Civic Education for Combating Corruption: Prospects for Donor-Funded Strategies

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Introduction

Since the ‘Third Wave’ of democritisation began over a decade ago, donors have increasingly funded a number of projects and programmes that fit under the general rubric of ‘civic education’. These tend to address either quite targeted problems within a country or wider institutional reforms. Targeted civic education projects tend to arise out of a specific need, such as post-conflict reconstruction. These are often one-off projects or part of a series, depending on need. This could also include, for example, projects aimed at voter education for first time elections within a country. Civic education with a broader remit and longer time frames for projects tend to support wider institutional reform or building. This could be human rights education in countries coming out of a non-democratic system. It could include democratisation education for new or transitional democracies that are looking to educate voters about their rights and responsibilities, beyond the polling booth, in order to increase political participation and entrench support for democratic systems and institutions.

More recently, we are seeing an increased interest among donors in funding civic education to build corruption awareness and civic virtue in schools. These efforts can be seen as both one-off and supporting wider institutional reform. One example is the World Bank Institute’s Youth for Good Governance Learning Program, which began with a pilot exercise in June through October 2002. The programme was designed to expose ‘young people, in several selected countries [Tanzania, Ghana, Uganda, Zambia, Russia, Ukraine, Yugoslavia, United States], to discussions on governance and anti-corruption, as well as highlight the important role they can play in improving the quality of governance in their countries’ (WBI 2002). Other examples include the EU-TACIS project on ‘Fighting Corruption through Civic Education’ in Kazakhstan; the American Bar Association’s work in supporting education and advocacy in Central Asia and in Africa, which has been partly funded by the World Bank and USAID; a NORAD project on anti-corruption education in Zambia; and SIDA’s support for the Namibia Institute for Democracy’s Integrity and Anti-Corruption Programme. What these all have in common is that they are fairly new, certainly within the last five years or so, and are specifically targeted at challenging corruption within recipient countries.

Increasingly, donors see this sort of education as ‘key’ in fighting corruption, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the public is often held up by scholars and donors alike as both a necessary and an effective watchdog against corruption. The public, perhaps through civil society organisations or through public consultation exercises, can help to formulate and promote action plans to fight corruption. They can hold politicians to pledges to fight corruption and to support action plans and vote against those who do not. ‘They can monitor governments’ actions and decisions’, perhaps by working in conjunction with the media, in order to hold public officials to account and to reduce corruption (World Bank 2006).

Secondly, citizens are not simply victims of corruption – they often contribute to corrupt practice by offering bribes, evading taxes, expecting relatives in the public sector to get jobs for family, and so on. Civic education can help citizens to
understand how their own actions contribute to a wider culture of corruption, something that is not simply limited to the upper echelons of power.

Finally, all politicians and civil servants started out as ordinary members of the public. If civic education can instil an anti-corruption ethic within the wider public, then it is hoped that this will eventually translate into an anti-corruption ethic within the public sector as more and more of those joining the sector have undertaken anti-corruption education.

Although civic education to fight corruption can use quite simple methodologies, such as billboards with anti-corruption slogans, advertising on popular radio programmes, storylines built into popular television soap operas – methods funded by donors in the past – what is different now is a recognition among donors that anti-corruption civic education must go much deeper than this. It must aim to change the way people think about their role as citizens. This requires deeper education, conducted over a longer period of time, using more complex pedagogy. Although this sort of civic education is likely to prove quite challenging, donors are beginning to recognise that current anti-corruption initiatives are unlikely to prove effective unless the underlying conditions – including people’s values and attitudes towards corrupt behaviour – also change. More formalised civic education is seen as key to making this happen.

This paper will look at two well-known and important models for civic education to fight corruption: the Hong Kong Independent Commission Against Corruption’s (ICAC) community relations programme,¹ and the US wider civic education programme. This is probably the best-known system, which has been in existence since the nineteenth century and is still very influential, not least because it has been packaged and ‘sold’ to other countries through the Centre for Civic Education’s ‘CIVITAS’ programme. USAID has also been active in funding civic education and has produced an important evaluation of its work, which this paper will also discuss in the context of donor-funded corruption education. In doing so, the paper will draw out lessons for other donors looking to expand their funding for work of this kind. The paper argues that both the Hong Kong and US experiences of civic education demonstrate how unlikely it is that donors will be able to produce similar results with a tiny fraction of the overall budget and in environments characterised by weak institutions, crumbling or non-existent schools and inadequate training for teachers. It will also show how, in both cases, corruption forms only a very small part of much wider civic education curricula based on citizenship, not corruption.

