Under the High Patronage of H.E. the President of the Republic Fouad Mebazza

Regional Conference

Public Service Delivery in Arab Countries: Corruption Risks and Possible Responses

Gamart, Tunisian Republic
29-30 September 2011

Synthesis Report: Anti-Corruption in the Education Sector

Developed by Laetitia Antonowicz, Associate Consultant, Education for Change Ltd.
Despite improvements in the last decade...

"More than 6 million children were not enrolled in school in 2008, levels of learning achievement are low, more than one-quarter of the adult population is illiterate and the learning needs of young children and adolescents continue to suffer from widespread neglect." (UNESCO, Arab States Overview, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2011)

Corruption impacts negatively on children's rights, families, education systems and development goals and contributes to a broad array of factors constraining progress in education.

The objectives of the roundtable were to remind the importance of tackling corruption in the education sector, to identify key corruption risks in the sector and interventions devised to address them, and to discuss key issues to consider when moving forward on anti-corruption work.

The roundtable brought together delegates from Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq and Egypt as well as external observers from UN and other development agencies.

**Corruption in the education sector**

Based on the background paper on anti-corruption in the education sector, a typology of corruption risks was presented alongside a financial flow risk map.

- Finance, including school grants
- Allocation of specific allowances (scholarships, etc)
- Construction, maintenance and school repair
- Distribution of equipment, furniture and materials
- Writing of textbooks
- Teacher appointment, deployment and training
- Teacher/school staff behaviour
- Information systems
- Examinations and diplomas, access to universities
- Institution accreditation

*Source: Hallak & Poisson, 2007, IIEP.*

![Financial Flow Risk Map](Image)

*Source: Transparency International 2010*
Corruption prone areas in the region, for instance, include:

- Allocation of specific allowances, particularly at university level for scholarships (Yemen)
- Private tuitions (from primary to higher education) (E.g. Egypt)
- Leakages and misuse of funds,
- Exams, university entry (Tunisia, Palestine)
- Procurement fraud
- Irregularities in the recruitment, deployment and transfer of teachers (Egypt); ghost teachers (Iraq, Palestine)
- Sexual harassment (Djibouti)

In addition education systems in many countries suffer from a lack of transparency (in budget allocations and teacher appointments for instance). Situations of monopoly for construction and material/equipment contracts remain common and few individuals at ministry and decentralised authority levels are allocated discretionary power without appropriate control and accountability mechanisms.

Education systems are also often characterised by their limited efficiency and equity. In Iraq additional challenges arose from the post-conflict situation.

**Anti-corruption interventions**

Examples of anti-corruption interventions in the region shared by participants include:

- System improvements in educational management in higher education in Tunisia (automation of students' registration)
- Strengthening teacher recruitment and management in Egypt. Several strategies have been recently implemented:
  - Online registration of teachers and attribution of a unique identification code
  - Verification of diplomas and qualifications
  - Consolidation and update of the salary scale for teachers
  - Matching of qualifications and experience with salary scale for salary consistency across the sector
- School Management Committees were strengthened at local level in Djibouti and their membership diversified to include women, district officials as well as other parties with an interest in education in the community.
- In Morocco, textbook procurement was open to competition with a range of accompanying measures in terms of pre-selection of publishers, quality assurance mechanisms and independent oversight committees.
- In Yemen two independent commissions oversee the allocation of scholarships and the accreditation of students' credentials from foreign universities.

**Key issues for anti-corruption work**

A range of issues and considerations are to be taken into account while engaging in anti-corruption work.

- Understanding context, risks, prevalence
- Opportunities and potential resistance and obstacles.
- How to choose approaches and tools?
- Quick wins
Short, medium, long-term strategies
- Schools- participation, SMCs, awareness raising
- Information, transparency, accountability
- Ethics, education, behaviour change

What accompanying measures for AC work, such as public awareness raising or internal and external communication strategies

What are the enabling factors / key challenges?
- Political, social, cultural, economic factors
- Political will
- Legislation
- Free press
- Vibrant civil society

How can we monitor progress and evaluate progress of AC work?

The following issues arose from the discussions.

**Partnership.** The roundtable highlighted the importance of partnerships and dialogue for anti-corruption implementation (public institution – civil society, including teacher unions, the media and parents associations; public institution-public institution; public institution – private sector, etc). Partnerships can create momentum, a space for debate and will contribute to ownership and sustained practices.

In Morocco the MoE has recently signed a MOU with the Central Commission for Fighting Corruption to develop education materials addressing the identification of corruption and the possible responses. These will be mainstreamed in schools.

**Participation.** The participation of all stakeholders from the onset of the intervention and at all stages of the process, from consultation, prioritisation to design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation is critical.

In Djibouti, School Management Committees were strengthened at local level and their membership diversified to include women, district officials as well as other parties with an interest in education in the community.

In Morocco, the independent commissions set-up to accompany the opening-up of the textbook publishing and dissemination market included parents in addition to professionals from the commissioning (Ministry) and supplying sides (publishers).

**Policy framework.** Participants strengthened the fact that AC and governance strategies were not implemented in a vacuum. The legislative framework and its enforcement are an important component. Similarly, the soundness of the policy framework (relevance, activity costing, links between inputs and outputs and outcomes) that will shape and provide some of the parameters for the implementation of a given strategy is also vital and should encompass governance and administrative elements alongside more pedagogical issues.

**Understanding of financial flows.** Understanding educational financial flows and related corruption risk areas is a first step to address some of the leakages at different levels.

