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The Role of Social Norms in Reducing Corruption in Education:

A Case Study of Schools in Hanoi-Vietnam

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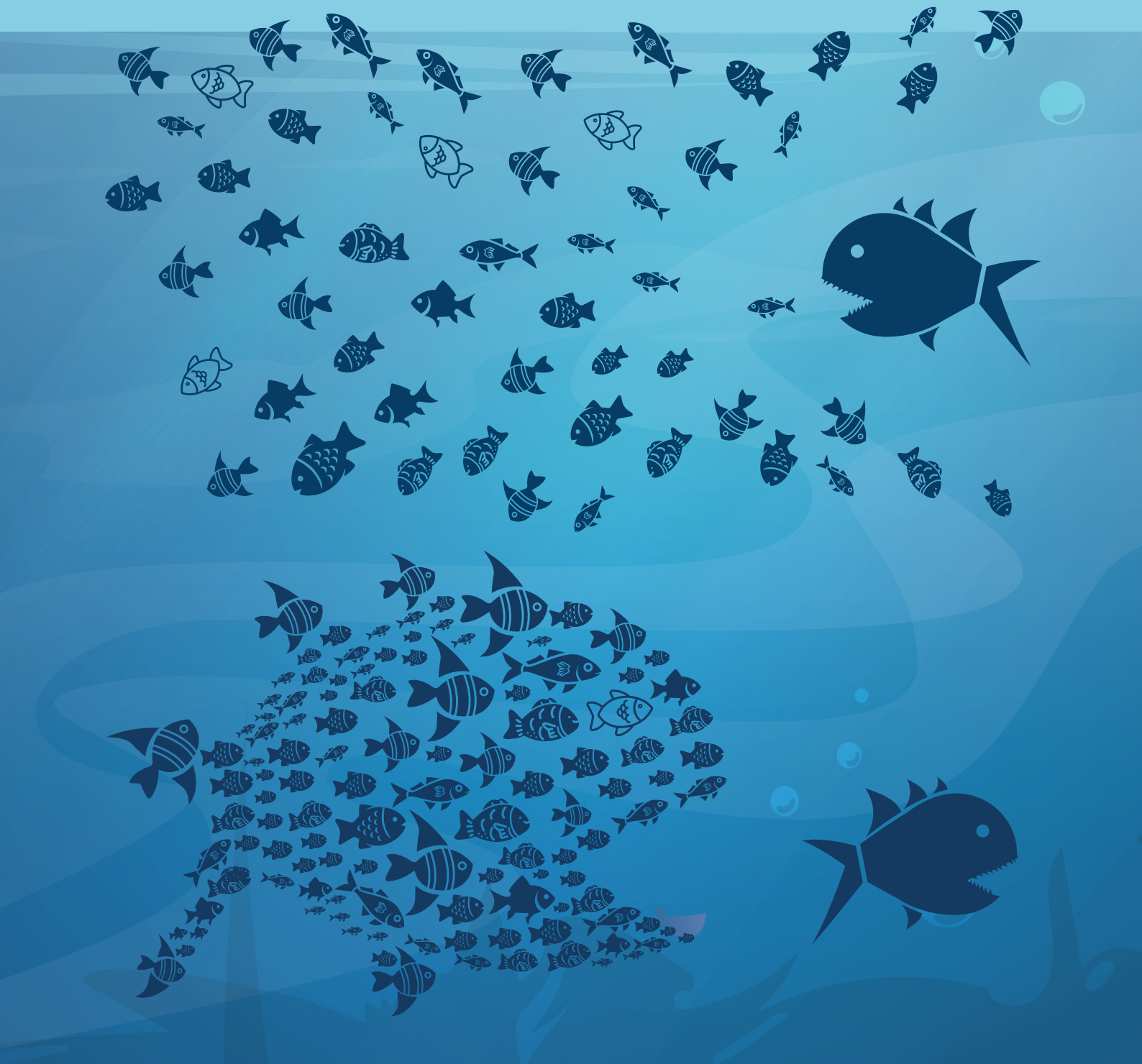

Frontpage Photo: An illustration of the importance of having a collective action perspective in the fight against corruption. Many small actors can take on a mighty challenge if they coordinate and work together. From this perspective it is fruitful to work with norms at the local level to fight corruption.

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Abstract

This research report presents empirical findings from an ethnographic study of the role of informal social norms in reducing corruption in public and private schools in Hanoi. The study begins by building a theoretical framework that inculcates the significance of local informal social norms in analysing/understanding corruption and designing counteraction strategies, especially at the sub-national or local level. After a two-month ethnographic study in Hanoi, a rich stock of ethnographic data was collected through observations and informal interviews. The informal social norm and practices found in various public and private schools in Hanoi included parents' payment of teachers for extra classes to ensure better school results for their children, showing gratitude and respect to teachers by providing them with gifts on 5-6 occasions per school year, and parents' contribution of money towards the provision of equipment in school classrooms. Our findings suggest that within the context of the school system, these informal norms persist as pragmatic responses to the weaknesses in the country's educational system. Consequently, they are not in themselves dysfunctional or corrupt, and are widely accepted as the "normal things to do". Notwithstanding, some of the parents and teachers also admitted that these informal norms and practices sometimes result in unequal and discriminatory treatment of students whose parents cannot afford to conform to them. Consequently, they sometimes become dysfunctional and/or corrupt practices that hinder the quality of education. Hence, from a collective action perspective, we argue that efforts to reduce the levels of corruption resulting from the dysfunctional aspects of these informal norms and practices must acknowledge them as institutionalised social practices that are part and parcel of everyday life. Therefore, anti-corruption interventions must not focus on eradicating/suppressing these informal social norms entirely, as this might threaten social fabrics. Instead, anti-corruption interventions should actively engage teachers, parents and school administrators in reforming the dysfunctional aspects into functional norms and practices in line with educational quality.

Preface

By Johan Lilja, Secretary General, Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy

The mandate of the Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy (ICLD) is to contribute to poverty reduction by promoting local democracy in primarily low- and middle-income countries. In order to fulfil this mandate, we promote and encourage decentralised cooperation through our municipal partnership programme; capacity-building through our international training programmes; and investing in relevant research and creating important research networks. ICLD documents and publishes key lessons learned from our ongoing activities, initiates and funds relevant research, engages in scholarly networks, connects relevant researchers with practitioners, and organises conferences and workshops. We also maintain a publications series. 'The Role of Social Norms in Reducing Corruption in Education: A Case Study of Schools in Hanoi-Vietnam' is the 20th report to be published in ICLD's Research Reports series, and results from a research project financed by ICLD.

This report faces the uncomfortable truth that myriad anti-corruption efforts in the developing world have not yielded desired results. By challenging the theoretic foundations underlying most anti-corruption programmes - the widespread beliefs that traditional economic-based attempts or legal centralistic normative approaches are sufficient for combatting corruption – Svensson et al. turns the gaze to corruption as a collective action problem; a social phenomenon formed in the nexus between formal and informal norm structures.

Corruption is not always visible to the naked eye, nor are the individual acts always illicit. In a personal and engaging touchdown in the Vietnamese school environment, the authors show us how informal social norms that constitute corruption can be vital to safeguard the social fabric, yet be dysfunctional and even harmful to a democratic system. Hence, anti-corruption efforts must look to alter micro-level norms by actively engaging those directly involved.

As a proponent of change implemented on the local level, informed by local dynamics, I welcome the authors' contribution to our collective understanding of anti-corruption. I believe that for us to fight poverty and reach the ambitious goals set out by Agenda 2030, change must be anchored at the local level through the involvement of all citizens by means of transparency, participation, inclusion and accountability. I hope that this research will contribute to inspire and inform local policymakers to continue the hard and challenging work and to play their part in making the world a better place for all.

Visby, Sweden, May 2022

Johan Lilja
Secretary General, ICLD

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Introduction

This report describes an ethnographic study of the role of informal social norms in reducing corruption in Hanoi's private and public schools. In the last decade, efforts to combat corruption have increased significantly, especially among developing countries. Despite this, evidence from several studies across the globe indicates that only a handful of developing countries have succeeded in substantially reducing their levels of corruption (Johnsøn, Taxell & Zaum 2012: 42). Subsequently, corruption remains endemic and undermines sustainable peace and development in these countries. According to many anti-corruption research and policy experts, the overall failure of the "anti-corruption industry" is a result of a flaw in the theoretical foundations that dominate and shape its designs (Sampson 2010; Marquette & Peiffer 2015). The anti-corruption industry, many scholars argue, is tremendously influenced by the "principal-agent theoretical perspective", which construes corruption to occur in a dualistic relation where one actor (the agent) has more information and decision power in a specific situation and uses this advantage for their own gain, even when it goes against the interests of the other actor (the principal).