Civic education as part of the three-pronged approach to combating corruption

The enduring anti-corruption model – reproduced in one form or another in many developing countries - is the three-pronged approach, based on the ICAC model of enforcement, prevention and education. According to the ICAC (2003: 1), enforcement is primarily about investigation, in order ‘to enforce anti-corruption laws vigilantly and professionally, to make corruption a high-risk crime’. Prevention is about ‘identify[ing] and eliminate[ing] opportunities for corruption in Government departments and public bodies by reviewing their procedures and practices, and

¹ See http://www.icac.org.hk/teensland/default.asp.
promote corruption prevention in private sector businesses’. Finally, education is ‘educat[ing] the community about the evils of corruption and enlist[ing] their support in the battle against corruption’.

Donors and governments have mostly focused effort and financial support on the first two. In most developing countries there is a serious lack of capacity for investigation into charges of corruption and for building up cases for prosecution. This work is extremely complex and expensive and, thus, beyond the capacity of most poor countries, demonstrated convincingly by Doig et al. (2005) in recent research into the experience of African anti-corruption agencies. The main focus, for donors certainly, has been in trying to strengthen watchdog institutions, legal frameworks, financial management systems and so on, in order to prevent corruption occurring in the first place. While there has been some lip service paid to the need for education, and occasional one-off initiatives have been funded, this work has been seen as having much lower priority than enforcement and prevention work.

Despite this, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is very difficult to find success in enforcement and prevention without changing overall public attitudes towards corruption, both among adults and children. Trying to educate adults is important to change things now, but children are important for long-term attitudinal change and to build deep support for new or strengthened institutions to improve governance and fight corruption. Indeed, according to Mexico’s Ministry of Public Education, ‘Education can play a decisive role in the fight against corruption and crime and the construction of a culture of legality’ (MPE 2003). Because of this, civic education should target both groups, with methodologies and pedagogy to suit.

The paradox facing both donors and the new democracies undertaking anti-corruption work is that for corruption campaigns to be successful, especially in the long term, citizens must be inculcated with new values to support new institutions and the tools to assess the government’s performance. However, as we will see, evidence suggests that civic education can actually reduce trust in all institutions, and not just corrupt ones (USAID 2002: 1). New democracies need civic education to build trust in institutions in order to foster a vital sense of national identity and patriotism, needed to prevent dangerous internal cleavages, and even established democracies find it difficult to put in place civic education programmes that teach students how to question the status quo and criticise those in power (Marquette & Mineshima 2002; Turner 1981; Bennett 2005). The needs of a new democracy and the need to educate against corruption may actually come into conflict, with the one negatively impacting upon the other.

It is also difficult to see how donors will build the necessary political will to support education programmes that could weaken those currently in power as well as their opposition. Certainly this has been the case in both Hong Kong and the USA, and it is important that donors look more deeply into both models to see problems and contradictions within the systems, as well as areas of ‘best practice’, that may help them better understand the challenges that will be faced in developing similar programmes in recipient countries.
The Hong Kong experience

The Hong Kong model for fighting corruption, based around the three-pronged strategy and with a powerful anti-corruption agency – the ICAC – at its core, has long been touted by donors and others as a model of best practice in fighting corruption. It is agreed that it has been successful in dramatically reducing levels of corruption over a number of years, even by those who question its transferability as a model to other countries (see, for example, Doig 1995; De Speville 1999; Pope 1999; Doig et al. 2005).

The work of the Community Relations team is seen as a key component of the ICAC’s success. The Community Relations Department ‘is responsible for the education, publicity and moral leadership of the Commission. Its role is directed towards mobilising public support in the fight against corruption’ (Chan 2000: 367). In addition to providing confidential ‘drop-in’ centres where the public can report corruption, its activities include explaining corruption to the public in layman’s language, working closely with businesses to develop and support corporate codes of ethics and anti-corruption measures, and in providing anti-corruption curriculum material, direct teaching and teacher training for schools and universities (Chan 2000: 367; Wong 1999). Its ‘Youth and Moral Education’ includes a very popular cartoon character called ‘Gee-dor-dor’, who is a flying rabbit with his own television show, comic and storybooks, stuffed toys and music (ICAC 2005).

