Corruption and Policy Implementation in the Philippines: A Comparative Analysis of the Teacher Training and Textbook Delivery Programmes

Vicente C Reyes, Jr, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

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Corruption and Policy Implementation in the Philippines: A Comparative Analysis of the Teacher Training and Textbook Delivery Programmes

Vicente Chua Reyes Jr.

Corruption is a perennial obstacle to the Philippines’ pursuit of development. The Department of Education (DepEd) is considered to be one of the most corrupt agencies in the Philippines. However, there are two DepEd programmes with different levels of effectiveness in controlling corruption. The Textbook Delivery Programme has been ineffective while the Programme on Basic Education has been successful. The article explains the different levels of implementing these programmes by using local perspectives via the ‘narratives of implementation actors’. Apart from providing insights on the challenges facing the evolving educational bureaucracy in the Philippines, this article also demonstrates the utility of network actor perspectives in appreciating the many concerns that determine and impede implementation performance and discusses the causes and impact of corruption and policy implementation on two public educational programmes.

Keywords: Philippines; Corruption; Implementation; Education Programmes

Introduction

A succinct analysis of the major implementation pitfalls besiegling the Philippines indicates that ‘it operates under conditions of extreme scarcity’ (Quah, 1987a: xiii). The size, scope and vast differences that characterise the geographic and cultural landscape in the Philippines render the bureaucracy in a situation where it experiences difficulties in delivering much needed services to its populace. What makes matters more acute is that within a situation of ‘extreme scarcity’, the

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Vicente Chua Reyes Jr., PhD, is a Research Associate at the Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. Correspondence to: Vicente Chua Reyes Jr., Centre for Research in Pedagogy and Practice, National Institute of Education, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616. Email: Vicente.reyes@nie.edu.sg
Philippines has in the past* and most especially beginning during the 1950s until the present* suffered from chronic and debilitating corruption. Quah (2003: 81) has even stated that the problem of corruption in the country is ‘a way of life’. In the latest Transparency International’s study on the ‘Ten Most Corrupt Leaders’, the Philippines earned the dubious distinction of having two of its ex-Presidents in the list: Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Ejercito Estrada (Hodess et al., 2004: 13). Quah (1987b: 89) adds that ‘corruption is a serious obstacle to policy implementation because scarce resources are wasted on bribes and not on the prescribed activities, and delays are quite common and do not contribute to the swift implementation of public policies’. A serious attempt to analyse policy implementation deficits requires a more holistic approach. In the Philippines, an explicit recognition of the almost ubiquitous impact of corruption is essential.

The Department of Education (DepEd) is one of the most corrupt national agencies in the Philippines (Cariño et al., 1999: 28). The National Textbook Delivery Programme (TDP) and the Programme on Basic Education (PROBE) are two DepEd programmes that involve three dominant policy actors, namely: (1) the government (which refers to the state bureaucracy, the local government units and the legislature); (2) international organisations; and (3) civil society represented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or private organisations. Despite their similarity, the implementation performance of both programmes is very different. The TDP has been described as suffering from chronic malfunction, whereas the PROBE has been acknowledged as an example of effective implementation. This article accounts for the stark contrast between two programmes whose elements assume striking resemblance within the same corrupt national agency. Specifically, the study addresses three main questions: (1) what is the status of implementation of the TDP and PROBE; (2) what are the causes and consequences of corruption for implementation; and (3) what are the factors determining the success or failure of implementation in both programmes?

Continuity and Change in the History of Philippine Education

The legal basis and historical roots of the Philippine education system can be traced to the landmark Act 74 ‘which was approved on January 21, 1901, that provided in its Article 4 for the creation of a Superior Advisory Board and in its Article 10 for the establishment of a local or municipal advisory board in every organized municipality’ (Martin, 1955: 4). The Philippines was under the control of the United States government through the American Governor-General and his administrators. Although it may appear that the creation of local or municipal advisory boards seemed to be a move towards decentralisation and the sharing of authority with local boards, the early years of Philippine education shows an unmistakable trait of centralisation (Powell and Wyndham, 1931). An account from the early 20th century describes the division superintendent encroaching on the jurisdiction of local school
boards: ‘In fact, the superintendent had the power to suspend, pending investigation, any appointive or elective board member’ (Martin, 1955: 7-8).

In the 1970s the New Society era of President Marcos, a nationwide reorganisation of the Philippines into provinces directly implicated the Philippine education system. Nevertheless, the centralised characteristic of the system persisted: decision-making and the power of administration still remained distant from the implementing agents on the ground (Wong, 1973: 54). In the 1990s, the Education Commission (EDCOM) Report focused on the DepEd's decentralisation in the 1980s. The Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) grew in size and prominence with the resulting bureaucratic inefficiency that necessitated de-concentration. This decentralisation, however, bears an uncanny resemblance to Philippine education of the 1970s and early 1900s: ‘with decentralization, authority to hire, fire and appoint teachers and janitors has been delegated to the schools division superintendent’ (Congressional Commission on Education, 1991: 39). Empowering the local school boards and administrators as embodied in the 1901 Act 74 is yet to happen. The history of the DepEd from its inception in 1863 to the present reveals frequent changes of its official name with the concentration of power in the uppermost echelons.

The Textbook Delivery Programme

The 1975 Textbook Production Project of the then Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) was a ‘massive effort’ that ‘was supervised by the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force (EDPITA)' with two objectives: achieving a 'pupil-textbook ratio of two-pupils-per-book by 1980' and to 'ending dependence on foreign-authored texts purchased at prohibitive costs *foreign texts whose contents are irrelevant to Philippine needs and realities’ (Cortes, 1980: 165). It is significant to note that as early as 1990, the EDCOM had already accurately diagnosed the weaknesses in textbooks distribution (Congressional Commission on Education, 1991).

In 2005, the DepEd was still suffering from serious implementation deficits. Recently, the Commission on Audit (COA) gave a damning report on the implementation performance of the DepEd in its textbook deliveries (Chua, 2003a, 2003b). In 2000, the EDCOM findings still ring true as one scrutinises the TDP. Ideal ratios targeted by the DepEd are still unattained and, worse, funds required to accomplish the targets are inadequate (Macasaet, 2002).

Responding to criticisms, the 2002 TDP was launched. Bold and innovative, it tried to address a mammoth problem while soliciting support from civil society. For the first time, the monolithic DepEd reached out from outside its bureaucracy in addressing its serious policy implementation deficits (DepEd, 2003). Several setbacks were experienced during its inaugural year. According to Chua (2003b: 1): ‘DepEd officials concede that they still have many obstacles to hurdle before they can give
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Official name</th>
<th>Head</th>
<th>Legal bases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>Superior Commission of Primary Instruction</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Educational Decree of 1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901-1916</td>
<td>Department of Public Instruction</td>
<td>General Superintendent</td>
<td>Act. No. 74 of the Philippine Commission, 21 Jan. 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1942</td>
<td>Department of Public Instruction</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Organic Act Law of 1916 (Jones Law)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Department of Education, Health and Public Welfare</td>
<td>Minister</td>
<td>Named by Japanese Sponsored Philippine Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>Department of Public Instruction</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Named by Japanese Sponsored Philippine Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945-1946</td>
<td>Department of Public Instruction and Information</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Renamed by the Commonwealth Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-1947</td>
<td>Department of Instruction</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>Renamed by the Commonwealth Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947-1975</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>E.O. No. 94 October 1947 (Reorganisation Act of 1947)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-present</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>RA 9155, August 2001 (Governance of Basic Education Act)</td>
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every child a textbook in all the five core subjects: English, Social Studies, Science, Math and Filipino.'

