

Fighting Corruption in Developing Countries: Strategies and Analysis

Bertram I. Spector, editor
Kumarian Press, 2005

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The introductory chapter by Spector succinctly sets out the purpose and direction of the book. Simply put, the aim of the book is to provide policymakers with more reliable insight into which strategies are effective and which are not. The book takes as its starting point that corruption is the misuse of public authority for personal gain (Klitgaard, Maclean-Abaroa, and Parris 2000). It is a definition which the contributors adopt as a whole. The focus is on the public rather than the private sector.

Spector argues that as corruption manifests in diverse ways it requires targeted anti-corruption strategies. The problem is one of scope. The book follows from Kaufmann's findings (2003) that, in general, anti-corruption strategies which focused on the development of appropriate laws, strengthened law enforcement agencies, and established government institutions, had no appreciable effect after a decade of implementation (p6).

The book, thus, advocates a sectoral or decentralized approach to combating corruption as opposed to a centralized or generalized one. It argues that a sectoral approach offers one of the best ways of understanding corruption and developing an anti-corruption strategy. The notion of a sector used in this book, may be, but is generally not commensurate with an industry. It is rather an area of activity where public power is exercised or, as in the case of political parties, obtained and influenced.

The first part of the book covers the analysis of corruption in a number of vulnerable sectors. Consequently, part I is comprised of chapters on the justice system, political parties, public health care, public education, public finance, environment and natural resources, energy supply, agriculture, and the private sector. Each chapter discusses and analyses the cause and manifestation of corruption in a specific sector. Common causes are societies predicated on patronage as opposed meritocracy, poor levels of remuneration and training, and societal tolerance of corruption. The contributors then discuss international experience in dealing with corruption in the given sector. Finally, practical anti-corruption strategies are set out. The strategies are a combination of hard and soft law options. Emphasis is placed, correctly, on the fact that legal strategies and ordinary law enforcement methods are by themselves insufficient. Thus, the contributors prescribe formal and informal methods for providing and enhancing transparency and accountability, such as, the publication of laws, regulations and judicial decisions; formal audits; subscription to codes of ethics; open deliberation and dealing; and the creation of public awareness through education.

Emphasis is placed on unofficial strategies which seek to place political pressure on public officials by the media, foreign aid agencies, and community watchdog organizations. Taken separately, each chapter provides a thorough and insightful analysis of corruption in a particular sector. When seen cumulatively, however, the findings on the causes, manifestations, and consequences of corruption become monotonous. This is also reflected in the repetition of anticorruption strategies. These similarities demonstrate that corruption, irrespective of the sector in which it manifests, arises from the same causes and has the same consequences.

Consequently, the sectoral studies are followed by a chapter which synthesises the lessons drawn by those studies. A notable omission from the work is a sectoral study of the police and military, given their pivotal influence on the political governance of developing countries. A further lacuna is a discussion on the impact the migration of skilled personnel from these countries has on the incidence of and struggle against corruption.

The book, in Part I, reads like an easy guide to the nature and causes of corruption and the strategies against it. Each chapter contains useful tables of statistics. They are also supplemented by textboxes which provide illustrations, examples, checklists and summaries of the causes and strategies against corruption. The textboxes succeed in not burdening the principal text with unnecessary detail and technicality. Part II gives applied analyses of corruption in the health and education sectors, trends and anti-corruption strategies, and the risks of re-corruption. Part II is more empirical and academic in nature in that it discusses and evaluates case studies and learned literature on the issues covered. The book contains a lengthy and comprehensive bibliography. There is also a biography of each contributor that gives the reader a sense of a contributor's expertise. The overall impression left by the sectoral studies is that in addition to the integrity and political will of leaders to implement anti-corruption measures, a developing country's success in the fight against corruption is dependent on its commitment to democracy and the rule of law. This book serves the purpose of providing a useful guide for policymakers wishing to research and develop suitable strategies to combat corruption in developing nations.

