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Policies and Practices of Capacity-Building for Educational Managers: Prior To and After Decentralisation

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Abstract

Decentralisation trends in education are consistently being followed around the world including South Asian countries (Govinda, 1997). In Pakistan, decentralisation in education came through a radical devolution policy in August, 2001, and new governing structures are currently undergoing a transition phase. Effective decentralisation requires education managers, key players in a devolved system, to acquire new knowledge and skills. In order to understand the policies and practices of capacity-building of educational managers and their impact on educational decentralisation, a research was conducted between March and November, 2005. This paper reports on the major initial findings emerging from this research which suggest that there are gaps between policies and the practices of capacity-building both prior to and after decentralisation. The papers also cites various possible causes for this gap and concludes by arguing that while there are greater training opportunities after decentralisation, the quality of training needs to be improved before expecting any substantial improvements in building capacity.

Introduction

Decentralisation in education has been one of the most important phenomena for educational planners for more than two decades. McGinn and Welsh (1999, p. 17) describe decentralisation as mainly about shifts in the location of those who govern and about transfers of authority from those in one location or level to those in another location or level. Rondinelli et al (1984, cited in McGinn & Welsh, 1999) categorise decentralisation into four forms: deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation. Deconcentration refers to shifting of authority for implementation but not for making rules. Delegation involves transfer of authority to lower ranks but that authority can be taken back at any time. The third form of decentralisation, devolution, refers to the transfer of authority to local units from where it had been taken earlier. Privatisation, as another form of decentralisation, refers to the complete handing-over of authority to a private body without much interference by government.

There have been three major reasons for recent interest in decentralisation: (a) the role of the central government has reduced as a result of market forces; (b) a favourable political-economic paradigm has emerged; and (c) new information and communication technologies have made management of a decentralized system possible (McGinn & Welsh, 1999).

Decentralisation is pursued throughout the world for political motives, funding motives, efficiency motives or a combination of these motives. The trend of decentralisation in education is consistently being followed throughout the world and in South Asian countries in particular. Govinda (1997) presents a very valuable summary of the decentralisation experiences from South Asia. In Pakistan, decentralisation in education accompanied a radical devolution policy in August 2001. District governments have been in operation since August 14, 2001 and are currently undergoing a transition phase, adjusting to new and emerging rules of business for provincial, district, tehsil and union council tiers. The Local Government Plan 2001 is designed to address issues of good governance at a systemic level. It addresses five fundamental issues for the devolution of political power: decentralisation of administrative authority, decentralisation of management functions, distribution of resources to the district level, and diffusion of the power-authority nexus. However, a coherent integration of these principles and application in various sectors is a major challenge (Government of Pakistan, 2001).

Winkler (2002) has noted that devolution of public education is 'not a response by the education authorities to widespread dissatisfaction with the performance of existing system'; rather, it is a direct result of the federal government's initiative. The purpose of reform was to dismantle the centralized education system and create a devolved system of education, ensuring a significant degree of institutional autonomy (Memon, 2003). In all provinces, education up to the higher secondary level has been devolved to the district level. In the case of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Punjab, this has been extended to the degree and post-graduate college level. This devolution plan, as designed by the National Reconstruction Board (NRB), assigns new roles and responsibilities to educational managers. The plan involves fiscal decentralisation, civil service decentralisation and expenditure decentralisation. The significantly greater responsibilities at district level require that the capacities of educational managers be developed to handle these affairs according to the envisaged policy. In fact Govinda (1997) considers capacity-building as a 'basic prerequisite for decentralisation' (p. 44).

King and Newman (2001) consider capacity-building as the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions of individuals. Explaining the notion of capacity-building from the perspective of developing schools as learning communities, Mitchell and Sackney (2000) propose a recursive model emphasising three categories of capacity which mutually influence one another. These categories of capacity are personal capacity, interpersonal capacity and organisational capacity. Mitchell and Sackney (2000) argue that growth in each category is built upon prior growth in itself and other categories, and builds a foundation of subsequent growth. Boundaries between capacities are permeable, and borders are expandable.

