

Corruption in education

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The term “corruption” is used as a shorthand reference for a large range of illicit or illegal activities. ¹Corruption remains as one of the most serious problems for all the periods of the mankind. Corruption, for any reason, is unacceptable.

Corruption impedes formation of democratic institutions, causes continuous violation of human rights and principle of equality, as well as social justice. Enlargement of scale of corruption, its impact on all fields of society is a big danger for the whole society and the state.

Further, corruption should be considered against local norms in social order, since corruption is an idea based on an assumption that “laws are there and do work.” It is worth of remembering that law is not a single source of social order.²

Education is one of the most important public services of the state. Corruption in education undermines public investment in the future of the country. Corruption in education may occur in political, administrative and classroom level. Corruption in the classroom level is one the most serious issues, since it involves and may harm students directly. It can also destroy equal opportunities in education. For instance; poor students bribe and get the same results as the bright students do. Consequently, corruption in educational environment will produce corrupt students.

Major factors stimulating corruption in education may be classified as follows:

- Economic factors
- Social factors
- Non –applicability of laws

¹ <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Policies/Anticorruption/anticorrupt300.asp?p=antipubs>

² Shinichiro Tanaka, “*Corruption in educational sector development: a suggestion for anticipatory strategy*”, The International Journal of Educational Management, 15/4 (2001) 158-166

Economic factors -low salaries of the civil servants force them to seek supplementary income. If their living wages are not provided, of course there is possibility of corruption. Government should ensure that civil servants are not subject to this temptation, by paying wages that reflect a civil servant's contribution to the national well-being. Some may claim that, if all civil servants were moralistic and diligent there would not be corruption. However, such thinking is not appropriate, where, for example, they are not well paid and corruption is just part of their daily life. Therefore, salary rises for civil servants is worth of considering to tackle with corruption.

Even when public servants earn enough, human failings may tempt them to risk the people's trust. Democratic governments should ensure that there is a strong legal framework to block that temptation.

Social factors - In some cultures it is customary and expected that gifts are given even in return for small favors. While token gifts of little monetary value often satisfy the cultural expectation, the practice has sometimes mushroomed into widespread, petty extortion. The practice of gift giving has often been exploited to mask a corrupt practice in the disguise of a cultural expectation.

If low-paid or unpaid salaries are major factor in teacher/officer corruption, several financial measures with anti-corruption conditions can be introduced, such as raising salaries or short-term micro financing.

The promotion of anti-corruption behavior towards students may be worth of considering. In such cases, careful attention should be paid to the targets of such campaigns. Alternatively, consulting channels for the students may be prepared.

A legal framework of the anti-corruption strategy in Azerbaijan began to shape in 1994; it comprises laws and other regulations. By joining the United Nations Convention Against Corruption, and by developing its own State Program to Combat Corruption, Azerbaijan has expressed the world that it is committed to establishing and enforcing strong legal framework to prevent corruption. Azerbaijan has also taken several important steps to develop legal framework of anti-corruption strategy including, the Law on Combating Corruption.

Government should take relevant actions to increase accountability in education systems and within the civil service generally to combat corruption. Along with it, it should establish strict laws and regulations within which related judgment and punishment actions could be carried out. The prescription is simple, applying is not. It requires a national commitment, on the part of government, public institutions, and the people, to fight corruption, every day, publicly and personally.

It is important to note that even if in totally “corrupt” environment there are many diligent and enthusiastic teachers struggling to improve education and achieve its aims. As every emerging democracy Azerbaijan faces difficulties in establishing and enforcing legal framework to combat corruption. Nevertheless, the Government should make all sufficient efforts to achieve the goal of defeating corruption, to open the way for a bright and secure future for the Azerbaijani people.