CORRUPTION PREVENTION AND STRENGHTENING OF INTEGRITY IN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF ARMENIA

(Analyses of Monitoring Results)

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(Analyses of Monitoring Results)

1.0 Introduction

The education system of the Republic of Armenia plays a unique role in the *National Integrity System.* It represents one of the latter`s pillars. Over the past several years the Armenian universities have witnessed a number of integrity-related programs along with the accompanying works on the development and inculcation of   Code of Ethics.[1]

Since 2009 more than 50 Armenian universities have become members of the Integrity Educational network launched by the International NGO "Integrity Action"; they have participated in numerous workshops, trainings, conferences, round tables, and other relating events. In compliance with the Memorandums signed between the Integrity Action and the above Armenian universities the latter have included in their curricula the courses on Integrity and Anticorruption Activity.

The **fight against corruption** has also been adopted as a priority by RA Ministry of Science and Education. For all this, one has to note that the Armenian educational system is still considered one of the most corrupt areas, and hence it is by far not accidental that during the period 2015-2018 it is prioritized by the RA Anticorruption Strategy as one of those four sectorswhere the Armenian Government has to land a tangible strategic result: minimize the corruption risks and eradicate the corruption as such.

However, according to Transparency International's evaluation of the "National Integrity System of Armenia" carried out in 2014, the performance of the educational sector in fighting corruption received the lowest score of -0.[2]

The educational system in Armenia is significant in that it is one of the prerequisites toward a sustainable advance of the country, reproduction and development of human capital; so the progress in this area should be viewed as the priority in terms of the country`s overall development. The Armenian Government views as the primary issues of the educational sector the enhancement of education quality and effectiveness at all tiers of educational system, their adjustment to the international standards, ensuring of accessible education for all groups of population.[3]The RA Minister of Education and Science has decreed the resolution "On the comprehensive action plan on combating the corrupt practices in the educational system in 2011-2012" that envisages the development and application of annual anticorruption strategic plans by the Armenian universities. Owing to the drastic measures put in place for the accreditation procedures, from the previous 90 something universities there are left 34 ones that meet the established requirements.

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[1] See the "Project on strengthening integrity in the Armenian higher educational system and fight against corruption" by the EU.

[2] Assessment of the national integrity system of Armenia 2014, page 102

[3] See THE RA ANTICORRUPTION STRATEGY, Annex , p.30

At the present time, however, of ever increasing importance is becoming the monitoring /assessment of the efficiency of courses on integrity anticorruption/modules taught at universities.

1.1. Study Objectives

The project ''Monitoring of anticorruption education and enhancement of integrity at RA universities", through the conduct of monitoring, is aimed to:
1/ study the efficiency of the integrity –related courses taught at Armenian universities,
2/ find out how the students are able to apply in real-life conditions their knowledge and skills acquiredduring integrity classes,
3/ study the efficiency of relevant measures by the respective university administration and public authorities toward prevention of corruption risks.

1. 2. Beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries of the study are the educational system of the Republic of Armenia (universities), students, and their parents, The RA Ministry of Science and Education, and other respective local and international organizations, the Anticorruption NGO Coalition. **The indirect beneficiaries of the study are**the entire society, the Armenian Government.

1.3. The expected results and impact of the study
In the result of the monitoring and the studies a survey will be published and sent to:
a/RA universities and competent divisions and administration of theRA Ministry of Science and Education,
b/ All the NGOs of the Anticorruption NGO Coalition.

1.4. Methodology and assessment tools of the project

To carry out this project the following methodology has been used:
a/ randomly done sociological surveys among 350 students from 9 universities;
b/ interviews with university teachers and administration;
c/ interviews with the 43 parents of above-mentioned 9 universities
d/ interviews with the experts of the RA National Assembly's Outstanding Commission on Science, Education, Youth, and Sports.

For the purposes of studying corruption risks a series of sociological surveys have been carried out at 7 state and 2private universities in the Republic. These surveys have been randomly realized among 350 students of the 9 universities indicated below:

1. Yerevan State University- 35
2. Armenian State Pedagogical University - 41 students
3. NationalPolytechnic University of Armenia– 30students
4. Yerevan State Medical University - 40 students
5. Gyumri State Pedagogical University - 66 students

6. Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia- 31 students
7. National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia- 30 students
8. European Regional Academy –36students
9. MovsesKhorenatsi University- 41students

1.5. Other sources of the study

- Newspaper and magazine publications containing the analysis of the RA educational system and materials on the efficiency of the anticorruption education.
- The RA Law on Education, other legal acts.
- Books, articles, and other explorations on the topic at consideration.