In the context of decentralisation in Pakistan, the development of different capacities could mean developing the personal capacity of teachers and principals as well as district educational leaders. Without adequate personal capacity, educators may not be able to question their beliefs and assumptions or have access to new ideas with which to question these. Without interpersonal capacity (collegial relations and collective practice to bind different levels of hierarchy), the socio-cultural elements in a district may override any attempt to change the status quo (Mitchell & Sackney, 2000). Similarly, without organisational structures educators within a district will have little support to undertake deep reflection and analysis for sustained improvements.

Currently, in the Province of Sindh in Pakistan, there is no separate institute for the training of educational managers in the public sector. However, the Bureau of Curriculum and the Provincial Institute of Teacher Education (PITE) occasionally organise training for educational managers in the province. Some foreign-funded educational projects like the Girls Primary Education Project (GPEP) have included training activities for educational managers. Recently, under the USAID-funded Education Sector Reforms Assistance (ESRA), educational managers in selected districts are being provided with some training. A research study was conducted to find out how and to what extent the capacity of educational managers is being developed to manage new responsibilities in the decentralised system and the implications this has for the effectiveness of the decentralisation policy. This paper reports on the major findings emerging from the research pertaining to the policies and practices of capacity-building prior to and after decentralisation.

In the remaining part of the paper we will first briefly describe the research design and methodology, followed by findings relevant for the purpose of this paper. The paper mainly shares findings related to policies and practices of capacity-building prior to and after decentralisation and tries to analyse if there

is any difference between the two and the implications this has for any future efforts to develop capacities under the decentralized system of educational management.

Research Design and Methodology

Research question

The main and subsidiary research questions for the overall research were as follows:

Main research question

How and to what extent is capacity-building of education managers affecting the process of decentralisation in one district of the Government education system of Pakistan?

Subsidiary questions

1. What is the capacity-building policy for educational managers at district level in the context of decentralisation in Pakistan?
2. What capacity-building is occurring at district level and how?
3. What is the effect of capacity-building at personal, interpersonal and organizational level?
4. What implications does capacity-building have for education decentralisation?

This paper mainly reports on the subsidiary research questions 1 and 2.

Research method

The researchers aimed for an in-depth understanding of the participants' perceptions of their capacity-building for the decentralisation processes, practices, roles and responsibilities. The qualitative research paradigm was chosen for its perceived advantage in providing rich and in-depth understanding of the processes.

The openness of the qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to approach the inherent complexity of social interaction and to do justice to the complexity, to respect it in its own rights (Peshkin & Corrine, 1992, p. 9).

Specifically, the case-study approach was adopted which provided an in-depth understanding of the processes of capacity-building for decentralisation (Bassey, 1999, p. 26, citing Sturman 1994).

Case study requires identification of ‘the case’ under investigation. Here the case was the district, and the study investigated the district officials’ understandings about capacity-building for decentralisation. We sought to develop both an in-depth and holistic understanding of the officials’ views about capacity-building for decentralisation. A description of the methods of data collection and justification for the selection follows.

Interview

Interviews (both individual and focus group) were used as appropriate techniques for this study as they allowed the researchers to develop a rich and in-depth understanding of the participants’ perspectives. Furthermore, interviews at different levels allowed for the triangulation of the data and thus increased validity. The use of a semi-structured interview protocol was followed which helped researchers to probe and further enrich the data by understanding participants’ perspectives (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Most of the data was collected through focus interviews. Such interviews provide a data range and personal context, and allow alternative views and underlying assumptions to emerge (Lewin & Stuart, 2003; Merchant & Ali, 2003; Stuart, 2000). Hence, focus group interviews were considered useful in this research. They provided us variety and alternative views which were debated in the group to develop a consensus. This proved a very helpful, enriched and time effective strategy that strengthened the quality of generated data.

There were six focus group interviews with ADOs, DOEs, Female HTs, Male HTs, LCS and RPs, and Supervisors. Five detailed individual interviews were also carried out with key informants. These were D-DOE Primary, DOE-HQ, EDO, DDOE-Acd&T, and DOE-Lit. Both individual and focus group interviews were carried out by two members of the research team, where one moderated the discussion and the other took notes. A gender balance was maintained in the research team as much as was possible during the field work. All the interviews were conducted in Urdu.

