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Anttiroiko, Ari-Veikko

University of Tampere

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Good governance in context: Learning from anti-corruption policies of Finland and Singapore

Ari-Veikko Anttiroiko
University of Tampere
School of Management
Finland

Abstract

Good governance has become a prominent topic on the development agendas of national governments, regional institutions and international organisations. There is common understanding that it is an imperative for development. This article discusses two success stories, those of Finland and Singapore, and their road to good governance. The analysis shows that historical, cultural and structural contexts have a major effect on the success of anti-corruption policy. Finland is clearly an evolutionary case with a low-profile good governance policy, whereas Singapore is a revolutionary case with an array of institutionalised anti-corruption measures. This implies that there is no universal recipe for success in curbing corruption, but rather processes which may vary considerably and yet be equally successful. The cases of Finland and Singapore may be an important source of inspiration and policy-relevant information, but anti-corruption policy and measures as such must be created taking due account of local history and culture.

Keywords: good governance, clean government, transparency, accountability, corruption, anti-corruption policy, anti-corruption agency, ethics management, cultural context, Finland, Singapore

JEL: D02, D73, D83, H11, Z18

Introduction

Good governance has become a prominent topic on the development agendas of national governments, regional institutions and international organisations. There is a common understanding that its absence is a major cause of slow economic and social development. Thus it is only natural that good governance has become one of the key issues in promoting economic, political and social life by responsible organisations at different institutional levels.

Improvement in public governance has become a key element of the paradigm shift in the sense that in international development cooperation there is a gradual shift from donor-determined conditionality to a general emphasis on good governance as a precondition for sustainable economic development. The message is that any country trying to escape poverty must take the issue of good governance seriously.

The most widely discussed topic under the good governance umbrella is arguably corruption. The historical roots of combatting corruption are practically as long as human civilisation itself (Caiden, 2013a, 95). Such efforts intensified in the post-war years, especially when the view of corruption was broadened from legal framework and public sector ethics to economic development and international development aid. The normative concept of good governance emerged on the high level political agenda in the late 1980s and has remained there ever since as a discourse on the preconditions for development in the developing country context. It was further broadened and intensified due to the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 and the liquidity and credit crunch of the latter half of 2000s, to serious failures of corporate governance such as the cases of Enron and Lehman Brothers, and to large-scale government failures such as the economically and politically devastating politics of George W. Bush's administration in the USA throughout the 2000s and bad economic policy, corrupted and inefficient tax authorities and widespread tax evasion in the case of Greece, to name just a few notorious examples. Corruption is a critical development issue in East and West alike.

While designing anti-corruption policies it is good to remember that there are also fairly clean countries, whose stories are worth sharing as they provide inspiration and knowledge for policy-makers, public managers and anti-corruption agencies. In this article we will discuss two country cases that may serve such a purpose.

Objective, methodology and structure

This article discusses the variations of determinants of clean governance using two examples, Finland and Singapore. Attention is paid to the role of cultural background, democracy, political leadership and administrative machinery – including anti-corruption agency – in combatting corruption in these two national contexts. The reason for choosing these two is that they represent utterly different cases among the high-ranked countries of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranking, the one being a Nordic welfare society and the other an Asian developmental state. They have also shown durability in this respect, for they were already among the least corrupt countries in the mid-1990s, when Transparency International started to publish its corruption index. Even if there is good reason to be cautious with developing countries' chances to emulate the success recipes of historically unique cases, we may see in Finland and Singapore illustrative benchmark cases when considering the approaches to good governance and anti-

corruption policy in particular. (On success and failure in curbing corruption in different countries, see Caiden, 2013a; 2013b).

Methodologically this article is based on historical analysis (Gardner, 2006), which establishes a contextual setting from which two ideal types of ethics management models are derived (see Hekman, 1983; Brewer, 2003). Two ideal types are constructed on the basis of empirical accounts of the cases of Finland and Singapore in order to highlight their most prominent features. They represent two utterly different societal and historical contexts. This helps to assess the applicability of these two cases to other national contexts, by comparing the respective ideal types and assessing their potential applicability to different contexts. That said, it must be born in mind that we are not talking about a simple transfer of the anti-corruption policies, organisations or actions of two model countries to other contexts. Rather, this discussion provides only an extra element of the knowledge base to be utilised in the policy-making and learning processes relating to good governance policy in the given context.

