

Decentralization and Educational Institutional Development- A Case study from Pakistan

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Abstract

Punjab Local Government Ordinance (PLGO) 2001empowered District governments with power and authority to play an effective and efficient role for institutional development. The aimed at finding out the magnitude of educational institutional development especially in rural areas of Punjab province. The research methods employed in this study were qualitative in nature. Itwas survey study covering the four districts of Punjab. The results show that school management may be more empowered for decision making process as mostly decisions are being made by politicians and often they are forced to implement the decision taken by top management.

Keywords: Institutional Development, decentralization, implementation, administration

Introduction

Pakistan Education Statistics 2008-09 show that country has 258, 420 educational institutions with the strength of 1,387,746 teachers. Pakistan is developing country and have low social and human development(Ahmad & Anjum, 2012).The administrative structure remained central for more than fifty years which needs change(Ali, 2000). In contrast, decentralization has solution of faced problems(Ali, Qasim, Jaffer, & Greenland, 1993).

This research focuses on local education administration in order to gain useful insights into educational achievement in Pakistan and specifically in rural areas of Punjab province (Cinner et al., 2012). Previous studies attempting to explain the low level of educational development in Pakistan have pointed to a wide range of macro social issues from population growth and political instability to feudalism and a lack of human rights (Khattak, Abbasi, & Ahmad, 2011). Generally speaking, issues of local governmental education administration in Pakistan do not receive adequate attention from researchers (Ali, 2000). One rare exception is, who examined education under the municipality in an urban setting, offering an institutional analysis of the local educational administration of the Punjab municipalities (Abdalla, 1994). His claim that local politicians and administrative elites lack competence and interest in public education management is still relevant (Abdul-Aziz, Jaafar, Nuruddin, & Lai, 2010).

There have been other studies concerning the local management of education in Pakistan; however, most of them focused either on School-based management (Adams & Hastings, 2001). Ignorance of local governmental education administration, particularly its everyday realities, could significantly constrain our ability to understand the low levels of educational achievement in Pakistan (Agterbosch, Glasbergen, & Vermeulen, 2007). Furthermore, such an oversight could limit the country's ability to enhance EFA, especially now that the local education authority has been given a mandate to administer basic education.

This paper elucidates the work of local education administrations in Pakistan based on qualitative field research. Pakistan has been implementing a major administrative reform since 2000, devolving a great deal of authority to the local tier of government (Bouquet, 2009). It was originally believed that the reform would lead to the more efficient and effective delivery of public services and better responsiveness to local needs. However, the expected outcomes have not been realised so far due to political, economic and social constraints (Agbola, 1987). The author illustrates some of these constraints based on fieldwork conducted in Punjab Province of where the work of district education offices was closely examined (Agterbosch, Vermeulen, & Glasbergen, 2004).

At the same time, the author points out a potentiality possessed by the local society regarding the improvement of local education management. In this paper's conclusion, the author explores and proposes possible future directions for local education administration, and the roles of international aid in supporting these changes (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991). The author hopes that this case study on local education administration in Pakistan could provide policy makers, donors and academicians with useful insight into local education governance and educational decentralization not only in Pakistan, but also other developing countries similarly struggling with achieving EFA.

Decentralisation has become a world-wide trend and municipalities as well as local governments in rural areas are being strengthened in a growing number of countries in all continents. In Latin America, countries such as in Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, Costa Rica, and, more recently, Bolivia and Honduras have enacted important reforms. In Guatemala, e.g. eight per cent of the annual budget go directly to local governments for development purposes. Other examples could be added, such as Bolivia which is currently in the middle of a decentralisation process which will shift important powers to the municipal level.

In Asia, Nepal has not only introduced direct elections of municipal and village councils but also a system of direct allocation of rather substantial block grants to the local governments for development projects with very little administrative control attached to it. India has amended its Constitution, in 1992, with a long chapter on village Panchayats. The Philippines and Sri Lanka are other countries with a strong trend to strengthen local government.

In the Middle East and Africa, Egypt and Jordan have started discussions on decentralization. Morocco has passed the main responsibility for basic services to the communes already in 1976. Since then, services have improved considerably. Ethiopia went very far in transferring most powers to the regional level and retaining only the most important powers such as defense or foreign policy, etc., at the central level. In contrast, Senegal, Burkina Faso and Mali have put the emphasis on strengthening the municipalities, however, with mixed results as the shift of responsibilities was not followed by a shift in the allocation of resources.

