern to them on an ongoing basis.

To respond to these concerns, we carry out research for a deeper understanding of the issues reported, and to support subsequent policy dialogue with research-based evidence. In addition to the foregoing, TI Z also carries out research to inform anti-corruption institutions on the sectors in need of support in implementing the relevant policies and interventions to tackle corruption and grow networks of integrity. We therefore hope that

this report will inform the ongoing work of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) Steering Committee, as well as contribute to interventions and policy reforms on corruption in the education sector.

The sector includes a range of institutions, namely Universities, Colleges, Polytechnics, Technical, and Vocational Education and Training - TVET and industrial training centres, and it has its distinct policy, regulatory and institutional framework.

The research consisted of a review of relevant literature to inform the research objectives and questions, culminating in a survey reaching 364 respondents online, and twenty-two key informants via structured interviews, on their knowledge of or perceptions of corruption in the HTE sector. Stakeholders surveyed included policymakers, key bureaucrats, teaching staff, learners, academic and managerial employees of higher education institutions (HEIs) and civil society organisations (CSOs), Development Partners, the media, and the general public. Being nationwide in design, the study managed to include respondents from all the country's ten provinces. The research was limited as we couldn't include responses from state-owned HEIs and MPs from the Parliamentary Higher and Tertiary Education Portfolio Committee due to clearance letter issues.

Being a hidden phenomenon, often involving the abuse of entrusted authority by various individuals, corruption remains a difficult issue to discuss for many stakeholders in our society today. We therefore express our sincere gratitude to individuals or organisations

that supported or contributed to the research. Without repeating the report's findings here, TI Z is deeply concerned about the study's findings, which showed that corruption in the HTE sector is a major problem in Zimbabwe. The importance of transparency and accountability in addressing corruption within HTE institutions should be understood against the backdrop of possible losses incurred by the country in human, material, and development terms, as well as rollback in attaining targets under Goal #4 of the SDGs and the right to education guaranteed in the constitution. The authorities therefore need to stem the growth of corrupt practices in this important sector. TI Z remains committed to working with the relevant stakeholders in realising this goal, as a non-profit, non-partisan, systems-oriented civic organisation with an interest in fighting corruption and promoting transparency in all sectors.

effort with their valuable insights.



Tafadzwa Chikumbu

TI Z Executive Director
August 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corruption continues to pose a substantial hurdle for Zimbabwe, as evidenced by international indices like the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), and has infiltrated various aspects of society, including education, as reported by TI Z's stakeholders. The interconnectedness between ongoing social, political, and economic factors and the extent of corruption within a nation is evident. For instance, Zimbabwe faced challenges exacerbated by the economic repercussions of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which created additional opportunities for corruption, particularly in public service delivery. Therefore, This research aimed to explore corruption within the HTE sector against

broader economic, social, political, and cultural contexts.

The research focused on all types of HEIs in the ten provinces in the country. Informed by gaps identified through a review of existing literature on the topic, a survey instrument was designed and piloted in Harare, Bulawayo, and Mutare between 2 and 6 September 2022. Following this, the nationwide data gathering took place between 4 October and 1 November 2022. The survey reached 364 respondents online, whilst 22 key informants took part in the research through structured interviews. The findings of the research were validated in Harare on 17 July 2024 on the sidelines of the TI Z National Anti-corruption Indaba.



The findings indicate that a majority of the respondents in the online survey (41.8%) expressed 'good' professional or institutional knowledge of the prevalence of corruption in Zimbabwe in general. In describing the problem of corruption in the HTE sector, a considerable proportion (40.9%) described it as a 'serious problem'. In terms of the frequency of the cases, a majority (35.4%) described it as 'sometimes' followed by 'frequently' (32.4%). The qualitative data from the KIs supported the notion that the issue is a significant problem. Participants likened it to being a small-scale representation of the national situation with corruption, described as widespread in its severity.

Several forms of corruption were identified in the online survey, with sextortion (53.3%) and academic fraud (48.6%) being the most common forms in the sector. The academic level of teaching and learning (identified by a majority of 42.6% in the online survey) was cited as the most vulnerable to corruption risk in the HTE sector when compared to the policy and regulatory level and institutional management level. In the qualitative findings, it was evident that corruption was most prevalent in institutional management and academic divisions, with specific examples provided. Procurement malpractices in institutional management stuck out as the most prominent form of corruption in institutional management coupled with embezzlement, corrupt allocation of accommodation in student welfare, and nepotism in the recruitment of staff. Meanwhile, the academic level was afflicted with sextortion in the interaction between teaching staff and learners, with learners said to be initiating this type of sexual coercion sometimes.

Several causal factors or drivers of corruption were identified in the research. At the top of the online survey was greed or financial gain (17.8%) followed by poor remuneration (17.5%). In the qualitative findings, the drivers of corruption were found to be prevalent throughout the HTE chain, where opportunities presented themselves for individuals to abuse their position of influence or

authority for private or material gain. The nature of these causes is political, economic, and social, including issues like the quest for power and interference with the running of institutions; prevailing economic hardships characterised by poor remuneration; and societal or academic pressures impacting on learners themselves.

It was also important to understand stakeholders' professional or institutional knowledge about public institutions that are mandated to address corruption in Zimbabwe. The online survey indicates that a majority (41.8%) expressed 'good knowledge' of public anti-corruption institutions. Linked to this, the research also surveyed respondents on their perceptions of the readiness of local HTE institutions to implement strategies or policies on anti-corruption or TAI. In this regard, the majority of online survey respondents (51.9%) indicated that institutions in the HTE sector are equipped or ready to deal with education corruption.

The research also sought to gauge the level of awareness by institutions and related departments in the HTE sector of the National Anticorruption Strategy (NACS) of 2020-2024. A considerable proportion of the online survey respondents (38.7%) indicated that institutions/departments in the HTE sector had '**good knowledge**' of the NACS while 36.5% said '**fair knowledge**.' This contrasted with the qualitative findings where respondents emphasised that institutions/departments in the HTE sector lacked awareness of the NACS, saying that this lack of awareness partly contributes to the prevalence of education corruption. It was also concerning to hear perceptions of how the NACS is perceived as a 'weapon' to deal selectively with individuals on political grounds.





The research also had an objective to understand how corruption in the education sector affected specific groups, namely women, the youth and people with disabilities (PWDs). It is clear from the qualitative responses in the online survey that some segments of society are impacted by education corruption disproportionately in





comparison to others due to their gender, age or type and level of disability. Specific types of corruption affecting them include sextortion, blackmail, and other economic forms of



extortion (linked to bribe-taking by individuals in positions of authority), and embezzlement (which robs them of the amenities to enjoy education at par with the able-bodied).

Recommendations are made in line with the findings and conclusions, and these are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Summary of Recommendations

INSTITUTION RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION	RECOMMENDATION	TIMESCALE
<p>MINISTRY OF JUSTICE, LEGAL AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (LEGAL DRAFTING DEPARTMENT)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bring the Protected Disclosures (Whistle-blower Protection) Bill, and Witness Protection Bill to parliament for adoption to protect people reporting or campaigning against corruption within HEIs and related departments Draft a standalone national legislation that criminalises sextortion, to curb the practice within HEIs 	<p>Short-term (6-12 months)</p> <p>Short-term (6-12 months)</p>
<p>THE MINISTRY (MHTESTD)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish and maintain an open-door policy towards stakeholders with an interest in promoting TAI within the HTE sector. This includes signing MoUs with CSOs like TI Z and other likeminded organisations for collaborative programmes on promoting TAI in HTE Explore innovative ways of financing the construction of adequate student accommodation and related amenities at state-owned HEIs to reduce bribe-taking behaviour by administrative staff e.g., concessionary infrastructure loans to learning institutions from the Manpower Development Fund Promote the adoption of ITCs (i.e., enterprise resource planning - ERP systems) in the day-to-day running of HEIs to reduce human interference in various processes reported to have an elevated risk of corruption e.g., student welfare, enrolment, and staff recruitment and promotion. An ERP system is a comprehensive, integrated software solution that helps organisations manage their core business processes. ERP is useful in fighting corruption through prevention, anti-abuse, automation, segregation of duties and biometrics, through the Internet of Things (IoT) (Syspro, 2022) 	<p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p>
<p>MINISTRY OF FINANCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Float a bond for financing the construction of adequate and inclusive student accommodation and related amenities at state-owned HEIs to reduce bribe-taking behaviour by administrative staff over scarce accommodation. 	<p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p>
<p>PARLIAMENT OF ZIMBABWE</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parliamentary portfolio committees are empowered to play an oversight role over the HTE sector and are recommended to do the following: The Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development Portfolio Committee must; 	<p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Scrutinise the HTE sector to track the occurrence of the diverse types of corruption reported by respondents in this study ii. Request regular reports from the HTE sector's regulatory and advisory councils with particular emphasis on issues of institutional governance within HEIs iii. Call for adequate budgets towards student amenities in state-owned HEIs to curb bribe-taking behaviour by administrative staff iv. Call for fiscal concessions for private HEIs to help them procure or expand their student amenities e.g., reduced cost of purchase or importation of materials v. Request annual reports on the implementation of its recommendations on the inquiry into the prevalence of sexual harassment in HTE institutions' 	<p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p> <p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p> <p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) should scrutinise expenditures towards this sector to ensure that resources are not diverted away from the provision of equitable and quality education due to acts of corruption. 	
<p>OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL (OAG)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OAG should conduct periodic audits of state-owned HEIs and related bodies in the HTE chain to assess for areas with a high risk of corrupt acts e.g. misuse of institutional/public finances and institutional assets for private gain. This includes accessing internal audit reports of various HEIs and related bodies. 	<p>Short-term (6-12 months)</p>
<p>NATIONAL ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY STEERING COMMITTEE (NACSSC) AND ZACC</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NACSSC should craft and implement annual action plans targeted at the HTE sector including carrying out annual reviews <p>ZACC should;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct regular spot checks on corruption targeted at the HTE sector • facilitate and monitor the implementation of anti-corruption programmes in the HTE sector including the rollout of integrity committees • establish secure digital platforms to enable reporting on corrupt acts within the HTE chain 	<p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Short-term (6-12 months)</p> <p>Short-term (6-12 months)</p> <p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p>
<p>ZIMBABWE GENDER COMMISSION (ZGC)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging its past focus and initiatives on sexual harassment, the ZGC should now recognise sextortion as a specific form of abuse lying at the intersection of the anti-corruption (AC) and GBV legal frameworks. In this regard, they should regularly investigate and report on it within HTE in line with Section 246 (b) of the constitution since it constitutes a violation of rights relating to gender • In line with section 246 (g) of the constitution recommend any acts of sextortion found for prosecution 	<p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p>
<p>PROCUREMENT REGULATORY AUTHORITY OF ZIMBABWE (PRAZ)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledging the significant progress made towards the adoption of an Electronic Government Procurement (EGP) or E-procurement, expedite the adoption of all the final stages for EGP to reduce the levels of human interference in the procurement process in state-owned HEIs and related departments • Conduct capacity building of administrative departments within state-owned HEIs to curb the prevalence of procurement malpractices reported in this study. 	<p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1-3 years)</p>

<p>HEIS</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote a culture of open dialogue with all internal stakeholders in the day-to-day running of institutions as opposed to the reported 'decree system' and re-establish any eroded primacy of institutional ordnance. This will harness their collective efforts to curb education corruption and re-build confidence in institutional governance Participate actively in the regular NACSSC and other related meetings Develop inclusive anti-corruption policies that factor in the needs of vulnerable groups and groups at risk of discrimination such as women and PWDs. These policies will protect these groups from any exploitation or discrimination based on their characteristics e.g., ring-fencing or guaranteeing resources earmarked for assistive devices, or amenities earmarked for them In line with the objectives of Article 13 (1) (c) of the UNCAC, all HEIs should collaborate on implementing common principles aimed at mainstreaming ethics and anti-corruption in HTE. A model example of a platform created to coordinate and monitor the implementation of this idea is the 2014 Poznan Declaration. The key principle from Poznan to highlight is the idea of making courses on ethics and non-tolerance of corruption a mandatory part of the university curricula across faculties. 	<p>Short-term (6-12 months)</p> <p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p> <p>Long-term (3-5 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1 to 3 years)</p>
<p>CSOs</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TI Z to spearhead an inclusive partnership with women's groups, youth organisations, academic and administrative HEI staff, and other stakeholders on a national campaign and joint initiatives targeted at corruption within HEIs under the banner #EducationIntegrityZW TI Z to assist willing HEIs with corruption risk assessments (CRAs) of their operational processes to identify the weakest decision points that can spawn corrupt acts TI Z to assist support stakeholders with an interest in a comprehensive analysis of the gaps in the inclusion of ethics and non-tolerance of corruption in all major HTE disciplines. This is a key step towards the creation of value-based HTE education in Zimbabwe. 	<p>Medium-term (1 to 3 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1 to 3 years)</p> <p>Medium-term (1 to 3 years)</p>

01

INTRODUCTION

KEY CONCEPTS

This study aimed to generate empirical evidence on corruption occurring in the higher and tertiary education (HTE) sector; to raise public awareness of its dynamics and influence the crafting of appropriate policy and institutional reforms. Corruption is defined by Transparency International (2009) as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It can be categorised as “grand, petty and political, depending on the amounts of money lost and the sector where it occurs” (Transparency International, 2009).

There are also numerous ways to describe corruption in the education sector. Redovic-Markovic (2013) in (Derri and Egemonu, 2022, p2), defines corruption in education to

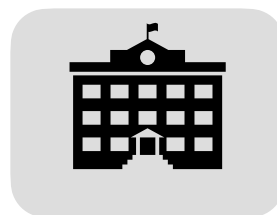
mean “the systematic use of public office for private benefit, whose impact is significant on the availability and quality of educational goods and services, and has an impact on access, quality or equality in education.” This definition provides limitations in that it only cites public office as the only space in which education corruption can occur. For this research therefore, education corruption was defined as

the systemic abuse of one's position of influence or authority in the provision of educational goods and services, for private or material gain.

It is also necessary to have a clear understanding of what the HTE sector is, and this is highlighted in the following definitions below:



Higher education: This includes college and university teaching and learning processes through which students attain higher educational qualifications (LIS Education Network, 2022). It is about education at universities or similar educational establishments, especially to the degree level.



Tertiary education: This refers to all formal post-secondary education, including public and private universities, colleges, technical training institutes, and vocational schools (World Bank, 2021)

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the context of Zimbabwe, universities, colleges, polytechnics, TVET, and industrial training centres form part of the HTE Sector. There are 24 higher education institutions or HEIs (both state-owned and private) registered with the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE). Furthermore, Zimbabwe has 7 polytechnics, 13 Teachers' Colleges (offering primary and secondary training), 6 industrial training centres and

numerous TVETs (government and private) spread across Bulawayo, Harare, Buhera, Chipinge, Marange, Mutare, Murambinda, Nyanga, Rusape, Chitungwiza, Chivhu, Hauna, Marondera, Murehwa, Mutoko, Kadoma, Kariba, Karoi, Murombedzi, Norton, Chiredzi, Mashava, Mwenezi, Hwange, Victoria Falls, Gwanda, Plumtree, Kwekwe, Mberengwa, Shurugwi and Zvishavane.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

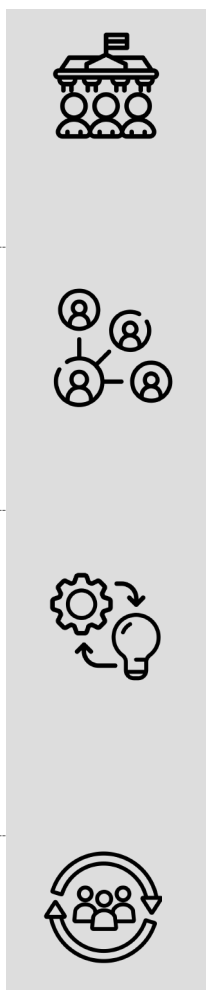
Given the foregoing, the topic was examined according to the following specific objectives:

- ▶ Measure **current perceptions of corruption in the HTE sector** (against the Transparency International 2013 GCB baseline)
- ▶ **Identify the major forms of corruption and their frequency/scale** in the academic, administrative policy, and regulatory components of the HTE sector
- ▶ **Establish the causes** of these forms of corruption
- ▶ Identify and classify the **impacts of corruption** in the education sector, including Gender and Social Inclusion (**GESI**) considerations
- ▶ Check on the **level of awareness of, and implementation readiness** by key institutions involved in the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS)

Propose tangible anticorruption strategies at policy and institutional levels to address the above impacts, organised in categories of Short-term (6-12 months), Medium-term (1 to 3 years) to long term (3-5 years), identifying the champions against each strategy.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH

This research employed several theoretical perspectives to analyse the findings of this assessment of corruption in the HTE sector in Zimbabwe, briefly summarised below:



Political economy analysis (PEA) is about understanding the political dimensions of any context and actively using this information to inform policy and programming. PEA involves looking at the dynamic interaction between structures, institutions, and actors (stakeholders), to understand how decisions are made” (DFAT, 2016). This approach was used to analyse the relationship between the state and higher education in Zimbabwe.

Power and influence analysis is “based on the premise that governance shortcomings are due to the existence of strong informal rules and networks that can contradict, undermine, or interfere with the operation of formal legal and regulatory frameworks” (Kirya, 2019: 19). This approach was used to understand the factors opposing the establishment of a conducive environment for transparency, accountability and integrity (TAI) in the HTE sector.

Systems mapping and analysis is “grounded in the assumption that to understand how corruption functions, one needs to identify its enablers and drivers, how they are related, and how they interact with the larger socioeconomic, political, and cultural context” (Kirya, 2019: 23). The approach was imperative in unpacking and understanding some of the drivers and enablers of corruption in the HTE sector and how they are interrelated with events taking precedence in the wider society from a socio-economic and political standpoint.

Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI) is an approach that emphasises factors that exclude specific demographic groups based on wide-ranging factors such as stereotypes, stigmas, and superstitions based or on their statuses such as gender and disability be analysed or addressed (World Bank, 2018).

