

June 2009

Corruption in Education in Sri Lanka

Position Paper

Our mission: Develop competent citizens keeping with the global trends through innovative and modern approaches to education leading to efficiency, equity and high quality in performance ensuring stakeholder satisfaction.

- Ministry of Education

What is really needed to make democracy function is not knowledge of facts, but right education.

- Mahatma Gandhi

Sri Lanka's education system has been hailed for its success in providing widespread access to primary and secondary education, with enrollment rates at primary school at almost 100%, nearly all children completing grade 5, and success rate at GCE O/L on the increase.¹ Institutions and regulations to provide good education for all are in place. Policy goals for the coming years have been defined in the Education Sector Development Framework and Programme (ESDFP) 2006-2010 that sets out to improve the quality of education, to promote equitable access to basic and secondary education, to enhance efficiency and equity of resource allocation, and to strengthen education governance.²

Despite this framework, the quality of education is a growing concern for many parents. In 2007, half the pupils who sat for the GCE O/L failed. Even those who succeed often lack relevant skills and knowledge to find meaningful employment.³ Equity in education also appears to be myth, with increasing competition for prestigious national schools and unequal distribution of resources across the country. Another concern is efficiency and effectiveness of education management, with overstaffing, lack of co-ordination and low capacities leading to poor results. Corruption impacts on all these aspects: It lowers the quality of education (for example, by bringing unqualified personnel into the education service, or by lowering the morale of educators), it exacerbates inequality (for example, exorbitant payments for school admission that cannot be afforded by the poor); and it leads to inefficiency (for example, by creating positions that are not needed).

¹ World Bank: Treasures of the Education System of Sri Lanka. 2005. Harsha Aturupane: Has the Holy Grail of education been sighted? Sunday Times. 06 July 2008

² Ministry of Education: Education for Economic Development and Prosperity. 2005

³ In 2005 only 10% of primary school children achieved the targeted level of mastery in English, 38% achieved mastery in mathematics, 37% achieved targeted mastery in first language. In: Treasures of Sri Lanka (2005). Also: Usvatte-aratchi: Education in our country, mostly a charade and a fraud: Sri Lanka Guardian 08 June 2009

- On 23 June 2009, on the occasion of the launch of an English skills programme, President Mahinda Rajapakse stressed the need to depoliticize the education system. Presidential Advisor Sunimal Fernando said that teaching has been severely affected due to political interference.⁴
- On 07 May 2009, the Ceylon Teachers Union filed a fundamental rights petition with the Supreme Court challenging serious flaws in the appointment and promotion procedures of the Sri Lanka Educational Administrative Service (SLEAS). The petition stated that out of the present 2,283 positions reserved for SLEAS officers, only 1,170 are currently being held by qualified officers. In addition, it states that approximately 7,860 appointments have been made under successive cabinets since 1978 on supernumerary basis ignoring the cadre positions provided for in the SLEAS minute.⁵ Besides leading to unrest and frustration among the SLEAS officers, this practice has a devastating impact on efficiency and effectiveness of education management.
- In May 2009, the principal of the prestigious Devi Balaka Vidyalaya in Colombo was interdicted by the Education Ministry for asking two parents to deposit Rs. 500,000 each in a personal bank account, and admitting another child to school for a payment of Rs. 200,000. No receipts had been issued for these payments. This case is one of the few that became publicly known; however, illegal payments and bribery of principals and officials, particularly to get access to popular national schools, appear to be a widespread phenomenon in Sri Lanka nowadays.⁶
- In August 2008, the Bribery Commission revealed that the Education Sector tops its list of complaints about bribery. Over the previous six months, it received 236 complaints of school principals and other education-related officials seeking bribes to get children admitted to schools, outranking the police, against whom 233 bribery-linked complaints have been lodged.⁷
- A helpline operated by Transparency International Sri Lanka (TISL) from August 2007 to March 2008 received 72 complaints about corruption, mostly about financial misappropriation, fraud and irregular appointments. All complaints were forwarded to the Ministry of Education. However, the Ministry has apparently not been able to resolve any of them to date.

Is corruption really on the rise in Sri Lanka's education system and to what extent does corruption impact on equity, quality and efficiency of education?