The DepEd has identified the ‘privatization of textbook production *the Republic Act 8047 or the Book Publishing Industry Development Act of 1995 effectively dismantling government monopoly of books’ as one of the reasons for the continual shortages. It is bewildering to consider that after almost a decade of book privatization, the shortfalls in textbook delivery which amount to approximately ‘15 million schoolchildren in 40,000 public elementary and high schools’ still trouble the Philippine education sector (ibid.: 18). Bureaucratic ineffectiveness, found in external audits by the COA, and corruption are the likely causes for the dysfunction.
Programme on Basic Education

In 1960, the state of teacher education and quality in the Philippines indicated an ‘imbalance between a great quantity of teacher education graduates and low quality of preparation’ (Cortes, 1980: 171-172). The DepEd was alerted in 1960 to the possible mismatch between teacher graduates and teachers with proper qualifications. However, 45 years later, the DepEd is still handicapped by inadequate teacher training (National Economic Development Authority, 2002). A World Bank report states that ‘the general lack of rationalization and low standards of the higher education system typically affect public and private Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs)’ (Paralkar, 2001: 2). The report indicates that ‘only 28 percent of Graduates of TEIs taking the Licensure Examination of Teachers (LET) in 1996 passed’ (ibid.: 6). Wong (1996: 135) provides insights on the importance of teacher education to student achievement and directly links teacher education and training to the quality of education.

A malaise afflicting the DepEd is the highly politicised hiring and subsequent promotion of teachers. It is not qualifications but political connections and ‘pecuniary conditions’ that matter in the question of hiring and promotion at the DepEd. Chua (1999: 81) says that teachers ‘found that a sure-fire way to land a job or promotion was to obtain a recommendation from a politician *from the mayor or governor to the congressman or senator*. Former Civil Service Commission Secretary Patricia Sto Tomas (2003) identified the pervasiveness of political patronage as a stumbling block to ongoing professionalisation efforts.

Within this context of corruption and politicisation as well as the declining quality of teachers, the Australian government, which has a strong record of achievement in education assistance (AusAID International, 2004), teamed up with the DepEd to launch the PROBE to focus on ‘improving the teaching and learning of English, science and mathematics at the elementary and lower secondary school levels’. The PROBE was ‘estimated to have benefited about 76,000 educators and approximately 3.7 million school-aged children in Mindanao’. Furthermore, it was reported that ‘the assistance had a particularly important impact on female teachers and their status within the education system’ (ibid.: 21). Unlike other similar programmes undertaken by the DepEd that suffer from chronic implementation deficits, the PROBE generated a successful implementation record (PCER, 1999).

Theories on Corruption and Implementation

Scott (1969), Alam (1989) and Hutchcroft (1997) imply that corruption and implementation satisfy particularistic demands and distribution of interests or power, authority and patrons in a loosely structured system among members of the political system. Carino (1991: 7) refers to the debilitating convergence of ‘patrimonialism at the top’ and the ‘lack of acceptance of universalism at the bottom’ that lead to a ‘lack of accountability of public officials’. Boncodin (2003: 569), on the other hand, argues that the existing ‘dysfunctions in the public sector’ result in ‘bad governance and
concomitantly high levels of corruption'. De Dios (2000: 12) accounts for the phenomenon of patronage politics when they assert that ‘in the Philippines, the bureaucracy is underpaid and deficient in training and qualifications, making it vulnerable both to patronage politics and corruption’.

Lande’s (1965) work on Philippine electoral politics and public administration relies on a patron-client paradigm. Lemarchand and Legg (1972: 153) develop Lande’s paired relationships via dyadic analysis by highlighting extended alliances in what they describe as a clientage network. The article uses patron-client and clientage networks as the theoretical starting point. Khan (1996: 692) exemplifies this: ‘Developing country states typically operate through patron-client relationships with key sectors of society, state leaderships operate through these networks to implement their economic and political strategies and to negotiate change in rights.’ This study posits that such a stance looks upon corruption and politics from a narrow ‘elite-dominated’ perspective.

Kerkvliet and Mojares (1991: 10) initiate a shift from an analysis of politics away from traditional elite viewpoints and towards local perspectives in political transition. Sidel (1999) builds on the idea of ‘command and coercion’ and highlights ‘bossism’ as an essential element of Philippine politics. David (2001) questions the stranglehold that ‘Philippine values’ have on the analysis of Philippine politics and society and underscores the prevailing cultural essentialism permeating the language of political studies in the country. Ileto (2002) reiterates the almost ubiquitous influence of a flawed concept of development trapped in a modernist discourse and laments how ‘Lande’s 1965 classic continues to haunt subsequent texts, including those that seek to debunk it’ (Ileto, 1997: 98). He challenges the present scholarship and proposes opening up a new path in Philippine political studies that are divorced from the subject positionings of individual authors. An example of this alternate discourse is the social empowerment approach in anti-corruption reform. Johnston’s (1998: 91) thesis on social empowerment in the context of institutional reform proposes that citizens be encouraged to ‘enhance their ability to participate effectively in politics and to check the self-interested behaviour of official decision-makers and of each other in the process’.

This article consciously responds to these critiques of Philippine political analysis and investigates the interplay of corruption and implementation by assuming the perspectives of key actors involved in the political processes *particularly the implementation of specific policies. Owing to the sensitivity of the issue of corruption the key actors were interviewed for the study. The personal narratives of actors navigating through the overlapping spheres in implementation are the analytical building blocks of this study (Hack, 2004).

A conceptual map exploring causal linkages between implementation and corruption has been formulated. Combining Chase’s obstacles of implementation (1979) with Van Meter and Van Horn’s (1975) elements of implementation, these are grouped into three broad analytical constructs of corruption taken from Klitgaard
(1997), namely, monopoly opportunities (or lack of opportunities), discretion compliance (or non-compliance) and accountability incentives (or disincentives).

Comparative Analysis of the TDP and PROBE

Key Actors and Data Analysis

Sixty-three key participants were selected for this study. Semi-structured interviews were complemented by observations and documentary research. The key participants were classified into six main groups, namely: (1) DepEd representative (national, regional, division and district); (2) legislator representative; (3) private sector representative (from the three main geographic areas); (4) civil society representative (from the three main geographic areas); (5) international organisation representative; and (6) local government representative (from the three main geographic areas). Pattern-matching and explanation building during the extensive content analysis were used.

