



FAKING IT

The modern counterfeit industry and higher education



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What is a forgery?

- ▶ forgery, 1. the act of reproducing something for a deceitful or fraudulent purpose
- ▶ 2. something forged, such as a work of art or an antique
- ▶ 3. (Law) *Criminal law*
- ▶ a. the false making or altering of any document, such as a cheque or character reference (and including a postage stamp), or any tape or disc on which information is stored, intending that anyone shall accept it as genuine and so act to his or another's prejudice
- ▶ b. something forged
- ▶ 4. (Law) *Criminal law* the counterfeiting of a seal or die with intention to defraud.

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- "The deliberate attempt to deceive consumers by copying and marketing goods bearing well known trademarks, generally together with packaging and product configuration, so that they look like they are made by a reputable manufacturer when they are, in fact, inferior copies (pg. 1)."
 - Source: the Anti-Counterfeiting group





Why do people forge things?

- Social status
 - Economy
 - Career
 - For fun
 - Because they see nothing wrong with it
- 



Things that are popular to forge these days

- ▶ Food
- ▶ Liquor
- ▶ Cigarettes
- ▶ Medicine
- ▶ Clothes
- ▶ Toys
- ▶ Spare parts (airplanes), accessories (batteries)
- ▶ Cell phones
- ▶ Websites, countries
- ▶ Passports, visas
- ▶ Higher education documents

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- What we choose to forge is depending on the times we live in and what we consider valuable.
 - Any cultural capital that can be converted into economic capital is subject to forgery.



Centres of production

- Napoli, Italy
- Beijing, Guangdong, China
- Lagos, Nigeria
- Hyderabad, India
- Karachi, Pakistan
- Istanbul, Turkey
- Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Benin




Some statistics

- ▶ The trade in counterfeit goods comprise a three figure billion dollar industry representing at least 5-7% of the total world trade. The percentage is increasing.
- ▶ 1999 – 25 million counterfeit items seized by customs and other authorities, 2000 – 70 million, 2001 – 100 million
- ▶ In the European union in 2015, more than 40 million products valued at 650 million euros.
- ▶ 50% of all medications brought into Nigeria are fake
- ▶ Fake degrees from real universities: at least 100,000 sold in 2015.
- ▶ At present, fake degrees are a huge problem in India.
- ▶ When it comes to Chinese applicants to US universities, an estimated 90% of recommendation letters are fake, 70% of application essays are not student-composed, and 50% of grade transcripts are falsified – Zinch China, 2010
- ▶ In 2013 as many as one in ten applications from Chinese students applying to US universities may have contained fraudulent content.



The effects of forgeries

- They pose a risk to peoples health and lifes.
 - Loss of tax revenues
 - Harm the reputation of legitimate companies
 - Devalue what is produced of legitimate companies
 - Loss of legitimate jobs
 - The revenues are used to finance other forms of crime such as trafficking, arms and drug trade.
 - The have a negative impact on product development
- 



Organisation

- Criminal networks
- Production in one country, assembly in another, transportation through a third and sale in a fourth
- Exploit weak legislation/legal loopholes and black labour
- Transport – air, sea and land
- Use of indirect routes
- Counterfeit and legitimate (sometimes stole) goods are mixed
- Marketing and sale over the Internet
- Organised as companies with their own technicians, financiers, importers, distributors, sellers etc
- Use shell and dummy companies