These theoretical perspectives fit into the analysis of the corruption risks in HTE in several ways. First of all, PEA can explore how government policies, funding mechanisms, and power dynamics among various stakeholders (e.g., administrators, faculty, students, and private entities) influence corruption. For instance, nepotism and cronyism may be more prevalent when public universities are underfunded or when admissions are politically influenced. PEA on the other hand examines how power is distributed among various stakeholders (e.g. administrators, faculty members, students, and external groups such as politicians), and how it is used to

perpetuate or challenge corrupt activities. Systems mapping and analysis on the other hand provide a visual representation of complex relationships within the higher education sector that contribute to corruption. GESI analysis is essential for understanding how corruption affects different groups within the higher education sector unequally.

JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STUDY

As regards the importance of this study, it has already been highlighted in the preface above, that TI Z received numerous reports of corruption in the education sector through its outreach activities meant to promote citizen participation in the national fight against corruption. The study therefore responds to their concerns by supporting them with a deeper understanding of the issues reported, and to support subsequent policy dialogue with research-based evidence. Furthermore, it has been stated that TI Z uses research to inform the strategies of the relevant institutions in the anti-corruption chain, particularly those charged with the spearheading implementation of the national strategy against corruption. Institutions in the sectors in need of support in implementing the relevant policies and interventions to tackle corruption and grow networks of integrity. We therefore hope that this report will inform the ongoing work of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) Steering Committee, as well as contribute to interventions and policy reforms on corruption in the education sector.

Furthermore, various academics, researchers, think tanks and anti-corruption practitioners have previously spearheaded research and campaigns on corruption in the education sector worldwide. Through this, the potentially damaging effects in terms of development have been illuminated. To give a few examples, research indicates that corruption leads to reputational damage and distrust of higher education by society in general (Denisova-Schmidt, 2018 in A. Curaj et al. (2018). In addition, "corruption in higher education can implicate the students themselves, thus exerting an influence over the next generation." According to Derri & Egeonu, (2022, p1.), "whether it is

treated as a fundamental human right or a mere social right, the importance of education to personal and national development remains sacrosanct. When access to education is impeded, the potential for individual and national development is squandered. Corruption in education is a major barrier to the realisation of the universal right to education."

Zimbabwe is also a signatory to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Education is one of the objectives towards sustainable development by 2030 and is included as Goal #4 on the SDGs. Target 4.3 addresses the need to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university by 2030 (UN, 2022). This speaks to the need to reduce barriers to skills development as well as providing lifelong learning opportunities for youth and adults, as well as making education progressively free (UN, 2020). Target 4.4 is premised on the need to increase the number of people with relevant skills for financial success. This is hinged on the need to "substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship" (UN, 2022). On the other hand, Target 4.7 focuses on education for sustainable development and global citizenship. Briefly, this speaks to the need to ensure that all learners acquire the transformative knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development – known as Education for Sustainable Development (UN, 2022).

It is plausible to assert that education corruption is an obstacle to the achievement of target 4.3 based on several considerations. For instance, Mauro (1998) in Chêne (2014) found that

government spending on education as a ratio to GDP was negatively and significantly correlated with corruption in a cross-section of countries. Furthermore, Chene (2014) asserts that rent-seeking and corruption may affect the allocation of resources by distorting decision-makers' incentives, causing them to divert public spending toward lucrative projects and activities. In theory, this means that public education resources earmarked for equal access in line with SDG target 4.3 can be diverted away from the intended beneficiaries. Furthermore, corrupt practices in the education sector can lead to 'half-baked' graduates joining the ranks of the productive forces without the relevant and

adequate skills for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship envisaged in target 4.4. It can also be seen as a threat to learners fully acquiring the "knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by citizens to lead productive lives, make informed decisions and assume active roles locally and globally in facing and resolving global challenges" envisaged in target 4.7 (UN, 202).

These considerations concerning the impact of corruption on the attainment of SDG targets linked to education cannot be overemphasised, and this helps to highlight the importance of this particular research into the dynamics of corruption occurring in HTE.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In line with the aforementioned objectives of the study, the research tried to address the following question:

What is the nature of, and dynamics of corruption in the in the HTE sector in contemporary Zimbabwe?

The main research question was then broken down into shorter sub-questions as follows:

- What is the **policy, regulatory and institutional frameworks** relevant to transparency, accountability and integrity in the HTE sector?
- What are the prevailing **perceptions on the levels of corruption** in the HTE sector?
- What are the major forms of corruption prevalent** in in the HTE sector, and what is the current scale of each?
- What causes** these forms of corruption?
- What are the impacts** of corruption in the HTE sector, including gendered considerations?
- What are the levels of **awareness of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS)** by key institutions involved in the HTE sector, as well as their implementation readiness?
- Given the foregoing findings, what **tangible sector-specific anticorruption strategies** can address the above impacts, including globally accepted frameworks applicable to Zimbabwe?

02



METHODOLOGY

LITERATURE REVIEW

TI Z reviewed literature from various sources to assess what is currently known about corruption in Zimbabwe's education sector; to identify gaps and thereby frame the proposed research from an informed point of view and contribute to knowledge on the topic. In summary, the types of corruption which were identified from various existing documentary sources demonstrate that the major forms of corruption affecting education over time include the following:

ACADEMIC FRAUD



EXAM LEAKS

Administrative or teaching staff providing learners with access to examination material for personal gain (Zhangazha, 2014; Nkomo, 2018; Radio VOP, 2019; Pindula.co.zw.; Newsday on Business Daily, Nemukuyu, 2021; Munyoro, 2022; Chronicle, 2022)



FAKE DEGREES

the sale or buying of fake academic qualifications to gain admission into institutions of higher learning, secure jobs or pass foreign qualifications assessments (Nkomo, 2018; Nyahasha, 2018; zimeye.net, 2020; Mabena, 2021; The Herald, 2021; ZWnes, 2022; The Herald, 2022; Fake Diploma Shop, 2022)



BLACKMAIL /EXTORTION

teachers not applying themselves fully on duty and subsequently coercing/demanding that parents or learners pay for extra lessons/supplementary tutoring (The Zimbabwean, October 2012; Chêne, 2015; Ngwenya, 2019; New Zimbabwe, 2022; Chibamu, 2022)



BRIBERY

Demanding kickbacks to secure job placements (Mapira & Matikiti, 2012 in Chêne, 2015); bribe taking for enrolment in secondary schools or boarding places, and headmasters compromising the eMap online enrolment system to line their pockets or in admissions and examinations (Mabhiza, 2021; Makaripe, 2022; The Herald, 2022; The Zimbabwe Independent, 2022)



PLAGIARISM

the deliberate falsification, misstatement, and alteration of evidence or data (Nehanda Radio, 2011)



NEPOTISM

In the deployment and transfers of teachers as well as recruitment of university staff (Damba, 2019; Nkala, 2022; Chitagu, 2022)



EMBEZZLEMENT

Abuse of the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM), general misappropriation of funds (The Sunday Mail, 2016; Newsreport 2022)



UNQUALIFIED ADMISSIONS -

of students to courses (New Zimbabwe, 2022)



POLITICAL CORRUPTION

Using manpower development resources to fund political party campaigns, and using teachers to campaign for political parties while some politicians use schools to fundraise for national events (The Zimbabwean, October 2012; Mashininga, 2016; Kuwaza, 2016; Dube & Gama, 2016)



FAVOURITISM, NEPOTISM, AND PATRONAGE

In the recruitment process, deployment and transfers of teachers, and grants to political supporters (Mapira & Matikiti, 2012 in Chêne, 2015; Mambo, 2012; Bertelsmann Foundation 2014)



SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Victims forced to offer sexual favours when seeking placements at schools for their children, as well as to get better grades – also known as sexually transmitted marks (STM) – at institutions of higher learning (IHLs). This disproportionately affects women and vulnerable groups in the education sector, who are the main targets and victims of sextortion (Ncube, 2019; The Guardian, 2020; Nkala, 2022)



PROCUREMENT IRREGULARITIES/ MALPRACTICES

Improper awarding of tenders at Primary, Secondary (school heads and school development committees - SDCs), as well as Tertiary Levels (Mawonde & Maodza, 2016; Newsday on Business Daily; Nemukuyu, 2021; Dube, 2021; Nkala, 2022; Newsreport 2022).



Fraud

Inflated numbers for paid admission tests, fake levies and doctoring of school accounts (ZIM Morning Post, 2020; Newsreport 2022)



Proxies

Charging a fee to write exams on one's behalf (Chêne, 2015)



Illegal (unregistered) education institutions

Munemo, 2022; H-Metro, 2022; Dauramanzi, 2022)



High rates of **teacher absenteeism and misuse of school resources** (Tizora, 2009)

These types of corruption in the literature informed the design of the survey instruments. Given that these examples are drawn out over a prolonged period spanning just over a decade, there was a need to fill the gap of understanding the current state of play with corruption occurring in the sector with empirical evidence.

RESEARCH STRATEGY

In terms of research strategy, TI Z adopted the mixed methods approach (i.e., use of both qualitative and quantitative data and analysis) as its method of inquiry. In terms of research design (survey research), the study was a cross-sectional study, to gather both qualitative and quantitative data through a survey for a diagnostic snapshot of the state of corruption in the HTE sector in contemporary Zimbabwe. The combination of both quantitative and qualitative methods was used to offset biases and complement the strengths and weaknesses of either method.

The survey was designed to capture the opinion of stakeholders who are involved directly or indirectly in the HTE sector. The quantitative survey data was mostly collected using an online survey questionnaire, targeting multiple target groups to enhance the credibility of findings reaching 364 respondents. The qualitative data which was collected through structured key informant interviews (KIIs) was used to get a deeper understanding of the topic under investigation and this reached twenty-two (22).

The survey was conducted in all the ten provinces in the country where institutions of HTE are located. These institutions are spread evenly geographically though metropolitan provinces such as Harare and Bulawayo have high numbers of these institutions due to their urban status and huge populations as well. State-owned universities, privately owned universities,

teachers' training colleges, polytechnics, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), and industrial training centres were targeted by the research.

As corruption is usually clandestine, the research also had to rely on measuring perceptions as opposed to recording actual incidences. The analysis focused on providing a detailed contextualized understanding of the stakeholders' points of view or actual experiences.

The detailed methodology particularly the sampling techniques, data collection instruments, research ethics, and study limitations are explained in the appendices (See Appendices B, C, and D).

03

FINDINGS

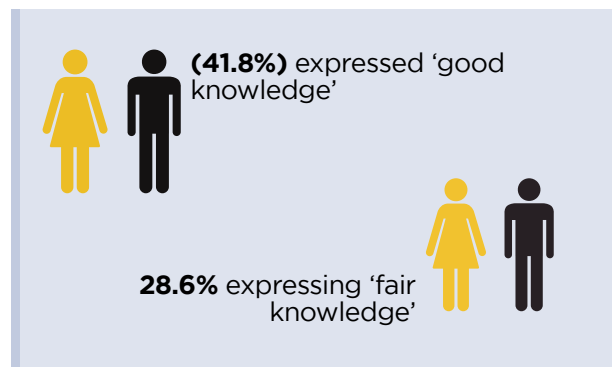
QUANTITATIVE DATA: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE ONLINE SURVEY

The following section summarises the findings from the online survey of 364 respondents, who were engaged via Google Forms.

PROFESSIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PREVALENCE OF CORRUPTION IN ZIMBABWE

Respondents were asked to rate their levels of knowledge on the prevalence of corruption in Zimbabwe in general. The question attempted to locate their awareness of corruption within their day-to-day experience as stakeholders in the HTE sector; hence the notion of professional or institutional knowledge. The question was also necessary to qualify their inputs on issues to follow, in particular levels of awareness amongst stakeholders of the National Anticorruption Strategy (NACS)

their awareness of public institutions that are mandated to deal with corruption in Zimbabwe, and their readiness to deal with education corruption.



Most of the respondents (41.8%) expressed 'good knowledge' of the prevalence of corruption. This was followed by 28.6% expressing 'fair knowledge' on the subject of corruption. Only 22.8% expressed an excellent understanding of the prevalence of corruption. A small proportion of the respondents (6.9%) had no knowledge of the prevalence of corruption whatsoever.

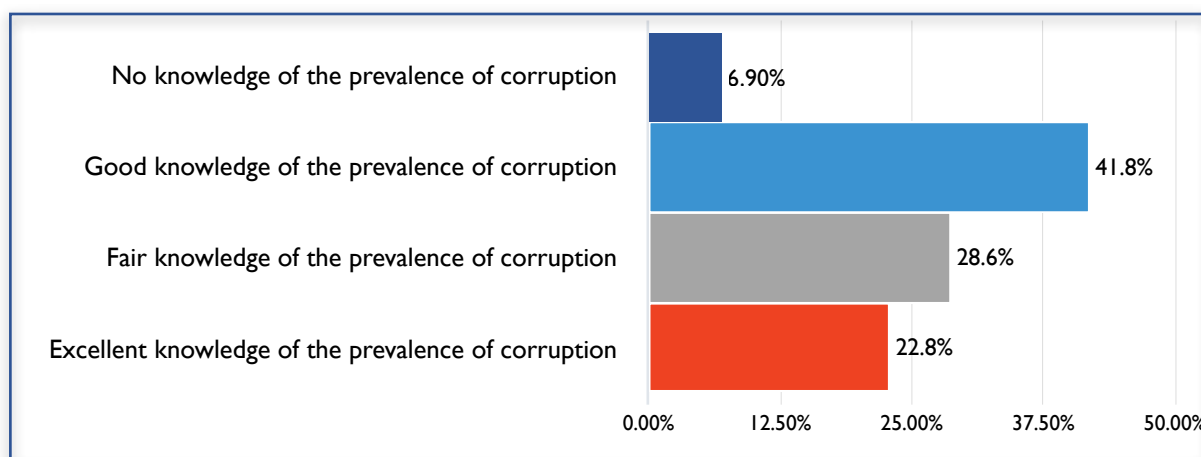
Overall, the high number of respondents with knowledge of corruption issues in the

country, in general, is useful in explaining its prevalence in the HTE sector on the backdrop of it being a national challenge (i.e., linking it to other economic, political, and social dynamics in the wider society). This implies that they are sensitive to the specific

occurrences taking place in academic settings, be it in the workplace (professional level) or the interactions amongst and between different institutions or actors (institutional level) in the HTE sector. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 Professional or Institutional Knowledge about the Prevalence of Corruption in Zimbabwe

Professional and institutional knowledge of the prevalence of corruption



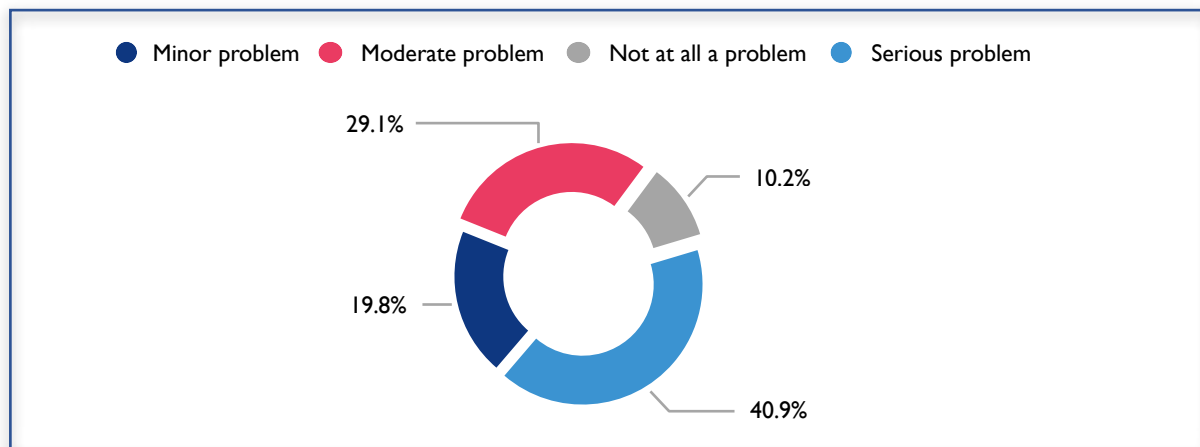
THE EXTENT TO WHICH RESPONDENTS BELIEVE CORRUPTION IS A PROBLEM IN THE HTE SECTOR IN ZIMBABWE

To drill down the issue from the national to sectoral level, respondents were asked about the extent to which they believe corruption is a problem in Zimbabwe's HTE. The majority of the respondents (40.9%) believe that corruption is an 'a serious problem', followed by 29.1% of the respondents who felt that it was a 'moderate problem', 19.8% who viewed corruption as 'a minor problem', and a small proportion (10.2%) who indicated that it was not a problem at all.

