International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa

Decentralization of Education Systems

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The decentralization of education systems is one of the most important processes taking place today. However, although it is a fashionable mantra, it is by no means a panacea. It can be an irresponsible way of removing responsibility and funds from the center without providing for financial and human resources for the work to be done well at a decentralized level. This edition of the IICBA Newsletter provides an insight into a number of experiences of decentralization, ranging from the in-depth study of decentralization in the Sahel to what is being attempted in post-Apartheid South Africa.

In general experience appears to indicate that some aspects of education need to remain centralized, such as the curriculum and the examinations. Establishing a high quality core curriculum and developing good textbooks may be best done at a national level, although there is a great deal of room for local level curriculum and textbook development for optional and complementary curricula. To some extent university and teacher education also benefit from the advantages of scale, as many countries presently may not have the human and financial resources to have many decentralized universities.

On the other hand there is ample evidence that communities benefit from having control over their own education systems. As the owners and beneficiaries of their education system the community can ensure that it is of the highest attainable quality. Moreover education systems which ensure a high level of community participation, community decision making, and community control, may also be far more relevant, robust and of higher quality than education systems which are centrally controlled and divorced from the real challenges of life. Bureaucrats may underestimate and undervalue the local communities' ability to run their own schools, and instead opt for a centralized system controlled by themselves rather than by the community. However, many of the worst schools suffer from lack of local community interest and care. Education for All cannot be achieved without the full involvement of the community in the education system. The nature and quality of this involvement is a dynamic process, with at the very least informing the community and obtaining their consent and support as the most basic level of involvement, to enabling the community to take over some of the decision making processes at the higher level. This is a learning process both for the educators and administrators on the one hand, and for the community on the other hand.

Decentralization is a key issue. How it is implemented can strengthen or weaken an education system.

Strategies For Building And Mobilizing New Local Capacities in the Sahel

Peter Easton et al

The second series of observations in the PADLOS-Education Study concerns the strategies used by local associations, enterprises and communities to acquire or mobilize the skills required by new local governance opportunities. A summary of these observations is followed by an analysis of the dynamics of skill mobilization and capacity construction at the local level, and of the role of the different sources of training presently available on the ground.

A. Appraisal of training

1.Rich and sometimes unsuspected resources: ***There is a surprising variety of local knowledge and skill, sometimes latent, upon which the communities and associations can call. The most successful organizations have learned to use all such means at their disposal in a very eclectic fashion.***

Associations on the road to self-sufficiency tend to develop and make use of the whole range of competencies available at the local level. There is a melange of types of instruction at the survey sites. Primary school is most widespread in Ghana and nonformal education most common elsewhere; but these two institutions compose only a part of the picture.

The communities and groups visited during this study tend to call upon all of these resources, in different combinations and in an eclectic manner, in order to mobilize the competency required for the assumption of new development responsibilities and functions. This hidden human resource systems has several key components:

Primary and secondary school. Primary school coverage remains uneven outside of urban centers. In addition, rejection of formal schooling has recently become more of a factor in the rural areas of some Sahelian countries for particular reasons, particularly the collapse in public sector hiring and Islamic distrust of Western institutions. Nonetheless, formal schooling remains a critically important resource and instrument in the movement of socioeconomic decentralization. The number of former pupils and school dropouts at the local level is growing noticeably. Even those who have migrated to the city often remain in contact with their home area, prepared to return as soon as real opportunities arise.

Religious training--Koranic and Biblical. Religious training is much more widespread than commonly believed. The network of Koranic schools is nearly a thousand years old in heavily Islamized areas, and much denser than the system of formal primary schools. In certain zones, writing of African languages in Arabic script is very common, and the literacy rate in these codes reaches up to 80% of the adult population. Thus it is not unusual

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to see management of local associations entrusted to individuals literate in Arabic script, especially when there are few trustworthy candidates. At the same time, by virtue of their transcription of the Bible into African languages and the emphasis given literacy training for the faithful, Christian missions have made very important contributions to building new capacities at the local level.

Seasonal migration: Emigration networks also constitute a training resource in the sense that a good number of participants learn new occupations and new skills during their circumnavigations, or are at least exposed to other ways of life and broader sources of information.

Nonformal education--an umbrella term which covers a large variety of training offered by different parties outside of the formal education system itself was found in 92% of the sites surveyed. This omnipresence seems due to the relatively modest cost, the flexibility and the African-language medium of nonformal training.

Extension offerings: Systems of short training and extension are present in all of the communities visited. 85% of the association leaders surveyed had taken at least one training course of this type.

Traditional education: Behind these different and more contemporary forms of instruction and training lies a base of traditional education and knowledge that is slowly being brought out of the shadow.

The array of human resources available at the local level is thus very diverse and far from impoverished. These varied types of training, however, are not well linked to each other. Episodic relationships and exchange mask a general lack of communication. But the constituent material needed to build new competencies manifestly exists, as do the beginnings of systems or approaches that would make it possible to coordinate and refine that potential. It nonetheless remains, for the most part, a hidden resource.

2. Application of learning. ***It is most often literacy and nonformal education programs that serve to bring out this diverse and still latent human resource and to prepare it for its new responsibilities.***

Given the diversity of human resources available at the local level, associations seeking self-sufficiency are confronted with a considerable problem of retraining, harmonizing, and integrating the available labor pool. The solution most frequently adopted has been to use adult literacy or nonformal education programs as a mainstreaming or a recycling mechanism. In a good number of associations, literacy in the national language of the area is now a condition of candidacy for official positions, and numerous Koranic students or school dropouts attend the literacy courses to brush up their skills and qualify for new responsibilities. At the same time, as these training activities expand, enrollments are getting younger. A number of communities are beginning to transform literacy training into a form of self-schooling for children.

3. The tool of writing-- ***Mastery of this tool appears to constitute a threshold of institutional development at the local level.***

All Sahelian languages of wide or medium usage have by this time been transcribed and are endowed with a growing literature. Their usefulness as a means of communication and self-management in decentralization strategies must increasingly be acknowledged. Moreover, the transition between African and international languages of communication (e.g. French and English) is now much better understood and pedagogically developed, opening the way to new modes of transition from one to the other. The multilingualism of Africa is, from this point of view, as much a resource as it is a constraint. The achievement of literacy in these languages poses few technical problems, but their adoption by the media and administration as a means of written communication has proved much more problematic.

Supporters of effective decentralization and local self-governance have every reason therefore to help surmount these problems and political reticence. The mastery of some written system constitutes, in any case, an essential condition for progress in the self-sufficiency of local associations.

4.Cross-pollination. ***The most convincing experiments in self-sufficiency and community governance result from synergy among the different elements of local capitalization and close collaboration between trainers and developers.***

The key element of a successful local

self-governance strategy lies in the close and careful coupling of training and productive investment. The fact is demonstrated by the numerous sites where unilateral interventions floundered until these two forms of capitalization were at last joined. Furthermore, it is most often training which serves to weld financial capital to an institutional base broad enough to ensure the perpetuation of the enterprise, and which provides a vehicle for cultural adaptation of the intervention model.

B. Analysis: Reinforcement and mobilization of local capacities

What can we learn about the dynamics of local capacity creation and the prognosis for self-sufficiency efforts from this appraisal of efforts of the performance and results of the various parallel training systems in place at the local level?

1.It's no mystery: ***The majority of local actors concerned with the local self-governance movement, men and women, succeed in becoming literate and/or gaining the required technical knowledge without great difficulty.***

Observations at the forty sites strongly suggest that teaching literacy and becoming literate in one's own language or a familiar tongue, and acquiring new knowledge on this basis, are not terribly difficult provided the application of the new knowledge is clear, and the pedagogy progressive and participatory.

Several factors seem to explain this fact:

- .The powerful motivation created by real opportunities for local assumption of responsibility;
- .The phonetic character of the transcription of African languages;
- .The great success of strategies for using new literates to staff subsequent training;
- .The relatively low unit cost of the programs;
- .The possible multi-functionality of literacy instruction; and
- .The existing knowledge of the public and the natural phenomena of screening which enter into the selection of local leaders.

The training necessary to support self-governance initiatives is not, of course, limited to literacy instruction, far from it. But if the tool of writing constitutes a threshold of effectiveness in the management of local institutions, mastery of this code is equally important as a means of magnifying the scope and the impact of training.

2. Keys to the success of training programs ***at the local level can be summarized by three conditions: careful dovetailing of training and application, real employment or self-employment possibilities in prospect, and a conscientizing but easily reproducible pedagogy.***

While our surveys were focused on the ins and outs of local self-governance efforts, they also provide some insight into the conditions for success of related training efforts.