1.6. Limitations

There have been certain limitations over the interviews as respondents avoided speaking or writing openly about corruption –related incidents or existing corruption risks **precisely at their university**. For instance, a number of students and employees, declining to introduce themselves, related about multiple precedents of "fund-raising" at other universities which information they heard from their buddies and relatives, yet shunned talking over the corrupt practicesthey have in their university life.

2.0 MONITORING OF CORRUPTION RISKS AT UNIVERSITIES. DISCLOSURES.

With a view to assess and prevent the corruption risks at the Armenian universities a monitoring has been put in place among academics and students of 9 Armenian universities. Sociological surveys have been conducted among 350 students of the aforesaid universities.

These 350 were chosen by "at random" principle. Of them 232 or66,3% were of female, while 118 or 33,7 % - male students, (see the figure1). Agewise the 324 or 92,6 of the respondents ranged between 18 and 24 years, while 26 of their number were aged from 24 to 43 years, (see figure2).
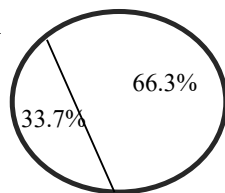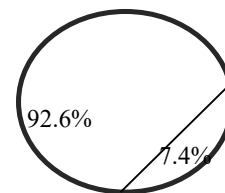
Figure 1

66.3%

33.7%

Figure 2

92.6%

7.4%

The respondent students randomly chosen for the survey represent different faculties, levels, and specialties of 9 universities. They were handed out questionnaires with 9 open and close questions. (seeannex 1).

The students were asked to respond to the following questions:

Do you think there is corruption at universities ?

245 of responding students or 70% thereof gave a positive answer to this question with only 105 or 30% of the respondents who answered negatively (see figure 3), which gives grounds for serious reflections and concerns.

Is there corruption at universities?figure 3

70%-   yes

30%- no

30% no
70% yes
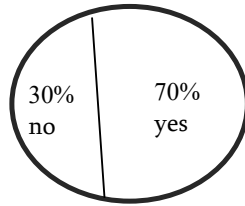
According to some explorers, "the students label as corrupt behavior mainly the bribe-giving, bribe-taking, abuse of office, with only a very small number of those realizing that corruption should be seen in all its manifestations … like protectionism, nepotism, mutual mediation, or simply "doing good" to others as clear-cut forms of corrupt behavior". [4]

The next question students were asked was this:

If any, what are the reasons of corruption at universities ?

To facilitate answering this question the students were given the opportunity to provide their individual options or respond to the options prepared for them. The answers were as follows. The students` 30,9 % responded that the cause of corruption at the universities is the laziness of students, 28,3 % think that it is due to the low salaries of the teachers, the17,7 % find it is the result of wanting supervision,while 23,1% are inclined to see the reason of corruption in imperfection of education laws and of the educational system on the whole (see Figure4).

Figure 4

Which are the reasons of corruption at universities:

a) students` laziness 30.9%
b) low salaries of teachers 28.3%
c) wanting supervision 17.7%
d) imperfection of education laws 23.1 %
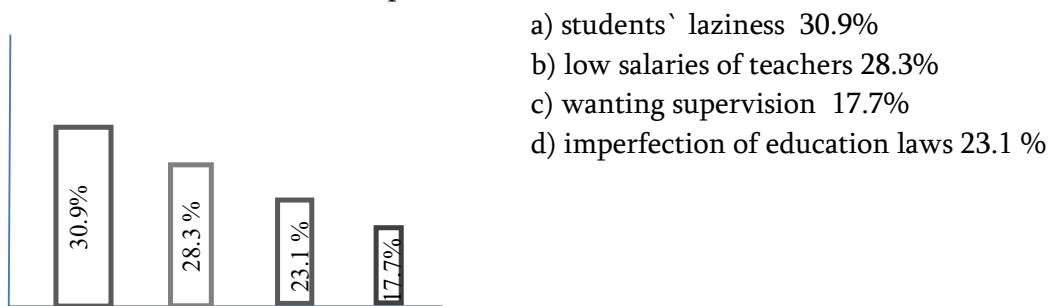
Without any doubt, among the reasons generating corruption are also: a / inveterate corrupt culture which has established itself with the students and their parents and which allows to