Concerning corruption, the principal-agent approach can play out in different ways. First, political leaders are often tasked with the role of 'principal', monitoring the actions of bureaucrats, or 'agents', as a means of holding them to account. However, political leaders or principals may have imperfect information about the agent's or bureaucrats' actions due to logistical and oversight constraints. Corruption occurs when rational-minded bureaucrats use their discretion over resources to extract rents when such opportunities arise. In the second variation, the public is cast as the 'principal' while public officials (bureaucrats or politicians) are classed as the 'agents'. Here, the agents (public officials) are able to abuse their office and discretion over public services to secure rents from the public, while the public (the principals) are unable to perfectly monitor or hold the public officials to account. (Ugur and Dasgupta 2011; Schwertheim, 2017).

Anti-corruption policy designs shaped by this perspective hinge primarily on the assumption that officials act rationally and strategically to maximise their own self-interest. As a result, they tend to over-rely on reducing the discretion of public officials, the enforcement of transparency and accountability, the strengthening of monitoring, supervision and sanctioning in an attempt to tilt the result of individual rational calculation in favour of the public or "principal's" interest (Khan, Andreoni, and Roy, 2019; Marquette & Peiffer 2015). The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) argues, based on recent literature (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013; Rothstein, 2011; Marquette and Peiffer, 2015), that there are limitations in understanding corruption only as a 'principal-agent problem'. The opponents of the "principal-agent perspective" generally maintain that the perspective erroneously assumes the existence of "principled principals", with the power to resist corruption actively. Whereas in reality, these perceived principals do not exist or may themselves engage in corrupt practices.

Consequently, critiques of the principal-agent theory insist corruption is instead a "collective-action problem". That is, in the contexts of their occurrence, corrupt practices persist because they are generally considered to be the norm. As a result, people either lose or gain little from behaving otherwise, especially if it is impossible to trust that others in the same context will follow suit (Persson, Rothstein & Teorell 2013; Rothstein 2011; Marquette, Pavarala & Malik 2014; Heather Marquette & Caryn Peiffer 2015). As found by Heeks and Mathisen (2012), many anti-corruption policies fail because they disregard or underestimate the significance of informal micro-level social norms and practices, resulting in a mismatch between the design expectations of the strategies and the actual realities in the contexts of their implementations. Informal norms are generally socially shared rules usually unwritten and enforced outside a state's official sanctioning channels (North, 2005).

Subsequently, this research aims to further contribute to the understanding of the dynamics that underline corruption and the significance of local (i.e., micro-level) informal social norms in reducing corruption, especially at the sub-national (local) level.

Thus, we embrace the growing body of literature that argues for a shift from viewing corruption mainly as a principal-agent problem towards also viewing it as a collective-action problem. Whereas the former focuses primarily on macro-level structures, formal rules and norms, the latter emphasises the necessity of understanding and including perspectives built on micro-level everyday life observations and informal norms (cf. Gupta 1995, Pardo 2004, Haller and Shore 2005, Nuijten and Anders 2007).

First and foremost, this study begins by building a theoretical framework that inculcates the significance of local informal social norms in analysing/understanding corruption and designing counteraction strategies, especially at the local level. The main building block for this framework is the multi-level order of corruption perspective, in line with the collective action perspective. Understanding corruption from these perspectives is essentially a question of recognising that corruption as a social phenomenon is formed in the nexus between formal and informal norm structures on different levels of society. When analysing corruption, this theoretical framework puts forward the claim that informal practices and norms (monetary and/or non-monetary) should be understood not merely as illegal or even non-legal, but rather as parallel legal orders in their own right, because they are institutionalised social practices that are part and parcel of everyday life. However, understanding and accepting such orders do not necessarily imply that they are societally beneficial; instead, they are structures that need empirical and theoretical attention. In essence, we challenge the widespread beliefs that traditional economic-based attempts or legal centralistic normative approaches are sufficient for combatting corruption (Acemoglu and Verdier, 2000b; Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2001; Kaufmann et al., 2011; Nye, 2002; cf. Rose- Ackerman and Palifka, 2016b). This theoretical framework is subsequently employed in our ethnographic study of the role of informal social norms in reducing corruption in public and private schools in Hanoi.

Through observations in the schools and interviews with teachers, parents and vice principals, we found informal social norms and practices such as the payment of teachers for extra classes to ensure better school results for their children, showing gratitude and respect to teachers by providing them with gifts on 5-6 occasions per school year, and contributing money towards the provision of equipment in the classrooms. Our findings suggest that within the context of the school system, these informal norms persist as pragmatic responses to the weaknesses in the country's educational system. Subsequently, they were considered by many of our respondents as the normal things to do. However, some of the parents and teachers also admitted that these informal norms sometimes result in unequal and discriminatory treatment of students whose parents cannot afford to conform to them. Consequently, even though they are not in themselves corrupt practices, they sometimes become dysfunctional or result in corrupt practices that hinder educational quality.

Subsequently, from a collective action perspective, we argue that efforts to reduce the levels of corruption resulting from the dysfunctional aspects of these informal norms and practices must acknowledge them as institutionalised social practices that are part and parcel of everyday life. In essence, anti-corruption interventions must not focus on eradicating/suppressing them entirely, as this might threaten social fabrics. Instead, an attempt to reduce corrupt practices resulting from these informal norms should actively engage teachers, parents and school administrators in reforming their dysfunctional aspects into functional in line with educational quality.

Vietnam on corruption

According to the World Bank (2021), corruption is a leading obstacle to ending poverty, especially among developing countries. As a social problem, it exceeds national boundaries and has attracted transnational policymaking, legislation, and extensive research, especially about its pervasiveness (Leys 1965, Heidenheimer et al. 1989, Rose- Ackerman 1999, Haller and Shore 2005, Sampson 2005, Nuijten and Anders 2007, Rothstein 2011). Most of these studies concur that in developing regions, corruption is endemic because an-

ti-corruption policies and institutions are ineffective. Although Vietnam's GDP has maintained a steady growth of around 5 per cent since 2010, corruption remains widespread (Ngo, 2017). Subsequently, in the most recent Transparency International corruption perception global ranking (2021), Vietnam scored 39/100 and ranked 87th out of 180 countries.

Recent studies indicate that the increasing levels of corruption in Vietnam over the last decade significantly hinders the quality of its public services and the growth of its private sector (Dang, 2016; H. T. Nguyen et al., 2020; T. V. Nguyen et al., 2017; Truong, 2020). For example, in a survey of 525 registered household businesses across eight geographical regions in Vietnam, Dang et al. (2016) found that tax officials used their positions to interpret laws in ways that enabled them to extort household businesses. However, because these households perceive extortion as a "normal cost of doing things", they resort to informal payment deals with tax officials. Mai (2020) maintains that in Vietnam, even when such corrupt tax practices are reported, top officials under whose management they occur are often not adequately sanctioned.

Several studies indicate that many forms of informal practices within Vietnam's private sector construed as corrupt per the "state's legal system" are considered "normal and/or desirable" within the sector. These studies suggest however that most of such informal practices are not detrimental to the country's private sector businesses and firms (Dang et al., 2016; Haa & Lea 2020; Vu et al., 2017). For example, Dang et al. (2016) maintain that some businesses resort to informal practices in accessing credit from banks because it speeds up the transaction in the inefficient public sector. Haa & Lea (2020) and V. H. Vu (2018) separately indicate that political connections help small and medium scale enterprises secure loans and strengthen their relationships with banks. Similarly, Nguyen et al. (2016) found that informal payments boost creativity, innovation, and product improvement among manufacturing SMEs.

Whereas the role of informal social norms and practices in corruption and anti-corruption within Vietnam's private and business sector has received some attention in recent studies, the same cannot be said about its educational system. McCornac (2015) argues that corruption challenges within Vietnam's educational system are a significant divider between the international and national standards of education. A newspaper article in 2011 reported a survey finding that suggested about 62% of parents used either money or personal contacts to register their wards in desired schools (Nguyen, 2008; Ngo, 2017). Despite this, considerably few studies have been conducted on anti-corruption in Vietnam's educational system. Moreover, these studies only provide insight into the forms of corruption in schools, such as bribes, informal fees, and promotion of teachers, but do not sufficiently explore the role of informal social norms in the prevalence of these practices (Dinh-Cu, 2008; Chow and Dao, 2012; Ngo, 2017).

Generally, recent studies conducted on corruption or anti-corruption in Vietnam (especially between 2015-2020) have primarily focused on the socio-economic cost/effect of corruption on the country's economic growth and development (for example, Dang, 2016; H. T. Nguyen et al., 2020; T. V. Nguyen et al., 2017a; Truong, 2020), and the challenges facing its anti-corruption programmes and policies (for example, Mai, 2020; T. T. Pham et al., 2017; Pham et al., 2020; Thai & Truong, 2020; T. T. D Nguyen, 2020; Huyen & Vu, 2018; Gregory, 2016; T. X. Le, 2018). These appraisals concur that the country's effort to control corruption has been ineffective (Mai, 2020; T. T. Pham et al., 2017; Pham et al., 2020; Thai & Truong, 2020; T. T. D Nguyen, 2020; Huyen & Vu, 2018; Gregory, 2016; T. X. Le, 2018).