Data Analysis

The recorded interviews were transcribed, translated and re-checked by the research team for accuracy. A grounded theory approach was used in analysis and emergent categories and themes were generated during the coding process. Regular team meetings were held to discuss the emergent issues related to coding. The use of computer based analysis through NVivo helped with complex data analysis and theory building.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers took account of all ethical considerations. The informed consent of all the participants was taken. Approval to conduct the project was obtained from the EDO (Education). A consent form describing the nature of engagements and how the participant would be protected from harm, expectations from the participants and rights of the participants to withdraw from the research at any stage of the research was developed and shared with the participants to obtain their consent.

Research Findings and Discussion

The research findings are divided into two major sections. The first section describes and discusses findings about policies of capacity-building and issues related to it prior to and after decentralisation. The second section talks about the practices of capacity-building, prior to and after decentralisation.

Policies of Capacity-building Prior to and After Decentralisation

This section will describe the findings and discuss the policies of capacity-building prior to and after decentralisation under major themes.

Awareness of policy existence

Awareness prior to decentralisation

The respondents share very little information about the policies of capacity-building prior to the decentralisation (2001). They were either totally ignorant about the existence of a policy or suggested that there were only opportunities for the teachers and managers were ignored. But none of the respondents had

seen any policy in the form of a document or official memo. Their only source of information about policy was official orders passed down to them through relevant authorities. It was also hard for many of the respondents to distinguish between the capacity-building policies for teachers and the capacity-building policies for managers.

Data depicts extremely low awareness of respondents about the capacity-building policy prior to decentralisation. On the extreme side some groups of respondents (supervisors) flatly denied knowledge of any capacity-building policy. Only 30% of the respondents could share some weak understanding about the policy.

Awareness after decentralisation

The awareness about the policy appears somewhat improved after the decentralisation. Although a significant number of people did not know about the policy, many participants shared some information that showed their awareness of the policy. In order to understand the awareness of managers about capacity-building (CB) policy after decentralisation, the data is discussed under three major categories: (a) no knowledge of CB policy; (b) understanding of CB policy; and, (c) process of policy formulation.

No knowledge of CB policy

The tables that were generated through NVivo suggest that around 50% of the research participants are completely unaware of the existence of their CB policy. It is even more surprising to note that the person who is responsible for the capacity-building of teachers in the district and perhaps lower levels of educational management, i.e. D-DOE Academic and Training, does not know about any capacity-building policy. An extract from the interview highlights this:

Question: I would like to ask ... that is there any document in which it is written that the training and capacity-building should be organised for DDOEs? Have you read any such document as a deputy DOE?

Answer: I am [repetitively] telling you that I don't have access to such document yet.

In a group interview with DOE (elementary, colleges and SEMIS) they unanimously agreed that there is no policy for managers' training, though they accept that there were some initial trainings at the beginning of the devolution

plan, but not anymore. DOE literacy, who was interviewed later also showed his lack of awareness of any policy for their training.

The focus group discussion with Male HTs also suggests that they do not know about any capacity-building policy or the district development plan. They feel that the planning is not shared with them and is, instead, kept as a secret document by administrators. The supervisors also agreed that there was a lack of awareness.

One explanation for this lack of awareness is the confusion caused by the introduction of a devolution plan. The devolution plan is considered a big shift in the overall administration of the entire government bureaucracy. Such synoptic policies bring drastic changes and the initial confusion hampers an understanding of the overall picture. What concerns people the most are the immediate changes in their positions and powers. Hence they care less about the overall policy and get more concerned about the immediate affect that the policy brings for their position. Amidst this confusion, the lack of awareness about capacity-building policy among managers is understandable. The following excerpt reveals the immediate effect of the change in policy:

Actually after devolution plan firstly the system was in a very bad shape. I didn't know that at what position will I work or what will be my authority and powers. An administrator didn't know what he was supposed to do, DCO didn't know this. After the passage of four years now we are at a position that we are gradually coming to know about our job description and we have tried to adjust within our capacity in this devolution plan, decentralisation. And now when we will spend next four years then I think it would be much better from last four years. Due to this [confusing state] we haven't gone through the policies that have made [under devolution]. (Focus Group Interview with ADOs)

