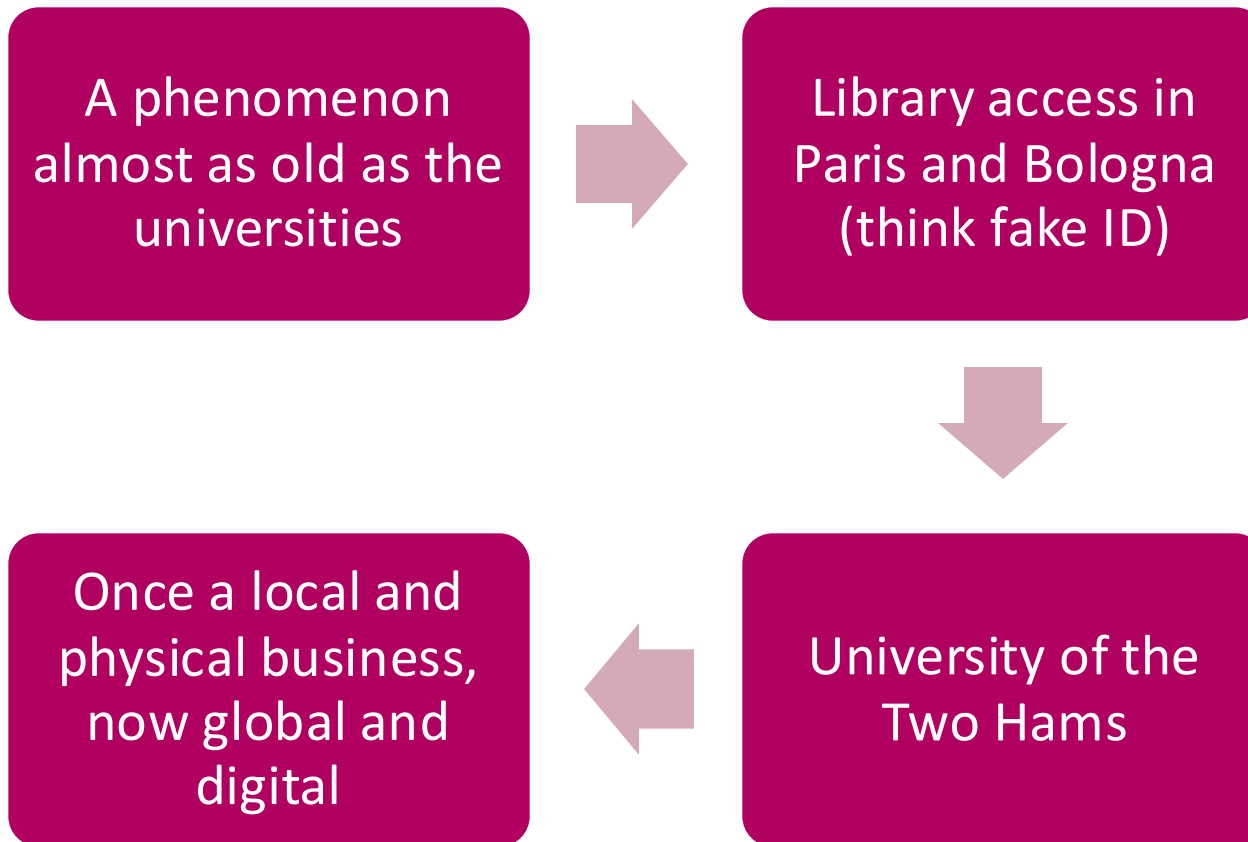


Diploma mills – not really new



A few of the largest and most well-known

- Almeda College and University
- Columbia State University
- University Degree Program
- St Regis University
- Axact



What, exactly, is a diploma mill?



A provider of services on a market regulated by supply and demand



A diploma mill is an organisation or individual who issues and sells fake or worthless diplomas/transcripts without actually requesting that the recipient has studied for the qualification or even accomplished anything and without there being a recognised authority or organisation supervising its activities. *Source: The National Agency for Higher Education, Sweden*

Voices from the diploma mill world



“In the final analysis, the LEGALITY of a degree is ALL that LEGALLY matters.”