Corruption is defined by Transparency International (TI) as the abuse of entrusted power for private gain and its benefits do not always come in monetary terms. In addition to bribery and fraud, corrupt practice includes cronyism, favoritism, misuse of public property, extortion, exploitation, and various other forms of malpractice. Sri Lanka's Bribery Act of 1994 defines corruption as 'any wrongful or unlawful loss caused intentionally by a public servant'.⁸

⁴ 'President disappointed over failure of Education Authorities' - Daily Mirror 23 June 2009

⁵ SC re-fix rights petition challenging flaws in SLEAS - Daily Mirror 26 June 2009

⁶ Corruption charges at Devi Balika: Principal, VP, 2 teachers suspended - Sunday Times. 10 May 2009

⁷ Nadia Fazlulhaq: Bribery rampant in 'elite' schools - Sunday Times. 24 August 2008

⁸ Bribery Act, section 17, 1994

Corruption is secretive by its nature; therefore, getting information on the extent to which corrupt practice exists is very difficult. The numbers of convictions, prosecutions or court cases hardly reflect levels of corruption; and media reports are often difficult to verify. People, when asked about their perception of corruption, tend to overstate its extent, but when asked to report on their own experiences, they tend to understate. It is important to highlight that the findings of the present study do not provide ‘true facts’ about actual levels of corruption in education in Sri Lanka. Rather, they provide an indication of the areas that are particularly vulnerable to abuse.

To ascertain how these corrupt practices impact on the achievement of national education targets in Sri Lanka, and to come up with recommendations on how education governance could be improved, in May 2008 TISL embarked on a study on the forms and extent of corruption in public education. 1000 households, 100 teachers and 100 education officers were interviewed and around 60 key-informant interviews were conducted to identify experiences and perceptions of corruption in education. The findings are documented in the report ‘Corruption in Education’ launched in July 2009.

This Position Paper summarises the findings of the study and makes some key recommendations to all stakeholders. It is hoped that it contributes to a constructive debate on how to tackle the complex problem of corruption in a sector that is key to Sri Lanka’s economic and social development.

Loss of dignity of the teaching profession

In the survey, both parents and teachers believed that the quality of education is declining. Half of the households were of the view that unqualified persons are appointed to teaching and administrative positions, and half of the officers interviewed said that the prestige of the teaching profession has declined in recent years. This is seen as a consequence of the politicization of the education system, where appointments are made either as a favour or to return a favour rather than on the basis of merit and performance. In addition, low salaries contribute to low morale of teachers (Sri Lankan teachers receive half or less than teachers in India, Bangladesh and Thailand), and a decline in real terms since the late 1970s.⁹

Corruption in the management of teachers and officers

Teacher development is one of the cornerstones of the Government's Education Sector Development Programme. **Some** of its goals are the enhancement of teacher competency and commitment as well as teacher motivation, skills and performance. These policy goals, however, often do not correspond to reality. The TISL study found evidence of systematic violations of principles of equal treatment of teachers and officials:

- The National Teacher Transfer Policy of 10 December 2007 clearly spells out the criteria for teacher transfers. An institutional framework has been set up to implement the policy, with the National Transfer Board in charge of transfers in the 329 national schools, and the Provincial Transfer Boards in charge of transfers in the provincial schools. At zonal level, Teacher Transfer Committees are supposed to co-ordinate teacher transfers within the zone to ensure that schools get the teachers they need. However, this framework does not appear to be adhered to. Use of undue influence seems to be a common phenomenon in teacher transfers, with connections to

⁹ World Bank: Building the Sri Lankan Knowledge Economy. 2007. p59

politicians and officers being the most important criteria for transfer. 85% of teachers and 90% of officers interviewed in the study said that teacher transfers are affected through politicians rather than the transfer criteria, and 66% of teachers as well as 86% of officers say that premature transfers to better-off urban areas are done through political intervention. Teachers without political clout spend years in remote rural areas without getting a chance for a transfer to urban areas whereas others successfully avoid getting posted to distant areas. Besides demotivating teachers, this practice has a serious impact on equity in education, and further entrenches the quality gap between rural and urban schools, leaving remote schools at a disadvantage.