The following discussion starts with the theoretical framework, which builds a conceptual basis for understanding the origins and the key dimensions of the concept of good governance. After this two policy-relevant issues are discussed. First, what is meant by corruption and what its major consequences are, and second, how to combat corruption and thus promote clean governance to the benefit of society. To illustrate the policy variations, we present the two abovementioned country cases, which are used to analyse how contextual differences affect the premises, forms and outcomes of anti-corruption policy, and how contextual differences should be taken into account in explaining, designing and evaluating such policy.

The concept of good governance

Governance is a generic term that refers to the manner in which organisations interact with their key stakeholder groups in order to achieve their goals. In the public domain the concept of governance or ‘public governance’ refers to governments’ goal-oriented interaction with various stakeholder groups from the public, for-profit and non-profit sectors in democratic decision-making processes, public service delivery and development activities. Good governance entails certain principles of decision-making and conduct of public affairs – such as transparency, efficiency and accountability - that apply to all the processes that constitute public sector operations and related interactions. As a discourse it has a special meaning derived from governance challenges in development policy and development aid frameworks (Anttiroiko and Valkama, 2005).

The currently used term *good governance* was introduced in the late 1980s in the World Bank's report on Sub-Saharan Africa, emanating from the discussions about the crisis of governance. This was the context in which a normative dimension addressing the quality of governance was brought to light (Santiso, 2001, p. 5). In the 1990s the OECD started to widen its anti-corruption activities towards the promotion of good governance (OECD, 2000). Due to such influential contributions good governance became one of the dominant topics in global development discourse.

Concerning the core concept, the World Bank Institute has distinguished the following six constitutive elements of good governance: voice and accountability, effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, independence of the judiciary, and control of corruption (Santiso, 2001, p. 5; cf. World Bank Institute, 2005). Fairly similar definitions have been provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB, 1995), the OECD (2005) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, 2005). (See Figure 1).

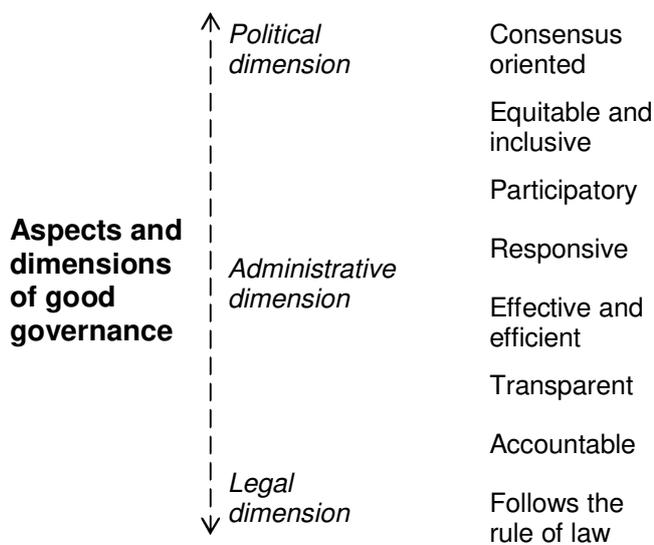


Figure 1. Characteristics of good governance. (Modified from UNESCAP, 2005).

To summarise, good governance refers to a specific quality of institutional arrangements and interactions between public organisations and stakeholders in public policy processes. This quality, the 'goodness', is needed to ensure that government cost-effectively brings maximum benefit to the people it serves and to society as a whole. Hence the connection with the idea of government's need and ability to create public value (Moore, 1995; cf. Roy, 2005).

Consequences of corruption

Good governance discourse has traditionally revolved around corruption, and even today curbing corruption is at the very core of the policies for good governance – and for a good reason. *Corruption* has long historical roots. It exists in some form in every society. Corruption is conventionally understood as the private wealth-seeking behaviour of someone who represents the public authority. A well-known metaphorical corruption formula is $C = M + D - A$, in which corruption (C) equals monopoly power (M) plus discretion by civil servants (D) minus accountability (A), which highlights key aspects of corruption-inviting setting in the public domain (Klitgaard, 1998; McCusker, 2006, p. 7). Corruption has many forms, however, which can be classified into five groups: bribery, embezzlement, fraud, extortion, and favouritism (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001, pp. 8-10).