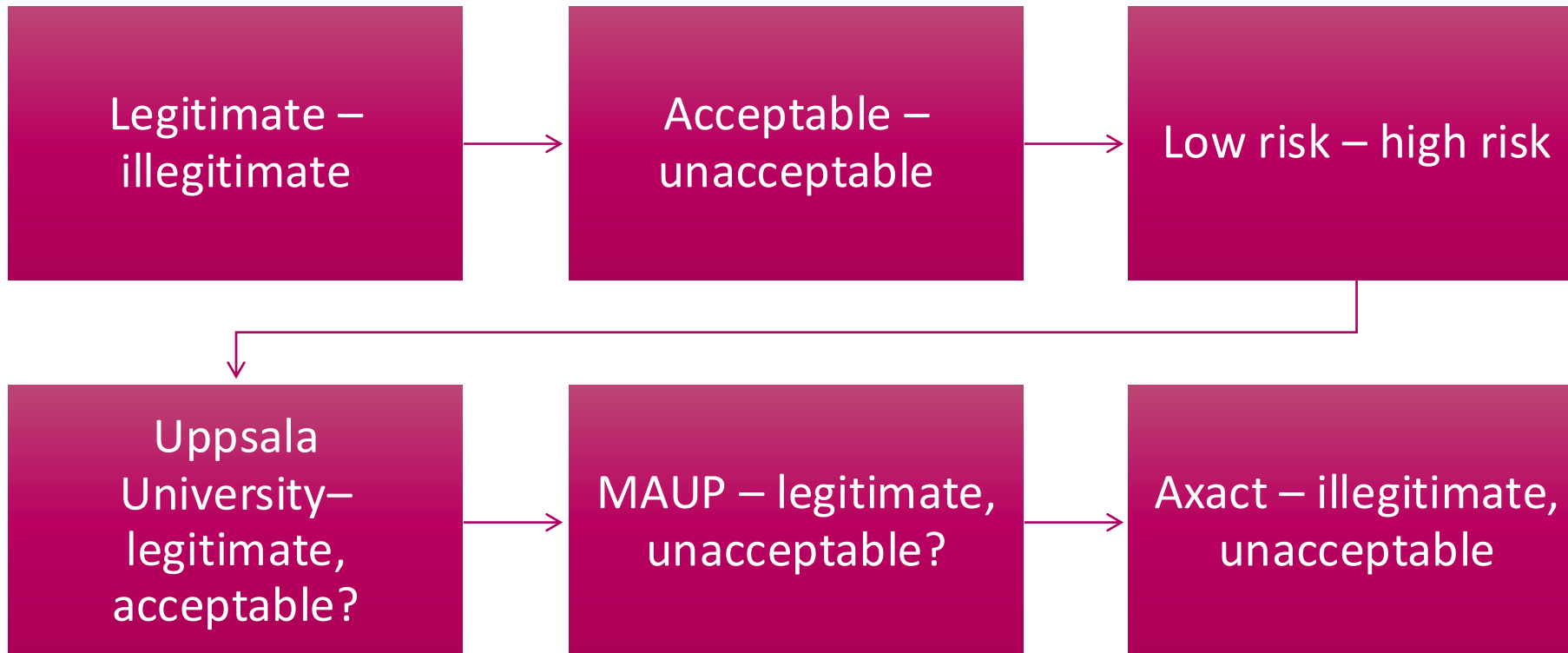


“The more you learn, the more stupid you get”
(anonymous professor at Irish International University)



“My position is clear: a degree is a degree whether it’s fake or real”

Diploma mills – a legal analysis



How to set up your own diploma mill I

Send spam emails to
potential customers

Create a
Facebook/X/Instagram
account

Market yourself through
search engines and
sponsored links

Recognise yourself

Become recognised,
accredited, validated
by and/or incorporated
in a micro- or fake
nation.

Affiliate yourself with a
church.