Understanding of CB policy

Participants from half of the focus group interviews showed either detailed or fractured information about the capacity-building policy. Some of them in fact showed some awareness about the overall decentralisation policy but could not elaborate on the specific capacity-building policies for educational managers. Overall, there appear to be three groups of respondents amongst those who showed some understanding about the policy. Participants in the first group had

very general information about the education policy and could not elaborate; participants in the second group had more detailed information about some aspects of education policies; and, participants in the third group shared a comprehensive view on all aspects of policy including the capacity-building policies for educational managers and staff. We will elaborate on each of them now.

Some participants showed a vague general understanding about the educational policy but could not describe the capacity-building policy in detail. It is surprising to note that this is observed at the highest level of district educational bureaucracy i.e. EDO. Following is an excerpt from his interview to highlight this observation:

Question: Actually I am trying to find out that is there any written plan that can tell us who should be trained and when? Anything in black-and-white?

Answer: No, this is not much in black-and-white. Written plan is that everybody needs training and they must be provided training and if they have already done once then they may require refresher courses, as new changes and new techniques are coming. So according to that every person needs guidance at every stage.

Likewise a head teacher shared her general understanding about the district plan but could not explain if there were any specific plans or policies for capacity-building. It is important to note that the head teacher was going through an extensive training course at the time of interview but lacked sufficient understanding of the decentralisation process, its policies and programmes. This lack of understanding is also a reflection of the limited understanding of the trainers and the limitations of the content of training.

The participants of the second group, unlike the first group, could share not only a general overview of the educational policy for the district, but could also share some concrete examples or references regarding the district plan. Although they could elaborate a particular aspect of policy they found it difficult to describe the capacity-building policies for the district managerial staff. This excerpt from a focus group interview substantiates this observation:

Question: Are there some particular policies regarding manager's training?

Answer: The Devolution Plan states bylaws for all the managers, rules and information for them. It mentions powers and job descriptions according to the designations ... The Devolution Plan is available in all the districts, which clearly states according to designations, what are the jobs of District Education Elementary, what are the jobs of District Education Secondary and Higher Secondary, what are the jobs of DOE Colleges, what are the jobs of DOE Technical and what are the jobs of DOE SEMIS. (Focus Group Interview, DOE – elementary, colleges, SEMIS)

There were very few participants who had comprehensive knowledge and an understanding of the district plans and policies. DO-headquarter was one of those who could explain in detail, the overall district education policies, including capacity-building policies and also provide some real district plans. Below is a detailed excerpt of interview with DO-headquarter that shows his in-depth understanding and experience of planning.

Question: Have your department [education] prepared any development plan?

Answer: A plan was prepared in my tenure which was made by me. The district government had asked us to prepare a plan, I was an EDO in Nawabshah and Gothki then, so there I made a plan. [searching files] I also made a plan recently during my EDO tenure [in current district] titled Sindh Devolved Social Services Program.

Question: OK, in which did you also mentioned some requirements for training as well?

Answer: It was component wise plan, we received a list from the [federal] government that you have to work on these guidelines and there was also a training program in that. Then after that there were programs planned on district level which was under Education for All, in which the planning was to be done from 2003 to 2015 ... after that there was an education plan from 2003 to 2006 and that was also from the technical side.

Being a senior educational official, the DOE-headquarter had been involved in district development planning and also shared some real district plans. But these plans, as became evident after interviewing several officials, have not been

disseminated widely, nor have they been consulted during implementation (the issue of policy communication will be taken up in the next section).

Process of policy formulation

DOE – headquarter, being the most senior person amongst the participants, said that the district policies are formulated under the guidelines of the central government; he gave the examples of planning for Education for All 2003-2015 and some other educational plans. It seems that although the planning exercise is carried out at the district level, the approach seems top-down. The same concern was raised in one of the policy dialogues organised by AKU-IED in 2003 where district officials mentioned that the districts still have to follow the priorities set by the Federal government.

