

## **Implementation of Decentralization in Education in Pakistan: Framework, Status and the Way forward**

Ayaz Muhammad Khan, Munawar S. Mirza

**Abstract:** Implementation of Devolution Plan 2000 through Punjab Local Government Ordinance (PLGO) 2001 was a landmark in the history of decentralization in Pakistan. It was the first time when most of the political, administrative, and financial powers were devolved to district government. The objectives of this study were to explore whether implementation of devolution plan was followed in true spirit, to discover the focus and problems in its implementation and to identify the way forward. The study was conducted using document analysis. The data analysis show that though powers were devolved from provincial to district government but most of the academic, administrative and financial powers remained centralized at the top in the decision making hierarchy of the district. Decentralization of powers from provinces to district is a giant step towards decentralization but it needs to trickle down further in the district management especially to the schools.

**Keywords:** decentralization, implementation, administration, financial, big bang

### **Introduction**

Educational decentralization is the transfer of authority from the center, or the Education Ministry usually located in the capital city, to the periphery. It usually transfers powers and responsibilities to either the region i.e., regional governments like states or provinces, or the regional offices of the Education Ministry; the locality i.e., local governments like municipalities or districts, the local offices of the Education Ministry, the school i.e., either the head of the school or a governing school board (Cummings and Riddell, 1992; Winkler, 2005). It is a complex process comprising the changes in the way school systems go about making policy, generating revenues, spending funds, training teachers, designing curricula, and managing local schools. This, in a way, changes parents, students and teachers attitude towards the school. Such changes imply fundamental shifts in the values that concern the relationships of students and parents to schools, the

relationships of communities to central government, and the very meaning and purpose of public education (Fiske, 1996). The purpose of decentralization in education is to raise learning achievement. The mechanisms for this, in theory, are increased efficiency and greater local accountability in the supply of education, leading to higher quality schools that are more in line with the population's preferences (Bray, 1994). Decentralization can contribute to improvement in service delivery and efficiency of resource utilization but successful implementation requires improvement in the other intervening variables such as leadership, teacher training, parent support, availability of resources, students' and teachers' motivation. A variety of specific management functions may be distributed among different levels of a decentralized educational management system (Hanson, 1999).

**Functions of educational decentralization.** Educational decentralization divides school system into smaller units, but the focus of power and authority remains in a single central administration and board of education (Lunenberg & Ornstein, 1996).

**Factors affecting success or failure of decentralization in education.** Kemmerer (1994) listed four factors that could lead to either the success or failure of decentralization in education. They are: cultural context in which devolution of education takes place, political support from national leaders and local elites, adequate planning management and last but not the least local empowerment.

**Failure in implementation of decentralization**

If objectives of decentralization are set at a central level which is a common practice in devolution, a discrepancy arises between responsibilities people are given and the rights and powers to act these responsibilities. This gap becomes a stumbling block in its proper implementation and a situation emerges where, "devolution of responsibilities is rarely accompanied by devolution of authority". It is better that decisions should be made at the lowest possible level where competencies exist (Fisher, 2000). Geo-jaja (2006) is of the opinion that implementation of decentralization is a complex phenomenon. As decentralization across the globe operates in different circumstances, its aims and outcomes are unpredictable. Whenever there is no clear cut criterion for

distribution of powers between federal governments and executives of sub national governments, the whole system appears locked.

**Pre requisites for implementation.** The implementation of decentralization policy has several issues to address. It may be possible that the design or decree through which decentralization was imposed is littered with ambiguities of decisions regarding the responsibilities of stakeholders or it may be in conflict with the already existing legislature. There may be a problem of capacity building for running the decentralized system. The new system of decentralization also needs system support from the already existing systems like sub national level governments, school supervisors, and teachers (USAID, 2005). There is always a sort of communication gap that hinders smooth flow of information. Moreover, there needs to be proper capacity building before it gets started (Kemmerer, 1994). Loeb & Susanna (2006) have mentioned the pivotal role of local implementers such as principals, teachers and students in the implementation of policies as earlier described by McLaughlin (1991a, b). They believe that success of implementation depends upon the will of the policy stakeholders. Successful implementation of decentralization in education requires improvement in intervening variables such as leadership, teacher training, parent support, availability of resources, student and teacher motivation (Naidoo & Kong 2003).

**Process or steps in implementation.** Fullen and Stiegelbour (1992) have categorized three key factors in the implementation process that is the characteristics of innovation or change, local role and external factors. USAID (2001) developed a framework of implementation divided into six roughly sequential tasks. Firstly, the legitimizing, which means getting the policy accepted as important, desirable and worth achieving. The second is the constituency building or gaining active support from groups that see the proposed reforms as desirable or beneficial and they act to achieve the policy objectives. The third is the resource accumulation to support implementation requirement in terms of financial and human resources. Organizational design or structure is the fourth task to be done for proper implementation which involves adjusting objectives, procedures, systems and structures of the agencies responsible for policy implementation. Mobilizing action, the fifth task focuses on identifying, activating, and pursuing action strategies.

Monitoring is the last task that sets up and uses systems to monitor implementation progress. It not only alerts the decision makers to implementation but also informs them of the intended or unintended impact of the implementation efforts.