Mai (2020) and Huyen & Vu (2018) argue that ambiguity in Vietnam's anti-corruption laws and policies is perhaps the leading cause of its inability to reduce its corruption levels effectively. For Huyen & Vu (2018), Vietnam's legislators and practitioners have failed to identify appropriate anti-corruption strategies. Subsequently, the country has relied on the right to information and the media's exposé of corruption scandals as a primary tool for combatting corruption (Thai & Truong, 2020; T. H Nguyen 2020; N. H. Pham, 2015).

Nonetheless, Pham et al. (2020) argue that the prosecution of these corruption cases is often hindered by the limited independence of the judiciary and further corruption within the country's court system. Subsequently, scholars like Gregory (2016) and Pham et al. (2020) maintain that Vietnam's anti-corruption prospect is bleak.

Disposition

This research report consists of six main sections organised in the following manner. The next section (section two) presents the theoretical framework used for the study. This is followed by a description of the ethnographic methods employed in the study (section three). In the fourth section, we review relevant literature on anti-corruption at both the national and sub-national levels. Findings from our ethnography study are presented in the fifth section, followed by our concluding discussions in the final section.

Theoretical Framework

The main building block for our theoretical framework is the multi-level order of corruption perspective, in line with the collective action perspective. Understanding corruption from this perspective is essentially a question of recognising that corruption as a social phenomenon is formed in the nexus between formal and informal norm structures on different levels of society. This approach is inspired by the theory of multi-level governance, developed originally by Gary Marks (1993) and later revisited by Marks in cooperation with Liesbet Hooghe (2003). Multi-level governance is a relatively recent conceptual framework developed to understand the pluralistic and highly dispersed policymaking activity that takes place at various political levels, involving both individuals and institutions, from the supranational to national or local levels. This concept is used to describe the hierarchical separation between these levels and, more importantly, to highlight the linkages that connect the levels. In this sense, the concept of multi-level governance implies that no level of activity is superior to the other. Therefore, they are mutually dependent through the intertwining of policy and other normative processes. The research's perspective probes into how certain informal, non-legal practices and transactions are perceived as instances of corruption from a legal standpoint (cf. Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999b; Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2001; TI, 2016), yet, from a sociological perspective, those practices are not only driven by kleptocracy, individual greed or survival strategies, but also reflect people's desire to fulfil their family and kinship obligations (Urinboyev and Svensson, 2017), socialise and maintain membership in their community and networks (Rivkin-Fish, 2005), avoid gossip and social sanctions (Lazar, 2005), gain or preserve social status and reputation (Pardo, 1996), and get more moral and affective support from those around them (Lomnitz, 1995). This implies that informal, non-legal practices may encompass a wide range of morals and emotions that go beyond mere economic interest and cannot be adequately explained by a mainstream view on corruption that tends to see any unrecorded transactions as corrupted.

The multi-level order of corruption perspective also relates to the notion of legal pluralism (cf. Griffiths, 2003; Merry, 1988; Moore, 1973; von Benda-Beckmann, 2002). Legal pluralism emphasises the coexistence and clash of multiple sets of rules or 'legal orders' that mould people's social behaviour: the law of the nation-state, customary rules, religious decrees, moral codes, and practical norms of social life. This means that supranational law or state law is just one among many other legal orders in society. Classic studies in legal anthropology and a more recent legal pluralism scholarship have demonstrated the emergence of "semi-autonomous social fields" or "non-state forms of normative ordering" with their own forms of regulation and informal norms, many of which contradict the state law (Moore, 1973; Tamanha, 2000). Hence, from a legal pluralism perspective, informal/illegal transactions that would be labelled as corruption from state law and/or supranational law perspective may very well be considered to be morally acceptable practices according to local morality, social norms and traditions.

When analysing corruption, the project puts forward the claim that these informal practices (monetary and/

or non-monetary) should be understood not merely as illegal or even non-legal, but rather as parallel legal orders in their own right, because they are not just spontaneous actions instead, they are institutionalised social practices that are part and parcel of everyday life. However, understanding and accepting such orders do not necessarily imply that they are societally beneficial; instead, they are structures that need empirical and theoretical attention. As a result, we challenge the widespread beliefs that traditional economic-based attempts or legal centralistic normative approaches are sufficient for combatting corruption (Acemoglu and Verdier, 2000b; Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2001; Kaufmann et al., 2011; Nye, 2002; cf. Rose- Ackerman and Palifka, 2016b).

Our approach highlights the necessity of understanding and including perspectives built on micro-level, everyday life observations (Anders and Nuijten, 2009b; cf. Gupta, 1995; Haller and Shore, 2005b; Pardo, 2017). Hence, one of the distinctive features of the project is the investigation of corruption beyond the established paradigms (structural, interactional and legal centralistic approaches) and instead focusing on society's informal norms, everyday micro-level power relations and non-monetary currencies (e.g., respect, prestige, social status, solidarity, trust and kinship) as an additional lens to understand the emergence, explanation, persistence and ubiquitousness of corruption.

The socio-legal definition of norms (both legal norms and other social norms) used in this project has three essential attributes (cf. Svensson, 2013; Svensson and Larsson, 2012). The first is that norms are individuals' perception of surrounding expectations regarding their own behaviour; the second one tells us that norms also are materialised expressions that are socially reproduced and thus can be studied empirically; while the third one states that norms are carriers of normative messages. Hence, norms have an 'ought' dimension and constitute imperatives (directions for action). Feldman and Nadler (Feldman and Nadler, 2006) divide the law and economics of norms (LEN) into three groups. The first category argues that using the law to shape social norms is likely to disrupt the desirable functions of those norms; the second group argues that law is unlikely to lead to any change in the functioning of norms; the third group views laws as an essential tool that could move social norms in the direction desired by policymakers.

Robert C. Ellickson, a professor at Yale Law School, was one of the first legal scholars to recognise the importance of socially enforced norms fully. He states that 'much of the glue of a society comes not from law enforcement, as the classicists would have it, but rather from the informal enforcement of social norms by acquaintances, bystanders, trading partners, and others; and he continues 'informal systems of external social control are far more important than law in many contexts, especially ones where interacting parties have a continuing relationship and little at stake' (Ellickson, 1991, 1998).

In the very title of one of his most renowned essays, Georg Simmel poses the question 'How is society possible?' (1910). His answer is founded on the premise that there must be harmony between societal development, on the one hand, and individual human characteristics and impulses, on the other. In other words, every human being is part of the social context and influences other individuals while simultaneously being influenced and shaped by the social environment. The interaction between individuals allows for mutual/shared decision-making: a simple thesis that could be stated to define the very essence of large bodies of social theory. What separates different orientations within social theory from each other is predominantly the viewpoint of the processes underlying mutual decision-making. From the functionalist sociology of law perspective that follows the tradition of Émile Durkheim, it is mainly through norms in society (both legal and social) that mutual decision-making arises. Norms, in turn, constitute social controls, which are decisive for shared expectations, and from the individuals' perspective, for part of their situated cognition. Hence, trust and reciprocity are central to a collective action approach to corruption.

Methodology

In this section, we describe the ethnographic method used in our case study, i.e., the role of informal social norms in reducing corruption in private and public schools in Hanoi.

Ethnographic Research Method

The study design represents a multi-level order of corruption approach with mixed methods in Vietnam. The project is ambitious in scope; however, its feasibility is greatly enhanced by the partners' previous experience gathering and analysing empirical data for large-scale, international, and established research contacts in Vietnam. The study primarily employed ethnographic methods to map and understand informal practices in schools concerning corruption regulations on different levels (global, national, and local) and an intervention study aimed at assessing and creating educational material.

We conducted a two-month ethnographic study in Hanoi from January to Feburary 2020. The fieldwork was conducted in close collaboration with Vietnamese researchers and research assistants who wish to remain anonymous. These collaborators contributed immensely to the identification of research participants, interviewees, and in many instances also served as translators or interpreters during the fieldwork. A rich stock of ethnographic material was collected through observations and informal interviews. The main emphasis was placed on exploring the role of society's informal norms and 'non-monetary currencies' as well as monetary transactions. More specifically, observations and informal interviews focused on the commonplace and more or less taken-for-granted activities that signal the key features of social structures, norms and interactions. We explored the role of law and informal rules and norms in everyday life and, directly or indirectly, homes of children, schools, and administrative arenas, looking at, for example, how officials enforce and talk about laws, to what extent people conform to laws or informal rules, people's perceptions of corruption and bribery, local definitions and interpretations of 'legal/illegal' and 'moral/immoral' binaries, everyday coping strategies, values and moral obligations, and the perceived role and image of the state in everyday life.

In addition, we also focused on the narratives and stories about corruption, following the everyday rumours and gossip surrounding the interactions between citizens and schools. Rigorous procedures and techniques for collecting data were applied: observation and informal interviews were documented in field diaries in addition to audio recordings. Observations and informal interviews were conducted at social spaces and events where most people exchange information daily, in schools and administrative offices. During fieldwork, we also conducted informal interviews with diverse groups of people with different social positions relevant to understanding corruption in schools.