Although the Hong Kong model has been replicated in many countries around the world, it is rarely – if ever – as successful in other contexts, certainly in developing countries. There are many reasons for this, including budget, staffing levels, staffing capacity, the size of Hong Kong itself, the strength of its existing institutions, its high levels of economic growth and per capita income and so on. Few developing countries can claim the same strengths. A number of recent studies have questioned the transferability of the model on these grounds (Doig 1995; Doig et al. 2005; Kamanga 2005; Moran 2000; Theobald & Williams 2000), and it is important to situate the civic education component within these wider arguments about transferability.

A recent study by Kamanga (2005), for example, compares Hong Kong’s ICAC with Malawi’s Anti-Corruption Bureau, which has been set up according to the Hong Kong model. However, it is proving much less effective, and this should be no surprise. Tables 1 and 2 below, from that study, demonstrate the difference in strength and capacity between the ICAC and the ACB, used to illustrate problems in transferability of the Hong Kong model. For the purpose of this paper, I would like to especially point readers to the section in the first table on ‘Community Relations’. This is the ICAC’s civic and community education division, and we can see here real commitment to education, both in terms of numbers of staff and as a proportion of the budget.
Table 1: ICAC’s Staffing Levels and Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Operations</th>
<th>Prevention</th>
<th>Comm. Relations</th>
<th>Administration</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Operations (HK$, m)</th>
<th>Prevention (HK$, m)</th>
<th>Comm. Relations (HK$, m)</th>
<th>Total (HK$, m)</th>
<th>Total (US$, m)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>943</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>1,299</td>
<td>525.6</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>128.5</td>
<td>705.9</td>
<td>90.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>932</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>1,285</td>
<td>540.6</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>118.9</td>
<td>693.3</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1,213</td>
<td>534.5</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>119.9</td>
<td>703.3</td>
<td>90.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>520.2</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>115.2</td>
<td>681.6</td>
<td>87.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avg.</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1,267</td>
<td>525.6</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>121.2</td>
<td>696.9</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Kamanga 2005: 22)

Table 2: ACB Budget, Approved and Strategic Plan Proposed Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Strategic Planned</th>
<th>Approved less Planned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total (MK)</td>
<td>Total (US$)</td>
<td>Total (MK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/05</td>
<td>140,000,000</td>
<td>1,285,583</td>
<td>425,819,105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Kamanga 2005: 40)

It becomes painfully obvious when looking at these figures that Malawi cannot hope to emulate Hong Kong’s success with a mere fraction of the budget, a considerable proportion of which must be funded by donors. Hong Kong’s success is at least in part due to the fact that it is able to throw a great deal of money at the problem.

Table 3 attempts to put this in the wider overall context of the environment in which civic education to fight corruption is taking place. Simply put, Hong Kong is smaller, less diverse, more urbanised (by its very nature), with higher economic growth and a much higher GDP, and more staff per capita to undertake this sort of work.

Table 3: Hong Kong & Malawi - Brief Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Hong Kong</th>
<th>Malawi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>6,882,600</td>
<td>12,341,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population per sq. km</td>
<td>6,569</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GNI per capita, 2004 (US$)</td>
<td>26,810</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% economic growth (2003-04)</td>
<td>7.7%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-corruption agency staff to total population ratio</td>
<td>1 to 5,674</td>
<td>1 to 15,125</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Kamanga 2005: 19, 22, 35, 38; World Bank 2005: 292)