Furthermore, the process of planning or policy making of any sort is not a shared process within district management. One of the ADOs stated:

We haven't gone through the policies that have been made and if there was any paperwork [policy] then it was in a closed room and four persons have made that and then they have transferred it to higher levels. DOE-HQ was showing you a plan and its purpose which was later transferred to Sindh government. After that what actions did the Sindh government take, did they make that a part of their overall policy or not, we do not know. Even as an ADO I don't know that what is in the plan. (Focus Group Interview with ADOs)

The above passage indicates two things. First, the policy making process is not shared and second, the process of central planning is unidirectional. Only few people among the district management are responsible for planning, and the viability of a plan that has not been developed as a result of widespread consultation, can be questioned. In addition the central government seems to take input from districts but does not give them feedback. As a result even higher management staff appears ignorant of any plan. It is not surprising therefore, that implementation of plans is a challenge for the government.

Implicit existence of Policy (prior to and after decentralisation)

The data reveals that, generally, policies are not explicit in the district education office both prior to and after decentralisation and the capacity-building policy is not an exception. Further investigation suggests that official policies exist but

they are not properly disseminated and communicated to the officers, particularly the officers in the field. As a result a general impression from all cadres of staff is lack of awareness about policy provisions for their capacity-building.

One of the Assistant District Officers (ADOs) argued that organisations cannot run in the absence of policies. He said, ‘institutions ... cannot run without ... policy and policy is a must’. Thus, he concluded that the functioning of education department itself is a proof that the policies and procedures are established, although they may be unknown to them. The same respondent also sees a clear link of policies with administration and management and suggests that ‘administration and management are based on the ... policy’. This implies that the real policies of an organisation are embedded in its management and administrative structures, which may not be explicit but shared by the practitioners in their daily practices. He elaborated that there are criteria of promotions and rules that govern management and administration of education, which, by implication, demonstrate educational policies, including capacity-building policy.

Improper Communication Strategies (prior to and after decentralisation)

Apart from the existence of policy, a general concern raised by many of the respondents is the inadequacy of the communication strategy for policies. In particular, field-based educational officials (e.g. field supervisors) who have to carry policy messages to the grass roots level are often not provided the full picture of any action. Supervisors shared their ordeals, suggesting that only senior officials had detailed information about the training programmes, their reasons and possible benefits. Supervisors are simply asked to provide the logistical support without providing detailed briefings about the action. In a focus group interview with supervisors, they stated:

We just did it and they [higher officials] send us the lists for training mentees only. But they don't give us any detail about full programme that we will do like this and this, and this would be the benefit of it. May be the EDO or the DOEs know but we don't get this information from ADO. (Focus Group Interview with Supervisors)

A great deal of implementation literature suggests that lack of communication is the single most reason for implementation failure. The interviews suggest that even basic policies related to job descriptions are not communicated properly,

which causes employees' lack of awareness of their real tasks. When people do not know what they are actually supposed to do, they can do every other thing that they may not be required to do, leaving aside the real job. In addition their supervisors can also take advantage of this lack of awareness and assign tasks that are not part of the job descriptions. This is the reason that several DOE's are not doing the job they are supposed to do. For example the DOE (Academic and Training) is not engaged in professional development trainings, which is supposed to be his responsibility. Deputy DOE Primary explained,

Actually policies are made but the concerned officers don't communicate and distribute it properly and in time that is why the person don't know about his actual job description. (Focus Group Interview with Deputy DOE primary)

One of the Deputy DOE's pointed out an interesting fact that often the actual draft of the policy does not reach the lower levels of the hierarchy because of communication barriers; however, any amendments in that draft get communicated. Although he did not elaborate, these amendments might be communicated through office orders and therefore reach all levels. Thus orders are communicated more directly compared to any policy document such as the District Development Plan.

The section below describes the awareness of educational officials about the capacity-building policy prior to the introduction of the decentralisation policy.