Corruption has many negative economic, political and social consequences with the most devastating impact on developing countries (Desto, 2006, p. 249; Ugur and Dasgupta, 2011). It has a negative impact on economic development and growth (Transparency International, 2005; see also UNDP, 1997). Corruption and other forms of bad governance bring about an unfavourable institutional environment, which tends to block the development of endogenous entrepreneurship, keep the levels of trust and social capital low, and make collective action difficult, thus eventually making it hard to achieve changes in these critical institutional factors. These are fundamental reasons why poor regions persistently stay poor (Millock and Olsen, 1993).

Corruption not only robs countries of their potential and afflicts most of the developing world; it also adversely affects the poorest within societies, imposing the heaviest costs on those who can least afford them (Transparent International, 2005). There is a need to remember that corruption and other forms of bad governance may also imperil the functionality of social systems in the developed world, of which there are numerous examples (Donahue, 2011; Henley, 2011).

Preconditions for the policies for clean governance

Corruption and other problems of bad governance have proved endemic worldwide. Nevertheless the Global Corruption Report of 2005 still claims optimistically that corruption can be reduced (Transparency International, 2005). There is even some evidence that there is overall progress in improving the rule of law and good governance, in controlling corruption, and in improving institutional quality in different parts of the world (Kaufmann, 2003; cf. Hanna et al. 2011).

However, many experts have challenged optimistic views of the fight against corruption in light of their observations and experiences. The lessons learnt so far are that policy decisions themselves either have little impact on corruption or else they just work extremely slowly (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001, p. 101; Caiden, 2013a; 2013b; see also Klitgaard, 1998; OECD, 2000, pp. 23-26, 58; McCusker, 2006; Matei and Matei, 2011).

As corruption is a multi-dimensional phenomenon, both its causes and consequences relate to major social systems – that is, economic, political and socio-cultural systems - and institutional actors, such as politico-administrative machinery, the business sector and civil society. Generally the norms and values of politicians and public servants and general cultural views of the public sector are important factors behind corruption (McCusker, 2006, p. 5). Culture may be an element that decisively affects the level and acceptability of corruption. There are, for example, clear cultural differences in the propensity to become engaged in corruption as well as to punish corrupt behaviour (Cameron et al., 2005).

At least from the policy perspective the most important element in anti-corruption policy is the political side of public governance and leadership in particular. As concluded by Abdulai (2009), controlling corruption in a sustainable manner requires a consistent demonstration of genuine commitment on the part of the political elite to the eradication of corruption. Where the commitment of the top political leadership to such a goal is weak, governments are unlikely to engage in zero tolerance but continue to condone some degree of corruption.

Another important dimension is democracy. Santiso (2001, p. 2) argues that “the *quality* of governance is ultimately attributable to its democratic content. Neither democracy nor good governance is sustainable without the other. Consequently, democracy and good governance need to converge, both conceptually and practically, in the study and practice of public policymaking.” Bringing politics back into the picture requires that we strengthen accountability, enhance the rule of law, and promote civic participation (Santiso, 2001; see also Caddy, 2001). At the same time it should be noted that democratisation does not have statistically noticeable effects until it has lasted for decades (Andvig and Fjeldstad, 2001; cf. Hanna et al., 2011).

There are new ideas about how to approach the design and implementation of anti-corruption and good governance policies. Daniel Kaufmann (2003) of the World Bank has challenged the notion that passing laws by fiat, creating new public institutions, or embarking on anti-corruption campaigns are effective. Traditional public sector management doctrines and conventional judiciary

reform approaches may not, after all, be that suitable, especially for most of the developing countries and emerging economies. What is needed, instead, is a sharper focus on external accountability, the development of transparency mechanisms and empirically-based monitoring tools, as well as participatory 'voice' and incentive-driven approaches to prevention. These should play a prominent role in providing checks and balances on traditional public institutions, in empowering non-traditional stakeholders, and in ameliorating state capacity and mitigating the very unequal field of influence in countries striving for clean government (see Doig and Riley, 1998; Tanzi, 1998; cf. Desta, 2006; Parnini, 2009; Hanna et al., 2011; Transparency International, 2009, p. 9).

In the next sections we will discuss two cases, Finland and Singapore, which will help to understand the preconditions for successful anti-corruption policy developed in two different contexts.

