

Implementation of Devolution Plan; Variations in the Perceptions of District Education Officers of Pakistan

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Being an important development in Pakistan, devolution plan has been an area of interest for different national and international organizations. Different studies have been conducted to see the implications of the devolution plan in education sector but most of them focused a particular geographical area due to time and resources constraints. The present study was design to get the data from maximum DEOs (Secondary Education) with regard to implementation of devolution plan. The major purpose of the study was to see the state of implementation of devolution plan in Pakistan according to the perception of the DEOs. The sample consisted 87 DEOs (i.e. KPK 19, Punjab 29, Sindh, 19 and Baluchistan 20). A questionnaire consisting 20 items was designed on five point rating scale and was launched through different research assistants. The data were tabulated and chi square was applied to see the variations in the perception of the DEOs in Pakistan. The results of the study indicated that the state of implementation of devolution plan in Punjab province was comparatively good. In KPK and Sindh the position was satisfactory, where as in Baluchistan it was week. There is a need to take remedial measures by the federal and provincial governments particularly in Baluchistan in all aspects of education at district level whereas, in KPK and Sindh, some major recommendations have been proposed to improve the working of the DEOs.

Key words: decentralization, district education officer, perception, organization, responsibility

Introduction

Centralization refers to gathering of powers into one office, person or authority. It can act as a potent unifying factor in the under developed world. Haimann, (1985, p.45) states that centralization empowers a chief executive over the operation, decisions and instructions. Decentralization is the opposite process and Govinda, (2003, p.10) argues that it makes day to day administrative work faster and more efficient. Thus, centralization and decentralization are the two extremes of a continuum. There are four major types of decentralization i.e. deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatization. In deconcentration, the central governments shift powers to elected representatives of local community (Paques and Lammert 2000, p.131). Deconcentration is considered the weakest form

of decentralization. It shifts responsibilities from the officials of central government in the capital city to those working in regions, provinces or districts. Under deconcentration, the central government shifts the powers of decision making to its own local agents. According to Paqueo and Lammert, (2000, p.131) “deconcentration involves the shifting of management responsibilities from the central to the regional or other lower level so that the center retains control”. Ibtisam Abu-Dahou, (1999, p.71) has argued that “Deconcentration gives some discretion to field agents to plan and implement programs and projects or to adjust central directives to local conditions, within guidelines set by central ministry or agency headquarters”. An example of deconcentration in Pakistan is creating new districts especially in Baluchistan, which are the crucial tier of provincial administration. Delegation is the

transfer of managerial responsibility for specified functions to public organizations outside central government control (Ferguson and Chandrasekhar, 1999, p.221).

Delegation is considered as a more extensive form of decentralization. Under delegation, the central government transfers the responsibility of decision making and the administration of public functions. The semi-autonomous or the autonomous bodies like universities in Pakistan are not wholly controlled by the concerned ministries of the central government but ultimately they are accountable to them in their major policy decisions. According to Ferguson and Chandrasekhar, (1999, p.221) “delegation is the transfer of managerial responsibility for specified functions to other public organizations outside normal central government control, whether provincial or local government agencies”. Rondineli, et al (1983, p.27) state that “delegation transfers managerial responsibility for specifically defined functions to organizations that are outside the regular bureaucratic structure and that are only indirectly controlled by the centre”. Under delegation, the central government delegates responsibilities in different areas and level like some housing schemes allowed by the Capital Development Authority, Islamabad, transportation facilities like Waran Bus Service in Rawalpindi, or special project implementation units as in PATA, Kohistan and some districts of Baluchistan where special education projects are implemented by giving some incentives to students or their parents to attract them in education process.

Shah (2003, p.12) states that, “Devolution is the creation or strengthening financially or legally sub-national units of government, activities of which are substantially outside the direct control of the central government”. Devolution is a more advanced form of decentralization. The term devolution implies

that something is given back to an organization from which it had been taken (<http://www.unesco.org/iiep>). Devolution involves participation and participation in turn, leads to search for new forms of association or partnerships between local stakeholders. Under this form of decentralization, all financial, administrative and other powers are permanently devolved at the local level and these powers cannot be withdrawn at the wish of the officials of the central government (Paqueo and Lammert, 2000). Under devolution, the authority, assets, and financial resources are transferred to the lower level governments, such as provincial or district governments. Similarly, Carevell (1998, p.23) states that, “Devolution is the transfer of powers from the central government to the local authorities. In addition to that, resources, discretion and responsibilities are transferred to the local authorities”.