Determinants and Obstacles to Implementation

Operational demands

Policy standards and objectives are key components of the operational demands of programmes. The policy standard of the TDP was to achieve a 1:2 textbook-pupil ratio by 2002. On the other hand, the overriding goal of the PROBE was to improve the quality of basic education, particularly in the core subjects of English, science and mathematics, through teacher training by 2001. The TDP had three main project components, namely: (1) determining textbook requirements; (2) textbook procurement; and (3) textbook distribution (COA, 2003). The PROBE had four project components, which were: (1) pre-service teacher education; (2) in-service teacher education; (3) training in the development of teacher resource materials; and (4) project monitoring and evaluation (AusAID International, 2001).

Nature and availability of resources

The TDP had a total project cost of P5.1.548 billion, which formed part of the educational component loan of the Secondary Education Management Programme or SEMP I. It also had a working timeframe from February 2000 to December 2002. The total outputs attributed to the TDP were 25 million textbooks delivered (COA, 2003). The PROBE had an aggregate cost of P5. 935.4 million, a combination of

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Table 2 Conceptual Map in Analysing Corruption and Implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Determinants and obstacles to implementation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature and availability of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power and shared authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causes of corruption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monopoly opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretion compliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability incentives</td>
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(1997), namely, monopoly opportunities (or lack of opportunities), discretion compliance (or non-compliance) and accountability incentives (or disincentives).
Australian government aid package and the Philippine government counterpart. The timeframe for the PROBE was from 1996 to 2001. The total number of teachers trained under the PROBE was 41,047 (AusAID International, 2001).

Power and shared authority
The working relationship during the implementation of the TDP was characterised as discordant and fragmented. The COA audit of 2002 found that the ‘TDP governed under RA 9155’ witnessed ‘key implementing agents not functioning and coordinating properly’ (COA, 2003: 3). Moreover, the prevailing economic, social and political conditions of the TDP contributed to a dysfunctional bureaucracy typified by irregular transactions making it prone to corruption and implementation failure. On the other hand, the working relationship within the PROBE went smoothly primarily because of the creation of various level management groups and the establishment and enforcement of memorandum of agreement and joint management monitoring units. A major difficulty experienced by the PROBE in the prevailing socio-political conditions was the failure of the DepEd to de-load PROBE fellows as had been agreed upon (AusAID International, 2001: 6).

Field interviews and observations of the three case areas are the sources of the comparison of the operational demands, nature and availability of resources, and power and shared authority of the TDP and PROBE. Table 3 provides a comprehensive comparative perspective of the TDP and PROBE.

Inferential Analysis: Status of Implementation and Incidents of Corruption
The 63 interviewees of the study were asked to rank the status of implementation of the TDP and PROBE from ‘failure to functional’ and also to rank the incidents of corruption that they encountered in these programmes from ‘never to always’. Table 4 provides the relevant data after the conduct of cross-tabulations in order to determine the measures of association between implementation and corruption.

The cross-tabulations produced statistically significant results (p < 0.05). Furthermore, a closer examination of gamma (g) reveals a negative yet strong value of -0.874, indicating a reduced error rate of 87.4% over what one could expect by random chance. In other words, based on the rankings done by the interviewees, the incidents of corruption have a strong negative relationship with the status of implementation: the greater the incidents of corruption, the greater the likelihood that the status of implementation becomes a failure (see, for example, Liebetrau, 1993). It should be pointed out that tests of measures of association like g primarily verify whether chance can be used to explain the observed association. Taking into consideration that statistical results and analysis alone cannot constitute proof of the existence of a causal relationship, the latter will be substantiated by the qualitative cases described below.
Table 3 Comparative Perspective of TDP and PROBE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TDP (figures indicated below are based on SEMP I alone; SEMP II were not included)</th>
<th>PROBE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal and objectives</td>
<td>Operational demands Achieve a 1:2 textbook-pupil ratio by 2002 for 15 million schoolchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project components</td>
<td>Three project components: (1) textbook requirement; (2) procurement; (3) distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projected impact</td>
<td>15 million schoolchildren</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major stakeholders</td>
<td>(1) DepEd; (2) BEE; (3) BSE; (4) CHED; (5) regional; (6) division offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geographic scope</td>
<td>Nationwide; 16 regions, a total of 6,000 schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total project cost</td>
<td>Nature and availability of resources Ps. 1.648 billion (part of the educational component of the SEMP I loan by the WB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total project outputs</td>
<td>25 million delivered textbooks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key implementing agencies</td>
<td>IMCS, private publishers, DepEd regional, division, district offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working relationship of implementing agencies</td>
<td>Power and shared authority COA audit of 2002: TDP was governed under RA 9155; however, key implementing agencies were not functioning and coordinating properly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic, social and political interferences to implementation</td>
<td>Major difficulties: (1) dysfunctional bureaucracy; (2) irregular transactions due to monopoly opportunities, abusive discretion and lack of accountability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

BEE=Bureau of Elementary Education; BSE=Bureau of Secondary Education; CHE=Commission on Higher Education; ISFs=In-Service Fellows; IMCS=Instructional Materials Council Secretariat; TSUs=Teaching Support Units.
Table 4 Status of Implementation and Incidents of Corruption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status of implementation</th>
<th>Incidents of corruption (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Failure</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Functional</td>
<td>34.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

p < 0.05 and r = -0.874.

Corruption in the PROBE

Figure 1 outlines complex linkages within the different layers of the bureaucracy developed from an analysis of official documentation, reports, press releases, observations and interviews with different PROBE actors. Cases of nepotism and favouritism occur in selecting possible PROBE fellows in the stages between the submission of the candidates’ names from the School, District, Division and Regional Offices. Final approval of candidates for the PROBE training is made at the national level by AusAID, limiting influence peddling and thus acting as a natural barrier against rampant nepotism and favouritism.

Cases of the lack of transparency in the use of the PROBE funds occur within the jurisdiction of school administrators and principals, the district, division and regional PROBE representative offices. Fellows reported delays in the reimbursement of expenses and a general lack of awareness on how funds supposedly allocated to the PROBE Schools are disbursed.

Corruption linkages uncovered seven vulnerable points in the diagram. The COA reports and newspaper accounts have not uncovered any reported corrupt practices in the PROBE thus far. However, based on field interviews conducted for the study, there are six cases of corrupt practices. The first case shows nepotism in the selection of teachers for overseas training. The second and third cases highlight extortion and influence peddling on the part of school principals. Two other cases underscore the misuse of the PROBE funds by school principals. The final case links the Regional and Division Office to the misuse of the PROBE funds.

Monopoly Opportunities

The validity and accuracy of the accounts of salaries and wages, due to the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR)/Central Office/Other Funds, Prior Years Adjustment and Cash in Bank, Local Currency Current Accounts (LCCA), were doubtful due to deficiencies in the centralised payroll system (COA, 2003: 70).

