

## Sub-theme

### Corruption in Education and Assessment Systems

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**Title: Parental informal payments in school: monitoring study**

Education represents an essential public good, particularly to developing economies. But persistent problems with transparency and accountability affect both the quality and equality of opportunities in education. For example, parents often may not know that the government has released funds for textbooks for their children, nor are they privy to understand how the creation of school budgets can hold public education officials accountable – or conversely, invite fiscal corruption. If parents do not become informed and involved in establishing, overseeing, and supporting their children’s schools, they are likely to be relegated to the periphery of decision making processes. Without a sense of ownership in either these processes or the institutions of education overall, parents are not likely to hold teachers and administrators accountable for the provision of an equitable, quality education. If communities do not know what to expect from schools (in terms of educational outcomes), if they are not informed of the legal mandates of education and are discouraged from involvement in the schooling process, they may not claim their children's right to education. Consequently, a general lack of transparency is likely to lead to a variety of corrupt practices in the education system – from the paying of informal (and in some cases, illegal) fees to the outright paying of bribes to school officials.

Monitoring study of Parental Informal Payment to Education (PIPES) is joint CIE and Open Society Institute Education Policy initiative and is part of the CIE’s “Education Policy Forum Project” which aims at developing educational programs in preventing corruption, raising public awareness for teachers and local communities. Under the project, CIE made a situation analysis and needs assessment, developed general program framework and guidelines for anticorruption education, and elaborated strategic plans for anticorruption actions. This paper will present the results from the PIPES study in Azerbaijan and follow up from public discussion among education stakeholders and school communities. It will describe the influence of parental contributions to mainstream school functioning and reflect on public and expert views on how to address this problem in the future.

## *Presentation*

The aim of the presented research project was to evaluate the transparency of general schools budgets in relation to the extent of “informal parental payments” to state schools in seven countries, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Moldova, Slovakia, and Latvia.

Education Support Program at the Open Society Institute has supported a number of initiatives in the area of transparency and anti-corruption awareness. The aims of these activities have been to raise the awareness of the wider public society, to raise capacity of OSI education network in this area and to collect evidence about the mismanagement practices on education. Many of the OSI network countries from Eastern Europe and Central Asia admitted that corrupt practices exist in their schools at the general education level. They also admitted that transparency issues are being discussed in public and are on the countries political agenda. The country representatives named several things, like, regulation of private tutoring, organization of school leaving or university entrance exams, production and distribution of textbooks, as the issues that are amongst the main problems in the field of education in the country. The paper presents the main problems Eastern European and Central Asia countries are experiencing in the area of informal parental payments to schools and how to address them.

The central purpose of this research project was to better understand both the *character* and *frequency* of the informal payments made by parents and families on behalf of primary and secondary students. As such we have been chiefly concerned with whether such payment schemes hinder the *access to* and *quality of* compulsory education in areas where these practices are commonplace. Since this is a largely exploratory study, designed to be implemented in numerous countries with highly varied systemic, cultural and linguistic factors, the methodological challenges were significant.

