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## **Case study of implementation amidst corruption linkages: the National Textbook Delivery Program (TDP) of the Philippine Department of Education**

Vicente Chua Reyes\*

*Policy and Leadership Studies Academic Group, National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616, Singapore*

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This article is subdivided into three closely linked parts. It initially starts with a description of the background and objectives of the Textbook Delivery Program (TDP). This is followed by an analysis of the factors of implementation on the basis of the field notes gathered during the inquiry. An analysis of the impact of these factors on policy implementation is highlighted in this section. The succeeding part explores cases of corruption and its intervening effects on TDP.

**Keywords:** policy; corruption; implementation; reform; textbook; teachers

### **Introduction**

A careful analysis of one of the major implementation pitfalls besieging the Philippines is that ‘it operates under conditions of extreme scarcity’ (Quah 1987, xiii). The size, scope and enormous differences typifying the geographic and cultural landscape render the bureaucracy in a situation where it experiences difficulties in delivering much needed services to its populace (Richter 1987). What makes matters more acute is that within a situation of ‘extreme scarcity,’ the Philippines has in the past – and most especially beginning during the 1950s till the present – suffered from chronic and debilitating corruption. Quah has even stated that the problem of corruption in the country ‘is a way of life’ (Quah 2003, 81). A serious attempt to analyze policy implementation deficits in a Philippine setting requires an explicit recognition of the almost ubiquitous impact of corruption.

The Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) is considered to be one of the most corrupt national agencies of the Philippines (Cariño et al. 1998, 28). As such a ‘culture of trust’, vital in achieving successful educational outcomes documented in other countries, is not present and thus seriously compromises DepEd’s implementation performance (Sahlberg 2007, 157). This article focuses on one of the most important lynchpins of the education system: the provision of vital learning materials or textbooks to its clientele of over 17 million schoolchildren.

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\*Email: vicente.reyes@nie.edu.sg

### **The Textbook Delivery Program**

The Textbook Delivery Program (TDP) traces its roots to the 1975 Textbook Production Project of the then Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). This project was a ‘massive effort’ that ‘was supervised by the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force under the MEC’ (Cortes 1980, 165). It had two objectives: to achieve a ‘pupil-textbook ratio of two-pupils-per-book by 1980’ and to ‘end dependence on foreign-authored texts purchased at prohibitive costs – foreign texts whose contents are irrelevant to Philippine needs and realities’ (166).

The watershed Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) report of 1989 identified six crucial concerns related to the distribution of teaching materials within the Philippine education system: (1) delivery delays, (2) perceived disparity in distribution, (3) shortages or inconsistent deliveries, (4) lack of an efficient transportation, (5) deficient warehousing system, and (6) lack of financial support for personnel such as property custodians responsible for getting or receiving textbooks (EDCOM 1991, 76). The EDCOM findings still ring true as one scrutinizes the performance of the textbook deliveries: ‘In 2000, the ratio of textbooks to students was 1:6 in public elementary schools and 1:8 in public secondary schools, far from the DepEd ideal of 1:1’ (Macasaet 2002, 291).

In response to similar criticisms that have plagued the DepEd for almost a decade, in 2002 the Textbook Delivery Program was launched. Both bold and innovative, it tried to address a mammoth problem while at the same time soliciting support from civil society. For the first time, the monolithic DepEd reached out from outside its bureaucracy soliciting support from various civil society groups to assist monitoring deliveries and serving as third-party inspectors (DepEd 2003, 1). After its first year, several setbacks in terms of implementation efficacy were experienced:

This is a story that has become all too common for DepEd officials. Even as they promise that this school year, many of the country’s 17.3 million public school children would no longer have to share textbooks in at least three core subjects in the lower grade levels, DepEd officials concede that they still have many obstacles to hurdle before they can give every child a textbook in all the five core subjects: English, Social Studies, Science, Math and Filipino. (Chua 2003, 1)

The DepEd has attributed the ‘privatization of textbook production or the Republic Act 8047 or the Book Publishing Industry Development Act of 1995 which effectively dismantled government monopoly of books’ as one of the reasons for the continual shortages (Chua 2003, 18). It is bewildering to consider that after almost a decade of book privatization, shortfalls in textbook delivery still trouble Philippine education (120). Bureaucratic ineffectiveness, indicated by external audits by the Commission on Audit (COA) and corruption fostered by unscrupulous public–private partnership, as pointed out by Chua, and its consequent implementation deficits are the likely causes for the failure. Crump and Slee warned about the ‘greater risk of corruption arising from the new alliances’ (2005, 256). Haque confirms such a hypothesis when he discusses implications of expanded public–private alliance, stating that ‘the concern remains whether such extensive dealings with business firms would influence public service through vested business interests, and thus, jeopardize its public accountability’ (2001, 74).

### ***TDP project workflow***

The project workflow traces decisions and actions from the DepEd Central Office (DepEd CO) through the Instructional Materials Council Secretariat (IMCS) and the DepEd Central Accounts Office, Financial Management Service flowing to bureaucratic layers of the agency through the regional offices, the division offices, the district offices, and the respective high schools and elementary schools. The role of the private publishers/suppliers is illustrated in Figure 1. The complexity of implementation processes and procedures is reflected in the workflow.

### ***Failure of the TDP***

The performance audit conducted by the COA from July to October 2002 provides thoughtful reflection. Four major weaknesses were enumerated: (1) general failure of the DepEd and local government units (LGUs) to meet objectives by misjudging requirements and distribution concerns, (2) lack of appropriate risk management systems in place, (3) lack of well-defined implementation work plans, and (4) lack of coordination among agencies involved in the implementation of the program (COA 2003). These factors bogged down TDP implementation leading to a systemic breakdown of the objectives and services DepEd was mandated to provide.

## **Corruption-implementation analysis**

### ***Corruption and implementation: theoretical bases***

Scott (1969), Alam (1989), and Hutchcroft (1997) suggest that corruption and implementation satisfy particularistic demands and distribution of interests or power, authority and patrons in loose structures among members of the political system. Cariño argued that 'patrimonialism at the top' and the 'lack of acceptance of universalism at the bottom' lead to a 'lack of accountability of public officials' (1991, 7). Boncodin highlighted 'dysfunctions in the public sector' resulting in 'bad governance and concomitantly high levels of corruption' (2003, 569). De Dios underscores patronage politics asserting that 'in the Philippines, the bureaucracy is underpaid and deficient in training and qualifications, making it vulnerable both to patronage politics and corruption' (2000, 12).