13 universities in a wine cellar



How to set up your own diploma mill II

Create your own
international
organisations

Diversify yourself – one
webb site is not
enough

Create and make use of
a network of
subcontractors

Buy and sell fake
peerages

Found your own fake
karate schools and
become experts on
counter-terrorism and
security

Offer credential
evaluation services

How to set up your own diploma mill III

Make sure logotypes of well-known credit card companies are visible on the web site

Try your best to sign affiliation agreements with legitimate universities

Offer life time verification, 24-7.

Use catch phrases – no courses, no classes, no books

”Curriculum is an integration of technology and tradition”

Make sure there are few, if any, degree requirements

Market yourself as a legitimate alternative to regular higher education

Use an inventive internet top-level domain, .ac or .ws

.ac is not ac for academic



Some statistics

Diploma mills in the USA sell at least 200,000 degrees per year to customers all over the world.

Of these, approximately 50,000 are doctoral degrees

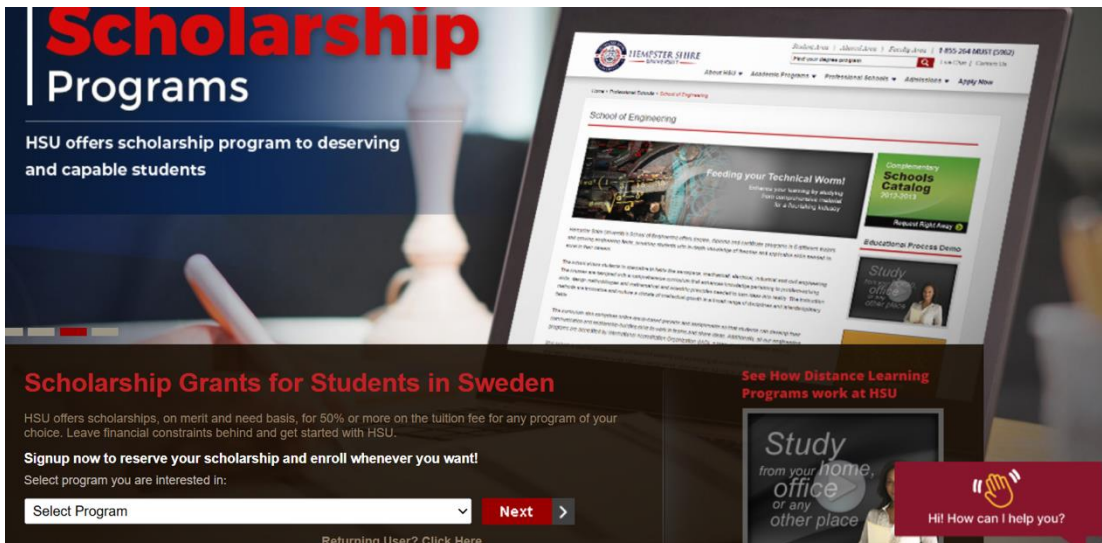
University Degree Program – 450 billion dollars in five years

St Regis University – sold 10,000 degrees to customers in 120 countries

Axact – the biggest there is...

In some countries, 10-15% of degree holders are graduates of diploma mills

The effects of diploma mills



Scholarship Programs
HSU offers scholarship program to deserving and capable students

Scholarship Grants for Students in Sweden
HSU offers scholarships, on merit and need basis, for 50% or more on the tuition fee for any program of your choice. Leave financial constraints behind and get started with HSU.
Signup now to reserve your scholarship and enroll whenever you want!
Select program you are interested in:
 Next >

Returning User? [Click Here](#)

See How Distance Learning Programs work at HSU

Study from your home, office or any other place
Hi! How can I help you?

They pose a risk to peoples' health and lives.