The Finnish model of good governance

Finland is well-known for its clean and transparent government. In the Corruption Perceptions Index of Transparency International Finland has continuously ranked as one of the least corrupt countries in the world. The situation is much the same in all the Nordic countries (Transparency International, 2004; see also OECD, 2000; 2002a; 2002b).

Finland's clean governance model is a result of a long historical development, first under Swedish rule until 1809, then as an autonomous Grand Duchy of the Russian empire, until the country finally gained independence in 1917. Many practices in political life and administration have their roots in traditional local customs and rule-making, which provided a legitimate basis for obedience to the law. Generally, the underlying feeling has historically been, and to a large extent continues to be that the law, as is the case with rules in general, is to be taken seriously (Joutsen and Keränen, 2009). Honesty and trustworthiness have likewise been perceived as virtues in Finnish culture, which is not so common in many other European countries.

Ordinary Finns do not encounter corruption in their daily lives, which partly explains why the majority of them trust their public institutions (Koskinen, 2003). In all the Nordic countries on a yearly basis only some 1-2% of people have offered bribes in some form, the average in the EU being 5%, in the Asia-Pacific area 10%, and Middle East and North Africa 40% (Transparency International, 2009, p. 32). Part of this picture is also a well-developed legislation, which, it should

be noted, has in the Finnish case never included either a separate corruption law or a separate agency controlling corruption. Instead, corruption is treated as a part of poor governance and criminality, and is thus handled at all levels of legislation and control systems, including the Constitution, the penal code, the civil service legislation, administrative directives and ethical norms (Tiihonen, 2003; OECD, 2000). This implies that the aspects of corruption are approached in a holistic manner.

What explains the clean government in Finland? We may build an aggregate image of the reasons for the low level of corruption in Finland on the basis of the following factors divided into six thematic groups (Tiihonen, 2003; Joutsen and Keränen, 2009; Anttiroiko and Valkama, 2005; Koskinen, 2003; OECD, 2000):

Culture and characteristics of society

- 1) High standard of living
- 2) Egalitarianism and fairly equal income distribution (large middle class)
- 3) Democratic mindset and the respect for the rule of law
- 4) Well-educated people
- 5) Universal welfare services and social benefits
- 6) Culture in which honesty and hard work are traditionally respected

The court system

- 7) Long and strong tradition of legality
- 8) Strong position of the Chancellor of Justice which has its roots in the 1700s and the Parliamentary Ombudsman, a position established in 1922. There are also auditors who perform independent scrutiny of public administration, most notably the State Audit Office, a national supervisory body that works in connection with Parliament and oversees the work of state authorities.
- 9) Trust in and easy access to the court system and police. People believing that corruption has influenced a decision affecting their rights can easily request a police inquiry.

Administrative structures and principles

- 10) Core administrative principles and values for public service: legality, justice, independence, impartiality, objectivity, trustworthiness of government, transparency, service-mindedness, proportionality, and being purpose oriented
- 11) Flat hierarchical structures

12) Well-functioning system of local government based on local autonomy

Civil servants

13) Civil service has been highly regarded as a career

14) Everyone can aspire to a good career. In addition, civil service careers are based on merit

15) Adequate salary level in public administration

16) Well-educated civil servants in both central and local government

Decision-making and administrative procedures

17) Collective and collegiate decision-making structure

18) Non-political civil servants as the administrative heads of ministries (permanent secretaries work along with the system of political state secretaries; the latter was introduced in the 2000s to support the ministries in their work)

19) Referendary system in which a civil servant prepares the matter in question for resolution by a decision-making body

20) Obligation to provide public argumentation for the reasons behind decisions

Politics and political parties

21) Consensus-oriented political culture ('rainbow governments')

22) Public funding of political parties

23) Special regulations concerning the amount and transparency of campaign funding

Culture and social conditions are the key factors in explaining the evolution of clean governance in Finland. First of all, Finnish society is democratic and egalitarian. It was one of the first countries in the world to grant all men and women the right to vote and stand for office. In addition, the standard of living is high, which, together with fairly even income distribution, means that the level of wages in both the public and the private sectors can be termed reasonable, leading to the emergence of a fairly large middle class. These background factors also include an effective and inclusive system of education. Such factors suggest that the Finnish public tend to have a relatively good capacity to understand, exercise and safeguard their rights (Joutsen and Keränen, 2009, p. 13).

