

## 1: Site-based management: Decentralization and accountability

*Decentralization and Accountability in Public Education. Hill, Paul T.; Bonan, Josephine Although only a few dozen school systems have formally embraced site-based management, thousands of districts across the country are experimenting with it in some form.*

Universities The ways in which public primary and secondary education is financed and delivered varies greatly throughout the world. In France, education is highly centralized at the level of the national government, whereas in Canada the national government does not even have an education ministry, and in the United States education is mainly the responsibility of local school districts. Many developing countries and countries in transition to market economies have highly centralized government administration of education and other public services. During the s and early twenty-first century, many of these countries began to decentralize education. This phenomenon proceeded fastest in Latin America and eastern Europe, but several countries in Asia and Africa also began initiating decentralization policies. Definition Decentralization is defined as the transfer of decision-making authority closer to the consumer or beneficiary. This can take the form of transferring powers to lower levels of an organization, which is called deconcentration or administrative decentralization. A popular form of deconcentration in education is to give additional responsibilities to schools. This is often called school autonomy or school-based management and may take the form of creating elected or appointed school councils and giving them budgets and the authority to make important educational decisions. Deconcentration may also take the form of empowering school directors or directors and teaching faculty to make decisions within the school. Another form of decentralization, called devolution, entails transferring powers to lower levels of government. Most often, education responsibilities are transferred to general-purpose governments at the regional or local levels. Examples are the decentralization of basic education to local district level governments in India and Pakistan. In rare cases additional responsibilities are given to single-purpose governments, such as the local school district in the United States. When education responsibilities are transferred to general-purpose governments, the elected governing bodies of those governments must make decisions about how much to spend on education versus other local services. Measurement The measurement of education decentralization is especially difficult. Economists often measure decentralization to lower levels of government by looking at the percent of educational revenues that come from local or regional sources, or, alternatively, by looking at the share of educational resourcesâ€”whatever their originâ€”that local governments control. Using these measures, education is highly centralized in countries such as Greece, Italy, and Turkey and highly decentralized in countries such as Canada, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States. However, these measures may be misleading when central governments mandate educational policies or programs that require the local government to allocate its revenues in a certain way. Mandating reductions in class size or the creation of special education programs, for example, reduces the degree of power the local government has to allocate its own revenues or resources. In the United States, the federal and state governments influence local education resource allocation both through unfunded policy and program mandates and through the use of conditional grants-in-aid, which require local governments or school districts to match federal or state funding for certain purposes. The combination of these mandates and conditional grants results in local school districts having discretionary expenditure control over only a small portion of their revenues and budgets. An alternative means of measuring education decentralization is more subjective and entails 1 identifying the major decisions made regarding the finance and provision of education and 2 answering the question, who makes each decision? This methodology divides educational functions into four groups: The content of each group is given in Table 1. TABLE 1 Some educational functions are decentralized even within centralized systems, and others are centralized even within decentralized systems. An OECD survey of its members, for example, shows that, even in centralized systems, schools make most of the decisions about the organization of instruction. On the other hand, in many countries most personnel-management decisions are made at a central level. Not all decisions are equally important. Indeed, one decision-making area is far more important than the

others. Teachers and other school staff represent about 80 percent of total recurrent education spending in developed countries and more than 90 percent of total recurrent education spending in many developing countries. Research on learning also demonstrates that teachers and their ability to teach are the single most important factor in the school that affects learning. Countries that allow school councils to select school directors and allow schools to recruit, hire, and evaluate teachers have already achieved a significant degree of decentralization even though school finance may still be highly centralized and teachers may be paid according to a national pay scale.

**Rationale** The rationale for education decentralization tends to be associated with four distinct objectives: Several countries with a history of authoritarian government have decentralized government in the name of democratization. More specifically, decentralization in these countries is designed to increase the voice of the local citizen and to empower the citizen to more fully participate in decision-making at the local level. Democratization has been the rationale for transferring education responsibilities to local governments in countries as diverse as Poland and Brazil. In other countries, there have been pressures from regionally based ethnic and language groups to develop their own curriculum, teach in their own languages, and manage their own schools. A good example of this is Spain, where initially the Basque and Catalan regions gained the right to manage their own educational systems, followed later by other regions. The improved efficiency results from two effects. One effect is the better match between services provided and the preferences of citizens. The other effect is increased output relative to resources or expenditures. Chile is an example of a country where education was decentralized to local governments primarily in the pursuit of greater efficiency. In addition, educators often resist decentralization for these purposes, fearing greater inequality in spending and educational outcomes. On the other hand, when education is decentralized in pursuit of greater quality, it is usually done as part of a larger reform promoted by educators themselves. An example of this can be found in several large U. At the same time, however, the performance of schools is carefully monitored, and schools are held accountable for improved performance to both parents and system administrators. These four objectives account for most, but not all, of the reasons for education decentralization. Argentina, for example, transferred education from the national to the regional governments in order to reduce central government fiscal deficits. Since the education sector employs more personnel than other sectors and also requires large recurrent salary expenditures, it is a tempting target to decentralize for fiscal reasons. Other countries have given local governments the authority to run their own schools as a means of circumventing central government bureaucracies in order to rapidly increase enrollments in remote areas. El Salvador provides an example of decentralization to remote rural communities for this purpose.