Overall, the high percentage (70%) of respondents who viewed corruption in HTE as a serious or moderate problem is worrying, as it is testimony of the existence of corrupt activities in the sector. Furthermore, it supports the idea that corruption in Zimbabwe has reached endemic and systemic levels, pervading all facets of life including the education sector. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 The Extent to which Respondents Believe Corruption is a Problem in the HTE sector in Zimbabwe

Extent of corruption as a problem in the higher and tertiary education sector in Zimbabwe



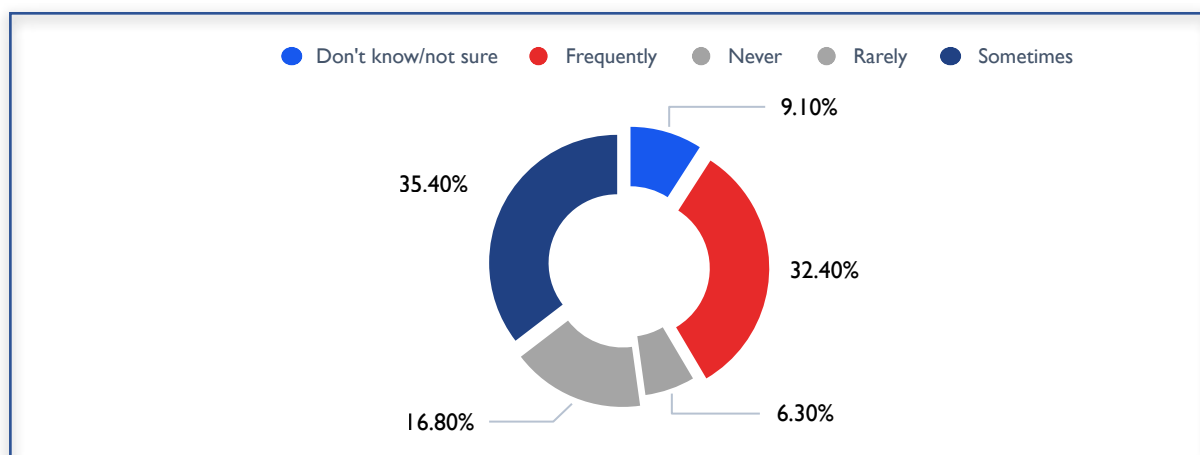
FREQUENCY OF CASES OR ACTS OF CORRUPTION NOTED AT PROFESSIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL IN THE HTE SECTOR

Respondents had mixed views on the frequency of cases or acts of corruption in the HTE sector. A majority of the respondents (35.4%) highlighted that such acts occurred ‘sometimes.’ This is followed by 32.4% of respondents who indicated that these incidences happened ‘frequently’ while 16.8% pointed out that they happened rarely. Other respondents indicated that they did not know or were not sure (9.1%) while a small proportion highlighted never (6.3%). As

highlighted in the introduction, corruption involves mostly hidden acts and hence the reliance on measuring perceptions, as opposed to recording actual incidences will yield mixed responses. Nonetheless, the 32.4% indicating that it is a frequent occurrence is still concerning, especially when the impacts of education corruption are considered further below. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Frequency of Cases or Acts of corruption noted at the Professional or Institutional Level in the HTE Sector

Frequency of cases or acts of corruption in the Higher and Tertiary Education Sector



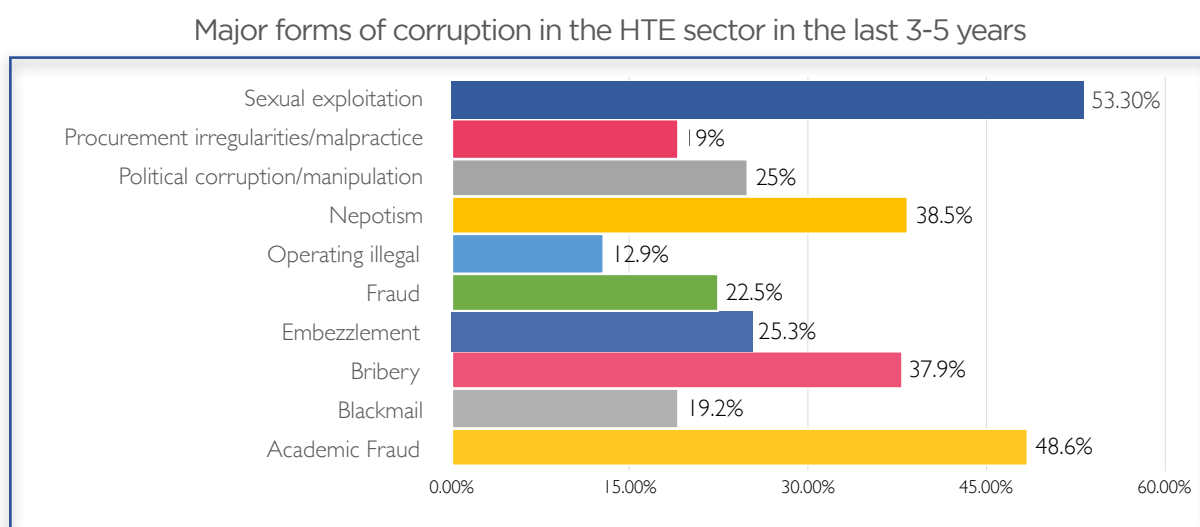
THE MAJOR FORMS OF CORRUPTION IN THE HTE SECTOR IN THE PRECEDING 3-5 YEARS

The research also sought to identify and classify the major forms of corruption in the HTE sector. In this regard, respondents on the online survey were asked to specify the major forms of corruption taking place within the HTE sector in the last 3-5 years in Zimbabwe, with each respondent allowed to specify a maximum of 3. They were each asked to highlight a maximum of three forms of corruption. It is important to note that each of these categories encompasses a broad range of practices (for instance academic fraud in this research includes practices such as exam leaks, fake degrees, proxy writing of exams, and plagiarism in line with the literature review above). The categories were created to enable the classification of the prevalent practices. The forms of corruption cited placed in order from the highest to the lowest from the responses are as follows:

- ▶ Sextortion or the form of corruption where sex is used as a currency (53.3%)
- ▶ Academic fraud (48.6%)
- ▶ Nepotism (38.5%)
- ▶ Bribery (37.9%)
- ▶ Embezzlement (25.3%)
- ▶ Political corruption (25%)
- ▶ Blackmail/extortion (19.2%)
- ▶ Procurement irregularities/malpractice (19%)
- ▶ Operating illegal/unregistered HEIs (12.9%)

Even though some respondents cited the operation of illegal institutions as a form of corruption, they did not indicate which HEIs were operating illegally or without registration. Respondents were also asked to indicate other types of corruption which were not cited in the online options, but the information given did not indicate significantly different categories from what is cited above. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 Major Forms of Corruption in the HTE Sector in the Last 3-5 Years



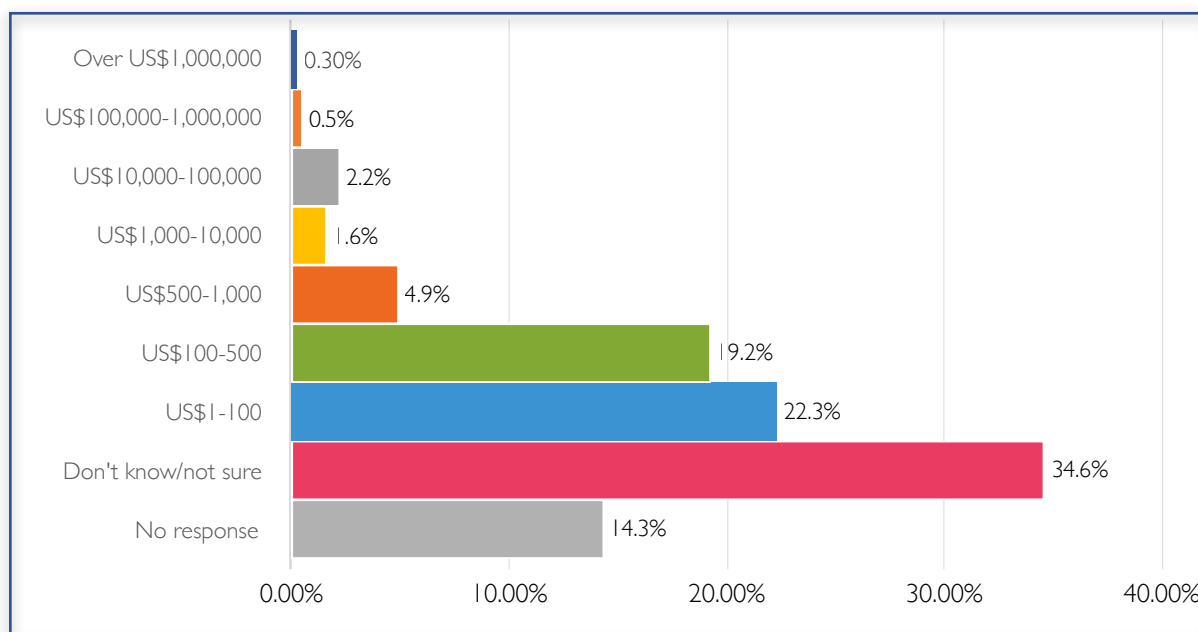
ESTIMATED US\$ VALUES OF BRIBES REQUESTED, VALUE OF RESOURCES EMBEZZLED OR INVOLVED IN PROCUREMENT MALPRACTICES

Corruption in the form of bribery, embezzlement, and procurement malpractices depends on the exchange (or loss) of monetary or other material resources in the transactions for corruption which translates into a loss or opportunity cost to the affected institution or the country at another level. Even though the research was investigating a hidden phenomenon, the research attempted to quantify the loss incurred from education corruption in material terms. In this regard, respondents

were surveyed on their knowledge or perceptions of how much money is lost through bribery, embezzlement, and procurement malpractices. Given that Zimbabwe runs a multi-currency system of exchange where the value of the US dollar exceeds other denominations according to public perceptions and practice, these estimates were denominated in US dollars, and the responses are summarised in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Estimated US\$ Values of Bribes Requested, Value of Resources Embezzled or involved in Procurement Malpractices

Estimated US\$ value of bribes, embezzlement and procurement malpractice.



Most of the online survey respondents (34.6%) 'did not know' or were 'not sure' of how much money was involved while 14.3% had 'no response.' Notwithstanding this limitation, the greatest number of respondents with actual knowledge of (or perceptions) of the figures concerned were

concentrated in the lower tier of amounts involved, which is testimony of the prevalence of petty forms of corruption versus grand corruption. Petty corruption is defined as the "everyday abuse of entrusted power by low- and mid-level public officials in their interactions with ordinary citizens, who

often are trying to access basic goods or services in places like hospitals, schools, police departments, and other agencies” (Transparency International, 2009, p33). In this regard, a sizeable proportion of the respondents (22.3%) highlighted corrupt transactions valued between US\$1-US\$100 while 19.2% indicated amounts between US\$100-US\$500. Transactions of between US\$500- US\$1,000 were cited by 4.9%. Smaller proportions of the respondents indicated larger amounts as follows; US\$1,000- US\$10,000 (1.6%), US\$10,000- US\$100,000 (2.2%), US\$100,000- US\$1,000,000 (0.5%) and over US\$1,000,000 (0.3%).

Another way to view the significant numbers of respondents with knowledge of amounts associated with petty corruption versus

grand corruption is the uneven influence (or access to decision-making levers) of respondents on institutional practices such as procurement, as well as access to information on the same. One’s access to information on HTE procurement not only depends on knowledge of the institutional processes involved but the beneficial owners of companies involved in supplying the relevant products and services. This level of activity is only done at policy/regulatory or institutional (non-academic) management which may have limited scrutiny or understanding by the public. At the same time, the institutional environment may not be conducive for whistle-blowers to speak openly about the larger amounts of transactions involved in education corruption.

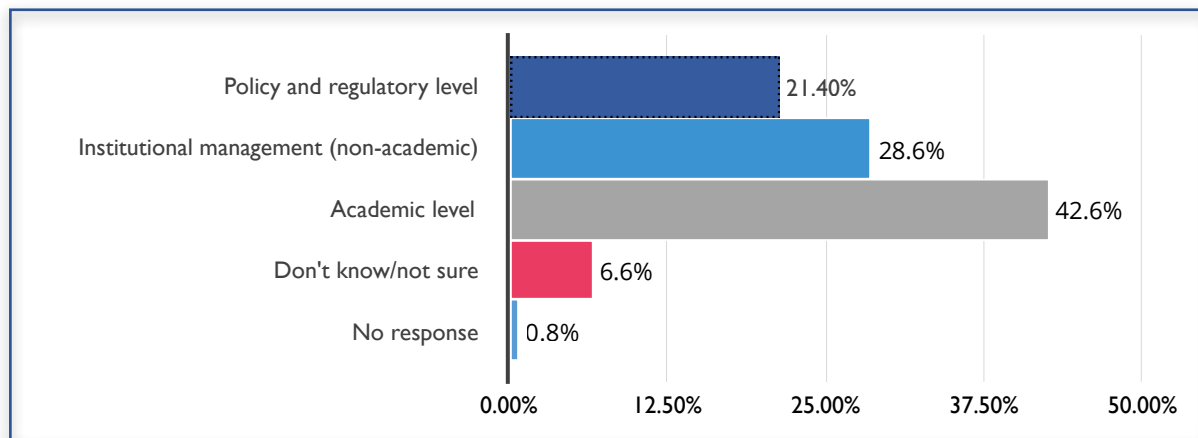
DECISION-MAKING LEVELS WITH THE HIGHEST RISK OF CORRUPTION IN THE HTE SECTOR

The research also sought to highlight the key decision-making levels in HTE where corruption is most prevalent. Three crucial areas were identified, and these include; (i) the policy and regulatory level, (ii) institutional management (non-academic), and (iii) academic level.

Respondents were therefore asked which of these they thought had the highest prevalence of corruption. Most of them (42.6%) indicated that the academic level was the one with the highest risk of corruption. This was followed by institutional management (non-academic level) with 28.6% and the policy and regulatory level with 21.4%. A small proportion of the respondents either did not know or were not sure (6.6%) while the other had no response (0.8%). When viewed together with responses on the most prevalent forms of corruption in the HTE chain (sextortion, academic fraud, nepotism, and bribery), these findings shine the spotlight on the teaching and learning environment. However, this does not diminish the impact or importance of corruption at the institutional management, and policy, and regulatory levels since all these are co-dependent components of the same system. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 6 below.

Figure 6 The Process/Stage in the HTE Chain with the Highest Risk of Corruption

Higher and tertiary education value chain with the highest risk of corruption



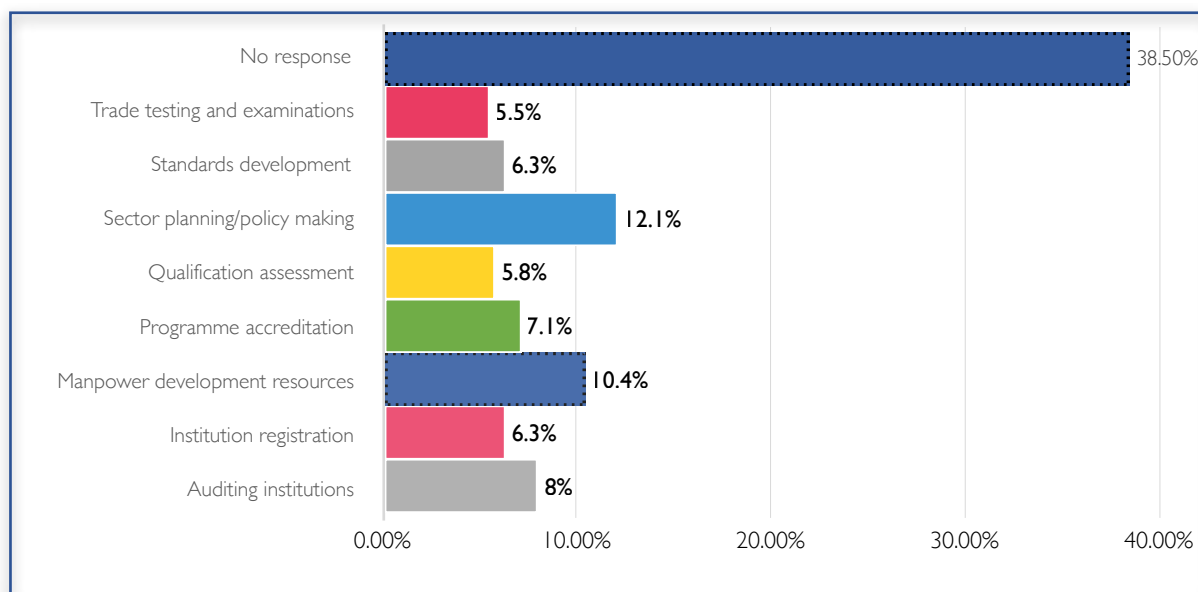
PROCESS/STAGE IN THE POLICY AND REGULATORY LEVEL WITH THE HIGHEST CORRUPTION RISK

To drill down further to understand corrupt acts occurring within each of the levels (i.e. the policy and regulatory, institutional management, or academic levels), respondents were asked which operational process or stage within each level they identify as having the highest corruption risk. These processes/stages correspond with what Transparency International (2023) calls “decision points”, which reflect the idea that actors in positions of authority have the responsibility to make decisions that are intended to serve specific purposes. However, if the actor behaves corruptly at this decision point (i.e. abusing their entrusted power for private gain), this leads to a “deviated decision” which does not result in the intended outcome for beneficiaries (Transparency International, 2023).

As regards the policy and regulatory level, most respondents (38.5%) had ‘no response’ showing that stakeholders have a scant understanding of the operational processes of this level in the HTE sector. Notwithstanding, 12.1% pointed out sector planning/policymaking as a process with the highest corruption risk within the policy and regulatory level. Further 10.4% highlighted the administration of manpower development resources as being highly exposed to corruption risks. Other processes with high corruption risks at policy and regulatory levels according to respondents included auditing of institutions (8%), programme accreditation (7.1%), institution registration (6.3%), standards development (6.3%), qualification assessment (5.8%), trade testing and examinations (5.5%). Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7 Process in the Policy and Regulatory Level with the highest Corruption Risk

Process in the policy and regulatory level with the highest corruption risk



While 38% of respondents either did not answer or were unsure about the process with the highest corruption risk at the policy and regulatory level, this lack of knowledge varies across diverse types of respondents. For instance, of students enrolled in higher education institutions demonstrated less awareness of corruption risks (41%) than HEI employees (32%). In contrast, all surveyed policymakers were able to identify the processes they believed carried the highest corruption risks. The group with the least awareness at the policy and regulatory level was civil society members, with 57% unable to identify a process most prone to corruption.

The specific processes identified as posing the highest corruption risks varied among different respondent groups. Policymakers responding showed the highest consensus, with 70% identifying sector planning and policymaking as particularly vulnerable. This process was also the most frequently chosen by HEI employees and media members. Conversely, the top choice among students, civil society members, and government

employees was manpower development and resource allocation.

