

## **Corruption in the Education Sector: An Introduction**

*“Corruption is a major drain on the effective use of resources for education and should be drastically curbed”.*  
*World Education Forum: Dakar Framework of Action (2000)<sup>2</sup>*

### **1. Introduction**

Education is a fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). All children of the world are entitled to free quality education, and must have equitable access to education.<sup>3</sup> Achieving universal primary education is the second Millennium Development Goal.

Education gives access to better opportunities in life, higher lifetime earnings and social mobility. Education has a strategic importance for development: As a public good, it not only builds a country’s leadership, but also citizens’ ethical attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, the education sector is expected to be particularly exemplary, and schooling to be fair. However, the reality is very different from that expectation in many parts of the world.

“Teachers sold places in the front rows of their overcrowded classrooms, parents had to pay if they wanted their child’s exercise books to be corrected, and the only way a child could complete the curriculum in an examination year was through private tuition with the same teacher. An Inspector’s main function on visiting a school was to be fed. Poor food and drink would result in a poor report. Headmasters’ posts were sold, those in the larger schools by the highest officials in the Ministry of Education.”<sup>4</sup>

Corruption in education affects more people than corruption in others sectors, both in rural and urban areas. Its consequences are particularly harsh for the poor who, without access to education and with no alternatives to low quality education, have

---

<sup>1</sup> This text was written for the Christian Michelsen Institute in July 2004.

<sup>2</sup> See The Dakar Framework for Action adopted by the World Education forum at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0012/001202/120240e.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> UN Declaration on Human Rights, 1948, paragraph 26, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, article 13, Convention of the Right of the Child (1989), article 28.

<sup>4</sup> N. Bennett, referring to corrupt practices in Cameroon, “Corruption in Education Systems in Developing Countries: What it is doing to the Young” presented at the 2001 International Anti-Corruption Conference (IACC), section 5

little chance to escape a life of poverty. An empirical analysis by the IMF shows that drop-out rates in countries with high corruption are five times as high as in countries with low corruption.<sup>5</sup> Low school enrolment in developing countries has been linked to illegal payments for school entrance and other 'hidden' costs for meals, uniforms, textbooks and other teaching materials as well as for additional services like extra tuition.<sup>6</sup> The percentage of students paying extra charges for education ranges from 10 to 86 % according to the CIET Social Audits.<sup>7</sup> Politically, corruption in education is a particularly sensitive area: Teachers usually represent the biggest group of public sector employees, a fact that may help explain reluctance to effectively tackle corruption in education.

Corruption in education is incompatible with a major goal of education: to produce citizens respecting the law and human rights. Corruption threatens equal access, quantity and quality of education. Misallocation and loss of talent because students and teachers are promoted on the basis of bribes rather than merit deprives a country of competent leaders. If an education system is not built on the concept of meritocracy, honesty and fairness, a country endangers its social, economic and political future. It is the very foundations of a society that are in danger if children come to believe that personal effort and merit do not count and that success comes through manipulation, favouritism and bribery.

“Rich children don’t have to perform well; they know that their parents’ money will guarantee their success. The children understand that what’s important isn’t knowledge but money.” Ukraine 1996, *Voices of the Poor*<sup>8</sup>

How frequent is corruption in education? A survey undertaken by TI in 2002 in South Asia reveals that the education sector is heavily affected by corruption, being at least the third most corrupt public service. In Pakistan, 92% of households with experience of public education reported having to pay bribes; the average amount paid was 4.81 rupees (US\$ 86).<sup>9</sup> In Colombia, the Ministry of Education received the second-lowest rating in an Integrity Index of 88 Public Institutions.<sup>10</sup> The World Development Report 2004 states shockingly low educational outcomes in many countries, and gives examples of students that have learnt practically nothing at all after many years of schooling.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> IMF Working Paper WP/00/116: “Corruption and the Provision of Health Care and Education Services”, p. 25

<sup>6</sup> Hallak & Poisson (2002): Ethics and Corruption in Education. IIEP/ UNESCO Policy Forum no. 15, p. 13 ff

