

Corruption and education

Muriel Poisson

11

Education policy

series



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Preface

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The International Academy of Education and the International Institute for Educational Planning are jointly publishing the Education Policy Series. The purpose of the series is to summarize what is known, based on research, about selected policy issues in the field of education.

The series was designed for rapid consultation “on the run” by busy senior decision-makers in Ministries of Education. These people rarely have time to read lengthy research reports, to attend conferences and seminars, or to become engaged in extended scholarly debates with educational policy research specialists.

The booklets have been (a) focused on policy topics that the Academy considers to be of high priority across many Ministries of Education – in both developed and developing countries; (b) structured for clarity – containing an introductory overview, a research-based discussion of around ten key issues considered to be critical to the topic of the booklet, and references that provide supporting evidence and further reading related to the discussion of issues; (c) restricted in length – requiring around 30-45 minutes of reading time; and (d) sized to fit easily into a jacket pocket – providing opportunities for readily accessible consultation inside or outside the office.

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The booklets will appear first in English, and shortly afterwards in other languages. Up to four booklets will be published each year and made freely available for download from the websites of the International Academy of Education and the International Institute for Educational Planning. Limited printed editions will also be prepared shortly after electronic publication.

This booklet

This booklet deals with the issue of corruption in the education sector. How can we define corruption in education? How can we assess the magnitude of malpractices in the sector? How can we improve transparency and accountability in each of the domains of educational planning and management (such as financing, public procurement, teacher management, and examinations)? This booklet addresses these questions in order to help countries develop more appropriate strategies to detect, reduce, and control corrupt practices, thus contributing to more efficient and equitable education systems.

The booklet identifies a number of factors that have placed the issue of corruption in education higher on the agenda during the last decade. It refers in particular to several international conventions, to various research works and to specific challenges facing the education sector, such as the decentralization of educational funding and management, the growing competition among both students and schools, and the boom in new technologies.

The booklet then reviews several tools to assess corrupt practices within the education sector, such as public expenditure tracking surveys, quantitative service delivery surveys, and report cards. It identifies several criteria for their success, especially the wide dissemination of their findings. It also emphasizes that these assessments often neglect key dimensions, such as the effects of corruption on the development of attitudes and value systems.

The booklet demonstrates that improving transparency and accountability in the education sector requires concerted action on three main fronts: developing transparent regulation systems and standards, building management capacity, and promoting greater ownership of administrative and financial processes. Each of these areas is illustrated by presenting practical cases taken from international experience.

The booklet concludes on the importance of changing attitudes, in particular by adopting codes of conduct, strengthening institutional capacities in some key areas such as management, accounting or audit, promoting the right to information of users and, more broadly, displaying strong political will at all levels of the system.

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Corruption in education: Why now?

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- ***Several international conventions on corruption have raised interest in this phenomenon and how it has impacted upon the education sector. Increased research has also illustrated that corruption can operate at different levels of an education system.***
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People involved in education systems – from the uppermost echelons right down to the school level – are confronted by corrupt practices at some stage. The phenomenon is not new; yet until a decade ago research rarely focused on it. There may be several explanations for this. First of all, the issue of corruption emerged only recently on the international agenda with the adoption of the OECD’s 1999 Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions and the adoption of the 2003 United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC). Secondly, those involved in the education sector have been reluctant to tackle the issue of corruption – perhaps because they fear that this might tarnish the image of the sector and therefore reduce the resources allocated to it.

Nevertheless, much research has been undertaken on corruption in education over the last decade by the World Bank, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP-UNESCO), Transparency International, the Soros Foundation, and several universities. Much of this research has applied methods of broad analyses of corruption in the

public sector, and has tended to use the general definition of corruption as: “the use of public resources for private gain”. For example, some of this research has examined large-scale corruption involving top-ranking decision-makers and large amounts of money – through the misappropriation of funds intended for major public works, such as the construction of schools. It has also dealt with petty corruption involving public officials at all levels of education systems, as well as small sums of money that are sometimes misappropriated as a matter of course, such as the imposition of illegal enrolment fees by schools.