The historical colonial experience of the Philippines quite similar to other postcolonial societies in the region has amounted to a 'political system and internal constraints' effectively hampering effective policy implementation (Morris and Scott 2003, 83). Patron-client paradigms in Philippine politics can be attributed to Lande's (1965) work on Philippine electoral politics and public administration. Lemarchand and Legg elaborated Lande's *paired relationships* via *dyadic analysis* by focusing on extended alliances in a clientage network (1972, 153).

Patron-client and clientage networks are the theoretical starting point of this article. Khan illustrates 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' (1996, 692). This article posits that corruption and politics, particularly in developing country contexts, have been stereotypically viewed from 'elite-dominated' perspectives.

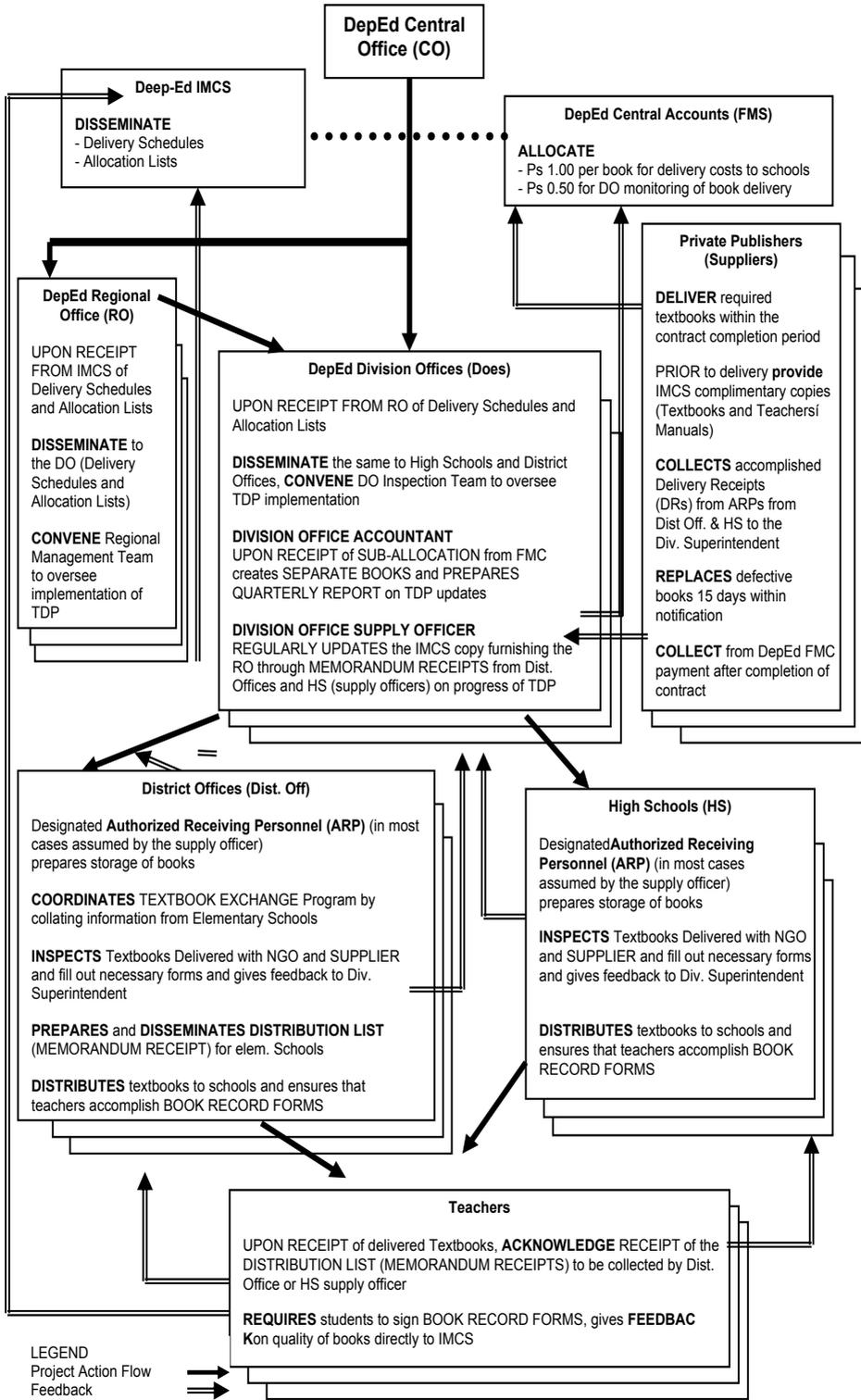


Figure 1. National TDP workflow/feedback.

Kerkvliet and Mojares started a shift from traditional elite viewpoints emphasizing local perspectives (1991, 10). Sidel (1999) builds on the idea of ‘command and coercion’ and ‘bossism’ as essential elements of Philippine politics. David (2001) critiques cultural essentialism permeating political studies exemplified by ‘Philippine values.’ Iletto reiterates the tarnished concept of development trapped in a modernist discourse (2002) and laments how ‘Lande’s 1965 classic continues to haunt subsequent texts, including those that seek to debunk it’ (1997, 98). He challenges present scholarship and proposes new paths in Philippine political studies divorced from the subject positionings of individual authors. An example of this alternate discourse is social empowerment in anti-corruption reform. Johnston’s 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’ (1998, 91).

The article interrogates Philippine political analysis and investigates the interplay of corruption and implementation by purposely assuming perspectives of key actors involved in the political processes – particularly the implementation of specific policies. Due to the sensitivity of corruption, interviews of key actors formed the main bulk of this project. Personal narratives of actors navigating through overlapping spheres in implementation were the analytical building blocks of this inquiry (Hack 2004).