Harm the reputation of recognised universities

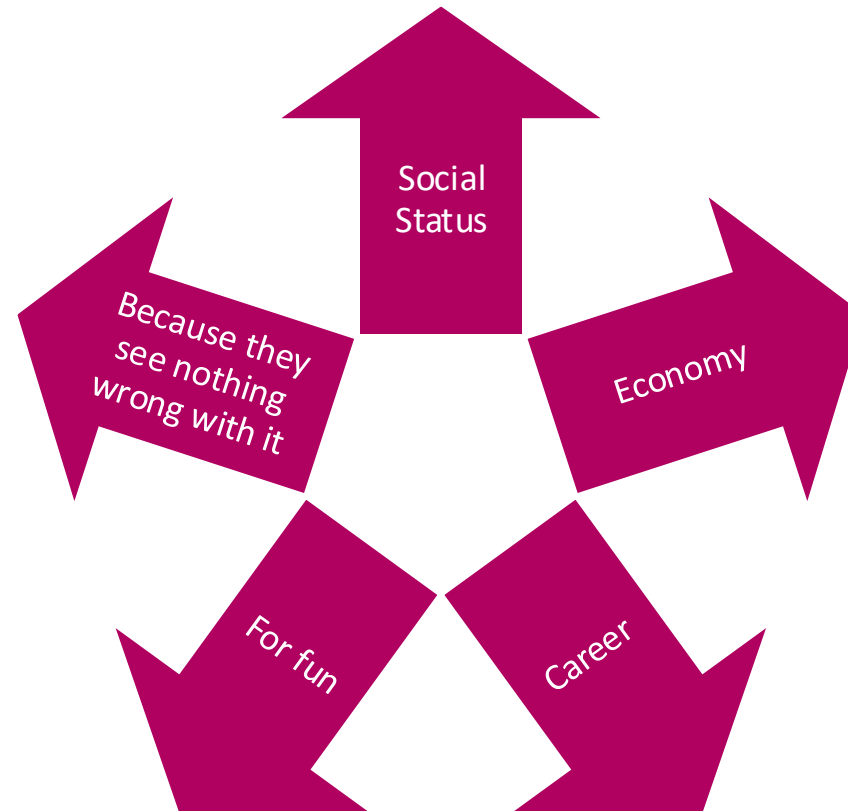
They have a negative impact on the value of real education

Reduce education to a tradeable commodity

The revenues are used to finance other forms of crime such as trafficking, arms and drug trade.

They may have a negative impact on research and education

Why do people buy diploma mill degrees?



Axact – too much and never enough

- Founded in 1997, initially operating out of P.E.C.H.S in Jamshed Town, Karachi, Pakistan
- Entered into the online "education" business in the year 2000
- Has sold over 9 million high school/college diplomas to customers in over 190 countries
- Runs over 4,000 websites, out of which 1,000 are fake school websites
- Total revenues reached the billion dollar mark in 2013-2014
- 2011-2022 – 70 billion USD
- Target markets are countries in the Gulf Region and the USA.

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Unfortunately, all of our operators are currently offline, please provide your information and an operator will contact you as soon as possible.

Your Name: *

Your Email Address:

Your Phone Number:
example: 5555555555

Leave Message: *



A highly diversified enterprise

- Axact maintains websites offering:
- fake term papers, theses, dissertations, custom research;
- used cars, fake apps, travel services;
- vanity publishing, piracy journals;
- teacher certifications, engineering certifications;
- And more

An advertisement for a scholarship. On the right side, a young man in a red graduation cap and gown smiles while holding a rolled-up diploma. The background is a light green gradient. The text is as follows:

**Earn a
Scholarship!**
Get up to
20% off
Limited offer
for first 100
students

APPLY NOW

Offer valid for limited period

At the core of the business – fake diplomas



”Education” is Axact’s primary source of income



Money directed to 50 bank accounts in 20 countries



Call centres in Karachi, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Islamabad



Organised as a company with a sales department, a legal department, an audit and control department etc



In 2015: approximately 370 fake high school, colleges and universities, 150 accreditation mills and 400 fake term paper sites.