This emerging focus on corruption in education is partly due to new challenges facing the education sector. These include: the rapid growth in resources allocated to education in particular under the Education for All Fast Track Initiative (EFA-FTI), the redefinition of aid modalities with the adoption of sector-wide approaches (SWAP), the decentralization of education system funding and management, the growth of gruelling competition among both students and schools, the boom in new technologies, the spread of new education delivery systems (especially distance education), and the development of cross-border instruction. These challenges present important opportunities for the transformation and renewal of education systems, but at the same time they have the potential to create new risks for large-scale corruption and fraud.

The cost of corruption in education

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- ***The cost of corruption varies a great deal from sector to sector and from country to country. These costs are difficult to estimate accurately in the field of education.***
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The cost of corruption has been the focus of various studies. The World Bank has put the worldwide cost of corruption at 1 trillion dollars (\$1,000 billion) per year, in a total global economy of 30 trillion (Kaufmann, 2005). According to the African Union, direct and indirect corruption costs Africa around 25 per cent of its Gross Domestic Product (ADB, 2003). At the national level, corruption also presents major economic burdens: it accounts for around 15 per cent of Mexico's Gross National Product (GNP); and, in Guinea an estimated 500 billion Guinean francs (ANLC, 2005).

The extent, nature, and costs of corruption vary widely from country to country. Studies by the World Bank have shown that the industrialized world is somewhat less corrupt than emerging economies. However, in some emerging economies such as Botswana, Chile, and Slovenia it has been demonstrated that the prevalence of corruption is lower than in certain member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (Kaufmann *et al.*, 2006).

It is important for policy-makers to identify the most costly corrupt practices in the public sector so that they can be targeted first. Unfortunately, very little research has been carried out to compare the costs of corruption in the education sector with that in other sectors. Transparency

International's Global Corruption Barometer provides the only instrument that can be used to make comparisons of corruption levels across public sectors. This indicator is based on reports of the frequency of bribe payments in about ten public sectors on the basis of statements made by individuals chosen from representative samples. According to the 2007 figures published within this framework for 60 countries, education is seldom considered to be the most corrupt public sector. The police, the legal system/judiciary, the registry, and permit services are generally considered to be more corrupt (Transparency International, 2007).

It is difficult to provide accurate estimates of the costs of corruption in the education sector. The available estimates have been limited to monetary amounts and resources in kind (for example, textbooks, equipment, and school meals) that have been misappropriated for private use at various levels of an education system (Chua, 1999). Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS) can provide valuable clues in this area by calculating the percentage of resource leakage between the central ministry of education level and schools (Reinikka & Smith, 2004). Quantitative Service Delivery Surveys (QSDS) can also provide useful information on the percentage of "ghost" and absent teachers (see Section 3). However, surveys such as these do not provide an overall figure of corruption costs. Moreover, as these estimates are limited to financial costs, they ignore the effects of corruption on system efficiency and performance, the particularly adverse effects of corruption on the poorest populations (GTZ, 2004), and the disastrous consequences of corruption on the development of attitudes and value systems related to citizenship and justice.

3 Diagnosis of corruption in education

The measurement of corrupt practices in the education sector has usually proceeded via the use of three main data collection strategies: Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, Quantitative Service Delivery Surveys, and Report Cards.

Several tools are available to decision-makers for the measurement of corrupt practices within the education sector. These include: Audits (of finances, teacher management, public procurements, etc.), Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys, Quantitative Service Delivery Surveys, Report Cards, and Perception Surveys. Three of these instruments are described below.

Public Expenditure Tracking Surveys (PETS)

PETS surveys aim to “follow the money trail” (mainly non-salary expenditures), from the central ministry of education level right down to the school level (Reinikka & Smith, 2004). These studies permit the calculation of rates of “leakage” in these flows, which have been shown to range from 87 per cent of the per-capita subsidy paid to primary schools in Uganda in 1995 (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004) to 49 per cent of the non-wage funds allotted to primary schools in Ghana in 1998 (Ye & Canagarajah, 2002). An analysis of the available research has shown that leakage rates can depend on different variables such as school size, location, student poverty level, and teacher profile. For example, in Uganda leakage rates have tended to increase in small schools with less qualified staff who do not feel

able to question authorities about the funding that they are supposed to receive (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004).

