



Investigating the Decentralization Process on Education in Pakistan in the Perspective of 18th Amendment: A Review Article

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ABSTRACT

This article is reviewed to highlight the concerns of the 18th Amendment in the Educational Sector for secondary education perspectives. The objective of decentralization and 18th Amendment is to advance the quality of secondary education, enhanced learning outcomes through increased efficiency and accountability in the secondary education. The 18th Amendment supporters that they believe this policy highlights the importance of access to knowledge to secondary education to Pakistani citizens. Moreover, these changes infer important amendments in the values that relate to a rapport among students, learners, students' parents, and the relationship of the local community with the federal government, and the vital sense and basis for public secondary education. However, critics pointed out that Policies, objectives and decisions made at a federal level various problems arise especially in context of accountability and sharing responsibility. Researchers conclude that the historical research on decentralization has given various effects in context of positive and negative perspective and decentralization is practical in the Secondary level of education.

Introduction

This amendment also ensures that protection of the allocations of the Provinces in all Federal services in addition to autonomous bodies and partnerships established by, or under the control of, the Federal Government and any blunder in the allocation of the shares of the Provinces in the past shall be rectified (18th Amendment, 2010). Furthermore, 18th Amendment concentrated on the decentralization of the secondary education system for the improvement. It highlighted the importance of access to knowledge to secondary education to Pakistani citizens (Authority, 2010).

Moreover, critique believes that for now provinces are not administratively prepared to run things on provincial level, however amendment has provided an excess of provincial autonomy.

Furthermore, this issue can be resolved and their administrative capabilities can be made adequate with their new responsibilities by relocating German specialists from the federal to provincial governments (Syed, 2010). Kemmerer emphasized the importance of social context, political support, adequate planning management and empowerment as the main influencing factors responsible for the success of decentralization. Policies, objectives and decisions if made at a central level many problems arise especially in terms of accountability and sharing responsibility. Whenever there is an absence of clear divisions of authoritative controls between the federal and the provincial government setups, the entire structure appears sealed. So it is suggested that decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level where actual competencies exist (ibid).

It is the authors' observation that for successful implementation of decentralization it is necessary to overcome uncertainties of decisions and responsibilities of stakeholders. Furthermore, to overcome the trouble of capacity building for operating the decentralized system, support from the actual executors such as teachers, school supervisors and sub national government are always required. For a smooth running of the system, it is necessary to sort out problems related to communication gaps that hamper even the transfer of information (ibid). Capacity building and a clear demonstration of roles of local implementing agents like principal, teacher and student are necessary for successful implementation (ibid). One of the main issues is to create a system dealing with education assets from scratch, which is to ensure transparency and provision of incentives for improving access and quality (Wrinkler & Hat-Field, 2002). Another issue is to create a system with opportunities for feedback into policy and practice (ibid).

Decentralization of Education in Aspect of 18th Amendment

Decentralization is the handover powers from the federal Ministry of Education to Ministry of Education provincial governments or to the regional offices of the districts (Paraphrased). This process requires a lot of changes such as changes in policies, producing finances, an expenditure of assets, training educators, designing programs and syllabuses, and managing local schools. The principal purpose of decentralization in education is an improvement in the quality of education, better learning outcomes through increased efficacy and accountability in this field. It has been the conviction for decentralization may result in improvement of provision of services and effectiveness in resource utilization. The implementation also requires the development of control and guidance, teacher training, parental encouragement, accessibility to facilities, students' and teachers' enthusiasm. Devolution distributes the school system to the smaller units, and the very power and the authority are kept in the authoritative control of central administration and board of education (Khan & Mirza, 2011).

Significance of Decentralization for Secondary Educational System in Pakistan

Some of the supporters of decentralization believe that this is the only way, results in desirable modification of parents, students, and teachers' attitudes towards the school. Furthermore, this sort of alterations imply fundamental shifts in the values that pertain to relationship of pupils and parents to secondary schools, the relationship of the community with the central government, and the vital sense and rationale for public education (Khan & Mirza, 2011). Decentralization in Pakistan is designed to overcome problems such as low literacy rate, highly unequal access varying with income level, between urban and rural populations, and between males and females (Wrinkler & Hat-Field, 2002). One of the reasons to introduce decentralization is to improve accountability of the education system and public-private schools. (Wrinkler & HatField, 2002). In Pakistan, most parents believe that the quality of education is better in private schools and for this reason very poor parents try for their children's admission to private institutions, despite limited finances. In order to overcome problems related to poor access to quality education decentralization is suggested. Despite several educational policies and plans still declined since

1995, after increasing between 1991 and 1995, in terms of enrollment status is observed. So, one of the reasons to improve the status, devolution is under progress towards execution (ibid).

The Decentralization of Secondary Education in Previous Governments

Decentralization of Secondary Education in Pakistan has been practiced in the past and Federal Government has supported it several times in the past. But it is expected that the current education devolution will be a successful initiative to delegate a number of accountabilities from federal or central government to provincial governments. Devolution in the past was practiced in different terms. Some are highlighted below:

Fiscal decentralization

Provincial government received about 82% (2000 census) of their revenues from a pool of collective revenues before devolution. After devolution provincial governments started transferring revenues to the district level and sub-district level governments.