The Intervention study design was be based on two sources of inspiration: (a) the theoretical understanding of corruption and anti-corruption strategies based on the multi-level orders of corruption perspective; and (b) experiences of organisational-level interventions in the field of occupational health.

One of the scientific fields that have dealt extensively with understanding the possibilities of achieving organisational change through the means of interventions is Occupational Health. Such intervention aims to improve psychosocial working conditions and employee health and well-being. Subsequently, we drew on these experiences to design a collective action based anti-corruption intervention within this project. More specifically, we used the five-step model to create interventions that have proven successful when working towards changing attitudes and norms in organisations. This model is based on an extensive literature review where criteria for functionality has been assessed (Nielsen et al., 2010). The model we implemented entailed the following key features: (1) Preparation: Establishment of an informal Steering Group including researchers together with critical persons in administration and organisations; (2) Screening: of methods and audit of system feedback; (3) Action planning: developing activities and participatory workshops; (4) Implementation: monitoring drivers of change - creating transparency through

communication; (5) Communication effect evaluation on different levels, process documentation, emergent variability. The critical feature of the intervention model is transparency through communication. Through communication, it was possible for the researchers and Vietnamese collaborators to collectively unveil hidden informal structures and relate these structures to the common good of the school system.

Review of relevant literature

Anti-corruption mainly comprises three interdependent efforts, i.e., understanding the problem of corruption, establishing anti-corruption institutions, and designing strategies to curb corruption. Our literature review employs the systematic methods created by Tranfield et al. (2003) and developed by Svensson et al. (2013). After searching for the keywords "anticorruption OR anti-corruption" in the web of science core collection database and excluding articles outside the social sciences, one- hundred and three peer-reviewed journal articles published between 2015 and 2020 were gathered for this review (see appendix). A descriptive analysis of the 103 articles shows that 89 of these studies representing 86%, were concerned with national-level anti-corruption strategies. However, among these 89 studies on national anti-corruption strategies, analytical methods were employed in 37 (42%), quantitative methods in 30 (34%), qualitative methods in 20 (22%) and experimental methods in 2 (2%). This indicates that relatively few qualitative studies have been conducted on national anti-corruption strategies in the last five years. The sub-national or local level received very little attention from studies in this review. Only three articles (F. Li and Deng 2016b; Vadlamannati 2015; Sundstrom 2019) were devoted entirely to this level.

In our thematic analysis below, we explore the extent to which recent national and sub-national (local) anti-corruption efforts and literature published between 2015 and 2020 go beyond the established paradigms (i.e., principal-agent perspective, macro-level, structural, interactional, and legal centralistic approaches) to focus on society's local level informal norms, everyday micro-level power relations and non-monetary currencies (e.g., respect, prestige, social status, solidarity, trust and kinship). This is done to underline the importance of local approaches based on the collective action perspective.

Anti-corruption literature on the national level

According to Gemperle (2018), establishing anti-corruption institutions and policies is crucial for many governments because it demonstrates their commitment to transparency and accountability. However, certain governments only do this to signal their integrity without properly implementing their anti-corruption policies and regulations (Schnell 2018). Deng (2018) and L. Li et al. (2017), insists that political leaders are often apathetic with implementation due to conflict of interest. For example, even when policymakers are not corrupt, they often significantly distort anti-corruption initiatives by opting for lower detection strategies when these strategies apply to their actions compared to situations where it does not (Boly and Gillander 2018). Therefore, in the wake of unempowered outsiders and demotivated agencies, many countries rely strongly on top-political will and leadership to ensure the effective implementation of anti-corruption regulations (Deng 2018). Nonetheless, Schnell (2018) argues that political competition that benefits from anti-corruption agenda setting can effectively force governments to implement anti-corruption policies and regulations. However, this might not always be the case. Some governments also use non-state or para-state anti-corruption institutions to deflect political opponents' blame and pressure without directly interfering (Aburamoto 2019).

Several studies within this level's canon recommend multi-sectoral, multi-agency, legal cooperation, and interdependencies between and within countries to improve the implementation of anti-corruption programs and policies (Taylor 2018; Kurakin and Sukharenko 2018; Ross 2018; Robinson 2015; Heinrich and Brown 2017). Conversely, Hobbs and Williams (2017), Boly and Gillander (2018), Fedotov and Voloshyna (2019) and Deng (2018) argue against the

decentralisation of anti-corruption institutions. In their view, increased supervision could lead to fear of making mistakes on the part of officials (Deng 2018), and multiple agencies could breed under-reporting of corrupt acts (Hobbs and Williams 2017).

Furthermore, Min (2019) and S. B. Kim (2016) suggest that legal sanctions must endeavour to incentivise corporations and individuals to self-report misconduct. Nevertheless, such civic action can only be induced when the public perceives the government to effectively implement its anti-corruption policies (Peiffer and Alvarez 2016). Also, even though the use of legal sanctions in fighting corruption has shown significant results in most Western societies, Ocheje (2017), Dadasov (2017) and Esoimeme (2018) separately question its dispensability in Africa. Ocheje's study, for example, suggests that normative peculiarities such as the blurry distinction between the public and private sphere in many African countries throw a peculiar challenge for the anti-corruption legal sanctions. Accordingly, they argue that improving anti-corruption institutions and strategies require ardent consideration of contextual and endogenous factors (Ocheje 2017; Dadasov 2017; Esoimeme 2018).

Anti-corruption literature on the sub-national (local) level

These sub-national (local level) studies (F. Li and Deng 2016b; Vadlamannati 2015; Sundstrom 2019) gathered for this review focused on the difficulties facing the implementation of national anti-corruption policies at the local levels. The challenge found in China's case by F. Li and Deng (2016b) was selective prosecution and light sentence of corruption cases. They maintain that this results from inadequate supervision of the local procuratorates and legal loopholes that allowed local actors to manipulate and transact power when investigating corruption cases. In India, Vadlamannati (2015) found that scheduled elections correlated to an increase in the number of corruption cases recorded by the state's anti-corruption agencies. However, these cases are often not investigated. Thus, anti-corruption initiatives are used to gain political support before elections. In South Africa, Sundstrom (2019) found that the strategy of employing performance-related pay (PRP) as a means of disincentivising bribe-taking by civil servants was largely unsuccessful. On the contrary, the PRP bonuses are instead used to reward officials who collude with corrupt senior managers. This subsequently makes honest behaviour even more costly and bribery more attractive for the civil servants. These studies suggest that micro-level informalities have implications for the implementation of anti-corruption initiatives. Finally, none of these studies highlighted local or micro-level anti-corruption initiatives or strategies. The primary concern was the "Top-Down implementation" of policies developed at the national level.

National-sub-national (local) literature

Some of the studies gathered for this review were multi-level. Therefore, they focused on both anti-corruption at the national and sub-national levels. These studies (F. Li and Deng 2016a; Cochrane 2018; Lee 2018; Mattoni 2017; Ocheje 2018; Milan 2017; Zeng 2017) are mainly empirical and focus on the implementation challenges facing national anti-corruption policies and programs at the local level. Two main challenges were identified within this body of literature. These were the impact of social/cultural norms, and local political officials on anti-corruption initiatives (Lee 2018; Ocheje 2018; F. Li and Deng 2016a; Zeng 2017). According to F. Li and Deng (2016a) and Zeng (2017), the centralisation of China's anti-corruption regime into a single agency model results in a substantial decrease in the influence of local party leaders on the implementation of anti-corruption programs and policies. However, this represents an attempt by the party's centre to maintain control of the regime rather than relinquishing control or promoting the rule of law. In addition, Lee (2018) contends that because the Chinese anti-corruption regime employs a top-down legal approach, it faces difficulties tackling non-economic forms of corruption and potential corruption-breeding rooted in Chinese culture such as gift-giving or "guanxi". Consequently, he proposes a bottom-up, culture-based approach to combatting

corruption that creates an environment where new norms will be propagated to discourage corruption induced through guanxi. This finding corroborates Ocheje's (2018) observations on Nigeria's fight against corruption. Ocheje found that social norms and institutions in Nigerian society create an enabling environment for corruption, which in essence, pose a severe challenge to the efficacy of law in combating it. Hence, the success of any anti-corruption initiative in the country should rely critically on the broad instigation of change in these norms. However, Ocheje does not explain or recommend ways through which the broad instigation of change in these norms can be achieved by the Nigerian government.

Concluding discussions

Our analysis of 103 peer-reviewed journal articles gathered for this systematic literature review indicates that most studies conducted within this period focus on anti-corruption at the national level, and mostly employ analytical and quantitative methods. However, the sub-national (local) level received scant attention, and qualitative methods were employed in very few studies. Also, a significant number of studies focus on anti-corruption at multiple levels i.e., the national-sub-national level. Our thematic analysis also suggests that most anti-corruption studies conducted in this period, have generally focused on an analytical, or empirical appraisal of anti-corruption policies and practices. However, this finding might have been due to our keyword search string "anti-corruption" used in gathering these articles. The term itself connotes interventions against corruption.