[4]**Karapetyan Svetlana,"Study of the corruption culture among Yerevan State University students"** , The USG Alumni and- Scholars Conference:" Integrity in Action. Education, Social Accountability and Development" , page 83.

buy everything in the educational system and obtain the high grades if not by money then at least by a valuable gift or through an acquaintance/relative; b/absence of irreconcilabilityagainst or, conversely, tolerance towards corrupt practices. For instance, at least 25% of the students participating in the sociological survey think that « it is impossible to do anything to do away with corruption at universities as it has always been there and will stay like this for good». One student pointed out that «corruption plays into the hands of idle students. An intelligent student has the power to confront a corrupt teacher with his knowledge and in this way to claim the grade he is worthy of. If students pay money, it happens because they are not sure of their knowledge".

Many students and teachers see the low salaries of the teaching stuff to be the main reason of corruption in universities. For example, one of the teachers with the NationalPolytechnic University of Armenia pointed out that it was mandatory to create such a system where the teacher`s salary should not be contingent upon the number of students, which would enable a teacher to comfortably live off the salary earned, without having to think of the perquisites».

Many of the teachers as well as 23,1% of the 350 students from the sociological survey found that behind the reasons begetting corruption were the imperfect laws on education and the hitches of the system. They pointed, in particular, to removing the privileges and the corruption risks relating to the matriculation to a university at a government order. This was highlighted also by a NA deputy R. Hakobyan.

The "Zhamanak" daily claims that each year estimated 1700 students avail themselves of the right to enter universities at a government order of which about 1000 are male students which figure nicely matches with the number of those granted a deferment of military service. Many think that by eliminating the privilege of a government-granted deferment it will be possible to reach social justice since the youth from the rich families are exempted from army service precisely in this way».[5]

It is not about the eligibility for deferment, but rather the auction of that privilege, - writes further the "Zhamanak" daily, and adds that«according to statistical data, the 90 % of those doing their post-graduate study are male persons of whom, however, only 5-6 % continue their scientific career after the graduation of the study process, while others prove to be well-established entrepreneurs...; thus it is easily inferred that those doing their bachelor and post-graduate study are mostly driven not so much by the ardor to acquire a thorough knowledge or dedicate themselves to science, but rather to get a loophole to dodge the army»:[6]

<u>Indicate in percent the level of corruption risks at universities</u>

In an effort to find out in what sector of university education the corruption risks are prevalent, we asked the students, over the sociological survey, to rate the level of corruption risks in percentage, based on a 100-point scale. As per level of corruptibility risk of universities the students gave the following assessment:

[5] «Zhamanak»daily newspaper, 7 May, 2016,page 3
[6]Ibid

a/entrance exams 65%-corruption risks
b/ intermediate examinations 15%-corruption risks
q/ final exams /35%/-corruption risks

One of the students who took part in the survey pointed out that "if in the result of the admission only the knowledgeable students get an access to education or are rated justly, then the corruption risks will diminish drastically or vanish completely".

For the purposes of studying the corruption risks 43 parents of the students from the aforesaid 9 universities were randomly interviewed. 25% of the interviewed parents find that corruption risks are to be imputed to the incomplete educational system and the laws on education; the parents further think that the RA Ministry of Science and Education is also at fault. Since the parents are oftentimes the enablers of the corruption risks of the students, they were   asked   the   following   question:
What will make you give the bribe and what will hold you back?   Most parents think that the reason that will make them pay the bribe is:

- Sloth of their children;
- Danger for their children to drop out of the university;
- Getting a high grade/privilege of a free education system;
- The corrupt teacher has cornered the student;
- Complexity of the subject and the irrelevance of the student`s intellect;
- Unsatisfactory mental and health condition of the child;

Reasons to hold parents back from paying bribes:

- advance in the child`s study;
- self-esteem of parents/moral principles;
- a sense of a shame.

Which of the two types of universities is more likely to develop corruption risks: a state or a private one ?

