

Managing Decentralization of the Romanian Educational System

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Abstract

The process of decentralization can greatly improve the efficiency, transparency, accountability and responsiveness in service delivery, compared to centralized systems. Decentralization of education systems demands harmonization of a complex set of functions for each level of education: primary, secondary, tertiary and informal. The question of to what level of government delegate decision-making for each level of education and what will be the division of powers, continues to fuel debate. The promotion of a decentralized system in terms of teacher professional development must be coupled with measures of accountability to individuals and organizations without sacrificing the central bodies involved in accreditation programs, monitoring and evaluation activities performed.

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“Reforming a system is not a one-time event, but a continual process of change, assesment, and alteration according to the needs of particular times and particular countries.”

David de Ferranti

Vice President Human Development Department The World Bank

1. Decentralization – concept overview

In general, the process of decentralization can greatly improve the efficiency, transparency, accountability and responsiveness in service delivery, compared to centralized systems. Decentralized education would probably be more efficient, more compatible with local priorities, encourage more participation and could serve more people. Governments that have serious financial problems are particularly attracted by the potential of decentralization to increase efficiency. Systems of cost recovery such as community financing have become the means for central governments to offload some financial responsibilities for the provision of education services.

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The concept of decentralization has emerged during the 19th century. It was considered since the French Revolution as a reaction to the excessive centralism of the old regime.

Decentralization was defined as the principle by which administrative management of a region is entrusted to elected local authorities. Legal scholars consider it to be the most appropriate mode of management to promote the free administration of local authorities.

The concept has experienced a multitude of definitions. However, in its most basic definition, it means the transfer of part of the power of the State National the regional or local.

Decentralization of power (political, budgetary and administrative authority) from the center to local or regional levels of public authority is a world tendency that is felt in all areas, including education.

The term refers to the delegation award, usually by administrative decree, of making authority to a lower level of government. Only certain powers of decision and management of staff and budget are transferred. The policies and guidelines developed at a higher level still apply.

The term devolution refers to the larger but incomplete transfer, usually by executive fiat. No power is independent granted and devolution merely delegates the implementation of rules and not their development.

Education has always been the basic tool to shape a career, but things have changed in the past few decades as the developed world has undergone a thorough revolution based upon information and knowledge.

Governments all over the world embark upon the policies of decentralization and privatization of education because of the conviction that they can lead to higher quality education services. Quality, when viewed from assessment and monitoring perspective, defines the input and processes (i.e., curricular content, delivery, assessment and examination) that make learning possible within the educational setting.

The Romanian educational system focuses following main aspects: creating a national well-balanced educational net, changing the institutional bodies for the initial and further vocational training, decentralizing the system of managing and funding the public education, assuring education quality, implementing the governmental social programs as well as its strategy for rural education.

In practice, decentralization is introduced when economic constraints are important and it usually involves the transfer of financial responsibilities towards lower levels (regional or local authorities, community organizations and / or individuals), supposedly to ensure more efficient use of limited resources and cost. In fact, the terms decentralization may vary considerably: transfer of powers to a local community, transformation of public services in private firms (Uphoff, 1992).

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.

Experience to date in decentralizing teacher management is limited and our knowledge of the long- or even the medium-term effectiveness of decentralization is sparse. We are, therefore, unable to say with certainty what difference all the changes described here will make for the quality of teaching or learning, or to recommend a single set of guidelines on the degree to which teacher management should be distributed between central and local management.

Decentralization of teacher management does not take place in isolation. Instead, it is usually part of a process of educational decentralization motivated by one or more forces. A review of the World Bank's role in helping countries to implement decentralization found that administrative, political, financial, and pedagogical rationales have driven such reforms.

So it is possible to propose a theory called evolution of the law or principle of functionality. The decentralization process, it is a transfer of powers from the state to communities.

Decentralization of educational systems and reforms in this area is generally attempts to dismantle centralized bureaucracies and create systems autonomous, which implies varying degrees of independence of institutions, administration regional or local and decentralized forms of direct management by schools or educational institutions of their business. But effective decentralization of education necessarily entails a joint commitment of all actors for partnership and cooperation - some stakeholders must, among other things, establish their credibility and legitimacy compared to the traditional central government - as well as improvements in educational services and the ongoing efforts to secure funding endogenous education. Decentralization requires capacity building in all directions.

International commitments such as Education for All, Reduction Strategies Poverty and the Millennium Development Goals lead to new forms of partnership between governments and the international community. The national authorities, central and decentralized levels, take on increased responsibilities in the design and implementation implementation of education sector reform programs and sector development.

The decentralization of education sector management requires that central authorities (Ministry of Education, etc.) and the local authorities to adopt common approaches regarding educational planning and monitoring its implementation. The common approaches have focused on the concept of planning, methodology and tools for planning, terminology, criteria for allocating resources and devices to meet the criteria, and the tracking devices.

An important feature of the modernization of the public sector management in education is the remedy for educational planning approaches based on programs. A program must, in general, behave as integrated following elements:

- an analysis of the current functioning of the sector (situation analysis, sector analysis, diagnostic);
- objectives and targets to be achieved in the future;
- evaluation of human, material and financial required objectives and targets;

- a list of priorities;
- devices management implementation;
- systems to monitor implementation.