Real employment

Training initiatives which are not at least partially linked with real outlets and possibilities of increased capitalization have little chance of success. The challenges of generating and managing new collective resources most often trigger the need for training, constitute its most solid starting point, and furnish its most immediate field of practical application.

Alternation between learning and application

A good alternation between learning and application seems to be the second key to success for this type of training. Application can, of course, signify many things besides the management of income-generating activities. The criterion is obviously the use or uses valued by the beneficiary group.

The big challenge, however, lies in adapting the program of instruction to the contours and requirements of the new powers or functions to be exercised, and in modeling those functions themselves into a gentle pyramid of competencies and tasks which the trainee can scale over time as he or she masters the related lessons.

A conscientizing and reproducible pedagogy

The element of conscientization, or culturally innovative and critical learning, is a key ingredient in the formula, insofar as it can transform training, however slightly, into a movement that revitalizes and awakens the surrounding culture. But it is difficult to reproduce such approaches in a large-scale cascading manner without a good methodology to associate beneficiaries in its conception and development.

3. Financiallly solvent training:***Coupling training and literacy to self-governance and local capitalization efforts also ensures the attainment of a higher degree of self-financing, and thus***

greater reproducibility of these programs.

Successful efforts at fivefold capitalization seem to offer the best basis for the self-financing of training. The most striking example of this phenomenon is probably found in Chad, where under conditions of a prolonged civil war and near-total incapacity of the state, communities forced to assume responsibilty for their own affairs created schools and provided 28 times as many classroom places as the government over the past decade. But similar approaches appear everywhere: training is taken over by a collectivity or association because it is considered an essential instrument of its own growth and self-governance.

In southern Mali, the position of trainer or literacy instructor is now an integral part of the personnel roster of cotton farmers' associations. The function is generally filled by neo-literates from the community, who are largely paid out of the associations' own funds.

In Ghana we encountered several examples of processes of community development which began or have developed thanks to the initiative of village residents who imported literacy instructors or trainers at their own cost to help them acquire the skills needed to master new opportunities.

The more training is incorporated into the very process of organizational development, the more successful the activity and the faster self-financing is achieved.

4. The great divorce: ***The gap between educational systems on the one hand and development services or programs, on the other, is still wide and deep. It represents one of the greatest obstacles to the promotion of fivefold capitalization in the field.***

A wide gulf continues to separate the two groups of actors who hold the key to capitalization at the local level.

Development agencies and the divisions of the aid organizations which support them recognize all too rarely their pedagogical vocation: that is, the possibility of breaking down their technical messages and managerial functions into learnable skills and ceding responsibility and resource entitlements to local actors who master them, phase by phase.

Educators, on the other hand, tend still to have little or no understanding of the stakes of socio-economic development in the zones where they work. They do not know how--or at least rarely try-- to adapt their programs to the pedagogy inherent in the assumption of new responsibilities by their learners.

If the situation seems to have improved somewhat over the last decade, it is thanks in large part to the appearance on the scene of new NGOs and local associations. Many of them have quickly recognized, or learned from experience, that even the smallest effort of sustainable local development requires blending interventions in different domains--domains pertaining to distinct Ministries and services in the traditional administrative structures. They have learned, in other words, that unless institutional development is linked to financial accumulation, to the acquisition of new knowledge and technical competencies and to opportunities for cultural appropriation, these development efforts are likely to fail.

Conclusion

Practical implications

What are the implications of the results of the PADLOS-Education study for the intervention or partnership strategies of government services, NGOs and aid agencies in the West African context?

A. With respect to local development

1. Fivefold capitalization. ***To promote the success of local governance and self-sufficiency initiatives, encourage multidimensional capitalization; firmly insert training into this context; and conceive all planning, investment and technical diffusion programs as opportunities for learning, assumption of responsibility by beneficiaries, and staged transfer of decision-making responsibilities.***

The launching and management of income-generating activities constitute the driving force of this strategy, but are not necessarily its first element. Capitalization can also begin with cultural renewal, or with confrontation of ecological or demographic challenges. The secret obviously lies in close interweaving of the five kinds of action proposed, and thus among the different sorts of support to be provided.

Whatever the order of intervention, the

image of fivefold capitalization at least serves to recall the necessary strategic ingredients and to emphasize the importance of reciprocal linkages. It seems fair to say that no external investment or intervention program in local development should henceforth be conceived without incorporating a strategy of capacity building which enables the beneficiaries to take charge of the activity in appropriate and mutually-negotiated phases. Learning how to develop such a joint strategy of development, training and actual assumption of responsibility constitutes the real challenge for agency and aid personnel.

2.Bottom-up coordination: ***Achieve at long last a better semblance of inter-service coordination by transferring control of resource deployment to the local consumers or clients.***

Better coordination among development actors is an eternal refrain, but an objective achieved only very partially and occasionally. The movement considered here presents real possibilities for better coordination from the grassroots, a situation in which the beneficiaries or clients of the activity themselves demand a minimum of harmony among the interventions of external agents.

This form of integration promises to be more solid and lasting than one solely imposed from above. It can be reinforced by different means:

- encouraging the location of prime contracting responsibility at, or near, the local level;
- further developing systems and networks for contractual provision of services by semi-public and private entities,
- improving the circulation of information about such possibilities,

in short, a collection of strategies resembling the classically recommended means for improving the operation of a market and guarding against its excesses and inequities.

3. Develop the golden spike-- ***the critical link between top-down decentralization and local self-management -- by making local municipalities the turntable and rendez-vous point between the two movements.***

It is critically important to ensure that the two movements now under way, top-down and bottom-up -- are not at loggerheads. Local municipalities seem to constitute the critical junction between the two phenomena.

- On one hand, we observe an increasingly powerful federative reflex among grassroots communities and associations, which seek to form networks of service provision and savings that reach beyond the local level.
- On the other, the newly decentralized authorities of government administration, enterprises and NGOs sorely need to assemble a constituency that connects them with the local population.

The local municipality, serving as the site of arbitration, training and exchange, can greatly facilitate the considerable task of harmonizing the two movements. Exchanges between small cities and the countryside are already characterized more by a bi-directional flow than one-way emigration. This recomposition of the space around numerous pivotal small cities and large towns holds promise for the future, but risks provoking the sort of stampede of donors that only a broad-based movement could hold in check.

4.Crossing the threshold of writing: ***Systematically promote in development projects and administrative operations the mastery and especially the use of the written code most accessible to local actors.***

This generally means African languages transcribed in Roman characters, though other alternatives exist and still others will emerge. In the present situation, it seems essential to develop training and intervention methods that will help people gradually move to functional bilingualism or trilingualism; and encourage an intensification of written communication in vehicular African languages, an expansion of small local media, and a greater attention to cultural production grafted onto local governance initiatives, which allow stakeholders to have their say in the design of these efforts.

The future seems sure to be multilingual, the natural state of a good proportion of humankind and a particular asset of African peoples. We must begin to think in terms of a functional trilingualism (bilingual in major centers, where many of the population will nonetheless wish to master a third code): local language, African *lingua franca* and international language, each having its own uses as well as shared areas of deployment.

In any event, to deny African languages

citizenship as legitimate means of economic, intellectual, political and administrative expression is to deprive the whole society and the new associations, communities and local enterprises in particular of a very powerful tool of internal development, as well as a resource that can serve to mobilize many others.

5.Walking on two legs: ***It is not enough to remember gender in strategizing for local self-governance. Successful strategies do best to start with women and must meet their needs for seed capital and training.***

To judge by the numerous women's or mixed associations visited during the study, initiatives on their behalf need to ensure at least three critical elements: the opportunity to come together to evaluate their situation, adequate credit, and access to training-on-demand in literacy, administration and management.

Supply of credit for productive investments -- ones which yield sufficient returns to repay the debt, help make ends meet in the household, and increase initial capital -- appears to be a key measure for unshackling women's energies. They themselves very rapidly perceive the great importance of supporting the activity with relevant training and literacy instruction and securing access to solid technical assistance, as needed.

In the communities visited in the course of the survey, women are increasingly responsible for maintaining social stability and managing households. There can thus be no strategy to stimulate the local economy which does not involve them.

B. With respect to training programs

1.Focus training on the mastery of management, ***the challenge of productive reinvestment of income, and the development of a process that enables the entire stakeholder population to participate in decision making in an appropriate manner and ensures that these debates offer opportunities to invoke and restructure cultural values.***

The challenges posed by management of collective resources remains one of the great stimuli of the desire to learn and one of the principal instruments of effective self-governance. Promoting strategies of local investment left, right and center is therefore the basic vocation of external sources of support, a vocation which will not be soon exhausted. But technical instruction alone is far from a sufficient strategy for pulling it off.