### ***Inferential analysis: implementation and TDP or non-TDP participation***

Field work was undertaken across different geographic settings which were the policy implementation sites of TDP, selected impoverished locales in the three main islands of the Philippines, namely: mountainous Nueva Vizcaya in Luzon, coastal Zamboanga City in Mindanao, and the urban–rural mix of Cebu City in the Visayas. From these three sites, 63 key participants were purposively selected for this inquiry.<sup>1</sup>

Sixty-three interviewees from the field study were asked to describe whether their program participation (i.e., TDP or non-TDP) were ‘working’ or ‘non-working.’ Table 1 compiles relevant figures after the conduct of cross-tabulations in order to determine measures of association between implementation and program participation.

The cross-tabulations produced statistically significant results ( $p < .05$ ). An examination of the absolute value of gamma ( $\gamma$ ) above .81 means that there was an 81% reduction in error in predicting the dependent variable, when the independent variable was taken into account (see e.g. Liebetrau 1993). In other words, the statistically significant relationship between the dependent and the independent variable is high. An interpretation of this could be that information about TDP membership greatly helps in improving the prediction of the outcomes of implementation (‘working’ or

Table 1. Status of implementation with TDP membership.

Status of implementation	TDP Membership (%)		Total
	TDP membership	Non-TDP membership	
Working	17.5	44.4	61.9
Non-working	30.2	7.9	38.1
Total	47.7	52.3	100

Note: Not assuming the null hypothesis; using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

<b>Factors of Implementation</b>		
Operational Demands	Nature and Availability of Resources	Power and Shared Authority
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- policy standards &amp; objectives</li> <li>- inter-organizational communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- resources</li> <li>- disposition of implementers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- characteristics of implementing agency</li> <li>- economic, social &amp; political conditions</li> </ul>

Figure 2. Factors of implementation.

‘non-working’) by about 81%. This relationship between implementation and TDP is explored in greater detail.

This subsequent section analyzes the factors of implementation (Figure 2) relying on the points of view of the implementation actors. By combining Chase’s obstacles of implementation (1979, 387) with Van Meter and Van Horn’s elements of implementation (1975, 447), the construct ‘factors of implementation’ is formulated. With this construct, the parameters of implementation that determine success (determinants) and those that lead to failure (obstacles) are analyzed in a systematic manner.

### ***Operational demands***

#### *Policy standards and objectives*

Civil society representatives, school principals, and classroom practitioners from Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao, respectively, all underscore the importance of providing textbooks to students. These actors pointed out how the TDP policy standard is not accomplished and the telling impact on its targeted beneficiaries.

A civil society organization (CSO) representative from Luzon having been in the educational system for more than two decades as a teacher-administrator underscored that textbooks are fundamental for the students in order to ‘help them understand.’ Furthermore, she pointed out an important link between the availability of textbooks and students’ learning when she mentioned that ‘without these textbooks they would not be able to learn as much as they wanted to’ (personal communication, December 2004). On the other hand, a Mindanao classroom practitioner instead of looking at it from a ‘learning’ or ‘student performance’ angle, discussed its effect on the teaching craft. She identified the inadequacy of textbooks as an indisputable factor that limited the scope of learning activities that she can perform in the classroom (personal communication, December 2004).

Another Mindanao classroom practitioner bewailed the difficulty of using unequally distributed textbooks in a classroom. One can only imagine the numerous issues that a teacher faces when confronted with a situation where the demand for learning materials far outpaces the available supply. She recounted that with 50 students and a limited supply of ‘25–30 numbers of books,’ it was ‘really hard to teach’ (personal communication, December 2004).

An important corollary to the inadequate textbooks issue experienced by the selected schools is the timely availability of an essential companion component of

textbooks – the teachers’ manual. Field notes revealed that acute shortages or delays in the delivery of the teachers’ manuals were common. A DepEd senior official based in the Central Office explained the crucial importance of teachers’ manuals:

A textbook for a public school must always have a teacher’s manual because there may be teachers in the field who are teaching areas which are not necessarily their expertise. (personal communication, June 2004)

### *Inter-organizational communication*

One of the corollary components launched with TDP was the Textbook Exchange Program. It was designed to facilitate ‘exchanges from other schools that they get the titles they want and give up the titles they don’t need,’ in the process reducing the ill-effects of multiple titles in schools and the unnecessary accumulation of unused books inside school warehouses. Field interviews noted that the compliance rate for the program in all the three case areas was disappointing. All of the supply officers interviewed maintained that there was no system that was set in motion to implement the exchanges and that it all depended on the initiative of either the school principal or the division superintendent or the district supervisor. Moreover, some supply officers declared that they simply received a DepEd memo, informing them about the program, without specific implementation mechanisms. These comments were corroborated by findings of the international organization official declaring that on their numerous monitoring activities in schools in relation to the Social Expenditure Management Project (SEMP 1), they would ‘still see [a] lot of surplus books’ and pointed out that the textbook exchange program implementation would be ‘quite difficult’ (personal communication, December 2004). She added that one possible reason for the low compliance rate was the discretionary command that school principals have over their textbook supplies: ‘we want to reserve these extra books just in case we have delayed deliveries next school year.’

Interestingly schools that did participate in the Textbook Exchange Program endured perplexing results. The Visayas school principal noted the disorder they experienced after being ‘asked to submit a list of books that we are lacking and what we needed in our school for the textbook exchange, the books delivered to us were not the ones we needed’ (personal communication, October 2004).

The inconsistent and incremental outcomes of the Textbook Exchange Program and other similar policy-making innovations emerging in the wake of TDP could arguably be described as tell-tale signs of policy spiral (Bryden 1974, 16).

### *Nature and availability of resources*

#### *Resources*

An international official whose primary responsibility is to monitor and liaise with DepEd in the procurement of textbooks lamented that even with the presence of stringent International Competitive Bidding (ICB) rules, debilitating multiple titles of books still persists (personal communication, December 2004). A Visayas classroom practitioner, with more than 25 years of teaching, conveyed the ‘frequent’ experience she has in dealing with multiple titles. She explained that with so many titles in a given subject what would happen is that ‘there is only one functional book for 40–50 students at that very moment’ (personal communication, October 2004). Difficulties

faced by teachers in such situations are unequivocally declared by the Visayas DepEd supply officer: ‘There are no two books that are the same in most classes’ (personal communication, October 2004).