An important element of Finnish public administration is the impartiality and integrity of civil servants. A special manifestation of such thinking is that an official may not participate in the taking of a decision which may benefit or, alternatively, harm his or her interests or those of another person with whom he or she has a dependent relationship. In such cases, the public official must

withdraw from consideration of the matter. From a procedural point of view, the Finnish system is based on what is known as the referendary system, which is actually an old pillar of public administration (the 'referendary' is an official responsible for preparing official matters for a decision-making body). It is also worth emphasising that the system is based on collective and collegiate decision-making, which tends to diminish the likelihood of corruption. An important dimension of all such administrative work is publicity and transparency (Joutsen and Keränen, 2009).

As Finnish culture and the administrative system support clean government in various ways, the law enforcement and court system are not the major instance in the big picture of combatting corruption. Yet, as in any society, they have their own critical role to play. (Joutsen and Keränen, 2009).

Finland is an interesting case of anti-corruption policy in the sense that by international standards its anti-corruption measures and institutions are weak. It does not have a separate unit dedicated to the investigation or prosecution of corruption-related offences. This reflects the fact that the guiding principle for anti-corruption work is that corruption is not perceived as an isolated phenomenon, and is therefore not deemed to require separate legal provisions or separate supervisory bodies, nor even a separate strategy or action plan. Instead, anti-corruption measures are integrated into general good governance policy grounded on the rule of law (Joutsen and Keränen, 2009).

Singapore's road to good governance

Singapore is a unique case because, unlike most other Asian countries, it has been able to break away from rampant corruption as a way of life. It is the most widely discussed Asian model due to its unchallenged position as the least corrupt country in Asia (Quah, 2011, p. 133). In the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranking of Transparency International (TI) it is at the level of the Nordic countries (in 2011 its rank was 5). We could assume that other successful developmental states, such as the former British colony Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea would have followed suit. However, only Hong Kong (CPI rank 12 in 2011) and Japan (CPI rank 14 in 2011) are in some respects close to the level of Singapore (Quah, 1988; Transparency International, 2009, p. 32). The situation is much worse in other East Asian countries, those of Taiwan (CPI rank 32 in 2011), South Korea (43), Macau (46), and China (75) not to mention South East Asian countries.

The fact that corruption is not a way of life in Singapore is an indication of the effectiveness of the anti-corruption policy adopted by the People's Action Party (PAP) government after it took office in

June 1959. The situation was completely different in colonial times. In fact, corruption was a part of the everyday lives of Singaporeans during the colonial period, especially after the Second World War (Quah, 1988). Among the first decisive steps towards clean government was the establishment of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) in the early 1950s as the independent anti-corruption agency, which was actually the first of its kind in the world (Quah, 2011, p. 133). This turn was based on the initiative by the colonial government after a serious corruption case involving the police and the unsatisfactory situation urged special attention. In spite of this, corruption continued to be rife throughout the sectors of public service, law enforcement being the most corrupted one. Such a deplorable condition was due to inadequate legislation, widespread corrupt practices, the inferior position of the poorly educated population in the eyes of the police and civil servants, low salaries of civil servants and problems in recruiting officers for the anti-corruption agency from the Singapore police force on short secondment (Tan, 1999).

The newly-elected PAP government in the late 1950s was determined to eradicate corruption in Singapore in general and in the civil service in particular. Its strategy for dealing with the problem of corruption emphasised the necessity of reducing both the opportunities and the need for corruption. From the beginning, top political leaders set themselves as role models for civil servants, divesting themselves of commercial ties, demonstrating high work ethics, avoiding any behaviour that could be construed as abuse of their office, and showing zero tolerance for corrupt behaviour. By personal example they created a fruitful soil for the atmosphere of honesty and integrity (Tan, 1999).

The PAP government relied heavily on the Prevention of Corruption Act (POCA) and the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB) to spearhead its anti-corruption strategy. The primary aim of the POCA and CPIB was to reduce the opportunities for corruption and to increase the price to be paid for corrupt behaviour if detected (Quah, 1988). In the late 1980s the essential pillars of Singapore's effective anti-corruption policy were in place and started to bear fruit. It was important that the CPIB since its inception investigated and prosecuted many leading politicians and bureaucrats, which was a sign to the whole of society of the determination to eradicate corruption (Quah, 2007, p. 25).

