

**NKC: DECENTRALISATION OF THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS****Krishan Kant,****Deepti Redhu & Raj Rani**

Mata Harki Devi College of Education of Women. Odhan (Sirsa) Haryana.

Received: 17 August 2012

Reviewed & Received: 03 Nov 2012

Accepted: 03 Nov 2012

Abstract

In almost every developing country teachers are the largest group of workers in the civil or public service and the largest item in the education budget. As the management and delivery of education comes under increasing public scrutiny, the question of how best to manage teachers is receiving much attention. For management, the goal is to have qualified and motivated teachers assigned where they are most needed, with low levels of turnover and attrition and an incentive system that encourages teachers' commitment and professionalism. For parents, the ideal is to have hardworking teachers who provide high quality education to their children. Simple though these goals may seem, they are far from being achieved in many countries. A main issue in achieving the goals of administrators and parents is how to manage teachers to maximize their effectiveness as educators. In particular, it is important to decide at which level of administration the supervision and management of teachers should rest. In most developing countries, centralized management structures in the education sector have been the norm, usually for logical and compelling reasons. In some countries a centralized system was inherited at independence; in others it was adopted to promote a national identity and to satisfy social expectations for rapid and easy access to education. Following independence, there was often an implicit belief that central planning and state involvement were necessary to overcome inherited social and economic deficiencies. In some countries it was seen as appropriate for a centralized

body such as the ministry of education to manage teachers to ensure the fair and equitable allocation of what is often a scarce resource. Thus in these countries the setting of teaching standards and the establishment of teacher training, recruitment, pay, conditions, promotion, and discipline are controlled from the center. As education systems have expanded and lessons have been learned in both industrial and developing countries, it has become clear that centralization is not always the best approach for developing and overseeing an effective teacher-management system. Centralized structures have proven to be particularly weak in dealing with day-to-day administrative tasks such as responding to grievances and keeping records. In addition, there has been a shift in social attitudes toward parents' rights to be involved in their children's education. Changes in public opinion about the role and ability of government and the spread of democracy and popular participation have contributed to this shift. Many communities are now demanding a greater say in how their schools are run and how teachers perform; education unions are seeking to give individual schools, teaching teams, and classroom teachers' greater scope for creativity; and governments are actively looking for viable ways to devolve authority for teacher management to different levels of the system. All of these aspirations have to be balanced against the need for equity for pupils and education personnel.

Meaning of Decentralization of Management:

According to UNDP (1997) “. . . Decentralization, or decentralizing governance, refers to the restructuring or reorganization of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels according to the principle of subsidiarity, thus increasing the overall quality and effectiveness of the system of governance, while increasing the authority and capacities of sub-national levels. . . . Decentralization could also be expected to contribute to key elements of good governance, such as increasing people's opportunities for participation in economic, social and political decisions; assisting in developing people's capacities; and enhancing government responsiveness, transparency and accountability.”

According to UNDP (1998) “. . . Decentralization is a complex phenomenon involving many geographic entities, societal actors and social sectors. The geographic entities include the international, national, sub- national, and local. The societal actors include government, the private sector and civil society. The social sectors include all development themes - political,

social, cultural and environmental. In designing decentralization policies and programmes it is essential to use a systems-approach encompassing these overlapping social sectors and the different requirements which each makes. Decentralization is a mixture of administrative, fiscal and political functions and relationships. In the design of decentralization systems all three must be included.”

Why decentralization of school management:

- Accelerated economic development.
- Increased management efficiency.
- Redistribution of financial responsibility.
- Increased democratization through the distribution of power.
- Greater local control through deregulation.
- Market-based education.
- Neutralizing competing centers of power.
- Improving the quality of education.