The irregularities related above are examples of how deficiencies in the controls of sanction and circumvention of operative procedures could lead to corrupt practices.
Figure 1 PROBE Complex Linkages.

The requirement of using accounts originating solely from the Payroll Services Division (PSD) creates a monopoly of sanctions. Consequently, when the lower levels of the bureaucracy implement programmes, i.e. salaries and wages for teachers,
without the benefit of accurate information monopolised by the PSD, irregularities occur that expose the agency to corrupt practices.

In the PROBE, a natural monopoly happens when the school is tasked to identify and select potential PROBE fellows for teacher training under the coveted Australian overseas training. One PROBE fellow related how some DepEd officials abused their monopoly power to commit corruption. She indicated that during the selection of possible candidates, ‘she was informed by her school principal that based on the ranking she was number five out of five possible candidates for the region’. After a week, her school principal told her that she was displaced in the list because a ‘god-daughter of the Regional Director’ was placed on the list instead. Upon hearing this, the teacher wrote to the Regional Office and to the AusAID Office in Manila and demanded an explanation. After several weeks, she was reinstated and eventually made it to the final cut of teachers sent to Australia (personal communication, December 2004). Another PROBE fellow expressed dismay at why a teacher ‘who came highly recommended by all three PROBE fellows in the school as a potential Assistant In-Service fellow (AISF) was bypassed’ for someone else. Later she ‘discovered that the teacher chosen was the god-daughter of the school principal’. When this example of influence peddling and ‘other similar cases were pointed out by the other PROBE fellows, the school principal dismissed the allegations’. What happened next was a protracted teachers’ strike that lasted for a week. The strike ended when proper restitution and compromise was made between the school principal and the striking teachers led among others by the four PROBE fellows (ibid.). The experience of the PROBE fellows is reminiscent of the findings of Chua (1999: 10) on corruption at the DepEd when she stated that ‘largely because of political patronage and payoffs, a number of people unfit for the teaching profession end up teaching in and running public schools’.

Monopoly situations in schools are not necessarily concerned solely with dispensing sanctions, authority or selection. Prevailing practices and norms within a school environment can sometimes also cause similar exclusive control. One of the teachers related her immediate experience prior to being chosen for the PROBE. ‘After participating in a conference at another city, she was asked to sign a document stating fraudulent amounts of expenses for reimbursement.’ She refused and was ‘reprimanded not only by her school principal but by colleagues for being so difficult and for not conforming to norms and procedures and was even warned of dire consequences’. This form of institutionalised corruption is similar to the findings uncovered by Chua (1999: 4) where ‘cheating becomes compartmentalized and subtle’ and where ‘the superior and the subordinate act out their respective roles according to a defined script’. The PROBE fellow’s experience of extortion ended after her request for a transfer was granted. She was fortunate to land in a school that respected ‘merit and good performance’ and was eventually nominated and became a PROBE fellow (personal communication, November 2004).

Nonetheless, a noteworthy feature of the PROBE is the absence of monopoly in the crucial stages of its implementation. One example of this would be the selection of
the PROBE fellows or in-service fellows above the regional and division levels of the DepEd. Instead of the controls of sanctions and operative procedures placed on one agency, the PROBE experience is a welcome contrast since a rigid selection criterion is followed by a Project Monitoring Unit (PMU) represented ably by key stakeholders of the DepEd and AusAID (AusAID International, 2001).

Shared responsibility and authority between the AusAID and the DepEd representatives at key levels of the bureaucracy mitigated monopoly opportunities. Consistent and regular coordination paved the way for the PROBE actors to follow mandated operative procedures. The Regional Learning Materials Centre (RLMC) within the PROBE is an example of this effective functional partnership. A PROBE fellow explained that the RLMC became a focal point ‘where everything is pouring in as if the centre is merging the three other PROBE components’ (personal communication, December 2004). This convergence is undoubtedly a highly credible reason for the overriding importance PROBE fellows from different case areas have placed on the role of RLMC as the producer of ‘instructional materials’. Another probable reason for the effective functionality of the RLMC would be the ‘unique’ nature of the centre. It was an integral part of the bureaucracy since it had to function within the DepEd. However, being a programme, it enjoyed certain ‘special features’, particularly supplementary funding from the AusAID. In addition, the RLMC had a PROBE Regional Long Term Adviser (RLTA), employed by the Australian Management Consultant team hired by the AusAID. The RLTA communicated directly with the PROBE fellows at the RLMC and in schools. Moreover, the RLTA, by nature ‘an outsider’ of the bureaucracy, could generate more rapid and relevant suggestions for decisions to be made by the joint policy-making bodies of the DepEd and AusAID.

Discretion Compliance

Payment of personnel benefits by Region V amounting to Ps. 6,709,111.08 was considered unauthorised, while in Region V total disbursements of Ps. 6,709,111.08 for various allowances and other personnel benefits for two Division Offices and five national high schools were considered unauthorised as they contravened existing laws and regulations. In Region VII, some nationalised high schools granted Loyalty Pay to officials and employees that exceeded by Ps. 578,000 from what is legally authorised (COA, 2003: 83).

The abuse of discretionary power of local leaders, i.e. Division Office personnel, school administrators and principals is another area where corrupt practices occur. Items that form part of the scarce resources of the DepEd become vulnerable to misuse due to abuse in discretionary functions leading to corruption. The bloated size of the bureaucracy and the general lack of clear-cut functions allow the abuse of discretionary authority to remain unchecked.

One PROBE fellow shared an experience highlighting discretionary abuse leading to corruption. She related that ‘PROBE funds specifically earmarked for the use of PROBE fellows* in this case mobile phones for outreach training* were improperly
used’. She and other PROBE fellows were ‘dismayed to learn and see that the school principal, and other officers of the school had new mobile phones’. Chua (1999: 7) exposed other similar situations where the complexity of the organisation gives rise to discretion conducive for corruption. She argued that due to the sheer size of the DepEd bureaucracy, it ‘fails to monitor every employee, school and office under it, especially in hard-to-reach areas’. This brazen example of embezzlement of PROBE funds prompted the PROBE fellows to submit formal complaints to the higher authorities and to AusAID Manila. She explained that ‘several months later, the phones were taken back by AusAID’ (personal communication, December 2004).

A remarkable trait of the PROBE is its precise implementation procedures. The PROBE established specific guidelines and functions embodied in its Project Implementation Document (PID) jointly prepared by the PMU and the Australian Technical group at the start of the project and which eventually became the base document for continuous monitoring (AusAID International, 2001: 37).

A frequent comment on the strength of the PROBE is efficiency in project completion. A considerable number of fellows identified smooth ‘budget’ operations as a key success factor. The Visayas PROBE fellow assigned to the RLMC said that ‘our budget had easier access, it’s really fast, materials are fast and we’re providing all the needs of the teachers there’ (personal communication, November 2004). The Luzon university administrator supported these observations by making comparisons of how efficient the PROBE was compared to other DepEd and Commission on Higher Education (CHED) programmes (personal communication, December 2004).