The *democratic* challenge of institutional development consists of ensuring that the competency and the resources needed to manage the capitalizat ion effort do not remain the exclusive right of an elite. To judge by the results of our surveys and discussions, this transformation poses two imperatives:

- Attending to the horizontal as well as the vertical axis in the acquisition of new skills and the distribution of functions within the organization, taking care to provide a good number of people outside the initial core of leaders with a set of skills and competencies that will at least enable them to monitor group activities and decision-making.
- Allowing the necessary time and energy to develop with the interested parties, on the basis of an updating of underlying values and traditions, institutional forms and decision-making processes likely to guarantee the representation and encourage the expression of everyone in an appropriate manner.

Finally, the effort required to give meaning to the innovations and to adapt them to the basic values of the surrounding culture or improve them by this crossbreeding is an indispensable function of any attempt at the promotion of local self-governance; and training can constitute one effective means to this end.

2.Adopt empowering training methodologies ***that put a premium on learner responsibility and participation, promote the development of increased self-confidence and offer opportunities for forging a reinforced and broadened cultural identity.***

There is a harmony to be respected or created between the objectives of greater assumption of responsibility and fuller participation assigned to these training programs and the methods used in developing and conducting them. Participation in the design and evaluation of training, and nurturance of responsibility for learning decisions, are critical approaches, though ones sometimes difficult to follow on a widespread

and durable basis. The time of patented and standardized instructional methods seems largely past. Experience shows how important it is to plan for the participation of the users themselves in the development of materials and instructional strategy.

The more explicit introduction of training into the self-management movement at the local level offers an opportunity to carry to completion, perhaps more advisedly and under better auspices, the task of rural and urban animation (and its equivalents) which was begun in West Africa more than thirty years ago. It boils down to the challenge of giving voice to local actors and helping them to express and analyze their own needs, to find innovative solutions to their own problems, and to define the role which the various training services and aid organizations should play in support of their own initiatives.

3. Self-schooling and local systems of human resource development: *Encourage communities to develop their own systems of training and schooling in African and (as feasible) international languages. Such educational initiatives should be based on, and closely coordinated with, prior successful activities in self-management and local capitalization.*

Our observations and analyses bring up some fundamental questions:

- Why not try forging a better connection between the self-management initiatives increasingly underway at the local level and the strategy of education for all conveyed by primary schooling?
- Why not consider at least in the growing number of communities affected by the sort of capitalized activities discussed here entrusting to the community itself the responsibility of organizing a program of primary instruction, schooling which would begin in an African language on the basis of prior literacy experience?
- Why not consider schooling as an integral part of the local human resource development system that all communities and associations striving for self- sufficiency inevitably need and as an enterprise that is as manageable at the local level as those in other sectors that are being increasingly taken over?
- Such an educational reform by the grassroots should of course be accompanied by a certain number of checks and guarantees designed to ensure the quality of work, as well as the usefulness and convertibility of the results. But is not the first step to breach the conceptual isolation surrounding the educational system and rethink it in the same framework as the new development activities in progress?

This does not mean challenging the importance of basic education, nor even of primary schooling as the principal modality to effect such change -- but rather seeking more effective means for reaching this goal, by reforming the dynamics of educational supply and by benefiting from new opportunities that have opened up in the field.

4. Working for long-term educational reforms *that will lead to a better coupling of school with the challenges and opportunities presented by socioeconomic decentralization.*

Such an ambition entails gradually accomplishing two important changes.

The first is achieving a much better horizontal and vertical integration of the educational system. On the vertical axis this implies fluid passage between a broad primary education rooted in African language literacy and a selective secondary and higher system using international languages to a greater degree. On the horizontal axis, it means promoting exchange, equivalencies and transitional mechanisms between the formal and nonformal segments of the system.

The second change involves crafting a host of new linkages between education and local development. Among the most important are --

- better connection of training and education to local employments;
- fuller enlistment of economic and social development services, credit and savings networks, and small and medium enterprise in developing locality by locality the job market and possibilities for entrepreneurial initiative which will be open to graduates of different training courses; and
- greater recognition of these practical destinations and itineraries in programs of instruction.

Note: This is summarized from the PADLOS Education Study entitled Decentralization Self Governance and Local Capacity Building in the Sahel coordinated by Peter Easton of Florida State University. Other researchers included: Guy Belloncle, Chéibane Coulibaly,Simon Fass, Laouali Malam Moussa,
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Decentralization of Educational Decision Making

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Virtually every country in Asia has formulated official policies endorsing some level of decentralization, although there is considerable variation in the form that action takes. Despite being one of the most heavily researched topics in educational development literature and one of the most widely pursued strategies in the region, the merits of decentralization are heavily contested (Bray, 1996b, 1996c; Hannaway, 1995; Hannaway & Carnoy, 1993; Rondinelli 8c Puma, 1995; Rugh & Bossert, 1998). Advocates argue that decentralization shifts decision making to those closer to the community and school, which leads to decisions more responsive to local conditions and needs. They believe it is a way to encourage greater community participation and financial support of schools. Opponents suggest decentralizing authority and responsibility may only shift the same old problems to levels of the system less well prepared to cope with them and that decentralizing management invites corruption and inefficiency. They point out that because communities do not necessarily speak with a single voice, decentralization has sometimes led to increased tension at the local level. Both groups are probably right. Whether decentralization is a force for more relevance or an invitation to confusion will be determined largely by the leadership at the district, community, and school levels.

Although the educational impacts of decentralization may not yet be clear, one by-product of decentralization is the expectation that headmasters will play a greater role in instructional supervision, community relations, and school management, activities for which many have never been trained. Headmasters in many parts of developing Asia have little or no formal preparation to understand the trade-offs (in terms of learning outcomes) associated with the resource allocation decisions that many are being asked to make. Also, they do not necessarily have the political skills needed to build the community participation and support that decentralization is supposed to foster. The move toward greater decentralization will place demands on school headmasters that many will be unable to meet (Bray, 1996a, 1996c; Chapman, Mahlck, & Smolders, 1997; Epstein, 1995; Hannaway, 1995; London, 1997). One of the current ironies of educational development is that the push toward decentralization now under way (to varying degrees) in virtually all countries in the region shifts more responsibility to the group of educational administrators least ready to accept it.

Even in the most enthusiastic settings, not all functions are decentralized. Curriculum and testing remain central functions virtually everywhere. However, districts, communities, and schools are taking more responsibility for such things as teacher selection and deployment, selection of textbooks and other instructional materials, facilities construction and maintenance, and most important, financing (Bray, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c; Fiske, 1996; Lauglo, 1995; Rondinelli & Puma, 1995; Shaeffer, 1992; Wheeler, McDonough, Gallagher, Sookpokakit, & Duongsa, 1997).

It is not yet clear that decentralization can legitimately be regarded as an educational innovation. That is, the decentralization has been advocated for its contributions to democracy development, community development, and

financial relief. However, it is not clear that it results in different experiences for students in classrooms or in how much students learn. The impact of greater community involvement and local financing depends on whether the new moves are in addition to current levels of government funding or are merely displacing that funding. Much of the value to education of greater decentralization will be determined by how communities and schools use their greater autonomy (Bray, 1996a, 1996c; Fiske, 1996; Rugh & Bossert, 1998). The wise use of resources to improve the quality of schooling will demand school managers who understand the elements of good instruction and who do not succumb to pressures to spend money on show rather than substance.

Decentralization: Implications for education administrators.

Decentralization places quite different demands on administrators at all levels - at the top because they have to relinquish authority and at the local level because they have to assume greater authority and responsibility (Bray, 1996b; Fiske, 1996; Rondinelli & Puma, 1995). In the move toward decentralization, headmasters face three issues: First, in only a few countries do headmasters currently have the training or background to meet this challenge. Across much of Asia, massive support and training will be needed if decentralized school management is to lead to positive outcomes. It is ironic that one of the most widely touted reform efforts shifts enormous new responsibilities to the group of education managers probably least equipped to handle them. Whatever educational value decentralization may hold is largely lost if headmasters cannot translate it into concrete actions within their school. Second, decentralization may lead to greater community pressure for transparency and accountability on the part of school and system managers. These administrators may have limited experience in understanding what this means or in knowing how to comply.

