

CONSTRAINTS TO THE EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF THE DISTRICT EDUCATION OFFICES

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Education:**

Overcoming Challenges and Achieving success

The Kenyan Experience

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By

Tiberius Barasa

Centre for Policy Research

Lecturer Maseno University

Outline

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Introduction

- The impact of decentralization in education has been an issue of concern for many developing countries since the late 90s
- This has necessitated rigorous analysis of decentralization policy reforms with a view to policy learning and enhanced quality education.
- The analysis of decentralization of education in Kenya does not reveal only challenges and constraints but also lessons and opportunities for further reforms.

Methodology

- The analysis focused on one of the main actors in education namely; the District Education Office (DEO).
- Four districts selected based on characteristics including geographical, topographical, population size, number of schools and economic activities.
- Aim: to examine the roles and challenges faced:
 - 1. Staff management
 - 2. Quality monitoring
 - 3. Financial management
 - 4. Relationship with local and central authorities

Summary of lessons learnt

- Main changes in its role: quality monitoring task characterized by two trends:
 - i. 1. Creation of Quality Standards Officers (QASOs) has contributed to better relationships with teachers.
 - ii. 2. Financial control overshadows the importance of quality monitoring, as auditors join QASOs during supervision visits.
- DEO has little, autonomy in the management of its staff and financial resources.

Constraints

- Staff management
- Quality monitoring
- Financial management
- Relations with local and national authorities

Staff management

- Inadequate number of staff carrying out these functions:
- 1. Current officers are overloaded with work, which leads to administrative tasks taking priority over important pedagogical work.
- 2. QASOs work is executed by TAC tutors, who are not qualified enough for these particular tasks.
- In contrast, all the positions of auditors and the Teaching Service Commission are filled:
- 1. Administrative tasks take priority over important pedagogical work.
- 2. Lack of expertise by (TAC tutors) creates confusion for school principals and head teachers regarding the roles of the DEO staff members.

Staff management

- Staff development is hindered by lack of career guidance.
- Staff productivity is constrained by poor working conditions in DEOs; small and cramped facilities.
- Inadequate transport facilities for school visits.
- Inadequate funding hinders proper functioning of the Office.
- Unclear criteria used to select staff for training
- Staff appraisal routine (no direct link to staff professional development).
- Political interference in staffing office.

Quality monitoring

Supervisions

- Although the assessments are effective to an extent, their effectiveness is constrained by a lack of commitment to implement the recommendations.

Monitoring tools

- Lack of alternative monitoring tools
- QASOs monitor the schools based on enrolment trends, examination results from KCPE and KCSE, transition and completion rates.

Initiatives

- Creation of a separate unit on Quality Assessment and Standards in the DEO has led to “change in attitude” (QASOs not ‘inspectors’, but ‘assessors’ or ‘advisors’)
- However, effective quality monitoring is constrained by staff shortage and lack of funds.
- The DEO has little autonomy in its staff management. The central ministry does most of the recruitment, appointment and deployment.

Management of financial resources

- Direct transfer of funds to schools has had adverse effect:
 - 1. Financial audits versus quality monitoring and teacher development.
 - 2. Overall school development role replaced by administrative and financial management roles.
- Inadequate school funds monitoring systems

Relations with local and central authorities

- Mixed feelings about decentralization:
- 1. Higher enrolment and transition rates
- 2. DEO role confined to monitoring and auditing of school finances.
- DEO strictly guided by central rules and procedures in budget spending, staff development and evaluation and school supervision.

Conclusion

- Decentralization policy in Kenya has not vested any autonomy or led to greater resource availability for DEO.
- The traditional role of quality monitoring by the DEO has been retained with an additional financial auditing role.
- However, the creation of this separate function has worked against the pedagogical support used to be provided by the DEO.