PETS surveys also show that leakage rates can vary depending on funding modalities. Research carried out in Zambia has shown that the leakage rate stood at 10 per cent for rule-based funding applied to primary schools (600 US\$ per school, irrespective of the size) versus 76 per cent for the discretionary funding given by local authorities to schools in 2001 (Das *et al.*, 2004), thereby illustrating the linkages between leakage rates and funding modalities.

Quantitative Service Delivery Surveys (QSDS)

QSDS surveys are used to collect quantitative data on the efficiency of public spending and the different aspects of “frontline” service delivery usually represented by schools in the education sector. For example, they may be used to measure teacher absenteeism and the percentage of “ghost” teachers that feature on official lists of active teachers. They can also include estimates derived from unannounced spot checks of samples of schools that are considered to be representative. Their findings have been used to estimate a 16 per cent absenteeism rate among teachers in Ecuador (Chaudury *et al.*, 2003), and a 15 per cent “ghost” rate for teachers in Papua New Guinea (Filmer, 2005).

The collection of additional data at school level can provide useful insights into the relationships between corrupt practices and contextual variables – for example, trends in absenteeism and their linkages with variables such as teachers’ age, gender, status and teaching conditions. A regression analysis of research findings from five different countries (Bangladesh, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, and Peru) showed that there was a positive correlation between teacher absenteeism and teachers’ age, length of service, and qualifications (Chaudury *et al.*, 2003).

Report Cards

Report Cards are used to generate information on the quality and efficiency of the public service as perceived by users. This approach to information collection may be used

to mobilize local communities in a participatory approach, and also to question them on particular matters, such as the payment of illegal school fees. Data can be collected by way of questionnaires administered to civil servants, teachers, pupils, and parents chosen at random from a sample of schools. These data can be “subjective” (based on the perception of the people interviewed) and “objective” (based on their experience and actual facts). In the case of Bangladesh, a citizen evaluation based on Report Cards showed that over 96 per cent of pupils had been made to pay illicit fees to sit for first term exams, and that a total amount of 20 million Bangladesh Takas had been paid by parents in eight Bangladeshi districts (Karim, 2004). The ease with which this type of survey can be performed in very different contexts has led various organizations and donors, such as the World Bank, the Commonwealth Education Fund, and the Hewlett Foundation, to fund and implement such probes.

Comparative studies of these various types of inquiry (Gauthier, 2006; Hallak & Poisson, 2007) have shown that their success depends on:

- the involvement of public authorities in the investigation process (even if data collection and data analysis are performed by an independent and impartial entity);
- the authorities’ resolve to pursue the findings of the survey, for instance by “cleaning up” the teacher list;
- the wide dissemination of survey findings; and
- the incorporation of these new tools into diagnostic methods for use by members of the public through inclusion in evaluations, audits, etc.

4 Transparency of standards and procedures

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- ***Corruption can be reduced if the standards and procedures associated with financial, human, and material resource management are transparent and widely understood by all stakeholder groups.***
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Chapman (2002) demonstrated that most corrupt practices actually “break the rules” – even if in some cases they can also be viewed as operating “within the rules”, for example, when bribes are paid to accelerate the issuance of official documents. Corruption that “breaks the rules” can sometimes be prompted by incomplete, imprecise, or overly complex rules, or statutes that generate conflicts of interest. In their comparative study of different models of formula-based resource allocation to schools, Levačić & Downes (2004) have shown that if the formula is confusing, if it contains “negative incentives” for those implementing it, or if it is poorly understood by the general public, then it is apt to foster the development of fraud – since only a few specialists can actually check that funds have been allocated appropriately. They provide the example of a formula applied in the state of Victoria, Australia, that comprised three key components: core funding allocations, needs-based funding, and priority programmes; Levačić & Downes (2004) noted that “technically, information on the allocation of resources to each and every school is available to anyone who seeks it (...)”; however, “its current complexity is a considerable hindrance to transparency”.

In order to improve transparency it is indispensable for policy-makers to review the different standards applied to financial, human, and material resource management. The city of Bogotá, Colombia, took action on school staffing procedures by publishing specific descriptions of staff recruitment procedures, postings, and transfer standards. This measure boosted school enrolments by more than one third, with only a limited number of extra teachers taken on due to the gains in efficiency that were made (Peña & Rodriguez, 2005). Similarly, Lesotho determined specific building standards according to which all school construction work was to be examined so as to ensure quality. Lesotho enforced these standards through construction project inspection teams that were supported with the mobilization of local communities (Lehohla, 2003).