<sup>7</sup> CIET (Community Information, Empowerment, Transparency) International Social Audit 1999. The CIET social audits are available via the Internet: <http://www.ciet.org>

<sup>8</sup> *Voices of the Poor: A Study To Inform The World Development Report 2000/01 on Poverty and Development*, (2000), p. 125 at <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/voices/reports.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Transparency International *Global Corruption Report (GCR) 2004*, p. 301

<sup>10</sup> *GCR 2004*, p. 292

<sup>11</sup> Shantayanan Devarajan et al, *World Development Report 2004 (WDR)*, see Chapter 7

## 2. Where does corruption in education occur?

Corruption in education occurs at political, administrative (central and local level) and classroom level.

*At policy level*, corruption afflicts the allocation of resources to the education budget, leaving the sector under resourced.<sup>12</sup> Research has displayed a propensity by decision-makers to prefer hard investments (procurement, military hardware, large construction projects) instead of soft investments (daily running costs for schools, for instance), because the former is more easily corrupted.<sup>13</sup> Decision-making can be biased along ethnic lines and can go as far as political blackmail (if you don't vote for me, you don't get the school).

*At central ministry level*, grand corruption involves the diversion of funds associated with procurement, construction, and of the funds intended for allocation to lower levels of the system. Funds for educational institutions can be siphoned off at the administrative and political level by corrupt administrators, public officials and politicians even before they reach the schools.

*At school and administrative level*, petty corruption involves the diversion of money and supplies on their way to schools, and bribes from educators lower in the system seeking to secure opportunity or avoid punishment.<sup>14</sup> In the late 1990s, it was reported from the Philippines that despite significant public expenditures on textbooks, only 16% of children actually received them. Education supplies were lost to payoffs, under-deliveries, and overpricing.<sup>15</sup> Also, corruption in teacher recruitment and promotion contributes to low quality of public teaching.

*At school level*, corruption occurs in the form of bribes paid by parents to ensure access, good grades and graduation. In a broader sense, a bias against pupils on ethnic or gender grounds (i.e. the bypassing of objective student assessment criteria) also constitutes an abuse of power, i.e. an act of corruption.

## 3. Common forms of corruption in education

Corrupt practices in education include bribes and pay-offs, embezzlement, bypassing criteria, academic fraud, favouritism, nepotism and traffic of influence, which constitute an abuse of power for private gain. These practices occur in education planning processes, in school management, in student admission and examination, in teacher administration and teachers' professional conduct.

---

<sup>12</sup> P. Mauro: *The Effects of Corruption on Growth, Investment, and Government Expenditure: A cross-country Analysis in Corruption and the Global Economy*, 83-107 (1997), edited by Kimberly Ann Elliot, Washington: The Institute for International Economics.

<sup>13</sup> Shang-Jin Wlei: World Bank Economic Papers, The World Bank Development Research group, 1999

<sup>14</sup> D. Chapman, "Corruption and the Education Sector", 2002

<sup>15</sup> Chua, Yvonne 1999: *Robbed: An Investigation of Corruption in Philippine Education* (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism)

### **3.1 Planning and school management**

#### *3.1.1 Approval of school establishment*

Decisions concerning where to build new schools or which schools should receive government subsidies can be influenced outside of the formal decision-making organs. Schools may be built in areas where they are not needed, bypassing school mapping criteria. Projects may be selected for personal and political interests rather than educational needs.

#### *3.1.2 Procurement*

Corruption in procurement occurs in the provision of educational material (curriculum development, textbooks, library, uniforms, etc), of meals and of building, facilities and equipment. Profits are usually high – in school construction and in the design and manufacturing of text books because sales levels are guaranteed – thus the propensity of bidders to pay bribes. Because textbooks and supplies often remain under monopolies of the state without transparent bidding procedures, designers are frequently chosen on the basis of unprofessional specifications and through personal connections. As a consequence, textbooks may be of poor quality.