PROCESS /STAGE AT INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT LEVEL WITH THE HIGHEST CORRUPTION RISK

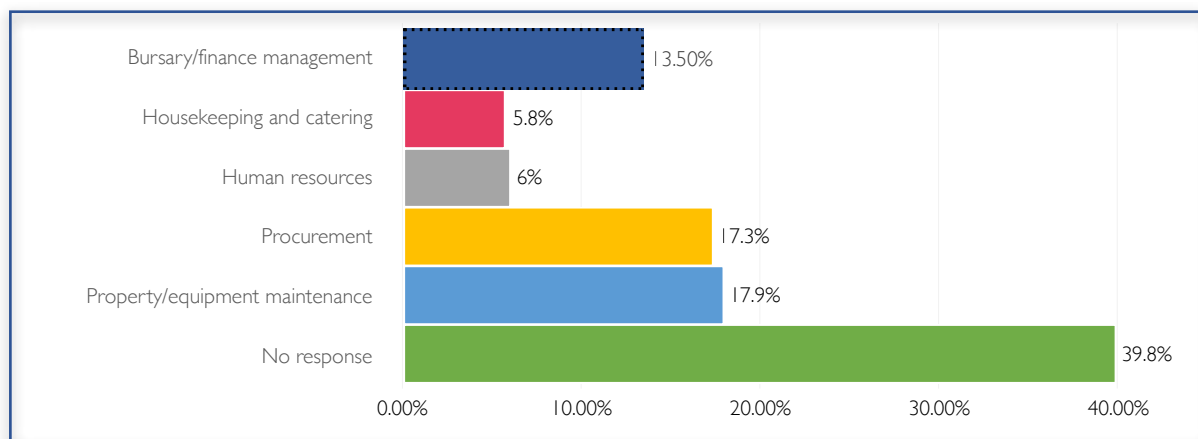
As regards the institutional management level most of the respondents (39.8%) had 'no response' to the question of which process/ stage had the highest corruption risk. Over and above most respondents with 'no response' 17.9% highlighted Property and Maintenance as being most vulnerable to corruption risks. A further 17.3% cited Procurement as vulnerable as compared to 13.5% citing the Bursary or Finance Management process. Other areas or stages or processes identified in the research included Human Resources (6%), Housekeeping, and Catering (5.8%) as vulnerable to corruption. The fact that Property and Maintenance and Procurement attract the greatest concern at this level is important because corruption in these

processes attracts resources ‘away’ from the teaching and learning process due to rent-seeking behaviour, which is described in greater detail in the qualitative responses on

‘impacts of education corruption’ below. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8 Process /Stage at Institutional Management Level with the Highest Corruption Risk

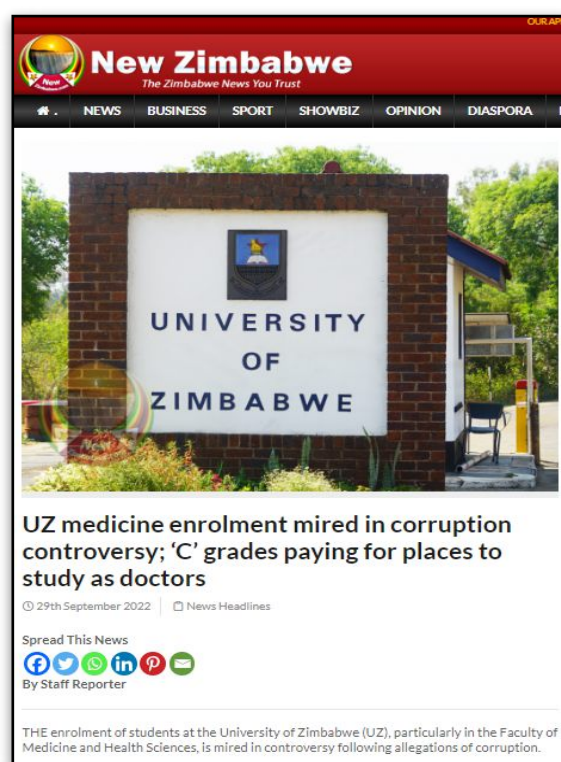
Process/Stage at institutional management level with the highest corruption risk



PROCESS /STAGE AT THE ACADEMIC LEVEL WITH THE HIGHEST CORRUPTION RISK

As regards the academic level, most respondents (22.3%) had no answer on this issue mirroring the dearth of knowledge on operational processes in the preceding two levels. However, a corresponding 22.3% identified ‘enrolment’ as being the process with the highest risk of corruption. However, 13.7% said the processes linked to students’ welfare as having the highest risk of corruption. A further 11% cited the processes linked to examinations and graduation. Other processes exposed to high corruption risks at the academic level include the appointments of teaching staff (10.4%), teaching and learning (8.5%), student representation (7.4%) and research (4.4%).

The idea that enrolment has the highest risk at the academic level implies that under-qualified or undeserving students (and even family and friends) are taken in for



(Photo: www.newzimbabwe.com)

Respondents rated enrolment as the decision point with the highest risk of corruption

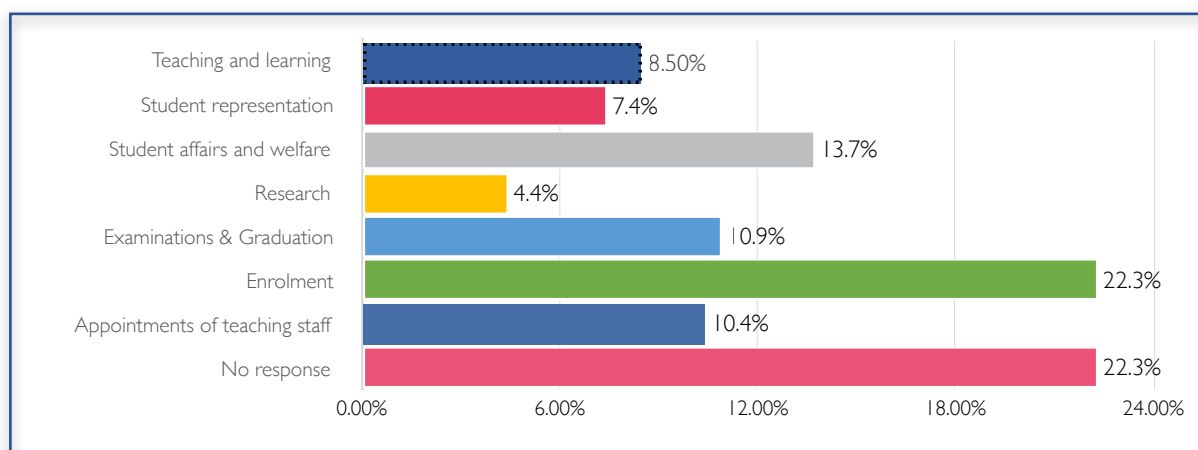
specialised, competitive programmes. There is also the risk of payment of bribes (or sexual favours) to academic staff involved in enrolling students into courses. Such actions

may prevent affected institutions from registering the most capable students, thereby sustaining the credibility and value of qualifications that they subsequently award. This in turn impacts their ability to contribute

to society and the country's overall social and economic development. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9 Process/Stage at Academic Level with the Highest Corruption Risk

Processes with the highest corruption risk at academic level



The lack of awareness of corruption risks at the academic level was the lowest among the three levels, with only 22% of respondents unable to name a process. Notably, all policymakers could identify a process at the academic level with the highest corruption risk. In contrast, the groups with the lowest awareness at this level were members of the media (33%), students enrolled in HEIs (26%), and civil society members (24%). Enrolment was the process most respondents (22%) identified as more prone to corruption. This choice was particularly prevalent among students (39%) and HEI employers (21%). However, policymakers showed the most consensus, with 60% of them selecting the appointment of teaching staff as the process most prone to corruption at the academic level.

Overall, one salient issue that can be picked when comparing responses for all levels is the dearth of knowledge among respondents

on processes with the highest corruption risk at the Policy & Regulatory level, and the Institutional Management level. This is because 38% of respondents who answered this question on the Policy & Regulatory level said they did not know which process in that domain had the highest risk. On the other hand, 39% said they did not know which process in institutional management had the highest corruption risk. This lack of awareness of areas with the highest corruption risk can be explained in terms of the asymmetry of detailed information on the HTE sector between decision-makers and external stakeholders, which can make it potentially difficult to monitor their actions or hold them to account on sector planning and the management of institutions. Given the scant knowledge of how these levels in HTE work amongst respondents, further research into the corruption risks occurring in the relevant domains is necessary, coupled with public

education to foster a greater understanding necessary to hold duty bearers to account.

PERCEIVED LEVEL OF INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS OF THE NACS

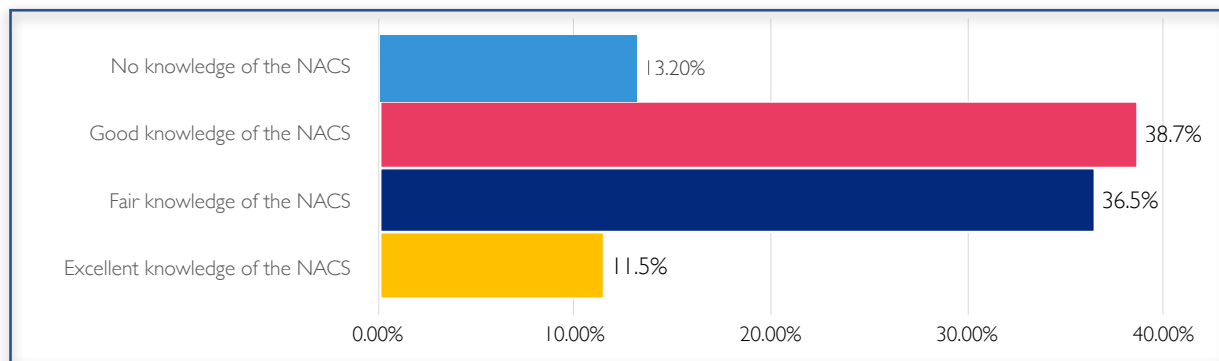
Article 5 (Chapter II) of the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) on 'Preventive Measures' charges each state party to develop and implement or maintain effective, coordinated anti-corruption policies that promote the participation of society and reflect the principles of the rule of law, proper management of public affairs and public property, integrity, transparency, and accountability. In this regard, in July 2020 Zimbabwe launched the NACS (2020-2024). The online survey therefore sought to gather information on the perceived levels of awareness by institutions in the HTE sector of the NACS.

indicated that institutions and departments in the HTE sector had 'good knowledge' of the NACS while 36.5% said they had 'fair knowledge.' A further 13.2% said the institutions had 'no knowledge' of the NACS while 11.5% said the institutions had 'excellent knowledge.' Overall, the findings show that stakeholders expect institutions in the HTE sector to be knowledgeable about the NACS. However, this wide knowledge of the NACS contrasts sharply with the perception that corruption in the HTE sector is currently a concern above, with various acts confirmed in the online survey. This raises questions on the participation of players in the HTE sector to realise the objectives of the NACS.

As shown below in Figure 10, a sizeable proportion of the respondents (38.7%)

Figure 10 Perceived Level of Institutional Awareness of the NAC

Level of awareness by institutions/departments in the higher and tertiary education sector of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS)



INSTITUTIONAL READINESS IN HTE TO IMPLEMENT STRATEGIES/POLICIES IN TAI.

Closely linked to the current levels of awareness of the NACS, the survey also assessed the extent to which HEIs and related ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) are ready or equipped to implement strategies/policies on anti-corruption, or TAI. There were mixed views amongst the surveyed

respondents with a majority (61%) indicating that institutions/departments were 'fairly well equipped' to implement formal strategies/policies on anti-corruption or TAI. A further 19.5% reported that these institutions were 'well equipped' while another 19.5% said they were 'not at all equipped' with these formal

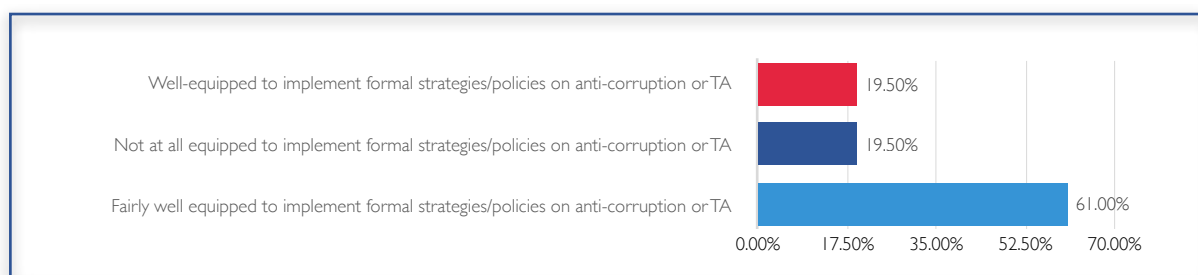
strategies/policies to support anti-corruption or TAI practices.

The fact that most respondents rate these institutions as *'fairly well equipped'* to implement strategies and policies necessary to combat corrupt activities raises questions when viewed together with the various forms of corrupt practices reported in previous sections suggesting a lack of willingness and resolve or in

the worst case, an *'informed non-participation.'* In theory, the relatively high institutional levels of awareness of the NACS, and moderately high degree of their institutional readiness to implement the right strategies to tackle education corruption must correspond with a high number of respondents not viewing education in HTE as a significant problem. Responses to this question are summarised in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11 The State of Institutional Readiness in HTE to Implement Strategies/policies on Anti-corruption, or TAI

Readiness of higher education institutions to implement strategies/policies on anti-corruption or transparency and accountability and integrity (TAI)



KNOWLEDGE OF PUBLIC ANTICORRUPTION INSTITUTIONS IN ZIMBABWE

Respondents were also surveyed on their professional or institutional knowledge about public institutions that are mandated to deal with corruption in Zimbabwe. Since the ratification of UNCAC, Zimbabwe has domesticated the requirements of the Convention through several legal frameworks. For example, the 2013 constitution created the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission (ZACC) and the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) under Chapter 13, with a broad mandate to fight corruption in the country (Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). Several acts of parliament also create a broader institutional framework for anti-corruption (or competent authorities), which includes various MDAs, law enforcement agencies, and independent

constitutional bodies that are not listed here for the economy of space.

Concerning the knowledge of public institutions that are mandated to deal with corruption in Zimbabwe, most of the respondents (41.8%) who took part in the survey indicated that they had 'good knowledge' of anti-corruption institutions. Meanwhile, 36% had 'fair knowledge' of these anti-corruption institutions. Those with 'excellent knowledge' of these anti-corruption institutions constituted 15.7%. A small proportion of the respondents (6.6%) pointed out that they did not know existing anti-corruption institutions.

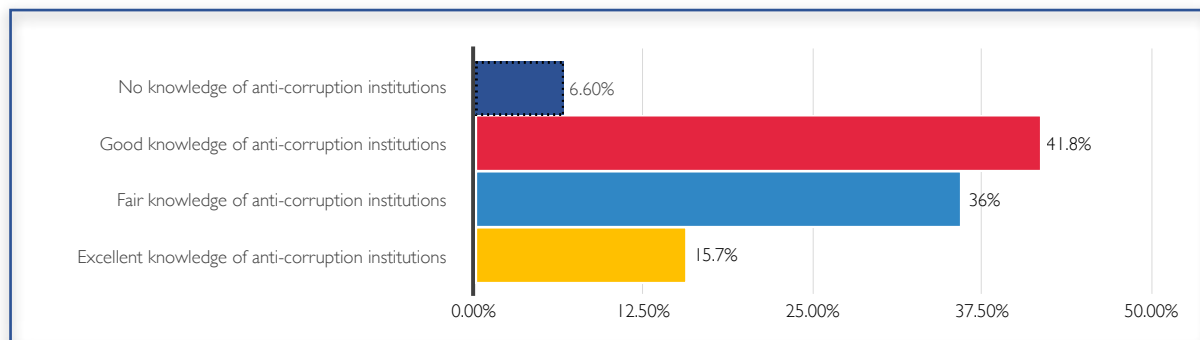
As reflected in Figure 12 below, the findings show that respondents have good knowledge of existing public institutions that

are mandated with the task of dealing with corruption issues in Zimbabwe including the HTE sector. The readiness of these

institutions to deal with corrupt activities in the sector is looked at in closer detail in the following section.

Figure 12 Respondents’ Knowledge of Public Anticorruption Institutions in Zimbabwe

Knowledge on public institutions which are mandated to deal with corruption in Zimbabwe



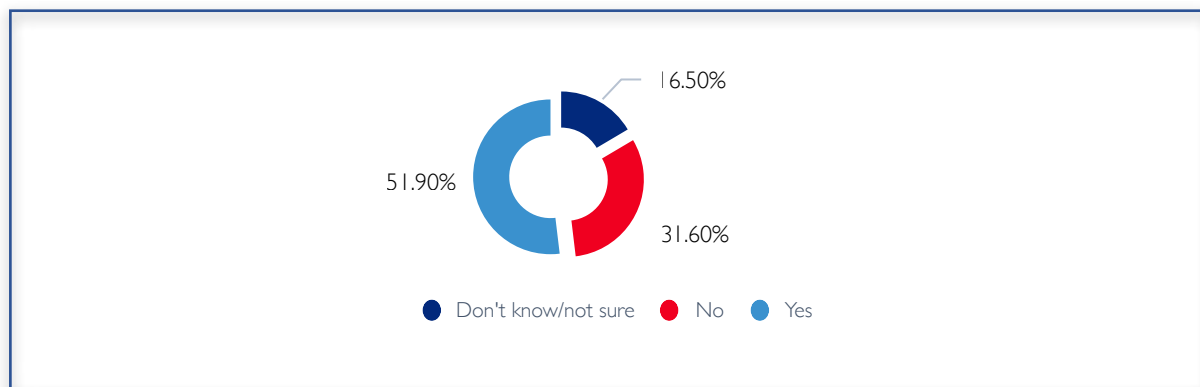
READINESS OF PUBLIC ANTI-CORRUPTION INSTITUTIONS TO ADDRESS CORRUPTION IN HTE

Apart from the awareness of public institutions that are mandated to deal with corruption in Zimbabwe, the research also surveyed respondents on their readiness to deal with corruption in the HTE sector. As shown in Figure 13 below, most of the respondents (51.9%) indicated that these public anti-corruption institutions were ready to deal with education corruption while 31.6% were of the view that they were not ready. A small proportion (16.5%) pointed out that they did not know or were not sure about the readiness of these public anti-

corruption institutions to curb corruption practices within the HTE sector. Whilst the findings show high levels of awareness of the public anti-corruption institutions (41.8% above), as well as their perceived high level of readiness to combat corruption; the perception that corruption is currently a serious problem by 40.9% of respondents in Figure 12 above casts doubt over the current efficacy of these anti-corruption institutions to deal with the type and extent of corrupt activities within the sector.