Quite the opposite of what all the classroom practitioners related, the international organization official argued that the current TDP has contributed significantly to improving the quality of textbooks. She attributed the general improvement to the benefits of *laissez-faire* economics with the entry of the ICB ushering many positive changes particularly aspects that deal with ‘the quality of the paper, the packaging, well, that’s as far as the physical aspects are concerned’ (personal communication, December 2004). The national DepEd senior official reinforced this by claiming that the entrance of international bidders – ‘Korean, the Indian, the Chinese’ – has altered the situation of the local textbook publishing industry. He reiterated that when these international players come in and ‘if their quality is better, it forces local private publishers to improve the quality of their books’ (personal communication, November 2003). He also pointed out that after ICB was introduced, paper quality has improved when they ‘made it thicker, because it was upgraded from 60 grams per square meter (GSM) to 70’ (personal communication, November 2003).

### *Disposition of implementers*

Frontline implementers of the DepEd represented by principals and teachers play a crucial role in the effective implementation of education programs. Their disposition – willingness, reluctance, dedication, or resistance – determine to a great extent implementation outcomes.

One of the issues that has produced peculiar consequences is the policy on resolving textbook losses. The counterproductive practice of a considerable number of teachers, who deliberately ‘collect only a few textbooks to be distributed to students,’ is disturbing. The Luzon classroom practitioner explained the nature of the problem: ‘the teacher gets the books from the property custodian and then issues these to the students and in cases when the students can’t return the book, it’s the teacher who is liable’ (personal communication, December 2004). The Visayas classroom practitioner detailed some of the consequences when she stated that ‘if their students leave without proper clearances, the teachers would not receive their salaries. So sometimes the teachers have to make promissory notes, sometimes amounting to thousands of pesos’ (personal communication, October 2004). The supply officer from Mindanao acknowledged this: ‘that’s true if pupils will not pay the teachers will pay’ (personal communication, November 2004). The Visayas supply officer contextualized the issue when he explained that ‘there are some pupils who really have no money and who are neglectful.’ So rather than spend, a lot of teachers deliberately ‘withhold distributing textbooks’ (personal communication, December 2004).

### ***Power and shared authority***

#### *Characteristics of implementing agency*

The supply officer shared his ideas on the causes of the multiple titles phenomena at the DepEd: ‘there is an inherent lack of coordination among different parties.’ He explicitly identifies them as the different sets of publishers, one coming from the national level, another from the city and another from the province (personal communication, December 2004).

Another supply officer with 20 years experience provided a comprehensive tale of the procurement role of the LGUs:

Before, the National Office would procure books which would be channeled through the division offices. But, since there would be inevitable delays and the schools can't wait, they, with the help of the local government would buy some other titles. And then the books eventually arrive from the Division, so there is duplication, different titles for the same subject in the same grade level. (personal communication, October 2004)

The problem surfaces when the LGUs procure textbooks without proper coordination with the concerned authorities. However, if one examines the process carefully, one may deduce that the continual bureaucratic incompetence might actually be seen as recurrent incidences of collusion and corrupt activities.

### *Economic, social and political conditions*

Human capital development through the provision of basic education to the country's youth is a crucial area that the nation has prioritized. In view of the resource-strapped, violence-ridden, and politically volatile condition of both urban and countryside Philippines, strategic and timely interventions in education are of vital significance.

The importance of textbooks becomes even more evident because when teachers aren't fully trained, they need to have reference materials. In a regular situation when you have good teachers, textbooks don't really matter as much. Because a good teacher is always going to be able to assemble materials. What textbooks do is that it organizes it so that all the materials are in one place. In that sense it's important to get good textbooks if your teachers are not well-trained or not that innovative. Like I said without training that's going to be evident. So the value of textbooks to our system has actually been more important than what I would call a normal situation. (personal communication, November 2003)

### **Causes of corruption**

Interaction among actors involves varying degrees of cooperation and conflict forming part of the dimensions of process – a preliminary listing of causal factors that influence the outcome of policy as determined in a quantitative-qualitative research on implementation undertaken in Philippine education (Reyes 1996). Benchmarking these dimensions upon existing dominant paradigms and their corresponding critiques, key variables are purported to impinge on the sphere of the actors and their exposure to corruption. These variables are grouped into the three broad analytical constructs of corruption taken from Klitgaard: (1) monopoly opportunities or the lack of it, (2) discretionary compliance or non-compliance, and (3) the presence of accountability incentives or disincentives (1997, 500). The article posits that these constructs comprise 'causes of corruption' (Figure 3) and adapted for this inquiry (Reyes 2007, 120). This section discusses these causes with the findings gathered from the interviews.

Figure 4 underscores the complex linkages that transpire in the intersections of implementation and corruption with TDP. It illustrates that private publishers registered seven contact points. The DepEd school property officer registered the second highest number of contact points with four. LGUs and the DepEd district offices also registered two links each. The main offices involved in TDP, namely: the

<b>Causes of Corruption</b>		
Monopoly Opportunities	Discretion/Compliance	Accountability incentives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- controls on sanction</li> <li>- operating procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- resource vulnerability</li> <li>- adherence to functions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- organizational context</li> <li>- power relations</li> </ul>

Figure 3. Causes of corruption.

regional office, division office, DepEd CO, Philippine legislature (through the Presidential Development Assistance Fund – PDAF or also known as the Congressional Development Fund (CDF) or ‘pork barrel’ of specific congressmen), and the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) registered one contact point each. Three important actors in TDP are not directly implicated in the corruption linkages: division supply officers, school principals, and school teachers. Based on documentation and interviews, these three implementers do not actually have substantial exposure to implementation.

Division supply officers perform reporting functions in relation to the TDP. This took effect in 2001 when private publishers were required to deliver books directly to high schools. The school principals do not actually receive the textbooks delivered to the school supply officers. The memorandum receipts (MRs) signed by supply officers are frequently forwarded directly to division or district offices. School teachers are at the far end as they merely receive (and then distribute or refuse to distribute) textbooks delivered to their respective school supply officer.

One linkage not clearly marked but is of significant importance is the connection of the international organization (the external funding agency) to TDP. As can be seen, this entity (in the case of TDP would be the World Bank – WB, the International Monetary Fund – IMF, and the Asian Development Bank – ADB), has only one coordinating linkage with the DepEd CO. Notwithstanding the fact that it provides a huge resource outlay to DepEd, the absence of coordination linkages with other implementing agents of TDP effectively dampens checks and balances that may be utilized. The experience of DepEd has seen that this default has been exploited by unscrupulous individuals for corrupt practices.