### **Approaches to Implementation of Decentralization**

Most of the countries of the world are showing commitment at the policy level to decentralize educational governance following the two approaches: gradualist and big bang. Some countries like Brazil, India, and Nigeria, which have federal frameworks, follow a measured process of legislative devolution called as gradualist approach. Most of the developed nations of the world have adopted the same approach. In this approach the final responsibility for education lays with the state/province that transfers powers to locally elected bodies with full legislative back up. Even unitary governments like China, Egypt and Bangladesh have adopted this approach. Such decentralization is called as deconcentration and delegation of authority to lower levels in a prescribed fashion. Pakistan and Indonesia have adopted the big bang approach in which the whole package of reforms is adapted through central legislation more or less suddenly. They devolved most of the administrative, financial and political powers to lower levels like districts. In the big bang approach, there is most probably a higher risk of failure (UNESCO, 2006; Winkler & Cohen, 2005.).

### **The objectives of this study were to:**

1. assess the implementation level of decentralization as compared with the plan at various levels i.e. district, school and local community.
2. discover implementation of devolution in education in academic, administrative and financial matters of the district.
3. suggest ways and means for better implementation of the devolution plan along with modification in the model, if needed.

When military took over the reign of the government on October 12, 1999, General Pervez Musharraf gave a seven-point agenda to the nation including the devolution of power to the grass root level. The government intended to decentralize the administrative, financial and political structure of Pakistan. The National Reconstruction

Bureau (NRB) on 18th November 1999 undertook this Herculean task (NRB, 2001). The first major contribution of this Bureau came on the scene when it delivered the first comprehensive plan to filter down the essence of democracy to its very grass root level known as the Local Government Plan- 2000 or Devolution Plan announced on August 14, 2000. The objectives of changing the system of governance as mentioned by NRB (2001 a) were “to restructure the bureaucratic setup and decentralize the administrative and financial authority to the district level and below and refocus administrative systems to allow public participation in decision-making with improved monitoring system at local councils level.”

### **Devolution Plan 2000**

According to the Plan, “the local government is based on five fundamental principles; devolution of political power, decentralization of administrative authority, de-concentration of management system, diffusion of power authority nexus, and the distribution of the resources to the district level”.

The Devolution Plan (2000) devolved powers and responsibilities, including those related to social services, from the provincial levels to elected district level authorities and local councils. Under devolution, political power, decision-making authority, and administrative responsibilities were moved as close as possible to the village, union council, tehsil and district levels, whereas the major policy-making, coordination, and special service functions were left with the provincial governments.

Levels of devolution were:

1. Political devolution through the establishment of elected local government.
2. Fiscal decentralization through the transfer of funds to local government.
3. Administrative decentralization, to correspond with the new devolved political and fiscal arrangements.

Under devolution, there were no shifts of responsibility, power or authority from the federal to the provincial governments rather they were from provincial to districts.

**Implementation of devolution.** Pakistan is a federation composed of four provinces, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Gilgit Baltistan. The form of decentralization that has been implemented in Pakistan is devolution as we see that local

governments also have autonomous sources of revenue.

The provincial governments promulgated the Local Government Ordinance, 2001 in their respective provinces to install a new integrated Local Government System with effect from 14 August 2001 to function within the provincial framework and adhere to the federal and provincial laws. The new system allowed public participation in decision-making. The essence of this system was that the local governments would be accountable to citizens for all their decisions and actions.

This is to be noted that Local Government Ordinance 2001 has been given constitutional protection under the highly controversial 17th Amendment. Local Government Ordinance 2001 have been put (being provincial laws) under the sixth schedule for six years (or two subsequent rounds of elections) so that during this period it cannot be altered, repealed or amended except by the President till December 2009 (ADB, DIFD, and WB 2005).

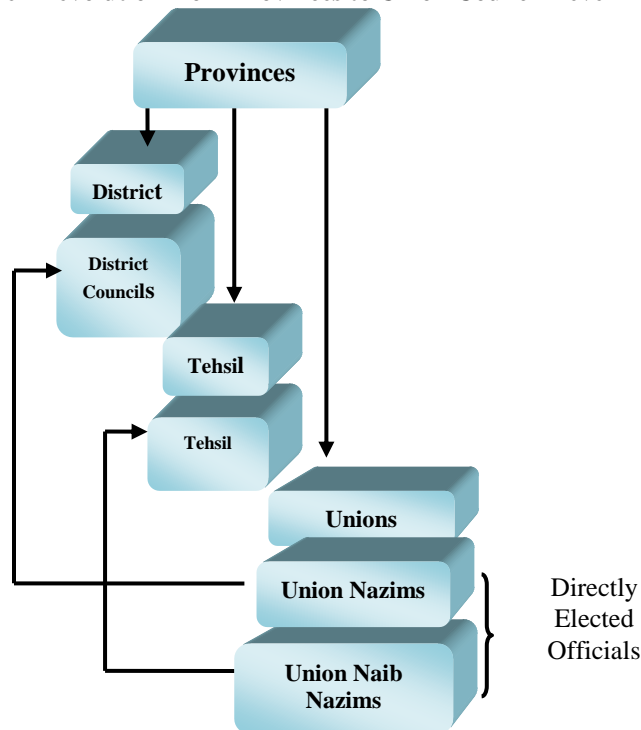
After 31 December 2009, local governments were at the disposal of provincial governments. The Government of the Punjab issued a notification on 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 appointing bureaucrats to head all tiers comprising elected representatives in pursuit to sub section-4 of the section 179-A of PLGO 2001. The Government of the Punjab has yet to decide whether to continue the same system or bring some changes to it through provincial assembly. With the approval of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the local governments are at the disposal of the provincial government. Article 141 of the constitution states "Each Province shall, by law, establish a local government system and devolve political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments". Moreover, with the abolition of the concurrent legislative list, article 38 of the concurrent list dealing with curriculum, syllabus and standard of education up to grade 12 have been devolved to provinces which will add more academic powers to provincial government.