Successful decentralization reform requires at least the following four factors:

- **Deregulation.** Increased flexibility through deregulation is the key to making decentralized schools work effectively. Current national and regional (state, provincial or departmental) laws, presidential decrees, ministry policies, municipal regulations and other legal instruments tend to be cumulative, contradictory, and almost always confusing to educators over the years.²⁶ However, deregulation also holds dangers, notably the potential for local abuses of power (for example, unqualified teachers can be hired or large budget deficits incurred).
- **Semi-autonomy.** Truly autonomous schools do not exist. With deregulation comes semi-autonomy, and semi-autonomy can be used effectively only if a local plan exists to guide educational actions, actors, and processes. The existence of a local plan should be a prerequisite for the transfer of authority. At a minimum, the plan should include local goals and upgraded standards involving administrative processes, professional development, curriculum innovation and change, and local financial contributions in support of school development. The potential danger is that because of inexperience, local decision makers may substitute wishful thinking for realistic potential.

• **Local school governance and leadership.** There are two basic models of decision making authority in a decentralized school. Under the first arrangement, authority is transferred to the school director who receives advice on decision making from an elected school council consisting of parents, teachers, staff, and sometimes, students. Under the second model, authority is transferred to the school council. A power-sharing arrangement exists between the council and the school director, each with defined duties and responsibilities. Both models can be effective, depending on the goodwill of the participants. Strong, collaborative leadership from the school director and the council members is important. The danger of the first model is that some directors may routinely ignore the advice of the council. The second model can be problematic if the director and the council members engage in disputes over task responsibilities. The second operates more effectively if the school council concerns itself with setting overall goals and policy for the development of the school and the evaluation of its progress, but does not become involved in micro-managing day-to-day affairs. Under this second model, the school director should not try to set policy. In all cases, if the school council or the school director violates national educational policy, the ministry of education should be entitled to intervene. In Spain, the school council elects the school director from teacher candidates who present proposals for school development. After the election, the school director and the council members work together to implement the development plan. The negative side of the Spanish model is that the teachers elected as directors must continue to teach several classes a day; they can only be reelected once, and then must return to a classroom in their own schools when their time in office is over. Along with losing valuable administrative experience, the transition of teachers from colleague to director and then back to colleague is difficult and stressful.

• **Accountability.** The decentralized schools model can be effective only if accountability accompanies the transferred authority. A danger with decentralized schools is that they will not be held accountable for anything, even if they do not meet their own goals and minimum standards, or those of the region or of the nation. A second danger is that a radical element in the community may take over the school council to insert its own ideological agenda.

Recommendations of NKC:

Ensuring quality school education to all is the foundation upon which any further advances towards a knowledge society must be based. Noting the crucial importance of school education,

the National Knowledge Commission held a series of workshops and consultations around the country involving a very wide range of stakeholders, to discuss issues of quantity, quality and access in school education. NKC recognizes that the primary responsibility for school education is borne by the State Governments, and therefore any policy changes must be with the full participation and involvement of the states. Nevertheless, NKC believes that positive changes in systems of schooling will require the active involvement of the Central Government as well as State Governments, not only in the matter of providing resources but also in promoting organizational and other changes. NKC has a number of suggestions and recommendations covering the different aspects of school education, but the essential thrust can be summarized in terms of more resources, more decentralization and more flexibility.

Central Legislation for the Right to Education, backed by Financial Commitment

NKC endorses the speedy enactment of a central legislation that will ensure the right of all children in the country to good quality school education up to Class VIII, supported with financial commitments of the Central and State Governments. This obviously requires substantially increased public spending for both elementary and secondary school education, which must be seen as a priority area for spending. Currently school education is highly segmented, even in government-run institutions, as a result of the parallel track of “education centres” in some states. These separate systems must be integrated to give all children access to schools of acceptable quality, which will obviously require additional spending.

More Flexibility in Disbursal of Funds

However, there is a strong case for changes in the manner in which such expenditure is incurred. The current norms for central government disbursal to states of funds for [including for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)] the planned SUCCESS program for secondary education and other central schemes, are too rigid and must be made more flexible. NKC strongly recommends a system of funds transfer and accounting that will allow for regional and other differences as well as changing requirements over time, and thereby allow State Governments to use the resources in the most effective way. There should also be greater flexibility in disbursing funds down to the school level and a greater degree of autonomy of local level management in the use of funds. The norms and rules should allow schools to adapt to local conditions and meet particular requirements of their students.