A major challenge may face decision-makers in such contexts: How can the right balance be struck between simpler and more transparent standards on the one hand and, on the other, an aspiration for equity whereby resources should go first and foremost to the most needy individuals and schools?

Das *et al.* (2004) have shown that in Zambia, formula-based funding was reaching more primary schools than discretionary funding paid to the schools by local authorities (90 per cent as against less than 20 per cent – see Section 3). Using a regression study, they also showed that formula-based funding was always progressive, with higher shares for the poor schools, whereas discretionary funding was regressive in the entire sample of schools used for the survey. This example has illustrated that when the risk of corruption is high and management capabilities low, direct resource-allocation models based on a simple formula and involving a limited number of intermediaries can help reduce the opportunities for fraud.

All in all, in contexts of weak institutional capacity, decision-makers must strive to:

- simplify and specify the standards governing the allocation of resources in areas that are known to be particularly exposed to corruption;

- preserve a concern for equity, even if this means making standards gradually more complex, and, at the same time, strengthening the capabilities of the people who implement these standards;
- publish the standards and give them broad publicity; and
- devise ways and means of enforcing these standards.

Capacity building and management automation

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- ***Decentralization of administrative and financial decisions can make the tracking of resource flows more complex. However, high levels of transparency, automation, and computerization in administrative and financial transactions are essential for reducing corruption in education.***
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The debate over the positive and negative effects that decentralization can have on corruption is far from settled (Fishman & Gatti, 2000; Fjeldstad, 2003). However, there is agreement that much depends on the context and conditions under which decentralization takes place.

Corruption tends to prosper in contexts where new management procedures have not been clearly established at local level; where territorial officials and school heads are under-trained and under-equipped to perform the new duties devolved to them; where the transfer of authority to local level is not accompanied by the establishment of appropriate systems of scrutiny; and, finally, where the knowledge base of the local community is inadequate for a genuine verification of resources. More generally, decentralization makes the tracking of resource flows more complex because the discretionary power devolved to local authorities, combined with budget flexibility, often tends to blur management processes.

One key aspect of the fight against corruption lies in the strengthening of institutional and individual capacities in areas such as accounting, financial management, education expenditure tracking, the production, publication, and interpretation of information, supervision mechanisms, verification and audits, public procurement procedures, and the use of new management technologies such as e-markets. Capacity building requires not only the introduction of appropriate training, but also the development of adequate instruments – for instance in the form of guidebooks that are suitable for school principals (specifying the financial rules); for schools (to develop their expenditure plans); and for school boards (to examine accounts). Levačić & Downes (2004) point out that since 1990 newly-appointed school principals in England must undergo basic financial training (National Professional Qualification for Headship); and that in Brazil’s Rio Grande do Sul state, the central authority produces and distributes a financial autonomy guide that includes current legislation, the funding formula used, and recommendations about management.

Research into different areas of management has concluded that greater transparency, computerization, and automation in financial transactions are vital to reducing corruption in education. The development of a linear programming model has enabled Chile to select bidders for the national school feeding programme (Programa de Alimentación Escolar) impartially and transparently, based on a wide range of criteria such as: the compliance of meals with specified nutritional needs, infrastructure requirements (furniture, equipment, cooking utensils, crockery, cutlery, etc.) as well as handling, delivery, and supervision (Latorre & Aranda, 2005). In Lebanon, the computerization and automation of examination administration – including the selection of tests and staff in charge of running the examinations, the distribution of candidates among examination rooms, the marking of tests, and the processing and diffusion of results – has facilitated the detection and punishment of those who break the rules governing the administration of examinations (Mneimneh, 2008).

In conclusion, the curtailment of corruptive practices that derive from a lack of awareness of procedures or the incompetence of those involved – particularly in a context of decentralization and greater school autonomy – requires:

- heightened attention from decision-makers to the development of management capabilities among all operatives in the system;
- the provision of practical tools, such as guidebooks, to facilitate adherence to procedures; and,
- improved computerization and automation of information and management systems so as to reduce interference by individuals in the systematic and orderly running of the system.