#### Consequences of corruption in procurement

In 2001, twenty five million secondary level schoolchildren in Bangladesh started the school year without textbooks. When the textbooks were finally delivered, they were full of errors – yet, they had to be purchased by pupils at a higher price than previously announced. A report card survey carried out by Transparency International Bangladesh revealed that students had to pay an additional Tk 670 million (approximately US\$ 12 million) due to the textbook crisis.<sup>16</sup>

#### *3.1.3 School accreditation*

The post-cold-war period has seen a blossoming of private teaching institutions and a flowering of new degree programmes. These institutions and degrees need to be recognised through a system of accreditation that is traditionally managed within government ministries. Corruption may occur in the licensing and allocation of subsidies to both private and public institutions. Schools and institutes may bribe their way into getting the necessary authorisation for giving classes and exams, and there are many instances of corrupt accreditation of schools leading to poor medical schools, law schools and business and accounting programmes. These corrupt practices place the nation at risk because institutions of low quality may be licensing students with poor professional standards.<sup>17</sup>

### **3.2 Student admission and examination**

<sup>16</sup> TI Bangladesh, Report Card Survey on “The textbook crisis of the secondary school students”, 2001

<sup>17</sup> Heyneman “Education and Corruption”, Presented to the International Forum at the Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE), Sacramento, California 2002, p.6

### 3.2.1 Students' admission

Corruption in the admission and selection process is frequent in many countries. Entrance tests are privately sold to high-paying candidates before the tests are administered.<sup>18</sup> Oral examinations are even more open to corruption since they are more subjective and difficult to monitor. As salaries decline in value, and educational institutions require alternative sources of income, bribery surrounding the admissions process as well as the process of examination and graduation can become a matter of routine. Candidates may even know how much a "pass" will cost and be expected to bring the cash ahead of time.<sup>19</sup> Other forms of corruption include the selling of information (e.g. of exam papers ahead of examination), favouritism and nepotism.

### 3.2.2 Private tutoring

“Poor high schools also produce students who leave poorly prepared for college. Therefore, parents must hire private tutors to ensure that their children pass the entrance exams. The catch is that the most popular tutors are professors who also sit on the committees that decide who is admitted to college, and who is refused. The examinations are oral. Grading criteria are wholly subjective. The "tutoring fees" wind up being de facto bribes.”  
*Chronicle of Higher Education*, 2002<sup>20</sup>

When admitted, families with children in school at all levels may have to engage teachers as private tutors because tutorials are viewed as a necessity to passing the exams. The World Bank's Voices of the Poor survey finds that public school teachers in Pakistan demand payment for each child in the form of “tuition”. “If parents do not meet these payments [...], the teachers were reported to beat the student or submit a failing grade for him or her.”<sup>21</sup>

“Free” primary education is often not free in reality for poor families. Private tutoring can exacerbate social inequalities and frequently includes manipulation of students by tutors. This is particularly problematic where mainstream teachers provide paid supplementary tutoring for their own mainstream pupils after school hours. In the worst cases, a form of blackmail arises in which the teachers teach only half the curriculum during the school day and then require their pupils to pay for the other half during private lessons.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.2.3 Examination

The examination system is central to institutions that are based on meritocracy, and its fairness is crucial to ensure quality outcomes in education. Again, reality often contrasts with this, for example it is reported from India that cheating is so well established that when universities try to crack down, students protest and demand their traditional “right” to cheat. Examination proctors are sometimes beaten or even killed by students for conscientiously doing their jobs. In some places, professors or administrators collude with students by selling them examination papers in advance or

---

<sup>18</sup> Heyneman (2002), p.5

<sup>19</sup> Heyneman (2002), p.5

<sup>20</sup> *Chronicle of Higher Education*, #11, August 2, 2002 “In Georgia, Professors Hand Out Price Lists” by Bryon MacWilliams T'bilisi, Georgia

<sup>21</sup> *Voices of the Poor* (2000), Pakistan 1996, p. 125

<sup>22</sup> M. Bray: Adverse effects of private supplementary tutoring. IIEP 2003, p. 13

by “fixing” the results. In others, students manage to steal examinations and sell them in advance to others.<sup>23</sup>

In Georgia, professors are reported to hand out price lists for passing exams. A student can practically buy his or her way through the institution, paying for every exam and, ultimately, a diploma. Moreover, students can bypass the higher education system altogether by simply buying a diploma from an established university.

