

CENTRALIZATION AND DECENTRALIZATION IN EDUCATION SYSTEM: ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

Asih Nurakhir¹

*¹Instructor at the Department of Nursing, Diponegoro University; Student at the State
University of Semarang,*

In the concept of management system, centralization and decentralization are important concepts for the public to consider as they have significant effects on the running of schools in educating children as the nation's assets. Both concepts are related to the decision makings and the holding of authorities in the management system. Centralization and decentralization have been implemented in many countries in different regions worldwide for many years. They have their own characteristics, advantages and disadvantages which are distinctive from one to another. This paper aims to describe the basic concept of centralization and decentralization in education system and their advantages and disadvantages from a broad point of view.

Centralization in education is usually referred to the condition in which the administrative authority for education is vested. The authority is not in the local community. Instead, it is hold by a central body which has complete power over all resources for example money or budgets, information, people, and also technology. This body also determines the content of curriculum, controls the budget, and is responsible for employment, the building of educational facilities, discipline policies, and many others (Brennen, 2002).

Centralization puts the responsibility for decision-makings at higher levels, concentrating both authority and power at the top management. All decision makings and authorities are focused on the top tier of management which may consist of few people who dictate the policy and make all the crucial decisions. Centralization in this case minimizes the roles or involvement of the individuals in the bottom levels (Brennen, 2002). In the current practice, many believe that centralization does not fit the current trends of participatory management, empowerment, and shared decision-making

In centralized education, all educational decisions and policies are all-round uniform. Those decisions and policies are from the top, made by the top and should be

implemented by the bottom levels. The curriculum, for instance is uniform regardless of relevance levels of students' lives and the environment. Hence, it may happen that the position and role of the students tend to be used as an object and has less opportunity to develop their creativity and interest.

Many have argued that centralized education brings many advantages for the public. Centralization develops uniformity of management since the phase of planning, management, evaluation, and development of model of school and learning. It makes organizations becomes more efficient as all decision-makings are centralized and planning and development gets more integrated. Centralization also reduces redundancies assets and other facilities, in which case the assets can be used together without having to provide the same assets for different jobs. It improves coordination; coordination becomes easier because of the unity of command.

In oppose to centralization, decentralization has been referred to the extent to which authority has been passed down to the individual schools at the bottom levels. Within this concept, the top provides local administrators with greater autonomy which gives scope for creativity, resourcefulness, and personal enhancement particularly in the area of problem solving (Brennen, 2002). The local communities or the regions then have some access to the decision makings and policies in their areas under the supervisory of the top government. In the case of education decentralization, there is a process of devolution of fiscal and decision-making authority from the higher to the lower levels of government and organizational units. This can affect the way school systems make policy about its resource and spending, organization of instruction (e.g. curricula, textbooks, teaching methods, schedule), personnel management (e.g. hiring / firing, pay scales, assigning teaching responsibilities, training), and planning and managing public schools (Heredia-Ortiz, 2007).

The reason for implementing decentralization varies in different countries. It is usually related to the policy to save money by improving the efficiency of management, to transfer power to the most capable level of government, to get increased funding, to adopt to more general national administrative re-forms, and to give users more control over education (Cooper & Florestal, 1997 in Edquist, 2005). Those reasons however can

be summarized in three broad categories: educational finance, efficiency and effectiveness, and redistribution of power in education system.

Many studies have tried to classify and categorize decentralization. These efforts have outlined an important distinction between decentralization as delegation and decentralization as devolution. The former, decentralization as delegation normally implies a transmission of tasks and administrative responsibilities related to specific functions, usually defined by central authorities. In this sense, the decentralization of tasks does not necessarily mean a shift of power because the local agents generally are only given the role of executing decisions that have previously been made at a central level (Lane 1984 and Lauglo 1995 in Karlsen, 1999). On the other hand, delegation may indicate an extended local autonomy simply because total central control is difficult. Decentralization as devolution implies the transmission of authority and responsibility from central to local bodies. Devolution is the only category of decentralization in which local authority and independence are clearly increased (Karlsen, 1999).

There have been many arguments that implementing decentralization brings a lot of benefits towards development. Those can be related to participation or involvement in decision making as well as good governance. Decentralization brings public services closer to people as they have more opportunities to participate more actively in decision-making process of local policies and activities than in the centralized one (Saito, 2001). Decentralization also provides people opportunity to become involved in the decision-making process. This allows for greater flexibility, and makes it possible for better decisions to be made because persons at the scene of the action are more closely related to the problem (Brennen, 2002).

In balance to its strengths, adopting the concept of decentralization may also be disadvantageous. Decentralization may foster more local loyalty to regional identities than the national identity, and this may encourage more autonomy from the central government but at the same time may put the national integrity itself at risk (Saito, 2001). Decentralization may increase corruption in education sector at local levels. This may be related to the potential involvement they have in the decision making of certain policies and procedures. As different areas in a country may have different resources,

decentralization may encourage the development of resource-rich areas, but at the same time, it may discourage the poor ones if control by the top is not well managed.

In conclusion, centralization and decentralization concepts in education system have their own strengths and limitations. It is the choice of a community or a nation to choose to adopt the system. As long as there is good control and governance, the bad effects of the systems may be minimized. *nr

REFERENCES

- Brennen, Annick M. 2002. *Centralization Versus Decentralization*. Available online at <http://www.soencouragement.org/centralizationvsdecentralization.htm>, retrieved on January 3, 2013.
- Edquist, Love. 2005. *Decentralization of Educational Management in Vietnam*. Jönköping International Business School, Jönköping University. Retrieved on 2 January 2013
- Karlsen, Gustav E. 1999. "Decentralized-Centralism" Governance in Education: Evidence from Norway and British Columbia, Canada. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, Issue #13, December 6, 1999.
- Heredia-Ortiz, Eunice. 2007. *"The Impact of Education Decentralization on Education Output: A Cross-Country Study"*. Economics Dissertations. Available online at http://digitalarchive.gsu.edu/econ_diss, retrieved on 2 January 2013.
- Saito, Fumihiko. 2001. Decentralization Theories Revisited: Lessons from Uganda. *Ryukoku RISS Bulletin*, No. 31 March 2001.