- The study revealed that in many instances, unqualified persons perform teachers' roles in the absence of regular teachers. This is despite sufficient qualified teachers being available in the country. In 2007, 209,198 teachers were employed in 9,678 schools, at a teacher-pupil ratio of 1:19.¹⁰ Yet remote schools experience a dearth of teachers. Volunteers often fill the void, sometimes paid by parents, in other instances minor staff or Samurdhi assistants were reportedly working as teachers. Urgent action needs to be taken to amend this unacceptable situation.
- In-service advisors are appointed to Zonal Education Offices with the aim of improving quality of teaching in schools. However, there are allegations that they frequently engage in other activities such as providing paid private tuition to pupils during their working hours. Almost half of the teachers interviewed for the study stated that in-service advisors and subject directors are more of a problem than a solution. Also, the position of in-service advisors in the administrative hierarchy does not seem to be clear neither to the directors, some of whom refuted the suggestions that they come under supervision of the zonal director, nor to the zonal directors, some of whom apparently did not know about or did not want to exercise their authority over the advisors. This apparent lack of awareness of the existing regulation leaves plenty of room for abuse. Good governance requires both officials to comply with their tasks as well as authorities to exercise their duties – in the absence of control and disciplinary action; abuses of power can go unhindered.
- Under circular 2000/34 of the Ministry of Education, appointments of acting principals are prohibited. Yet appointments of performing principals outside the regulation of the Principals' Service seem to be rampant, while qualified applicants apparently are not being offered jobs. According to the Ceylon Teachers Union, half of Sri Lanka's 9,728 schools are currently headed by performing principals; most of them are recruited from the teachers' body without having sat for the relevant examination of the Principals' Service. In addition, lengthy processes seem to result in a systematic delay of appointments of regular principals. This malpractice is mirrored in the public perception. Survey findings reveal that 56 % of teachers and 62% of officers agree that political appointments of performing principals are a type of corruption. Again, this practice seriously impacts on the quality of teaching, not only by bringing unqualified people into the public service, but also by affecting the morale and motivation of regularly appointed principals. The Ministry of Education has started to act on this issue by recruiting 450 principals in April 2009, some of whom were performing principals while others were fresh recruits.
- Alarming, 50% of teachers and 60% of directors interviewed believe that most of the important positions in education are political appointments. The law provides that appointments to the education service are done through the Sri Lanka Education Administrative Service, which is part of the Ministry of Education, and in concurrence with the Public Service Commission

¹⁰ School Census 2007. In: Ministry of Education: 'A future generation...' 2008

(PSC). However, at the beginning of 2009, of the 200 Grade 1 officers (zonal and provincial directors and line ministry directors), 198 had been made outside the formal appointment procedures.¹¹ A committee to look into these issues has been set up the Ministry of Education with the aim of regularizing these appointments, and as a first step, 24 Grade 1 officers have qualified to be given a position in June 2009.¹² Irregularities occur also in the appointment of additional directors (Grade 2 officers): While 300 positions exist in the country, 600 appointments had been made at the beginning of 2009.¹³ Another area of concern is the granting of extensions to principals and officers beyond the retirement age. Overall, while the Ministry of Education apparently attempts to remedy this unhealthy situation, the non-appointment of members to the Public Service Commission since its lapse on 08 April 2009 does not abode well, as appointments can now be approved by the Cabinet of Ministers directors without any control.

- Another area of teacher management that is apparently open to abuse is the appointment of volunteer teachers, a practice that has not been regularized and reportedly is discouraged by the Ministry of Education.¹⁴ The 2006 school census revealed a total number of 7,463 untrained teachers mainly in underdeveloped districts.¹⁵ Volunteers are appointed by the Secretary upon request of provincial authorities, and in exceptional cases, they have been made permanent upon Cabinet approval. However, the TISL study revealed that appointments of volunteer teachers are a frequent practice that leads to much discontent within the teaching profession.

Corruption in school admissions

One principal from a school in a difficult area questioned “how do the principals in popular schools keep private vehicles, live in luxury houses, when we cannot? We all get the same salary”

Undoubtedly, school admission is one of the most controversial topics in the current debate about education in Sri Lanka. There are frequent media reports of preferential access to popular schools, facilitated by bribes or through family or political connections (nepotism, cronyism). Accordingly, a large percentage of respondents (89% of teachers, 81 % of officers) believe that principals usually take bribes to admit children to schools. However, this perception is not backed by actual experience: Only 8.1 % of households admitted bribing a principal. 15.5 % of households said they paid large sums of money to the School Development Society (SDS), and 7 % said they contacted a high level education officer to get their child into a good school. This relatively low level of reported incidents of bribery and nepotism in school admissions, however, does not necessarily reflect the reality, as some respondents may have chosen not to report their involvement in corrupt practice. Understandably, parents are reluctant to report illegal payments to principals and officers as they feel this might jeopardize their child’s schooling. While it is difficult to quantify bribery and nepotism in school admissions, this apparently frequent practice has tainted the image of a fair and equal public education system.