The thing that makes Hong Kong even more of an implausible role model for developing countries is that the ICAC’s contribution to civic education in Hong Kong is only a tiny fraction of the total budget for civic education, and its emphasis on corruption, once again, is only a tiny part of the overall citizenship curriculum. Following the handover of Hong Kong to mainland China in 1997, the Chinese government put in place an extensive and ambitious civic education programme, of which the ICAC plays an important – but small – role. Civic education is seen as a
vital tool in dealing with social problems and instilling in youth a wide-ranging number of desirable characteristics – over 120 of these at last count (Fairbrother 2005: 299)! The following is just a partial list of these, in no particular order (adapted from Fairbrother 2005: 298):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Problems</th>
<th>Desirable Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>social conflict</td>
<td>civic consciousness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>overpopulation</td>
<td>understanding of the rule of law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environmental pollution</td>
<td>political maturity, understanding, interest and awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crime</td>
<td>eliminating political apathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>corruption</td>
<td>strengthening national awareness vis-à-vis China</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drug abuse</td>
<td>national identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the perceived erosion of traditional social values</td>
<td>national pride and patriotism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>juvenile delinquency</td>
<td>knowledge and understanding of China’s history, politics, economics, society and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>understanding the unique nature of ‘One Country, Two Systems’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Considering that corruption – and the work of the ICAC itself – is such a small part of civic education in Hong Kong, it is hard to extrapolate the value and impact of the ICAC’s work, just as it is also hard to extrapolate the impact of the specific and unique context. Future research will attempt to do this. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to say at this stage that it is clear that modelling civic education based on the work of the ICAC is unlikely to produce results similar to those found in Hong Kong simply because of the context in which such work is taking place, including budget, staffing levels and capacity, overall institutional framework and the wider civic education in place. There are of course lessons to learn, which we will come back to in the conclusion, but this cannot be seen as a model for poor developing countries with weak institutions and little money available to fund similar programmes.

**The US experience**

The US has probably by far the best-known, longest running and most widely researched formal civic education programme in the world. From the early nineteenth century on, leaders believed that free compulsory education required an emphasis on ‘moral education’ in order to foster commitment to ‘liberal notions of individual rights, civil society and the market’ (Marquette & Mineshima 2002: 539). Emphasis was placed on history, patriotism, myth-building, developing in-depth knowledge of laws and institutions and moral character. This was closely linked to churches and religious institutions throughout the nineteenth century, but become part of a secularised curriculum in the twentieth century (Beyerlein 2001). With a wave of new immigrants from different parts of Europe and Asia, in particular, ‘acculturation’ was also emphasised, allowing immigrants to keep parts of their own culture while becoming both American and democratic (Marquette & Mineshima 2002: 543; Janowitz 1983: 17).
Until recent years, it has proven very successful both in fostering a healthy democracy in a multicultural setting and in inculcating citizens with democratic skills and values. The flagship ‘CIVITAS’ programme, which is delivered in many countries around the world as well as in the US, includes things like civic life, politics and government; the foundation of a country’s particular political system; how government is meant to embody the purpose, values and principles of democracy; how the country fits into world affairs; and finally, the role of the citizen in a democracy (Marquette & Mineshima 2002: 549; CCE 1991). However, many believe civic education in the US to be in serious crisis right now, for a number of reasons. These are all also applicable to most, if not all, developing countries.

Firstly, the changing nature of immigration has challenged ideas of citizenship in the US. A multi-cultural society made up almost entirely of white, European, Protestant immigrants is very different from one made up of many different races, faiths, ethnicities and geographical origins. Indeed, the biggest challenge to American civic education to promote one national identity is the massive influx in Hispanic immigrants in the latter part of the 20th century. Janowitz has called this a ‘re-nationalisation’ of sorts, with states that were originally, such as Texas, Florida and California, now becoming, or close to becoming, majority Spanish-speaking (Janowitz 1983). Using civic education to promote a particular set of values is extremely difficult unless there is pre-existing consensus on values among citizens. Most developing countries are very heterogeneous, in terms of ethnicity and religion, and this is likely to reduce the scope for consensus.

Secondly, it is not seen as enough now to have strong sense of national values and citizenship. We are all also expected to be ‘global citizens’, with a commitment to values such as respect for human rights, individual sovereignty over state sovereignty, openness, freedom and so on. In countries where there is little global penetration, and where what penetration that does exist is limited to particular urban regions, classes and/or sectors, the concept of a ‘global citizen’ will be very difficult to get across. It is hard enough in areas of the US that are literally thousands of miles from an international border but where global penetration certainly exists.

Thirdly, researchers have found a widespread lack of support from authority figures for innovative pedagogical approaches. What exists currently in the US is really ‘political socialisation’, which has widespread support among teachers, religious leaders, parents and politicians. What it lacks is ‘political education’. The difference between the two is significant.