The Local Government Ordinance (LGO) promulgated by provincial governments during August 2001, with amendments during 2002, attempted to assign clear powers, responsibilities and service delivery functions to three levels of local governments: district, tehsil and union. Local government at each level comprised a Nazim and Naib-Nazim, an elected body and an administrative structure. In effect, responsibilities for the delivery of social and human development services, such as

primary and basic health, education and social welfare, now rests at the district level, whereas municipal services, such as water, sanitation and urban services, were delivered at the tehsil level (PLGO, 2001). Nazims were the head of their administrative councils. Members of the union councils were directly elected while union Naib-Nazim and Nazim constituted the elected bodies of the tehsil and the district councils respectively.

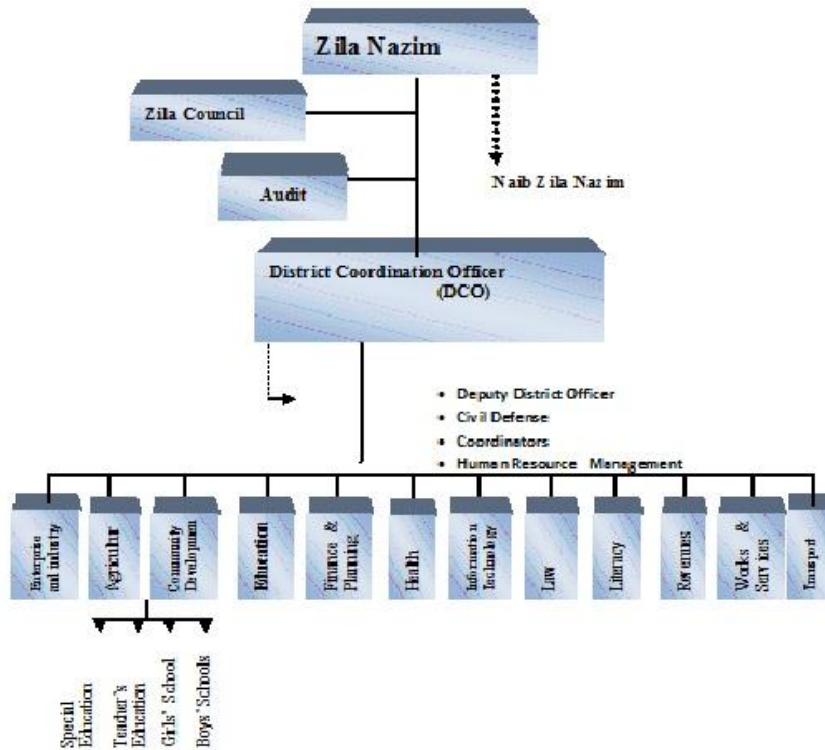
At the top tier, the district, there was a single integrated local government called District Government. The district government consisted of Zila Nazim and District Administration. The District Administration, which comprised district offices including sub-offices at tehsil level, was responsible to the District Nazim. The administration was responsible to serve the people. Adequate checks and balances were introduced in the system. The new system effectively addressed the specific needs and problems of large cities. City district governments were established in metropolitan cities like Lahore, Faisalabad, Rawalpindi and Multan. The formation and working procedure of district or city district government was the same.

**Figure 1 Devolution from Provinces to Union Council Level**



The middle tier, the Tehsil, had Tehsil Municipal Administration headed by the Tehsil Nazim. The Tehsil Municipal Administration included the offices and sub-offices of the Urban Local Councils. In a City District, a Town Municipal Administration was organized more or less on the same pattern as Tehsil Municipal Administration in a common District. Each district had a district government as well as councils at tehsils (sub-district), and union council levels. District Nazim was the chief Executive of the district and the administration and police was responsible to him. The office of the District Coordination Officer was the nucleus of administrative coordination in the district. There were 12 departments in the district government: finance and planning, law, education, health, revenue, community development, work & services, information technology, transport, agriculture, enterprises & industries and literacy. Each department was headed by Executive District Officer (EDO) as shown in the figure 2.

**Figure 2 Organogram of the District Government**





The district governments have been in operation since 14 August 2001. All district governments followed the same pattern and there was no difference in the implementation of devolution plan in districts with different demographical location. District governments in all metropolitan cities were called as City District Governments but had the same structure (Punjab Local Government Ordinance, 2001). We can conclude here that the spirit of the devolution plan was materialized in PLGO 2001 by devolving political, administrative and financial powers from provincial government to newly established local governments.

### **Devolution of Education in Pakistan**

Ever since the announcement of Devolution plan in 2000 and till its promulgation in the provinces on 14 August 2001, a series of consultation and technical group meetings were held at federal and provincial levels to develop a well-designed education structure at provincial as well as at district levels. Many posts were abolished whereas new posts were carved out with clear job descriptions (MSU, 2001). The Education Department of pre-devolution era was devolved through Punjab Local Government Ordinance 2001 in the Schedule I part A of decentralized offices.

The organizational setup of education in Pakistan is at three levels.

1. Federal level (Ministry of Education, Govt. of Pakistan)
2. Provincial level (Department of Education, Govt. of Punjab)
3. District level (District level under Department of Education, Govt. of Punjab)

No federal level power from the Ministry of Education was devolved to lower levels through Devolution Plan 2000 which has transferred responsibility for delivering education to local governments. As part of these overall reforms as stated in the Provincial Local Government Ordinance 2001 and reflected in the Education Sector Reforms Action Plan (ESRA) 2001-2005, the district rather than the province, has become the operational tier of governance. There has been no decentralization of any federal level powers, duties or responsibilities to either the provincial or district level.