175 of the respondents or their 50 % answered that in the state universities, 110 or 31,4%of the students asked responded: in the private universities. 65respondents or 18,6% claimed corruption was in both types of universities. See the figure 5:

Figure 5

Do students courses combat corruptioneffectively?
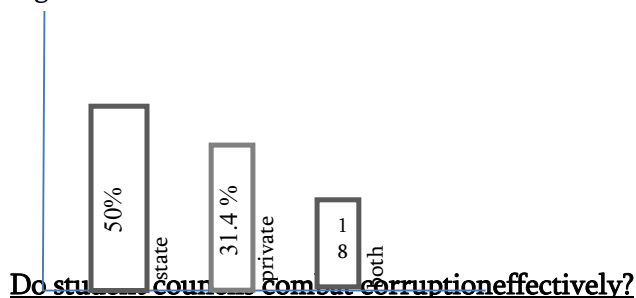
The significance of this question is that in each university it is precisely the students who have to be in the forefront of the anticorruption fight. Logically, in this combat invaluable is the role of **student councils** which, sadly enough, except for cultural and educational events, have almost discarded the actuality of the corruption-related problem as well as that of the need to strive for academic integrity and against plagiarism. As the results of the sociological survey have revealed it, 177 or 50,6 % of the interviewed students find this fight to be ineffective, while the 49,4% of the respondents who still think that it is efficient did not deliver a single example where a student council played a decisive role in preventing/exposing corrupt practices or offered suggestions towards strengthening integrity (see Figure 6).

Figure 6   50,6 %-yes

                                                           49,4%-no
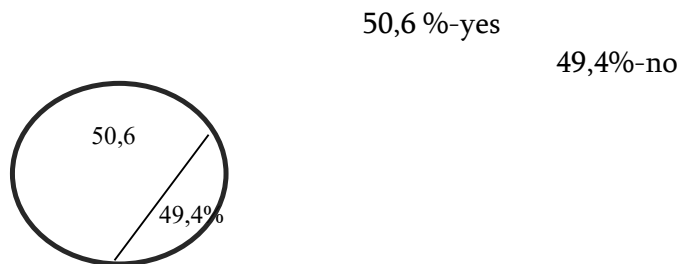
The EU program "On the enhancement of the role of Integrity in the Armenian tertiary education system and the fight against corruption" for2015-2017 intends to strengthen the positions of integrity in the system of the higher educational institutions of Armenia and to boost the combat against corruption. This program prioritizes also the development of a code of ethical conduct for university teachers and students. It is envisaged to create commissions on ethics at universities. Many of the said universities we have studied so far have already embarked on developing code of conduct and establishing a commission on ethics. For instance, the Code of Conduct of the RA Public Administration Academy was worked out in 2015 and became effective up January 1-st, 2016. This Code of Conduct encompasses such important provisions as the rules of behavior for the Academy officials and students, the procedure of organizing the Commission and its activity, etc. We would like to specifically emphasize the provisions relating to the work conditions of the Academy officials precisely stating:'' not to abuse the office toward creating favorable conditions, privileges, and exceptions for the officials or other persons".[7]

The Code of Conduct of MovsesKhorenatsiUniversity says: «giving or taking a bribe shall be incompatible with the professional moral of the university teacher».[8]

Deplorably, in many universities the codes of conduct either don`t exist or are in the making. This is apparent also from the findings of the aforementionedsocilogical survey carried out among 350 students. For instance, in response to the question'**Does a Commission or a Council on Ethics act at your university?** they answered as follows:

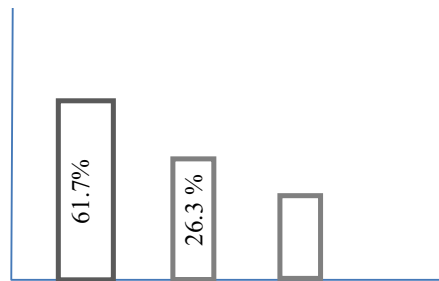14,3 % of students said 'no', while61,7% pointed out that they have not even heard about them (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

[7]The RA Academy of Public Administration, Code of Conduct, Yerevan, 2015 , page 17

[8]MovsesKhorenatsi University, Code of Conduct, Yerevan, 2016 , page 8

Does a Commission or a Council on Ethics act at your university?

a) 61.7% don`t know, have not heard

b) 26.3% yes

c) 12% no

3.0 Efficiency of teaching integrity at Armenian universities

Evidently, at universities the efficiency of anticorruption activity is in a direct ratio to a number of important circumstances such as:

a/how effectively are conducted the courses, modules, or individual topics on anticorruption activity at universities;

b/ what is the duration of these courses, modules, and subjects;

c/ have the university teachers been duly re-trained for teaching integrity –related subjects;

d/ do the students have practical skills to apply the integrity –related knowledge they have acquired at university?