Figure 13 Readiness of Public Anti-corruption Institutions to address Corruption in HTE

Readiness of public institutions mandated to deal with education corruption



04

QUALITATIVE DATA

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS FROM THE KIIS

The quantitative data presented in the preceding section gave details on the severity, and extent, of corruption in Zimbabwe's HTE sector. The research also conducted interviews with numerous key informants to

gather their views and opinions on the subject at hand to corroborate the findings from the online survey. This section summarises the qualitative findings and analysis.

EXISTENCE OF CORRUPTION IN THE HTE SECTOR WITHIN THE LAST 3-5 YEARS AND ITS EXTENT/ SEVERITY

Respondents in the KIIS were asked whether they think there is corruption in HTE, as well as the extent or severity of it in the preceding 3-5 years. One respondent said:

Like any other sector it is a microcosm of the situation at national level. Once corruption increases at national level it is evident that it is now rampant and systemic. This means every sector (public and private as well a civil society) are characterised by endemic and systemic corruption. HEIs have not been inoculated against the virus of corruption. So absolutely, corruption in the HTE sector exists and it is increasing. The endemic scale of corruption is also corroborated by regular surveys measuring public attitudes on economic, political, and social matters (Interview, 25 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

The respondent also lamented that when students and other concerned groups protest corrupt acts, they are arrested instead of the institution remedying the situation mirroring events at the national level. As reflected in the quote above, the sector is classified as an important subset of the wider society, and hence is vulnerable to and manifests acts of corruption that are prevailing within the existing political, economic and social milieu. This suggests that there is transferability of corrupt practices between the national level and various sub-sectors including HTE.

Another respondent said, *"It [corruption] is there [in HTE], and it is on the increase due to poverty, low salaries and high standards of living (Sic.)"* (Interview, 19 October 2022 HEI employee). This was echoed by another who said, *'There are serious levels of corruption in the education sector, it is getting worse as the economy continues to deteriorate'* (Interview, 16 September 2022, HEI learner). In this regard, these respondents highlight the close relationship between the deteriorating economy and the increase of corruption in HTE.

In another KII, the current state of corruption was described metaphorically as having reached the same levels as 'stage 4 cancer' mainly because public officials are no longer shy to demand bribes nor hide their appetite for them (Interview, 22 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative). This sentiment resonates with the findings of TI Z's 2021 National Bribe Payers' Index (NBPI) study which analysed the dynamics of bribery in the public sector in Zimbabwe. Briefly, the study found that bribery is still rampant in most public institutions, with more than half of citizens indicating that they have paid a bribe

within the preceding 12 months (TI Z, 2022). The fact that this and other respondents link bribe-taking to the enrolment of students infers that there is bribe taking place in state-owned HEIs in that area of operations.

Indeed, when the above responses are looked at, the state of corruption in Zimbabwe has in recent years worsened as highlighted by various global indices to measure the phenomenon like the Corruption Perception Index (CPI). This deterioration has dealt a detrimental blow to the growth of the economy while affecting social service delivery, with HEIs not spared from its negative effects. In a vicious cycle, the challenging economic environment emerging from these increasingly high levels of corruption in turn intensifies poverty and lowers the prevailing standards of living, which is fertile ground for corruption to take root in the sector.

THE FORMS OF CORRUPTION PRACTICES CURRENTLY EXISTING WITHIN THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

Respondents in the KIIs also gave responses on the types of corruption that they have observed in the sector:

In contrast to 21.4% of respondents in the survey part of the research indicating that the Policy and Regulatory Level of the sector was the most vulnerable to corruption, none of the KII respondents was able to indicate any specific forms of corruption. This might indicate that this level in the sector is either not an 'open entity' to external stakeholders or not well understood by them.

However, regarding the forms of corruption in the institutional management/non-academic side of HTE, a crucial area that was identified by several key informants as a

hotspot for corruption is the procurement process within HEIs which the findings show is vulnerable to rent-seeking behaviour where tender processes are manipulated for kickbacks. Another form of corruption involved embezzlement, characterised by the siphoning of financial and any other institutional resources by staff and other key

actors in the sector and diverting them for personal gain. There was also corruption cited in the way hostels are allocated because of the shortage of student accommodation in tertiary institutions (Interview: 15 October 2022 with a media representative).

The institutional management/non-academic side of HTE was also linked to nepotism in terms of favouritism in personnel appointments and promotions of staff. One respondent said:

There is recruitment of lecturers along ethnic lines, or in one instance 'Karanganisation' of departments or institutional administration. The result is that one ethnic group now dominates the apex of many faculties in one state university, in some cases with 90% representation. Academic staff are not being recruited on merit. This is closely linked to the frustration and subsequent dismissals of some key staff on spurious grounds to create space for kinsmen (Interview, 25 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative).

Other areas identified in the KII relate to the academic level. Many KII respondents echoed the idea that processes such as enrolment are a cause for concern given that corrupt activities take place at this level. Undeserving and underqualified students are given places in some degree or diploma programmes within these institutions at the expense of qualified students. Overall, this raises the risk of the quality of qualifications given out and the calibre of students produced as well being compromised.

Furthermore, sextortion involving female and male lecturers has been identified as a common corrupt activity that takes place in the sector; and in some instances, this

involves students proactively bribing lecturers to pass their courses. Said one respondent, "One type of corruption that exists in the higher education system is sextortion. These are the key ones (sic.) because, obviously, bribery and nepotism cannot be completely ruled out" (Interview: 15 September 2022 with an employee/representative of a media institution). Another respondent echoed this citing the issue of the awarding of undeserved marks in exchange for cash or sex; lecturers doing assignments for students; bribes to get enrolment or other internal opportunities, and sexual exploitation (Interview: 17 October 2022 with a media representative). Another respondent added;

In terms of how they conduct their courses, some of the instructors are corrupt. Sometimes they engage in sextortion as well as being paid to pass people. The administration level's procurement procedure is a popular place for corruption to occur. It

has a negative impact on the number of degrees we earn (Interview: 16 September 2022 with policymaker)

The idea expressed in the KIs that students proactively bribe lecturers with sexual favours is consistent with the idea of sexually transmitted marks (STM) in Ncube (2019).¹

Over and above sextortion, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation, as highlighted by one respondent who said:

Most recently young people were doing lectures on Zoom and WhatsApp and at times most of the students because of accessibility issues didn't really grasp some of the concepts and some of the lecturers ended up demanding some form of payment either to teach these young people (extra lessons) or to give them information that could help them with their exams (Interview, 14 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative).

The foregoing issues linked to sextortion were echoed in a joint report by the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development; and Women Affairs, Community and Small to Medium Enterprise Development [hereafter the two Parliamentary Committees] presented to the National Assembly on 4 May 2022 on their inquiry into the 'Prevalence of Sexual harassment in Higher and Tertiary Education Institutions.' Briefly, their report, prepared after their visit to 15 HEIs reveals that both students and staff reported a high prevalence of sexual harassment in HEIs. Physical harassment in particular was most prevalent between students and staff (Parliament of Zimbabwe in Veritas, 2022). Where teacher training colleges are concerned, sexual harassment was highest between these two groups during the supervision of the Curriculum Depth Study (CDS) projects, whilst Polytechnic students cited the continuous assessment as an area of high risk of the same (Parliament of Zimbabwe in Veritas, 2022).

Whilst there was a high prevalence of sexual harassment in HEIs noted, the report said that most cases go unreported due to a combination of factors such as the fear of intimidation and victimisation; stigmatisation; the lack of institutional sexual harassment policies; lack of employee awareness and buy-in to institutional policies; lack of trust in existing reporting mechanisms, lack of training in handling reports; the lack of adequate student accommodation, rising poverty levels and financial constraints creating a desperate atmosphere rendering students more susceptible to sexual harassment (Parliament of Zimbabwe in Veritas, 2022).

On other forms of corruption, another key informant said that most corrupt acts prevalent in the sector as aligned with the 5 main offences in the criminal code linked to corruption, such as (a) bribery; (ii) using corrupt/fake documents; (iii) concealment of a transaction from a principal; (iv) concealing personal interest in transactions and (v) criminal abuse of office by principals (Interview: 26 September 2022 Public Sector Respondent). As regards bribery, the respondent said "The trend of bribery to get a place is rampant. As regards bribery, the aforementioned

¹ The study defined STM as a form of transactional lecturer-student sexual relations amounting to academic misconduct and student cheating

report by the two Parliamentary Committees found that some lecturers asked for money to give students a rewrite or a higher mark (Parliament of Zimbabwe in Veritas, 2022).

A case study given by the respondent is that of a lecturer manipulating date stamps used in the enrolment process. Students are also interviewed in batches whereby a network of lecturers will collude to pre-select and admit students from a shortlist of candidates” (Interview: 26 September 2022 Public Sector Respondent). The fraudulent issuance of results in cases where students are not allowed to get them for non-payment of tuition because they need to get employed was cited as an example of the use of corrupt/fake documents (**Interview: 26 September 2022 Public Sector Respondent**).

As regards the concealment of a transaction from a principal the respondent gave the example:

*The perpetrator deliberately understates acts within the formal system e.g., to conceal private tutoring. Some lecturers do not deliver within the budgeted time and then charge students for extra tutoring outside teaching hours. Students feel pressured to pay for extra tutoring to avoid the financial and logistical inconvenience of writing supplementary exams. An example is a lecturer who set up a WhatsApp group and charged students US\$61 for extra tutoring via that platform. Furthermore, he charged students to do their coursework and sold them exam material (**Interview: 26 September 2022, Public Sector Respondent**).*

As regards criminal abuse of office by principals, the respondent gave the example of the Principal of a Teachers' College who interfered in the recruitment of a lecturer for a specialised course by putting psychological pressure on the interview panel. The result was that the person recruited for the position did not have the requisite qualifications for that position (Interview: 26 September 2022 Public Sector Respondent).

The foregoing shows the range of the forms of corruption occurring in the HTE sector at different levels. Whilst the specific forms of corruption taking place at the policy and regulatory level could not be ascertained from the Klls, the institutional management and academic levels seemed most afflicted with various identifiable forms of corruption with clear examples mentioned. Procurement malpractice in institutional management sticks out as the most prominent form of

TeOne students leak HEXCO exam papers

Local News | By Trevor Mutsauro | Dec. 15, 2023



Elton James (23), Kudzai Chumutsa (23) and Bradley Mangombe (24) were granted US\$50 bail and remanded to January 18 for trial commencement.

THREE students from the TelOne Centre for Learning yesterday appeared before magistrate Dennis Mangosi facing a charge of leaking HEXCO examination papers.

Elton James (23), Kudzai Chumutsa (23) and Bradley Mangombe (24) were granted US\$50 bail and remanded to January 18 for trial

(Photo: www.newsday.co.zw)
The active participation by the youth in education corruption will be a setback for national anticorruption efforts.

corruption coupled with embezzlement, corrupt allocation of accommodation in student welfare, and nepotism in the recruitment of staff.

The academic level on the other hand is mostly afflicted with sextortion in the interaction between teaching staff and learners according to the Klls. The proactive or active participation of the youth in this form of corruption has implications for the

issue of the influence of corruption over the next generation as highlighted above by Denisova-Schmidt (2018) in A. Curaj et al. (2018). There are also unqualified admissions to courses and blackmail i.e., creating the necessity for private tutoring. The linkage with the existing criminal code would suggest that the competent authorities are currently equipped to deal with some forms of education corruption using current legislation albeit not comprehensive.

THE MAJOR PROTAGONISTS OF CORRUPTION IN THE HTE SECTOR

In this section, respondents were asked to identify who the primary agents or instigators of corruption within the HTE sector were. In this regard, one respondent gave a detailed account of how all levels within the HTE sector cannot be completely exonerated from corruption. The respondent asserted;

One cannot exonerate all levels within the HTE chain. However, the least culpable are lecturers except in instances where some of them engage in leaking exam materials or perpetrate sextortion. As once hinted in a past publication of Horizon Magazine, 'a thigh for a pass' is sometimes perpetrated by academic staff.

The administration within HEIs are the ones who leak exams and results because it is their role to administer the related processes. As a result, some universities mitigate against this practice by involving fewer and fewer people in the process of administering examinations.

*In higher education institutions, there are instances where certain connections between the ministry and the leadership of state HEIs may contribute to unethical practices within the sector. Sextortion is also prevalent in the recruitment of staff by departmental chairpersons and deans as well as within some ministerial departments **(Interview, 25 October 2022, with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)***

This is echoed by another respondent who said;

The major drivers of corruption in the HTE sector include virtually all stakeholders. While students and lecturers are locked in academic fraud, it is because management at all levels is failing to create an environment where proper education can take place. The government as both a policy and regulatory player and also a facilitator in higher education is also responsible, both directly and indirectly. The buying of degrees or getting degrees done on a student's behalf includes government officials and politicians. Indirectly, the environment of poverty marked with a high fetish for degrees, especially postgraduate degrees (MA and PhD), which is encouraged by the government has also

contributed much to this academic fraud (Interview: 6 September 2022 HEI employee).

The policy and regulatory bodies have been identified as a major driver of corruption in the sector. This is highlighted by one respondent during an interview who noted that;

Regulatory and policy-making bodies take their time to consider the current situation before acting. For instance, the economic climate is a significant factor. The remuneration of lecturers who solicit bribes from students has not been changed in any way. The lecturers will not ask for bribes if they are adequately paid. Once more, the student unions are failing to inform their constituents of the risks associated with such malpractices (Interview: 27 September 2022 with HEI employee)

One respondent asserted that some individuals at the policy level have also been in the corruption feeding trough whilst they were heading learning institutions. In this regard, Policymakers interfere with the appointments so that the beneficiaries can feed back benefits to them. There is therefore a 'cascade effect' from the policy level down to institutional and back up. Individuals deserving of these positions are pushed out of the system (Interview: 26 September 2022 Public Sector Respondent). The prevalence of corruption within this level is best understood in the context of political corruption, which is defined as the "manipulation of policies, institutions, and rules of procedure in the allocation of resources and financing by political decision-makers, who abuse their position to sustain their power, status and wealth" (Transparency International, 2019).

As regards institutional/non-academic management, one respondent said, "The administrators are properly placed to drive corruption. The students are just participants in this initiative, but the major drivers are the administrators" (Interview, 26 September 2022 with policymaker).



(Photo: www.thestandard.co.zw)
Respondents raised concern with the recruitment of lecturers along ethnic lines.

The foregoing shows that drivers of corruption are found throughout the HTE chain where opportunities present themselves for individuals to the systemic use of one's position of influence or authority in the provision of educational goods and services, for private or material gain. Different actors usually drive acts of corruption both within the institutions themselves and also by external stakeholders as well suggesting that the entire value chain has been affected by it.

QUALITATIVE RESPONSES ON DECISION-MAKING LEVELS WITH THE HIGHEST RISK OF CORRUPTION IN THE HTE SECTOR

Noting that the sector is comprised of multiple actors and processes contributing to one ecosystem or domain, the research went further to understand the decision-making areas with the highest corruption risk in the HTE sector. As a response to this question, one respondent asserted that whilst all the decision-making levels within the HTE sector were vulnerable to corruption risks, the non-academic (Institutional Management) at the apex had the highest risk. The respondent noted;

.....
All stages but enrolment is the most corrupt (Sic.). Students who are not even qualified for certain programs get them because of connections, there is also a lot of corruption at the attachment stage, there is corruption on exams and results, there is also corruption on the funding of student clubs by the university (Interview, 20 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

Echoing the above sentiment, another respondent pointed out that institutional management was vulnerable to corruption risks. This is highlighted in the following quote;

.....
Institutional (non-academic) management of HEIs is the area or stage most vulnerable to corruption risks. Whilst institutions in the sector are interlinked, 'a fish rots first from the head' explaining the idea that management is the most corrupt. The context of this is that the style of governance that prevails at the moment tends to be authoritarian where the Executive level runs higher and tertiary institutions by decree (Interview, 25 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

Procurement was cited in several KIs as the area of institutional (non-academic) management of HEIs with the highest risk. These findings from the KIs correspond with those from the online survey on the question of the decision-making levels with the highest corruption risk in the HTE Sector, where 17.3% of surveyed respondents believe that Procurement is an area of high corruption risk. Procurement is one premise contributing to the idea that administration (non-academic) is the most vulnerable to corruption risk within HTE institutions. Respondents also highlighted that the administration (non-academic) level is known more for the types of academic fraud involving unqualified admissions, bribery/favouritism in the examination, management of results; or nepotism and patronage in the allocation of attachment places and the funding of student clubs by the university.

Another respondent located the highest risk as being at the policy and regulatory level, saying;

.....
HEIs do not interact much with policy levels because their executives have been given carte blanche by policy and regulatory authorities, thereby limiting accountability. The relevant councils with oversight over the sector are therefore largely symbolic because they are silent in the face of education corruption. Retired councillors are not replaced and those that remain or appointed reflect the political landscape. The result is that the regulatory bodies by omission or commission have no effective oversight over the sector.

The Senates at the institutional level rubber stamp the decrees from above rather than debate issues or apply intellectual rigour in the true spirit of academia (Interview, 25 October 2022, with a CSO or think tank employee/representative).

A contrary view from the preceding sentiment, which was expressed in another KII is that the relevant regulatory councils are fully functional, particularly in the area of quality assurance and institutional audits, accreditation, and the monitoring of degree programmes, therefore corruption within HTE is at “the level of zero” (Interview, 1 November 2022, Public Sector Respondent).