An important part of the PAP strategy was to tackle the root cause of corruption in the civil service. More than anything, this meant the constant improvement of salaries and working conditions. The assumption was that corruption becomes a serious problem in social conditions where the civil servants are generally paid very low salaries and where there is an unequal distribution of wealth.

Accordingly, the salaries of Singaporean civil servants are fairly high by Asian standards (Quah, 1988). The same policy was adopted with politicians too. Top politicians have reiterated Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's mantra that political leaders should be paid the top salaries that they deserve in order to ensure clean and honest government (Quah, 1988). This is a problematic issue in countries like Singapore, for such an act can be interpreted as a "rent extraction" by a leader insulated from democratic control (Di Tella and Fisman, 2004, p. 477; Adam, 2012).

In all, corruption does exist in Singapore, as it does in all societies in one form or another, but Singapore is not a corrupt society. There are occasional incidents of corrupt behaviour, but such cases are the exception rather than the rule, i.e. they represent individual cases of corruption rather than symptoms of an endemic problem. In short, corruption is incidental and not institutionalised (Quah, 1988).

Discussion: Learning from the Finnish and Singaporean development paths

Finland and Singapore represent interestingly very different kinds of success stories. Finland's approach is seemingly evolutionary by nature, whereas Singapore is more of a revolutionary case. From a context-specific point of view they provide models for two different policies, which may be useful when considering country-specific approaches to combatting corruption (cf. 'monitoring and incentives' vs. 'changing the rules of the game' approaches to corruption, see Hanna et al., 2011). We may actually use these two cases to build two ideal types of anti-corruption policy. Finland's model, which is fairly similar to those found in Sweden, Denmark and Norway on the one hand, and to some extent also countries of the British Commonwealth such as New Zealand and Australia on the other, reflects the situation in the least corrupt countries in the Western world. Singapore's approach, in turn, which resembles Hong Kong and to a lesser extent Japan, represents the Asian developmental state model. The ethics management models derived from these two cases and contexts are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Two ethics management models: Finnish vs. Singaporean model.

<i>Features</i>	Evolutionary culture-based ethics management model	Revolutionary compliance-based ethics management model
Country group	Western	Asian
Example	Finland	Singapore
Background agenda	Welfare and equality (social); welfarism	Development and growth (economic); developmentalism
Democracy	Democratic system, free press, civic liberties, multi-party system	Semi-authoritarian system (soft authoritarianism), limited freedoms, dominant-party system
Role of politics	Political pluralism; consensual institutional support for anti-corruption policy	Personalised leadership; leading politicians' critical role in supporting anti-corruption policy
Role of administration and anti-corruption agency (ACA)	Clean, transparent administration; no separate anti-corruption agency	Clean administration; special role of strong anti-corruption agency
Major structural support for anti-corruption policy	Cultural values and norms	Political leadership and institutional measures
Development of anti-corruption policy	Evolutionary; piecemeal, integrated policy	Revolutionary; masterminded anti-corruption policy
Approach to anti-corruption policy	Weak; holistic approach; no specific anti-corruption policy or legislation	Strong; spearhead approach; anti-corruption policy and anti-corruption law have important role
Characteristic measures of anti-corruption policy	Lenient measures: ethical and cultural codes and principles, instructing, internalisation of norms and values	Tough measures: investigation, compliance, control, punishment

The role of *culture, political leadership and administrative machinery* are in a generative relationship with each other, and interestingly, their combinations differ considerably in the two cases discussed here. In Finland tradition and culture seem to be key to good governance. In addition, a strong and clean administrative machinery has become the backbone of the governance system, not the political leadership or even legal provisions as such. Politics is rather the weakest link in the chain. The case was more or less the opposite in Singapore in the 1950s and 1960s, when the new anti-corruption policy was in the making, for political leadership and the role of Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew in particular was decisive in the whole transformation process. In Singapore the political leadership seemed to be the glue between cultural change and institutional arrangements, which made the dramatic improvement possible during a fairly short historical period (Quah, 2007, pp. 31, 36). Nevertheless it should be remembered that in Singapore the anti-corruption policy is backed up by a vigilant public that is ready to report suspected corruption (Quah, 2007, p. 36). As Tan (1999, p. 64) puts it, the cultural climate in Singapore is strongly opposed to corruption.