To clear up these questions students were asked the following question within the sociological survey:

Is the integrity education at your university effective ?

This question was answered in the following way. 45,7% of students said 'yes', their 40% - 'no', while 14,3% have not made up their mind, saying 'I don`t know'.(see Figure 8)

Figure 8

Is the integrity education at your university effective ?
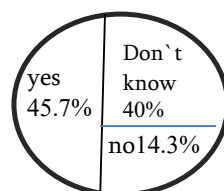
yes 45.7%

don`t know 40%

no14.3%

Within the framework of this program a monitoring has been carried out on the **courses/ modules on** Integrity and anticorruption activity taughtat thesaid universities with the assessment made based on the six criteria.

The criteria explored the efficiency of the six main pedagogical methods while teaching. Among other things, the monitoring revealed if taught anticorruption module, course is only:

1) /of a theoretical/conceptual value or the teacher uses also other teaching approaches of which important are: 2) discussion of ethical and moral questions; 3) discussion of case

studies in all their dimensions, 4) critical comments, 5) problem-solving teaching 6) practical teaching.

The efficiency of the six teaching methods has been evaluated in three dimensions:1/ theoretical, 2/ affective 3/ practical.

These six pedagogical approaches are extremely important in terms of enhancing the efficiency of teaching the modules and courses on integrity and anticorruption activity.

In our opinion, the efficiency of the anticorruption education at universities can be measured not only by theoretical knowledge, but also by the level of skills the students are able to apply this knowledge to real-life conditions; this quality requires an ability by the students to demonstrate intolerance towards corrupt practices, and observance of established ethical and behavioral norms.

For the monitoring/ assessment of these modules/courses there has been developed an evaluation table /see Annex 2/ that was used towards finalizing the overall calculation. On balance, at the above 9 universities have been randomly monitored and studied 11 courses on integrity and anticorruption topics. According to the explorations, over their lectures the teachers were mainly centered more on the theoretical aspects of integrity and anticorruption activity / 3,82 average grade/ than the affective / moral and ethical themes/ 2,45 / average grade, and considerably less **/ 0,27** average grade/ on the analysis of practical and implementation things . See the table below:

RA universities	Subject, module, theme, and teaching approaches	Mentality/theoretical	Affective/ moral	Practical/ skills
9	11	3,82	2,45	0,27

In this respect it is typical that the teachers still use little study examples on integrity and anticorruption casestudies,do not focus on the real-life situations while discussing the problems relating to the above topics, and so on. One more problem is that the the practical application of the students` skills has been rated at the lowest level **/ 0,27/.**

As the "HaykakanZhamanak" daily has it: «The Armenian universities do not teach the students to learn, in thata fact-based knowledge is simply piled up in the student`s head. Practical classes at universities are brought to a minimum».[9]Ruben Topchyan, Head of the" National Center of Education Quality Insurance Foundation" reinforces the foregoing argument by saying that «Practical classes at universities are gradually getting on the wane»:[10]

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to prevent corruption risks in the tertiary educational system of the Republic of Armenia and enhance the role of integrity in the educational system of the RA we suggest the following proposals:

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[9] «HaykakanZhamanak» 17 September, 2014. page 6

[10]Ibidem

- Strengthen the control of the entrance examinations, intermediate and final examinations at the Armenian universities.
- Introduce in the RA Education Law such amendments that would eliminate the privileges relating to the procedures of getting access to the bachelor, master, and post-graduate study at Armenian universities, and in this way minimize corruption risks.
- Reinforce at Armenian universities the preventive administrative measures towards minimizing of corruption risks, among them:

a/ launch a "hot line" for students, parents, and teachers; it can work at the Council of Ethics;

b/create at universities an atmosphere of intolerance towards corrupt and every sort of unethical behavior;

g/intermittently hold workshops on integrity to upgrade the level of knowledge and skills with teachers and students.

