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A Review of Developments in School-Based Management in Indonesia

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A Review of Development of School-Based Management in Indonesia

Agustinus Bandur

Abstract

School-Based Management (SBM) with devolution has been widely accepted as a major reform initiative in developed and developing nations. In Indonesia, the implementation of SBM was triggered by the fact that quality of national education was one of the major problems, leading to the financial crisis in 1997. Subsequently, the Indonesian Government appointed a Commission of National Education in 2001 to formulate policy recommendations to have a better quality education. One of the recommendations of the Commission was to develop representative councils at district and school levels. For this purpose, the Central Government embarked on the formation of educational and school councils in each district of Western Sumatera, Bali, and Eastern Java. Based on these trials, the councils were considered strategic in improving national education. The enactment of the Education Law 20/2003 strengthened the education reforms, with the formation of mandatory corporate governing body type school councils.

This paper focuses on current developments of SBM in Flores, based on a study of the implementation of SBM in Flores primary schools. Main issues addressed here are the problems and issues confronted in the implementation of SBM and data collection. The research methodology included both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of research, comprising an empirical survey followed by semi-structured and focused group interviews. For the purposes of empirical survey, the questionnaire developed by Gamage (1996) was adapted with appropriate modifications. The questionnaire was refined further with a trial and pilot study. The research sample included 42 schools. Empirical survey was supplemented with 42 interviews with different categories of stakeholders.

Introduction

Attempts to strike a right balance between centralization and decentralization of educational provisions have become the most significant policy issues in current education reforms (Caldwell, 1990; Gamage & Zajda, 2005). In the context of public school system, decentralization of authority occurs at the school level in order to empower school stakeholders in decision-making which was performed earlier by the centre, region or the district (David, 1989; Herman & Herman, 1992; Gamage, 1996a). It is believed that the teachers, school administrators, parents and local community who are the closest to the children, are the best placed to determine the strategies that meet the needs of their particular students. For these reasons, School-Based Management (SBM) with devolution has become largely accepted as a major reform initiative both in developed nations including Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the USA, and developing countries such as Hong Kong, Thailand, and Indonesia.

While there are different definitions of SBM, it can be viewed as a pragmatic approach to a formal alteration of the bureaucratic model of school administration, with a more democratic structure that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement relying on the redistribution of decision-making authority through which improvements in a school are stimulated and sustained (Gamage, 1993). For the purposes of implementing this power and authority, a school council is formed, consisting of the principal and the representatives of teachers, parents, local community, local government, alumni, and in the case of secondary schools, students. Research findings show that devolution of decision-making authority to school councils can increase the level of responsiveness, partnership, and empowerment of relevant school stakeholders which in turn, encourages participation of parents and local

community, as well as improving student outcomes (O'Neil, 1995; Wohlstetter, 1995; Gamage, 1993, 1996b, 1998a).

In this paper, first I examine the development of school systems that impacted on the Indonesian school system and secondly, the emergence of SBM in Indonesia since 1999 and its implementation in Flores. Thus, the paper begins with an overview of international trends followed by a review of the development of SBM in Indonesia.

Overview of International Development in SBM

SBM practices worldwide do not carry the same meaning, particularly to the extent whether authority and responsibility are devolved to school councils or whether the councils are mandatory or advisory. This section examines how SBM has emerged in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the USA, and Thailand.

Australia

Gamage (1992, 1994) reports that the Australian education system from its inception in 1789 showed a tendency for centralization and bureaucratic forms of school management. However, since the mid 1970s, some of the Australian school systems took the initiative in moving towards a new concept of decentralization of education to regional levels with devolution of significant power and authority to the school level to encourage community participation in school governance (Gamage, 1993). Other researchers also affirm that in response to having greater democracy, efficiency, and accountability, the Australian public education structures have undergone major reconstruction by creating partnerships between school and community while devolving authority in decision-making to school governing bodies aimed primarily at achieving better

teaching and learning (Connors & McMorrow, 1990; Sharpe, 1996; Gamage, 1993,1996a, 2003).

In Victoria, a trend to a decentralized system of school governance with an emphasis on a clear shift of operational decision-making authority to school as well as building partnerships between school, parents, and community has been developed since 1970s (Chapman, 1988; Gamage, 1996a, 1998b; Duhou, 1999; Gamage & Zajda, 2005). With the enactment of the Education School Councils Act in 1975 and the establishment of school councils as mandatory corporate bodies in 1976, Victoria followed the move towards SBM with devolution of decision-making authority to school councils (Chapman, 1988; Gamage, 1996a).

Recently in 2006, Victorian Government enacted the Education and Training Reform Act on school councils, providing objectives and functions on the part of school councils. The objectives of a school council are to: assist in the efficient governance of the school; ensure that its decisions affecting students of the school are made having regard to it as a primary consideration, to the best interests of students at the school; enhance the educational opportunities of students at the school. The functions of a school council, are to: establish the broad direction and vision of the school within the school's community; arrange for the supply of goods, services, facilities, materials, equipment and other things or matters that are required for the conduct of the school; raise funds for school related purposes; and ensure that all money coming into the hands of the council is expended for proper purposes relating to the school.