Political socialisation teaches what to think. It tells students what values society has chosen and makes them their own. It requires uncritical acceptance of the status quo. It encourages participation in the future, with a heavy emphasis on voting, but does not encourage students to act as citizens now. Political education, on the other hand, teaches students how to think. It emphasises a ‘rational decisioning process’. It allows critical evaluation of the status quo. It emphasises the ‘skill of participation’, with a focus on acting and the consequences of student inaction right now (Marquette & Mineshima 2002: 547, emphasis added; see also Turner 1981: 60-1).
There is a significant difference between civic education to promote patriotism – the kind of civic education that the US is historically very good at and which is needed in order to build a strong sense of national identity – and civic education to promote active citizenry – the kind that is needed to combat corruption. Civic education to fight corruption actually requires both of these approaches. There needs to be an established moral framework in which to inculcate students, but that needs to be combined with critical thinking skills that encourages the questioning of those in authority. It is not at all clear that authority figures in developing countries – like those in the United States – would feel comfortable supporting this kind of education.

Finally, as we continue to see on a daily basis, politics – and corruption – matter! Civic education can teach people all about ideals, but if those ideals are not matched with real-life integrity in public office, then people stop paying attention to what they are being taught. As we will see, this has been shown rather dramatically in a USAID evaluation of its own civic education programmes, influenced in no small part by the US experience of civic education at home.

**USAID evaluation of civic education programming**

In 2002, USAID published an evaluation of its funded civic education programmes in three countries – the Dominican Republic, Poland and South Africa. This was civic education to support democratisation, not to combat corruption, but it raises several interesting points for the discussion here.

The evaluation found that some areas of USAID’s work were successful, in particular, increasing political participation. It found that civic education is most successful when (a) there are at least three or more sessions, (b) participatory methods are used (e.g., role-playing versus lecturing) and (b) ‘teachers are knowledgeable and inspiring’ (USAID 2002: 1-2). Lessons learned in terms of best practice in designing a civic education project include:

- ‘Identify central democracy problems
- Set program objectives
- Identify target audience and program content
- Measure participants’ baseline knowledge, practices and values
- Select methodology
- Measure improvement’ (USAID 2002: 9).

The results of the evaluation demonstrate quite mixed results. According to the report,

In general terms, the results of the statistical analysis show that civic education does have a significant, positive impact on certain democratic behaviors and attitudes, with the caveat that the quantitative results were considerably weaker for school-based programs than for adult civic education programs. In looking at the full range of democratic behaviours and attitudes, civic education appears to have the greatest positive impact in rates of political participation, particularly at the local level. Civic education programs were also linked to greater participant knowledge
about democratic structures and institutions, and their sense of political
efficacy, although gains here were less than with local participation.
However, civic education programs appeared to have little effect on
changing democratic values such as political tolerance and, in fact, in
some cases, appeared to have a negative impact on trust in political
institutions (USAID 2002: 12, emphasis added).

This diminution of trust was regardless of whether or not particular institutions were
covered by the civic education programme. This makes sense if you think about it. If
you teach people how their government is corrupt, how it violates citizens’ rights,
how it denies citizens fair access to services, then people may very well walk away
feeling discouraged and angry, not empowered and enlightened.

The report notes that in countries were many problems exist, expectations
should be low, as work is being undertaken from a ‘bad baseline’. Also, the critical
thinking skills required to develop democratic citizenship skills ‘may serve to build
awareness of political problems and deficiencies in existing institutional
arrangements’ (USAID 2002: 18). Although this may deliver positive results in the
long-term, it is likely to be very destabilising in the short- to medium-term, especially
in countries emerging from conflict and/or with fledgling democratic institutions.
Obviously, this has a great deal of relevance for plans to expand civic education to
fight corruption. By its very nature, it is likely to focus on negative traits within the
system and could have the effect of turning citizens off of the overall political system,
creating anger and apathy, rather than empowering citizens to fight corruption.
Donors could fund civic education to fight corruption and then undermine their other
work to support democratisation.