Nonetheless, our analysis suggests that studies on the national and local levels mainly appraised national anti-corruption strategies and their implementation challenges. Despite the variances in their subject matter, we found that the majority of the studies across the levels are shaped by the principal-agent perspective. Subsequently, these studies are generally state-centric and devote primarily to the analysis of macro-level factors such as the behaviour of actors in particular public-office settings, the system of formal rules and institutions, how ruling elites are composed, the competition that exists among them, how accountable they are, and disregarded micro-level informal social norms and their roles in combating corruption.

Consequently, irrespective of the entity of focus (i.e., country or institution), method or level of analysis (national, local or multi-level) common conclusions and recommendations were offered in their appraisals of anti-corruption strategies. Most of the studies attributed the ineffectiveness of anti-corruption policies and strategies across various societal levels and institutions, to the inability of "principals" to be principled. For example, the majority of studies at the national level pointed to the lack of political will and weak monitoring mechanisms as the primary obstacle to effective anti-corruption. Our findings from this literature review corroborate earlier observations of Ugur and Dasgupta (2011), on the predominance of the principal-agent theoretical perspective within anti-corruption scholarships, theory, and practice. Even though local level studies were scant, findings from the few studies suggest that micro-level informalities have significant implications on the implementation of anti-corruption initiatives.

Furthermore, the national-local level studies primarily focused on the implementation challenges facing national anti-corruption policies and strategies at the local level. Thus, the interconnections and interdependence of anti-corruption activities between these levels were explored. However, this was done in a top-down approach. Subsequently, how local micro-level activities and informal norms shape national anti-corruption discourse and strategies were not adequately studied. Nonetheless, the analysis found in the canon highlights the need for empirical anti-corruption studies on the interdependencies between (1) national/central level initiatives, policies, and laws, and (2) local, micro-level social norms and practices. Additionally, they indicate the importance of local-level actors and informal norms to anti-corruption policymaking and implementation.

Huan's story on becoming a teacher at Olympia School in Hanoi

My name is Huan, a physical education teacher here at Olympia School. I was born in 1992 to an ordinary family in the Thai Binh province and was the only child of my parents. My family is ordinary in the sense that the only property we had, was our house, and we did not have any savings account. Growing up in Thai Binh, I was interested in sports and became a professional athlete by grade 9. After secondary school, my interest and ambition to develop a career in physical education drove me to the University of Pedagogy of Sports in Hanoi. After graduation, I asked my parents to let me stay in Hanoi for 1 or 2 years to look for a decent job, but they insisted I return to Thai Binh. Among my relatives, there is this uncle who is working at the Provincial department of education. He tipped my parents about an open position to become a PE teacher at a secondary school in his hometown, which he claimed would cost my parents 200 million dong (approximately USD 8,700) to get me the position. Having literally no penny in their saving account, my parents deposited our house to get a loan of 190 million dong from the bank and "chạy" (meaning running, a popular Vietnamese term defining the act of paying money to get something) for the job position for me. I was planning to stay there and commit to this job. But I had to come back to Hanoi to referee a sports tournament, and that was when this job opportunity at Olympia opened for me . When I passed the employment process at Olympia, my parents did not allow me to quit the 200-million-dong job. Mr Son – Head of the Physical Education department at Olympia, even had to come down to my hometown, talking my parents into letting me go.

Results

This section presents the empirical findings from the ethnographic study of informal social norms and practices within public and private schools in Hanoi, and their implications for developing new or improving existing strategies to counteract dysfunctional informalities and/or corrupt practices at the sub-national (local) level. The study was primarily conducted in five public and six private schools across Hanoi. Aside from observations, a total of seventeen interviews were conducted. Our interviewees included six teachers from private schools and five from public schools, as well as two vice-principals. Also, four parents were interviewed in addition to the teachers who gave insights from their roles as parents.

Becoming a Teacher in Hanoi

Understanding the motivation behind people's decision to pursue a career in teaching is very vital because it provides an empirical basis for planning teacher training programs and education, designing curriculum and influencing government and inter-governmental policy implementation (Fray & Gore, 2018; Watt & Richardson, 2007). The motivation behind the decision to become a teacher is generally categorised into extrinsic (e.g., salary), intrinsic (e.g., passion), and altruistic (e.g., contribute to society) motives (Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). However, their impact on decision making varies among continents and nations (Fray & Gore, 2018). In Western countries, intrinsic and altruistic motivation appears to be the reason most people choose the teaching career (Jungert, Alm, & Thornberg, 2014; Struyven, Jacobs, & Dochy, 2013). On the contrary, extrinsic motivations are found to be the case in most non-Western countries (Mwamwenda, 2010; Yüce, Şahin, Koçer, & Kana, 2013) even though it is mostly the intrinsic factors that underline their decision to remain in the profession as found by (Salifu, Alagbela, & Gyamfi Ofori, 2018) in their study of Ghanaian teachers. Several studies have shown that very few people choose to teach as a fallback career (Gore, Barron, Holmes, & Smith, 2016; Moran, Kilpatrick, Abbott, Dallat, & McClune, 2001; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012; Watt &

Richardson, 2007). Huan's story below sheds light on the experience of becoming a teacher in Hanoi.

In a coffee shop two kilometres away, next to the construction sites, we met a private school teacher who is just at the beginning of her career. It was on a Friday evening after she had closed from work at around 6.30 pm. It is usual for many young adults to gather here after work and gossip about their colleagues. Seated a few tables away from us are some university students who appear to be preparing a group presentation for their class. As we drink Vietnamese ice coffee to the thunderous pop music in the background, the teacher begins to share her motivations for choosing the teaching profession. According to her, the decision to become a teacher was hinged on her passion for teaching. However, this career choice made her parents worried about the financial resources they envisaged would be needed to obtain a teaching job. She further lamented that at the time, they estimated that it would cost about 200 to 300 million VND to bribe herself into a job in a public school in Hanoi. Therefore, the looming need to borrow this amount of money upon graduating from the university created a stressful situation in the family. She explained that it was only through the intervention of "luck" that she instead found a job in a private school where she did not need to pay any money. She attributes her situation to luck because she recalls knowing many colleagues who had to pay huge bribes before getting their job. Even though she did not go through this ordeal, her narrative substantiates Huan's experiences in the opening parts of this section.

We met another teacher in a coffee shop who has been teaching chemistry in a public high school for about 15 years. During our conversation, she shared that she did not have to pay herself into the public school system since she graduated with extra high marks from the University of Pedagogy. However, she knows many others who had to. Consequently, she insisted that she does not feel obliged to earn extra money, unlike her colleagues. She expressed that as a single woman who lives on her own, her salary is good enough. She also emphasised how passionate she is about her job and wants to contribute to a better society through how she plans her classes and lessons. We soon after finished our coffees and departed the coffee shop as more and more young Vietnamese gathered to slurp coffee drinks and hang out. She hops on her bicycle and readies herself to embark on a few kilometres ride home, leaving me with her last words, "it is great to live and work in the same district".

Celebration of Holidays and Gift-giving

Gift giving is a universal human behaviour that has not yet been fully understood and interpreted by social scientists (Carmichael & MacLeod, 1997; Sherry Jr, 1983). D'Souza (2003) argues that whether in monetary or non-monetary forms, gift-giving communicates appreciation and affection. In addition, it serves as a rhetorical act through which cultural meanings are forged in symbols either for honouring social obligations or political manoeuvre (Schieffelin, 1980). Consequently, gift-giving and its interpretations are complex (L'Etang, 2012) and vary across regions and countries. In certain Asian countries, gift-giving is a medium for gaining access, establishing connections, securing favours from others and building relationships (D'Souza, 2003). However, to understand and interpret gift-giving, Sherry Jr (1983) insists that the relationship between the gift itself, consequences of giving and taking the gift, and the various actor's interpretation and understanding of the action and motives must be established. Hence, depending on the situation, nature of the gift and the relationship between the actors, a gift can be construed as either appropriate or unethical.

Gifting especially on anniversaries and other special occasions according to Ho (2019) is very crucial for building and cementing interpersonal relationships in Vietnam. Subsequently, there is a Vietnamese adage that goes like "a gift is not as important as the way it is given" (Nguyen & Tsetsura, 2015). This adage suggests that there are implicit and explicit intentions for giving a gift which can either be sabotaged or enhanced through the means it is channelled through. Nguyen & Tsetsura (2015) concur that in certain instances, the economic value of the gift does not encode its function but rather the symbolic value it embodies. Jamie Gillen (2012) in his study of positionalities in money

and gift exchange in Vietnam, found that financial compensation and gifts were given and construed as an acceptable transaction or currency for time and efforts. He showed that the Vietnamese phrase "Tiền cà phê" meaning coffee money, exemplifies monetary gifts that are commonly given to compensate for time and effort.