- The residential criterion for school admissions together with intense and increasing competition

¹¹ Bribery rampant in ‘elite’ schools. Sunday Times 24 August 2008; and: In education politicians wield power. Daily Mirror 17 November 2008

¹² Telephone interview with P.W. Gunasekera, Advisor to the Ministry of Education, 17 February 2009 and interview on 01 July 2009

¹³ Interview with Joseph Stalin, Secretary General of Ceylon Teachers Union, 15 January 2009

¹⁴ Telephone interview with Mohamed Thambi, Additional Secretary Human Resources, 20 February 2009

¹⁵ School Census 2006. Ministry of Education

for good schools seems to provide various opportunities for corruption. Many parents prepare for school admission long before the child is ready to go to school. According to the study, frequent corrupt practices include purchasing, leasing or renting a house close to a prestigious school, and bribing the Grama Niladhari to falsely certify that the family lives in proximity of a good school. This practice further increases pressure on popular schools and entrenches the gap between a few better-off schools and the balance. Fraud in the use of residential criterion is facilitated by poor levels of interaction between the community and the school. If principals and authorities do not know their constituencies well, they are more easily defrauded.

- The study found that strong competition and the possibility of manipulation and abuse have even given rise to a new profession. Professional ‘mediators’ prepare required documents and ‘ensure’ children’s admission to popular schools in exchange for a fee of up to several tens of thousands of rupees .

One parent from Kandy said that he had given Rs. 80,000 to a 'go-between ' to get his daughter admitted to a well-known popular school in Kandy, but he could not get the child admitted. Now that intermediary repays the money to him in small installments.

Illegal fees and payments

Sri Lanka prides itself of providing free education to all children. According to MoE circular 2006/ 20, no other fees than facility fees (*‘sewa gastu’*) and SDS fees can be charged from parents for school admissions. However, the circular does not indicate a range or give a ceiling to the fees, leaving the amount to be charged at the discretion of the school. It is therefore not surprising that the survey revealed a huge variation in amounts of school fees charged from parents, indicating varying ability of parents to contribute to their children’s education. In addition to facility and SDS fees, a number of other fees are charged for activities such as sports, library, computer-use charges, security and ‘donations’ to the schools. While levying of fees is not a corrupt practice, and often meaningfully complements the resources of underfunded schools to the benefit of the pupils, it leaves some scope of abuse if fees are not levied in a transparent manner, and if donations and contributions are meant to influence the record of one’s child, or to gain access to a school that the child would otherwise not be admitted to.

- When asked about the appropriate standard fee to be charged from students, principals, officials and households unanimously said they were unaware of this. There seems to be little transparency in the criteria upon which fees are determined. The mean annual household admission fee as reported in the survey is Rs 3,994. Ninety percent of teachers and officials and 81.4% of parents found that fees are too high.
- There seems to be no consistent system of financial control of fees levied by schools. 86 % of officers and 62.2 % of teachers opined that school fees and grants are not audited, and 46% of teachers and 19.4 % of officers said that school accounts are not presented to the SDS meetings. While there is no legal provision for this, principals are encouraged at the principals’ meetings at zonal and provincial level to present accounts to the SDS and display them in the school notice board. However, the study found that this was not happening in most of the schools.

Abuse of quality inputs – direct grants to schools

- The quality input grant is a direct grant to schools (calculated on the number of pupils per school) to cover costs for basic requirements such as stationery for the students and technical

equipment for the school. It is handled by a School Management Committee (whose members are teachers and the school principal) that identifies the needs of the schools and does the necessary purchases. The principal accounts for the grant to the MoE or to the Provincial Education Department. 80% of households interviewed were aware of quality inputs. However, half of the households reported that they were asked by the school teacher to buy additional stationery for classroom work.

- In some schools, the survey found that resources remained unused because principals were not sure about the correct procedures, and children did not receive their materials despite the resources being available. This hints at some level of uncertainty of existing regulations and reluctance to exercise authority, with the effect that pupils are denied the learning materials that they are entitled to.