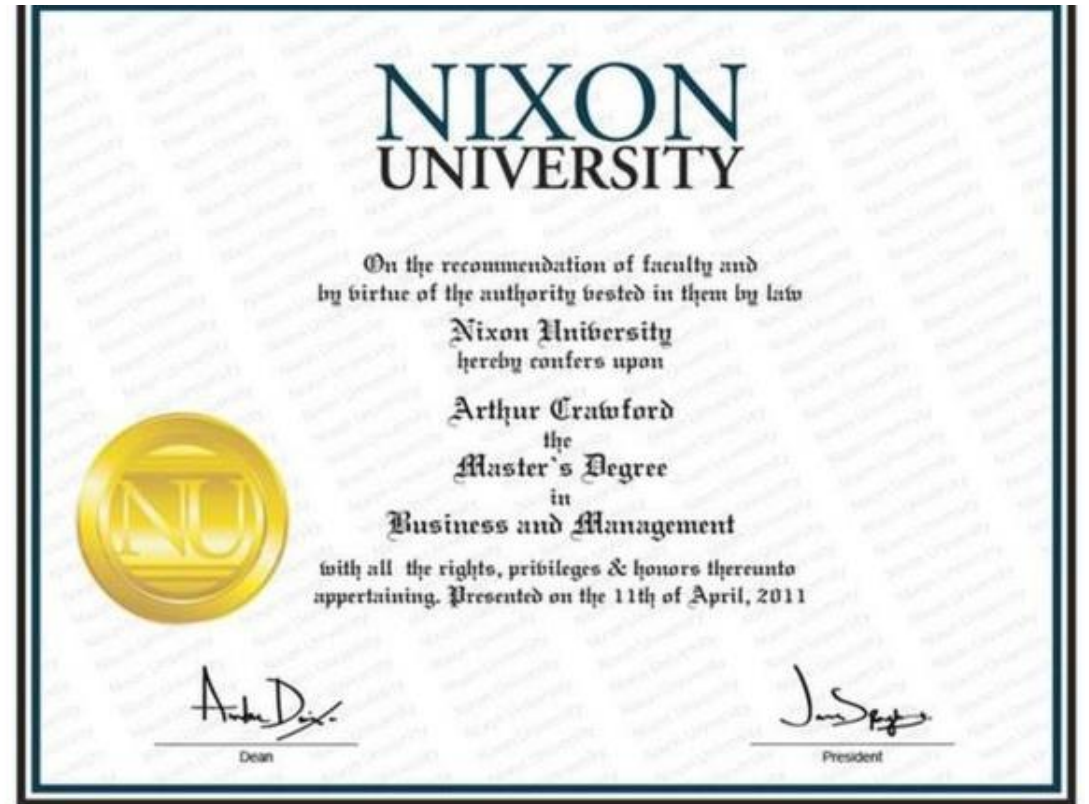


There may have been as many as 1000+ fake university websites over the last 20 years.

The products

- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition of Prior Learning
- Online Education
- Research and Sponsored Development
- The Upsell

This may all sound impressive but in reality....



Prior Learning Assessment

- Approximately 65% of Axact's universities
- "Universities" include Baychester, Brooklyn Park, Glenford, Hansford, Columbiana
- A short interview is conducted by one of the sales persons at a call center, with questions about work experience etc. After the interview the customer is said to fulfill requirements for the requested degree.
- Payment options include "scholarships", Cash on Delivery and Graduate Now, Pay Later plans.



STUDY AT
BROOKLYN PARK 

- ▶ Degree Program
- ▶ Diploma Program
- ▶ Certificate Program
- ▶ MBA Program
- ▶ Postgraduate
- ▶ Applications

Request Brochure 

Online education

- 35% of Axact's schools
- Al Arab U, Al Nasr, MUST, Myers Field etc
- Fake schools provide access to virtual classrooms with (stolen) recorded lectures and videos. Online chat rooms where students are guided through assignments by tutors who never themselves attended college. The "school officials" also take care of the final "examinations"



Research and Sponsored Development

- The fake term paper, theses and custom research sites
- Marketed as "100% non-plagiarized"
- According to information to former FBI agents, much of the content is stolen and obtained by buying library IDs and log-in credentials from hundreds of US college libraries from hackers in Pakistan, China

In the dark ages of humanity
students had no choice
but to write essays on their own