Accountability Incentives

The continuous designation of the Fund for Assistance to Private Education (FAPE) as its service provider for the management of Government Assistance to Students and Teachers in Private Education (GATSPE) programme reduced the amount due to the student beneficiaries by Ps. 223,674,521.14 representing the 5% service fee paid to the FAPE from 1997 to December 2004. Giving the FAPE full responsibility to undertake the programme practically eliminates participation by the DepEd, which is in a better position to implement the programme in the field. These violate Sections 15 and 16 of Republic Act No. 8545 dated 28 February 1998 (COA, 2003: 85).

Contracting work to private companies within the huge DepEd bureaucracy is another possible source of corrupt activities. The FAPE experience is an example of how private sector agencies may be able to take undue advantage of systemic weaknesses and loopholes in the largely dysfunctional DepEd bureaucracy. The failure of the DepEd to manage GATSPE and thus subcontracting it has led to a disadvantageous situation exposing its monetary resources to exploitation. Unfortunately, accountability of the possible irregularities is severely limited since the FAPE’s role is enshrined in an inflexible subcontracting agreement. What is worse, analysing the pertinent features of the subcontracting lease implies the absence of any form of performance incentive and disincentive scheme on the part of the FAPE.
The lack of accountability in the use of funds may have actually occurred in the PROBE. A Mindanao PROBE fellow described that ‘she and other PROBE fellows have perennial difficulties in reimbursing expenses made for their outreach training’. She expressed her surprise and indignation* after being informed by the school accountant* that the PROBE funds were available, but that the school principal was re-channelling them for beautification and purchase of computers for the office of the principal. Asked what she did upon realising the anomaly, she replied that being on a postgraduate government scholarship she was unwilling to compromise by ‘rocking the boat’, thus she remained silent about it (personal communication, November 2004).

Another case of lack of accountability is related by a Luzon PROBE fellow. She described that in December 2001, ‘the final month of PROBE, the entire Regional Office had a lavish excursion at a resort’. Food was plentiful and even ‘jackets and giveaways were generously handed out’. She inquired from the DepEd officials present as to why no AusAID representative was present and the response she received was that ‘AusAID did not know about this activity, and that they were liquidating the remaining balance of PROBE funds before the end of the year’. She ‘was saddened with the misuse of funds that could have been used for more seminars in her poverty-stricken region instead of being spent for a junket’ (personal communication, December 2004). This confirms a key argument raised about the propensity towards corruption at the DepEd particularly when both the Central and Field Offices are faced with a situation where ‘there is so much money’ that ‘drives officials into a spending frenzy’ and where such abuses are not subject to regular accountability procedures (Chua, 1999: 7).

The PROBE had an exceptionally well-established accountability scheme. Aside from institutionalising project management and monitoring as the fourth component of the PROBE, accountability was entrusted to the monitoring and evaluation fellows. These were represented by all the relevant stakeholders of the PROBE who were directly involved in the establishment and maintenance of a monitoring system for the project (AusAID International, 2001: 38).

Corruption in the TDP

Figure 2 outlines the complex linkages within the different layers of the bureaucracy. Pieced together from official TDP documentation, interviews and observations with the different actors of the programme, one significant linkage that is not clearly marked but is of significant importance is the connection of the international organisation (the external funding agency) to the TDP. The international organisation providing huge resource outlays (represented by the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Asian Development Bank) has only one connection through a single link with the DepEd Central Office. The absence of coordination linkages with other implementing agents effectively damps checks and balances. The DepEd has
Figure 2 TDP Complex Linkages.
seen that this default has been exploited by unscrupulous individuals for corrupt practices.

The diagram uncovered situations in which dishonest practices occur. Field interviews and observations documented ten cases of corruption. Three cases of irregularities referred to fraud between a DepEd Office and a private publisher. Four cases indicated fraud between private publishers and school supply officers in the three case areas. The eighth case described the use of speed money by a private publisher in a DepEd Office in Luzon. Another case illustrated influence peddling in Luzon. The final case concerned a bribe that was offered to a National DepEd senior official.

The diagram illustrates that private publishers registered seven contact points. The DepEd school property officer registered the second highest number of contact points with four. The Local Government Units (LGUs) and the DepEd District Offices registered two links each. The main offices involved in the TDP, namely, the Regional Office, Division Office, the DepEd Central Office, Philippine legislature through the Presidential Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) and the Department of Budget Management, registered one contact point each. It is interesting to note that the three important TDP actors are not directly implicated: the division supply officers, school principals and school teachers. From documentation and based on interviews conducted, these three actors do not actually have substantial exposure to the implementation flow of the TDP.

Division supply officers perform reporting functions within the TDP. This took effect in 2001 when private publishers were required to deliver books directly to high schools. School principals do not actually receive the textbooks delivered to schools. The Memorandum Receipts (MRs) signed by the supply officers are frequently forwarded directly to the Division or District Offices. School teachers are at the far end as they merely receive (or refuse to receive) the textbooks delivered.

Monopoly Opportunities

The ambiguity of sanction controls within the DepEd leads to an undesirable situation where excessive monopoly is enjoyed by some agencies eventually becoming a cause for corruption. This monopoly occurs not only at the Central Office but more significantly in other TDP agencies.

The COA report (2003) indicates that more than 15 million textbooks were recorded as excess and wastage over the actual required number. With the average price of textbooks between Ps. 70 to Ps. 80 (computed at an average of Ps. 75), a mind boggling Ps. 89,689,950 worth of textbooks were unprogrammed, wasted and could very well have been taken advantage of by the corrupt parties. How could such a wanton waste of funds occur? The answer lies in the monopoly of the Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS) and Division Offices in determining the quantities to be contracted to private publishers:
Quantities to be contracted were determined by the IMCS by considering textbooks procured by the Central Office under SEMP I and TEEP which is not ideal since the Division Offices and the LGUs are also procuring books on an on-going basis. (COA, 2003: 45, emphasis added)

The IMCS which paradoxically suffers from severe personnel constraints has a natural monopoly in determining the national aggregate amounts of textbooks. Already saddled with a miniscule staff and a gigantic task, the IMCS is also entrusted with determining up-to-date and accurate textbook demand for the entire system. This becomes more complex with dysfunctional operative procedures allowing Division Offices *enjoying an analogous monopoly situation *to request funding assistance from LGUs charged against the SEF, without internal checks and balance:

LGUs have also not established any guidelines to determine textbook requirements chargeable against SEF. At the time of audit, they rely on the submitted requests of the Division Superintendent without validating these as to accuracy. (COA, 2003: 14, emphasis added)

A modus operandi that private publishers and corrupt DepEd actors take advantage of is the issuance of falsified government documents *specifically Sub-Allowment Release Orders (Sub-AROs) and Notice of Cash Allotment (NCAs)* in order to commit fraud. Chua (1999: 25) has documented several instances where the ‘suppliers would offer to help education officials in the field or Central Office to work for the release of a SARO or NCA, on condition that they be awarded the contract.’