Private tuition classes and study leave

It is the schools' obligation to teach children according to the curricula and to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to pass GCE O/L. However, most of Sri Lanka's pupils do receive additional tuition – 78% of households in the survey reported payments for private tuition. While tuition can help the student to improve his or her performance, it is problematic if provided by mainstream teachers to their own students. 8.2% of households reported paying their child's classroom teacher for private tuition. The MoE has issued a regulation that prohibits teachers from doing tuition during school hours (circular 2006/45), but it does not prohibit paid tuition provided by a teacher to his/ her pupils after school hours. This is problematic as it can serve as an incentive for teachers not to teach the essentials of the curriculum in their regular class, thus forcing pupils to attend their (paid) private tuition classes, which constitutes an act of extortion and further exacerbates social inequalities. The Sri Lankan public also seem to condemn this practice: The survey showed that 65% of teachers and parents agreed that conducting paid tuition classes for students by classroom teachers after hours or during the weekend is a corrupt practice.

- Many public schools in Sri Lanka give study leave to their students, particularly before GCE O/L and A/L examinations. In the survey, 35 % of teachers stated that their school provides study leave, for a duration of 1 -3 months. However, this practice contrasts with MoE circular 2006/45 that requires students to have attended a minimum 80% in order to be eligible to sit for O/L and A/L exams. One possible reason for the prevalence of this illegal practice is that it provides opportunities for additional income for teachers, who offer paid tuition during the study leave period. Again, the impact of equity in education is obvious, as poor households may not be able to afford private tuition.
- The prevalence of private tuition also shows low levels of trust in the government education system, as apparently parents do not believe that schools equip their children with sufficient knowledge to pass the exams.

‘... at the end of the year students are given study leave for three months before they sit for the A/L examination. During this three-month period what do the teachers do? Very often they conduct tuition classes. Many teachers do so in the afternoons for the same students who attend their classes in the morning. This is a gross violation of ethics and it is a corruption...’ Focus group discussion in Kandy 28 May 2008

Non-availability of documents in Tamil language

- Zonal education directors in Nuwareliya and Puttalam reported that Tamil translations of MoE circulars are usually not provided in time. While TISL cannot comment on the reason for this practice, its negative impact both on school governance and on the quality of education is obvious: Without proper knowledge of existing regulations, principals and zonal officers cannot perform their tasks according to the rules, and they cannot bring ill-performers to book. Also, if schools are not aware of their entitlements, for example, on quality inputs, they will not claim them.

Delays in textbook delivery

- Textbooks constitute the main learning resource in education. While delays in textbook delivery often happen due to poor planning and neglect and do not constitute acts of corruption in its strict sense, they have a serious impact on the quality of teaching. The survey revealed that 23.3% of households had not received textbooks at the beginning of the academic year, and that 6.2% of children had not received their textbooks at all. The MoE has recognized this problem and reportedly improved delivery of textbooks at the beginning of school year 2009.

Structural issues

- Out of the 9,678 schools in Sri Lanka (2007), 329 are national schools that are administered by the Ministry of Education. All other schools are run by the Provincial Councils. The former are generally more prestigious and popular, much better resourced and absorb the best students from middle class households. The intense competition for access to national schools facilitates corruption and puts poor households at a disadvantage.

Complaints about corruption

- A key element of good governance is the existence of a complaint mechanism for victims of corruption. Parents, teachers and officers alike should have a way to find redress if their rights are violated. However, the study revealed that amongst victims of corruption, 78.3% of parents, 62% of the teachers and 45% of the officers have not made a complaint. If a complaint was made, it was lodged with the principal or a teacher. This shows that a majority of people have decided not to practice their civil right of making a complaint when a problem occurs, probably for fear of reprisal and political victimisation. Appeal Boards that are tasked to deal with parents' complaints at zonal level appear to be prone to corruption themselves.
- There may be many legitimate reasons for not reporting corruption. Lack of awareness of complaint mechanisms and fear of reprisal are just two. Low complaint levels clearly indicate some kind of public apathy and lack of trust in the public administration. But they also constitute an excuse to policy-makers and officials to remain passive instead of tackling problems of abuse and corruption that obviously affect the quality of education.

Why does corruption prevail?

Forms and reasons for corruption in the education sector are not different from other sectors. Corruption in this sector is often debated because education employs a significant number of public servants, absorbs a significant proportion of the government's budget, and concerns the majority of Sri Lanka's citizens as almost every family has school-going children. The politicization of the public service that appears to be the root cause of corruption, however, is not unique to the education sector.

So why does corruption prevail?