If the *clean administrative machinery* has been and still is the key to Finnish good governance, administrative measures have actually been equally important in Singapore, even if some contextual differences are apparent. First of all, the independence and power of the CPIB was decisive from

the very beginning of gaining sovereignty, which was further strengthened by the law enacted soon after. There is also need to emphasise that even if the CPIB is the investigative organ in the system, the primary responsibility for preventive work and guidance is vested in the government departments, which are required to take sufficient administrative actions to prevent corrupt practices within their units (Tan, 1999).

It seems that the adequate level of *civil servants' salaries* is the common denominator of both Finland and Singapore. Yet closer inspection reveals that its role as a determinant is not so self-evident in either case. Namely, in the Finnish case, public administration was not in a historical perspective endemically corrupt even in the earlier historical 'constitutional state' period with generally low wages in public administration. According to an old Finnish saying, "a public official's bread may be thin, but at least it is long", meaning that there is good job security to counterbalance rather modest remuneration. In the case of Singapore, respectively, the PAP government had succeeded in curbing corruption from the 1950s to the early 1970s, a time before a significant rise in salaries, mainly by ensuring that the CPIB enforced the anti-corruption law effectively and impartially (Quah, 2007, p. 28). Paradoxically, subsequent pay rises were not only motivated by stemming the brain drain from the civil service to the private sector but can also be seen as a way for the political and bureaucratic elite to make excessive personal gains legitimated by the commitment to anti-corruption policy (see The Economist, 2010; Adam, 2012).

These two cases point to clear fundamental differences in anti-corruption policy: in a semi-authoritarian society like Singapore strong leadership and an efficient anti-corruption agency are necessary conditions for successful policy and related cultural change. In the Finnish case the relationship is the reverse: the cultural background facilitates non-corrupt procedures which rely on transparency and democratic values.

Conclusion

It seems that historical, cultural and structural contexts have a considerable effect on the success of anti-corruption policy. Finland and Singapore are among the most successful countries in terms of combatting corruption, but their historical and cultural conditions are very different, as are also their approaches and roads to clean government. Finland clearly represents an evolutionary case with low-profile anti-corruption policy, whereas Singapore is a revolutionary case with an array of institutionalised anti-corruption measures. This implies that there is no universal success recipe in curbing corruption, but rather culture-specific processes which may vary considerably. However,

there are also some common denominators in both cases, which can be summarised as follows. First, anti-corruption policy and institutions must be created so as to take maximum advantage of local history and culture. Anti-corruption policy is likely to be successful if people are educated and civil society is vigilant and empowered. Lastly, the administrative machinery must be made clean by systematically eliminating opportunities for corrupt behaviour within it.

In the pursuit of clean governance, especially in the short term, the support of top political leaders, a clear anti-corruption policy and a strong anti-corruption agency may be necessary, as exemplified by the case of Singapore. These do not, however, explain the cleanness of governments as such, as evidenced by the case of Finland. This compels us to consider whether institutional measures should be accompanied by careful consideration of the historical and socio-cultural nature of the context in which any anti-corruption policy is adopted, and an even more careful match between institutional measures and socio-cultural conditions in order to generate synergistic effects from both the carrots and sticks built into the anti-corruption policy.

Lastly, it needs to be remembered that it is difficult to transfer organisational or structural methods that operate efficiently in one country to another context (Heilbrunn, 2004). Setting up an anti-corruption agency and taking compliance-based administrative measures seem to be a fast track strategy and fairly feasible, but the implementation may be impeded by various considerations, not least by silent opposition from leading politicians, local elites and top bureaucrats. There are also structural methods, such as high salaries for politicians and civil servants, that are technically easy to implement, but require a certain level of prosperity and political will, which remain unattainable in most of the developing countries. The most challenging strategy would build on actions that contribute directly to building a “clean culture”. This, however, is time-consuming and requires broad-based institutional support. Even if there is evidence of difficulty in enacting meaningful anti-corruption policies and implementing them (Heilbrunn, 2004; see also Quah, 2008; Kim, 2008), success stories may be an important source of inspiration, guidance and legitimation in countries that have demonstrated their commitment to structural transformations towards clean governance.

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