Now, districts are responsible for planning, monitoring and evaluation of education systems at district level. Salary and managing teaching and non-teaching staff

is in the jurisdiction of district. Creation or abolition of posts in districts is not devolved to districts. The districts can generate their own funds in addition to the funds transferred by federal and provincial government. The head of the Education Department in a district is Executive District Officer (EDO). Initially, district governments were given the functional responsibility for delivering elementary, secondary and college education but college education was excluded from it and now only elementary and secondary education is in its purview. Under the devolution plan the district management and community has been empowered at the grassroots level in planning, management, resource mobilization, utilization, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the education system (PLGO 2001; Zaidi, 2005).

**Devolution of administrative powers in education.** Under the devolved system, planning, management and monitoring/evaluation of elementary and secondary schools have been decentralized to district level. The EDO Education bears the major responsibility for ensuring the educational needs of the district. He is also responsible for planning and establishing new institutions where necessary. Duties and functions of EDO Education include: implementing the provincial education policy through the district education policy and plan; preparing plans for development of education in the district covering the levels that fall within the responsibility of the district; and preparing the annual educational budget of the district (ADB, Dfid, WB, 2004, Zaidi, 2005 & GoP, 2005)

With the creation of the office of the District Coordination Officer, the previous bureaucratic administration at divisions and districts was abolished (ADB, Dfid, WB, 2004). As compared to situation before devolution, decentralization has created a third, district cadre of civil servants and depending on the province arrangement; staff up to grade 16 or 17 now reports directly to the district governments (ADB, 2002). Training schools teachers and HTs is still managed by the provincial government.

**Table 1**

*Responsibilities of key officers of the District*

| <b>Designation</b>                         | <b>Responsibilities</b>   |
|--|---|
| District Nazim                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Play visionary and leadership role in educations as a chief executive of the district.</li> <li>• Transfer the officers of B.S 19 and above.</li> </ul>  |
| District Council                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approve district level education policy and budget.</li> <li>• Submit policy through DCO and Zila Nazim.</li> </ul>  |
| District coordination Officer (DCO)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work as an official head of the district.</li> <li>• Work as the principal account officer.</li> <li>• Work as an administrative head of the district education department.</li> <li>• Post and transfer employees of B.S.11 to BS. 18 in education department.</li> </ul>   |
| Executive District Officer (EDO) Education | <p><b>General</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist DCO for the formulation of education policies.</li> <li>• Make arrangements for the execution and implementation of the policy.</li> <li>• Observe the rules of district education offices.</li> <li>• Provide efficient administration.</li> <li>• Submit and re-submit the proposals for the by-laws.</li> <li>• Issue standing orders.</li> <li>• Provide definite line of action.</li> </ul> <p><b>Specific</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement district education policy.</li> <li>• Provide all sorts of district education data.</li> <li>• Exercise administrative control over the officers.</li> <li>• Guide and help the supervisory staff.</li> <li>• An eye on the progress of education.</li> <li>• Work in the adjustment of officials below BS 10 within the district.</li> <li>• Help the organization of in service teacher training.</li> <li>• To ensure provision of conducive environment in schools.</li> <li>• Distributes funds and scholarships.</li> <li>• Recruit teachers and conduct examinations.</li> <li>• Inspect private schools and report inquiries.</li> <li>• Organize sports and promotion of A.V aids.</li> </ul> |

**Devolution of financial powers.** The devolution would have been merely a delegation had there been no fiscal transfer to districts. There was fiscal decentralization which requires provinces to devise transparent mechanisms to transfer revenues to local

governments in the form of formula-driven block grants. Under the new system, local governments are to determine budgets and expenditures for most services, whereas only policy issues, guidelines and monitoring functions are to remain with provincial and federal governments. PLGO 2001 has authorized the District (Zila) Council to levy Education Tax along with nine other taxes to generate their own finances.

The federal government through federal financial award transfers divisible share to provinces and certain proportion is retained and provinces do the same through provincial financial awards and transfer funds to districts. The district governments are fully empowered to allocate expenditures to various sectors in accordance with their own spending priorities that are evident from the annual budgets approved by the Zila Councils (HRCP, 2004).

Under the devolution plan, district education can be financed from three sources

- a) district governments' own resources
- b) provincial non-earmarked block grants
- c) ad-hoc federal education grants to provinces and districts

Before devolution though districts were vibrant but all funds at the district level were channeled into one account. Account No.1 – technically a provincial account which included special grants e.g. from the President, Governor, etc. Technically there was a problem in it as unutilized funds at the end of financial years would revert back to the province. After the LGO 2001 a new Account No. 4, a non-lapsable district account was created. Districts after devolution are in a position to decide the extent of finances to be allocated for education.

Cheema, Ali, Khawaja and Qadir (2004) have pointed out that so far as the extent of fiscal decentralization is concerned it is still limited because no new taxes have been devolved to the local governments. District governments are still dependent primarily on provincial and federal funds.

In a district the District Coordinating Officer (DCO) is the Principal Accounting Officer. The DCO is accountable to the District Coordinating Council headed by the Nazim. Though resources and their utilization have been delegated to districts yet it just remained accumulated in the office of principal accounting officer i.e. the DCO. EDO-Education is now answerable to the DCO at the district level. The parallel to EDO in the pre-devolution authority was DEO who used to be implementing authority as well.