### **3.3 Teacher management and professional conduct**

#### *3.3.1 Teacher administration*

There are many opportunities for corruption in the administration of teachers and public education officials: The recruitment process may bypass criteria and lead to employment of unqualified personnel. Teachers may be allocated to schools where they are not needed while other schools may lack teachers. Placements in rural schools are frequently unpopular, especially amongst unmarried and female teachers, and may be avoided through bribes to public officials.

Inefficient information management systems and corrupt administration may involve allocation of salaries to *ghost teachers*. As in school management in general, abundance of rules and regulations often aggravates the problems.

In pre-civil war Liberia, the process of getting replacement teachers hired to replace teachers who had died or left teaching was highly complex and corrupt. New teachers needed 29 official signatures to get on the payroll. As a remedy, “headmasters were allowed to appoint temporary substitutes and let them cash the pay checks of the teachers they replaced. Principals quickly realised that they could cash these pay checks and keep the money, without bothering to appoint a replacement teacher. This eventually led to a high incidence of “ghost teachers”. When district and central officials realised what was happening, instead of trying to eliminate the practice, they demanded a cut of the proceeds.”<sup>24</sup>

Corruption frequently involves the *teacher promotion* process. Candidates may bribe or otherwise sway promotion committees. In universities with a rigid academic hierarchy, senior academics often promote their friends or perhaps colleagues without regard to the qualifications of the candidate.<sup>25</sup>

Corruption also occurs in *loan and scholarship schemes* for higher education. Bennett finds widespread corruption in such schemes in Africa and concludes: “The corruption involved in misusing the system [...], enabling graduating students to avoid paying back student loans creates a future governing elite trained to believe that theft from the state is OK.”<sup>26</sup>

#### *3.3.2 Teacher misconduct*

---

<sup>23</sup> P.G. Altbach. “The Question of Corruption in Academe”, *Journal for International Higher Education*, Winter 2004, p. 2

<sup>24</sup> Chapman p 13 see <http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/research/reportcards.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Altbach (2004), p 2

<sup>26</sup> N Bennett (2001), p 8

Professional misconduct of teachers constitutes corruption in that power is abused for personal gain.

Motivated and effective teachers are a prerequisite for quality teaching. However, as *Voices of the Poor* documents, people in developing countries often complain of absent or abusive teachers and demands for illegal fees to get their children into school or to influence examination results.<sup>27</sup> Teachers may use tuition and school fees for private profit, and accept favours for normal services. They may exploit their students as unpaid labour, frequently on their fields. Cases of malfeasance are distressingly present in many settings: teachers show up drunk, are physically abusive, or simply do nothing. Sexual harassment by teachers is frequent in many countries – it constitutes, in that abuse of power is involved, an act of corruption in the broader sense.<sup>28</sup> A study of sexual violence in Botswana (2001) revealed that 67% of girls reported sexual harassment by teachers, 11% of the girls surveyed seriously considered dropping out of school due to harassment (despite the fact that Botswana provides 10 years of free education) and 10% consented to sexual relations for fear of reprisals on grades and performance records.<sup>29</sup>

“There must be an end to the practice of male teachers demanding sex with schoolgirls or female teachers. It shows selfish disrespect for the rights and dignity of women and young girls. Having sex with learners betrays the trust of the community. It is also against the law.”  
Kader Asmal, South Africa Education Minister<sup>30</sup>

*Teacher absenteeism* is a serious and widespread problem in many countries. A survey of thousands of primary schools carried out by the World Bank in 2002-3 in seven developing countries found that teacher absence ranged from 13% (in Peru) to 58% (in Indian states Assam and Bihar). In addition, many of those that were present at school were not teaching.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> D Narayan et al “Voices of the Poor: Can Anyone Hear Us?”, World Bank, 2002