The Upsell

- Comes in various forms:
- The Additional Requirements: soon after an individual has purchased a degree, she or he will be contacted by an agent who advises that the documents need to be "legalized" to be valid in the individuals country of origin or domicile, or both,
- The Offer: the customer may also receive a proposal to "transfer" credits to another, more "reputable" school, at an additional cost.
- Not accepting may lead to the individual receiving threats that authorities in home country will be notified, which according to sales agents may lead to termination employment, difficulties in obtaining loans and visas and even imprisonment.

axact

**IN RESPONSE TO THE FALSE & DEFAMATORY
NEWS PUBLISHED IN "THE NEWS" DAILY
DATE: 04 FEBRUARY 2016**

How is this even possible?

- Axact – hiding in plain sight since 1997
- In spite of extensive media coverage (NYT, CBC News, Al-Jazeera, BBC etc) and raids directed at Axact's headquarters in 2015 and a following investigation and court case, no one has been sentenced, with one exception.
- This is partly due to the lack of federal legislation in Pakistan, and partly to the fact Axact is highly litigious.
- Witness intimidation – and more
- According to some, Axact provides services to the government and to intelligence agencies.
- ...and then there's the Indian connection...



Why is it a problem for higher education?

- Exact universities and degrees awarded by such entities are difficult to deal with but are still relatively easy to identify. It's time-consuming, requires co-operation and an exchange of information but it's manageable.
- A few recent developments, however are more worrying...

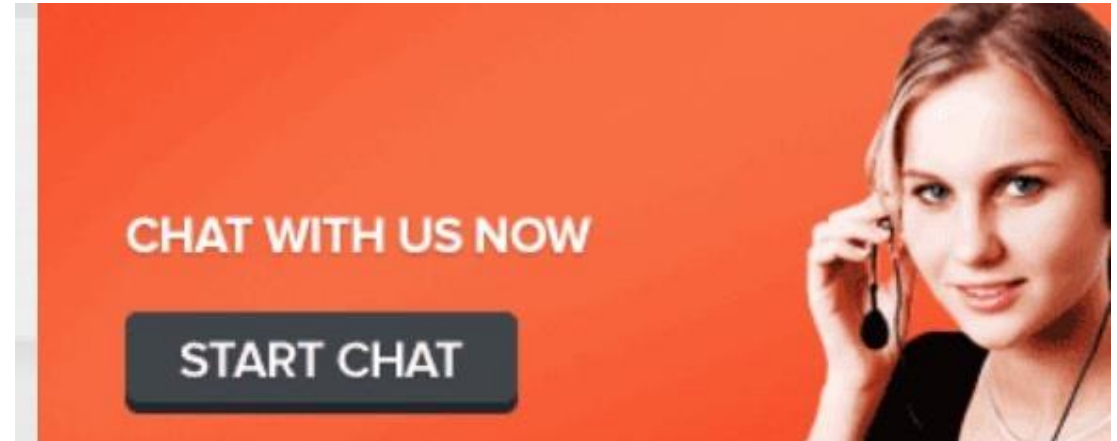
Global Vision University - Member Institution

Contact Person: Mr Manoj Sharma

Position: Principal

Accreditation – quality assurance under threat

- Fake accreditation has been around for ages. Usually, it's part and parcel of a fake degree operation in that both the university and the accrediting agency are created by the same individuals or organisations.
- Recently, fake accrediting agencies – Aexact agencies in particular – have had some success in selling what is basically meaningless, if not right-out worthless accreditation to legitimate schools in various regions.
- Also, and this even more concerning: legitimate agencies with a let's say lackadaisical approach to accreditation has accredited or accepted as members Aexact schools, in some cases not just one, but several. This gives legitimacy to entirely fictitious schools and enables them to make reference, in promotional material, to for example CHEA and the US Department of Education.



Chat Live with IAO Consultant

Consultant: Welcome to International Accreditation Organization
Consultant: Are you seeking internationally recognized accreditation for your institute?
Consultant: We are offering 90% accreditation grants to education providers worldwide for limited time.
Consultant: Talk to one of our consult

Write Here ...