Third, to the extent that decentralization shifts decision making back to the community, it may stifle educational reform. Communities tend to be conservative (Chapman, 1998; Chapman et al., 1997; London, 1997). Even well-intentioned changes to instructional materials, teaching methods, or tests can arouse considerable opposition (Chapman &. Snyder, 1992; London, 1997). Parents are not prone to risk their children's future on new ideas about what students should study, how teachers should teach, or how learning should be measured. Parents and teachers may perceive such shifts as threatening the balance of advantage. Those who do well under the existing system may resist changes that put their advantage in doubt. As interested as parents are in seeing the quality of education improve, they are often more interested in protecting whatever comparative advantage their own children might have gained from their schooling. They want to make sure their own children do not lose their positioning for whatever benefits may accrue from their education (London, 1997). A corollary of this observation is that parents may not always be natural allies of teachers and headmasters in efforts to raise educational quality, at least if there is perceived short-term risk to their children.

One of the issues of the next decade will be involving communities in meaningful ways without stifling new instructional materials and practices. Central governments face their own challenge in this regard. It is not yet clear how central government can encourage quality in a system in which much (or all) of the money comes from the community.

Decentralization also can bring other problems that education managers at levels above the school need to anticipate. For example, decentralization fosters inequities. One reason that countries centralize some educational functions is to ensure an equitable distribution of resources across communities of different economic means. Decentralizing and pushing local communities to take more financial responsibility for their own schools can lead to greater inequities within a country as richer communities are able to finance their schools at a much higher level than poorer communities. It will fall to district, regional, and central administrators to ensure that decentralization does not undermine equity.

This is not to say that productive dialogue cannot develop. In most communities, there are shared education concerns - such things as persistent dropouts, high pupil absenteeism, school-work relationships, and the utilization of school fees. These concerns under certain conditions may provide a common purpose and facilitate community dialogue on school matters. This does

not happen automatically; there needs to be support. such as previous community experience in participatory decision making, willingness of governments to share control while continuing to provide resources, and commitment on the part of local organizations to a process of continued learning. Most important, community participation depends on the openness of community members to the possibility that new local practices emerge from examination and study of local experience (Shaeffer, 1992).

Increased Community Contribution to Support Their Local Schools

As national budgets get tighter, governments essentially have only a limited number of strategies available to them for finding new funds to support education. They can (a) lower costs (presumably without lowering quality), (b) raise taxes, (c) raise fees paid by the student and their families, (d) encourage (or require) higher community subsidization of their local schools, or (e) some combination of these. Because salary accounts for more than 90% of the education budget in many countries, lowering costs is problematic for both political and educational (quality) reasons - among other things, underpaid and unemployed teachers can become a potent political force. Raising taxes is always unpopular. Many families are already paying substantial private costs of sending their children to school (even when it is officially free) (Bray, 1996c). With alternatives constrained, strategies for increasing community support have taken on new salience. Consequently, one purpose of decentralization is to encourage more financial support from the community for the schools.

Community contributions: Implications for education administrators. Increased community contributions come at a price. Many communities expect their investment to be reflected in a better educational experience for their children. Some expect more meaningful participation in decisions that affect their school such as teacher selection. Indeed, much of the advocacy for greater community involvement is grounded not in claims that communities should pay more but in the belief that community participation can increase responsiveness of schools to local needs, which in turn will enhance quality. In short, increased local support will require headmasters to use community money wisely, be able to demonstrate pay-off, and operate in a transparent way.

Involving local government in sector-wide programmes

by Florence Kuteesa, Uganda

The Education Sector Investment Programme (ESIP) is one major example of an initiative to build and sustain more effective development partnerships that seek to make aid more effective in realising the goals and objectives of education in Uganda. At a time when Uganda is undertaking far-reaching decentralisation, the role of local governments becomes more pronounced. This paper reviews the opportunities and challenges in the Education Sector and in particular the extent of the involvement or participation of local governments.

Background

In 1997, the Ugandan President launched the Policy on Universal Primary Education (UPE) to provide education for all primary-age children, by eliminating the school fees or tuition paid by parents. The immediate effect was a doubling of overall primary school enrolment from 2.3 million students in 1996 to 5.6 million in 1997. This had significant implications on resource (both financial and human) requirements. With such a sudden large increase in enrolment plus anticipated impact on post - primary education, the government had to work out a strategic plan to mobilise resources and make wise choices in their allocation.

The Universal Primary Education (UPE) Policy necessitated an in-depth review of the priority areas in the sector and in resource allocation. In a widely consultative and participatory process, lasting almost two years and supported by a number of donors, Government produced the Education Sector Investment Programme (ESIP). The programme states that

emphasis will be placed on primary education and will gradually stretch to post primary institutions to enable them to accommodate the graduates from the influx from primary schools. ESIP states the goals and objectives for the sector, identifies cost effective strategies and interventions by the respective stakeholders as well as an articulation of the critical resource requirements and costs envisaged over the medium term. The ESIP is fully owned by government and has been accepted by all development partners as a planning tool for mobilising and allocating limited resources in strategic and priority areas.

With the responsibility of delivering basic social services decentralised to local governments, a significant share of resources is transferred to districts as conditional grants for teacher's salaries; classroom construction etc. Effective implementation of ESIP depends therefore on the capacity of the local governments to co-ordinate and manage the education programmes.

Provisions for Planning, Budgeting, and Review

Since the introduction of a more transparent and consultative budget process at the national level, the Education Sector has gone a long way in instituting measures to determine more effective goals and enhance accountability in the use of scarce resources. A sector working group has been established, involving all key stakeholders, including communities, local and central government, donors, representatives of the private sector and NGOs. The working group, chaired by the Ministry of Education, sets the performance targets, advises on the resource allocations and reviews the inputs and outputs of the delivery mechanism. This information is feed into the annual Budget Framework Paper.

Besides this official arrangement, there are a number of consultative mechanisms, such as the monthly Co-ordination Committee on ESIP, led by the Ministry of Education; joint auditing, inspections and supervision visits to the local governments; and a Donor Sub-group on Education. This group brings together all concerned donors, periodically, to discuss issues and to make efforts to streamline the SWAp. In an effort to streamline the monitoring and review process of donors, Government has initiated Joint Reviews which include key stakeholders and donors. The first review was conducted in April 1999 and is a significant step in co-ordinating interventions and monitoring the use of both domestic and external resources. These reviews will continue to be held twice a year. The six monthly ESIP Reviews, involving all Education Stakeholders and donors are supported by a number of working Groups, namely; Sector Policy and Management, Tertiary Education; Secondary Education; Financial Planning and Management; Technical and Vocational Education, Primary Education, Teacher Education and Disadvantaged Groups.

Capacity Challenges Related To Local Government Participation

National Co-ordination of ESIP mainly relates to policy discussions, resource allocation and technical guidance; whereas co-ordination at the local government level focuses on implementation. While the former is regarded as relatively effective, the latter has proven more difficult. Experiences among local governments however vary greatly.

The Decentralisation programme has recently shifted the responsibility of actual implementation of education programmes to local government. Given the fact that this is a new role, it is not surprising that the local authorities still lack adequate knowledge and understanding of ESIP. ESIP is still seen as a national initiative led by the Centre. The roles and responsibilities of the Centre and local governments are not clearly defined. More effort is needed to provide a framework for re-defining roles of the districts vis-a-vis the Centre and identifying capacity gaps relating to their new responsibilities.

Whereas most officials working for the Centre (Ministry of Education) are acquainted with performance outputs, efficiency and effectiveness sustainability and co-ordination, many local authorities are not in a position to articulate these issues within their broader planning and budgeting framework. Capacity in some districts is currently constrained by lack of critical skills related to planning, budgeting, accounting and management of the ESIP i.e. preparation of work plans, action plans, technical documents, strategy papers as well as monitoring reports.

The situation is further aggravated by the absence of a functioning Education Management Information System. Moreover, it is imperative that local governments offer more attractive remuneration packages to attract and retain highly qualified and experienced personnel. To this end, District Capacity Building Plans are being developed to facilitate the mobilisation and utilisation of resources to address these gaps.

One significant element that has not received sufficient attention is a concerted effort towards fully involving local governments in ESIP. The process cannot achieve its full impact with respect to improved service delivery and accountability, unless a structured plan of action with regard to transfer of appropriate knowledge is arranged, and also more involvement of local government in determining priorities and resources transfers. Such a concern raises a fundamental question of who is really in the lead seat: the local authority, the Centre, or the donor? Admittedly, the majority of local governments still depend heavily on the Centre or on donor support for fulfilling key functions, in particular planning, budgeting and financial management.

Besides weak capacity and co-ordination at the local government level, the co-ordination mechanism between the Centre and local levels is acknowledged as inadequate which is reflected in insufficient strategic communication between the two levels; lack of effective co-ordination and follow-up, plus, and a focus on reporting "spending" levels rather than on results achieved.