The corruption linkages uncovered situations where dishonest practices occur. Field interviews and observations documented 10 types of corruption experienced by the implementing actors. Three types of irregularities pointed to fraud between a DepEd Office and a private publisher. Four cases indicated fraud between private publishers and school supply officers that happened in the three case areas. One example described the use of speed money by a private publisher in a DepEd Office in Luzon. Another instance illustrated influence peddling in Luzon. A bribe offered to a national DepEd senior official is also described.

### ***Monopoly opportunities***

The article posits that ambiguity of controls of sanction leads to an undesirable situation where excessive monopoly is enjoyed by some implementation actors leading to

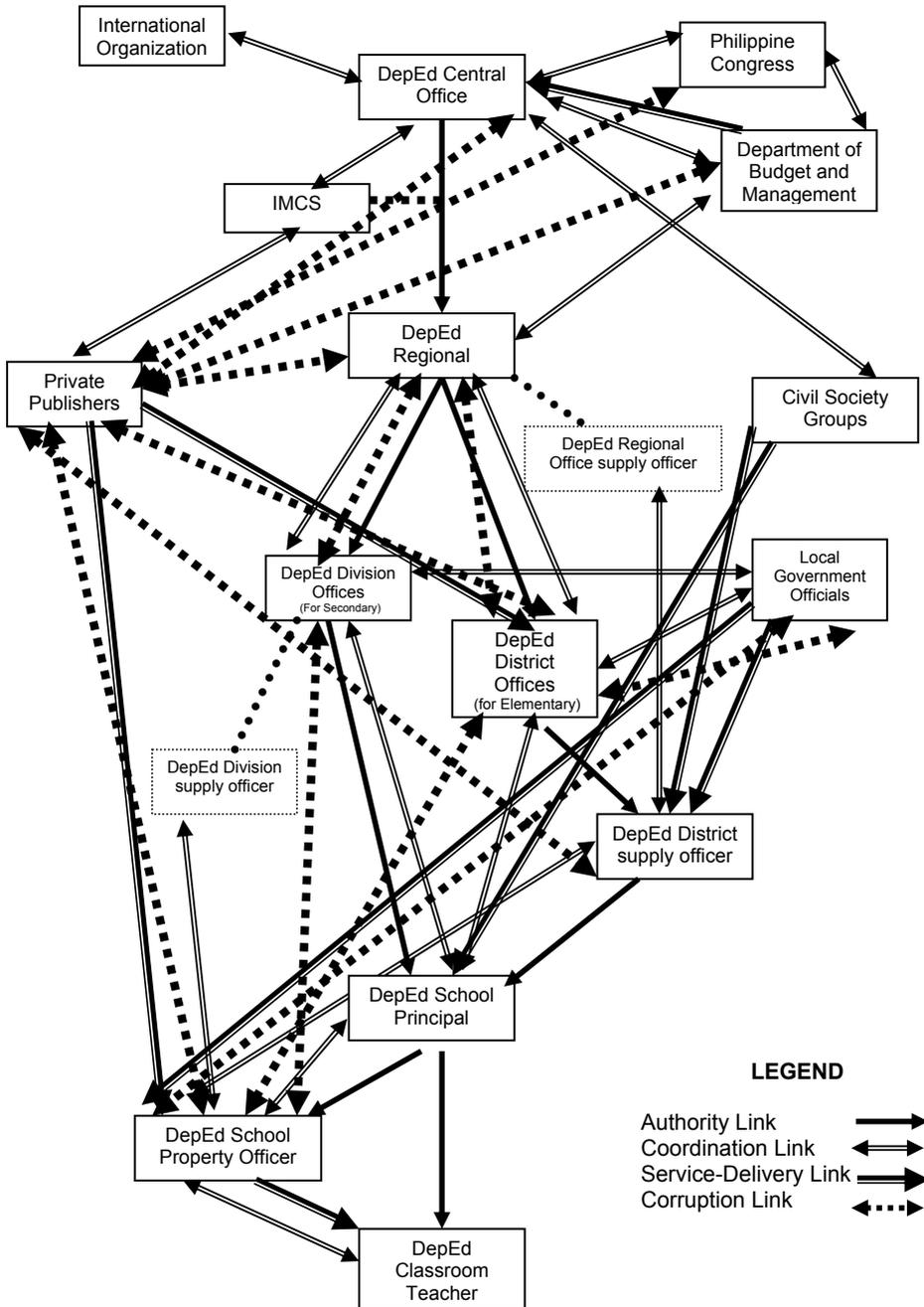


Figure 4. TDP corruption linkages.

heightened causes for corruption. This occurs not only within the Central Office but in other agencies involved:

While procurement of textbooks by the DepEd Central Office undertaken by IMCS under SEMP 1 exceeded the projection by 17,213,558 the *objective was still not*

*attained*. Only 6 subjects for Grades 1 to 4 have sufficient books. The available books for these subjects *even exceeded* the textbook requirements by 1,195,866. (COA 2003, 5, emphases added)

The report indicates that an aggregate of a little over 15 million textbooks was recorded as excess. With average prices of textbook between Ps. 70 and Ps. 80 (COA 2003, 2) and computing the peso value of the excess textbooks at an average of Ps. 75, a mind boggling Ps. 89,689,950 (US\$ 1 – Pesos 45.60, circa July 2008) worth of textbooks were unprogramed, wasted and could very well have been taken advantage of by corrupt parties. How could such a wanton waste of funds occur? The answer lies in the monopoly of the IMCS and division offices:

The DepEd entered into additional contracts with 5 suppliers from December 2001 to May 2002 for the delivery of additional textbooks for Grades 1 to 4 under SEMP 2. The quantities to be contracted *were determined by the IMCS* by considering textbooks procured by the Central Office under SEMP 1 and Third Elementary Education Program (TEEP) which is *not ideal since the Division Offices and the LGUs are also procuring* books on an on-going basis. (COA 2003, 15, emphases added)

### *Dysfunctional bureaucracy*

The IMCS, suffering from severe implementation capacity gaps, and entrusted with determining up-to-date and accurate demand for the entire system monopolizes computations for national aggregate amounts of textbooks. This is made even more complex by dysfunctional operative procedures which allow division offices – enjoying an analogous monopoly situation – to request funding assistance from LGUs charged against the Special Education Fund (SEF), without internal checks and balance (COA 2003, 14).