Methodologies

The qualitative research methods were employed in this study. Four districts of Punjab province Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum and Rawalpindi were targeted for study purpose. Total 16 government high schools were visited and 8 headmasters and 160 teachers were interviewed. The researcher employed semi-structured interviews and group discussions; both are commonly used qualitative research methods. The research team consisted of 4 members and all members visited each and every school. The rural area schools were difficult to approach. All the respondent were asked about decentralization effects on educational institutions with special reference to student enrolment, student promotion, political interference, departmental inquires, school discipline, teacher transfer, support staff transfer, head master transfer, role of parent-teacher committees and financial issues.

Findings

1. Student enrolment

Rural areas school management has many challenging task before them and one of them is student enrolment. 89 % respondents reflected that government schools face much pressure at the time of admission in terminal classes' i.e 6th and 9th. This pressure includes movement of student from one school to other by neglecting the location of school and feeding community. Many times student from the neighbor of one school desires to move to other school which may be 15 KM away from his locality and this trend creates a state of imbalance among enrolment of schools. Some school get overburden and some have very limited number of students'. This trend got strength from local government and politicians. Town Nazim and his team enforce the school management to create this imbalance.

2. Student promotion

Second bigger challenge for rural areas school management is student promotion during internal exams. 74 % respondents informed that government schools face much pressure at the time of exams and internal promotions in classes' 6th and 7th as assessment of these students' is done by teacher made tests. This pressure includes promotion of student from one class to next class by neglecting the promotion criteria. This undue promotion creates disturbance for school management and teachers as well. The parents approach local government officials and politicians who approach school management and enforce them for neglecting the criteria of promotion.

3. Departmental inquires

Third time consuming challenge for rural areas school management is departmental inquiries. Many departmental matters remain in the process round the year. 84 % respondents disclosed that government schools face much pressure regarding these departmental inquiries. Mostly these matters are related to school discipline or administrative or financial issues and need a transparent trial but local government officials and politicians interfere in these inquiries and due to unfair trial guilty official escape from punishment and this phenomenon destroys whole system of the school.

4. School discipline

Fourth factor which proves problematic is the interference of local government officials and politicians in school discipline. 93 % respondents strictly recommended that school discipline should be free of any outside interference. School discipline includes the student uniform, their intime arrival at school, leave application procedure, parent-teacher interaction, school internal decision making process, teacher intime arrival and full time presence. When school discipline get influence from outside, it much difficult for school management to maintain and process school's managerial affairs. Mostly local government officials and politicians interfere in school discipline destroys whole system of the school.

5. Teacher transfer

Fifth factor which directly influences the teaching-learning process is transfer of teachers without any reason or need. 97 % respondents strictly recommended that teacher transfer should be on merit and free of political pressure. The undue political inference creates stress among teachers when they were dislocated by transfer on political pressure.

6. Support staff transfer

Sixth factor which directly influences the teaching-learning process is transfer of teachers without any reason or need. 67 % respondents strictly recommended that transfer of support staff should be on merit and free of political pressure. The undue political inference creates stress among support staff when they were dislocated by transfer on political pressure.

7. Head master transfer

Seventh factor which directly influences the teaching-learning process is transfer of head teachers without any reason or need. 81 % respondents strictly recommended that transfer of head teacher should be on merit and free of political pressure. The undue political inference creates stress among head teacher when they were dislocated by transfer on political pressure.

Discussion

This paper has explained the realities of local education administration in the Punjab province. The research was conducted at the level of government secondary schools in rural areas. Pakistan has a stratified education administration: from the federal government at the top, to the provincial governments in the middle, and finally district governments being at the bottom with sub-units (Tehsil and union). The 2000 reform designated the district governments as the core of basic education administration. Thus, the research focused on this level.

Nevertheless, the research conducted at these four districts offers intriguing insight into issues concerning local educational administration in the context of the recent decentralization reform. First, and the foremost, teacher transferring is a problematic issue that seems to consume much of time district education officers have at their disposal. At the same time student enrolment, student promotion, school discipline, departmental inquiries and political interference are the issues which need to be addressed on priority basis. Without remedial action, it seems unrealistic to expect the school education administration to improve the delivery of education service both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Lastly, collaboration between key stakeholders involved in education is important in improving teaching learning efficiency.

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