- First, many abuses, mainly in the area of appointments, transfers and promotions are symptomatic of a deeply entrenched system of political cronyism, favoritism and nepotism. To break down the vicious cycle of political appointments and decline of the quality of education, strong intervention at top government level is required. In fact, as has been witnessed in Singapore and South Korea, if the top executive provides a role model for lower echelons of the civil service, public tolerance of abuse and corruption will decrease, and public servants will be motivated to follow that example.
- Second, uncertainties regarding existing regulation, and lack of clarity in the regulations leave scope for abuse. For example, in the absence of a clear benchmark for school admission fees, parents may continue to feel exploited and principals may feel insecure as to the adequate amount to be charged. In the case of volunteer teachers, lack of regulation apparently encourages this practice to continue despite apparent agreement amongst education experts that it demoralized qualified teachers and has a negative impact on the quality of education.
- Third, the widespread lack of enforcement of existing regulations seriously impacts on the credibility of policies. Lack of enforcement is probably the biggest obstacle to curbing corruption. A number of good instruments have been put in place to enhance accountability and improve quality and equity in education. However, if they are not being used, they will not achieve anything. This applies to many regulations such as the teacher transfer criteria which requires teachers to serve at least three years in a 'difficult area', thus ensuring that remote and disadvantaged schools are being adequately provided with teachers; and minutes of the SLEAS appear to be ignored thus allowing unqualified persons to enter the Education Service.
- Fourth, a lack of co-ordination between the various layers of education management leads to inefficiencies and frustration of officials. For example, teacher transfers apparently are often effected through provincial directors without consultation of zonal directors and principals, thus jeopardizing planning and effective teaching.
- Fifth, the system of having national and provincial schools without allowing transfer of resources between them, making national schools much more attractive to ambitious parents, opens doors for abuse by those who control access to national schools. The extreme competition for national schools should be contained by providing a level playing field for all schools and allocating resources equitably across all schools in Sri Lanka.
- Sixth, institutional weaknesses resulting from the politicization of the public service prevent effective implementation of checks and balances that are an indispensable part of good governance. For example, the Public Service Commission has not been fully able to fulfill its statutory function of ensuring that appointments to the SLEAS are done properly. With the lapse of the tenure of the PSC in April 2009, and the non-appointment of members since, the Cabinet has virtually taken over the appointment of public officers. As long as this situation prevails, the education service continues to be open to abuse and manipulation, at the detriment of the quality of education.
- Lastly, public apathy and resignation provide an incentive for corruption. The study showed that households, officials and teachers all condemned political interferences and thought that

it hampered quality of and equity in education. However, the majority appeared to have accepted that politicians are above the law and that nothing can be done about such interferences. This is also reflected in low levels of reporting against corruption.

Recommendations:

To the Government:

1. In the best interest of the country, the Government needs to ensure that decisions on education are objective, equitable and free of biases and prejudices. The executive at all levels should lead as an example and refrain from influencing decisions.
2. The national Public Service Commission needs to be re-instated immediately and given adequate resources to fulfill its functions as defined by the constitution, i.e. to ensure that only qualified officers are appointed to the SLEAS and the Principals' Service.
3. Efforts should be made to level inequalities in the distribution of resources to schools, including distribution of teachers. The government should set aside the required resources to provide incentives for teachers to work in disadvantaged areas.
4. The government should spend more resources on education. In the past decade, 2-3 % of GDP was spent on education, while OECD countries spent 6.2% of their GDP on education, and the South Asian average was 3.5%.
5. Adequate measures for whistle-blower protection should be put in place. Cases of corruption can be dealt with only if victims of corruption do not have to fear reprisals.
6. The government should review the divide between national and provincial schools and consider measures to decrease pressure on popular national schools. The possibility of limiting national schools for higher education should be reconsidered.
7. Provide more space for joint decision making including all stakeholders (national and provincial level, officers, educators and citizens), so that decisions on education are more consensus driven.

To the Ministry of Education:

8. The Ministry's efforts to regularize appointments should be commended and strengthened. Appointments to positions in the SLEAS, the Principals' Service, the Teacher Service, and the Teacher Educator Service, should be made according to the Establishment Code, the Sri Lanka Principal Service Code 1999, and the Teacher Service Code 1995. Excess appointments should be reviewed and brought in line with the cadre formulated in the SLEAS minutes.
9. The possibility of introducing a professional educational service should be considered. This educational service would ensure that (a) the quality of performance of officers, principals and teachers, (b) discipline and professional standards are maintained and (c) educators and officers are adequately trained.
10. In regard to admissions, the MoE should emphasize regulation set out in circular 2008/21 (only facilities fees/ 'sewa gastu' are legal), and revoke earlier regulations that may have allowed principals to ask parents for cash and donations during admissions to school.