### *Clientage linkages*

A *modus operandi* that private publishers and corrupt DepEd actors take advantage of is the issuance of falsified government documents – specifically Sub-Allotment Release Orders (Sub-AROs) and Notice of Cash Allotment (NCAs)<sup>2</sup> – in order to commit fraud. Chua documented several instances where ‘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’ (1999, 25). Field interviews confirmed these findings.

A senior DepEd official disclosed that ‘sometime in 1999 a representative of Publisher X<sup>3</sup> approached her with a photocopy of a Sub-ARO for payment of textbooks’ delivered to the office. She ‘called the Central Office to confirm the validity of the Sub-ARO’s serial number’ and received a positive response. She then ‘consulted her high-ranking DepEd superior who signed the approval of two checks that amounted 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 the existing trust liabilities and maintenance and other operating expenditures’ of the office (personal communication, October 2004). 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' (personal communication, October 2004). This statement corroborates what Chua also discovered in her investigation: 'suppliers say supplementary materials' was actually where 'they and government officials made a killing and not on textbooks' (1999, 53). The supply officer said that he was 'disturbed with the discrepancy but since he was not in the loop of the approval chain' he simply 'decided to go along with it' (personal communication, October 2004).

The three senior officials above have been named coconspirators together with their superior, and other officials in an ongoing case that has been filed by the COA with the court specializing on graft and corruption: the *Sandiganbayan*. Similarly, criminal charges against Publisher X have yet to be finalized pending the *Sandiganbayan* decision on culpability of the above-mentioned DepEd Officials. The timely COA audit plus the cooperation of vigilant officials who categorically declare their non-participation in corrupt activities were instrumental in bringing this case to court. These irregularities underscore how monopoly power is distorted to commit fraud.

The National Office is also a staging ground for corruption. Chua discovered that politicians 'who hold the power of the purse and can block appointments and initiate investigations also poke their fingers in the agency's procurement pie' (2001b, 59). A national DepEd senior official related that 'corruption is so embedded' in the system that fundamental changes are necessary. He confided that:

Some time in early 2003, he received a phone call from a member of the Philippine legislature instructing him to select a particular local private publisher – whose price quotations were too expensive over several international publishers whose quotations were lower – since doing so, according to the caller, would result in monetary rewards for the senior official and would be a contribution to patriotism and national interest for preferring a local over a foreign supplier.

The senior official flatly rejected the offer and warned the legislator of consequences for interfering with DepEd functions (personal communication, November 2003).

A supply officer confided that a common practice is the 'collusion among some members of the LGUs, some officers from DepEd and private publishers.' He supported his allegations by producing actual identical specimens of book titles that have been delivered for the past three years and funded specifically by DepEd, with the use of the SEF of the LGU and the same private publisher. He explained that 'multiple titles and inferior paper quality' of textbooks is the result of *binubulsa* (literally means: going to one's pocket) or '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, October 2004). The supply officer validates allegations that: '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' (Chua 2001a, 67).

Another concern related to textbooks is the timeliness and relevance of the books themselves to current curricula and syllabus. The Mindanao school principal stated that late deliveries 'happen most of the time' causing, a mismatch between books and 'innovation that the Department itself has mandated.' She commented that aside from looking into quality of the books, the entire textbook delivery and curriculum

system must be studied in order for these to be ‘timely and meaningful’ (personal communication, November 2004).

At the tail end of the field research, interviews were done with people at the headquarters of the DepEd and other institutions involved in the TDP. Progression of the interviews began at the school level, moving up to the district, to the division, the regional offices, and finally to the national offices. Interviewing, observing, and inspecting the stockrooms and classrooms of the meager public schools provided vivid images of the very real and urgent needs of schools. A senior official – from the international organization funding TDP – provided insightful observations:

And so far, I mean, when we did a completion report for SEMP 1 we saw that the ratio is now 1:1 for, in general but, sometimes it’s  $1\frac{1}{2}:1$ , so one and a half students to one textbook. (personal communication, December 2004)

These were observations of an international organization official tasked to oversee the management of the funds provided as loans for textbook manufacturing and delivery. On the other hand, a national DepEd senior official overseeing TDP 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 high-ranking respondents confidently acknowledged that distribution ratios of textbooks in the schools all over the nation had reached ‘1:1.’

Upon knowing that considerable time was spent visiting, observing, and interviewing various schools, the interviewees inquired as to what the initial discoveries were. Without mentioning specific details, findings of deprivations reported from the district, division, and regional offices alongside large quantities of rotting and unused books inside warehouses were shared.

After hearing these observations, the international organization official and the national DepEd senior official rationalized their statements. One clarified that the figures can be misleading since: ‘actually, the 1:1 ratio is only at the macro level’ (personal communication, December 2004). The national DepEd senior official clarified:

But if you don’t have a good teacher or a teacher who’s trained to innovate, then what happens is they say ‘we will pick one title.’ Then we ask, ‘What do you do with the other three or four?’ They say, ‘Well we put it in storage or we put it in the library.’ So in effect, the one is to one is on the supply side but not on the demand side. So we’re finding out that when we go to classrooms, there are classes that still have shortages even though they have enough textbooks sitting in their storerooms. (personal communication, December 2004)

The seemingly inconsistent statements by key policy-makers charged with TDP implementation at the national headquarters provide evidence that they are remotely aware of the compliance to overall mission or what actually happens in the frontlines. Richter’s (1987) depiction of ‘enormous differences typifying geographic landscape’ and Quah’s (1987) ‘conditions of extreme scarcity’ of the Philippine archipelago reinforce notions of severe difficulties that policy-makers face in implementing and evaluating policies. Subsequent policy decisions and innovations made are misguided or at the very least incremental (Van Meter and Van Horn 1975) dampening efficacy of implementation and proliferating policy spirals (Bryden 1974). More precarious implications are: (1) resources channeled for the textbook deliveries are wasted, either through the delivery of multiple titles, non-usage, and extended storage of textbooks

within DepEd warehouses or worse the misuse of these resources for corrupt ends and (2) the end-users – students and teachers – at the school level never receive the intended outputs.