**Implementation** Like other education reforms, decentralization can result in political winners and losers. The potential winners are those gaining new decision-making powers, while the potential losers are those losing those powers. Two of the potential losers—civil servants and teacher unions—are sufficiently powerful that they can effectively stop decentralization processes. The civil servants working in education ministries have perhaps the most to lose, because some of their jobs become redundant and their power to influence the allocation of resources may be diminished. In countries where corruption in government is a serious problem, reduced power will be also reflected in a reduced ability of civil servants to extract financial or in-kind rents. The leaders of national teacher unions also lose power to the extent that salary negotiations, teacher recruitment, and teacher promotion are moved from national to lower levels of government. Union members may also fear lower salaries if the funding of education is moved to local governments with fewer sources of government revenues. In countries where being elected head of a teacher union is an important stepping-stone to a political career, decentralization of labor negotiations is likely to reduce the political importance of leading the national union. The implementation of education decentralization reforms can either be rapid or slow. Legislative or constitutional changes that immediately transfer responsibilities from the national to lower levels of government run the risk that lower levels of government will lack the required administrative capacity required to manage the system well. The result may be disruption in the delivery of schooling to children that adversely affects their learning, at least for a time. A more gradual decentralization can allow powers to be transferred to lower levels of government as those governments gain administrative capacity. The difficulty with gradual decentralization is that it may never occur at all, as the potential losers marshal their

forces to fight the policy change. In some countries with serious problems of internal conflict, weak public bureaucracies, or very weak government finances, one finds de facto decentralization of education. In these cases, the central government abdicates its responsibility for financing and providing public education, especially in remote areas, so local communities organize and finance their own schools and recruit and hire their own teachers. In Africa, the countries of Benin and Togo provide examples of community control and finance of schools resulting from the lack of central government supply. In other cases, the central government finances an inadequate number of teachers and other school resources to ensure schooling of adequate quality. In these cases, parents may form school councils to raise revenues to hire additional teachers, construct and equip school buildings, and provide other school resources. By virtue of their important role in funding education, parents and school councils may exercise significant decisionmaking power. School Finance

The financing of decentralized education can be very complicated in systems where two or three levels of government share financing responsibilities. The choices for financing education in such systems can be framed as follows: The choices made concerning education finance are extremely important as they determine both the degree of effective control local governments have as well as the implications for efficiency and equity. The single most important choice is whether the level of government providing education in most cases, the local government is expected to generate its own revenues for education from its own tax and other revenues sources or if it will receive the bulk of the required educational revenues from a higher level government. Local government capacity to generate revenues i. Thus, requiring local governments to raise all their own revenues for education ensures an unacceptably high degree of inequality in spending per child. Countries where local governments finance education from their own source revenues e. In the case of Brazil, the central government provides additional financing to ensure each jurisdiction spends a minimum amount per student. In the case of the United States, school finance policies vary by state, but in general they, too, ensure a minimum level of spending and, in some cases, put a cap on the maximum amount a local school district can spend. Most countries have made the choice to fund a large portion of primary and secondary education spending from either the regional or national government budgets. This funding can be provided in one of two ways. Monies can be transferred from the central government to either the general fund of the local or regional government or to a special education fund of the local or regional government. In the former case, the local or regional government receives funding sufficient to cover a large portion of expected education expenditures, but the local or regional government makes the decision of how much to spend on education. In the latter case, the local or regional government is required to spend the grant monies on education only. Requiring grant monies to be spent on education ensures adequate education spending but reduces the expenditure autonomy of the local or regional government. Once a decision is made to transfer monies to lower levels of government, a further decision needs to be made as to how to determine what amount of money should be transferred to each receiving government. The basic choice is whether to negotiate that amount between governments or to determine the amount using a capitation formula. Negotiation has political advantages in that it allows central governments to reward their political allies, and thus it is often popular. Capitation formulas, however, are more equitable and may also provide incentives for educational performance. Chile, for example, determines how much it provides to each local government based on a formula that includes indicators of educational cost, educational need, and student average daily attendance. Since local governments receive more revenues if more students are enrolled and attending regularly, the formula has encouraged those governments to undertake campaigns to keep children in school. Effects of Decentralization It is extremely difficult to disentangle the effects of education decentralization policies from other variables simultaneously affecting educational outcomes, and there have been few rigorous attempts to do so. Two studies that did attempt to isolate the effects of devolution in Central America concluded that it increased parental participation, reduced teacher and student absenteeism, and increased student learning by a significant, but small, amount.