**Externality.** The need for greater independency for commissions set-up to oversee or decide on budget allocation or complaint cases was emphasised. Appointment mechanisms for such commissions are to be looked at as well as membership.

**Citizens.** The role of parents and their readiness to challenge the pitfalls of education delivery was raised as an enabling factor for anti-corruption approaches. Civil society organisations have
a role to play in raising parental awareness and support parents in claiming their right to education.

**Citizenship education** and the like (moral education etc depending on countries) are believed critical in shaping the debate about anti-corruption and the quality of public delivery as well as supporting behaviour change. Participants strengthened the importance of such approaches for students but also teachers as part of pre-service and in-service teacher training.

**Complaint mechanisms.** The Director of the Ombudsman Office, Jordan, recalled the vital importance of complaint mechanisms and of citizens’ awareness of these. Other conference participants highlighted the need to raise the awareness of citizens about mechanisms and to support their use. In the case of sexual harassment/abuse, for instance, the protection of children and families is a critical issue to consider.

In Jordan Ombudsman Office forms and pre-paid envelopes are available free of charge in all post offices in the country for people to lodge complaints.

**Information transparency and dissemination.** Participants discussed information transparency and publicity around budget approvals and expenditures (including budget amendments and reversals that often occur after budget approvals). This also applies for funding formulae and school grant amounts where relevant. Broader transparency issues (around sector performance information, process information and so on) were also raised.

**Accountability.**

In Egypt a pilot project led by the Egypt Parents Coalition conducted evaluation of service delivery in schools through questionnaires distributed to parents and teachers. This resulted in the publication of school-based reports on the web. The pilot was entirely web-based (electronic questionnaires) which was perceived as a potential constraint on participation. Another perceived challenge related to how this information base was used by decision-makers to inform follow-up actions.

**Capacity development.** The need for a clear identification of capacity and skill gaps at school, local and national levels was emphasised. This could be done as part of a broader capacity needs analysis or focus specifically on the education sector. How to translate capacity needs into relevant technical assistance programmes is a key question.

**Diagnostic vs strategies.** Some participants touched upon the tendency to focus on diagnostic tools as opposed to engage in governance reforms. Others pledged for a robust understanding of a complex issues. AC strategies and education governance work should be informed by various diagnostics commissioned and conducted by different categories of institutions (civil society, external donors, ACC reports etc).

**Country’s interests**

Country reports in plenary included the following education specific elements.

**IRAQ:**

- public campaigns on the importance of education and of reducing corruption in the sector,
- the establishment of control mechanisms in education,
- the development of guides on budgeting and disbursement,
- the review of codes of conduct/professional codes,
- developing laws and regulations on conflict of interest

**PALESTINE:**

- Development of a national anti-corruption strategy and ensuring it covers sector-specific issues

**YEMEN:**
- Stock-taking exercise on education
- Procurement regulation and legislative frameworks
- Code of conduct for civil servants (incl. MoE)
- Information systems and communication – across MoE and administrative entities.
- Governance strengthening
- Complaint mechanisms

**MOROCCO:**
- Build on mapping and diagnosis conducted to move forward on interventions

**DJIBOUTI**
- Unclear/too broad

**JORDAN**
- Unclear/too broad

**Next steps**

The Conference brought together representatives from state institutions and civil society organisations to build momentum around how to move the anti-corruption agenda forward in the sectors.

Where are we going from here?

Developing and implementing AC interventions in countries will not occur in a vacuum. Legitimacy, will, buy-in and ownership will be critical. The indicative steps to support this process are to:

- Identify key educational trends and issues in selected countries
- Undertake a rapid stakeholder analysis to better understand the dynamics between actors
  - Who are the players in education?
  - Who is doing what in governance, public sector reform and anti-corruption in education (MoE, UN, donors, NGOs, civil society)?
  - What interventions UNDP could complement/enhance in that context?
- Map and validate priority corruption areas in the sector, and existing AC initiatives
  - Review existing literature
  - Multi-stakeholder process to ensure ownership of results and consensus (this would include interviews of key stakeholders at national level (central level and decentralised authorities), visits to a couple of schools in urban and rural areas, and multi-stakeholder workshop(s))
  - Prioritisation (including quick wins and more medium-term interventions)
- Identify opportunities for action and resistance points
- Identify champions for promoting anti-corruption in education
- Support the development of strategic interventions
- Implement interventions and build capacity
- Measure progress
Coordination with other “regular” players/partners and alignment with existing interventions will be critical. However this provides a unique opportunity for tackling corruption prone areas that may not be address by sectoral approaches or public sector reforms.

Possible countries for future interventions include:

**MOROCCO** – A number of diagnosis studies have been conducted, including in education (Africa Education Watch, Transparency International, 2009). Civil society has mobilised around AC issues and the MoE has engaged in a number of activities. This provides an enabling environment to start the process in country.

**EGYPT** - Teacher recruitment, management and deployment is under review in Egypt. In parallel discontent is growing at school level, particularly against private tuition. Investigating what support could best complement current reforms and tackle issues between teachers and parents at local level might be an interesting point for Egypt.

**JORDAN** - Unclear.

**YEMEN** - has expressed great interest in engaging in the education sector. There are risks, however, mostly pertaining to the security situation which is likely to prevent or compromise missions, and to the current uncertainties that are likely to constraint meaningful support to new processes and hamper sustainability and institutionalisation of outcomes.