Textbook Out I and II, according to the national DepEd officer were originally conceived to counteract attempts by several unscrupulous private publishers and their colluding and corrupt cohorts within DepEd to deliver below the agreed quantities to make ‘extra profits through smaller volume deliveries.’ Eliciting support from civil society volunteers – as monitors – the ultimate objectives of Textbook Out I (conducted in the year 2001) and the subsequent Textbook Out II (in the year 2002) were ‘to ensure correct and timely deliveries to the designated division offices and high schools all over the country’ (personal communication, December 2004).

For the official who championed Textbook Out I and II, they were designed to ‘ensure quality production’ (personal communication, December 2004). An international organization official party to Textbook Out I and II, by virtue of being the main funding agency, however viewed the program differently: it ensured ‘joint procurement of textbooks,’ in the process taking advantage of ‘larger economies of scale’ (personal communication, December 2004). Confusion among agreed outputs on the part of key decision-makers of policy – in this case Textbook Out I and II – inevitably leads to a debilitating lack of efficacy.

Another problem is the participation that was expected to come from volunteers from civil society – primarily sourced from the National Movement for Free Elections (NAMFREL). Participation of civil society was institutionalized in a Memorandum of Agreement forged between DepEd and representatives of civil society. Civil society volunteers were recruited to ‘join in monitoring the actual deliveries’ (personal communication, December 2004).

Except for the Luzon case area, findings from the Visayas and Mindanao case areas revealed that the volunteers were not available. Mindanao NAMFREL volunteers could only participate during the briefings but for the actual inspection they were ‘unable to mobilize volunteers who were then busy providing election education campaigns in other rural areas of the province’ (personal communication, November 2004). Similarly, Visayas NAMFREL volunteers ‘were currently engaged in election education campaigns among the urban poor in the city and provinces’ (personal communication, October 2004). Upon inquiring as to who assisted them, various district and high school supply officers, answered that ‘they simply asked parents who were around during the deliveries, particularly those who were waiting to fetch their kids after school to help, in monitoring textbook deliveries’ (personal communication, October–December 2004).

### ***Discretion compliance***

The article posits that the vulnerability of resources and the lack of adherence to functions can be causes of corruption. Excessive and abusive discretion on the part of actors over vulnerable resources lead to corruption. An example of this is related by the DepEd supply officer in Luzon.

### ***Patron–client relationships***

He confided that an existing provision in textbook delivery stipulates that private publishers who cannot distribute textbooks directly to the beneficiaries can give a

'delivery fee of Ps. 1 per book' to the corresponding DepEd Office to 'facilitate delivery.' He stated that some of his colleagues 'negotiate an increase in the delivery fee' (personal communication, December 2004) with some private publishers in order to 'prioritize delivery.' He continued by saying that these unscrupulous individuals 'after pocketing the extra amount' do not actually 'lift a finger in hastening deliveries.' Instead, they advise the supply officers of respective schools to come to the office to collect their books – usually at the expense of the respective schools. He reiterated that the use of '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 account corroborates Chua's findings on 'kickbacks' enjoyed by regional and division offices as these 'transact directly with the private sector' in the case of textbook purchases and deliveries (2001a, 66).

Failure to adhere to mandated functions or lack of compliance causes corruption. The findings of a COA's audit pertaining to a specific function safeguarding vulnerable resources reinforce this argument:

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 the Divisions of Quezon, Mandaluyong and Caloocan Cities however showed that this instruction *was not observed*. (COA 2003, 53, emphasis added)

A school official related a recurring incident happening in her division. She would visit the DepEd Office for other purposes and would stumble upon 'other school officials from different areas collecting or being given books by the Head.' Upon investigating further, she discovered that not 'everyone was informed of the delivery of textbooks and discovered that only those in the favor of the Head and who had donated to a fund-raiser would enjoy these privileges.' She has 'protested to the National Office for the blatant display of influence peddling.' Her telephone calls and inquiries have been noted, but 'nothing was done as she was not supported by other school officials' (personal communication, December 2004).

### ***Accountability incentives***

Lack of coordination among various agencies and the exercise of decision-making that is at odds with regulated sanction highlight deficiencies in accountability and subsequent incentives and disincentives schemes:

Inquiry from the Designated Property Custodian of District Offices and High Schools disclosed that the selected textbooks and supplementary materials found undistributed were *already in excess of the quantities they actually need*. On the other hand, there were also teachers who *did not request for these textbooks because of its high price and who did not want* to take the risk of paying said amount if and when these textbooks are lost by their pupils. Undistributed textbooks and supplementary materials is an indication of the excessive and/or unnecessary purchases made by the Regional Office in violation of Sec. 3 (g.) RA 3019 and Section 33 of 1445. (COA 2001, 33–4, emphasis added)

The report underscored the lack of coordination among the district, division and regional offices. Moreover, the hesitancy and discordance noted among the teachers

and property custodians of schools and districts led to resource wastage and opportunities for corruption. A more serious issue relates specifically to the power exercised by the property custodians/supply officers. The sensitivity of their position and the amount of resources that pass through their office are so serious that a lack of accountability leads to a very strong cause of corruption.

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*. These violate Sec. 444 of the Government Accounting and Auditing Manual Vol. II. (COA 2001, 36–40, emphases added)

Excess delivery of textbooks, textbooks delivered that were not ordered, delayed deliveries are all violations of procedures that seem to occur with impunity at DepEd. Careful investigation of current practices reveals that a system of accountability is absent (COA 2003, 23).

Reporting or feedback mechanism and specific time frames for corrective measures that reinforce accountability are also not present. Failure to report and delays in noting and requesting for rectification remain unchecked because the defective system tolerates it. Prevailing incentives–disincentives modes are in place but non-functional (COA 2003, 41).