Privatization is transfer of authority over financial, administrative or pedagogical matter on a permanent basis (Paques and Lammert 2000, p. 142). The fourth form of decentralization is privatization which is a transfer from a government institution to a non-government agency or private enterprises. Ibtisam Abu-Dahou, (1999, p.42) has defined privatization with its functions. According to him, “Privatization includes the transfer of powers and functions from government institution to a non government agency. With privatization both central and local public representatives are likely to lose direct control over service provision like Pakistan Telecommunication Corporation which has been recently privatized and the Ministry of Telecommunication has lost its direct control over it. However, the said Ministry may still have an influence through the exercise of regulatory powers like Pakistan Telecommunication Authority which still exercises the regulatory powers to improve the service delivery of PTCL. Privatization is recommended for Pakistan primarily because

the public sector has become quite large and unwieldy. This was the reason that in the previous decades Government of Pakistan has been making steps for the privatization of different institutions. With decentralization, there is a loss of any unified central direction. But its advantage is that it enables people at local level to participate in policy formulation and in its implementation. However, one cannot expect resolving all problems automatically, because of decentralized measures. In addition, the cultural context is important. Therefore, the western notion of decentralization cannot be transplanted to Asian countries which have their own cultural problems and needs. The most important factor is to consider the purposes of any proposed decentralization.

Decentralization of Education

The decentralization of education varies in different countries. Generally this seeks to empower the community and its representatives who are the actual stakeholders to make decisions for implementing and improving an education system at grass root level. In some countries policy decisions are retained centrally while, in others policy and detailed administration are decentralized. Many countries have experienced it in different areas: India for rural development, in Mexico, Argentina and China, for educational development. Benefits, however, are below the expectations as the strong and continuous political commitment lacked in majority of the countries. In China, the Minban schools (Minban education is the transliteration for private or nongovernmental education in Chinese) were a means to solve the problem of financing education (Raymond and Wang, 2008). For Hong Kong, SBM (school based management) was a device for reshuffling of power from the SSBs (schools sponsoring bodies) to other stake holders so that schools are under better control (<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title>). In Argentina, decentralization measures were

carried out in a centralization spirit, while in Singapore, deconcentration measures were taken to make sure the better control of the universities in fulfilling the national goals (UNESCO, 2005). Comparatively it has proven to be better in services delivery, enhancing retention of students at different level and particularly to improve the quality of education.

In the year 2000, Pakistan introduced the devolution of power programme with due legislative support. Under the devolution programme the district management and community has been empowered at the grassroots level in planning, management, resource mobilization, utilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the education system. The decentralization of educational administration in Pakistan is a major innovation and reform in the political and education system. The purpose was to improve administrative and implementation processes by entrusting those closer to the field to increase the participation and make the appropriate decisions. Federal government under devolution plan is now responsible for national policy formulation addressing issues such as;

1. Easy access to education
2. Equity and quality of education
3. Setting teachers' pay level
4. Defining required teacher's qualification
5. Setting the norms for national curriculum and
6. Assessing student's performance through national assessment system

Under the devolution plan, responsibilities of the provincial government now include matters related to the implementation of the provisions of national education policy. The district governments are responsible for the planning, monitoring and evaluation of the education system at their level. They are also responsible to develop organizational structure for educational programs. The district has to

generate its own funds in addition to the funds allocated by the federal and provincial governments. However, it is a challenging task. To support the education system under decentralization, short term and long term plans have been drawn to facilitate and provide them opportunities to address the implications of decentralization. These areas pertain to the development of framework for district based planning, management, supervision, monitoring community mobilization, participation and capacity building. District educational management plays a vital role in monitoring the performance of secondary schools in their respective districts. District management coordinates and integrates network activities so that education system may try to achieve maximum internal efficiency through management, allocation and use of resources available for increasing the quantity and improving the quality of education. There are different studies conducted at national and international level to study the devolution plan of Pakistan.

