

# Corruption remains **major hurdle** for education in developing world

## TRANSPARENCY INT DOCUMENTS GLOBAL DILEMMA, LAUDS THAI ANTI-GRAFT CAMPAIGN

### THE NATION

FOR YEARS, teachers at a senior high school in Ghana reportedly demanded bribes of around US\$35 (Bt1,095) from students, in exchange for helping them pass their final exams.

In Vietnam, a recent online poll of almost 20,000 respondents conducted by Dan Tri Online Newspaper, found 62 per cent of parents admitted to being involved in some form of corruption – either by calling on connections or paying money – to register their children in their school of choice. Bribes to secure a spot can reach as much as \$3,000 for a seat in a prestigious primary school. These practices only serve to make education less equal and contribute to rising inequality. In response, the government has targeted corruption in admission procedures and demanded that the number of spaces for enrolment by each age group be made public.

Experiences from the two countries were part of Transparency International's "Global Corruption Report: Education". Released last week, the report consists of more than 70 articles commissioned from experts in the fields of corruption and education, from universities, think-tanks, businesses, civil society and international organisations. The aim is to show governments and civil society across the globe that corruption in education – from the primary school level to university – affects schooling at every level and in multiple ways.

When resources intended for schools are siphoned off for private gain, it reduces the availability of learning and undercuts the quality of educational inputs – from learning facilities and materials to teachers and administrators. Corruption also acts as an added tax on the poor who are plagued by demands for illicit fees and bribes, compromising their access to schools. In the long term, corruption in education has adverse implications for educational quality and learning. The authors of a large study commissioned by the International Monetary Fund found corruption is consistently tied to greater cost and lower quality of education.

"From Chile to Morocco and Thailand, many of Transparency International's chapters have shown that developing wide-ranging programmes on integrating anti-corruption initiatives in school curricula and classroom activities is key to putting an end to corruption in education. This is something we as a global movement must build on in the future," Transparency said.

In the policy brief, TI gave recommendations to governments and civil society, which must play a role in tackling corruption in education.

Governments must adopt a human-rights based approach to education and development commitments, to ensure equal access to education for all children. They must create the right incentives for school administrators and teachers to not engage in corruption, and create better working conditions so that teachers have pride in their vocation and

school. For greater transparency, they must increase information to communities, including simple changes such as clear details about school fees and testing processes.

To create better public oversight and accountability, governments must ensure funds are reaching their intended destination and disbursement levels are on track for the year. They should establish oversight bodies, such as parents' committees in the management of schools, to help prevent and detect corruption.

Civil society should demand governments provide universal education. They must work with govern-

ments to fulfil this right by integrating it within development pledges.

- Use existing mechanisms to bring relevant information on corruption to these global bodies' attention (see side bar);

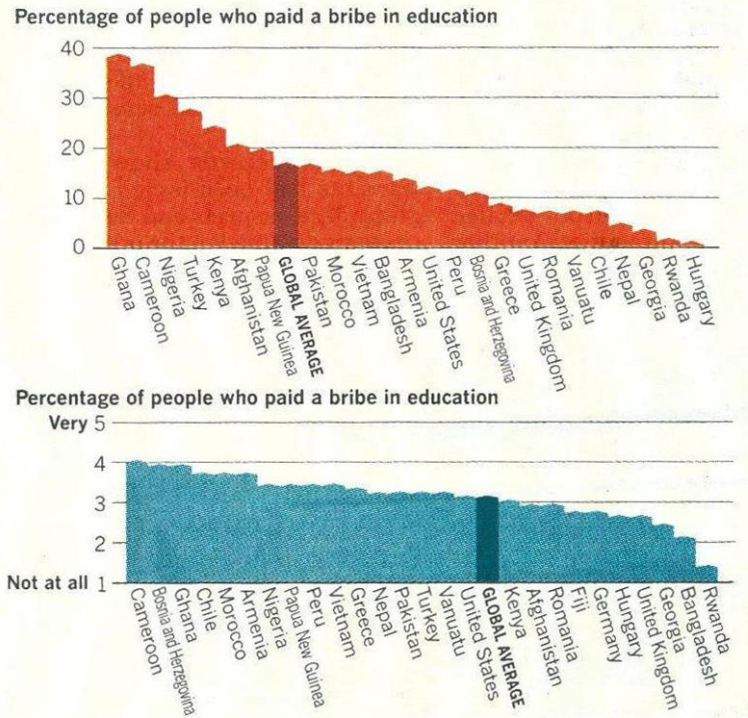
- Create greater awareness on the part of parents and students about the negative impacts of corruption, particularly bribing one's way into a more prestigious school or paying to pass an exam;

- Target anti-corruption outreach to specific groups who make decisions about schooling in a household, such as mothers;

- Get the media – whether print, television, radio or social channels – to play an important role in shifting public opinion about bribery.

Meanwhile, Thailand's initiative in fighting corruption in education is applauded in the report. The 'Growing good anti-corruption' campaign, initiated by the Centre for Philanthropy and Civil Society; Transparency Thailand and the Mapping Civil Society Approaches, Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. The organisers, in close





Source: 'Global Corruption Barometer 2013', Transparency International. Data missing for Niger (both questions), and Germany and Fiji (bribery question) NATION GRAPHICS

cooperation with external experts, have developed teaching manuals to accompany the programme. In two-day workshops the teams have trained over 3,000 kindergarten to 14-year-olds in 458 schools in Bangkok, as well as 600 instructors in private Catholic schools.

'Growing good anti-corruption' began in 2009 by targeting children aged six to eight (kindergarten through to the third grade), which is the youngest-known age group for children being taught anti-corruption awareness.

Dr Juree Vichit-Vadakan, TI Thailand secretary-general and former president of the National

Institute of Development Administration, says they sought to begin inculcating children with ethics and values of a just society as early as possible. "If you begin before they're fully socialised, there's a much better chance of getting these values to take hold", she explained.

The campaign has received excellent feedback from teachers and pupils, but the real obstacles to entrenching it in school instruction, said Juree, are not just achieving full acceptance among all teachers and school administrators, but also challenges to these values that children witness around them every day.