A senior Visayas DepEd official disclosed that ‘in 1999 someone from Publisher X [actual names are not provided to preserve the anonymity of the respondents] approached her with a photocopy of a Sub-ARO for textbooks payment’. She ‘called the Central Office to confirm the validity of the Sub-ARO’s serial number’ and received a positive response. She ‘consulted her high-ranking DepEd superior who then signed two checks amounting to a total of Ps. 24 million’ to be given to Publisher X (personal communication, October 2004). Another senior official from the same office confided that ‘there were no NCAs’ that accompanied the Sub-AROs. Upon consultation with her superior, ‘it was agreed that the checks issued to Publisher X would be charged against existing Trust Liabilities and Maintenance and Other Operating Expenditures (MOOE)’ of the office *an unambiguous violation of existing laws. The supply officer from the same unit revealed that ‘some of the big items that were being paid to Publisher X, specifically the supplementary materials worth Ps. 3 million were actually not included in the List of Approved Supplementary and Reference Materials’ (ibid.). This statement corroborates what Chua (1999: 35) discovered: ‘suppliers say supplementary materials’ was where ‘they and government officials made a killing and not on textbooks’. The supply officer said that he was ‘disturbed with the discrepancy but since he was not in the loop of the approval chain simply decided to go along with it’ (personal communication, October 2004).
The three senior officials above have been named co-conspirators together with their superior, and other officials in an ongoing case that has been filed by the COA with the Sandiganbayan the legal entity that takes charge of cases of irregularities against government personnel. Similarly, criminal charges against Publisher X have yet to be finalised pending the Sandiganbayan’s decision on the culpability of the above-mentioned DepEd officials. None of the officials has been placed in preventative suspension while all three interviewed claim that ‘they merely performed their duty’. The irregularities above underscore how monopoly power is distorted to commit fraud.

The National Office is likewise a staging ground for corruption particularly in procurement. Chua (2001: 59) discovered that politicians ‘who hold the power of the purse and can block appointments and initiate investigations also poke their fingers in the DECS procurement pie’. A national DepEd senior official related that ‘corruption is so embedded’ that fundamental changes are necessary. He confided that ‘in early 2003, he received a call from a member of the Philippine legislature instructing him to select a particular local publisher*whose quotations were more expensive than several international publishers*since doing so, according to the caller, would result in monetary rewards and would be contributing to patriotism and national interest’. The senior official flatly rejected the offer and warned the legislator of consequences for interfering with the DepEd’s functions (personal communication, November 2003).

A supply officer reveals a common practice that occurs in his jurisdiction: the ‘collusion among some members of the LGUs, some officers from DepEd and private publishers’. Some ‘titles that were delivered to him were the same books of previous years and the paper quality is really poor’. He supports his allegations by showing actual identical specimens of books that have been delivered in the past three years and funded specifically by the DepEd, from the SEF of the LGU and the same private publisher. He explains that ‘multiple titles and inferior paper quality’ of textbooks is the result of binubalsa (which literally means: going to one’s pocket) or the embezzling of government funds. Asked whether he had been offered bribes, he said that ‘yes, opportunity is always there, but thank God, I have not fallen into temptation’ (personal communication, November 2003). The testimony of the Visayas supply officer validates a finding that Chua (2001: 67) exposed: ‘Division superintendents and district supervisors enjoy one privilege that their regional bosses do not: They have at their disposal the SEF or the local school board fund’.

Interviewing, observing and inspecting the stockrooms and classrooms of the meagre public schools that belonged to the impoverished sectors of the three case areas provided vivid images of the acute scarcity and wastage of resources. Two senior officials*one from the international organisation providing funds and another DepEd official overseeing the implementation of the TDP *shared puzzling observations:
And so far, I mean, when we did a completion report for SEMP I we saw that the ratio is now 1:1 in general but, sometimes it’s 1½:1, so one and a half students to one textbook. (Personal communication, December 2004)

Moreover, the national DepEd senior official declared that: ‘we have reached a point where at the end of this round, we will hit one to one, one textbook to one student’ (personal communication, November 2003). Both the international organisation official and the national DepEd senior official confidently acknowledged that the distribution ratios of textbooks all over the Philippines had reached ‘1:1’.

In both instances, upon discovering that considerable research had been done on the selected areas of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao, both senior officials inquired as to what the initial findings were. They were informed, without mentioning specific details of places and identities, that teachers, principals and supply officers reported massive textbook deprivations alongside large quantities of rotting and unused books and other classroom learning tools inside warehouses.

On hearing these, these two senior officials rationalised the earlier statements made regarding school ratios. One of them clarifies that the figures mentioned can be misleading since: ‘actually, the 1:1 ratio is only at the macro level’ (personal communication, December 2004). The other official refers to the multiple titles dilemma:

If you don’t have a good teacher or who’s trained to innovate, then they say ‘we will pick one title’. We ask, ‘What do you do with the other titles?’ They say, ‘We put them in storage or in the library’. . . . In effect, the 1:1 [ratio] is on the supply side not on the demand side. So when we go to classrooms, there are classes that still have shortages even though they have enough textbooks in their storerooms. (Personal communication, November 2003)

The above revelations have important implications. Policy-makers and implementers at the national headquarters are remotely aware of the compliance of their overall mission or what actually happens down the frontlines. The more important implications are that (1) the resources channelled for textbook deliveries are wasted, either through the delivery of multiple titles, non-usage and extended storage of textbooks within warehouses or worse misuse for corrupt ends and (2) the end-users *the students and teachers* at the school level have not received the intended outputs of policy.

Discretion Compliance

This study contends that the vulnerability of resources and lack of adherence to functions are important causes of corruption. A DepEd regional official confided that an existing provision in textbook delivery stipulates that private publishers unable to distribute textbooks directly to beneficiaries can give a ‘delivery fee of P1 per book’ to corresponding DepEd offices to ‘facilitate delivery’. What he has experienced is that some of his colleagues ‘negotiate an increase in the delivery fee’ (personal
communication, October 2003) with some private publishers in order to ‘prioritise delivery’. He said that these unscrupulous individuals ‘after pocketing the extra amount’ do not actually ‘lift a finger in hastening deliveries’. Instead, they advise supply officers to collect their own books*usually at the expense of the respective schools. He reiterated that the ‘bonus’ or what may be referred to as speed money is commonplace particularly in his office. He personally declared that he does not participate in such ‘hocus-pocus’ but does not likewise ‘rock the boat’ for fear of agitating others. This corroborates Chua’s (2001: 66) findings on ‘kickbacks’ enjoyed by the regional and Division Offices as these ‘transact directly with the private sector’ in the case of textbook purchases and deliveries.