Nasir, (2008) studied the devolution plan in six districts of N.W.F.P. in order to find out basic similarities and differences between the centralized and district system and to judge the effects of the district system on educational management and to study difficulties and problems in the implementation of the new system. The researcher recommended devolution of administrative and financial powers at district and local level to make the system more effective and meaningful. Warraich, (2008) analyzed the new educational management system under the devolution plan. The researcher recommended that district educational management must be trained to create a participatory relationship with teachers. District educational personnel should be given a free hand within the broad parameters of provincial government to play their role more freely. Khan, (2007) focused on the implementation status of the devolution plan in

Rawalpindi district by exploring the perception of educational managers about the devolution plan. The researcher recommended that that financial and administrative powers be delegated to the district educational authorities as well as to Heads of secondary schools. The community may further be mobilized to play its role effectively.

Asian Development Bank, (2004) in a report concluded that local governments in Pakistan were not fully empowered to develop their own budgets based on the available resources. The report recommended that the community and its representatives at local level may be given complete financial autonomy in finances and developing their own schemes. The World Bank, (2001) carried out a study to examine the process and implementation of devolution in different countries with its impact on rural development, rural services delivery, overall economic growth and particularly poverty reduction. The study concluded that decentralization in general could change local participation; improve accountability and responsiveness of government but it did not always help to improve economic efficiency and poverty reduction. UNESCO, (2006) in a study focused on implementation of decentralization in the education and health sectors. In this report, the role of local community and their representatives as well as the participation of the citizens in the devolution plan was also included. The study recommended that the powers may further be devolved at the institution and local community level, so that workable and realistic planning could be made at local level. The study further recommended that the district educational management i.e. Executive District Officers be further empowered in all administrative and financial matters.

Rationale of the Study

The devolution plan was initiated in Pakistan in 1999. Under this plan, the district

educational management particularly, the District Officers (Secondary Education) had a key role in the new system. Being independent in some matter, overall he is supposed to help and support the Executive District Education Officer. Keeping in view the provisions of devolution plan and the crucial role DEO, the present study was designed.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were to :

- i. Observe the state of implementation of the devolution plan according to the perceptions of the District Education Officers (Secondary Education)
- ii. Determine the differences in the perceptions of the District Education Officers (Secondary Education) regarding implementation of devolution plan in education sector.
- iii. Identify problems and difficulties in the implementation of the devolution process and propose recommendations.

Research Methodology

The study was descriptive in its nature. The population of the study comprised 109 District Officers (Secondary Education). 87 DEOs amounts to 87 comprised the sample of the study. It was convenient sample in its nature. Questionnaire was used for data collection throughout the country. Data were collected through research assistants identified and trained for the purpose.

Data Analysis

Keeping in view the objectives of the study and nature of the data, chi square was used to determine the differences in the perceptions of the District Education Officers (Secondary Education) and to observe the state of implementation of devolution plan in accordance with perceptions of the DEOs. For

the analysis of the open ended questions percentage was used. The tabulated/analyzed data is given at the end.

Findings

The findings were drawn as following:

The value of χ^2 of the responses of DEOs of three provinces i.e. Punjab, KPK and Sindh for the statements i.e. effectiveness of the need based educational planning under new system, coordination of educational activities at district level, quantitative expansion of education under new system, cooperation of the community while organizing different educational activities and initiating proposals of inservice training programmes etc.” were statistically not significant.

The value of χ^2 of all the responses of DEOs of all provinces for the statements i.e. delegation of necessary financial and administrative powers for the improvement of quality education, effective monitoring and supervision of private schools were statistically not significant. Whereas value of χ^2 of the DEOs of four provinces for the statements i.e. evaluation of educational activities at district level, involvement of DEOs in the performance evaluation reports of concerned employees, assisting EDOs effectively in different educational activities were statistically significant.