Devolution has led to reduction in the EDOs' financial powers, particularly in relation to those of the DCO. For example, EDO (Education) in Punjab is category II officers (PLGO, 2001); previously the divisional directorate had category I financial powers.

As a result, spending powers of the EDO have been severely curtailed. By contrast, the financial sanction powers that were formerly accorded to provincial secretaries have now devolved to the DCO, and as the Principal Accounting Officer of a district, the DCO is a Category I officer. He, therefore, has higher financial sanction and procurement powers than EDOs (Education). This disparity resulted in centralizing the budget preparation process and expenditure authorization within the districts.

**Changes in delegation of financial powers.** The Delegation of Powers under Financial Rules and the Powers of Re- appropriation of Rules 1962 have been amended in 2006. The authorizations of fund have been devolved keeping in view the category of the officer. Now DCO being Category I officer is the principal accounting officer of the district. EDO being Category II officer is now authorized to make expenditure up to Rs 750,000 (PDFPR, 2006), whereas before devolution the limit was up to Rs 25, 000 with a quotation before expenditure (Zaidi, 2005). In May 2001 Provincial (Punjab) Workshop was held to see the implications of devolution in education sector and they chalked out the district education structure along with roles and responsibilities of different officers at district level. They proposed financial powers of Category I Officer for EDOs, Category II officer to DEOs (Elementary & Secondary). But when PLGO 2001 was promulgated, EDOs financial powers were restricted to only Category II Officer. Director of the Division (an administrative post held by a non-bureaucrat from education department) held Category I financial powers in the pre-devolution period. This post was abolished and financial powers that were in the hands of non-bureaucrat were devolved to DCO, a bureaucrat, who was already overburdened as he has to supervise 12 EDOs in a district. Similarly, it was suggested that DEOs will hold Category II officer. But after devolution no financial powers were given to them. So it can be concluded that financial powers of the education department at district level were curtailed.

**Citizens' community boards (CCBs) and schools.** A thorough study of the Devolution Plan 2000 and its implementation through PLGO, 2001 shows that the intent was to decentralize administrative and financial powers to the very grassroots levels but devolution in education never reached to school level in the form of school based management which is the ultimate goal of devolution in education, except for establishing school councils which were vibrant even before devolution.

CCBs, work on bottom-up financial planning and operate at the village and union council levels. As per PLGO, 20001 at least 25 percent of the total development budget of each tier of local government (district, *tehsil*, and union) must be earmarked for projects identified by CCBs.

The mechanism of matching grant scheme has been designed, whereby the CCBs must provide 20 percent of total funds in cash to receive 80 percent of the approved budget. Civil Society organizations and school councils have to re-register as CCBs if they want access to district funds (NRB, 2002).

Through a notification issued on 19 August 2002 Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education allowed school councils to be eligible to become CCBs which would be composed of at least 8 to maximum 25 members. A CCB would register itself through EDO Community Development. The contribution for such CCBs to the matching grant is 20% which shall be in cash and not in kind and would follow procedural rules of district government.

CCBs, authorized by the LGO to raise funds through voluntary contributions along with financial support of the local government, are part of an effort to stimulate local civil society and build lasting citizen government relations (PLGO, 2001, ADB/WB/DFID, 2004, Zaidi, 2005). With specific reference to education, CCBs should form and support establishment of School Councils as an attempt, under the Local Government Ordinance, to create incentives for service providers to respond to the views and concerns of service users and encourage community participation. (ADB/WB/DFID, 2004).

### **Findings and Conclusions**

Devolution plan 2000 was implemented in Punjab through PLGO 2001 which was protected constitutionally through highly controversial 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan till 31 December 2009. There has been no decentralization of any federal level powers, duties or responsibilities to either the provincial or district level from planning, management and monitoring/evaluation. Under PLGO 2001, responsibilities and service delivery functions were devolved to three levels of governments: district, tehsil/town, and union councils. The new system allowed public participation in decision-making. The essence of this system was that the local governments would be accountable to citizens for all their decisions. The district government was led by elected Zila Nazim who was the chief executive of the district. Similarly, Tehsil and Union Councils were led by Tehsil and Union Nazims.

DCO was the official head of the district administration and was also the administrative head of the education department at district level. DCO was responsible for the postings and transfers of the employees of education department working in B.S.11 to BS. 18. EDO (Education) acted as the executive head of the district. His duties and functions of included: implementing the provincial education policy through the district education policy and plan; preparing plans for development of education in the district covering the levels that fall within the responsibility of the district; and preparing the annual educational budget of the district. Though it was decided by the government that they would filter down administrative powers to the grassroots level but in reality all powers remained either in the office of DCO or EDO. DEOs, DDEOs and AEOs who, in the pre-devolution administration of the district, had been acting as a line authority became as the staff authority of EDO. This meant that in the name of decentralization to the districts, all powers were accumulated in the office of EDO (Education). The federal government through federal financial award transfer divisible share to provinces and certain proportion is retained and provinces do the same through provincial financial awards and transfer funds to districts. Under the devolution plan, district education can be financed from three sources: district governments own resources, provincial non-earmarked block grants, ad-hoc federal education grants to provinces and districts

After the PLGO 2001 a new non-lapsable Account No. 4, which is a District account, was created. In a district the District Coordinating Officer (DCO) is the Principal Accounting Officer. The DCO is accountable to the District Coordinating Council headed by the Nazim. Similarly, the EDO-Education is now answerable to the DCO at the district level. Devolution has led to reduction in the EDOs' financial powers, particularly in relation to those of the DCO. For example, EDO (Education) in Punjab is now category II officers (PLGO, 2001); during pre-devolution era the divisional directorate had category I financial powers. EDO being Category II officer is now authorized to make expenditure up to Rs 750,000 (PDFPR, 2006) whereas before devolution the limit was up to Rs25, 000 with a quotation before expenditure.