6 Outsourcing of management and verification processes

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- ***The outsourcing of certain management and scrutiny functions in the form of “external audits” can provide organizations with important supplementary information that can be used in the fight against corruption.***
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Corruption is perpetrated by individuals; however, it can be greatly abetted by the settings in which it actually happens. Some conflicts of interest relating to finances are thus generated by the way resources are allocated. For example, in some cases, schools are asked to produce the statistics from which their budgets will be calculated, which presents an open invitation to misreport the numbers by overstating enrolments (Levačić & Downes, 2004). Some active or passive corrupt practices associated with the administration of examinations, admissions to university, and/or the accreditation of institutes of higher learning are directly linked to the monopoly enjoyed by the administration in the area concerned (Eckstein, 2003). Some practices actually jeopardize the impartiality of evaluation and verification systems that are intended to stop corruption when the departments responsible for operating these systems are directly attached to the administration that is under review. For example, in her study of auditing, Kopnicka (2004) demonstrated that whereas an internal audit had detected no infringement of the public public procurement rules in a Slovak university, an external audit found eight such breaches.

The challenge facing public authorities is considerable. Some of the powers they enjoy would be better performed by external autonomous agencies that are acknowledged to be impartial and independent. Levačic & Downes (2004) illustrated that the degree of transparency in formula funding of schools was directly linked to the ability to collect statistical data independently of the schools. The state of Victoria, Australia, gathers enrolment statistics four times a year with one such collection performed by an outside entity. Using data from Kyrgyzstan, where an autonomous entity was set up to operate university entrance tests, Drummond and De Young (2003) illustrated the need to outsource pupil selection processes in order to limit fraud in some situations. Similarly, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) has stressed the need to establish autonomous professional bodies tasked with accrediting tertiary institutions and comprising a fair representation of the different parties concerned.

It is important to note that the outsourcing of management and scrutiny operations poses a number of problems. The administration sometimes challenges the legitimacy of outsourcing on the grounds that external agencies encroach upon its official rights and responsibilities; the cost of outsourcing is often also raised. To try to overcome these difficulties, various studies underline the importance of combining internal and external approaches. According to Kopnicka (2004), “the administration needs to realize that it must use both internal and external auditing, for they complement – not rival – each other. Indeed systematic and regular internal auditing is indispensable to be able to react promptly to any irregularities”. In addition, the aim should be to gradually lessen the need for the involvement of outside entities by fostering the development of a genuine culture of honesty and evaluation within the administration. Kazakevičius (2003) has thus described how Lithuania, while setting up an effective internal and external auditing system, also ushered in mechanisms for the stakeholders in the school system to evaluate themselves.

In summary, outsourcing has a major role to play in reducing corruption provided that attention is given to the following areas:

- the outsourcing, at least for a time, of certain key functions such as data collection and the organization of examinations, as the only means of limiting the risk of conflicts of interest;
- the importance of ensuring complementarity of purpose and function across the internal and external monitoring and regulation agencies; and
- the promotion of a culture of evaluation and monitoring at all levels of the administration.

Teacher codes of conduct

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- *Teacher codes of conduct have been viewed as a useful mechanism for reducing corruption in some parts of education systems. However, their effectiveness may often be influenced by the processes used in their development and by the monitoring and control procedures that they require for implementation.*
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Some professions, such as lawyers and medical practitioners, have long had their own codes of conduct and/or agreed official statements of ethical behaviour. However, widespread acceptance of the importance of the need to fight fraud and corruption has led other professional groups to develop such codes – particularly within the national and international public service. Codes of conduct have also emerged in the education sector – especially in higher education, often with the aim of curbing academic fraud – and in many cases have taken the place of regulations that have traditionally governed the teaching profession. Education International, the global federation of teacher unions, chose to support this movement, by adopting an International Declaration on Professional Ethics in 2001 (EI, 2001). Since then, several countries have made efforts to develop similar codes of conduct applicable to the teaching profession. These codes detail teachers’ obligations both in their teaching (competence, regular attendance, etc.) and in their relationships with the administration, their colleagues,

their pupils, and the community at large (impartiality, non-discrimination, etc.).