Decentralization and Greater Local Autonomy

Community participation is an important instrument to ensure accountability and improve the day-today functioning of schools. This in turn means that the management of schools, including the use and management of funds, should be decentralized to local authorities as far as possible, whether they be panchayats, Village Education Committees or municipalities, and to School Boards that have representation of all stakeholders including parents.

Expansion of Functional Literacy

NKC would like to stress the continuing importance of a focus on expanding functional literacy among the population. Illiteracy remains a major problem, even among the age group 15-35 years, and therefore literacy programs must be expanded rather than reduced, and given a different focus that is directed towards improving life skills and meeting felt needs, especially (but not only) among the youth.

Planning for School Infrastructure

It is important to remember that land is an essential requirement of schools, and this requirement is likely to increase in the near future given the expansion implied by demographic changes and need to ensure universal schooling. Therefore, urban master plans and local development plans must explicitly incorporate the physical requirements for schooling, including provisions for playgrounds and other school facilities.

Enabling and Regulating Mechanisms for Private Schools

Since private schools play an important role in the provision of education, there is need for both enabling and regulating mechanisms to be developed and strengthened for them. There should be transparent, norm-based and straightforward procedures for the recognition of private schools, to reduce harassment and bureaucratic delay. There should also be transparent criteria as for the disbursement of aid from the government to some self-financing schools, especially those which cater to underprivileged children, and clear norms with respect to the ability of school managements to raise resources from other sources. The monitoring of private schools, in terms of ensuring a transparent admissions process, regulation of fee structures, as well as meeting minimum set standards for quality of teaching and infrastructure, also requires attention. The possibility of greater exchange between schools, including mentoring of one school by another, should be allowed and encouraged.

Database on School Education

Educational planning and monitoring are made much more difficult because of the lack of comprehensive and accurate data on schools, school-age children and actual attendance of both students and teachers. The collection and speedy dissemination of accurate and current data on schooling must be made a priority. It is necessary to create a complete database on schools and school-age children so as to track the actual coverage and quality of schooling at different levels, and to make it widely available in a timely manner. Such data collection may be made an essential part of the fund allocation for school education, with appropriate institutional mechanisms.

More Co-ordination between Departments

The multiplicity of management structures and government departments that currently governs schooling creates confusion, unnecessary replication and possibly inconsistent strategies across different schools. There must be greater co-ordination between different departments of government on school education policy, even while ensuring more autonomy to the local management of schools.

National Evaluation Body for Monitoring Quality

Educational administration also needs to be more conscious of actual learning outcomes at different levels, which will determine both policy and functioning. NKC therefore proposes a national evaluation body to monitor the quality of both government and private schools, using a results-based monitoring framework based on a short list of monitorable criteria that include both process and outcome indicators.

Revamping School Inspection

The system of school inspection needs to be revamped and revitalised, with a greater role for local stakeholders and greater transparency in the system. The solution does not lie in simply expanding the system – rather, we need to develop systems to ensure meaningful monitoring, including provision of greater facilities to school inspectors, a separation of inspection of qualitative and administrative aspects, transparency in the criteria of inspection, and greater involvement of local stakeholders.

Teachers and Teacher Training

Teachers are the single most important element of the school system, and the country is already facing a severe shortage of qualified and motivated school teachers at different levels. It is urgent to restore the dignity of school teaching as a profession and provide more incentives for qualified and committed teachers. Nonteaching official duties such as electoral activities should not be allowed to interfere with the teaching process. Forums that allow and encourage teachers to exchange ideas, information and experiences, including a webbased portal, should be developed. At the same time, there should be transparent systems for ensuring accountability of school teachers. As far as possible, teachers should be recruited to particular schools. The training of teachers is a major area of concern at present, since both pre-service and in-service training of school teachers is extremely inadequate and also poorly managed in most states. Pre-service training needs to be improved and differently regulated in both public and private institutions, while systems for in-service training require expansion and major reform that allows for greater flexibility.