School councils may register themselves as CCBs to carry out constructional works in the schools. In order to make parents and community participate in the schools, the school councils were made vibrant. The creation and abolition of the post was not devolved to district. There was a well-defined monitoring system at district and sub district level for all offices under the jurisdiction of district government. The monitoring committees at union, tehsil and district were established to monitor within the district social services like health, education, literacy, revenue works, transport etc. Unfortunately these monitoring committees never became functional due to lack of training on the part of the stakeholders. School councils and EDO office were also given the role of monitoring schools.

### **Discussion**

Punjab Local Government Ordinance was promulgated on 14 August 2001 in order to realize the goals set down in the Devolution Plan 2000. It appeared really remarkable that the whole system of the provincial government had been transformed into such an innovative system formerly unknown to the country.

NRB established in 1999 chalked out this Devolution Plan in 2000 and it was implemented through PLGO 2001 in all provinces including the Punjab in big bang style through constitutional amendments. Its abrupt emergence and short implementation time duration in itself marks many questions. All objectives of decentralization were set at a central level which ultimately ended in creating discrepancies between responsibilities people were given and the rights and powers to act these responsibilities.



The objectives of the devolution plan as described by NRB in 1999 were to restructure the bureaucratic set up and decentralize the administrative and financial authority to the district level and below and refocus administrative systems to allow public participation in decision-making with improved monitoring system at local councils level. The researchers found that there had been no decentralization of Federal level powers, duties and responsibilities to district level.

It is striking that in all military regimes only provincial powers were devolved but no federal powers were devolved. This new system allowed public participation in decision making at three levels of local government: district, tehsil and union council level. District Nazim became chief executive, DCO (a bureaucrat), official head of the district administration and EDO (Education) acted as executive head. All administrative and financial powers that were supposed to trickle down to grassroots level in district never happened. So the essence of devolution in education that was school based management as a final product could also not happen. That is why it can be concluded that decentralization in Education was partial as the federal government maintained a part of decision-making at the federal level, such as curriculum design, setting of teacher salary levels, teacher accreditation and evaluation of pupil achievement. Provincial government holds the appointment, promotion, monitoring, transfer and posting of the officer above BS 17 within the district.

Devolved system of local government kept on going well till the 2008 when the ruling party supported by President of Pakistan Pervaiz Musharaf, retired General of Pakistan Army had lost the elections. The new political government in the Punjab province had strong reservation against this local government system. Before 2008, political government in the center and provinces had some problems with the district governments but situation kept on balancing as both started working within their constitutional limits. District Nazims, though supposed to be impartial and with no political affiliation, more or less had strong connections with the ruling party. With the shift of political government, things started entangling. New political government in Punjab had strong reservations against the system. As a matter of fact, they considered it as a legacy of military dictatorship.

They vowed to restore the pre-devolution administrative system of Divisions

(administrative units in the province composed of four to five districts) controlled by commissioners and deputy commissioners who were bureaucrats. Moreover, they intended to restore previous local government system based on the Local Government Ordinance 1979 with low political administrative and very limited financial powers. Due to massive upraise of Nazims and councilors of all levels of district governments, protest of members of civil society, active support of some of leading political parties and, last but not the least, through constitutional protection of the system through 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment, provincial government could not fulfill their desire to abolish this district government system.

The provincial government, in August 2008, restored the Divisions once again giving them some of the powers but they could not alter the responsibilities of District Nazims or EDOs. The provincial government restored the divisions in order to facilitate the huge administrative gap between provincial and district governments. They stated that no powers had been taken away from District Nazims rather some provincial powers had been delegated to the divisions to facilitate the work. All District Nazims feared that the political provincial government of the province wanted to take all of their powers and delegate it to DCOs of the districts and commissioners at divisional level. Since there has been a resistance posed by provincial government especially, elected provincial members, solely with a fear of loss of powers in case this third tier of district government becomes fully vibrant and functional.

Similarly, after 31<sup>st</sup> December 2009, the constitutional protection of 17<sup>th</sup> Amendment for district governments ended and legally district government system came into the jurisdiction of the provincial governments. No local body elections were held. Government of the Punjab, through a Notification No. SOR (LG) 39-6/2008 dated 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 from the Local Government & Community Development Department, appointed District Coordination officers (DCOs) as Administrators of their respective City Districts/ District Governments and allowed them performing all the functions of Zila Nazim, Zila Naib Nazim and Zila Councils. So district governments still exist but are not controlled by the elected representatives of the district government rather these governments are run by the bureaucracy.

Another important development took place recently when through the 18<sup>th</sup>

Amendment in the Constitution of Pakistan, federal government abolished concurrent list from the constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan and with that now on all matters in the concurrent list became in the jurisdiction of the provincial government. The article 38 of the concurrent list dealt with curriculum, syllabus, planning, policy, center for excellence and standard of education which has been devolved partially to provinces. Standards in institutions of higher education and research, scientific, technical, legal, and professional have been explicitly included in Federal List (11& 12). National Planning and National Economics Coordination including planning and coordination of scientific and technological research now also falls in the federal list (7). For the first time in the history of Pakistan, provinces have been given the authority to develop the curriculum, frame syllabus and ultimately maintain standards in the education. Under this amendment, the responsibility of the provincial government has increased many folds.