Following the results of the Victorian SBM policies, many researchers argue that Victoria is currently implementing the most devolved SBM model resulting in the improvement of student outcomes (Chapman, 1988; Sharpe, 1996; Gamage, 1996a; Duhou, 1999). Duhou (1999: 68) claims that the Victorian SBM model represents one of the most comprehensive strategies at school

decentralization for higher student performance attempted anywhere in the world. Other researchers report that the Victorian SBM policies have a positive influence on the teaching/learning environment (Gamage, Sipple & Partridge, 1996: 10). Ten years later, research conducted by Gurr, Drysdale & Mulford (2006) shows that the leadership of principals has created a supportive teaching and learning environment in schools, leading to enhanced quality of education for students.

Similarly, with regard to SBM development in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), researchers show that school governance with devolving decision-making authority to school level provides greater freedom and autonomy, achieving greater equity among schools as well as creating equality of opportunity for students and flexibility in using school facilities (Gamage, 1993; Caldwell, 1993; Duhou, 1999; Bush & Gamage, 2001; The ACT Department of Education & Training, 2004). For instance, on the basis of an empirical survey, the ACT Department of Education and Training (2004) reports the overall effectiveness of its SBM model. It reveals that the major impact of SBM was improved local decision-making at the school level. In the same context, the devolution programs have given schools the flexibility to direct funds to their areas of greatest priority and need, leading to improved educational outcomes for students and more effective schooling Duhou (1999: 4).

New Zealand

The most dramatic educational change in New Zealand commenced in 1988 when the government accepted the major recommendations of the Picot Report by enacting the 1989 Education Act replacing the highly centralized and regulated system of administration of schools in New Zealand with SBM (Caldwell, 1990; Whitty, Power & Halpin, 1998; Gamage and Zajda, 2005; Robinson and Ward, 2005). The primary goal of the implementation of SBM was to achieve systemic efficiency, increase local community involvement, and even

to provide consumer choice. Each school is now governed by a Board of Trustees, comprising the principal, a staff representative and elected parent representatives, one of whom acts as the chair of the board (Gamage and Zajda, 2005; Robinson and Ward, 2005).

The Picot Report called for a transfer of decision-making authority from central government and regional educational boards to the school level along with building partnerships between the teaching staff and school communities, encouraging greater local decision-making, promoting equity and fairness. Other reform programs - including the implementation of a devolution package to schools, involving staff employment, payment of salaries, determination of salary points, negotiation of industrial agreements, allocation of funds in a way that would most benefit students, and maintenance and improvements to buildings - were also implemented (Gamage and Zajda, 2005; Robinson and Ward, 2005; Williams & Harold, et al., 1997).

England and Wales

Chapman (1990: 10) affirms that the Education Act enacted in 1988 provided autonomy, power, and accountability in education. Bush & Gamage (2001: 40) state that the rationale behind the devolution of authority in England and Wales is based on the market-led assumptions that parents know what is best for their children and that teachers are more concerned with their own interests than those of the pupils and students. They clarify that the underpinning assumption of giving authority to school governing bodies is that greater autonomy will lead to improved educational outcomes. For these reasons, parents have had increased representation on governing boards since 1999 in England and Wales (Bush & Gamage, 2001: 40-42).

Other research conducted by Rutherford & Jackson (2006) shows that building partnerships for raising standards in the UK schools was one of the major aims of the Government. In this context, the partnership is seeking the individual schools' improvements. Another strategy implemented by the government for the excellence in the schools was promoting largely autonomous schools that would then compete in the marketplace for students, supported by government grants. In this case, Rutherford & Jackson (2006: 449) state that working in partnerships is not cheap, thus, schools are keen to be involved but need sustainability of funding.

The United States of America (USA)

A report on *A Nation at Risk* by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (NCEE, 1983) opened the eyes of many Americans to the effects of the increased centralization and bureaucratization of school administration. The report resulted in the transfer of authority relating to budget, staffing, and instruction from the district offices to representative bodies including administrators, teachers, parents, and local community at the school. Williams et. al (1997: 626) claim that shifting decision-making authority from state educational agencies and school districts to local school sites has become one of the solutions in improving the quality of America's public schools.