Document forgeries now and then

Before Internet

Mechanical

Paper

Ink

Physical

Local

Small-scale



Internet

Electronic

Screen

Scanner

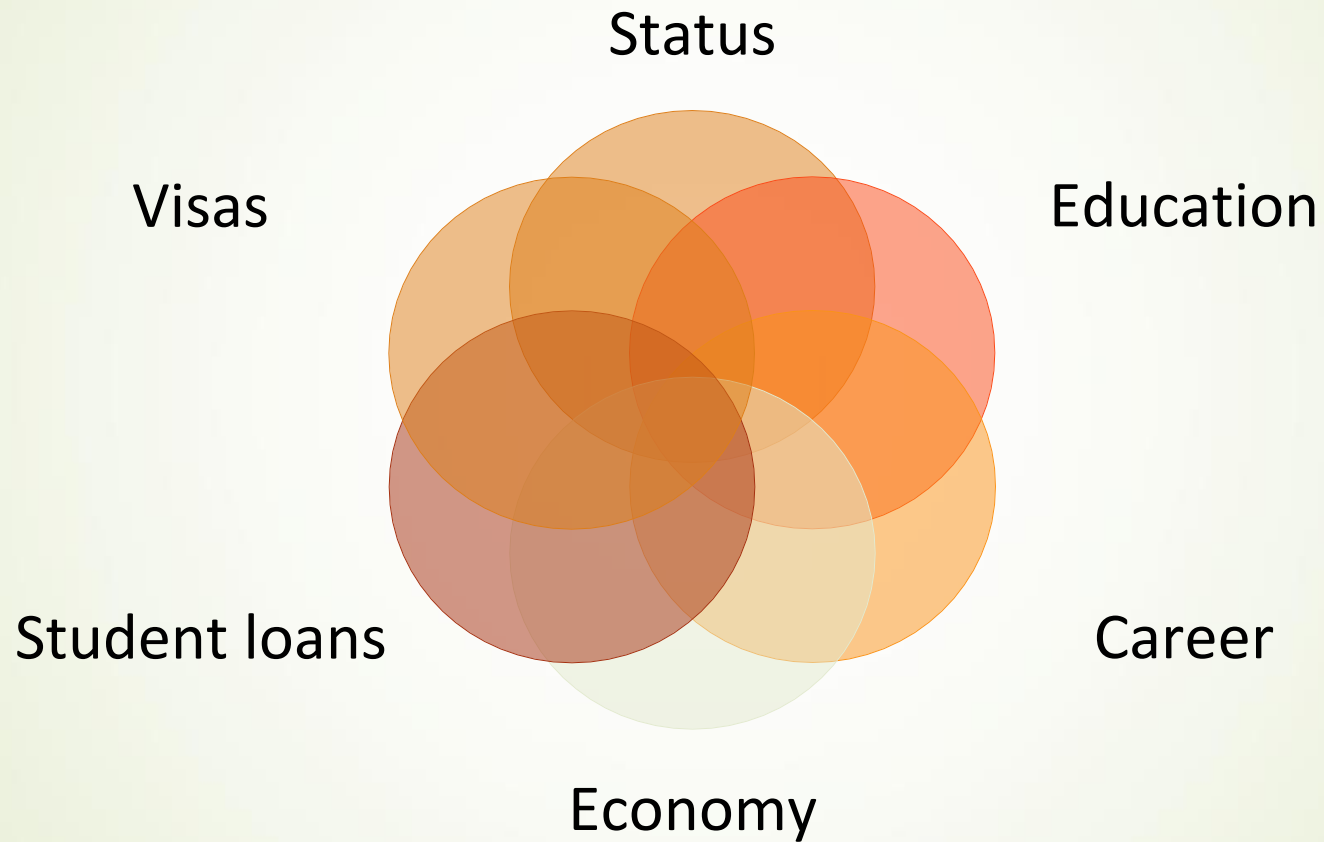
Virtual

Global

Large-scale



The Business Idea



Forged documents

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graph TD; A[Forged documents] --> B[Completely forged]; A --> C[Partially forged]; A --> D[Irrelevant documents]; C --> E[Unauthorized changes]; C --> F[Illegally issued documents]; D --> G[Phantasy documents];
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Completely forged

Partially forged

Unauthorized changes

Illegally issued
documents

Irrelevant documents

Phantasy documents


The new era...

- "Create your diploma now! Create a transcript! Create a recommendation letter! Hell, create your own college!"
- "Just download the software and you will have your own Diploma and Transcript Maker.





Forgeries in higher education

- Certificates, diplomas
 - ID cards, passports
 - Transcripts
 - Birth certificates
 - Recommendation letters
 - Language tests
- 



Production centres

- Lagos, Nigeria
 - Hyderabad, India
 - Karachi, Pakistan
 - Spokane, USA
 - Beijing, China
- 




Some (unofficial) statistics

- Diploma mills in the USA only 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 largest ever. An estimated 70 million dollars annually
- In some countries, 10-15% of degree holders are graduates of diploma mills

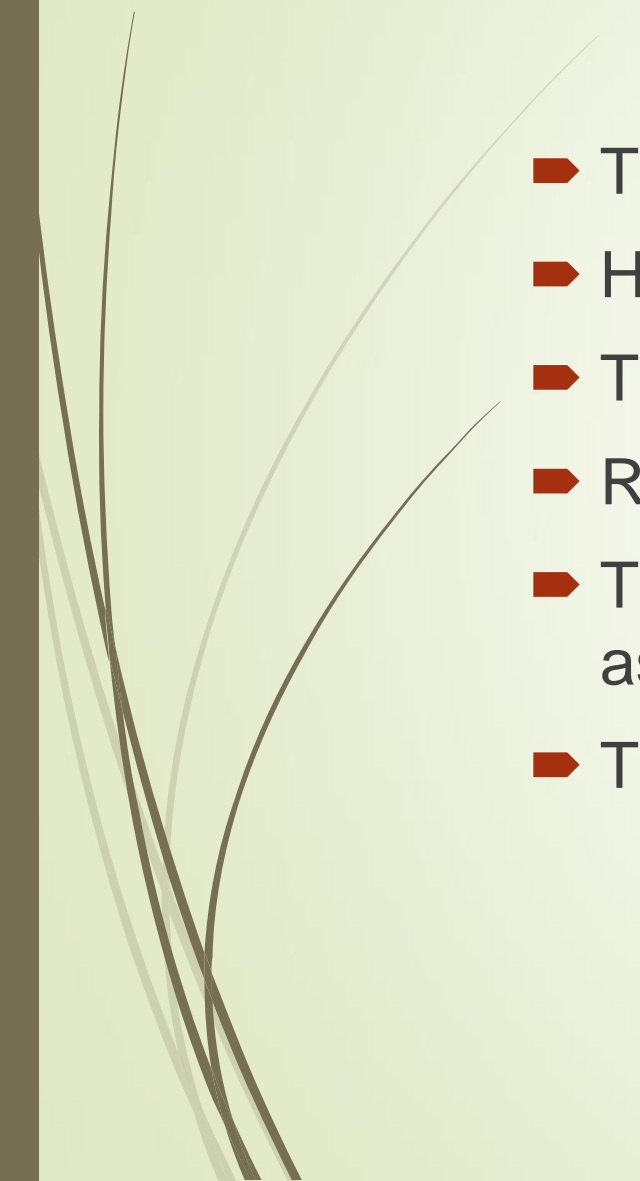


Why do people buy fake diplomas?

- Social Status
 - Economy
 - Career
 - For fun
 - Because they see nothing wrong with it
- 



The effects of fake universities

- They pose a risk to peoples health and lifes.
 - 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
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What can be done about it?

- Take fraud seriously
- Develop a policy to combat fraud
- Make use of your legal system
- In international admissions, research your target markets
- If working with agents, check them up
- Increase your knowledge about foreign higher education systems
- Tap the resources of your ENIC-NARIC
- Cooperation is essential
- Training of key staff