Practices of capacity-building of educational managers - prior to and after decentralisation

Opportunities for Capacity-building

The opportunities for capacity-building prior to decentralisation were mainly concentrated at the supervisory level of educational managers. The supervisors reported availing various capacity-building opportunities prior to decentralisation. These included refresher courses, workshops in Islamabad and Karachi, and formal trainings arranged by Bureau of Curriculum in Hyderabad and Khairpur. The most prominent among these is the Sindh Primary Educational Development Programme (SPEDP) . Senior teachers, head teachers and school supervisors were selected and developed as Master Trainers under SPEDP. Supervisors who had also received this training were assigned to schools that were to be developed into School Development Centres for teacher training and resource

development (Rizvi, 2003). Hence, the supervisor's role became quite important and also prominent.

For other educational managers, opportunities for capacity-building were almost non-existent. As this EDO reports, "Previously the training opportunities were almost non-existent" (EDO, 27), "If there was any training I have not heard about it, only selected people used to go. There may have been training at the upper level, we are at a lower level" (DOE-Headquarters, 135), "I did not get any opportunity for training or workshop prior to decentralisation" (D-DOE-Primary, 119).

An important point to note about the trainings at the supervisors' level is that the focus of the trainings was not primarily on supervision. Rather, the focus was on teacher training and school management. This evidence indicates that supervision was undertaken as a component of school management and teacher training in which the supervisors were taught the skills of guiding teachers, undertaking follow-up exercises, observing classes and giving feedback to the teachers.

Practices after Decentralisation

Opportunities for capacity-building of the educational managers after decentralisation fall under six major categories: formal trainings, workshops, informal sharing sessions, meetings, seminars, and experiences. From the analysis of the data, formal trainings emerged as the most frequently availed form of capacity-building. This may be because most of the educational managers understood capacity-building as formal training. While the other forms of capacity-building such as workshops, informal sharing sessions and seminars have been noted by some educational managers, the evidence suggests that these have not been considered by most of the educational managers. Another explanation for this could be that opportunities for formal training in the form of refresher courses, short term trainings and long term courses have been provided to majority of the educational managers. The other forms of capacity-building are more needs-driven and context-based. For example, when deliberations on an important issue are required, a meeting with the relevant officers can be called.

The data also suggest that the main focus of the majority of capacity-building activities has been management issues. These include issues of managing a school, leadership and management, educational management, and financial management. ADOs' trainings focused on the areas of management and

accounting. For example, the main training that the Deputy Director Officer Education–Primary (DDOE-P) reported receiving was the Educational Leadership and Management Course (ELM) from Aga Khan University. Similar views were shared by DOEs–Elementary Colleges (EC), one of whom found the training held in Karachi about their powers and responsibilities extremely useful.

...since this devolution plan trainings have been organised and we the DOEs got training there in Karachi regarding DOEs’ powers and its results were great. Then we worked on the same pattern and right now we are working on the same pattern too. (DOE-EC, 37)

The main training attended by the FHTs is the one offered by the Institute for Business Administration (IBA). This training focuses on the areas of school administration and budgeting.

Since all the interviewees were in management positions, it was appropriate to conclude that the focus of the capacity-building activities is, in a general sense, job-related.

Discussion

Initial findings suggest that there are differences in the capacity-building opportunities prior to and after decentralisation. Some similarities have also been noted in capacity-building opportunities. These differences and similarities in capacity-building opportunities can be explained under four broad themes: the flatter distribution of power, availability of opportunities, follow-up of the opportunities, and power structures.

Decentralisation has resulted in the flatter distribution of power at the district level in the sense that the provision of responsibilities has become the responsibility of the local governments at the ground level. Hence, people at different levels of authority are being provided with capacity-building opportunities.

Capacity-building opportunities were also provided prior to decentralisation. However, the analysis has illustrated that these were concentrated in one level of educational managers—the supervisors. The evidence demonstrates that capacity-building activities are more widely and evenly distributed after decentralisation. An EDO commented that the training opportunities had increased, particularly for the teachers and the head teachers. Previously, a senior teacher would

assume the head teachers' responsibilities without any training. Now head teachers were receiving training in matters of finance and school administration.