Concluding Remarks

ESIP had proved to be an extremely complex, fast-moving and demanding initiative shaping decisions and forcing reforms within a decentralised framework. The initiative demands risk-taking and decisiveness of the key implementors who are the local government authorities. There is no doubt therefore that the authorities need to fully understand the initiative, the implications for their responsibilities, functions as well as resources requirements so as to facilitate and enhance streamlined and well-coordinated implementation of ESIP.

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Discourses on the Policy of Educational Decentralisation in South Africa since 1994: an Examination of the South African Schools Act [1] [2]

Yusef Sayed

Introduction

The policy of educational decentralisation has in recent times become a key aspect of educational restructuring in the international arena. This is evident, for example, in the 1988 Education Reform Act in England and Wales (see for example Bash & Coulby, 1991; and Bowe & Ball, 1992), the Tomorrow's Schools report of the Australian government, and the changes effected as a consequence of the report (see Lauder & Wylie, 1990; and Gordon, 1992). It is also to be seen in the changes in the Dutch education system since 1982 (Sleegers & Wesseling, 1993) and in Brazilian education since the 1980s (Santos Filhos, 1993).

The decentralisation of educational control and decision-making is also evident in discussions surrounding educational restructuring in South Africa and has been expressed in the call for greater community and parental participation in schooling (Sayed, 1995). This move towards greater devolution and participation in schooling increased in momentum after the elections of 1994 and was sanctioned with the passing of the South African Schools Act (SASA) in November 1996. In an attempt to understand the move towards educational decentralisation, this paper examines the rationale and likely implications behind such a policy in the South African context. Specifically, this paper critically examines the discourses of educational decentralisation in present educational policy development (1994-1997) in South Africa with reference to the SASA. It is intended that the examination of the policy of educational decentralisation in South Africa will provide an illuminative case study for debates about such a policy in the international context.

The paper is divided into three sections. Firstly, the paper explores the different understandings of educational decentralisation in current policy development in South Africa. In discussing conceptions of educational decentralisation in South Africa, the paper examines these in relation to the underlying assumptions of the policy of decentralisation raised by commentators such as Rondinelli et al. (1984), Lauglo and McLean (1985), Weiler (1990), Prawda (1993), Mankoe and Maynes (1994), Lauglo (1995), Bray (1996) and Fiske (1996). Secondly, the paper examines notions of educational decentralisation embedded in the SASA and the tensions and contradictions contained therein. Finally, the paper highlights a particular manifestation of educational decentralisation in the South African context, the tension between national and provincial educational competencies and decision-making.

Discourses of educational decentralisation in contemporary South African educational policy development

Discourses of educational decentralisation in the South African context find expression and support in both the policies of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) (1994) government and the opposition, the National Party, which was, for a period, a member of the Government of National Unity (GNU). Two inter-related, though potentially contradictory, notions feed discourses of educational decentralisation.

First, both the previous ruling National Party and the opposition anti-apartheid movement shared a commitment to some form of educational decentralisation albeit for very different political and ideological reasons. For the National Party, the clearest expression of a commitment to educational decentralisation was to be found in its Model B and C Regulations [3] and in its Educational Renewal Strategy (ERS). In these regulations, the National Party argued that educational decentralisation allowed for greater control of schooling by those who had to pay and that it would enhance efficiency, effectiveness and quality.

The National Party's commitment to educational decentralisation as expounded in its ERS document and Model B and C Regulations prioritised individual freedoms and rights in matters of social service provision. The National Party in the last years of apartheid was committed to the ideal of total individual freedom of choice without any forms of intervention or regulation by the state. Underlying this ideal was the notion of the 'individual as consumer' reflected in the discourse of 'parental choice' and 'consumer power'.

However, many writers commenting on educational decentralisation have pointed out that it is mainly professional and middle class parents (mostly white in the South African context) who benefit from such decentralisation. Moreover, many writers point out that central governmental authority for educational decision-making is never actually totally surrendered (for example, see Bash and Coulby (1991), Weiler (1990) and Bowe and Ball (1992)). Thus, the National Party's commitment to educational decentralisation of control to School Management Committees was also related to strong centralised control. Thus, the claim for the redistribution of authority and the commitment to individual (consumer) freedoms, as Weiler (1990) points out, cannot be accepted at face value.

The commitment of the progressive anti-apartheid support for policies of educational decentralisation was, by contrast, rooted in the very trajectory of resistance politics. Such politics operated on an oppositional discourse which drew upon local community support and participation. Grassroots mobilisation and struggle were the basis for resistance. It thus constituted itself in a call for 'community control', 'grassroots control'. In the educational sphere, the most poignant illustration of this notion was the call for 'structures of dual power' in the discourses of the National Education Co-ordinating Committee (NECC) (NEPI, 1992) and the formation of Parent, Teacher and Student Associations (PTSAs) which were conceived as vehicles of community expression. Paradoxically, the notion of community as an expression of participatory democracy is weakened in the SASA for two reasons, first, by making community participation in governance structures conditional upon the agreement of the school governing body, and second, by reducing such participation to an instrumental search for such representatives as can render expertise to the school governing bodies. In fact, it is deeply ironic that community representatives on school governing bodies do not have any voting status.

The notion of grassroots community participation was constituted in the context of a state which was oppressive and where the state itself was the primary apparatus of oppression. Thus, grassroots community control was the antithesis of state control. Power to the people as opposed to that of the state reflected a strong commitment to participatory democracy and the decentralisation of control.

Furthermore, in the discourses of the progressive anti-apartheid education movement, there has been a strong call for the democratisation of the state and the education system. It was believed that the transition to post-apartheid society would usher in the installation of a legitimate political centre which would transform education to meet the needs of all, in particular, the historically marginalised and disadvantaged sectors of society. This call was underpinned by a strong commitment to a representative state in a constitutional democracy.

For the progressive education movement, the discourse of educational transformation reflected both a commitment to a strong, interventionist state and a belief in the desirability and efficacy of grassroots control. The latter suggests a strong move towards civil society activity and participation in the polity. With the elections, the new education system was charged with giving expression to both sets of commitments. The first white paper (WPI, Department of Education, 1995a) on education set up this framework. It proposed a strong regulatory state with a commitment to civil society participation in the education sphere. The latter is captured in, inter alia, recommendations that motivate the need for strong, advisory bodies at all the appropriate levels of the education system.

The progressive anti-apartheid education movement's commitment to participation thus faced the difficult paradox of balancing a strong commitment to the idea of the state as an agent of control and regulation and simultaneously a belief in the efficacy of community control suggesting new forms of the state/civil society relationship.

Sceptical commentators such as McGinn and Street (1986) and Weiler (1990) argue that the policy of educational decentralisation is mainly an attempt to reconstitute the form of the state, and consequently a reformulation of the nature of control exercised in education. In this respect, the crucial claim that is advanced is that the policy of educational decentralisation is an attempt by the state to operate at a distance. In operating at a distance, the state portrays itself as being one with the people.

However, the key challenge facing the new government elected in 1994 with the passing of the SASA is the attempt to find an acceptable balance between a commitment to strong forms of citizen participation and the need for strong state intervention. Creating strong forms of citizen participation may diminish the power of the elected authority (government), and consequently potentially undermines the will of the electorate who expect the elected government in South Africa to fulfil the mandate upon which it was voted into power. Hence, the Ministry of Education and the South African government have tended not to grant stakeholder bodies decision-making power. Instead such bodies in the South African context have been accorded mainly advisory powers. On the other hand, strong forms of government control and intervention with stakeholder bodies having weak advisory powers may minimise and militate against increased participation as citizens may feel unable to effect change. An example of this tension in the South African context was the Constitutional Court ruling in favour of the Minister of National Education which stated that the National Minister of Education did have the constitutional power to issue national norms and standards over and above provincial wishes[4]. The Constitutional Court case highlights the difficulty of trying to balance central authority and regulation with the devolution of educational control. It signals a key tension between the ability of an elected government to act decisively and, at times, unilaterally, and simultaneously the desire on the part of such a government to be receptive and responsive to all views from whatever source.

Equity, parental participation and the SASA

The preceding section has highlighted the discursive influences shaping the policy of educational decentralisation in South Africa. It has highlighted the tensions that the GNU faced in creating a system of educational governance that entrenched citizen participation at the school level and simultaneously intervened to redress the inherited educational imbalances. In trying to understand the discursive shape of the evolving policy of educational decentralisation in South Africa, this paper focuses on two key questions that affect the implementation of the SASA. These questions focus on the crucial issues of school fees and parental participation. The two questions that help illuminate the discourse of educational decentralisation in South Africa since 1994 are:

- To what extent will the power to raise school fees as proposed in the SASA further exacerbate inequities in education in South Africa?
- What are the underlying assumptions regarding the forms of parental participation envisaged in the SASA?