A comparative study undertaken in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal (Nuland & Khandelwal, 2006) revealed that the effectiveness of such codes is often constrained by several factors. In particular, they tend to be over-theoretical; they are largely unreadable; teachers do not lay claim to them; they are not widely publicized; enforcement mechanisms are rarely included and/or inadequate and are rarely used successfully in cases of non-performance. Nevertheless, good practices have also been observed in Ontario, Canada. Poisson (2009) explained how the success of a code of conduct was closely linked to the ways in which the teachers themselves espouse the code. She detailed the mechanisms that fostered such ownership: involvement of teachers in developing the code through a participatory process; joint identification of the specific ethical problems they faced; the establishment of mechanisms for regular reviews of the code; validation of the code by teachers' organizations; wide dissemination of the code in different forms (also as part of pre-service and in-service training); the establishment of appropriate monitoring and control systems; and, the publication of punitive measures meted out under the code.

The effectiveness of such codes also has much to do with the development of appropriate monitoring and control mechanisms. A comparative analysis of such mechanisms (Hallak & Poisson, 2007) has revealed different models. In Hong Kong, China, a commission made up of representatives of the local administration, teachers, and parents, was empowered to ensure enforcement of the code. This commission can carry out related investigations and make recommendations (So, 2003). In Ontario, Canada, a professional organization representing teachers was mandated to ensure adherence to the codes; it was able to adopt punitive measures against teachers but did not have the power to dismiss them (Nuland & Khandelwal, 2006). In Scotland, United Kingdom, a professional organization similar to the one established in Ontario was in charge of

the self-regulation of the teaching profession and it was also empowered to dismiss teachers for malpractice.

The effective establishment of codes of conduct within the education sector should support decision-makers with the following:

- involvement of the teaching profession and teacher unions in the development and implementation of such codes;
- easier access to the codes, by ensuring their broad dissemination (particularly as part of pre-service and in-service teacher training);
- establishment of the necessary mechanisms to register and process any complaints whether at the national, local, or school level; and
- promotion of self-regulation by the teaching profession.

8 The right to information

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- ***A number of successful examples show how producing relevant information and ensuring access rights for both stakeholders and general society can make a strong contribution to fighting fraud and corruption in education.***
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The fight against fraud involves uncovering opportunities for corruption, measuring its extent, mobilising citizens, and then enabling citizens to track the decisions that have been made. At each stage, reliable information must be produced and made readily available to all (Transparency International, 2003). The power of information is illustrated by the now famous experience of Uganda, which has been the subject of many articles and publications. Not only did the PETS serve to inform decision-makers that the leakage rates of the annual capitation grant paid to primary schools was as much as 87 per cent in 1995 (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004); but furthermore, the decision by the Ugandan government to publish the amounts allocated to education, at every level in the system (central, local, school), by means of vast information campaigns has slashed leakage rates from about 87 per cent in 1995 to 10 per cent in 1999 (Reinikka & Svensson, 2004). Various initiatives have been directed at formalising, and indeed institutionalising, the citizens' right to information through the constitution of integrity pacts (Arcidiacano, 2005 for Argentina), report cards (Karim, 2004 for Bangladesh), and citizens' assessment cards (for Latin America).

Several studies have shown that the administration often finds it difficult to recognize the public service users' right to information, considering it to be a matter for the sole concern of the administration. Experience has proven that a legal foundation for the right to information is often indispensable to force compliance from the administration. Thus, it was under the pressure of civil society movements that several Indian states (including Tamil Nadu, Goa, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Assam, and Delhi) decided to recognize the right to information in their Constitution. Nonetheless, Devi (2003) has shown that the enforcement of compliance with this right has met several obstacles. These include: lack of awareness of the administration and the general public; a refusal by politicians and civil servants to enforce compliance; the prevalence of a "culture of secrecy" within the administration; administrative sluggishness in responding to citizens' applications; limitations of information systems; impunity in the event of a non-response; and, the low literacy level of the population at large.

Recognizing these difficulties, educators from Karnataka and Rajasthan put together recommendations aimed at consolidating the effectiveness of the right to information. These recommendations covered the involvement of governments, NGOs, and other partners in the organization of awareness campaigns on the right to information; the organization of training sessions for all government staff members (including administrators and teachers) on the right to information, its precise interpretation, and its enforcement procedures; citizens' education on how, and in which circumstances, to use the right in order to obtain information; the speedier dissemination of any information that is of use to the public, and in a form that is accessible to different types of users (literate, illiterate, urban, and rural); the consequent consolidation of information systems; the establishment of incentive and punitive mechanisms designed to encourage civil servants to provide accurate and up-to-date information; and, the regulations associated with charging for the supplying of information (Devi, 2003).