Educational managers highlighted follow-up of capacity-building as an important difference. They noted that since capacity-building of educational managers was the responsibility of different agencies and not of the government alone, these agencies arranged for effective follow-up exercises to make sure that their programme was successful. Previously, the follow-up systems were quite weak. Prior to decentralisation, follow-up of the capacity-building exercises was weak and that was the main reason for the limited success of most of the programmes, including SPEDP.

Educational managers have also drawn attention to the 'power structure' that has been identified as an important factor in defining the educational managers capacity-building status. Capacity was being developed through various means but the educational managers also reported that the extent to which they were able to use their capacities depended on the extent of authority or power they had. For example, ADOs believed that previous SDOs were more powerful than them (ADOS, 54). FHTs were authoritative to the extent of making and presenting a plan; however, the implementation of the plan was not in their power (FHTs, 34).

Conclusion and the Way Forward

The paper argues that even though training opportunities have increased after decentralisation, the quality of trainings needs to be improved if there is to be a substantial improvement. The data suggest that qualitative improvement in any capacity-building programme depends mainly on improvements in the focus, content, duration and time period of these programmes.

Most of the educational managers have suggested improvements in the focus of capacity-building exercises. ADOs were of the view that the focus of trainings needs to shift from general to specific.

...the major portions of our roles and responsibilities include planning and management. So we really need to learn about planning in management... And another thing is financial management, and planning is linked with it. If we separate planning then financial management cannot run and without financial management planning cannot be implemented. So we need planning and financial management together. However,

capacity-building in planning is much more needed because the devolution plan has been implemented and we need a real improvement for our achievement. (ADO, 294)

Needs-based trainings, appropriate to the job descriptions of the participants, were considered important by most of the educational managers. One DOE noted:

...as far as training is concerned they should be according to the managers' and teachers' requirement.... It shouldn't be like an SS [Subject Specialist] is training for manager. An SS should be trained for SS training and a manager should be trained for manager's training. (DOE-EC, 242)

From our earlier analysis of capacity-building after decentralisation, it was quite clear that most of the capacity-building activities were focussed on the areas of 'management', both educational and financial. Yet most of the educational managers have recommended further capacity-building in the same areas. This evidence appears to imply that educational managers are not very satisfied with way capacity-building in management is currently being offered. The recommendation to change the capacity-building from general to specific is a clear indication that for educational managers who participated in the study, the focus of current capacity-building exercises is quite general. Data suggest that educational managers require capacity-building opportunities which are directly related to their specific roles and responsibilities, and which match their contextual realities. Some of the specific areas suggested by educational managers are planning in management, communication skills, budgeting with planning, school administration, field-based training, and conducting examinations.

Educational managers have also recommended changes in the content of the capacity-building opportunities. According to them, the content of the capacity-building activities should be both contextual and easily understandable by the participants so that they could take back some constructive ideas for improvement. One LC-RP gave an example of a teacher training to elaborate this point:

...unlimited amount has been spent on the training but when the objectives are checked from those who have got the training, the result comes out in zero figure. May be our teachers couldn't understand what was taught at the training or the trainings have been difficult for them or the training was not up to their levels

or according to their abilities that they could go and do something for the improvement of their schools and environment where they live. (LC-RP, 358)

Most of the educational managers also recommended a change in the time period and duration of the training. ADOs and LCs-RPs suggested that capacity-building programmes should be of short duration. This is evident in words such as, 'But the duration of training must not be long (ADO, 145),' and 'There should be short courses, not long courses (LC-RP, 392).'

In addition, improvements were also suggested in the time period of the capacity-building activities. Education managers were of the opinion that such activities should be held at a time suitable for them. For example, a FHT recommended that training for them should be arranged before promoting them to the position of head teachers. The current practice of training head teachers who had been leading schools for more than ten years was not helpful because their experiences had already trained them in a particular way.

It has also emerged clearly from the findings that there are serious gaps between the policies and practices of capacity-building prior to and after decentralisation. Although the situation has improved to some extent after decentralisation, further efforts need to be undertaken to make people aware of the policy provisions. One of the major barriers to awareness about policies is poor communication amongst educational managers about policy provisions, due to which there is general apathy toward such efforts. Hence, it is recommended that the efforts should not only be limited to improvement of policies but an equal emphasis should be placed on their communication to end-users.

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