Another respondent pointed to the academic level as being the most vulnerable to corruption, saying:

Corruption is at its highest risk in the classroom, or one can say in that space where knowledge is produced. The university is a knowledge factory and most of this knowledge is manufactured in classrooms and in research. These are the spaces that have been mostly poisoned by corruption, where some people have their dissertations written for them by certain individuals in exchange for money or other material benefits. I limit it to this space because that is the space with which I am familiar.

It could be happening in policy or regulatory spaces because if you look at the quality of some degrees or universities that the Ministry of Higher Education gives licenses, you could tell that something is wrong. There have also been stories of students complaining of being failed at university because they had turned down a lecturer or their relationship has gone sour. There is also probably sexual corruption or corruption linked to illicit relationships between lecturers and students, something that can be called a degree for sex or sex for marks (Interview: 6 September 2022 HEI employee).

One interviewee highlighted that certain academic establishments may be more vulnerable to ethical breaches due to the incorporation of production units under the framework of Education 5.0. Consequently, educational institutions are permitted to establish specialised business units (SBUs) which are at risk of being used for private gain by the academic and administrative leadership (Interview: 26 September 2022 Public Sector Respondent).

When the above responses in the qualitative section are looked at, it is clear that all stages within the HTE sector as well as types of institutions are currently perceived as being vulnerable to corruption. Overall, judging from the foregoing responses, a major contributory factor is the running of institutions through ‘rule by decree’ rather than the consultation or democracy necessary for running academic institutions, as well as a system that favours those who are connected to administrative staff.

THE DRIVERS FOR CORRUPT PRACTICES IN THE HTE SECTOR

The research also delved into the reasons or causes influencing individuals or groups to engage in various forms of corruption in HTE. The qualitative responses in this section came from both the online survey and KIs.

ONLINE QUALITATIVE RESPONSES ON THE DRIVERS OF CORRUPTION IN HTE

As a follow-up to the question on the major forms of corruption in the HTE Sector in the last 3-5 years respondents in the online survey were asked to specify the main causes or drivers for the forms of corruption they had highlighted. In the online survey, **economic hardships** and resultant **poverty** were by far the biggest cause of academic corruption. The economic hardship was reported to impact both providers and recipients of higher education. It is plausible to assert that such an economic and social context is conducive for petty corruption taking place between the frontline staff in HEIs, and/or related departments, and the learners. On one hand, the harsh living conditions of families or individuals seeking higher and tertiary level education place them in a vulnerable position where they can be abused to access limited enrolment places, as well as navigate the courses quickly to attain high grades and qualifications to attain employment. On the other hand, **poor remuneration of staff** within HEIs emerging from the qualitative inputs to the online survey was seen as driving them towards bribe-taking behaviour to cope with the economic hardships.

Greed for material wealth was also a significant driver of corruption in the qualitative inputs to the online survey.

Qualitative responses in the online survey highlighted **the quest for power, influence, or superiority** among individuals as a major driver for education corruption. A significant number of responses from the online survey also pointed to **patronage politics, politicisation of institutions,** and related **abuse of power** as major causes of HTE corruption. Respondents giving qualitative inputs to the online survey also mentioned the **nature of institutional structures and policies in the HTE sector** as major drivers of corruption. In this regard, they mentioned the **size of the institution, levels of bureaucracy, levels of resources, and external interference** as key to understanding the influence of political interference with institutions.

Furthermore, one respondent said that teaching spaces are **not adequately regulated** leading learners to seek clarifications from lecturers in private spaces, whilst challenging research activities necessitated direct assistance. Together with learners' **desire to excel and fear of failure**, this structural weakness in institutions made learners vulnerable or even negotiate or make offers themselves. Linked to this, the qualitative inputs to the online survey revealed that **academic pressures** faced by students were a major driver of academic corruption. Briefly, the **need to be enrolled in the most competitive programmes** (according to job market demand) without proper qualifications, **poverty, and pressure from parents/society** to complete are major causes of academic corruption. This is exacerbated by learners' **laziness and poor study habits**, making some students active players in academic corruption.

KII QUALITATIVE RESPONSES ON THE DRIVERS OF CORRUPTION IN HTE

On the other hand, respondents in the KIIs provided a myriad of reasons and this included **poverty and an unfavourable economic environment**. In response to this question, one respondent replied;

Taking a political economy approach to analysing corruption in the sector partly explains the reasons why individuals/groups participate in education corruption. Life is now difficult in the country due to prevailing socio-economic conditions. Virtually nobody within the HEIs can survive solely on their current remuneration. This situation again is a microcosm mirroring the national level. As testimony one will observe that university staff are most of the time vending various products and services on top of their day jobs.

*In contrast, plain greed is a major factor at the higher echelons in these institutions. The innate instinct to pilfer national resources can be noted at the policymaking level. The incumbents are then more likely to turn a blind eye to what happens at the institutional level. The individuals and groups that perpetrate these practices engage in selective persecution of people who step on the wrong toes by whistleblowing **(Interview, 25 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)***

A similar sentiment was also expressed by another respondent during an interview who highlighted;

*Poverty remains at the core of the sources of corruption; weak procurement processes; poor remuneration schemes are other drivers of corruption often leaving the aggrieved to find personal remedies outside the confines of the law; then we have the deep-rooted absence of accountability and transparency platforms to encourage student and citizen stewardship, Zimbabwe's government practice of catch and release not forgetting the lack of whistle-blower protection; an inability of the Auditor General to legally enforce remedies on the proponents of financial impropriety stemming from an overbearing influence of clan-based thinking on the decision-making processes which has birthed the crippling effect of nepotism often slowing down the efficiency of public institutions **(Open-ended survey questionnaire response, 22 September 2022)***

According to one respondent, the issue to do with the role of the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) above stems from the fact that most audits from that department on state-owned HEIs and related MDAs have been focused on financial statements rather than corruption i.e. the abuse of entrusted authority for private gain. Past audits have therefore not reported any specific cases of corruption beyond the issues of poor financial controls, weak corporate governance, and poor management of assets (Public Sector Respondent, 20 October 2022).

Some participants in academic corruption are motivated by **the need to progress academically**, as highlighted by a respondent who said that the motivation for students to participate in corruption is the need to pass (Interview, 27 September 2022 with an employee or representative of a Zimbabwean HEI). More light was shed on academic reasons for corruption by another respondent who said:

The most crucial reason for this kind of corruption is the general culture of putting emphasis on qualifications such as MA and PhD rather than knowledge and skills. Degrees have been equated to knowledge and skills when the opposite has always proven to be true. The fetish around postgraduate qualifications has compelled a lot of people to seek degrees by hook or crook... There is also some kind of power around knowledge and some people want degrees, especially PhDs so that they can practice some form of power as seemingly the most knowledgeable in their communities. (Interview: 6 September 2022 HEI employee).

One of the reasons given to explain the occurrence of corruption is more structural in nature. According to one respondent, the curriculum for HTE is decentralised unlike that of the primary and secondary education sector. This **dispersed system of delivering education opens up more scope for corrupt activities by examiners** (Interview: 26 September 2022 Public Sector Respondent). Individuals and groups were also described as taking advantage of **weak governance systems in the sector**, most prominently in the areas of procurement processes. In some instances, nepotism has hindered any course of action being taken by perpetrators because of **kinship ties**, which creates more scope for corruption.

As reflected in the statements above, several reasons have been provided to explain why individuals and groups partake in corrupt activities in the HEI sector, and these cut across political, economic and social considerations.

EXPLORING THE PRESENCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGIES IN HTE INSTITUTIONS

It was important to gauge the state of health with existing anticorruption frameworks (policy or structural) in the HTE sector. Over and above ascertaining whether HTE institutions had formal anticorruption strategies, policies, and units/departments the KIIs also focused on their effectiveness.

Respondents had mixed views on the issue but what came out prominent was the lack of visibility of these institutional frameworks. One respondent noted with concern that these institutional frameworks on anti-corruption must be missing given the high level of corruption that goes undetected amongst HTE institutions, saying:

These must be missing because there is a lot of corruption which is undetected that happens within tertiary institutions and for most students because of just growing in a society where corruption is the norm anywhere and everywhere it becomes very normal

for them to conform. It is in very few spaces where students can challenge certain practices but, in most cases, they are forced to comply. But where there is a strong and viable student union some of those issues could be picked and raised but by large, they go undetected (Interview, 14 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

The foregoing contribution sees students becoming entangled in the web of institutional corruption as a result of the ineffectiveness of the relevant anticorruption strategies, policies, or units. This contributes to the overall prevalence of corruption in HTE overall. Student unions are therefore unable to contribute to the anticorruption fight since there are no auxiliary tactics, regulations, or organisations to aid in their efforts. Another respondent said;

We are yet to hear of any if they are there because I doubt if there any structures in any of the institutions. We have had students some who come for attachment, and they raise these issues year in year out, so we begin to question what these institutions are doing (Interview, 15 September 2022 with an employee/representative of a media institution)

Contrary to the idea expressed above, about the dearth of anti-corruption frameworks in HEIs, other responses suggest that they do exist. One respondent revealed that the regulatory councils provide HEIs with a checklist where most of those issues linked to transparency and integrity are indicated. This includes such issues as frameworks governing how new students are enrolled, and promotion of academic staff among other things (Interview, 1 November 2022, Public Sector Respondent). Furthermore, the key informant revealed that ZACC has insisted on the establishment of integrity committees with all HTE institutions now having them as part and parcel of corporate governance (Interview, 1 November 2022, Public Sector Respondent).



(Photo: www.theherald.co.zw)
ZACC was cited as rolling out anticorruption initiatives targeted at HEIs

However, another respondent said;

They [HTE institutions] do have them but they are there for decoration purposes because with the way the educational sector is structured, they will put all the necessary departments, but the concern is on the effectiveness of the structures or standing for

what they are there for (Interview, 27 September 2022 with a media representative)

Similarly, another respondent asserted;

At the institutional level, there are many notable codes of practices (ordnances) which are now largely symbolic. The HEIs and other related institutions in the HTE chain also have internal auditors who do not report malpractices [beyond their institutional frameworks]. The national anti-corruption infrastructure has been compromised by the authoritarian style of governance. Ideally, universities should be inoculated against this, however, organisational processes are subverted by authoritarianism (Interview, 25 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

Another respondent said

The current strategies/policies and related units at the institutional level are ineffective. It is not clear whether they are redeemable. They need serious resuscitation. The ethical foundation has collapsed. For example, in the past 2-3 years practice at one university has not been guided by policy but by decrees. There is a gap between ordinance and practice (Interview, 25 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

Derisively, another respondent said the institutional frameworks to combat corruption in HREIs are effective in that few people are often caught on the wrong side of corruption. If anything, these would be extreme cases. Corruption cases are often hard to detect (Interview, 17 October 2022 with a media representative) whilst others dismissed them as archaic (Interview, 20 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative) clearly, the foregoing shows that there are indeed formal anticorruption strategies, policies, and units/departments within institutions, albeit with less impact than intended.

ASSESSING THE LEVEL OF INSTITUTIONAL AWARENESS OF THE NACS

The NACS is currently the main framework for coordinating anti-corruption efforts in Zimbabwe and all sectors inclusive of HTE. One of the key objectives of the NACS is the promotion of citizen empowerment and awareness of their rights and responsibilities in the fight against corruption. The NACS also guides public sector agencies, the private sector, and civil society to contribute to the fight against corruption, with a National Anti-Corruption Strategy Steering Committee (NACSSC) established to oversee and monitor the implementation of its key thematic pillars. This means that the country pursues a multistakeholder approach to combatting corruption. With this background, the research also gauged the levels of institutional awareness of the NACS within HTE.

Respondents had different views on the subject however they all agreed that the level of awareness was minimal and, in some instances, non-existent. On the point of non-existent awareness of the NACS within HEIs, one respondent said;

.....
They are not doing anything except if they are doing it internally but publicly, they are not doing anything (sic.). There is no visibility in terms of how they want to fight corruption
(Interview, 15 September 2022 with a media representative)

Another respondent said;

.....
The institutions in the HTE sector have no knowledge of the NACS. Those individuals who do know about it have little or no respect for it. It has been reduced to a political weapon to deal with perceived enemies, hence the phrase “catch and release.”
(Interview, 25 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

The aforementioned sentiment is echoed by another respondent who asserted that key representatives of the HTEs and related departments are not regularly participating in the NACSSC meetings (Interview: 26 September 2022, Public Sector Respondent). One media representative highlighted that their industry has done a lot to raise public awareness of the NACS but there is doubt if HTE institutions have started implementing tenets of this document at the institutional level. This respondent said;

.....
As media, we have highlighted the emergence of that document, but I doubt very much if it is yet in practice in the tertiary education (sic.). In tertiary institutions, the administrators are the main culprits so they would not want to push for something that exposes them. TI Z and other anti-corruption bodies in the country should lead the process of raising awareness probably by doing specific programmes at tertiary institutions just to raise awareness because some of these administrators might be doing it out of ignorance. So, there is a need for anti-corruption institutions to visit these tertiary institutions and address staff and students. ZACC may have to go there and arrest maybe two or three individuals maybe that could help
(Interview, 15 September 2022 with a media representative)

The foregoing shows that the perceived lack of awareness of the NACS at the institutional level partly contributes to the prevalence of corrupt activities at the institutional level. This observation is further compounded by the belief by respondents that NACS functions as a tool for selectively targeting individuals based on their power and political affiliations. Consequently, it can be inferred that NACS has not been adequately prioritised within HTE institutions and relevant departments as an essential anti-corruption framework.

READINESS OF PUBLIC ANTI-CORRUPTION INSTITUTIONS TO ADDRESS CORRUPTION IN HTE

Linked to gauging levels of awareness within the HTE sector the research also sought to assess the readiness of anti-corruption agencies to deal with the forms of corruption peculiar to that sector. One respondent said, “They are not equipped. They do not have the human capital competent to deal with issues of corruption. Secondly, there is a need for them to have the authority to deal with these cases. Thirdly there is a need for financial resources.” (Interview, 27 September 2022 with an HEI employee). Another added;

.....
In as much as they are mandated, they are not equipped, they are toothless dogs because if we are to look at ZACC an institution that has been given direct powers to arrest but they even negotiating with corrupt criminals so it means this will not apply on low-level institutions because their powers are also limited. There is not much that these institutions can do **(Interview, 27 September 2022 with a media representative)**

Nonetheless, the comments above indicate that the public institutions were perceived as not well equipped to deal with education corruption as evidenced in the number of increased corrupt activities. This has made it difficult for them to find a solution for this sector's specific challenges.

THE IMPACT OF HTE CORRUPTION ON DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH

The research also sought to comprehend the effects of corruption in the HTE sector in Zimbabwe. Respondents gave varying opinions when asked about this subject, but they all agreed on one thing: corruption in the HTE sector has a negative impact when looked at from the highest level of abstraction, in terms of the overall development and economic growth of the entire economy. To summarise the impacts of HTE corruption at the macro level, one respondent quoted Anmit Padhy's assertion that a whole nation collapses when education breaks down (see Figure 14). This key informant also highlighted the implication when the products coming out of the HEIs are 'half-baked' with the developmental impacts manifesting in when they are employed in various sectors. For example, the risk of hiring unqualified doctors,

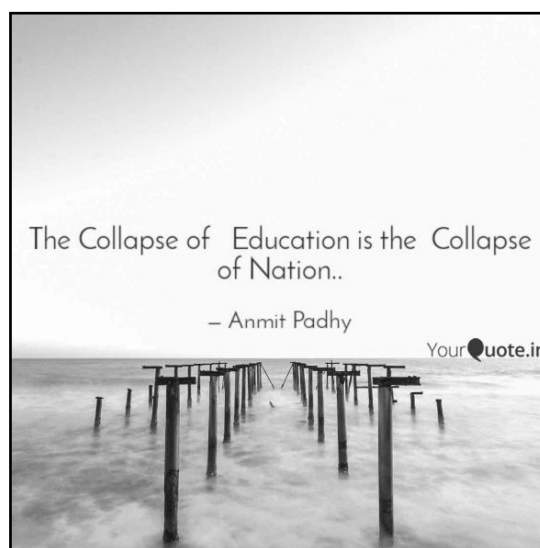


Figure 14 When Education Collapses, a Whole Nation Collapses (Anmit Padhy)

accountants, and engineers is alarming when considering the financial and human costs to the nation due to their lack of skill and competence. (Interview, 17 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative).

Overall corruption in the HTE sector damages the quality of education imparted to the youth. As one key informant pointed out:

It [corruption] affects the delivery of quality and affordable education. The provision of educational material, accommodation, etc all suffer because of corruption. All the money is diverted for personal gains at the expense of building better-quality educational buildings and remunerating lecturers. Underpaying lecturers forces them to unleash a spiral of corrupt tendencies. In the end degrees will be awarded as you pay for them
(Interview, 26 September 2022 with policymaker)

This respondent highlights the impact of diverting resources from investing in top-notch materials and human resources on the quality of education within HTE institutions. The opportunity cost felt when resources for teaching are diverted in turn diminishes the value of the qualifications granted by these institutions since lecturers lack the motivation necessary to deliver on their core mandate, concentrating instead on (sometimes) unscrupulous practices for survival. Students are disadvantaged and, in some instances, have to part ways with money to get favourable treatment. The service subsequently rendered to students is below international standards and norms. Therefore, the quality of education that students receive is impacted largely by corrupt activities. Another respondent noted;

[The] number one effect is that institutions are bound to have half-baked graduates, which is the major one. As a result, those people once they get in the industry, are likely to underperform. In any case, the Short-term effect is it will damage the image of the institution, even the image of the country and the brand, and as a result, the standards of education will certainly go down because of this (Interview, 14 September 2022 with a media representative)

Most notable as highlighted in one KII, is that the quality of higher education in this country needs to be safeguarded from any forms of corruption because the reputation of institutions and degrees they produce would be destroyed (Interview, 1 November 2022, Public Sector Respondent). This was also echoed by another who observed that corruption not only compromises the quality of education but also brings about reputational risk to the institutions and the country as well (Public Sector Respondent, 20 October 2022). According to another respondent:

Corruption lowers the standards in terms of the integrity of our qualifications, it also lowers the quality of education that is offered. Corruption also raises critical questions around the integrity of the recognition of the qualification awarded by a certain institution whether it is authentic or based on merit. It also takes away the benefit of the learning process because it means if one has money to pay, they can forego the learning process and walk out with a qualification, so it is also lowering the standards of the education process itself (Interview, 14 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/ representative).

