

Idiom by Lon Yan

自欺欺人

ren2 shen2 gong4 fen4

"Professionals" in which you trust your money or even your life could be fake ones who bought "credentials" from "diploma mills."

Allen Ezell, a former FBI agent who has investigated these illegal "degree granting" operations for decades estimated that half of new PhDs issued every year in the U.S. are fake.

Can anyone actually fool people with fake academic credentials? In the TV series Suits, a young man who pretended to be a Harvard Law graduate managed to practice law for years before being discovered. He went to jail.

Apparently, this can happen in real life too. Many years ago, a member of the Legislative Council who practiced law for year also went to jail because it turned out he was never qualified.

And can anyone obtained a fake degree

without knowing it? A Canadian man who paid the equivalent of about HK\$48,000 for a master's degree from a non-existent university insisted that he didn't know, even though he was never required to do exams or academic work.

The idiom that comes to mind is "自欺欺人" (zi4 qi1 qi1 ren2).

"自" (zi4) is "self," "欺" (qi1) "to deceive," "to fool," "to take unfair advantage of," "欺" (qu1) is, again, "to deceive," "to fool," "to take unfair advantage of," and "人" (ren2) "others," "other people." "自欺" (zi4 qi1) is "to deceive oneself," and "欺人" (qi1 ren2) can mean "to bully others," but in this context, it means "to deceive others."

Literally, "自欺欺人" (zi4 qi1 qi1 ren2) is "to deceive oneself as well as others." It means "to believe one's own lies."

Terms containing the character "欺" (qi2) include:

欺騙 (qi1 pian4) – to deceive; to cheat; to swindle

欺瞞 (qi1 man2) – to hoodwink; to cover up the truth

欺負 (qi1 fu4) – to bully

欺壓 (qi1 ya1) – to bully and oppress; to tyrannize