These two questions raise the difficult issue of attempting to decentralise school governance and promoting greater educational equity.

Autonomy, equity and user fees

A key tension in the SASA is the proposal that school governing bodies, constituted in terms of the provisions of the SASA, may raise additional revenue in the form of school fees (referred to as user fees in this paper). The idea of user fees is premised on the assumption that parents who wish to provide quality education for their children, over and above the state subsidy, are able to do so. Thus, the act (Department of Education, 1996b, Chapter Four) indicates that parents, as the majority constituency on the school governing body of public schools, may decide to levy school fees that are binding on the school community. This approach, known as the Fourth Option, has its origin in the Hunter Review Committee Report (1995b) which proposed three models of school financing, namely,

- the minimalist-gradualist approach which would allow most existing governing bodies to continue to function including the ex-Model C schools;
- the equitable school-based formula approach which is similar to the previous approach but argues for equal per capita expenditure and prohibits schools from raising additional monies; and

- the partnership approach that includes an equal per capita expenditure but where the state's commitment to operating costs is reduced depending on parental contribution. (Department of Education, 1995b)

The White Papers' bill and act concerning the organisation, governance and funding of schools refute all three approaches and propose a fourth option based on the advice of international consultants. The Fourth Option essentially suggests that schools should be allowed to levy user fees over and above state subsidy[51]. This paper considers the notion of user fees as an instance of the introduction of market forces in educational provision in South Africa.

The market that is introduced through user fees does not function on the classical supply-demand model. Gintis (1995), writing about school devolution in the USA, argues that the ideal or pure market rarely, if at all, operates in education. More accurately, what is created through the devolution of educational control is, as Deem et al. (1995) argue in the UK context, 'quasi-markets'. The market mechanism that is introduced is the generation of additional resources based on the principle of self-interest. User fees reflect the deregulation of educational provision and are operative on the grounds of ensuring that the quality of educational 'goods' is correlative of the price (value) that is paid. The worth of the educational product is thus secured in the value of the exchange. User fees secure market logic by engendering commitment to monetary transaction as a basis for the determination of quality and worth. In this case, not every citizen is therefore able to maintain the same level of financial investment and consequently, the level of substantive equal social entitlement depends on a citizen's wealth. The long-term tendency of such an approach is the creation of a two-tier system of public schooling stratified into well-resourced schools and a majority of marginalised, state-reliant schools. This is a result of wealthier parents being able to pay more for their children's schooling and their relative 'cultural capital'. Mindful of the possibility of schisms in public education, the state intervened in educational governance in an attempt to regulate the operation of the market. Thus, the Parliamentary Committee inserted a clause (Department of Education, 1996b, Section 39.4) in the final act that states that the Minister would, after consultation, set 'equitable criteria for the total, partial, conditional exemption of parents unable to pay school fees'. Thus, an attempt was made to curb the possible excesses of the market.

User fees were justified on the grounds that monies raised in this way would effect savings that could be expended on equity and redress projects. This was a persuasive argument on the surface. Yet, it presumes that schools could be motivated to collect monies for the benefit of the state. Why would schools raise monies which they would not be able to keep? Put cynically, user fees thus can be read simply as a cost-cutting exercise. More fundamentally, there is no indication in the SASA or any other government policy text that savings effected from user fees will be used for redress and equity concerns. The catch-22 of user fees as a way of balancing state regulation and market forces is that, as presently formulated, it will either drive away or demotivate schools from collecting such monies or it will have to be so tightly regulated as to make deregulation impractical. Put differently, the application of user fees in the SASA cannot engender additional funds or achieve equity or redress without compromising either of the goals.

What the SASA proposes is the operation of the market by removing regulatory control over the raising of additional funds. It introduces notions of private in public education and consequently redefines the private versus public boundary in South African education. Thus, what the SASA reflects is the ways in which public education takes on characteristics of the private free market. Concurrently, it argues for state regulation to prevent widening the rift between the rich and the poor. This 'balance' is not easy to achieve. Nor are the trade-offs and compromises satisfactory. However, there are less difficult trade-offs and compromises [6].

Parents as consumers and/or citizens?

A key demand in the debate concerning educational governance has been the call for greater parental participation in schooling. Parental participation has been the officially stated position of all progressive educational organisations in South Africa. The SASA gives expression to this

call but in potentially conflicting ways. Parents are, at one level, conceived of as citizens in a constitutional democracy.

They are thus individuals with citizenship rights which are to be exercised in the context of devolved school governance. In this instance, parents are granted the right to participate as citizens in the determination of key areas of school policy. This right is manifested in their representation on school governing bodies. With this right comes a set of responsibilities. The parents' school citizen status is guaranteed by the conferring of juristic persona on school governing bodies. The SASA thus introduces devolved educational control with user fees being a key devolved responsibility.

But the parent as school citizen represents a specific type of citizenship. As the first version of the second White Paper on the organisation, governance and funding of schools (WP2a, Department of Education, 1995b, Sections 4.15, 4.16) indicates, the citizen parent is an individual with rights which are interactively constituted in the context of a strong commitment to equity and redress and where such rights are held in partnership with the relevant education authorities. The rights of the school citizen do not therefore imply, as the WP2a (Department of Education, 1995b, Section 4.16), puts it; ‘turning over the school to parents’. Parents are framed as assisting with the professional functioning and work of the school.

Implicit in the above conceptualisation is the notion of a school citizen as an individual whose rights are not ‘self-contained’ but for whom the exercise of the right is to contribute instrumentally to the better functioning of the school because that is to his/her benefit. Put differently, the school citizen in the SASA is one who works with the school and is not, as has been the case in the past, the locus of opposition. Thus, the parent is constituted in the image of the state, a citizen who is unlikely to be oppositional or come into conflict with the relevant education authorities. The form of citizenship that is espoused is, as Deem et al. (1995) argue in their study of school governing bodies in the UK, largely administrative; the citizen who functions as part of the larger workings of the public administration of the state. This could be thus viewed as deconcentration of administrative educational control with parent citizens expected to take on greater administrative responsibility for schooling, a system of administrative downloading.

The preceding point highlights two distinct conceptualisations of the parent as citizen [7]. The first form of parental citizenship is the individual as self-reliant and not hostage to the state. It is a citizenship constituted on the basis of the person him/herself making his/her life better and not dependent on the state. This is a citizenship which attempts to regenerate and revitalise cohesive bonds and restores the political and moral order. This version, it is argued, is invoked in the SASA. The second version, the left form of citizenship, is the citizen who, through public association in the space of civil society, recognises the bonds of community and consequently works for the public good and the assertion of civic virtue. This is essentially political citizenship and what distinguishes it from the first is that the citizen's recognition of him/herself is located within the context of a broader collective.

By contrast, the discourse of the parent as consumer and his/her identity as a market agent is constituted in the SASA through two distinct mechanisms. Firstly, the notion of the school consumer is engendered through the assertion of parents as the primary clients, who should always be the majority constituency in the school governing body. The parent consumers are the ones who, in the words of the second version of the second white paper on the organisation, governance and funding of schools (WP2b, Department of Education, 1996b, Section 3.15) ‘have the most stake in their child's education because of the heavy legal and financial decision for which governing bodies would be responsible’. Secondly, the parent consumer is constituted on the basis of the fees which he/she pays to provide additional finances for school provision beyond the state subsidy.

The operation of the market in education creates a conception of the consumer citizen who is a self-interested, utility-maximising, rational individual. This is the cornerstone of the philosophy of the consumer citizen. In this conception, the school community simply becomes the locale for self-interested possessive behaviour. Put differently, community involvement simply becomes the expression of strong consumer rights. This is evidently the case at most, if not all, of the ex-Model C schools where the school community

becomes the locus for the self-interested behaviour of the individual driven toward competition and the acquisition of marketable credentials. The school community is thus a collective resource for self aggrandisement.

For the consumer citizen to operate, two conditions need to be met, namely, that of choice and that of the ability to control the product by virtue of the fees contributed. The first condition operates in the South African context through 'conditioned or constrained' choice which feeds into the privileging of the middle class. In other words, the choice that is available for all South Africans is conditioned or constrained by the principle of 'soft zoning' which privileges pupils from the immediate school locale. In the context of South Africa's unequal racial geography, this gives preference to those who have been privileged and the newly emerging elite who are able to move to such areas. Constrained choice in the South African context ties in neatly with the stratification reproduced by market relations which the SASA opens up.