Federal Role

Federal government played an important role for secondary education, designed curriculum, assessment criteria even after devolution, it was under the responsibilities of the Federal Government.

Provincial Role

The provincial governments' main concern with pre-service teachers training program called inductive trainings. It is for new teachers such as: JEST and HST. They attend trainings and know about their profession. In-service teacher mandatory teachers training programs arrangement with the district governments after the promotion and those trainings held with a passage of time and known as continuous professional development (CPD). Teacher's pay scale and credentials, curriculum, assessment criteria are part of provincial governments'.

District Role

District government's major role was to ensure the pay structure and manage teachers at district levels. The source of income was from the Federal government but it was the district responsibility to decide expenditures for education versus other public services. Construction of new schools, an inspection of schools, and yearly teachers' assessments along with headmasters responsibilities were given to district government (Wrinkler & HatField, 2002).

Decentralization effects on Secondary Education

In Pakistan, previous data has revealed a low literacy rate among adults where only 42% of adults age fifteen above are illiterate. Moreover, considerable dissimilarity within rural and urban, male and female inhabitants are observed. These facts symbolize both past and present. Though, after reforming and planning different strategies to improve the literacy rate still, 50 percent of seventeen years old children from poor families never been to school and the prime reason behind this is the variation inaccessibility to the school of education. An urban child has almost double the chances to attend school than a rural child, as a result, a rural child is not reaching secondary education level. Similarly, boys (aged 6-10 years) are 31 % more likely to attend primary school than a girl child, resulting in less enrollment of females in higher or secondary education. These inequalities continue to increase with the level of education (Wrinkler & HatField, 2002). Therefore, one of the main reasons for decentralization is to overcome these inequalities and differences.

Decentralization practiced in the past has been summarized by Mahesar and Rehman in their article published in 2008. Some of the highlighted effects are mentioned below:

Positive Effects

Some of the positive outcomes in secondary education included lower increase in enrollment of students in secondary schools, where School Management Committees played a positive role in improving enrollment. Improvement in infrastructure was obvious as all schools under survey increased capacity through constructing more classes. Similarly, access to basic facilities such as availability of drinking water and provision of electricity was improved. Enrichment in the school environment is evident from students' interest to go to school and from parents' high level of satisfaction. The number of working days increased as compared to the past. The involvement of the Community has dejected the element of ghost schools. Authoritative controls provided to the District Officer (SEMIS) has been resulted in better decision making expected as reasonably scientific with efficiently organized. However, there remain areas for improvements requiring policymakers to attend to.

Negative Effects

Some of the harms resulted via decentralization were observed that more improvement in ruling party-affiliated areas was seen which was against the objective of equal distribution of education. Similarly, political influence in transfers and postings of the teachers has resulted in either over deployment or deficiency of teachers in different schools. Though enrollment was improved increasing demand of teachers was not facilitated as per requirement. Thus the total number of working teachers reduced as compared to working teachers before decentralization. Capacity building of the School Management Committees was also not addressed at the institutional level. It is true that to some extent decentralization showed improvement in the performance of secondary schools but, the indecisive attitude of higher management in allowing the entrusted administration to work as per the mandate assigned to them was obvious (Mahesar & Rehman, 2008).

Under devolution, financial resources were generated from 3 levels of the district such as ad hoc federal education grants, government own-source revenues, and provincial non-earmarked block grants. This system never guaranteed equity and satisfactory funding for primary education as a result many children lacked access to school (Wrinkler & Hat-Field, 2002). And, obviously, it decreased secondary education enrollment too.

Devolution in the sector of education throughout the world has shown diverse results (though most showed positive results like especially in students' accomplishment). A study conducted by Mohammad Khan Ayaz in 2012 showed some of the impacts of decentralization in secondary education. He calculated students' achievement in secondary education from various districts in the pre and post decentralization era. His results showed: Decentralization in education has no noteworthy effect on students' accomplishment. Even in some districts decline in overall results was observed. Regionalization in education showed an increase in the number of students appearing and passing the Secondary School Examination, somewhat indicating an increment in enrollment of students. After devolution districts produced their own capital in addition to the assets transferred by federal and provincial governments, which was utilized in improving infrastructure and provision of facilities. Punjab Local government Ordinance 2001 declared that college education would be devolved to district governments but it was not implemented (Khan, 2012).

Conclusion and Suggestions

Different studies taken on decentralization process on secondary education. It has given different effects (positive and negative both). But it is practical for secondary education, as previous examples about it, arose questions on quality of education, validity, and reliability in aspect of educational standards and results as well (Memorandum, 2020). The time will tell the decision, either these are beneficial or not. However, secondary education systems to be decentralized better and better results can be obtained through new amendments in the system. Also, it has to be piloted till satisfactory results achieved. Regular monitoring and assessment from the higher authorities is essential for the secondary program. Disinterest between the numerous stakeholders can only be encountered, when the change is being monitored frequently. Regular training of teachers is necessary to show continued improvement in the system. Fair policy for recruitment, incentives, and transfers can bring a positive change among the teachers and shareholders motivation in terms of fulfilling of responsibilities. Similarly, better monitoring and evaluation outline to supervise the operations needs to be framed (Mahesar & Rehman, 2008). Ambiguities related to roles and responsibilities under decentralization.

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