Indeed, institutions with a history of corrupt behaviour are likely to suffer reputational damage. This will dash the institution's hopes of forging regional, national, and international collaborations; result in losses on investment opportunities from various public and private partners; lower enrolment numbers; generate subpar research outputs due to underappreciated academic staff; and ultimately limit its contribution to economic growth and sustainable development.

SPECIFIC IMPACTS OF HTE CORRUPTION ON WOMEN, THE YOUTH, AND OTHER GROUPS AT RISK OF DISCRIMINATION

The research also sought to ascertain the differentiated impacts of corruption in the HTE sector on women, the youth, and groups at risk of experiencing discrimination. This approach was crucial noting that corruption affects diverse demographic groups differently, and that anti-corruption interventions also need to take these differences into account (Chiweshe & Bhatasara, 2019).

Corruption is a major obstacle to achieving gender equality as it "hampers economic growth, increases poverty and undermines the quality and quantity of public services, depriving the most marginalised groups, including women, of equitable access to vital services such as

healthcare, education and water and sanitation” (Transparency International (2019). Closely linked to this, “corruption disproportionately affects vulnerable populations and hits the poor the hardest, especially women, who represent a higher share of the world’s poor” (Transparency International, 2019).

On the other hand, the Youth are involved in almost every aspect of society — as students, activists, citizens, workers, customers, and voters – hence they are affected more by corruption compared to other segments (World Bank, 2009 Transparency International, 2009). As they make up the most sizeable chunk of their communities and societies, they are more exposed to bribery due to their diverse roles and numerous dealings with the state and society (Transparency International, 2009). More importantly, corruption diverts resources meant for development, undermining a government's ability to provide basic services necessary for younger generations to develop and meaningfully contribute to society as citizens (Transparency International, 2009). A 2015 Baseline survey on youth and corruption by TI Z reported that corruption denies young people opportunities, impoverishes them, erodes their cultural values and morals and widens perceived ethnic and regional differences (Gweshe & Mutondoro, 2015)

The 2022 national population census results have suggested that 9.2 per cent of the population have disabilities of varying degrees (Africa Press, 2022). The impacts of education corruption on PWDs are best explained by the linkage or intersection of corruption and discrimination. Indeed, the characteristics of people such as ethnicity, gender, or disability can be used as the basis of discrimination which enables and fuels corruption, creating a vicious cycle that deepens inequality (Transparency International, 2021). The impacts that PWDs may face from corruption include instances where corrupt public officials can divert resources intended to fund assistive devices, accessibility measures, and reasonable accommodation programmes (Transparency International and the Equal Rights Trust, 2021 in Jenkins and Macdonald, 2022). Furthermore, it is recognised that certain characteristics can make some PWDs more exposed to the ill effects of corruption than others e.g., people with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities (UNCRPD 2017 in Jenkins and Macdonald, 2022)

IMPACTS OF HTE CORRUPTION ON WOMEN

As regards the impacts of HTE corruption on women, sextortion features prominently in the findings. Sextortion is a specific form of corruption (among others) where sex is the currency for a bribe, and this is seen to target and impact women disproportionately (Transparency International, 2019). “As both a form of corruption and a form of sexual abuse, sextortion lies at the intersection of the anti-corruption (AC) and GBV legal frameworks” (France, 2022 p.1)

On this topic, one respondent said,

Women [are impacted disproportionately by education corruption] when sex predators target them.... because they have family responsibilities, pressure to complete

assignments is higher. They end up forced to pay bribes or give sex to short-circuit the process (Interview, 17 October 2022 with a media representative)

Another respondent said “Women are the most affected by corruption in the education sector; there are lots of stories around ‘thigh grades’, how women are forced to give sexual favours for enrolment, passing exams and getting places for attachment (Interview, 20 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative). Said another respondent;

Sextortion presents a huge problem, and this directly affects women even women living with disabilities due to their vulnerable state they often are deemed as easy prey by lewd lecturers who take advantage of them sexually in exchange for marks, due to their vulnerability they often are not in a position to negotiate for safety as such the risk of unprotected sex. The occurrence of sextortion at the University level also coincides with a huge mental health challenge as such feeding the substance and drug abuse at our higher learning institutions (Response from open-ended survey questionnaire, 21 September 2022)

Another respondent asserted,

There are groups of people that are not taken seriously...women are abused in education and have to pay the price with their bodies. Degrees or marks are given a value that is equivalent to women’s bodies and sexual favours are elicited from them to pass. It is not their mind that is valued as should be the case. In the case of young boys, they always get in the crosshairs of abusive lecturers as long as they see them as being a threat among the girls and women. This can disadvantage them in that they do not get the marks that they deserve but are punished. This kills their spirit in a sense creating a toxic environment at university. PWD are taken as invalids and corrupt lecturers believe they can gain nothing from them usually leading to neglect of this group of people (Interview: 6 September 2022 HEI employee).

Another went a step further to highlight that sextortion is a violation of the rights of women, particularly their sexual reproductive health and rights (Interview, 14 September 2022 with a media representative). To highlight the health risk associated with sextortion, another respondent noted with concern,

Sexual exploitation results in... female students... having unplanned pregnancies and being infected with STIs. Female students are used as sex objects in exchange for favours or marks. Those who refuse will receive threats of failing the modules or demotion if employed by the institution (Response from open-ended questionnaire)

This foregoing emphasises the health risk that sextortion poses to female victims while simultaneously demonstrating the consequences of refusing to comply with sexual exploitation, such as failing a module or course. Due to their conditions, including the desire to pass, obtain

housing, and obtain financial support as well, several girls within these institutions have succumbed to such acts of corruption.

IMPACTS OF HTE CORRUPTION ON THE YOUTH

As highlighted above, they also make up the most sizeable chunk of their communities, making them more exposed to some forms of corruption. Correspondingly, they constitute the majority of students in HTE institutions making them more likely to various forms of education corruption. Commenting on this issue, one respondent noted that,

Youths are vulnerable to sexual and economic exploitation (female youths are younger and more attractive and more prone to exploitation; they have limited financial resources and are highly likely to pay in kind as an alternative. Most of the youths are affected by social pressures (Interview, 17 October 2022 with a media representative)

This emphasises how youths in HTE institutions particularly females are susceptible to sexual and economic exploitation. Another respondent said;

Corruption especially for those that cannot participate in it, [are put] in a position of disadvantage because they cannot access certain privileged information and they cannot get certain services which all of us should get within the university or [learning] institution... Corruption impoverishes the student because it means at different points, they have to part with their money to pay for different things yet in a normal functioning university when one pays their tuition, they should get what they paid for (Interview, 14 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

This highlights the challenges faced with the type of corruption where administrative staff may exploit the shortages of enrolment places or amenities such as accommodation, or where teaching staff may abuse their positions of authority to create conditions for paid-for additional tuition.

Another respondent remarked,

The current generation of youth are collectively, products of a damaged system in terms of the prevailing social order, education systems, and health systems. HEIs must mould the youth beyond imparting skills to include national values and development. Now when they graduate, they are worse than when they came in from [Church based] mission schools which instilled such good values (Interview, 17 October 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

This observation resonates with an assertion by some authorities on the subject, that corruption in education is not a stand-alone phenomenon, but a consequence of deeply rooted problems in the education system and the society that it serves (Kirya, 2019). This means that the phenomenon of education corruption operates in an environment with mutually sustaining corrupt institutions, which in turn produce products that are prone to sustain it themselves, probably because it excludes the infusion of values of transparency, integrity, and accountability in its curriculum. This adds on to the stigma of "half-baked" graduates in a context of limited

opportunities and high unemployment. Indeed, corruption in the sector and in the larger society is the root of all of these problems.

Youths as reflected in the comment above, end up becoming products of corruption with no sense of values and integrity. They simply get 'captured' in the process of corruption that is deemed proper in order 'to get things done' or have 'things go your way.' Ethics such as hard work, commitment, and other important facets that enable one to be a complete student are no longer practised. In such a context, the youths are more likely to believe in the approach of taking 'shortcuts' to survive or get opportunities. This deals a heavy blow to the quality and calibre of students that are produced by these HTE institutions in Zimbabwe.

IMPACTS OF HTE CORRUPTION ON PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs)

Apart from women and the youths, corruption within HTE institutions has negative consequences on PWDs. These are people with special needs that need to be catered for by these institutions. However, corrupt activities such as embezzlement deny the availability of resources to ensure quality services for people with disabilities. One respondent noted with concern that people with disabilities have physical challenges and limitations and, in some instances, they end up taking care of themselves and their needs without any assistance and provision of quality services from these institutions. This is echoed in the following sentiments.

PWDs – Because of their physical limitations... end up paying to obtain some services within the institutions (Interview, 17 October 2022 with a media representative)

PWDs are also affected because of embezzlement of funds because the universities are not user friendly for them (Interview, 20 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)

Usually, disabled people do not have ease of free movement (sic.), especially around campus facilities because there are usually no proper pavements or transportation means for them certainly, these are issues that have to do with corrupt management that does not consider the use of some of our fees to cater for the less abled (Response from open-ended survey questionnaire)

PWDs now find it challenging to meet the requirements of HTE due to corruption. This is largely the result of these institutions' subpar treatment of them. They also face difficulties caused by a lack of adequate infrastructure, including pavements, transport options, and access to buildings such as administration and lecture halls. Corruption occurs when funds intended to support the needs of PWDs in HTE institutions are either embezzled or improperly used. Another challenge that is an inhibiting factor for PWDs in HTE institutions is the lack of access to information as pointed out by one respondent. This is also compounded by the lack of resources including learning materials not prioritised or supplied because of corruption. This is highlighted by one respondent who said PWDs,

.....
might be affected to a point where they cannot access some information due to their disability. The more they are on the institution the less information they access, even the learning process for them is difficult because they might not have all the resources on them. Some of these corrupt activities bleeds critical resources which are supposed to be developing infrastructure and services within those tertiary institutions, so their absence means people are learning without adequate learning and teaching aids **(Interview, 14 September 2022 with a CSO or think tank employee/representative)**
.....

The first challenge for people with disabilities is segregation because disability comes in different stages and forms so in most cases most of them come from backgrounds where they are not able to fund themselves. So simply because of that their spaces are taken by those who are able-bodied **(Interview, 27 September with a media representative)**

In general, corruption has a significant impact on students with disabilities in Zimbabwe's HTE sector. Due to the persistent corruption in these institutions, PWDs are denied access to adequate services. In addition, this makes them more susceptible to a variety of challenges, whilst the skewed emphasis on able-bodied students continues. This highlights the intersection between discrimination and corruption.

05

CONCLUSION

The research has managed to attain its key objectives whilst employing the political economy approach, power and influence analysis; systems mapping and analysis and GESI. Notwithstanding the limitations presented in the collection of data on corruption which is clandestine by nature, enough information was collected for collation and analysis to bring out a coherent picture on the dynamics of corruption in the HTE sector.

Briefly, it has been established that a considerable number of stakeholders believe that corruption in the HTE sector is a major problem in Zimbabwe. This sentiment must be taken seriously given the considerable number of respondents in the survey expressing excellent and good knowledge of the prevalence of corruption in the sector, as well as the combined number of respondents reporting that incidences occur 'frequently' and 'sometimes' when the scale of

the problem is considered. Different cogs exist in the operations of the sector, and these include regulatory and policy, institutional management (non-academic), and academic levels. The findings of the research concluded that corruption was most prevalent at the academic level where lecturers and students are implicated.

Corruption was most prevalent at the academic level where lecturers and students are implicated.

As regards the objective of identifying and classifying the major prevailing forms of corruption, the research showed that stakeholders must be concerned about the following: sextortion (e.g. using one's position to request sexual favours for marks, enrolment, employment promotion, etc.);

academic fraud (e.g., exam leaks, unqualified admissions, fake degrees, plagiarism, proxy writing of exams); nepotism (e.g., favouritism in personnel appointments, promotions or enrolment of students, etc.); and bribery (i.e., offering, promising, giving, accepting or soliciting of gifts, loans, fees, rewards or other advantages e.g., for enrolment and other benefits, etc.). There are several other types of corruption noted with less prevalence but viewed collectively all these activities must be equally concerning to stakeholders worried about the integrity of the HTE sector.

As regards the main causative factors for the phenomenon of corruption in the HTE sector the research revealed a wide array of factors, such as the prevailing economic hardships and resultant poverty (exerting push and pull forces on various actors to engage in bribery); greed for material wealth; the quest for power and influence; patronage politics linked to external interference in the running of HEIs; weak or inappropriate institutional structures and policies (including scarcity of resources); inadequately regulated teaching spaces; stringent entry requirements for enrolment; academic pressures linked to poor study habits of learners and generally an ethical deficit with some individuals in the ranks of the HTE domain.

As regards identifying and classifying the impacts of corruption in the HTE sector, the research mainly identified sextortion (with the attendant challenges of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS transmission,

unwanted pregnancy, moral decay, and marriage breakdown); discrimination (against women and PWDs); dropouts; gender inequality and social exclusion of vulnerable groups; unfairness in the learning environment and outcomes, negative psychosocial impacts (i.e. emotional abuse, lost dignity and inferiority among victims of sextortion and discrimination); lack of confidence or trust in the HTE sector and arrested social and economic development and the losses from 'half baked' graduates in the workplace.

The research also showed that stakeholders had good and fair knowledge of the NACS. As regards the readiness of local HTE institutions to implement strategies or policies on anti-corruption or TAI, the research showed that a majority of the stakeholders believe that indicated that institutions in the HTE sector are equipped or ready to deal with education corruption.

Overall, corruption in the HTE sector in Zimbabwe mirrors problems that are currently prevailing in the wider society that has been experiencing severe waves of corruption fuelled by unfavourable economic and social conditions. HEIs exist within the wider polity/society and due to the aforementioned challenges, institutions and related departments are vulnerable to and reflective of corruption practices in the environment they exist in. The linkages between the wider society and the HTE sector are summarised in Figure 15 below.

Figure 15 The Dynamics of Corruption in Zimbabwe’s HTE

Multifaceted Impacts of HTE Corruption



Source: Key informant interviews and survey questionnaire responses (Researchers' configuration)

Given the foregoing findings, this research proffers several recommendations (summarised in Table I in the Executive summary above). The recommendations take a multi-system approach to include new legislation, improved funding of institutions, improved parliamentary oversight, punitive measures for incidences, and robust institutional arrangements to promote transparency and value-based education within HTE to name a few.

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APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

The demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented graphically in terms of categories of respondents, gender, age, location characteristic, highest level of education and location by province.

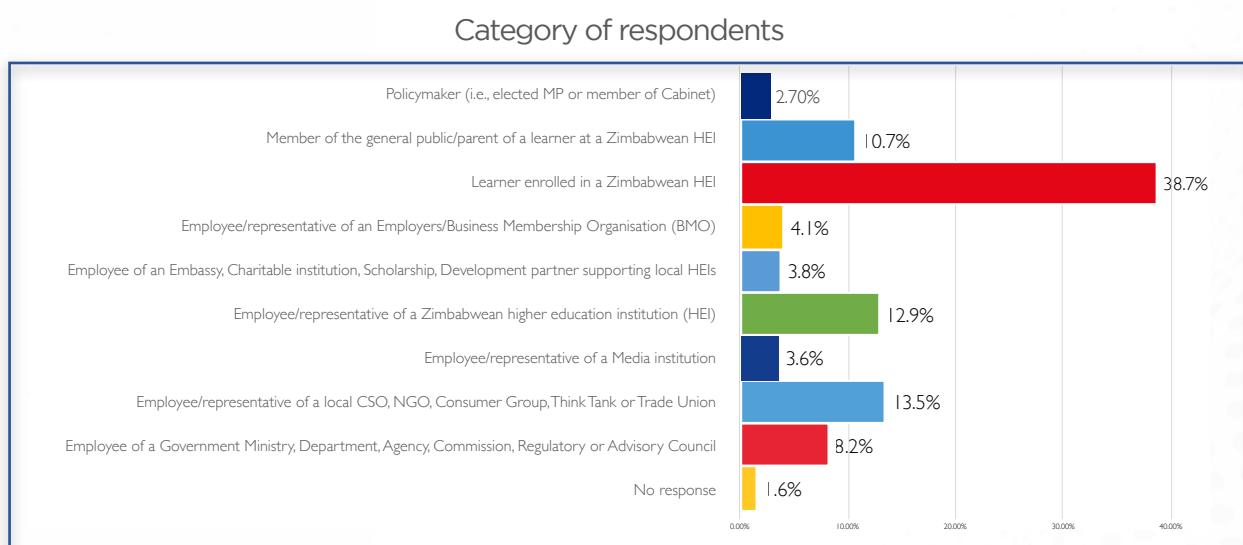
Categories of respondents

Different categories of respondents were included in the research and these constituted various stakeholders within the higher education sector in Zimbabwe as illustrated in Figure 16 below. Most of the respondents (38.7%) were students enrolled in a higher education institution which included universities, polytechnics, teacher’s colleges and vocational skills training centres (as per the categorisation by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development).

The second highest number of respondents (13.5%) were employees or representatives of a local CSO, Non-governmental organisation (NGO), Consumer Group, Think Tank and Trade Union. Meanwhile, 12.9% included employees or representatives of a Zimbabwean Higher Education Institution (HEI). Members of the

general public or parents of a learner at a Zimbabwean HEI constituted 10.7%. Other categories of respondents were represented in the following way; employee or representative of a Government Ministry, Department, Agency, Commission, Regulatory or Advisory Council (8.2%), employee or representative of an employers/business membership organisation (4.1%), employee or representative of an embassy, charitable/ philanthropic institution, scholarship, development partner or multilateral agency supporting local HEIs (3.8%), employee or representative of a media institution (3.6%), policymaker (i.e. elected MP or member of a Cabinet) (2.7%) while 1.6% had no response.