The value of χ^2 of the responses of DEOs of Punjab province for the statements i.e. provision of manpower for effective implementation of devolution plan, provision of equipment to the secondary/higher secondary schools and initiating proposals to the EDOs office for the appointment and transfer of teaching and non teaching staff were significant statistically. Whereas value of χ^2 of these statements of the DEOs of KPK, Sindh and Baluchistan were statistically not significant.

The values of χ^2 of the responses of DEOs

of Punjab, KPK and Baluchistan for the statements i.e. EDOs provinces guidance to the DEOs on administrative, financial and academic matters, and measures are taken for community participation in educational activities were significant. The value of χ^2 of these statements for Sindh province was statistically not significant.

The values of χ^2 of the responses of DEOs of Punjab and Sindh for the statement i.e. formal and regular feedback on instructional improvement and immediate resolution of the problems of heads of secondary and higher secondary schools were statistically significant. However, the responses of DEOs of Baluchistan and KPK to this effect were not significant.

The values of χ^2 of the Punjab and Baluchistan for the statements i.e. frequent monitoring and supervision of public school, and effective supervision of schools under the new system were significant. Whereas the value of χ^2 of Sindh and KPK for these statement were not significant.

The values of χ^2 of the DEOs of Punjab, Baluchistan and Sindh for the statement i.e. independent countersigning of teacher's performance report under the new system were statistically significant. However the value of χ^2 of Baluchistan for this statement was not significant.

In the open ended questions the DEOs of four provinces indicated different problems which they face while working under the new system. These includes; political problems, excessive work load, capacity building, lack of adequate finances, involvement of local representatives, lack of administrative and financial powers, lack of sufficient trained staff, absenteeism of teachers and pressure of clerk/SSs unions.

Conclusions and Discussion

From the data analysis and findings it revealed that DEOs of Punjab, KPK and Sindh were effectively involved in initiating need based educational planning in their districts. They coordinated educational activities at their part efficiently. During their stay and working in the concerned districts quantitative expansion in secondary and higher secondary education was improved but on the other side, they did not enjoyed full cooperation from the community while executing different educational activities at district and institution level. The DEOs of these provinces were not independent in initiating proposals of inservice training programmes to the EDOs and other higher authorities. The DEOs (Secondary Education) of all provinces were not delegated necessary financial and administrative powers for improving the quality of education at secondary and higher secondary levels. The process of effective monitoring and supervision of private schools in their district was also not improved as envisaged in the devolution plan. However, they were actively involved in the performance evaluation of the concerned staff, evaluation of educational activities at district level and assisting their Executive District Officers (education) for different educational activities of secondary and higher secondary intuitions. The DEOs of Punjab were provided necessary manpower and equipments for their offices and for the purpose of effective implementation of devolution plan. They were also in a position to initiate different proposals to the EDOs office for the appointment and transfer of teaching and non teaching staff. However, the DEOs of Sindh, Baluchistan and KPK lacked these facilities and powers. The EDOs of Punjab, KPK and Baluchistan provided guidance to their DEOs on administrative, financial and academic matters. The DEOs of these provinces took appropriate measures for community participation in educational activities. However the DEOs of Sindh did not enjoyed guidance from their EDOs on major administrative,

financial and academic affairs and also did not enjoyed cooperation from the community while executing major educational activities. The DEOs of Punjab and Sindh regularly received formal and regular feedback from secondary and higher secondary schools on the instructional improvement. They also resolved the problems of heads of secondary and higher secondary schools promptly. Comparatively, the DEOs of Baluchistan and KPK did not received formal and regular feedback on instructional improvement and they also could not resolve the problems of heads of secondary and higher secondary schools under their jurisdiction. The DEOs of the Punjab and Baluchistan were actively involved in the frequent monitoring and evaluation of public school. Similarly under new system they were in a position to supervise secondary and higher secondary schools in a better way. The DEOs of Sindh and KPK were not actively involved in the important aspects of monitoring and evaluation of the schools in their respective districts. The DEO Secondary Education of Punjab, Baluchistan and Sindh were independent in countersigning the teacher's performance report under the new system. Whereas the DEOs of Baluchistan did not availed this independent role. Apart from above position, the DEOs of four provinces faced the problem of political interference in their routine work, excessive workload to meet the targets, lack of capacity building, financial and managerial powers, lack of trained staff, absenteeism of subject specialists, teachers and pressure of the community as well as different unions of clerks and subject specialists etc. Due to these problems their worked was badly suffered.