To understand the devolution in education properly, we must place it in the context of what used to be the system before devolution. Pakistan, even before devolution, was divided into district municipalities which had limited administrative and financial power. Most of the decisions were either made on federal or provincial levels and rarely on district levels. The devolution of powers to districts gave substantial power and increased the amount of resources to districts. In the process of decentralization, at district level, education departments have been established with responsibility for administering the system. The districts were responsible for planning, directing and evaluating the education system and for the salaries of teaching and non-teaching personnel. In addition to the resources transferred by the federal and provincial governments, the district had to generate other additional resources.

The real difference between decentralization and centralized management and governance is how people and organizations change behaviors to implement new regulations. Decentralization should not create a centralized system at a lower level, but change the system qualitatively so that a greater variety of stakeholders participate in a new way. The implementation of decentralization can either be rapid like big bang or slow and sequential. Whenever, it is in big bang style through rapid constitutional change like in Pakistan, Argentina and Indonesia, there was always a chance that the lower level where powers had been shifted might not have the requisite level of capacity to run the

system effectively (UNESCO, 2006; Winkler & Cohen, 2005). Similarly the type of trained personnel, that were required to run the system, was not available. Moreover, the mechanisms for each office were not well-planned. Practically Pakistan met with the similar end.

Besides, devolution plan gave some provincial powers and functions in the provision of education to districts but no powers to sub district levels (Tehsil or Union Councils). The ground realities have shown that it lacked capacity of the personnel to run it efficiently. No capacity building was done before and most of the training that was supposed to be given were either not given or were not managed well. It would have been better if it had been done as a pilot project. If met with success better be implemented across the country. As districts lacked in capacity to run training programs at their own level, provincial and federal government should have helped them in their capacity building. Moreover, districts may follow the example set by one of the district by initiating training teachers at their own district level. Similarly, at the level of school, there is need to create room for citizens to effectively participate in governance and in some cases management of the schools. As key stakeholders, parents must have a greater say in the important functions of the schools. They need to be trained in aspects like functioning of the school council. They also must assume a greater role in the policy process.

The decentralization of the education system would have been better supported by qualified personnel familiar with the philosophy and goal of the new system. Effective collaboration and coordination between governments of the provinces and districts could have provided a basis for more effective execution of the reform. The degree of commitment of Punjab Government at all levels to this decentralization process - for now and in the years to come - is going to be critically important for the effectiveness and sustainability of the this system. With the devolution of development of curriculum and syllabus, to provincial government after the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in the Constitution, the burden on provincial government has increased to a great extent. This underlines an important point that is often ignored that decentralization is not a program but a process that re-allocates powers and resources from officers at the center to others at the periphery. Its effect depends very much on the character of central decision making, on how the center used its powers and recourses (Faguet & Sanchez, 2006).

Decentralization cannot be imposed by law but calls for goodwill, commitment and promptitude on the part of the personnel responsible for bringing in the changes. In most of the countries where education was decentralized, curriculum and testing remain centralized practically whereas functions such as the selection of teachers, textbooks, and other instructional materials, and facility construction and maintenance, are being left increasingly to school (Behrman, Deolalikar & Soon, 2002). The success or failure of any form of decentralization in education depends upon its successful implementation (Rondinelli, 1984).

### **References**

- ABD, DfID, World Bank (2004). *Devolution in Pakistan - an assessment and recommendation for action.*
- ABD, DfID, World Bank (2004). *Devolution in Pakistan – Overview of the Study*
- ABD, DfID, World Bank (2004). *Devolution in Pakistan – Recent History*
- ABD, DfID, World Bank (2004). *Devolution in Pakistan – Technical Considerations*
- Bray, M. (1994). Centralization /decentralization and privatization/ publicization: conceptual issues and the need for more research. In W.K. Cummings & A. Riddle (Eds), *Alternative Policies for the Finance, Control and Delivery of Basic Education*. *Special Issue of the International Journal of Educational Research*. 21 (8), 817-824
- Brown, D.J (1994). Decentralization in education government and management, In Husen.T, Posplethwaite.T.N , *International Encyclopedia of education*(V3,Ed 2<sup>nd</sup>), (pp 1407- 1412)
- Cheema, A., Khwaja, A. I., & Qadir, A. (2004) *Decentralization in Pakistan. context, content and causes*. Faculty Research Working Paper. [http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/research/wpaper.nsf/034/\\$.file/rwp\\_05\\_034\\_khwaja.pdf](http://ksgnotes1.harvard.edu/research/wpaper.nsf/034/$.file/rwp_05_034_khwaja.pdf)
- CPBEP, (2009). *District Education Management Handbook. Compendium of rules and regulations for district education officers*. Canada Pakistan Basic Education Project Lahore. A-030979.
- Cummings, W., & Riddell, A. (1992). *Alternative policies for the finance, control and*

*delivery of basic education.* Cambridge, Mass:HIID.

Department of Education (2002). Government of the Punjab. Civil Secretariat Lahore.

Education Encyclopedia (2008). *Decentralization in education.* Retrieved from stateuniversity.com on 14 February 2010

Fisher R.J. (2000). Decentralization and Devolution in Forest Management: A Conceptual Overview. In: Enters, T., Durst, P.B., and M. Victor (eds). 2000. *Decentralization and devolution of forest management in Asia and the Pacific. RECOFTC Report N.1*

Fiske, Edward B. (1996). *Decentralization of education: politics and consensus.* The World Bank, Washington, DC.