Lessons for donor-funded civic education to fight corruption

Donors are faced with a real paradox: it is highly unlikely that anti-corruption
work will be sustainable without a change in public values and understanding of
corruption. The main focus for donors has been on strengthening institutions, but the
need to address the underlying morals and values is becoming more and more widely
accepted. This can be seen in recent debates about how to define corruption. The most
common definition of corruption in use today is ‘the abuse of public office for private
gain’ (World Bank, 1997: 8). Ethics are loosely implied in this definition of
corruption but certainly not made explicit. Discourse analysis of the World Bank’s
literature on corruption has shown a process that established a particular definition
that limits the study of corruption to that of public office and economics (Marquette,
2003; Polzer, 2001). This was done to meet the needs of a particular organisation, but
it has impacted the study of corruption as a whole. There is no sense of the moral
complexity surrounding decisions to act corruptly or not; indeed, morality has been
stripped away from much of the contemporary debate about corruption, as it has been
from this definition.

This has not always been the case. According to Wraith and Simpkins,
‘Corruption is above all a moral problem, immeasurable and imponderable’ (Wraith
& Simpkins, 1963: 17). Banfield introduced the concept of the ‘amoral familist’,
someone who works to ‘maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear
family’ (Banfield, 1958: 85), in the context of Sicily, in his famous text The Moral
Basis of a Backwards Society. As Williams explains, ‘Before it became subject to the rigours of modern social science, corruption was used primarily as a term of moral condemnation. In moral terms, to corrupt means to pervert, degrade, ruin and debase’; however, ‘[w]ith isolated exceptions, modern social science has largely eschewed the moral perspective on corruption’ (Williams, 1999: 504).

Moral definitions of corruption have been accused of being Eurocentric, racist even, and critics have explained that, although morality may be relative according to context, ideas of ‘public duty’ are not (or should not be). However, as Philp so succinctly put it, ‘The relativism which we risk is not simply moral relativism; that might seem like a price worth paying to avoid western stipulation. But the danger of this move is that the damage to one’s analysis spreads beyond moral relativism to a conceptual relativism’ (Philp, 1997: 442). This is why we continue to be faced with dilemmas of definition decades into the modern study of corruption. In an effort to strip the debate of any of its moral complexity, we have rendered it problematical at best, nonsensical at worst. Donors are recognising that civic education to fight corruption must move beyond building support for and understanding of institutions and into ‘re-injecting’ an understanding of the link between (im)morality and corruption. What they are not so sure about is how to define morality and whose values should be included.2

Some quite large caveats apply here that donors will have to take on board before they devote more resources to this area. Firstly, the ever-elusive political will applies here and is needed from the very highest level. Changing school curriculum to include moral education to fight corruption will at the very least need the support of the Ministry of Education and perhaps even higher than that. In some countries, it may be hard to find support to teach children how to challenge those in authority, and champions in government will need to be sought out.

In addition to political will from the very top, this sort of work also needs the support of relevant educational authorities, parents, teachers, religious leaders and so on, and this may be much more difficult to muster up than donors currently perceive. Once again, really effective civic education to fight corruption will need to teach students how to question authority. In many countries, developed and developing alike, this may be very difficult.

Issues of capacity are of utmost importance, as the USAID evaluation showed. Indeed, ‘By far one of the most important findings to come out of the study is that course design and quality of instruction are more important than civic education training in and of itself in explaining levels of variation. That is, if civic education programs are not well designed and taught, they have virtually no positive impact on democratic behaviours and attitudes’ (USAID 2002: 12, emphasis in original). This is of real concern when the reality of teaching in many developing countries is that of crumbling (or non-existent) buildings, over-crowded classrooms and poorly trained and over-worked teachers. Innovative teaching methods required for in-depth learning

2 DFID has recently funded a large study into the relationship between religion and development, directed by Professor Carole Rakodi at the University of Birmingham, and involving partners in India, Nigeria, Pakistan and Tanzania. A study of the relationship between religion and values in relation to corruption is part of this study and will be directed by the author in conjunction with the country partners.
are likely to be beyond the current capacity of most teaching staff, no matter how committed they might personally be. If USAID found that poor civic education was much worse than no civic education, donors should be very careful when funding programmes in less than ideal environments.

Finally, one-off initiatives are unlikely to be effective, as has been shown time and time again in all areas of anti-corruption work. Fighting corruption should be part of a wider strategy of civic education, has we have seen is the case in Hong Kong.