Recommendations

The DEOs of all the provinces may be given financial and administrative powers to improve the quality of education at their level. One month managerial training is proposed for the DEOs of all the provinces. The Educational

Planning Policy Studies and Leadership department may be assigned this important task.

The DEOs of KPK, Sindh and Baluchistan may be encouraged and empowered to initiate proposals to EDOs on all related matters particularly for the appointment/transfer of the teaching/non teaching staff. They may also be authorized to recruit necessary manpower and procure adequate equipments.

The DEOs of Baluchistan may initiate need based educational planning and appropriate measures for quantitative expansion for secondary schools (boys and Girls).

In Sindh province, all EDOs may provide proper guidance to DEOs on administrative, financial and academic matters at high secondary school level.

In Sindh and KPK, DEOs may take steps for the effective monitoring and supervision of schools working in public sector.

In KPK and Baluchistan DEOs may ensure formal and regular feedback on the instructional improvement in their institutions.

The DEOs of Baluchistan and KPK may conduct a survey for the identification of problems of heads of higher secondary/secondary schools for their immediate remedy.

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Table 1 Responses/Perceptions of DEO s regarding Devolution Plan

Statement	PUNJAB	KPK	SINDH	BALUC
Need based educational planning has become more effective in the new system	27.586***	14.00***	8.316*	4.300
It has now become more convenient for you to coordinate educational activities at district level	28.414**	10.842**	14.00***	4.900
The new system has become helpful in quantitative expansion of education	31.941***	7.684*	8.316*	4.700
Necessary manpower has been provided for the effective implementation of the devolution plan	8.552*	2.00	3.263	4.900
Necessary financial and administrative powers have been provided to improve the quality of education	4.621	1.684	5.474	3.100
The government schools in the districts have been provided sufficient equipment	10.414**	2.00	4.21	.100
EDOs provides guidance to you on administrative, financial and academic matters	16.828***	14.000***	2.947	6.700*
You assist EDOs more effectively in different educational activities	24.069***	15.211***	14.00***	9.100*
It has become more convenient for you to evaluate the educational activities at district level	20.138***	8.000*	7.684*	9.100*
The new system has improved the supervision of schools under your jurisdiction	7.514*	5.158	4.526	6.400*
Formal and regular feedback on instructional improvement is received from the schools	17.034***	3.263	9.579**	1.900
Monitoring and supervision of public schools is being done more frequently under the new system	13.724**	.105	3.895	12.400**
Monitoring and supervision of private schools is being done more frequently under the new system	2.966	1.684	.105	3.700
The process of proposals for appointment, promotion, transfer and other matters of teaching/non teaching staff to EDOs office has become more formalized	15.379***	4.526	.421	2.500
The countersigning of teachers performance reports is carried out more independently under the new system	11.241**	2.947	17.789***	12.400**
You are more actively involved in the performance evaluation reports of relevant personnel of secondary/high secondary schools	10.828**	7.684*	10.542*	12.400**
The problems of heads of secondary and high secondary schools are resolved quickly	17.862***	23.263	8.316*	1.300
Under the new system it is expected that in-service training proposal be initiated by your office	16.621***	10.142**	7.684*	1.600

You have been enabled to take measures for community involvement in educational activities	13.310**	10.842**	1.368	6.100*
You enjoy more cooperation from the community while organizing performing different educational activities	8.552*	10.842**	9.421**	.700

*p<.05

p<.01 *p<.001

df = 2

Table 2 Problems Identified by the DEOs While Working Under New System

S. No	Statements	Frequency	(%)
1	Political problems	70	80
2	Excessive work load	74	80
3	Problem of capacity building	65	75
4	Lack of adequate finances for new system	64	74
5	Involvement of local representatives	58	67
6	Lack of financial powers	55	63
7	Lack of sufficient trained staff	46	53
8	Lack of administrative powers	46	53
9	Absenteeism of teachers under new System	42	48
10	Pressure of clerk/SSs unions	34	49