

Combatting Corruption: EDUCATION Sector

Guidance Note - DG INTPA G1

This note is an excerpt of longer guidance currently in development, exploring anti-corruption in different sectors.

Corruption in the Education sector leads to the violation of the child's fundamental rights, particularly the best interests of the child (BIC), enshrined in Art. 24§2 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and as defined by the UNCRC.¹ Corruption undermines fundamental rights by affecting the quality and affordability of education. Thus, the demand for anti-corruption is not only about accessible education but also about educational services that are equitable and inclusive, of acceptable quality, free of discrimination, and receptive to the needs of individual students.²

Education is one of the critical components of EU partnership, driven by the [European Consensus on Development](#), and in line with the [UN SDG4](#) (Quality Education). The COVID pandemic has made responding to the global learning crisis an even greater priority. The EU's [Global Gateway](#) "is investing in quality education, paying attention to the inclusion of vulnerable groups, and is working with partner countries to strengthen cooperation on research and innovation."³

[Corruption Risks and Mitigation](#)

Note that the risks of corruption within the sector go far beyond economic impact, and directly relate to the abuse of basic rights of the most vulnerable, particularly children and young women. Acute as these problems are at the local level however, attention must all be given to corruption at the central government level, which often represents the most significant and widespread impact.

This section briefly describes typical corruption risks and provides links to further information as well as examples for different approaches to mitigate these risks:

Decision Making - Decisions on education policy can be politically influenced by informal power networks, directing choices around e.g. geographic targeting, or engagement in private-public partnerships. Corruption manifests at different levels, resulting in policies that worsen inequality and prioritise private interests over public (policy capture).

Resources for further reading (in part based on UNESCO IIEP [brief](#))

*OECD Open Government Toolkit [Open government - OECD](#)
UK Government Open Policy Making [Toolkit](#) (based on UNESCO IIEP [brief](#))
The Governance Lab at New York University has formulated eight [recommendations](#) for open and engaged policy-making.*

Public Procurement - Procurement for school construction/maintenance, meals, learning materials, uniforms and equipment are common targets of corruption, resulting in kickbacks, favouritism, and overpricing.

*Resources for further reading (based on UNESCO IIEP [brief](#))
The main integrity risks existing throughout the public procurement cycle, and key means for addressing them. [OECD](#) (2016) [Preventing Corruption in Public Procurement](#)*

*The [Open Contracting Partnership](#) has developed a wealth of resources on open contracting, including global principles, red flags, etc.
Hivos has produced an [advocacy toolkit](#) for opening up contracting.*

Budgeting – As above, different levels of budget management present different risks. At a central level it can result in, for example, ghost teachers, white elephant projects and politically influenced funding allocations. More locally, school subventions, salaries and parental donations can be the target. Funding abuses can undermine teacher motivation and widen inequalities. Political influence can also lead to discrimination and exclusion.

*Resources for further reading (based on UNESCO IIEP [brief](#))
The International Budget Partnership (IBP) has published seven editions of the [Open Budget Survey](#); the 2021 [report](#) provides information on budget disclosure, opportunities for public engagement, and checks and balances in the budget process from 120 countries.*

The Participatory Budgeting Project (PBP) has developed a guide dealing with [participatory budgeting](#) in schools, as well as videos, an online course for educators, and other tools.

With the support of the European Commission, PlaNET Social Enterprise has developed a [manual](#) to include students in school participatory budgeting, building on real-world examples from Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Public Service Provision – Favouritism and extortion in the learning and evaluation process are common risks, penalising the economically and socially vulnerable. 'Sextortion', sexual harassment and abuse can cause lifelong trauma for victims, and act as a significant barrier to female education. The Global Partnership on Education (GPE) has useful guidance on addressing the two overlapping issues of (i) fraud and (ii) sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH). The below links relate primarily to the former.

¹ European Commission (n.d.). *Best interests on the child (BIC)*. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/networks/european-migration-network-emn/emn-asylum-and-migration-glossary/glossary/best-interests-child-bic_en

² UNESCO, 2015b

³ European Commission (n.d.). *Education*. https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/human-development/education_en

Resources for further reading (based on UNESCO IIEP [brief](#))

UNDP has produced a [practical guide](#) that reviews social auditing experiences worldwide and examines the conditions required for their successful design and implementation, focusing especially on democratic governance, transparency, and accountability issues.”