20 October is Vietnamese Women's Day, among many vital days like the beginning of the school year, Teacher's Day, International Women's Day, New Year's Eve, the Lunar New Year Têt and International Women's Day within the Vietnamese school environment. These days are characterised by a common symbolic practice of showing special appreciation to teachers. At least once in almost every month, an occasional moment of this nature traditionally calls for such exposition of appreciation to the teachers. Here at the campus gates of a public school in Hanoi are guards orderly organising the arrival of students, teachers, and guests. The gate to the left is used for the students, and the gate to the right is for teachers and other school personnel only. Those violating this arrangement are getting a fair share of attention from the older man in the guard booth. While observing the guards' manner of ordering arrival, my attention is swiftly drawn to the huge baskets of flowers, chocolates, and toiletries with coloured ribbons and gift cards carried by some of the arriving students.

During the fieldwork, gift-giving related to such days was discussed with some parents and teachers. In our conversation with a parent at a coffee shop in the central business district of Hanoi, he revealed that his children's teachers expect that he and his wife show their appreciation on these annual occasions. On such days they are expected to put between 500 000 VND to 2 million VND (i.e., $22-$88) in an envelope and stick it into a flower bouquet. On the part of the parents we interacted with, these monthly expectations of appreciation, especially in the form of monetary gifts, bear on them some amount of stress. Nevertheless, their inability or decision not to offer monetary gifts results in the teachers' discriminatory treatment of their ward. One parent recalled the following.

> "When entering grade 4, my daughter was listed in selective class for those with highest scores. On occasions such as Teacher's Day and Women's Day, I never bring teachers the envelopes but merely present them with memorial souvenirs. It seems like my daughter was discriminated against because of that."

When quizzed further about what made her assume her daughter was treated differently from others, she said,

> "Hằng was graded unfairly. The teacher marginalised her in all performance activities and even talked to her in sarcasm, which made her sad. For example, normally, teachers would use the pronouns "con" (equivalent to "son/daughter") or "em" or "bạn" to call students; in this case, Hằng was called "cô" (meaning miss) instead."

The repercussion of this discriminatory treatment was a decision to move Hang to a private school when she got to the middle school level. Moreover, we gathered from our interviews with the teachers that the solicitation of these appreciations is mainly channelled through the parents' association. This association typically organises the collection of money from individual parents into buying a joint gift for the teachers on behalf of the class. Even though many parents and teachers are engaged in this transaction of expectation and appreciation, some of them assent that these forms of transactions on these occasions to a large extent characterise bribery and have been the medium through which teachers earn extra money to compensate for their low salaries. Whereas this view was held by the majority of our research participants, we cannot ascertain whether this is a collectively held viewpoint of parents and teachers in Hanoi. These extra monies are sometimes sheathed in the form of shopping vouchers, which equally serve as "accepted currencies" in this transaction. The permissibility of these vouchers as currencies in this transaction is made possible through the Vietnamese norm against rejecting gifts.

"Let us say if you give me a present, but I do not know the real, let us say the value of the present, I cannot say yes or no. In our culture, we do not have the culture of giving back a present. If you give me something, I just happily receive it."

The gesture of appreciation shown to the teacher does not only take place during these holidays. Another parent stated that after her daughter was sick, she showed her special appreciation to her homeroom teacher for all the extra help she offered her.

"I gave 500 000 VND (approximately $22), not in money, but as a gift voucher to show my appreciation to my daughter's teacher. It was a gift voucher in a grocery store so she could buy something. I did not want it to be seen as odd or something else, just to show my appreciation, so that is why I chose a voucher. Nevertheless, yes, it has a value of 500 000 VND."

Home Teaching (lớp học thêm)

Extra classes or home teaching can be observed all over the world and considered by many parents and teachers to be valuable supplements to regular teaching and learning in schools. However, this educational activity is observed to be on the ascendency, especially in developing countries. In the case of Vietnam, Ha and Harpham (2005) observed that a combination of short schooling hours and a short academic calendar resulted in the country's educational system providing students with just a little above half of the international normal annual teaching input. Therefore, parents' need to overcome this weakness in the country's educational system heightened the demand for extra classes for their wards. It is important to note that extra classes have always been part of the country's educational system and have traditionally been offered by teachers voluntarily. However, the country's economic reforms from 1989 (Doi Moi) particularly the deregulation of the country's educational system to allow for the establishment of private educational centres in combination with the growing demand among parents for extra classes culminated in the emergence of non-voluntary, home-based, and profit-driven extra classes mostly organised by teachers and private learning centres. Dan (2002) reports that by the early 1990s the economic and social cost of extra classes especially among poorer households in Vietnam became profound. Subsequently, in 1993, the Vietnamese government banned home teaching and extra classes that were not organised by schools' administrations.

Nonetheless, recent studies and news reports indicate an increasing prevalence of illegal extra classes in Vietnam (Dan, 2002; Harpham, Huong, Long, and Tuan, 2005; Ha and Harpham, 2005; Viet Nam News, 2017; Tien Phong News, 2020; Tuoi Tre News, 2021). According to Dan (2002) and Ha and Harpham (2005), the demand or need for extra classes is sometimes deliberately created by some teachers by significantly reducing the duration and learning content of their school classes, to run extra classes in their own homes. Reports by the Viet Nam News (2017) shows for example that, a 3-hour extra class in subjects such as Maths and History costs around $15-$22 USD. Even though Ha and Harpham (2005) did not find a significant impact of extra classes on learning outcomes in writing and arithmetic of 1000 eight-year-olds across five provinces in Vietnam, many parents continue to seek and invest in these services for their wards. Nevertheless, reports by Tien Phong News (2020), suggests that not all parents invest in these services because they intend to better the grades or learning outcomes of their wards. Instead, some parents pay for extra classes for their wards because they are afraid not doing so may result in the victimization of their children by the teachers.

During our interviews concerning informal social norms, the issue of home teaching or extra classes was brought up by almost all our respondents. When the school year is over, teachers all over the country are supposed to be on summer holidays. According to many of the teachers we interviewed, the summer break does not translate into a breakaway from teaching and learning for children and teachers in Hanoi. Instead, it becomes the peak time for extra classes (lớp học thêm). We gathered from our interviews that parents send their children to various classes, including English, Arts, Sports, Mathematics, Literature &

Philology and Soft Skills, especially during this period.

When we asked the teachers and parents why extra classes and home teaching are prevalent in Hanoi, most of the teachers, especially those from the public schools, pointed to low salaries and teachers' need for extra money. According to one of the vice-principals, even though it results in fewer brown envelopes in the school, extra classes and home teaching remains vital tools for teachers to earn extra money and for parents to secure good grading for their wards. In fact, during a brainstorming session of a workshop we organised with representatives from various schools, local representatives from Hanoi, and teacher education institution, a female teacher initiated a discussion around the informalities of financial transactions in schools. She started by sharing her views of how extra fees have been embedded into the relationship between parents and teachers. For example, she mentioned the extra teaching hours that teachers in public schools devote to students during evenings when home-teaching is performed as a certain informal fee. In public schools, she stated that it is also common with extra English classes that come with a certain fee. She thinks that each teacher can earn around 500 000 VND ($22) extra per day. Subsequently, one of the teachers who conducts home teaching disclosed to us during an interview that,

> "I teach extra two classes (2 hours each) per week… I teach my own students. A colleague of mine teaches around 12 hours or more per week, and for that, she earns 10 million VND ($438) extra [per month], compared to her salary of 7 million ($307). She rents a room outside the school for about 100 000 - 200 000 VND/session ($4-$8)…. the students are recruited via the parents' association in each class."

However, one of the vice-principals stated that such an arrangement is highly discouraged according to Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) regulations. He added,

> "We just try to talk with the teacher. If we hear any information about the private relations that can affect the activity of teachers at the school on their students, we have a private talk to the teachers. […] in the last two school years, I have had two private talks like that to our two teachers about the home teaching and the private relations that can affect their work."

Majority of the teachers and parents from the schools we observed acknowledged the prevalence of home teaching. Nonetheless, we gathered from the interviews with the vice-principals that a few teachers effectively endeavour to desist from home teaching. Thus, to ensure that parents do not lure them into home teaching, these teachers either keep their addresses secret or give many excuses and lie to get rid of parents. In fact, during one morning encounter with a vice-principal, she describes a complex relationship between parents and teachers. On the one hand, some teachers want the parents to know where they live to transfer information and money outside of the school area. In contrast, on the other, some teachers try to protect their integrity by keeping their addresses secret. The vice-principal also added that it is common to observe parents sharing their children's homeroom teacher's address between themselves. She says she is very strict on not sharing her home address or directions to where she lives. She explains,

> "Because I do not want to have the private meeting with the parents. Because when the Vietnamese meet each other at home, they often give presents, which comes with expectations. However, sometimes it is more than I can do for them, so I do not want to refuse. So, it is better if you do not give them a chance to give to you."

A further query revealed that some private schools have recently implemented a penalty system where teachers who cannot fulfil listed criteria get a deduction of salary. One of such reasons for salary deduction is terrible grades of a class where the teacher doubles as "home teacher". Consequently, there have been several cases where teachers have rounded up grades from less good to very good. According to one

of the public school teachers who also conduct extra classes, there have been instances where students who attend school less than three times in an entire school year receive the best grades. This assertion was further illuminated by another teacher who recalled undergoing home teaching on countless occasions when she was a student. She revealed that her parents paid her teacher to conduct extra teaching at the teacher's home. The classes included extra assignments and the opportunity to do tests a day before they were officially conducted in school.