Secondly, where parental contribution is high and significant, the parent consumer is likely to be interventionist in nature. This is clearly the case. However, the one key clause that the Parliamentary Committee removed from the act was that which gave parents the right to determine the school's admission policy. Had this been the case, parental control over the product by controlling the input would have been almost complete.

Yet, the success of the Parliamentary Committee was partial. For the notion of an educational market manifest in user fees focuses mainly on the choice behaviour of the school consumer. What is often ignored is the behaviour of producers who operate in no less a self-interested, utility-maximising way than parent consumers. In this context, the school as producer actively solicits and attracts those parents who can and are likely to be able to pay the stipulated user fees. In this way, consumer choice is reduced as it is now circumscribed by the self-interested behaviour of the school.

The SASA introduces particular notions of parents, privileging the notion of the parent as consumer. Public education and the participants therein begin to structure their interactions on the basis of market logic. In this context, the distinction between the public and private is blurred as the patterns of interactions that are likely to govern public schooling in South Africa will reflect that of consumers in the market place. This is already the case in many schools in South Africa.

The tension between national policy and provincial implementation in the Western Cape

A particular manifestation of the tension in the policy of educational decentralisation centres on the Western Cape Schools Bill (WCSB). With the passage of the SASA, the nine provinces in South Africa, which according to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa are responsible for schooling, have two options. Firstly, where provinces had already passed schools acts, these had to be amended in line with the new SASA. Secondly, where provinces had no such legislation, they could choose not to pass any act, in which case the national act would prevail. Alternatively, they could pass their own acts. The Western Cape Province, which is the only province where the National Party is in the majority, chose to pass their own schools act for obvious political reasons. This section of the paper considers the differences between the national SASA and the WCSB to highlight the tension in educational decentralisation between national centralising tendencies and decentralising provincialisation of education.

It is perhaps appropriate to start by contextualising the discussion. The Constitution of South Africa cites schooling as a provincial competency. In other words, the governance and administration of schooling is the function of the nine provinces, two of which are controlled by the Inkatha Party (Kwa-Zulu Natal) and the National Party (Western Cape). As discussed, the overriding constitutional provision suggests that national authority is only for the purposes of establishing uniform norms and standards, and in instances where provincial laws and regulation contradict national priorities and policies. In the latter case, the National Ministry of Education may intervene, following a prescribed procedure which includes showing just cause why the province has violated national policies.

In the case of the Western Cape, its draft school bill is not an obvious case of conflict.

However, there are a number of recommendations in the WCSB which reflect the conflict between centralised (national) and decentralising (provincial) modes of governance. Four manifestations of this tension, 'decentralised centralisation', 'protectionism', 'omission and adaptation' and 'deferral', are discussed.

The WCSB contains a strong controlling thrust in its recommendations concerning school governance. For example, the WCSB states that 'the Head of Education may exempt a learner from school if she is pregnant, if the learner marries' and more insidiously 'if sufficient school facilities are not available' (Western Cape Bill, 1997, Section 50.1). Further examples are the provision made for a school attendance officer who may enter schools, interview any person and subpoena any information he/she feels to be necessary in respect of attendance (Western Cape Bill, 1997, Section ll.1). These examples highlight the centralising nature of the WCSB which opens schools to direct surveillance by the department. Thus, the Western Cape Education Department utilises its decentralised powers to centralise school governance at the provincial level and subjects schools to greater scrutiny.

Yet, whilst the WCSB centralises certain functions, it also provides school governing bodies with many powers and functions which the SASA removes or restricts. For example, the WCSB restores to school governing bodies the right to determine language and religious policy in schools (Western Cape Bill, 1997, Sections 52, 53). The political project that is being sponsored revolves around, on the one hand, accruing provincial educational power to buttress possible and potential national intervention. On the other hand, the WCSB gives expression to the National Party's ERS of devolving maximal power to governing bodies as a way of diminishing state authority in educational decision-making. Thus, the WCSB further devolves educational decision-making authority and control.

'Protectionism' surfaces in the provision relating to the continuation of certain councils. The WCSB proposes that certain governing bodies which are in existence will, at the inception of the Western Cape Schools Act, become the new governing bodies as required by national legislation (Western Cape Bill, 1997, Section 26.1). This clause makes it possible for governing bodies constituted in terms of apartheid legislation to continue despite the passing of the SASA. Specifically, it allows ex-whites only Model C school governing bodies to continue operating. This is perhaps the clearest expression on the part of the provincial authority to retain the status of certain schools. As such, it possibly contradicts the democratic intent of the SASA.

'Omission and adaptation' refer to the manner in which sections of the WCSB, on the surface, mimic the SASA, but actually the report changes the approach of the latter by omitting certain sections. The most important example is the omission of the limitation clauses which are the cornerstone of the SASA. For example, the SASA lists a number of limitations regarding the determination of language and religious observance policy in the schools which the WCSB fails to mention. A further example is the partial, conditional or total exemption of parents from the payment of school fees. In the SASA the determination of exemption is a ministerial prerogative whereas in the WCSB it is a function of the governing body (Western Cape Bill, 1997, Section 57.1). Through a process of omission and adaptation, the WCSB potentially alters the substantive meaning of the SASA.

Finally, the most important feature of this WCSB is perhaps 'deferral'. The WCSB defers a number of crucial policy decisions to the issuing of proclamations and regulations. This is a significant policy manoeuvre in that whilst education bills in South Africa are subject to public scrutiny and debate, proclamations and regulations are the prerogative of the department and schools are required to implement these. This might not be a problem if what is deferred is not of critical import. However, this is not the case with respect to the WCSB. For example, what the WCSB defers are critical decisions regarding both the powers and functions of school governing bodies and their actual composition. This is another way in which national legislation may be altered in practice. Further, it removes from the public arena significant policy debates.

The above four instances of policy reformulation and modification indicate the tension between centralising and decentralising modes of educational governance. The tension between the centralised and decentralised modes of educational

governance in the South African context can also be discerned in other educational systems. The National Curriculum in England and Wales is one example of this. Even though the Education Reform Act of 1988 devolves management powers to the schools, all students are still required to follow a National Curriculum (see Bash and Coulby (1991)). Conversely, a centralised education system may also transfer control. For example, Lauglo and McLean (1985, p. 11) point out that even centralised socialist societies such as Cuba may decentralise administrative control.

The WCSB illustrates the need, in understanding educational decentralisation, to differentiate between two key dimensions of an education system: policy control and policy implementation. Governments may devolve powers of implementation to schools, or grant other agencies or individuals the freedom to provide education (policy implementation) whilst retaining control over functions such as curriculum and financing (policy control). In the South African context, the tension that is set up is between the national level as a body that formulates policy ('setting of norms and standards') and the provincial level as the agency that is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of educational policy. The tension surrounds the actual practices of implementation at the provincial levels and the different ways in which policy implementation is understood.

Conclusion

The paper began by highlighting the growing tendency toward educational decentralisation and has focused on the tensions and contradictions that beset such a policy in the South African context. It has argued that the move toward educational decentralisation in South Africa shares with many other countries a commitment on the part of the government to enhancing parental participation in schooling. The paper also argues that the move toward educational decentralisation in the South African context is coupled with recognition of the need for state intervention to ensure national norms and standards and promote the goal of equity. In this respect, the paper concurs with the research on educational decentralisation by Lauglo and McLean (1985), Weiler (1990), Prawda (1993), Lauglo (1995) and Bray (1996) that suggests that the key issue in the centralisation-decentralisation debate is the balance between centralised and decentralised modes of educational governance and the distribution of power in the education system. The paper further argues that the balance between centralised and decentralised modes of educational governance in the South African context may result in educational inequities with a key difference being that current educational policy may accentuate inequities along the lines of class rather than race. The paper cautions against unqualified commitment to educational decentralisation in countries in transition marked by gross disparities in educational opportunity and access. It is hoped that the discussion of the discourses of educational decentralisation in the South African context will provoke careful examination of the optimal balance between citizen participation and state regulation in the governance of education.

Notes

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[2] The paper was first delivered at the Oxford 'Education and Geopolitical Change' Conference in September 1997. An earlier version of the paper appeared in the Journal for Negro Education, 66(4).

[3] The previous ruling Nationalist Party passed the Model B and C Regulations, respectively, in 1991 and 1992. These regulations gave then whites-only schools control over key school policy issues such as admission of pupils. However, such schools were then expected to cover operating costs, resulting in high school fees. See Carrim and Sayed (1992a,b) for a more extensive discussion of the Model B and C Regulations.