Public expenditure tracking surveys (PETS) in education: [Report](#) for Peru, Uganda and Zambia and [sample questionnaire](#)

Quantitative service delivery surveys (QSDS) in education: [Transparency International Report](#) on the community involvement in the management of school resources allocated to 9YBE Program in Rwanda

Human Resource Management - Favouritism in staffing relates to employment contracts, promotions, deployments and other benefits. Absenteeism and ghost personnel are also major problems. Sextortion is also an acute and underreported problem (see above) – often rendering women as complicit rather than victims.

Resources for further reading

IIEP UNESCO developed [guidelines](#) for the design and effective use of teacher codes of conduct.

Corruption Analysis

In identifying corruption risks, two external resources can help to pose the right questions. The [OECD Anti-Corruption Network](#), and the [U4 anti-corruption resource centre](#), specifically on the Education sector. More general guidance is provided by the [USAID Anti-Corruption Assessment Handbook](#).

In analysing drivers of corruption more generally three complementary approaches are often employed: While (i) Political Economy Analysis includes stakeholder mapping and exploration of the structure as well as the ‘rules of the game’, the (ii) Systems Analysis covers the procedures and routines within a system to understand the drivers and causal loops. Finally, (iii) the Analysis of Social Norms and Perceptions, including gender aspects, focuses on expectations and perceptions of what is acceptable behaviour. [Local Education Groups](#) can be a key stakeholder, building accountability and reporting on corruption and sexual abuse. More information can be found [Global Partnership for Education](#).

Resources for further reading:

[OECD public integrity maturity model](#) – self-assessment tool for national and subnational governments and public sector organisations.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia (2023): *Political Economy Analysis and Adaptive Management* [Good Practice Note](#).

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office UK (2023): [Understanding Political Economy Analysis](#) and Thinking and Working Politically.

UK AID (2017): *The Beginner’s Guide* to Political Economy Analysis (PEA).

USAID (2018): *Thinking And Working Politically Through* [Applied Political Economy Analysis](#).

U4 (2015) [The basics of corruption risk management](#): A framework for decision-making and integration into the project cycles.

The Corruption, Justice and Legitimacy Program – tools and guides.

EU Tools

Any anti-corruption analysis can complement and be supported by existing EU tools and processes, including [Conflict analysis](#) and EU early warning systems (corruption is a key driver of instability), [Gender analysis](#) (women and girls are particularly vulnerable to impacts of corruption), [Risk Management Framework](#) (RMF+ includes dedicated indicators and mitigating measures), [Budget support](#) (documentation provides essential info on budgets and public financial management), [Human Rights & Democracy country strategies](#) (combatting corruption is critical to good governance support). Note also the recent [EU Handbook](#) of good practices in the fight against corruption.

Further Resources

[Causes of corruption in education](#) from the UNODC Module Series on Anti-Corruption

[Corruption in the Education Sector](#) - Transparency International

[Global Corruption Report: Education](#) - Transparency International

[Corruption and Anti-corruption Efforts in the Education Sector](#) of the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre

[Corruption in the education sector](#) from the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre

[EDUCATION SECTOR CORRUPTION: HOW TO ASSESS IT AND WAYS TO ADDRESS IT](#) from the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre

[Gender, Corruption and Education](#) of the U4 Anti-Corruption Resource Centre

[Corrupt Schools, Corrupt Universities: What Can Be Done?](#) from Hallak Jacques, Muriel Poisson

[Cost and Extent of Corruption in the Education Sector in Uganda](#) from the Inspectorate of Government (IG) of Uganda

[EDUCATION FOR ALL 2000 2015: Achievements and Challenges](#) of UNESCO

[Integrity of Education Systems: A Methodology for Sector Assessment](#) of the OECD Anti-Corruption Network for Eastern Europe and Central Asia

[Making the SDGs work: Why and how to address corruption in sectors](#) from Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)

[Mapping of risks](#) from UNESCO’s International Institute for Educational Planning

The [Anti-Corruption Knowledge Hub](#) is the portal for Transparency International’s Anti-corruption resources. The [U4 Anti-corruption resource centre](#) also provides a wide range of resources.