Failure to adhere to the mandated functions or lack of compliance causes corruption. The findings of a COA’s audit pertaining to a specific function safeguarding vulnerable resources reinforces this view:

DepEd issued Memorandum dated May 16, 2001 directing all regional/divisional/district school officials to ensure that the same textbook titles are used within a given class for each subject where textbooks are needed and where these textbooks are available. … Evaluation of distribution records of books to teachers in selected schools within Divisions of Quezon, Mandaluyong and Caloocan Cities however showed that this instruction was not observed. (COA, 2003: 53, emphasis added)

After field inspections in different parts of the country, the DepEd senior official confirmed a suspicion that had been circulating around: the multiple titles phenomenon. The team reports were similar: they ‘discovered that there are 4 or 5 different titles for the same subjects in the school’. In other words, resources that should ideally have been spent to produce textbooks in order to achieve a one textbook per student ratio have been wasted.

The senior official claimed that the privatisation of textbook procurement and distribution as espoused in the recommendations of the EDCOM is the root cause of the multiple titles problem. She said that with the diminished role of her agency and the predominance given to private companies in textbook preparation and distribution, the multiple titles problem has arisen. Limiting the scope of their agency, which originally involved the preparation and eventual distribution of books, her office was suddenly relegated to merely broadcast the lists of approved textbooks. As a result, private publishers were emboldened to produce whatever books were listed. This gave way to situations where the publishers produced multiple titles for the same grade level, dictated primarily by economics and profit (personal communication, June 2004).

Observations made by various personnel at the DepEd succinctly underscore the overriding problem lurking behind obstacles in achieving the elusive 1:1 ratio. Textbooks have already been written and delivered. Unfortunately, as recounted by actors from the different case areas, either these books are delivered late, with the wrong quantities, are defective or distributed unevenly. These persistent problems are
telltale signs that point to serious implementation deficits. Another explanation for this problem would be abusive discretion leading to corruption.

A Mindanao school official related a recurring incident in her division. Visiting the DepEd Office she would stumble upon ‘other school officials from different areas collecting or being given books by the Head of the DepEd Office.’ Upon investigating further, she discovered that not ‘everyone was informed of the delivery of textbooks and only those in the favour would enjoy these privileges’. She has ‘protested to the National Office for the blatant display of influence peddling’ but ‘nothing was done as she was not supported by other school officials’ (personal communication, November 2004).

Accountability incentives
This study argues that disparate and fragmented organisational contexts compounded by discordant power relations in the TDP are causes of corruption. Lack of coordination among various agencies and the exercise of decision-making at odds with regulated sanctions highlight deficiencies in accountability and non-existent incentives and disincentives schemes. A more serious issue relates to the power exercised by property custodians/supply officers: the sensitivity of their positions and amount of resources passing through their office are so serious that a lack of accountability leads to a very strong cause of corruption.

Textbooks and supplementary materials worth Ps. 769, 649 were not received by the Designated Property Custodians of the Districts from the Division Offices. Although Memorandum Receipts (MRs) were prepared and signed by the Designated Property Custodians, they executed sworn statements/certifications stating that some of the books indicated there were not actually delivered. (COA, 2001: 33-34, emphasis added)

Three supply officers from two case areas described similar experiences pointing to fraud. The Mindanao supply officer related that ‘books delivered to her, did not comply with the stipulated Basic Education Curriculum (BEC)’. She also confided that upon requesting for a copy of the allocation list from the DepEd Office, she was told that ‘it would be coming soon, but six months later it had not arrived yet’. She related that even without the stipulated allocation list, she ‘signed MR forms since the private publishers and a local DepEd official assured her that the books were in order’ (personal communication, October 2004). She most recently resigned from her position as supply officer and has focused on her job as school teacher. Another Mindanao supply officer described that he ‘could not reconcile the disparities between the BEC books and those delivered to the school’. He confided that he signed the MR because the teachers were ‘urgently asking for textbooks since classes had already started’. He was assured by the private publisher and a local DepEd official that everything was in order. He has requested to be relieved of his duties as supply officer to focus on his work as school teacher (personal communication, November 2004). Both supply officers signed the MRs even when the delivered products were
not in order. Chua (1999: 147) uncovered this phenomenon in her investigations where suspected corrupt officials invoke the ‘Arias doctrine, meaning they signed documents on a purely ministerial basis, or by claiming that decisions were made on a collegial basis and not on an individual basis’.

Both supply officers above did not receive any type of training for the position and were appointed by the school, without any increase in salary or diminution of duties. Consequently, both cited a severe lack of competence and frustration in carrying out their roles. Both expressed that the lack of preparation and ignorance of the required tasks exonerates them. Both confided that the ‘colluding local DepEd official has pending cases filed against him but nothing has come of it yet’.

The third supply officer from the Visayas complained that ‘textbooks that she had received were not in accordance with the BEC curriculum and that she had yet to see a copy of the allocation list’. Compared to some of the supply officers interviewed in this study, she was unafraid and vocal in declaring who the culprit of the discrepancy was. She stated that ‘the DepEd Office, the private publisher and the school principal are colluding to defraud the government’. She claimed that ‘private publishers have told her about the “take” or the money that is given out as bribes to some members of the DepEd Office and her school principal’. She explained that the school principal initiated dismissal proceedings against her, but she ‘already enjoyed security of tenure and was unafraid of anyone’ (personal communication, October 2004). These statements reinforce Chua’s (1999: 47) finding that the publishers conspire with the DepEd and schools resulting in the issuance of ‘some items in excess of or way below their actual need, or goods that they never asked for and did not need in the first place’.

Reports implied that collusion between supply officers and private publishers have occurred providing unquestionable evidence of corruption. An audit report on the performance of private publishers is enlightening: excess textbooks, deliveries that were not ordered, delays are all violations of procedures that seem to occur with impunity at the DepEd (COA, 2003: 23). Careful investigation of current practices in the TDP reveals that a system of accountability is absent: feedback mechanism and specific timeframes for corrective measures reinforcing accountability are non-existent. Failure to report on the part of District and Division Offices and delays in rectification remain unchecked because the defective system tolerates it. Prevailing incentive -disincentive methods that could invariably motivate performance and mitigate lacklustre operations are in place but are non-functional.

Review of the Personnel Appraisal Reports (PARs) as of June 2002 of the NCR personnel involved in the provision of textbooks showed that their reports do not include any activity on the provision of textbooks. Their performance and accomplishments in this programme were not being reported and assessed. In the Divisions of Quezon City and Caloocan City, personnel did not submit their PARs for the year 2001, while the designated District Custodian in the Division of Mandaluyong City is being assessed and rated only on her performance as a teacher, not as a district custodian. (COA, 2003: 41, emphasis added)
The preceding section outlined the corruption causes that were generated from a careful study of available documents on the PROBE and TDP together with field interviews and observations. Table 5 summarises these findings as they are divided initially into the three main causes, namely: (i) monopoly opportunities; (ii) discretion compliance; and (iii) accountability incentives and how these interact with the causes of corruption.