As a result, participants in the extra classes organised by this teacher always got high grades on all official school tests. However, due to other parents' financial constraints or lack of income, their children could not acquire extra classes or home teaching and, thus, could not match up to their mates' grades. Six of our interviewees admitted that such students suffer some form of discriminatory treatment from the teachers. One of them explained that some of his colleague teachers were very pushy and used abusive words, mainly when dealing with such students. Furthermore, parents who are either unable to afford extra classes or do not see its relevance due to already satisfactory performances of their ward find themselves in a situation where home teaching becomes a costly lagniappe. In such instances, it is the children who, according to one of the teachers, "suffer mentally" from the extra classes.

> "The main issue is that teachers in public schools often make children suffer mentally. For example, since the salary is relatively low, the teachers have to open extra classes. If the teacher is not very competent, he/she has to stimulate demand from her own homeroom students, who might not need to take extra classes. Hằng – my? daughter – is good at most subjects without extra classes even though all her classmates take them".

"Had I known": Contrition about home teaching

One day, my parents asked me to take an extra English class by an old teacher along with my best friend – Nga and her mother's colleague's son in Nha Chung street by the Cathedral. We spent time once a week for about two months over the summer of 2005 there. Honestly, I did not feel productive or helpful since the old teacher, whom we called "uncle", did not teach us anything. He gave us some trial tests but barely corrected us when we made mistakes or explained the grammar principles. The experience mainly was weekends hanging out together, so relaxing that we even came up with the idea of founding a music band, which made me take a drum class later. However, soon after that course ended, I realised why my dad had brought me to that class. When sitting in the exam room solving English tests, I suddenly saw "the uncle" entering the room! He was walking around the room a bit, then he took a long pause at my table, looked into my test paper, subtly smiling with me. I had no clue how to behave, break the silence saying hello or bow my head or what? Eventually, the only response I had in reply to his smile was merely a surprising gaze. I remember when he appeared, I was in the middle of a tricky question that I could not solve. A part of me back then wished that "the uncle" – as my English teacher for two months, could guide me to the answer. I guess I had that in my gaze on him too. However, he left the room without saying a word. It turned out he was one of the inspectors monitoring that exam. My best friend's mother had a connection and asked my dad if he wanted to join the plan. They paid "the uncle" in the form of extra English class tuition fees to take care of us. When the results came out, I failed the exam anyway for my low overall scores, especially in Maths. Had I known my dad did that, I would have tried harder in Maths, or not? That I would not know.

Another informant disclosed,

> "My sister's child is a first-grader, and she needs to go to the teacher's house for extra class in the afternoon following her teacher's indeclinable suggestion."

She adds that her sister is uncomfortable because the teacher barely teaches or spends time on the child. Instead, she gives the child some assignments and goes away to cook dinner for her family. Thus, attention, teaching and supervision by the teachers were reported to be very weak, primarily when the sessions were conducted at the teacher's home. The situation of home teaching in Hanoi can be seen from the life story narrated by one of our respondents.

The account of this informant was further illuminated in our interview with a private school teacher who revealed that during graduation exam season, some students took her night class to practice for the exam and at the same time signed up for another class by a teacher who was rumoured to be able to "guess" the exam questions. In Vietnam, there is a myth that some exam training centres are better at predicting the actual exam questions than others. It has been assumed that either the teachers there are better at predicting or have better relationships with the exam designers.

In addition, we found that home teaching influences the private life of teachers in many ways. A younger teacher at a private school in Hanoi indicated that she conducted home teaching before she married and started planning for her family life. She recounts that the main reason for quitting home teaching was that it made it difficult for her to fulfil her duties as a wife and mother when it came to cooking and taking care of the house. However, upon quitting, she needed to rely on her husband to cover for the lost extra income to the family.

At 4.30 pm during a dusty afternoon, we met an English teacher of one of the private schools in Hanoi at a coffee shop chain. The English teacher is in a hurry; her husband is supposed to pick up the children from kindergarten, but he is not answering his phone or Messenger. She speaks fast while checking her text message. After ordering coffee and introducing ourselves to each other, she says it is almost a norm that teachers conduct home teaching after school hours. As long as it does not create any "scandals" such as fixed grades or leaked test results, the managers of her school do not care or intervene. As with the other teacher, she used to do home teaching before becoming a mother and adjusted her apartment and its interior design. In her former rented house, she decorated an extra bedroom to become a private classroom where she installed tables and chairs.

According to her, home teaching or extra teaching in Hanoi is almost analogous to a market. The value of teachers depends on several factors such as reputation, rumours, and the schools they work at. Other teachers, we met highlighted that this market is separate from one where parents select kindergarten, primary and secondary schools, and high schools for the children. In this market, social media platforms have become vital mediums for parents to conduct their market surveys. Some of the teachers indicated that school quality, teachers and grade results are widely discussed in various social media groups. This market, however, does not only rely on schoolteachers only for home teaching. During a late evening on a sidewalk next to the tourist areas in Hoan Kiem District, we met a university teacher from the University of Architecture who revealed to us that she earns extra money by working as a home teacher in fine arts. Besides this, she is the mother of four children who are all of school age. We drink Vietnamese green tea from our plastic stools while watching the steady traffic stream pass by. The sound from the traffic is loud, and we must adjust our voices to drown out the noise. The university teacher explains how she started to teach extra classes. At first, she did it in her home but quickly, that space became too small and instead, she joined a centre where several teachers are teaching extra classes in fine arts. In the future, she hopes she can open her centre for extra classes in fine art. With that comes the pressure of creating a good reputation among parents to get good business. She has already started by asking a few friends to send their wards

to the centre where she currently works. She further adds that she gets a paycheck every month covering the number of hours she has taught during the previous month. As a mother of four, she says this creates a cherished income for the whole family.

Parents' Donation in Public Schools

The luxury Daewoo Hotel is situated in the middle of one of the busiest intersections in Hanoi. When it was built in 1996, it was one of Hanoi's most luxurious and tallest buildings. Since then, it has accommodated world leaders during their visits to the Vietnamese capital. Nowadays, it is outnumbered in terms of size by many other buildings. One is the Lotte Tower, just opposite the road with 65 floors, including a shopping mall, restaurants, a roof-top bar, offices, apartments, and a hotel. In front of one of the entrances to the Daewoo Hotel, I am meeting a parent who is around 50 years old. He has two children and, together with his wife, have spent a lot of time and effort planning for their children's education to ensure that they get a good start in their careers. They have succeeded in one way or another; one is now a high school student, and the other is studying at the university. We sit down to enjoy a coffee on the patio. As soon as we start talking about managing his children's schools, he becomes very engaged.

In the Vietnamese school system, many public schools are dependent on parents' contributions to equip classrooms with air conditioners, fans and IT or bring the students to an excursion or a camp. In many of the more expensive private schools, this is included in the school fee. He shared several stressful situations when he and the other parents had been asked to donate facilities to the schools. It ranges from fans to projectors and other facilities that are requisite in classrooms. He says that it is often up to the parent board to decide and organise the fundraising, which sometimes becomes very competitive among the parents. When discussing this topic with some teachers in Hanoi, we found that the donations from each parent in various cases also have implications for the children's school results. In other words, the more your parents contribute, the better the grades of your ward.

On another day, we visit a public school in Cau Giay district where we are welcomed by playing students in school uniforms; the black training trousers are matched with a white polo shirt and red scarf that most children in Vietnamese public schools are wearing every school day. After greeting and playing with the children, we are invited into the vice principal's office. Together with the vice-principal and the vice-principal, we make a formal presentation to the school while cookies, instant coffee, and green tea are made available as refreshments. The concrete walls are painted in yellow, and the floor is covered in bright tiles. We are seated in big wooden chairs, often used for more formal meetings in many Vietnamese offices. The deputy vice-principal is happy because this meeting is also a reunion with one of us, whom she met many years ago during a training course. During our conversations about memories from the past, ongoing projects, and school management, she wants to show us their newly built restrooms. The main reason, she says, was the complaints from parents about the poor and dirty facilities, and she explains that the solution was a fundraising campaign between the parents. She shows us the name lists of each parent in each class who donated and the amount of money for each contribution. This is valuable evidence on how much the school means for each parent, she says. In another vice principal's office, we talk about the importance of the fundraising campaigns and the contributions from the parents.

> "Because in our country the resources for education are not enough, and I think it is not enough for the school's needs. So, we must find a way to call in the support of parents. Public schools, only have enough resources from the government for only basic activities. If you want to improve and organise more activities, you must collect more resources. So, if you organise an activity like that, you must call in support from the other resources."