At central level, the following capabilities must be acquired:

- assist, advise and support the counties in Educational Planning;
- ensure national consistency and comparability of the educational planning and monitoring its implementation showing that all counties adopt the same approach, the same techniques and similar tools for planning, they use the same data type, use the same terminology and apply the same criteria for determining priorities and allocating resources;
- ensure that each county education plans allow effectively reaching the targets and national goals;
- advise the Ministry of Finance and other central bodies involved in the allocation of resources to counties for the implementation of educational plans;
- advise local authorities in charge of their budget over the allocation of financial resources for education.

At the local community level education authorities must develop and implement a modern planning and ensure a modern implementation of the plan.

Managers should acquire the necessary skills to master all the stages, namely:

- i. Preparation of provincial education plans modern
- ii. monitoring the implementation of plans;
- iii. updating plans in light of the results provided by the tracking device;
- iv. implementation plans in a medium-term expenditure framework term;
- v. implementation of the framework of the Medium Term Expenditure through annual budgets.

Central and local levels of education will manage the overall planning and resource allocation.

2. Effective management of the process of decentralization of the Romanian educational system

The state of any system depends on its funding. Romanian education system has suffered and still suffers from underfunding, which has already become chronic. Due to the lack of political will and educational policies inconsistent, we estimate that the underfunding will manifest itself in the future. Implementing the concept of decentralization began to be discussed since 2003, by amending certain provisions of the Education Law and the Statute of teaching staff and developing methodologies for the implementation of decentralization.

To check the viability of the concept of decentralization as it was designed to be implemented in the Romanian education system were established eight pilot

counties. Unfortunately, decentralization has been formal application with large differences from one county to another because of the budget for 2004 budget that did not include the amounts necessary to apply administrative and financial decentralization.

The decentralization has been implemented partially and not entirely, as would be necessary, as there was no ongoing monitoring or final evaluation, the experiment was an obvious failure. It created discontinuities in the system, some schools have lost their legal personality, and because it was difficult to fill the positions in accordance with the principles of decentralization, education is still a dream.

For the Romanian educational system, decentralization follows a series of challenges. Romania is already a full member of the European Union. This is a challenge not only for Romanian society as a whole, but for the existence of vital sectors such as education. Romanian education is required to meet the requirements of this process, not just the educational dimension, but also in employee size, development of knowledge and culture, according to new standards of compatibility, performance and competitiveness at European and global level.

In today's society, science and culture are not only areas of the accompanying development of human society, but factors of its propellants. Competition, market knowledge and culture increasingly require higher performance. Here's what Clark Kerr says, president of the University of California: "For the first time we are witnessing the emergence of a world of learning, truly international and highly competitive. If you want to be part of this world must deserve this. We can not rely on politics or anything else. We must give greater autonomy to institutions to enable them to be dynamic and move quickly in a competitive international environment. We need to adopt business management strategies to accompany institutional autonomy".

Preparation of new generations of professionals in all areas is taking place today in more diverse and more dynamic forms and ways. Romanian school must expand and diversify its educational offer, to improve its structure according to existing demand, adaptable and anticipate developments in the educational environment and space knowledge and culture.

Increased knowledge and development culture is one of the most onerous conditionality of this world. The new world will follow a knowledge-based technology, an aspect of mass culture that are combined with the entry of high values in all aspects of functioning society. The school is required to take part in this development process, to overcome the current limits.

Conclusion

One of the infallible test of the effectiveness of decentralization is a clear and true involvement of all stakeholders and the existence of true partnerships.

In recent years there has been considerable public pressure for decentralization of education in developing countries. This pressure was largely determined by fiscal constraints, but also was motivated by concerns over the effectiveness of a centralized system for providing educational services. Specialized studies provide a rich characterization of evolution and, in some respects rapidly changing education systems.

Common Themes include:

- substantial legal and political commitments - often constitutional - and growing, compared to education;
- rapid increases in university and primary school enrollment and increased enrollment at secondary and tertiary education;
- Increasing financial pressures, in part because of rapidly increasing enrollment and in part because of general pressure on public finances;
- school quality is limited and probably damaged;
- a significant private sector participation in education;
- limited experience in matters related to decentralization - including private schools, school management committees and control over local budgets, but often partial and not clearly defined;
- Increase movement toward greater decentralization;
- Very little systematic exploration before the impact of decentralization.

Decentralization of education systems demands harmonization of a complex set of functions for each level of education: primary, secondary, tertiary and informal. The question of to what level of government delegate decision-making for each level of education and what will be the division of powers, continues to fuel debate. There are several experiments underway worldwide, ranging from the delegation of a number of functions to intermediate and local governments, to managing and financing of schools by communities. The current consensus is that it is preferable for higher education and some functions such as curriculum development and establishment of standards under the Ministry of Education. National primary and secondary education should be decentralized as much as possible, and participating in school governance enhances accountability, makes them more sensitive leaders and promotes the mobilization of resources. However, the principles shown above are general information, details of each program of decentralization of education will depend on the specific conditions of each model.

Romania today can learn from the experience of European countries that have identified limitations of excessive decentralization of education systems. Therefore, the promotion of a decentralized system in terms of teacher professional development must be coupled with measures of accountability to individuals and organizations without sacrificing the central bodies involved in accreditation programs, monitoring and evaluation activities performed.

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