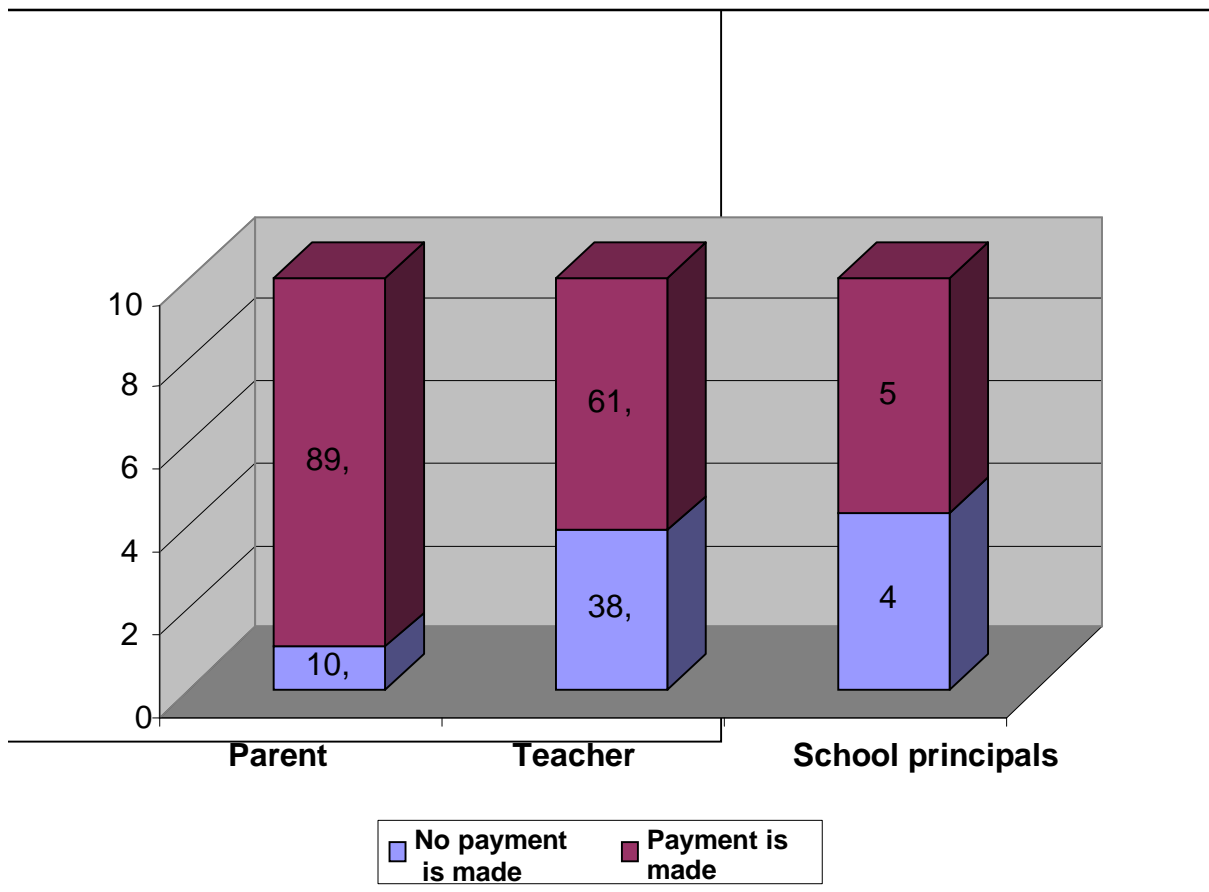
Methodology section of the presentation discusses the implementation challenges of this study; the sources that were utilized for data acquisition; the design of the research tools; sampling procedures; and a basic overview of the implementation outcomes.

Azerbaijan PIPES project preliminary findings were publicly discussed in March 2007 among educational stakeholders followed by great public debates. Following questions based on project findings are expected to be shared in the symposium

*Whom are informal payments made and what is the purpose? What are the forms of informal payments  
Frequency issue: how often and regular? Informal payments in secondary education system – is it a  
corruption? Factors influencing non-formal payments? What is impact on education?*

- n Scope of informal payments, existing in the system of secondary education, is rather large. As a result of a nationwide survey 89.6% of the parents, 61.4% of the teachers and 57% of the school principals confirmed that they exist in their school

## Perceived scale of informal payments by parents, teachers and school principals



- n Rather than a corruption in the classical sense, informal payments in secondary schools can be characterized as a phenomenon caused by low salaries, insufficient school supplies, etc.;
- n Some corruption cases exist in the allocation of funds. For example, money collected to improve infrastructure for schools ultimately ends up in the pockets of teachers and principals.

### Key factors

- n Insufficient state financing of educational institutions creates low social security of educational staff;
- n Financial policy, including the system of accountability should be improved,
- n An appropriate public feedback for collected payments has not been properly developed

### Impact on different aspects

- n Informal payments cause discrimination and increase social inequality in schools,
- n Informal payments negatively affect moral and psychological environment of schools,
- n Pupils perceive informal payments as the model behaviour and it develops in them false life skills,
- n The above mentioned three factors negatively affect the quality of secondary education.

### Nature of informal payments upon the parents' answers

To whom and for what purpose are informal payments made	Teacher		School principal		Parent committee		Other school representative		No reply		Total	
For buying presents for teachers or school principals	481	45,8	4	0,4	116	11,1	23	2,2	426	40,6	1050	100
For repair of a school/class	287	27,3	173	16,5	54	5,1	32	3,1	504	48,0	1050	100
For heating of a school/class	404	38,5	91	8,7	52	5,0	23	2,2	480	45,7	1050	100
For supplementary lessons, which are provided for children at school	20	1,9	3	0,3	0	0,0	2	0,2	1025	97,6	1050	100
For giving good marks to children	13	1,2	4	0,4	2	0,2	0	0,0	1031	98,2	1050	100
For different school activities	349	33,2	12	1,1	166	15,8	115	11,0	408	38,9	1050	100
For examinations	85	8,1	18	1,7	9	0,9	31	3,0	907	86,4	1050	100
For receiving school-leaving certificate	59	5,6	70	6,7	9	0,9	7	0,7	905	86,2	1050	100