Fullen,M.G.,& Stiegelbauer,S. (1992). *The new meaning of educational change.* IInd Ed.NewYork: Braun and Brumfield.

Geo-jaja, M, A. (2006) Educational decentralization, public spending, and social justice in Nigeria. *Review of education (2006)52.125-148*

GoP (2000). *Local Government Plan 2000,* Islamabad: Chief Executive Secretariat, National Reconstruction Bureau Islamabad Pakistan.

GoP (2007). *Government of the Punjab.* Retrieved March, 13, 2007 from [www.punjab.gov.pk](http://www.punjab.gov.pk).

GoP (2001). **Guidelines for monitoring committees of local government 2001.**Government of the Punjab.

Government of the Punjab (2001). *The Punjab Local Government Ordinance 2001*

Hanson, M.E. (1995). *Best practices in educational decentralization: the cases of Venezuela, Colombia, Argentina, and Spain.* (World Bank Seminar on Education Decentralization)

Hanson, M.E. (1998). Strategies of educational decentralization: key questions and core issues. *Journal of Educational Administration, 36 (2), 111-128.*

Hanson, M.E. (2000). *Educational decentralization across the Pacific Rim.* Retrieved December12, 2005, from World Bank Global Education Reform. Website <http://www1.worldbank.org/education/globaleducationreform/pdf/Hanson%20Editorial.pdf>

HRCF (2004). *The education budget in Pakistan.* Retrieved on 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2007 from <http://www.commonwealtheducationfund.org/downloads/Pakistan%20Financing>

[%20of%20Education.pdf](#)

- Loeb, S., & McEwan, P. J. (2006). An Economic approach to education policy implementation. In M.I. Hoing (Eds.), *New directions in Education Policy implementation*. (pp.169-188). N.Y: State University of New York Press.
- Lunenburg, A.C.,& Orstein, A. C. (1996). *Educational administration concepts and practices*. Wadsworth Publishing Company. USA.
- MSU (2002) *Devolution and decentralization: Identifications of Progress in Implementation in Education*. Workshop Report, Islamabad, Pakistan
- MSU (2001c). Devolution and decentralization: implication for the education sector Punjab. Provincial (Punjab) Workshop Report, Lahore, Pakistan.
- Naidoo., Jordan. P. (2002). *Educational decentralization in sub-Saharan Africa – espoused theories and theories in use*. Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Comparayive and International Educational Society (46<sup>th</sup> Orlando, FL, March 6-9, 2002). *ERIC Document Service no 472 263 E.3*.
- Naidoo., Jordan. P.(2005) *Educational decentralization and school governance in South Africa. From policy to practice*. International institute for educational planning. UNESCO
- PDFPR. (2006). The Punjab Delegation of financial powers, rules 2006. Retrieved on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2009 from [http://www.punjab-prmp.gov.pk/adb\\_docs/OC-7/OC-7\(i\)%20Delegation%20of%20Financial%20Powers%20Rules%202006-FD.pdf](http://www.punjab-prmp.gov.pk/adb_docs/OC-7/OC-7(i)%20Delegation%20of%20Financial%20Powers%20Rules%202006-FD.pdf).
- Punjab Local Government Ordinance 1979.
- Punjab Local Government Ordinance. 2001.
- UNESCO (2006) *Decentralization in education in Pakistan* .Country report at the UNESCO seminar on “EFA implementation: teacher and resource management in the context of decentralization”. Administrative staff college of India, Hyderabad, India, 6-8 January 2006.
- UNESCO (2005) Handbook for decentralized educational planning. Implementing national EFA plans. Bangkok: UNESCO Asia and Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, 2005.
- UNESCO (2005a) *Decentralization in education: National policies and practices*. Education policies and strategies 7.

UNESCO (2005b). *Implementation education for all: Teacher and resource management in the context of decentralization*. Education policies and strategies 8.

USAID (2001). *Policy implementation: what USAID has learned?* Centre for Democracy and Governance. US agency for international development. Washington, DC20523-3100.

USAID (2005). Decentralization in education. *EQ Review3 (4)* Retrieved March, 3, 2009 from [http://www.equip123.net/EQ\\_Review/3\\_4.pdf](http://www.equip123.net/EQ_Review/3_4.pdf).

USAID (2006) Assessing the impact of Devolution on health care and education in Pakistan.

USAID (2006) *Identifying the impact of educational decentralization on the quality of education*.EQUIP2

Winkler, D., & Gershberg, A. (2000). Education Decentralization in Latin America: The Effects on the Quality of Schooling. In *Decentralization and Accountability of the Public Sector*, ed. Shahid Javed Burki et al. Washington, DC: World Bank.

Winkler.D (2003), Decentralization and education, In Guthrie.J.W, *Encyclopedia of education* (Ed 2<sup>nd</sup>), (pp 542- 546) New York: Thomos Gale.

Winkler, D. R. (2005) *Understanding decentralization*. Retrieved February 20,2006 from <http://www.equip123.net/docs/e2Understanding%20Decentralization.pdf>

Winkler, D (2008). *Decentralization and education*. *Education Encyclopedia*. State University .com. Retrieved on 07-05-2008 from <http://education.Stateuniversity.com/pages/1903/decentralization-education.html>

Zaidi, S. A. (2005) Political economy of decentralization in Pakistan. Transversal theme “decentralization and social movement” working paper 17. development study group Zurich

### **Correspondence**

Name: Ayaz Muhammad Khan

Email: [ayazof@yahoo.com](mailto:ayazof@yahoo.com)