Figure 16 Categories of respondents

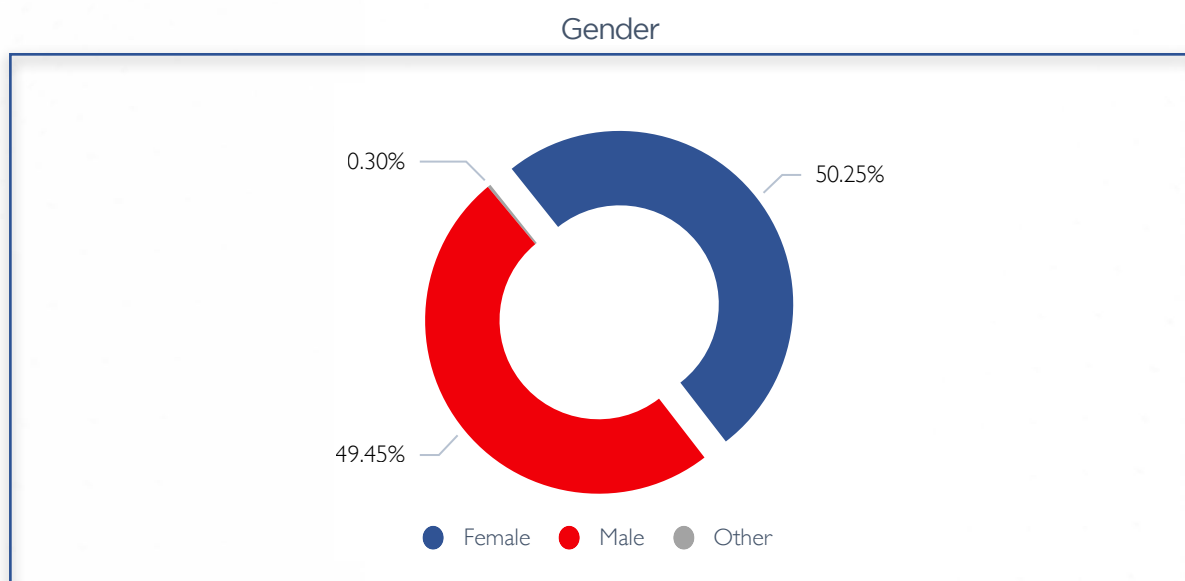


Gender

Out of the 364 respondents that participated in the survey, a majority were female (50.3%) while males constituted 49.5%. As an appreciation of the diverse sexualities and gender that currently exist in today's world, the research also included the other (0.3%) category. The high number of females within the higher education

space is a clear indication of the government and ministry's efforts on enrolment in these institutions to ensure that females are afforded an opportunity to study and acquire qualifications at higher and tertiary education levels.

Figure 17 Gender of respondents

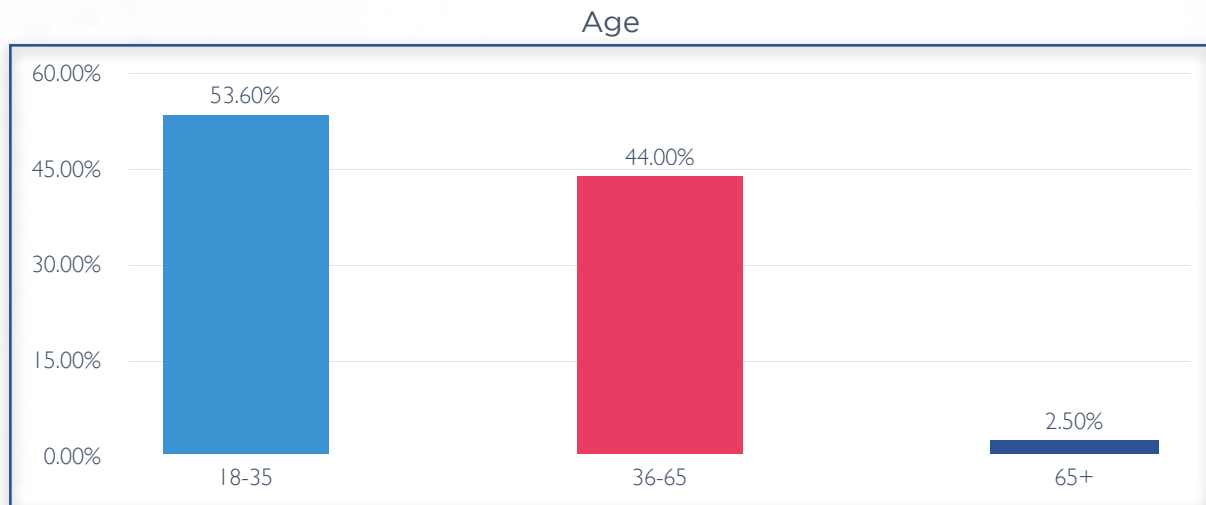


Age

The age of the respondents was divided into three categories ranging from 18-35 years, 36-65 and 65+ years. A majority of the respondents (53.6%) were between the ages of 18-35 while the second highest was between the ages of 36-65 and the third highest was the 65+ category (2.5%). The research observed that most of the respondents were youthful and made up the bulk of students who were enrolled within a Higher Education Institution (HEI). Meanwhile, the adults and those over sixty-

five constituted the different categories of people who are parents and working in various institutions and sectors with diverse interests in the higher education sector. The research had overall representation of the various age categories which ensured a balanced perspective in soliciting the different views, perspectives, opinions and beliefs of the prevalence of corruption within the higher education sector in Zimbabwe.

Figure 18 Age of the respondents

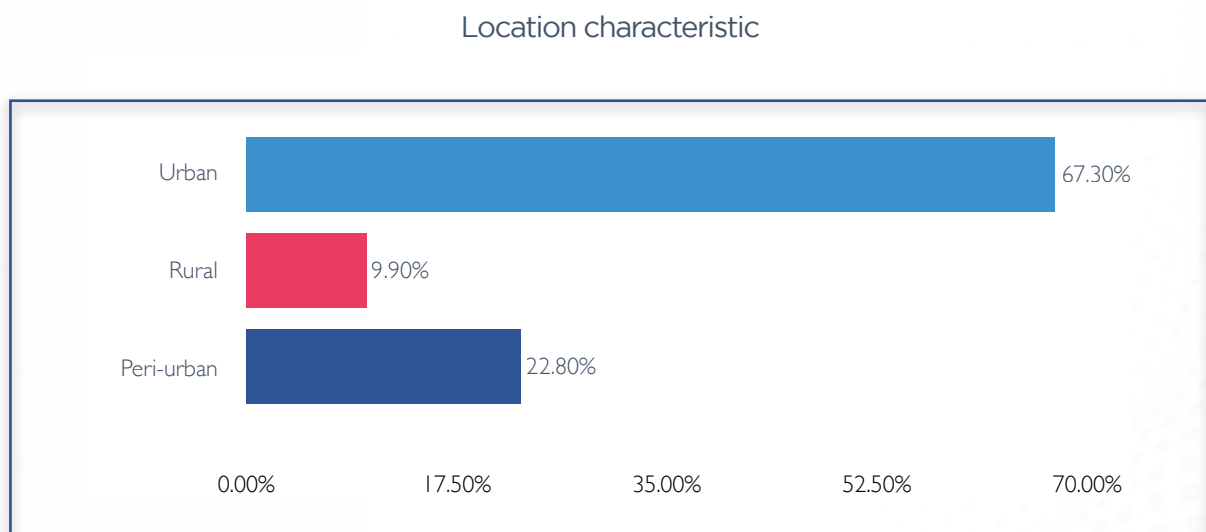


Location characteristic (Area of residence)

Respondents in the research were also asked to indicate their location characteristics which were mainly divided into three categories, urban, rural and peri-urban. 67.3% made up most respondents and these were in the urban areas. Meanwhile, the peri-urban constituted 22.8% while a small proportion came from the rural areas (9.9%).

In Zimbabwe, higher education institutions are geographically located in different areas throughout the country with students, staff and other stakeholders coming from different and divergent localities that include urban, rural and peri-urban areas. This is represented in the figure below.

Figure 19 Location characteristic of the respondents (Area of residence)



Location by Province

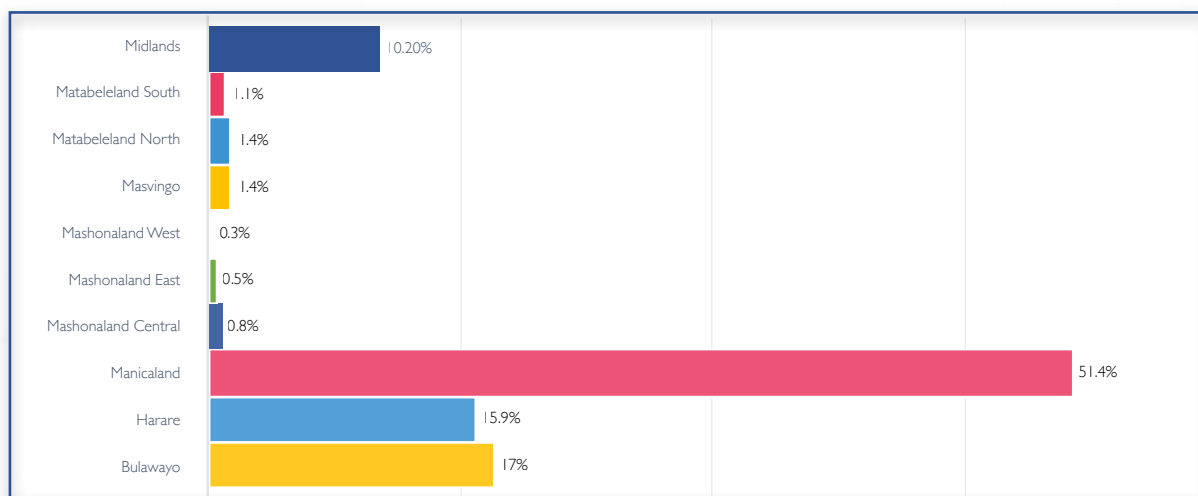
This research was a nationwide study investigating corruption in the higher and tertiary education sector throughout Zimbabwe and thus all the ten provinces took part in the research. A majority of the respondents that participated in the research were located in Manicaland Province (51.4%) while the second highest (17%) came from the Bulawayo Metropolitan Province. Harare Metropolitan Province had 15.9% representation while Midlands had 10.2%.

The other provinces were represented in the following way: Matabeleland North

(1.4%), Masvingo (1.4%), Matabeleland South (1.1%), Mashonaland Central (0.8%), Mashonaland East (0.5%), and Mashonaland West (0.3%). The research envisaged a proportional representation of all the provinces during the survey but due to unexpected outcomes and consequences it resulted in a disproportional depiction. However, all the provinces took part in the research which ensured a balance of the sample of respondents given the location of higher education institutions throughout the country.

Figure 20 Location by Province

Location by province



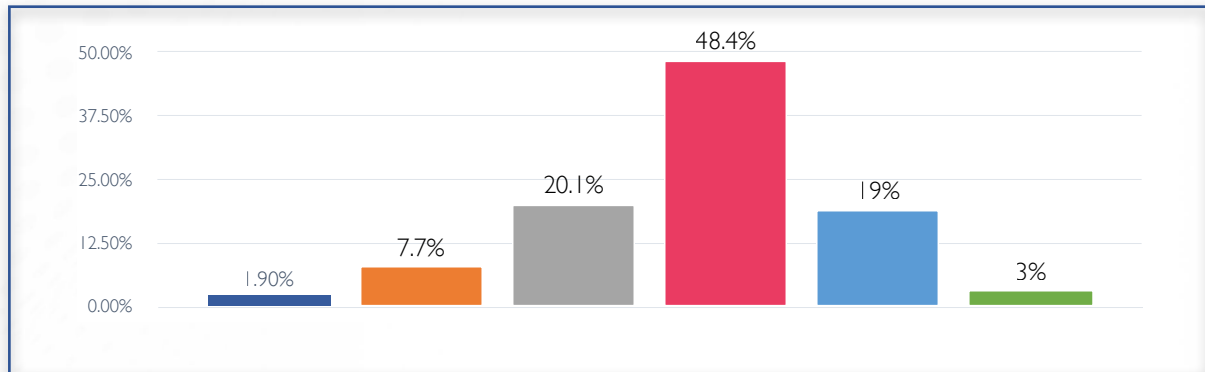
Highest Level of Education

In terms of the obtainment of the highest levels of education among the respondents, this section was divided into six categories which included primary, secondary, diploma, tertiary (degree), masters and doctoral. A sizeable proportion of the respondents (48.4%) had a tertiary (degree) qualification while the second highest 20.1% had obtained a diploma as their highest level of qualification. Masters holders constituted

19% while 7.7% had attained a secondary school qualification. The lowest numbers largely entailed those who had doctoral (3%) and primary (1.9%) qualifications respectively. The sample of the research was representative of all levels of academic qualifications across the board from the lowest (primary) and to the highest (doctoral).

Figure 21 Highest level of education

Highest level of education



APPENDIX B: METHODOLOGY (INCLUDING RESEARCH DESIGN AND STRATEGY)

Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of key informants. In this case, those with required expertise and knowledge on the HTE sector were interviewed in the process. A total of twenty-two key informants out of a possible fifty-three participated in the KIs, and these were selected from various institutional stakeholders and individual country experts that are directly or indirectly involved in the HTE in Zimbabwe.

Simple random sampling was done to select respondents in the survey questionnaire who included university students and any other relevant stakeholders in the research. The online survey was administered by the TI Z Secretariat where a total number 364 participants managed to make an input into the research.

Figure 22 below shows the targeted stakeholder groups.

Figure 22 Profile of Targeted Respondents

-
- Policymaker (i.e., elected MP or member of Cabinet)
 - Employee or representative of a Government Ministry, Department, Agency, Commission, Regulatory or Advisory Council
 - Employee or representative of a Zimbabwean higher education institution (HEI)
 - HEI learner
 - Employee or representative of an Employers/Business Membership Organisation (BMO)
 - Employee or representative of a local civil society organisation (CSO), nongovernmental organisation (NGO), Consumer Group, Think Tank or Trade Union
 - Employee or representative of an Embassy, Charitable/philanthropic institution, Scholarship, Development partner or Multilateral agency supporting local HEIs
 - Employee or representative of a Media institution
 - Member of the general public/parent of a learner at a Zimbabwean HER

Data Collection Instruments

The research relied on the following data collection instruments which were piloted in Harare, Bulawayo and Mutare between 2 and 6 September 2022.

Survey Questionnaire: An online questionnaire was designed by TI Z and administered to the cross-section of relevant stakeholders described above. Several platforms were used to raise awareness of the objectives of this study as well as the commencement of the online survey, such as social media, the TI Z website, the TI Z mailing list, radio and other channels in order to reach the intended participants of the research. The histogram below shows the timestamp in terms of the collection of quantitative data through the survey questionnaire.

Interviews: Face-to-face interviews were conducted with key informants on the topic. Other methods of conducting the interviews apart from face-to-face discussions were used in the research to gather information from relevant key informants. These included telephone conversations and the use of digital platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp (especially where the respondents could not be reached, or their schedules were too busy to conduct physical interviews). COVID-19 regulations such as social distancing, wearing and sanitising of hands were observed during the process of physical interviews.

Secondary data: To supplement and corroborate the primary data (from survey questionnaires and interviews), the research used secondary sources in the form of existing literature (empirical evidence) on the phenomenon of corruption in the HTE sector. This included books, journals, statutes and regulations, media reports, public audit reports, websites, policy briefs, glossaries and blogs related to corruption in the HTE sector.

APPENDIX C: ADHERENCE TO RESEARCH ETHICS

The research dealt and complied with several ethical issues include:

1. **Seeking permission:** To obtain authorisation to conduct the research, this was done in conjunction with HTE institutions and stakeholders. These numerous targeted stakeholders received letters outlining the study's objectives and requesting either individual or group participation.
2. **Informed consent:** Before the start of the interviews, informed consent from the Key Informants (KIs) who took part in them was obtained.
3. **Confidentiality:** Respondents were assured of the anonymity of their responses with the study team because research on corruption is sensitive.
4. **Integrity and transparency:** To provide transparency and an audit trail, all phases of research design, data collecting, cleaning, coding, and analysis were well documented.

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The consultants and TI Zimbabwe faced a few challenges during the data collection exercise. The key challenges were the following:

1. The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development (MHTESTD) was approached to grant the consultants and TI Z a clearance letter which was needed by state-owned HEIs as a condition for making institutional responses in the KIs. TI Z also requested the ministry to designate a representative to participate as a respondent in the survey part. Several efforts were made to acquire this letter and secure this respondent with no success, so the data gathering proceeded without this category of respondent.
2. It was also important to include the opinions of the Parliamentary Higher and Tertiary Education Portfolio Committee and its staff given its oversight role on the HTE sector. Formal written requests and follow-ups were made for permission to interview MPs; however, the clearance was not given. The data gathering had to proceed without this category of respondent in the survey.
3. Due to the sensitive nature of the research topic some respondents were not willing to participate in the research due to mistrust and fears over confidentiality.
4. Some of the targeted key informants in the research could not take part due to work and other personal commitments. In some instances, others referred the research team (consultants and TI Z) to higher offices where there was no response.

All these challenges made it difficult for the research team to consultants to reach the intended sample size. Notwithstanding these challenges, the anonymous online survey and the KIs managed to provide enough data for analysis from various participants.

About Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI Z)

Transparency International Zimbabwe (TI Z) is a non-profit, non-partisan, systems-oriented local chapter of the international movement against corruption. Its broad mandate is to fight corruption and related vices through networks of integrity in line with the Global Strategy. TI Z believes corruption can only be sufficiently tackled by all citizens including people at the grassroots level.

Vision

A Zimbabwean society free from all forms of corruption and practices.

Mission

To combat corruption, hold power to account and promote transparency, accountability, and integrity in all sectors of society.

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