[4] Political parties such as the Democratic and National Party took the Minister to Constitutional Court at the time of the issuing of the National Education Policy Bill. In essence, they argued that the bill undermined provincial responsibilities and powers for education and consequently the bill contravened the Constitution. The Constitutional Court disagreed with this view and asserted the power of the Minister to determine national educational priorities and objectives. In essence, the Constitutional Court ruled that the Minister of National Education was within his constitutional powers to issue national uniform educational norms and standards for the whole country, overriding provincial authority in this respect.

[5] The views of the consultants cement into policy positions only because their views resonate with a growing shift in educational policy-making towards neo-liberal economics, emphasising financial stringency and austerity. The positions become more palatable as the dressing for the shift evokes the language of the left of equity and redress; commitments which are not sustained. In a previous paper (see Sayed and Carrim,

1998) this is referred to as the 'Middle Class Mandatory Fee Clustering (MMFC)' option. Also see Sayed (1997) for a critique of the assumptions that underpin the Fourth Option.

[6] See Sayed (1997) for a discussion of a possible alternative to the Fourth Option referred to as the Fifth Option. In essence, the Fifth Option proposes that schools may raise additional fees but that a certain proportion of funds raised be placed in Development Funds which all schools could access for projects that promote equity and redress.

[7] These forms of citizenship emerge powerfully in Deem et al.'s (1995) fascinating account of citizenship and governing bodies.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Productive workshop for teacher-trainers held in Ethiopia

From 12-16 November the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the BESO/USAID Project and the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) held a week-long conference entitled "HIV/AIDS: Education for Behaviour Change" in Nazereth. Three representatives from eighteen Ethiopian teacher training institutions attended along with representatives from various NGOs.

HIV/AIDS workshop Nazereth, Ethiopia, November 2001

One of the goals of the workshop was for teacher training institutions to expand their knowledge on the impact that HIV/AIDS has on education and the possible impacts that education could have on HIV/AIDS prevention. The workshop also served as an important gathering for the representatives from the teacher training institutions to share their experiences integrating HIV/AIDS training and education into the curricular and co-curricular activities at their own institutions. By the end of the workshop, participants had developed a "yearly plan of action" for integrating HIV/AIDS learning and training into the curricular and co-curricular activities of their institutions.

On the third day of the workshop participants were taken on "site visits" to HIV/AIDS agencies and clubs around the town in order to gather information and stimulate the process of forming partnerships with local HIV/AIDS agencies. Many different perspectives were voiced throughout the conference and the pervading theme was that something must be done to improve HIV/AIDS training and awareness in the teacher training institutes and the schools. Representatives from the teacher training institutions understand the need to integrate activities into their own classrooms and institutions.

IICBA Board meeting, Arusha, 12 October 2001

IICBA utilized the opportunity presented by the ADEA Ministerial Conference to hold its Board meeting. The main items on the agenda were a review of achievements and problems over the past year and discussion of the work plan for 2002 - 2003. One of the main problems faced by IICBA was underfunding, and the Board agreed to find innovative ways to raise funds, such as allowing member states to buy into some of the highly successful programmes that IICBA had already developed.

Senior Executive Seminar for Ministers, Arusha, 6 October 2001

A seminar was held for Ministers of Education a day before the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) Biennial Conference for Ministers. The main topic was the issue of student and teacher demonstrations and strikes. Almost every Minister had had to deal with a demonstration or strike in the past year. Ministers were able to share their positive and negative experiences in dealing with these delicate issues. The major challenge for Ministers was to build up a national consensus on key issues. By doing this they would be able to win the whole of society, including teachers and students, on their side. The issue of how to build up consensus was discussed in some detail.

Ministers of Education seminar, Arusha, Tanzania, October 2001

Ministers supported the idea of having study visits to East Asia and Latin America, and IICBA agreed to try and organize these.

First Pan-African Capacity Building Forum, Bamako, 22 - 24 October 2001

The African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) organized an exciting forum on capacity building for poverty reduction in Africa. IICBA Director, Fay Chung, participated in a workshop on gender issues in capacity building. Her presentation focused on legal issues like land ownership systems in Africa and their drawbacks for development and poverty reduction. She focused on the need for capacity building of key institutions such as financial, economic, social, religious, education and health institutions.

Science and Mathematics assessment workshop, Johannesburg, 26 - 30 November 2001

UNESCO IICBA held a workshop jointly with the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) on the assessment of learning in science. This was part of IICBA's programme to strengthen learning assessment programmes for science and mathematics in Africa. It was based on the work done for over a decade by Dr. Udo Bude of the German Foundation (DSE) in Southern and East Africa in improving the testing of science at primary and junior secondary levels. Dr. Bude had set out to improve the testing of science through the national examinations systems.

Representatives from learning assessment departments of Ministries of Education came from 12 countries from the region, including Botswana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition key institutions such as SACMEQ and AFCLIST were well represented. Resource persons were Dr. V. Chinapah from UNESCO Paris; Prof. Keith Lewin from the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex; Dr. Anil Kanjee from HSRC, and Dr. J. Froemel from UNESCO, Santiago. Workshop outputs included:

- Exchange of information among participants on the status of mathematics and science education in the sub-region;

- Utilization of the capacities and experience already gained in Africa;
- Developing cooperation and synergy between relevant organizations and projects focusing on the area of mathematics and science education in Africa;
- Exploration of new approaches to the teaching of mathematics and science that address specific needs of learners and communities;
- Identifying system reforms that need to be addressed;
- Establishing cooperation between assessment institutions;
- Formulation of a work plan.

Workshop on education planning and economic development, Maputo, 29 - 31 October 2001

This important workshop involved Permanent Secretaries of Education from selected countries as well as institutions responsible for the training of education planners and economists. The major areas covered by the Workshop included an analysis of the New Partnership for Development in Africa (NEPAD); the impact of private sector development in Africa; and the ongoing training programme in South Africa run by the Research Triangle Institute of the USA for the country's educational planners linking their planning to the country's economic development. The main outcome was the recommendation that a curriculum should be developed for education planners on economics, and that conversely a curriculum should be developed for economists on human resource development. Presently education planners knew nothing about economics, and economists knew nothing about education. The aim was to build bridges between these two important disciplines.

Ad-Hoc Expert group meeting on reform in higher education and the use of information technology: 19-21 November 2001, Nairobi, Kenya

The workshop was organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA); UNESCO Headquarters, Paris; UNESCO Regional Office for Sub-Saharan Africa, Dakar; UNDP-New York in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). It provided a forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences on reform in higher education and the use of information technology for higher education. Participants were drawn from Africa as well as UN agencies, ADB and Africa's development partners such as USAID, DFID. In addition to background documents prepared by the ECA and the co-sponsors, empirical and theoretical papers analyzing the links between higher education and economic growth, best practices in the use of IT in higher education, and innovations in African higher education, were presented by experts in the respective fields and discussed. Almaz Eshete who represented the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) presented a paper entitled "Approaches to Strengthening Capacities in Teacher Education, the Experience of the UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa".

Finally, participants were divided into three discussion groups under the themes of Best Practices in the Use of ICT in Higher Education, the Challenges and Strategic Plans and presented recommendations. Some of the recommendations that emanated from the deliberations were as follows:

1. ICT should be considered as a national objective and developed within a broad national development framework with a cross cutting application to higher education. The

Egyptian and to some extent the South African models were cited as examples of good practices.

2. Strengthening of leadership and management of the reform supported by political will and commitment and institutional visions should be taken as challenges for reform in higher education.
3. Institutions should design strategic plans that incorporate the use of ICT with ECA and UNESCO assisting in developing the guidelines.
4. Within the framework of the forum, OAU, ECA and ADB should harmonize the regional and sub-regional protocols and spearhead the political awareness and will and mobilize resources for ICT development and use in higher education in Africa.

Education of Nomads in East Africa.

A project is currently being implemented by UNICEF, UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and the International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) with funding by the African Development Bank (ADB) on the education of nomads in East Africa. The objectives of the Project are to help the governments of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda and Djibouti to a) develop policy and programmes for responding to the socio-economic needs of nomadic children and communities; b) target resources more effectively to improve the basic education and income earning potential of nomadic population; c) improve the coverage and quality of basic education and poverty reduction services; d) identify project proposals based on the results of the study for possible ADB financing.

The studies conducted in the six countries will be followed by two workshops one on policy and the other training based on the results and recommendations of the consolidated report of the six countries.. Permanent secretaries and heads of planning departments of ministries of education and practitioners in education of nomads will be invited to participate in the two workshops respectively.

The International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (IICBA) is contributing to the overall implementation of the study and is specifically responsible for the implementation in Ethiopia. Four regions in Ethiopia namely Afar, Somali, Borena zone in Oromia region and Debub Omo and 22 Woredas (districts) have been included in the study.