## 2: Centralization Vs. Decentralization - Article by Annick M. Brennen

*Site-based management, one of the most widely discussed educational reforms, involves shifting the initiative in public education from school boards, superintendents, and central administrative offices to individual schools.*

Accountability, Transparency and Corruption in Decentralized Governance Accountability In its democratic political aspect, decentralization as currently conceived and increasingly practiced in the international development community has two principal components: Accountability constitutes the other side of the process; it is the degree to which local governments have to explain or justify what they have done or failed to do. Improved information about local needs and preferences is one of the theoretical advantages of decentralization, but there is no guarantee that leaders will actually act on these preferences unless they feel some sort of accountability to citizens. Local elections are the most common and powerful form of accountability, but other mechanisms such as citizen councils can have limited influence. Accountability can be seen as the validation of participation, in that the test of whether attempts to increase participation prove successful is the extent to which people can use participation to hold a local government responsible for its actions. Types of Accountability Accountability comes in two dimensions: Government Workers to Local Officials The first type can prove difficult to achieve, for civil servants, particularly professionals in such fields as health, education, agriculture --the very sectors that are most often decentralized-- often have considerable incentive to evade control by locally elected officials. They may well also fear that quality standards for service delivery will suffer if provision is localized. Finally, they often find opportunities for corruption greater if they are supervised by distant managers through long chains of command than if they must report to superiors close at hand. For all these reasons, they tend to have strong urges to maintain ties with their parent ministries in the central government and to resist decentralization initiatives. And understandably, their colleagues at the center have a parallel interest in maintaining these ties, for they are much concerned about preserving national standards in service delivery and often about opportunities for venality as well many corruption schemes provide for sharing ill-gotten gains upward through bureaucratic channels to the top. Given all these reasons both good and bad for opposition, it is scarcely surprising that decentralization initiatives so often run into heavy bureaucratic resistance, and designers find themselves pressured to keep significant linkages between the field and the central ministries, especially concerning such issues as postings, promotions, and salaries. Needless to say, such ties tend to undercut the capacity of elected officials to supervise government servants supposedly working for them. Some decentralized governance systems e. Elected Leaders to the Citizenry The second type of accountability is that of elected officials to the citizenry. Elections provided they are free and fair provide the most obvious accountability, but this is a rather blunt tool, exercised only at widespread intervals and offering only the broadest citizen control over government. Voters can retain or reject their governors, a decision that can certainly have salutary effects on governance, but these acts are summary judgments, generally not reactions to particular acts or omissions. And when local elections do revolve around a given issue, such as schools, they necessarily leave everything else out of the picture. Citizens need more discriminating instruments to enforce accountability. Fortunately, a number of these are available. Political parties can be a powerful tool for accountability when they are established and vigorous at the local level, as in many Latin American countries. They have a built-in incentive to uncover and publicize wrongdoing by the party in power and to present continuously an alternative set of public policies to the voters. Civil society and its precursor social capital enable citizens to articulate their reaction to local government and to lobby officials to be responsive. These representations generally come through NGOs though spontaneous protests can also be considered civil society, which, like political parties, often have parent organizations at the provincial or national level. If citizens are to hold their government accountable, they must be able to find out what it is doing. At the immediate neighborhood level, word of mouth is perhaps sufficient to transmit such information, but at any higher level some form of media becomes essential. In some countries, print media can perform this function, but generally their coverage is minimal outside larger population centers. A feasible substitute in many settings is low-wattage AM radio,

which is highly local, cheap to operate, and can offer news and talk shows addressing local issues. Public meetings can be an effective mechanism for encouraging citizens to express their views and obliging public officials to answer them. The *cabildos abiertos* held in many Latin American countries are a good example. In some settings, such meetings may be little more than briefing sessions, but in others they can be effective in getting public officials to defend their actions. Formal redress procedures have been included as an accountability mechanism in some decentralization initiatives. Bolivia probably has the most elaborate instrument along these lines with its municipal Vigilance Committees that are based on traditional local social structures and are charged with monitoring elected councils, encouraged to file actionable complaints with higher levels if needed. In other systems, formal recall procedures are available to citizens dissatisfied with their officials. Opinion surveys have generally been considered too complex and sophisticated to use at the local level, but usable and affordable technologies are being developed in the Philippines enabling local-level NGOs to employ such polls to assess public opinion about service provision. A recent USAID assessment of democratic local governance in six countries found that each country employed a different mix of these mechanisms, while no country had employed them all. No one instrument proved effective in all six settings, but various combinations offered considerable promise. Some may be able to substitute at least in part for others when weak or absent. Civil society and the media, for example, might together be able to make up for a feeble party system at the local level.