Corruption and Implementation of the TDP and PROBE

The DepEd bureaucracy is characterised by serious flaws that can be traced to its colonial history. More significantly, these flaws contribute to a hierarchy with power ensconced at the topmost level that has evolved into a labyrinthine complex of linkages, making it non-transparent and prone to collusion and corruption. Implementation linkages of TDP are highly dysfunctional. Authority and coordination linkages are frequently compromised by insubordination of key actors across the bureaucracy (unwillingness to participate) and communication gaps that derail basic deliverables. Service-delivery is rendered almost ineffective since numerous actors practice discretionary authority that oftentimes violates the mandate and mission of TDP. Worse, discretionary abuses continue with impunity due to systemic weaknesses of the DepEd to enforce disciplinary action. Moreover, TDP suffers from (1) severe inadequacies; (2) multiple titles difficulties; and (3) proliferation of poor quality and content in the textbooks and teachers manuals.

Implementation linkages of PROBE are functional despite the limitations inherent at DepEd. Authority and coordination linkages are strong due to the attitudes of a majority of PROBE fellows who are deeply engaged and abide by the programme mission. Service-delivery linkages are robust due mainly to increased collaboration and frequent coordination among vital PROBE stakeholders. Other strengths can be found in (1) teaching strategies for PROBE fellows; (2) presence of

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Teacher Support Units (TSUs) in schools; (3) and professional growth and development for participant-actors of PROBE.

Documented corruption linkages in the TDP are alarmingly high. Collusion and circumvention of procedure for private gain occurs through linkages between private publishers, unscrupulous field officials and school-based supply officers. Corrupt transactions between the private publisher and middle level departments also occur albeit of lesser frequency. However, the corrupt linkages between private publishers and the middle level departments deal with more substantial amounts of resources compared to other linkages. Corrupt practices that occur through these transactions usually deal with (i) falsification of records to obtain substantial money transactions; (ii) delivery of substandard textbooks, delay in actual deliveries and insufficient amounts; and (iii) the misuse and diversion of resources to unauthorised uses. Some other allegations of corruption such as nepotism, favouritism and non-transparency of funds have likewise been reported though to a lesser extent in the PROBE. Its highly centralised yet highly coordinated operations prevented corruption from proliferating.

Resources invested in the TDP undoubtedly act as powerful motivator to entice actors to engage in corruption. This is exacerbated by five factors uncovered during field interviews and observations: (1) insubordination and ambiguity in sanction control among actors; (2) TDP operating procedures in disarray; (3) TDP implementers incapable of performing jobs; (4) discordance and lack of coordination among TDP implementers; and (5) the exercise of abusive discretionary authority that led directly to corrupt activities.

There are two critical weaknesses of the DepEd bureaucracy: being a dysfunctional ‘power concentrated on top’ organisation and a syncretic hierarchy compounded by extent of participation (active, isolated or empowered) of various actors. More importantly, the different degrees of interaction among key actors, namely, (1) state bureaucracy, (2) local government units, (3) legislature, (4) private sector, (5) civil society and (6) international organisations, determine to a great extent the implementation outcomes.

Determinants of implementation, namely, operational demands, nature and availability of resources, and power structures in implementation settings, shape the processes of the TDP and PROBE. This study postulates that the interface of these determinants and obstacles of implementation vis-à-vis the policy implementation actors result in complex linkages of discordant and dysfunctional pockets as well as stakeholdership networks. The dysfunctional pockets contribute to failure, while the stakeholdership networks allow successful implementation to happen.

Policy Recommendations
Determinants and Obstacles to Implementation

The experience of PROBE in coming up with a stakeholder-driven PID is a valuable lesson. Authority-coordination and service-delivery linkages within TDP can be
examined such that it could be tapped as a reinforcing tool in achieving greater adherence to policy standards and objectives. Increased coordination among implementers improves checks and balances. The experience of PROBE highlighting a high degree of coordination is very useful.

This study validates the assumption that textbook demand for services within DepEd far outstrips its supply capability. Resource gaps can be found in all levels of the bureaucracy. However, the scarcity is most acute at the frontlines. Multiple titles phenomenon complicated by SEF textbook funding from LGUs and lack of coordination amount to redundancy and a pitiful wastage of scarce resources. Service-delivery linkages could be re-examined; a well-managed and appropriately staffed unit that consolidates the various TDP resource requirements could be identified.

This study presents evidence confirming that the DepEd implementation settings *in particular the TDP *is prone to abusive discretionary authority. This is true at the school level supply officer position and at the middle level of the DepEd. Day-to-day operations (greatly affected by the context and locale of an implementing unit) may be devolved. However, sensitive areas such as procurement must be controlled properly. The PROBE experience of training fellows and institutional partnerships with regional TEIs recognised as centres of excellence and the subsequent dividends of an empowered and vigilant corps of classroom practitioners are valuable lessons.

Causes of Corruption

This study recognises that corruption increases with the sinister combination of (i) amplified monopoly opportunities highlighted by ineffectual controls on sanction; (ii) increased discretionary authority and concomitant decrease in compliance manifested by the vulnerability of resources and incapacity of implementers; and (iii) non-existent accountability systems complicated by distorted incentives and disincentives schemes typified by incongruent practices and discordant power relations in implementation settings.

Corruption linkages identified in the TDP (and also in the PROBE) need to be closely monitored. Choke points and vulnerabilities must be corrected in order to prevent corruption from spreading. First, clarity of goals and procedures of projects need to be established to reduce monopoly. Moreover, sharing the implementation burden can prove strategic: not only does it address the resource gaps of DepEd, it also ensures and strengthens ownership. The experience of strengthened and functional partnerships in the PROBE could be used as a model. Second, transparency in the TDP’s linkages must be fostered to disallow discretion. Heightened coordination linkages within the PROBE served as a natural buffer to protect it from the inherent corruption in teacher training at the DepEd. Increased professional coordination linkages in the TDP can emulate the PROBE model of
building checks and balances. Third, existing accountability measures must be reviewed as the study discovered that these are not being utilised. The PROBE had a PID and the PMU which were two institutional devices that dampened corrupt practices. Combining transparency and accountability as measures to combat corruption must be supported by a clear public perception that such a practice is a ‘high-risk, low-reward activity’ (Quah, 2003: 187). The Office of the Ombudsman and Sandiganbayan tasked to investigate and prosecute allegations of corruption and which are perennially experiencing capacity and servicing difficulties need to be strengthened in order not to ‘erode its legitimacy’ and for it to continue performing its ‘tasks impartially and effectively’ (2003: 185). Furthermore, the DepEd needs to be creative in exploring its mandate and the Magna Carta for Teachers to establish procedures for effective accountability. Fourth is the exercise of political will, which Quah describes as ‘the most important prerequisite’ (2003: 181) of an effective anti-corruption strategy. Private publishers that have questionable transactions must be blacklisted. Attempts at transparency and purging must be undertaken with political determination. Lastly, combating corruption can also be jointly promoted by local actors and other stakeholders: social empowerment of local actors plus institutional measures (Johnston, 1998). Impressive results produced by stakeholdership networks of the PROBE actors ably supported by the partnership of the AusAID and several agencies of the DepEd testify to the resiliency of this approach against corruption and its effectiveness in implementation.

References