**Conclusion: citizenship, not anti-corruption**

The development of active, engaged and educated citizens has been the focus of citizenship education – in both formal and informal methods – for many decades. The reason why civic education is successful in fighting corruption in Hong Kong probably has much more to do with its emphasis on citizenship, rather than corruption. Citizenship is important in all political systems, although arguably for democracies in particular. As Shklar explains:

> The good democratic citizen is a political agent who takes part regularly in political locally and nationally, not just on primary and election day. Active citizens keep informed and speak out against public measure that they regard as unjust, unwise, or just too expensive. They also openly support politics that they regard as just and prudent. Although they do refrain from pursuing their own and their reference group’s interests, they try to weigh the claims of other people impartially and listen to their arguments. They are public meeting-goers and joiners of voluntary organizations who discuss and deliberate with others about the politics that will affect them all, and who serve their country not only as taxpayer and occasional soldier, but by having a considered notion of the public good that they genuinely take to heart. The good citizen is a patriot (Shklar 1991: 5).

This is really what donors are talking about when they discuss the need for civic education to fight corruption. Institutions may be very important, but as Habermas has pointed out: ‘the institutions of constitutional freedom are only worth as much as a population make of them’ (Habermas 1992: 7). What is needed in many countries is a stronger sense of civic awareness and pride – patriotism that refuses to allow institutions to be ravaged by corruption.

The above quote from Shklar is a normative statement about what a good citizen *should* be. It presupposes a strong institutional environment in which the good citizen can be supported in his or her work for the public good. The reality in many countries is that this environment does not exist. In weak environments, corrupt behaviour such as clientalism actually makes more sense than patriotic citizenship. As Hadenius explains, ‘Where people cannot rely on the existing system of rules, they usually seek out, as a substitute, networks founded on personal contacts. If you cannot trust the official institution, you must rely on your friends. This, as we know, is the logic of clientalism’ (Hadenius 2001: 95). If the result of civic education is a *reduction* in trust in official institutions, as was found in the USAID evaluation, the result could be a further entrenchment of clientalistic behaviour, as citizens use their
newfound critical skills to determine that it makes more sense to rely on friends than on a weak and corrupt state.

In developing countries, the capacity for wide ranging citizenship education does not exist, despite what could be argued as great need. There are too few schools with too few trained teachers and little in the way of an agreed curriculum. Consider that USAID’s budget for this work is relatively high, with an average of $30 million per year, totalling over $232 million for the whole of the 1990s (USAID 2002: 1). The ICAC’s budget for civic education in 2004 alone was US$14.8 million. Keeping in mind that this is only a fraction of the overall government budget for civic education, and that Hong Kong is a tiny city-state with a strong economy and strong institutions, it is unclear how donors expect to make any sort of significant impact on changing values to fight corruption in very poor environments. Future research will try to extrapolate the value of the ICAC’s role to see what specific lessons can be drawn for donors and for developing countries, but the overall conclusion here is unlikely to change.

It is important to remember that what donors are actually looking to do – whether they acknowledge it or not – is to change moral values through education, to make people good, democratic citizens, but without any clear consensus about what constitutes a ‘good citizen’ in particular countries. This is part of the growing move towards more explicit involvement in politics by donors (see, for example, Marquette 2004). Civic education is not just instrumental in changing attitudes towards corruption and civic behaviour but is part of political indoctrination as well, as Hong Kong shows. This is seen as a very important part of strengthening both new and old democratic polities, but it can also be used to build support for non-democratic or abusive regimes. Just as it can be used to teach citizens to question the government, it can also be used to ensure that this never happens.

It should also be accepted that small injections of funds are unlikely to make any difference, and where real commitment on the part of governments to this sort of civic education exists, donors should expect to fund at higher levels than currently and with a commitment to long-term support. Without money and support, evidence suggests that donors could cause more harm than good. As the USAID experience has shown, it is worse to have a poorly funded and executed programme of civic education than to have none at all.

It is likely that in weak political and institutional environments, donors should look to support homegrown civic education institutions and programmes that demonstrate an existing commitment to the sorts of values that donors hope to foster. It should also be recognised that this sort of programming must go hand in hand with continuing strengthening of institutions and massive investment in schools and teachers in order to have any chance at success.
Sources