Three supply officers from two of the case areas described experiences that point to the existence of fraud in relation to textbook delivery. 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<sup>4</sup> from the DepEd Office, she was told that ‘it would be coming soon, but six months later it has not arrived yet.’ She related that even without the stipulated allocation list, she ‘signed the MR since the private publishers and an official from the DepEd Office assured her that the books were in order.’ She had recently vacated her position as supply officer and has focused on her job as school teacher (personal communication, November 2004). Another Mindanao supply officer described that he ‘could not reconcile the disparities between the BEC books and those that have been recently delivered to the school.’ He confided that he signed the MR because the teachers were ‘urgently asking for textbooks since the school already started for more than six months.’ He was assured by the private publisher representative and the DepEd Office that everything was in order. He has requested the school principal to relieve him of his duties as supply officer to focus on his work as school teacher (personal communication, November 2004). Both signed the MRs even when the delivered products were not in order. Chua uncovered this phenomenon where suspected corrupt officials would 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’ (1999, 147).

### *Stakeholdership networks*

Both supply officers 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 expressed a severe lack of competence and frustration in their attempt to carry out functions that they were unfamiliar with. They expressed that lack of preparation and ignorance of the required tasks exonerates them from any irregularity.

The third supply officer from the Visayas complained that ‘the textbooks that she has received were not in accordance with the BEC curriculum and that she has not seen a copy of the allocation list.’ In contrast with other respondents, 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 of resources.’ She claimed that the ‘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 had initiated dismissal proceedings against her, but she said that she already enjoyed security of tenure and was unafraid of anyone in the school’ (personal communication, October 2004). Furthermore, she claimed that she was supported by a loose network of like-minded stakeholders: members of the teachers’ union, business sector, and CSO. The seemingly empowered teacher mentioned that her group continues to actively play their role as watchdogs. This is consistent with Johnson’s anti-corruption thesis based on social empowerment (1998, 91).

### **Reflections**

The article hoped to provide analytical illumination in relation to the implementation of policies in contexts of scarcity proven to be prone to corruption. A vital educational policy embodied in the TDP aimed at providing much needed textbooks to approximately 17 million schoolchildren dispersed along the rugged and predominantly agricultural Philippine archipelago of 7100 islands provides interesting and valuable critical lessons.

Studying the TDP project workflow, mapping out organizational relationships of the various stakeholders involved in implementation and analyzing factors of implementation related to the TDP and the implementing agency reveals highly complex linkages (Reyes 2007, 120). Key implementers have expressed disenchantment with the debilitating communication gaps. Multiple titles phenomenon in schools and the institutional weaknesses encountered by supply officers and CSO volunteers remain daunting tasks. Severe limitations in resource and decision-making abilities handicap the implementing agents, a situation exacerbated by inconsistencies that frequently occur between various implementing agencies.

Furthermore, deeper scrutiny of the multiple layers of the convoluted linkages inherent in TDP reveals a fertile ground for corruption to fester. Monopoly opportunities by division offices, the IMCS and private publishers are worsened by weakened coordination functions established to strengthen internal controls but are sadly non-existent. Unchecked discretion and lack of compliance among local actors fueled by ambiguity of functions and the continued vulnerability of resources cause irregularities and corrupt behavior. Ineffectual accountability guidelines and the non-existence of incentives schemes compounded by prevailing disincentives continue to severely undermine implementation. Policy failure is directly affected by the factors of implementation – represented in this case study by a dysfunctional DepEd bureaucracy. Moreover, leakages stemming from probable causes of corruption, become intervening factors that exacerbate implementation shortfalls.

The dominant paradigm in interpreting corruption from politics, administration, and policy perspectives has typically been through patron–client relationships analyses. Findings undertaken as basis of this article critically interrogate this dominant premise.

It can be argued that carrying out policy – like the TDP – in contexts of scarcity create a nexus where the constructs of factors of implementation and causes of corruption incessantly converge. Fixating policy analysis primarily through patron–client linkages may not be able to provide a nuanced picture.

As illustrated through the interviews, observations, and document analysis, the nexus of implementation and corruption reveals various types of complex linkages: (1) the dominant perspective of patron–client relationships underscoring dyadic actors driven by particularistic motivation, (2) a dysfunctional bureaucracy highlighting discordance among actors in an ineffectual organization, (3) clientage linkages featuring complicated webs of particularistic actors functioning within the faulty hierarchy, and (4) stakeholder networks characterized by coalitions of actors determined to preserve universalistic goals. The corruption implementation nexus and the typologies of complex linkages found therein provide an intriguing starting point for further analysis: Alongside regional officers who act as ‘patrons’ with their bevy of ‘client’ principals thrive a corps of teachers and supply officers who are either disfranchised or reluctantly follow the mandate within a dysfunctional organization, who exist side-by-side with syndicates of regional officers and Central Office personnel engaged in particularistic goals, tempered by pockets of CSO volunteers, teachers and multilateral agencies empowered as stakeholders of Philippine education. Policy-makers and practitioners intent on addressing debilitating performance deficits in contexts of scarcity prone to corruption need to incisively take stock of the various typologies of complex linkages existing within a given program and make sense of how these converge with factors of implementation and causes of corruption.

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### **Notes**

1. In order to honor the confidence of those persons who were interviewed in the course of this research, their names, and complete job designations are omitted here. Nonetheless, where data source is reported from an interview, the interviewee is identified by their position.
2. A Sub-ARO and Special Allotment Release Orders (SAROs) are official documents issued by the DBM on approved purchase orders also known as Requisition and Issue Vouchers usually requested by Central Offices of government agencies. The Sub-AROs and SAROs from DBM are usually charged to either the Bureau of Treasury or to the PDAF or the CDF also known as ‘pork barrel.’ Standard practice at the DBM stipulates that Sub-AROs and SAROs should be accompanied by an official NCA. Government offices that have received the approved Sub-AROs and SAROs and the accompanying NCAs can then issue official government checks to recipients.
3. In order to preserve the anonymity of the respondents, their actual names are not provided.
4. The allocation list is the official enumeration of books assigned per level per subject that emanates from the DepEd.

### **Notes on contributor**

Vicente Chua Reyes, Jr., is an assistant professor at the Policy and Leadership Studies Group of the National Institute of Education at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore. His

research interests are in education and governance and in issues of citizenship among young people. His latest book: *Corruption and implementation: Case studies in Philippine public administration* is published by the National College of Public Administration and Governance, University of the Philippines Press (2009).

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