

## CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

This study has been undertaken to examine the costs and impact of the fighting corruption efforts of the South African public sector. To achieve this purpose I began by providing a working definition of corruption, namely, that it is the misuse of public office for private gain. The term 'fighting corruption' has used in the title and elsewhere to convey the strong intent and political will that has come to characterise efforts to reduce such corruption where it occurs. The South African public sector has provided the context for this study as it has shown evidence of the most overt forms of corruption, namely, incidental, institutional and systemic. The measurement of corruption itself has been a preoccupation of many doing research in this field of good governance, but I have not found it necessary to treat this matter as anything other than a marginal concern here. Instead I have given greater attention to providing an historical background to the social, economic, cultural and political landscape of South Africa wherein apartheid had the dual effect of inviting a culture of lawlessness apart from involving many acts and forms of corruption itself.

In the literature survey that I found necessary to provide, I established that the paucity of studies on the subject of the costs and impact of fighting corruption (over against corruption itself) is a matter of concern. Such a situation has obviously not helped in the writing of this case study but most of the secondary sources used have nonetheless been of enormous help, particularly in

understanding the phenomenon of corruption in other contexts of the world. The implementation of national integrity systems in Hong Kong, for example, has been quite instructive evaluating South Africa's strategic approach. As the focus of this study is on costs and impact, it was furthermore incumbent upon myself to show that the ways to fight corruption must be informed by the available means at the disposal of the state. The debates generated around Herbert Simon's rational decision-making model of public administration proved useful in drawing attention to need for balance between strategic imperatives and budgetary constraints. Unpacking some of this conventional wisdom to make efficacious decisions in public policy management can be a valuable tool for government officials committed to reducing corruption as I discovered.

Inasmuch as corruption was shown to be a blight on South African society before its transition to democracy in 1994, the situation since then has given cause for much alarm to the extent that a national strategy to fight corruption was developed. The traditional policymaking process has unfortunately, however, not been a feature of this approach where numerous pieces of legislation get enacted in the absence of real analysis and capacity for implementation. While the President can be lauded for his bold statements against corruption made at public forums, as we saw, tight control from the central hierarchy has left little room for pursuing innovative approaches to countering the problem. One inevitably experiences a sense of *déjà vu* as the rules of policymaking are increasingly being abandoned. South Africa therefore remains at risk to the

corrosive effects of corruption like most other developing countries and the extent to which it manages this negative perception (which we have established to be not entirely undeserving) may well serve to define the content of its democratic ethos in the years to come.

From the outset of this case study my intention was to provide an evaluation of the implementation of the national anti-corruption strategy in terms of its articulation through national consensus. I have found it to be a positive expression of the country's desire to combat and prevent corruption but, through lack of adequate resources, its efficacy cannot be assured. While some additional spending by government on anti-corruption initiatives might bring in some benefits, as I tried to show, it is far from clear that national government (and the taxpayer as a result) is not the loser when money is spent on solving one set of problems but which leads to further bureaucratization and more costs. My own view is that the country would be better served by an independent single agency within the public sector that will be dedicated to fighting corruption alone and led by a person of sound integrity. This, I *believe*, will cause corruption to be better 'managed' with modest costs, produce a positive impact for all and thus generate a more constructive engagement with the problem.

The originality of this study consists in the attempt to show that the task of fighting corruption in the South African public sector will need to be regarded as a fiscal end within the national budgetary framework in order to maximise its

impact. Failure to undertake such reform of the national strategy on corruption leaves open the question whether the political rhetoric against corruption is sufficiently matched by a commitment of resources. Heavy reliance on donor support to fund what should be a national priority, particularly for a developing country like South Africa, is unlikely to be sustainable over the long term. Hence the need to include the costs of fighting corruption as a standard line item in the expenditure framework of the National Treasury. I have also established that the process of calculating such costs is best facilitated by the rationalisation of the multiple units involved in fighting corruption and the creation of a single fully resourced organisation instead. This, of course, must be preceded by a policy shift in perception by national government about the value of addressing the problem of corruption over an ongoing basis. As in many other situations, this case study of South Africa can be instructive for other developing countries as well, especially as our literature survey showed a distinct lack of attention being given to the matter of the costs of fighting corruption both here and elsewhere.

No feasibility study has been done to explore the viability of the 'decreased costs and greater impact' option that I alluded to earlier. Only a select few seem to know exactly how police corruption is being tackled since the closure of the anti-corruption unit dedicated to that purpose. The extent of corruption in the departments of Home Affairs, Correctional Services And Social Development (Welfare) is generally thought to be very high, but proper audits and analytical studies have yet to be done. The Eastern Cape province is plagued with

corruption to such extent that Cabinet responded by deploying a high-level task team in 2002, and which included two directors-general, to 'fix' the problem. The task team completed its mission about a year later but the question remains: Has the problem of corruption there been brought under control? It is often claimed that the fight against corruption will not succeed without the involvement of civil society. As this study has been concerned with the public sector, this question has not been addressed, but new research may help to clarify the precise role that civil society should play in advocating for increased spending towards reduced corruption in society

Earlier we briefly discussed the views of different scholars in their search to understand why and when corruption takes place. Most of this discussion took place ,here and elsewhere, within the context of the developing world. Yet it is far from clear that corrupt practices do not occur with the same or greater degree of frequency in the developed world. It would be instructive therefore to establish the role played by large multinational companies of the developed world, for example, in fueling the climate of corruption in the developing world through the payment of bribes. The measurement of corruption, and the costs and impact of fighting it, also pose interesting avenues for further research, especially by economists, who possess the necessary tools to take up such matters in monetary terms. These and many other such questions remain unanswered and will require far more detailed attention by others working in this field of study.

Despite the public sector focus of this study, it would be misleading to assume that corruption as a phenomenon is largely absent in other sectors of society. In terms of the definition used in this study, most of what constitutes corruption would ordinarily be located in the public sector. Yet if one sought a broader definition, where the abuse of *public trust* is at issue, the role of bankers, insider trading on stock markets, and civil society activists themselves would have to come under scrutiny. In the world's leading civil society-based anti-corruption organisations like Transparency International, one should not take for granted that the highest standards of corporate governance and ethical conduct prevail. From my own experience of working in and with such organisations over the years, I have become acutely aware of behaviour by some very senior office bearers that can easily be described as disturbingly unethical. Others, like Jeremy Pope, who has worked tirelessly out of London for the past twenty years fighting corruption, are better able to substantiate this concern than is possible here. Many civil society groups depend on foreign donor support for their work against corruption and this is often construed as interference in the internal affairs of governments in the developing world. If national sovereignty is at stake when the public sector is under scrutiny, then such a matter would deserve more thorough investigation. It would be interesting to understand if, for example, a case can be made to show that donor agencies are a 'front' for employment of foreign nationals in exotic countries of the world and which actually serve to undermine the struggle against corruption. Or, to revisit the local context, how black economic empowerment is serving a dual purpose of uplifting the economic

fortunes of a select few while robbing the poor of resources that might otherwise be theirs. Such questions must be left to others working in this field of scientific research.

It is lamentable that we live in a world that is being increasingly exposed to corruption. Yet the irony is that in the absence of such corruption, this study would have hardly been possible. As with much else in life, one is thankful for small mercies!