<sup>28</sup> Empirical studies are listed in “Unsafe schools: A literature Review of School-Related Gender-Based Violence in Developing Countries”, USAID 2003  
[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/wid/pubs/unsafe\\_schools\\_literature\\_review.pdf](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/pubs/unsafe_schools_literature_review.pdf)

See also the Human Rights Watch Report “SCARED AT SCHOOL: Sexual Violence Against Girls in South African Schools” HRW 2001 <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/safrica/>

<sup>29</sup> Rossetti 2001, quoted from USAID paper, *ibid*.

<sup>30</sup> The HIV/ AIDS Emergency: Guidelines for Educators, South Africa Department of Education, 2000  
[http://education.pwv.gov.za/HIVAIDS\\_Folder/AIDS%20book.pdf](http://education.pwv.gov.za/HIVAIDS_Folder/AIDS%20book.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> N Chaudhury, H Rogers, J Hammer: Measuring and Understanding Provider Absence in Health and Education. 2004. The study is still under publication.

“(I)f you visit a school in India on any given day, there is a good chance that nobody will be there... Where teachers are absent, some may be doing quite different jobs while continuing to draw their government salary; but a good many are teaching in smaller groups, privately for a fee... The problem is lack of accountability... Teachers are paid by state governments. Government inspectors do not supervise them effectively: in many states they seem to settle for collecting bribes from teachers... Illiterate villagers are used to seeing their school empty for much or all of the time, they know and expect no better.<sup>32</sup>

Another corrupt practice of teachers involves educational materials: Professors may require students to buy their books and lack of compliance may result in failing an exam.<sup>33</sup> They may also adopt an inadequate textbook or educational materials because of a manufacturer’s gift.

Finally, the utilisation of school property for private commercial purposes also constitutes an act of corruption.<sup>34</sup>

#### **4. Causes of corruption in education**

There appear to be a number of causes of corruption in education.

A clear relationship exists between *economic factors* and corruption. *Inadequate salaries* of administrators and teachers and irregular or delayed payment often force them to look for ways to supplement their income. As *Voices of the Poor* reports from Moldova, teachers have left their position in large numbers because they cannot survive on their salary alone. Those who remain supplement their income by extensive subsistence gardening or work several shifts. In villages, they accept payments of food or labour by parents, they sell textbooks or buy manuals from printing houses and resell them to pupils.<sup>35</sup>

In higher education, *shortage of funds* puts universities under great pressure to admit students and therefore makes them vulnerable to corruption. Institutions that experience “permanent poverty” in societies that offer few options for the highly educated are more exposed to the lures of academic corruption. Strong links exist, of course, between *societal corruption* and corruption in academia. Since universities in reality are not ivory towers, they are greatly affected by societal norms – and corruption is an element of social and economic life in many countries. Societies that do not have well-developed norms based on meritocracy are often prone to academic corruption: the idea that someone can be promoted or can receive an academic degree

---

<sup>32</sup> “India’s Economy”, in *The Economist*, February 1997

<sup>33</sup> N Janashia, “Corruption and Higher Education in Georgia” in *International Higher Education*, Winter 2004, p.1

<sup>34</sup> Adopted from Heynemann (2002), p. 13

<sup>35</sup> *Voices of the Poor* (2000), Technical paper 1

because he or she is from a particular group or has certain familial links is seen as acceptable.<sup>36</sup>

Linked to the economic situation is the *lack of infrastructure* that makes monitoring of classroom teaching difficult in many developing countries. The poor condition of roads, railways and telephones makes it sometimes impossible for inspectors to visit schools. As a consequence, teachers' misconduct can go without sanction and other corrupt practices, e.g. embezzlement of funds allocated for school materials, are not exposed.

A lack of *transparent regulation and criteria* often leads to high levels of corruption, especially in a context of declining public expenditure. Without clear standards and laws, the line between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour becomes blurred. Inadequate accreditation mechanisms for schools and higher education institutions further exacerbate the problem.