Integrity and anticorruption must be taught as mandatory subjects at universities. If a university lacks such a possibility, then a respective curriculum on integrity and anticorruption activity has to be developed and integrated into other relevant subjects.

- At all universities one has to set up commissions and councils on ethics.
- The academic integrity has to be introduced in the academic plan in the mandatory way.
- Discover resources within the universities towards the raise in salaries of the teaching stuff.
- Encourage the involvement of *student councils* into the pro-integrity and anticorruption activities.
- Raise the level of awareness and transparency while preventing any individual case of corruption, laying stress on the electronic assessment system.
- Pay more attention to developing the students` skills by highlighting the importance and encouraging the use of practical skills over the teaching process.

CONCLUSION

The tertiary educational system of the Republic of Armenia is ailing with corruption risks, phenomena whose eradication needs a political will and hands-on measures as well as legal amendments . The RA educational system is tightly connected with all areas of societal life as well as with the implementation of overall anticorruption activities.

None the less, in order to render the current anticorruption strategy more viable one has to provide for the immediate implementation of the following measures:

1. Elimination of privileges / during the matriculation to universities, master and post-graduate study /,

2. Enhancement of transparency and oversight in all procedures relating to higher education, matriculation, and evaluation of students' knowledge,

3.Establishment of commissions, councils on ethics at universities, and observance of the principles of academic integrity, inculation with students of practical skills towards application of the precepts of integrity in real-life situations.

4. Enhance the efficiency of teaching of integrity and anticorruption at universities; make sure that more courses, modules, and topics on integrity are encompassed in the university curricula. Pay a particular attention to the development of practical skills of students and their involvement in the anticorruption campaign.

The List of Used Literature

1. Anti-Corruption Strategy and Its Implementation Plan of Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 2009, Annex , p.30
2. Karapetyan Svetlana, "Study of the corruption culture among Yerevan State University students", The USG Alumni and- Scholars Conference: "Integrity in Action. Education, Social Accountability and Development", page 83.
3. Avetisyan Meri, "Magarich" or Tips to School Teachers: How in Service Teachers Perceive and Interpret Professional Integrity in Armenia?", The USG Alumni and-Scholars Conference: "Integrity in Action. Education, Social Accountability and Development", page 177-178.
4. National Integrity System Assessment of Armenia 2014, Transparency International, page 102
5. Integrity Action Textbook, London, 2015, pp.168-177
6. Public Administration of the Republic of Armenia, Code of Conduct, Yerevan, 2015, 27 pages
7. Movses Khorenatsi University, Yerevan, 2016
8. "Zhamanak" daily newspaper, Yerevan, 7 May, 2016, page 3
9. "Haykakan Zhamanak" daily newspaper, Yerevan, 17 September, 2014, page 6

Questionnaire

1 . **Indicate your personal data**
Sex Age Profession
male/female   18-24,   24 -43,   43-63   and beyond
2. **Are your universities corrupt ?**
Yes/ No
3. **If yes , what are the causes of corruption at universities ?**
a/ students` idleness
b/ low salaries of teachers
c/ weak supervision
d/ incomplete laws on education and lacking educational system
e/ other /indicate/
4. **Give the percentage of corruption risks at universities**
a/ entrance examinations /1-100%
b/ intermediate examinations /1-100%
c/ final examinations /1-100%
d/ other
5. **In your opinion in what universities the corruption risks are rife: state or private ?**

State/Private

6. **Do the student councils combat corruption effectively ?**
Yes   No

7. **Does your university have a commission or a council on ethics?**
YesNoDon`t know, haven`t heard of them

8.**Is the anticorruption education efficient at you university?**
YesNoDon`t know

9.**What can be done to eradicate corruption from universities?**

/Provide you brief statement , if necessary, use an additional page/

Curricula Scoring Template

	Cluster (a) - Thinking	Cluster (b) – Feeling	Cluster (c) – Doing	
Approaches to Teaching/Training	0 OR 1	0 OR 2	0 OR 3	Total
Normative, Conceptual				
Ethical and Moral Foundations, the Costs of Corruption				
Case Studies				
Critical Insights				
Problem-Centered				
Action Learning				
Total				