



FORMS AND EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION ON THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN VIETNAM

Over the past five decades, the education sector in Vietnam has witnessed a number of achievements—even garnering international praise for its significant improvement in literacy and enrolment rates. However, entrenched corruption in the sector threatens to jeopardise the progress made.

Stories of corrupt practices in education are regularly reported in the Vietnamese press: from school staff embezzling money intended for poor students to systematic corruption related to improving students' marks. In 2010, Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer for Vietnam found that education is perceived as the 2nd most corrupt sector listed; with 67 per cent of interviewees from urban areas perceiving education as corrupt.

Recognising these hazards, the Vietnamese government, in recent years, has promulgated a number of directives and decrees focused on eradicating various forms of corruption in the education sector. Nonetheless, corruption in education continues to lack the appropriate level of attention and is often discarded as a social phenomena rather than recognised as a genuine form of corruption. Better analysis is clearly needed to enhance understanding on what corruption really means in the education sector.

Transparency International, supported by Towards Transparency in Vietnam, has commissioned a study on the *Forms and Effects of Corruption on the Education Sector in Vietnam*.

Findings:

Using in-depth interviews, taken from March to June 2010, with teachers, parents and school administrators and research from surveys and press reports, the report found that the main forms of corruption in the Vietnamese education sector today, as perceived by public opinion and society include:

- Corruption in the building of schools and classrooms, the provision of teaching supplies and printing of school books
- Payment of bribes by schools and teachers in exchange for awards and titles recognising false achievements and credentials
- Collection of financial allowances by principals for untaught classes
- Payment of bribes by teachers to school officials for allocations to teach 'desired' classes
- Payment of bribes by students and parents to obtain good marks and enrolment in desired schools and classes
- Effective coercion of students to pay for extra classes by discriminating against students who do not
- Misappropriation of money intended for students
- Collection of additional unauthorised money from students and parents.



Causes of corruption include:

- **Weak institutional accountability** associated with an 'asking-giving' culture and poor management by regulatory agencies
- **Insufficient legal system** stifled by loopholes and contradictions
- **Lack of whistleblowing culture** in denouncing corruption in the education sector
- **Poor pay for teachers** coupled with increased access to wealth through blossoming market mechanisms
- **Limited public participation** in the monitoring, supervision and management of schools
- **Lack of transparency** in the allocation and utilisation of resources.

Effects of corruption:

Rising costs and inequality

Corruption in education threatens to increase educational costs for households which inevitably increases the dropout risk among families that cannot afford these extra costs. Corruption, thus, directly increases inequality in access to educational services.

Decrease in quality

Corruption not only threatens fairness in education, it also appears to impact on the commitment of teachers and the earnestness of children. As a result it creates a poor atmosphere of study and work that de-motivates various players and discredits the entire system.

Erosion of ethical norms

Corruption contributes to the downgrading of teachers' and pupils' ethical values by effectively punishing those who attempt to act with integrity.

Key recommendations:

- **Call corruption by its name** and recognise the significant risk it poses to Vietnamese society
- Adopt regulation to **strengthen whistleblower protection** and implement independent mechanisms for its efficient enforcement
- **Strengthen bottom-up oversight**, inspection and monitoring of schools by parents and citizens
- Continue **reform towards adequate salaries** for education workers to alleviate their drive to solicit bribes
- **Establish Teachers Associations** to complement the work of existing associations of former teachers (*Hoi Cuu Giao Chuc*) which can help to protect teachers and their working conditions
- Implement mechanisms to **monitor transparency** and information disclosure by schools (as required by existing government regulations)
- **Introduce anti-corruption education** to formal or extra curriculum in secondary and tertiary education and foster anti-corruption education at home.

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