Also, *inadequate organisational structures* often fail to provide incentives for improved performance and for control mechanisms and sanctions. In many transition countries, authoritarian and centralised systems do not create opportunities for professional growth. Lack of supervision and sanctions as well as inadequate management make it easy for teachers to misuse their professional positions.

*Lack of community involvement* facilitates corruption. If parents are not involved in establishing, overseeing and supporting a school, they may see it as something alien. Without a sense of ownership, parents are not likely to hold teachers and administrators accountable. If communities do not know what to expect from the school (in terms of educational outcomes), if they are not informed and are discouraged from getting involved, they may not claim their children's right to education.<sup>37</sup>

## **5. What can be done about corruption in education?**

Solving the problem of educational corruption is not significantly different from solving the problem of corruption in other sectors. A more accountable education system has to be built as part of an overall accountable civil service. Methods to achieve more accountability include clear sanctions for bribery, conflict of interest rules and codes of conduct, political independence of the administration, recruitment and career development rules that are based on merit, access to information, and complaint mechanisms for students and parents. As a general rule, effective accountability systems can only prevail in a context of laws promoting transparency, and if there is a free press and citizen participation.<sup>38</sup> More specifically, the following measures contribute to preventing corruption in education:

---

<sup>36</sup> Altbach (2004), p 2

<sup>37</sup> A study from rural Nigeria found that villagers often stopped expecting anything from government schools, shouldering the burden themselves. Daramola et al, 1998 (from WDR 2004, p. 112)

<sup>38</sup> For more information on integrity indicators of the civil service, see the *TI Source Book* chapter 20. TI has also produced a series of National Integrity System (NIS) studies in various countries. They can be downloaded at [http://mirror.transparency.org/activities/nat\\_integ\\_systems/country\\_studies.html](http://mirror.transparency.org/activities/nat_integ_systems/country_studies.html)

The *organisational structure and administrative procedures in the education system* need to build on principles of accountability and transparency. Rules and procedures associated with managing the education system must be clearly stated. Clear criteria must be set for the process of selection, admission, examination and promotion. There have to be mechanisms for monitoring compliance, and consequences of non-compliance must be specified. There should be autonomous examination and accreditation agencies. Adjudication should be done by independent school and professional boards. Donors should only provide funds for education if the administration has the capacity to effectively absorb the funds.

*Decentralisation* is often considered as a means to improving accountability and governance in education, making monitoring easier for local communities. However, this has not been confirmed by empirical studies – the opposite view that decentralisation leads to more opportunities for corruption has also been expressed.<sup>39</sup>

An *Education Management Information System* (EMIS) is used in many countries as a management tool for performance monitoring and quality enhancement. Its overall purpose is to provide better accountability for public spending, better policy understanding of school programmes and accomplishments, and to help improve the local education system. It supports and improves education by providing the information on the needs of the school districts and about student performance and participation.<sup>40</sup>

Clear *codes of conduct* for teachers are needed to establish standards for professional ethics that are not covered under the law. Educators need to know what behaviour might constitute corrupt practice, especially when proper professional conduct might run counter to social norms widely accepted outside of the education workplace. A code, for example, sets limits on accepting gifts in return for professional actions, even though gift giving may be considered appropriate in other settings. However, codes can only be effective if they are made public. There has to be clear consistent enforcement, and strong top level (including government) support.<sup>41</sup> An important model code is the “Declaration of Professional Ethics” developed by the World Union of Teacher Associations “Education International”, in 2001.<sup>42</sup>

Enforcement through *sanctions* of teachers’ and administrators’ misconduct is necessary for the credibility of regulation. Some forms of misconduct, e.g. theft or misuse of public property constitute a criminal offence and have to be judged by the criminal court system.