11. To improve morale of the teachers, good performance should be commended and rewarded. Teachers are the most important resource in education. Without a good teacher, even if school infrastructure is excellent and text books are outstanding, pupils will not learn. Therefore, teachers should be treated fairly and equally, they should be well-trained and be given career prospects. They should be paid adequately and on time. The dissemination of good practices and achievements is a motivation.
12. The MoE should ban the provision of paid private tuition by classroom teachers to their own students, as is the practice in countries with high education standards such as Singapore and Australia.
13. Efforts to reduce fraud in the application of the residential criterion for school admission should be strengthened.
14. Circulars and other regulations should be made available in all three languages at the time of their publication.
15. The Ministry should pro-actively strengthen existing complaints mechanisms, and put in place effective mechanisms at provincial and zonal level. Victims of corruption should be able to report malpractices without fear of reprisal, and those accused should be guaranteed an impartial inquiry. Resources need to be set aside for this important element of accountability. The integrity of Appeal Boards should be enhanced to ensure that grievances are properly dealt with.
16. Capacities must be built within institutions so that officials and educators are familiar with existing regulations. Officers and advisors at zonal level as well as principals should receive adequate training to enable them to perform their tasks. New circulars should be issued with regard to study leave and fees chargeable from students.
17. At school level, closer links should be established between students and their parents and the principal and teachers, so that parents have more means and confidence to voice concerns where there is gross abuse of power by teachers or principals. Closer links between schools and communities will also prevent fraud in the application of residential criterion for school admission. SDS and school management committees should be educated about roles and responsibilities in managing school finances. The possibility of reintroducing School Boards to ensure stakeholder participation in financial oversight, setting up the school plan, and evaluation of school outcomes should be reconsidered. School Boards are more representative of all stakeholders than school management committees.
18. A Code of Ethics for Teachers setting out clear parameters for professional behavior should be formulated. This Code could be developed together with Teacher Unions and should aim at highlighting the importance of teaching in education, and the fact that they are role models to students. It could build on Teachers' Charter and Parents' Charter and other documents that had been developed since the 1970s.
19. Clear criteria should be set for the appointment of volunteer teachers, as this practice demoralizes qualified teachers and impacts on the quality of teaching.
20. Ethics and value education should be included into school curricula, and should include topics such as accountability and transparency. This will contribute to building students'

resistance against corruption.

21. As far as possible, the Ministry should enhance transparency in payments by making payments through cheques or direct bank credit compulsory. If this is not possible, issuing of receipts for all payments needs to be enforced.

To Trade Unions:

22. Unions should support the development of a Code of Ethics for teachers, play an active role in implementing the Code and help ensure ethical behavior of teachers, with the aim of restoring the dignity of the teaching profession.
23. Unions should support teachers to comply with regulations, in particular with transfer policies, so that equitable distribution of teachers across regions can be achieved.

To Principals and Teachers:

24. Principals should display school and SDS accounts on school notice boards and present them to the SDS, so that school finance becomes more transparent. This would encourage community participation and enhance trust in school management.
25. Principals should conduct SDS and other meetings with the community in a participatory manner to enable all stakeholders to contribute to discussions. Principals should manage their school in a way that is conducive to participation and open discussion.
26. Teachers should maintain high standards of knowledge and behavior and refrain from any form of unethical behavior. Teachers play a crucial role in transmitting values and attitudes to their pupils, and poor salaries and lack of career prospects cannot be an excuse for ethical lapses.

To Parents:

27. Parents and students should report corruption and abuses and use existing complaint channels. When making cash payments, parents should insist on getting a receipt for their payments.
28. Parents should refrain from using undue influence or bribes to get preferential treatment for their children.
29. Parents should participate in SDS and other participatory bodies, and strive to raise their capacities while undertaking a pro-active role in these bodies.

This paper is based on a research study 'Forms and Extent of Corruption in Education in Sri Lanka' carried out in 2008. The study is part of a series of assessments that TISL carries out within its Monitoring Programme. Assessments of corruption in other sectors will be published in the course of the next years.

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