**Transparency and Corruption** In theory these two phenomena should be inversely related, such that more transparency in local governance should mean less scope for corruption, in that dishonest behavior would become more easily detectable, punished and discouraged in future. The history of the industrialized countries indicates that this tend to be true in the longer term, but recent experience shows that this relationship is not necessarily true at all in the short run. In the former Soviet countries, for example, local governance institutions have become much more open to public scrutiny in the s, but at the same time there can be little doubt that corruption at all levels has greatly increased. It is to be hoped that the local mechanisms of accountability discussed above will in tandem with greater probity at the national level improve the degree of honesty at all levels, but at best this will take time. The message for the international development community is to press forward with as many of these accountability mechanisms as is feasible. A second type of linkage between transparency and corruption has been noted by Manor when he notes that in India, while greater transparency in local governance was not accompanied by increased corruption, it did lead to popular perceptions of greater public malfeasance, simply because citizens became more aware of what was going on. This pattern has surely repeated itself in many other locales. Over time, to the extent that accountability mechanisms begin to become effective and corruption begins to decline, the citizenry should appreciate the improvement.

**Conclusion** The democratic local governance initiatives currently under way in many countries hold much promise for developing effective systems of public accountability that will ensure that government servants are responsible to elected officials, and that the latter are in turn responsible to the public that elected them in the first place. In the process these systems of accountability should increase the pressure for more transparent local governance, in which corruption will be easier to bring to light and thus to curtail. But just as it took many decades for such efforts to make much headway in the industrial countries, so too quick results cannot be expected elsewhere.

## 3: Accountability and Transparency

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Education and Decentralization Introduction There is currently a global trend of decentralizing education systems. Most countries are experimenting with or contemplating some form of education decentralization. The process transfers decision-making powers from central Ministries of Education to intermediate governments, local governments, communities, and schools. The extent of the transfer varies, however, from administrative deconcentration to much broader transfer of financial control to the regional or local level. While there are solid theoretical justifications for decentralizing education systems, the process requires strong political commitment and leadership in order to succeed. The path, depth, and ultimately, the outcome of decentralization reforms depend on the motivations for reforms, the initial country and sector conditions, and the interaction of various important coalitions within the sector. Why Decentralize Education In a world where most governments have experienced the pitfalls of centralized education service provision, mainly: In general, the process of decentralization can substantially improve efficiency, transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of service provision compared with centralized systems. Decentralized education provision promises to be more efficient, better reflect local priorities, encourage participation, and, eventually, improve coverage and quality. In particular, governments with severe fiscal constraints are enticed by the potential of decentralization to increase efficiency. Beneficiary cost recovery schemes such as community financing have emerged as means for central governments to off-load some of the fiscal burden of education service provision. Deciding Who Controls What There is ongoing debate about the appropriate locus of decision making within the education sector. The debate remains unresolved because the process requires that policy makers rationalize and harmonize a complex set of complementary functions, mainly: The choices of who does what are further complicated because each of these functions has to be evaluated for primary, secondary, and tertiary education, and often for preschools and adult literacy as well. Some emerging areas of consensus are summarized in this table. Decentralization Impacts The evidence about the impact of decentralization on education services is mixed and limited. In Brazil, it has increased overall access enrollments but has done little to reverse persistent regional inequities in access to schooling, per capita expenditures, and quality. These results are supported by experiences in Zimbabwe and New Zealand. However, the design of these decentralized systems have been criticized. One shortcoming is that central governments have off-loaded responsibilities to local governments and communities without providing adequate targeted support to poorer areas. The initial evidence suggests that decentralization to subnational governments may not be sufficient and that increased autonomy for communities and school actors may be necessary to improve schools and learning. By increasing the participation of parents, community-managed schools in El Salvador show significantly lower rates of student and teacher absenteeism. While this type of management does not appear to have improved student performance in tests according to a recent evaluation, it may be just a matter of time before better student attendance translates into higher student achievement. In Nicaragua, controlling for similar household background and school inputs, students in schools that make more decisions about school functions perform better in tests. These results are derived from ongoing impact evaluations. Since the impact of management reforms such as these may take time to unfold, further empirical analysis is needed. Conclusion Decentralization of education systems demands harmonization of a complex set of functions, each for primary, secondary, tertiary, and non-formal education. Issues of how far to devolve decision-making in each of these subsectors, and to whom, continue to be debated. The current consensus is that tertiary education, and specific functions such as curriculum design and standards setting are best retained by the center; secondary and primary education should be devolved as far as possible; local participation in school management improves accountability and responsiveness, and fosters resource mobilization. Yet, the devil is in the details, and there are many details that need to be sorted out on a country by country basis.

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