---

<sup>39</sup> On decentralisation and corruption, see O. Fjeldstad: “*Decentralisation and Corruption: A review of Literature*” (2003), U4 Report

<sup>40</sup> For more information, see <http://www1.worldbank.org/education/globaleducationreform/>

<sup>41</sup> Chapman (2002), p 12

<sup>42</sup> E.g. Declaration of Professional Ethics developed by Education International, adopted in 2001. See <http://www.ei-ie.org/congress2001/eethics.htm>

*Public feedback*, organised through civil society, can be a powerful tool to make social services more responsive and accountable. TI Bangladesh uses “report cards” to draw attention to perceived problems in the delivery of services. Report cards are handed out to users of public services and afterwards collected. They are analysed and the results made available to “Committees of Concerned Citizens”, who subsequently exert pressure for change on the basis of empirical evidence.<sup>43</sup>

The World Bank piloted a report card in Philippines to seek feedback on selected government services, one of which was elementary education. Through the survey citizens got to speak out on the quality and affordability of education, and revealed their awareness of, and access to, education.<sup>44</sup>

*Participation* allows parents and students to build ownership and to hold teachers and administrators accountable. Community involvement was found to improve school performance in El Salvador’s EDUCO programme and to dramatically increase enrolment in primary schools, despite poor conditions in which they work.<sup>45</sup> Parent-teacher associations or community groups can play an important role. Student participation and confidence can be built through the installation of counselling and complaint channels, through placing suggestion boxes in schools and establishing anti-corruption committees.

A prerequisite of participation is *access to information*: The public should have access to financial and statistical data on transfer of funds to the schools, on allocation of positions, of goods such as textbooks and stationary, transfers for school meals, etc. These data need to be both timely and accurate.

There should be *transparent procurement procedures* and enhanced accountability of public spending. Budget transparency will enhance accountability of education spending and enable the public to monitor expenditure and compare actual expenditure at school level with policy statements.

It goes without saying that *national leadership at the highest level* is a prerequisite for the success of any structural and management reform. Without the support of politicians and high level officials, the education system is unlikely to function in an honest and non-corrupt way.

Finally, corruption in very poor countries will not be cut unless the underlying *economic situation* has been improved. The government has to be able to ensure adequate teacher salaries, and to adequately resource the education sector.

---

<sup>43</sup> TI Bangladesh Report Card Survey on Primary Education, 2001 see <http://www.ti-bangladesh.org/research/reportcards.htm>

<sup>44</sup> More information at [www.worldbank.org/participation/web/webfiles/philipreport.htm](http://www.worldbank.org/participation/web/webfiles/philipreport.htm)

<sup>45</sup> WDR (2004), p.131

## **6. Conclusion**

Corruption in education affects more people than corruption in other sectors and it affects the development potential of the whole country. It takes various forms: bribes paid by parents to teachers and public officials to get good grades and pass exams; bribes paid by teachers to public officials to get preferred posting and promotion; embezzlement of funds allocated to purchase of teaching materials or school building; sexual and other exploitation of students by teachers, etc. There is both grand corruption at political and administrative level, and petty corruption at administrative and school level. The consequences of corruption in education are dire: the hidden costs for bribes and irregular fees result in high drop-out rates, especially amongst the poor who cannot afford to pay. Corruption in teacher promotion, lack of professional standards and of sanctions for misconduct; and poor teacher salaries result in low quality of teaching and low achievement, leaving whole generations without a future.

Because corruption in education cannot be analysed and solved in isolation, preventative measures must be built in reform programmes at various levels: The regulatory framework should set clear standards and recruitment and career development rules that are based on merit. Legal standards must be complemented by conflict of interest rules and codes of conduct. The regulatory framework should enhance accountability and access to information on educational policy and performance, thus allowing for public participation. There must be clear complaint mechanisms for students and parents, and sanctions for bribery.

In addition, organisational structures must enhance accountability. Clear lines of responsibility together with simple and transparent decision-making processes can prevent corruption. Institutions must have the capacity to adequately manage their education system.

Finally, parents, teachers and civil society in general should have a say in education planning and management: Without an active citizenry that demands quality education for their children, reforms will not be sustainable.

Transparency International, July 2004

Many thanks to Katharina Ochse for her helpful comments and to Katja Pelzer and Victoria Jennett.