Send

Credential Evaluation –the untapped resource

- Up until now, there have been only a handful of fake credential evaluators around, mostly short-lived operations, with one notable exception.
- This is changing, as Axact and other organisations are more actively (and aggressively) looking into this option. During the last year, Axact has created a number of websites for organisations that imitate or claim to be US government approved or even government agencies in their own right. A few of them are credential evaluation agencies offering assessments of Axact diplomas as equivalent to degrees awarded by regionally accredited US universities.



The other guys, and girls

- A loose network of schools operating out of Pakistan, Nigeria, UK, USA, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Mexico and Russia
- Sometimes competing, sometimes collaborating with A
- More in terms of “education” – in particular business studies, pseudoscience and alternative medicine.



WORLD INFORMATION DISTRIBUTED UNIVERSITY

Fraud in higher education – the far from exhaustive list

Degree mills – the
commodification of higher
education

Accreditation mills – substandard
or non-existing quality assurance

Credential evaluation mills –
academic or professional
recognition of fraudulent or
unrecognised qualifications. This
is the most recent development
often linked to student visa fraud

Essay and term paper mills – “our
papers are 100% non-plagiarised”

Professional test takers –
claiming knowledge that is not
your own

AI services, ChatGPT – static
knowledge on repeat?

- For example, we haven't fraudulent scientific organisations and fake scientific conferences

Degree mills = non-existing or invented knowledge

- A degree from a school created by A does not represent either learning or knowledge
- A degree from the other network usually represents substandard knowledge and superficial learning



Degree mill graduates, for admission:

degree mill graduates lack subject knowledge, partially or completely since the degrees are not based on actual learning or on pseudoscience. The potentially life-transforming experience of learning has been replaced by a product enabling shortcuts ("no coursework, no exams, no hassle!")



Degree mill graduates, for employment:

In addition to all of the above, degree mill graduates typically lack sufficient formal training in teaching and experience in good research practice. Curricula from substandard institutions is sometimes used in classes.

Essay and term paper mills = knowledge recycled

- Quite a lot is stolen from legitimate universities. Papers, essays, books, articles, private notes library log in details - essentially anything hackers can get their hands on

Providers operating out of for example China and Pakistan

Essayhelp.com, papertrue.com, essayhelp.org

If of good quality, most of the content is stolen. Papers of poor quality are often plagiarised and then rewritten in the same locations from where fake degrees are sold

These papers represent learning, knowledge and research, but of varying quality and above all, completely *detached* from the individual submitting it as their own.

These services are facing the danger of being replaced by AI.

ChatGPT, Gemini etc – knowledge(s) reassembled



It is often claimed that AI services will disrupt the knowledge economy and change what is referred to as knowledge management.



This may all be true but a bot such as ChatGPT will create knowledge that is not only detached from individual learning, but also from context, in the sense that it will draw information from an infinite number of sources.



However, it may be a snake biting its own tail. The reproduction of static knowledge may be economically managed for ever, but if degree mills, term paper mills and AI have deprived individuals of the skills to learn, reflect on and show their learning, new learning will take place only with considerable difficulty.

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Your Name: *

Your Email Address: *

Your Phone Number: *

Hello!
How may I help you?

How to combat fraud in higher education

Through legislation – make commercial contract cheating illegal, protect legally terms like 'university', 'academy', etc. cf UK, Netherlands

Through collection and sharing of information – between universities, the ENIC-NARIC network, QA assurance agencies, GAIN, Global Academic Integrity Network, [Global Academic Integrity Network](#)

Through collaboration on a European and international level – the ETINED platform, [ETINED - Council of Europe Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education \(coe.int\)](#)

Remember: education, too, is a tradeable commodity



UNIVERSITY OF EVERYWHERE ALL OVER THE PLACE	
BACHELOR'S DEGREE	\$240
MASTER'S DEGREE	\$360
PHD DEGREE	\$480
TOTAL: \$1080.00	
YOUR EDUCATION IS MONEY OUR MONEY	
WWW.CUSTOMRECEIPT.COM	

Thank you!
andre.hesselback@uhr.se