While the impact of users' access to information on improved transparency and accountability has been amply proven, the effectiveness of the recognition of the right to information still depends on the following factors:

- the adoption of a legal foundation to underpin rights;
- ensuring that decision-makers and the administration foster compliance;
- boosting the reliability and effectiveness of information systems; and
- providing the necessary resources to ensure genuine access to information.

The “virtuous triangle”

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- ***No single course of action will reduce fraud and corruption in education.***
- ***What is required is concerted action on three main fronts: the development of transparent regulation systems and standards, building management capacity, and greater public ownership of administrative and financial processes.***
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There is often a degree of pessimism as to the feasibility of reducing corruption in education. Long-standing practices that are deeply entrenched in the system and the refusal to introduce new ground rules are indeed major hurdles. Nevertheless, the success of the various approaches mentioned in this booklet illustrates that many areas of educational planning and management can be cleaned up. These include: finance in general as well as specific financial allocations (scholarships, grants to schools, etc.); the construction and renovation of school buildings; equipment, supplies, and school services (textbooks, meals, bussing, boarding facilities, etc.); personnel (especially teachers) management and behaviour; information systems; pupil selection (exams, admissions to university, etc.); and quality assurance and accreditation of educational institutions.

Hallak and Poisson (2007) reviewed each of these areas using as examples those countries that have managed to reduce corruption practices significantly. They concluded that no measure taken in isolation can combat corruption effectively. Only through an integrated approach based on

three main thrusts, can transparency and accountability within education systems be significantly and lastingly improved:

- **The development of transparent regulation systems and standards:** The ground rules and regulations must be re-visited with the aim of removing opportunities for corruption. This requires the definition of an explicit policy framework that specifies the powers of each player involved at every step and level of the process; the adjustment of existing legal frameworks to facilitate the processing of corruption problems, with the establishment of systems of rewards and sanctions; the development of clear and transparent standards and procedures that specify the mechanisms for the allocation, distribution, and utilization of financial, material, and/or human resources; the rules governing public procurement contracting; and the framing of codes of conduct that describe the rights and obligations of the profession, particularly teachers.
- **Building management capacity:** The strengthening of institutional capacities in some key areas is often indispensable for a better application of the standards and rules in force. Hence, it may be necessary to help government ministries to get a better grasp of the various diagnostic tools (particularly PETSs and QSDSs); to improve their information systems (in the area of finance, but also with personnel management and exam administration); and further still to set up appropriate mechanisms of scrutiny (including internal and external audits). These changes will require further training for public officers in areas such as management, accounting, evaluation, supervision, and even ethics. This training also needs to be extended broadly to all those players involved in management processes: school management committees, parents and teachers associations, unions, and civil-society organizations.
- **Fostering greater ownership of the processes by the community at large:** Klitgaard et al. (2000) showed that corruption was linked to the existence of monopoly

situations, discretionary powers, and the lack of accountability systems. Therefore, to combat corruption, existing monopolies must be cut back, the discretionary aspects of power curbed, and accountability systems strengthened. This requires the development of more decentralized management systems, but only under certain conditions, as well as greater participation and empowerment of communities to get them to exercise a veritable “social scrutiny” over the use of the resources allocated to education. Devi (2003) showed how vital the right to information and education are for the control of corruption: citizens should be sufficiently aware of their rights and well enough informed of the actual situation not only to detect fraud, but also to demand what they are entitled to by right.

An integrated approach such as this should be broken down according to the different fields of education system management and planning, and also adapted to different contexts. This requires decision-makers to display political will, and more specifically to:

- collaborate with legislators, regulators, and the judiciary;
- discuss with donors the best ways to strengthen the sector’s capacities; and
- allow and facilitate broader, more reliable, and speedier access for information users.

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IIEP is an integral part of UNESCO and undertakes research and training activities that address the main priorities within UNESCO's overall education programme. It enjoys intellectual and administrative autonomy, and operates according to its own special statutes. IIEP has its own Governing Board, which decides the general orientation of the Institute's activities and approves its annual budget.

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