In her school, the donations are formalised and categorised into three categories: school facilities, school

material, and school activities. She finds playgrounds, air conditioners, and fans in the first category, while the second one finances ICT equipment for computer labs. The day after our meeting, all students in the school are going to a historical village outside of Hanoi that parents entirely fund following the third category. Each parent must contribute 300 000 VND per child, and in response, she says, the school reports back in detail what the money has been spent on. This day, it will be specified with costs for bus transportation, lunch, and some snacks at the historical sites in the village. After the interview, when I am about to leave her office, I ask her about those whose parents have not paid the fee if they can join or not. The response is, "yes, but someone else must cover for them, perhaps a teacher".

Concluding discussion

The findings from our ethnographic study describe some of the informal social norms within schools in Hanoi, how these informal norms become dysfunctional and/or corrupt, and their implications on educational quality. As observed from our empirical findings, these informal social norms are neither necessarily dysfunctional nor corrupt in themselves. Instead, they persist because they are important pragmatic responses to the weaknesses in the country's educational system. By applying a socio-legal concept of norms in examining our findings, we conclude that imperatives of social conduct and subjective beliefs influence everyday practices of these informal social norms within the school system. This is reflected in the importance most parents attach to, for example, paying teachers for extra classes to ensure better school results for their children, showing gratitude and respect to teachers by providing gifts on 5-6 occasions per school year, and contributing money towards the provision of equipment in the classrooms.

Subsequently, these informal practices, within the context of the school system, are widely considered as the normal things to do. Nonetheless, they, even though not always, can result in the unequal and discriminatory treatment of students whose parents cannot conform to these informal norms or choose to behave otherwise. Thus, these informal social norms in themselves are not corrupt practices but can become grounds for breeding corrupt behaviours that subsequently impede the quality of education.

Furthermore, our ethnographic findings, provide us with a deeper understanding of how these informal norms constitute social controls, are decisive for shared expectations and are part of the situated cognition of both parents and teachers (Svensson, 2013, 2008; Leo, 2010). With this approach, we gain an understanding of how the teachers and other school personnel view and reflect on their jobs and the informal norms that shape their behaviour.

Consequently, reforming these informal norms require measures that will not simply seek to eradicate them, as that will pose a serious threat to both teachers and parents who construe them to be imperative. However, by viewing them as institutionalised social practices that are part and parcel of everyday life and parallel legal orders in their own right, anti-corruption initiatives targeted towards them must endeavour to transform them from dysfunctional into functional norms concerning educational quality.

Appendix

Papers included for the systematic literature review on anti-corruption, 2015-2020

Article	Year	Level	Method	Entity
(Vadlamannati 2015)	2015	L	Q	India
(H. Li, Xiao, and Gong 2015)	2015	N	Q	China
(Babos 2015)	2015	N	Q	Estonia/Slovakia/Slovenia/ Romania
(Kuris 2015)	2015	N	A	Multi
(Verdenicci and Hough 2015)	2015	G/N	A	IACR/Brazil
(Goel, Budak, and Rajh 2015)	2015	N	Q	Croatia
(Davis, Jorge, and Machado 2015)	2015	G/N	Ql	IACR/Argentine/Brazil
(Barutciski and Bandali 2015)	2015	G/N	A	OECD/Canada
(Robinson 2015)	2015	N	A	Kenya/Tunisia
(Chuanli 2015)	2015	N	A	China
(Nasuti 2016)	2016	G/N	A	Georgia/Ukraine
(Pleines and Woestheinrich 2016)	2016	G/N	Q	Azerbaijan/Kazakhstan/ Turkmenistan
(F. Li and Deng 2016a)	2016	N/L	Ql	China
(Walton 2016)	2016	G/N	Ql	Papua New Guinea
(F. Li and Deng 2016b)	2016	L	Ql	China
(Gephart 2016)	2016	G	A	IACR
(Bin and Yinghong 2016)	2016	N	A	India
(Gang-Zhi Fan, Huszár, and Weina Zhang 2016)	2016	N	Q	China
(Gilbert and Sharman 2016)	2016	G/N	A	OECD/UK/Australia
(Peiffer and Alvarez 2016)	2016	N	Q	Multi
(Spector 2016)	2016	N	Q	Multi/Vietnam
(Dang and Yang 2016)	2016	N	Q	China
(Manion 2016)	2016	N	A	China
(Nie and Wang 2016)	2016	N	Q	China
(S. B. Kim 2016)	2016	N	A	South Korea
(Muhumuza 2016)	2016	N	A	Uganda
(Tromme 2016)	2016	N	A	Vietnam
(Xenakis and Ivanov 2017)	2017	G/N	A	South-East Europe/ Britain
(Christensen 2017)	2017	G/N	Ql	Multi
(Mattoni 2017)	2017	N/L	Ql	Italy/Spain
(Mungiu-Pippidi and Dadasov 2017)	2017	N	Q	Multi
(Rogelja and Shannon 2017)	2017	N	Ql	Serbia
(L. Li et al. 2017)	2017	N	Q	China

(Harkin 2017)	2017	G	A	TIU (tennis)
(Hoole and Appleby 2017)	2017	N	A	Australia
(Hobbs and Williams 2017)	2017	N	A	Australia
(Xu and Yano 2017)	2017	N	Q	China
(Flavier, Chikireva, and Ivanova 2017)	2017	G/N	A	GRECO/Europe/Russia/ USA
(Sheryazdanova and Butterfield 2017)	2017	N	Ql	Kazakhstan
(Shu and Cai 2017)	2017	N	Q	China
(Zeng 2017)	2017	N/L	Q	China
(Ocheje 2017)	2017	G	A	Africa/EU
(Ocheje 2018)	2017	N/L	A	Nigeria
(Heinrich and Brown 2017)	2017	N	Q	Multi
(Milan 2017)	2017	N/L	Ql	Bosnia-Herzegovina/Macedonia
(Sharkey and Fraser 2017)	2017	N	A	China
(Zhu and Zhang 2017)	2017	N	Q	China
(Krajewska and Makowski 2017)	2017	N	A	Poland
(Caruso 2017)	2017	N	A	Spain
(Gemperle 2018)	2018	N	A	Multi
(Deng 2018)	2018	N	Ql	China
(Esoimeme 2018)	2018	N	A	Nigeria
(Lang 2018)	2018	G/N	A	IACR/China
(Boly and Gillander 2018)	2018	N	E	General
(Schwickerath 2018)	2018	G	Ql	UN
(Cochrane 2018)	2018	N/L	Ql	Australia
(Mamychev et al. 2018)	2018	N	A	China
(Kurakin and Sukharenko 2018)	2018	N	A	Brazil/South Africa/China/India
(Hassan 2018)	2018	N	A	Ethiopia
(Ross 2018)	2018	N	A	China/USA
(Taylor 2018)	2018	N	A	Georgia/Rwanda/Japan
(Wibowo 2018)	2018	N	A	Indonesia
(Panov 2018)	2018	G	A	EU
(Ying and Liu 2018)	2018	N	Q	China
(D. S. Kim, Li, and Tarzia 2018)	2018	N	Q	China
(Katzarova 2018)	2018	G	A	IACR
(Qu, Sylwester, and Wang 2018)	2018	N	Q	China

(Lee 2018)	2018	N/L	A	China
(Johnston 2018)	2018	G/N	A	Multi
(Rotberg 2018)	2018	N	A	Multi
(Ivory 2018)	2018	G	A	General
(Suberu 2018)	2018	N	A	Nigeria
(Schnell 2018)	2018	N	Ql	Romania
(Tourinho 2018)	2018	G/N	A	IACR/Brazil
(Mazak and Diviak 2018)	2018	N	Ql	Czech Republic
(Wolf 2018)	2018	G	A	IACR
(Mungiu-Pippidi 2018)	2018	N	A	Romania
(Fedotov and Voloshyna 2019)	2019	N	Q	Ukraine
(Aburamoto 2019)	2019	N	A	Russia
(Kruessmann 2019)	2019	G	A	IOC
(Banerjee and Vaidya 2019)	2019	N	E	General
(He, Wang, and Yang 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Qian 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Yu et al. 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Guo 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(de Oliveira Silveira 2019)	2019	G	A	WTO
(Ho et al. 2019)	2019	N	Q	Multi
(Liang and Langbein 2019)	2019	N	Q	China
(Min 2019)	2019	N	Q	South Korea
(Bull and Heywood 2019)	2019	G	A	IACR
(Sundstrom 2019)	2019	L	Ql	South Africa
(Sakib, 2020)	2020	G/N	Ql	Bangladesh
(Bautista-Beauchesne, 2020)	2020	N	Ql	Canada
(Zhou, Wang, and Chen 2020)	2020	N	Q	China
(Xie and Zhang 2020)	2020	N	Ql	China
(Onyango 2020)	2020	N/L	Ql	Kenya
Hao, Liu, Zhang and Zhao (2020)	2020	N	A	China
(Kong, Tao and Wang 2020)	2020	N	Q	China
(Al-Ajmi, and Alnami 2020)	2020	G/N	Ql	Kuwait
(Abotsi 2020)	2020	N	Ql	Ghana
(Okafor, Opara, and Adebisi 2020)	2020	N	Ql	Nigeria
(Tao 2020)	2020	N	Ql	China
(Kang and Zhu 2020)	2020	N	Q	China

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