Reforms in the Curriculum and Examination System

Curriculum reform remains a critically important issue in almost all schools. School education must be made more relevant to the lives of children. There is need to move away from rote-learning to understanding concepts, developing good comprehension and communication skills and learning how to access knowledge independently. This also requires substantial changes in the examination system, especially at Board level but also earlier.

Use of Information and Communication Technology

Wherever feasible, ICT should be made more accessible to teachers, students and administration for learning, training, research, administration, management, monitoring etc. This requires the provision of more facilities such as computers as well as connectivity and broadband facilities. Computer-aided learning also requires training of teachers and other staff in order to make the best use of technology.

English Language Teaching

Proficiency in English is widely perceived as an important avenue for employment and upward mobility, which also greatly facilitates the pursuit of higher education.

The incorporation of English into the curriculum through the teaching of English as a language in Class I and teaching of one other subject in English medium in later classes requires making

pedagogical changes to contextualize language learning, increasing the availability of English language teachers and providing more bilingual and supplementary teaching materials. At the same time, multi-linguality must be promoted and language issues must be explicitly taken on board in designing school curricula and methods of pedagogy.

Interventions to Ensure Access of Educationally Deprived Categories

Special interventions are necessary to ensure greater access to education of educationally deprived categories, and some proposals for this are developed in more detail in the accompanying Note. Obviously, specific measures are required to ensure greater enrolment and retention of girl students. Education of SC children must be a priority, which necessitates both flexibility of approach and avoidance of discrimination. The access of children from Scheduled Tribes requires more flexible and sensitive schooling strategies. Language issues must be explicitly taken on board in designing school curricula and methods of pedagogy. Special strategies are required to ensure greater access to schools for children in backward regions, remote locations and difficult terrains. Official strategies for ensuring better access of Muslim children to schooling are excessively focused on madrasas which cater to only a tiny minority of such children; the emphasis should be on creating enabling conditions for Muslim children in the general school system. Children of seasonal migrants require special conditions and efforts to ensure continuous access to schooling. Similarly, labouring children require incentives and bridge courses. The needs of physically disadvantaged children, as well as teachers, have to be factored in more thoroughly in provisions for school education.

There is wide diversity across states in terms of progress towards achieving universal elementary education, and also diversity within states with respect to the quality of school education. But NKC believes that these proposals, which require the active involvement of the Central Government as well as State Governments, will go some way in terms of ensuring universal access to elementary education, wider access to secondary education as well as better quality and greater relevance of all schooling. Given the strong synergies between this and other areas such as libraries, translation, knowledge networks etc, these suggestions should be seen in conjunction with other recommendations that have already been made in these other areas, as part of a systematic set of knowledge initiatives for the young.

Conclusion: As a coin has two sides likewise decentralization has also two aspects, its demerit results in monopoly, unsystematic management, less accountability & transparency and above all it's against individual competency blessed by Mother Nature. Its required the smaller units, the more efficacy will prevail to bring about the qualitative changes in Education.

References:

1. ANANDAKRISHNAN , M. (2001) Convergence of Knowledge System: Imperatives of Continuous Learning, *University News*, 39(2) (6–12 August),
2. Amaral, A. L., A. Guedes, T. Lobo, and R. Walker. 1995. "Decentralized Management of Education in Minas Gerais, Brazil." Paper presented at World Bank Seminar on Education Decentralization, June 2, World Bank, Human Development Department, Washington, D.C.
3. Brown, D.J., *Decentralization and School-Based Management* (London: Falmer Press, 1990).
4. National Knowledge Commission (2009), "Report to the Nation, 2006-2009", Government of India

Web References:

www.wikipedia.org

www.nationalknowledgecommission.gov.in