The Chicago model of School-Based Management (SBM) was driven by a coalition of parents and citizens campaigning to establish mandatory corporate body type councils for Chicago schools (Hanson, 1991; Edge, 2000; Gamage, 2006). This resulted in enacting the School Reform Act of 1988 by the Illinois legislature. The Act mandated each Chicago public school to have a local school council, consisting of eleven members: six parents, two teachers, two community residents and the principal, and in the case of secondary schools, a student representative with no voting rights. Thus, decision-making authority was

devolved to the Local School Councils (LSCs), including: (1) evaluation of the principal's performance and renewal of the contract; (2) approval of school budget; (3) approval of the School Improvement Plan (SIP); (4) monitoring the implementation of SIP and the budget; (5) helping choose texts and curricular materials; and even recommending new teacher appointments (Hanson, 1991; Edge, 2000; Gamage & Zajda, 2005). With regard to the success of the devolution model of SBM some researchers assert that the decision-making authority devolved to the LSCs was significant, particularly in view of the fact that each council has the authority to hire and fire the principal on the basis of a four-year performance contract (Hanson, 1991; Gamage & Zajda, 2005).

Researchers also report that the reforms have contributed to the improvement of teaching and learning, financial and administrative management, professional recruitment standards, and academic performance (Hanson, 1991; Wong, 1998; Edge, 2000). Other researchers found that SBM contributed to increases both in commitment and morale of teachers by participating in school decision-making, as well as the resulting greater collaborative working environment in schools (Leithwood & Manzies, 1998; Rotriguez and Slate, 2005).

Thailand

Thailand was confronted by the Asian financial crisis, which affected social and economic conditions throughout the country. In response to these and the need to improve extensive nationwide quality education, the National Education Act was enacted in 1999, not just for the purpose of improving the country's competitiveness in the face of globalisation, but also for enhancing human resource quality (ONEC, 2007; Sooksomchitra & Gamage, 2004; Nenyod, 2002).

At the school level, each Thai school is required to elect a school board as the mandatory governing body. The school board members vary from one school

to another, comprising 7-15 members, depending on the size of the school. The membership of the school board consists of representatives of the parents, teachers, local community, local government institutions and alumni, not more than two from each category, together with not more than four special interest representatives and the principal. Currently, the school board is empowered to: (1) approve the policy, plans, and budget of the school; (2) promote academic matters and the development of teachers and educational personnel; (3) mobilize resources for education; (4) coordinate and promote relationships between the institution and external organizations; (5) provide suggestions and advice to the administrator (principal); (6) participate in monitoring, inspection, and evaluation of the administrator; and (7) promote and support the performance of the school (ONEC, 2002, cited in Sooksomchitra & Gamage, 2004).

A national pilot study on the education reforms conducted by ONEC (2002) shows that the findings of the study, involving 250 pilot schools nationwide, indicates positive outcomes of the decentralisation programs to the improvements of school personnel development, learning process reforms, and community participation. For instance, teachers have indicated their enthusiasm for self-development and have come to enjoy better relationships with the parents and students. In addition, the students have been given opportunities to voice their opinions. However, researchers have also indicated some challenges confronted by school principals with regard to their roles as school leaders, school managers, school supervisors, public relation officers, and conflict handlers (Sooksomchitra and Gamage, 2004; ONEC, 2002, Nenyod, 2002).

Indonesia

Geography, Population & Governance

Indonesia is the largest archipelago in the world, with over 17,000 islands of which 6000 are inhabited spreading between the continents of Asia and Australia. After China, India, and the United States, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous country, with a total population of 225,4 million in 2007, up from 205.1 million in 2000 and 147,5 million in 1980 (Indonesian Statistics, 2007). It is predicted that the Indonesian total population will increase up to 273,1 million by 2025.

By year 2004, children below the age of five were about 21,2 million and the school-age children (5 to 14 years) were approximately 42,2 million (Division of Educational Policies and Strategies, UNESCO, 2006). This total number has decreased from 43,2 million in 2000. This data indicates that population of school-age children is one of the largest in the world. The primary school students are accommodated in 170,626 schools across the country (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2007).

For the purpose of governance, Indonesia is divided into 33 provinces and 440 districts and city municipalities (The Central Intelligence Agency, World Fact Book, 2007; The Jakarta Post.Com, 2007). In the new framework of regional autonomy after the resignation of Soeharto in 1988, authorities in relation to several areas and responsibilities were transferred from central government to autonomous regions (provinces and districts or city municipalities). Areas of decentralization were enacted in Law 22/1999, later revised in Law 32/2004, including public works, health, education and culture, agriculture, communication, industry and trade, capital investment, environment, land, co-operative and manpower affairs (Article 11). Central government still holds key authorities in the fields of foreign policies, defence and security, justice, monetary and fiscal, religion, national planning and macro national development control,

financial balance fund, state administration and state economic institutional systems, human resources development, natural resources utilization, as well as strategic high technology, conservation and national standardization (Article 7).

Education Reforms Since 1998

Bjork (2003: 5) notes that by the end of the 20th Century, Indonesia was one of the most highly centralized nations in the world. He claims that the centralization of authority in Indonesia could enforce the dependence of regional leaders on central authority and even cause them to orient themselves away from local constituents. Consequently, the Indonesian regional governments lost autonomy making them politically and administratively dependent, which in turn led Indonesia to a financial crisis in 1997.

However, on the basis of Law 22/1999 on Regional Autonomy, education was considered an area for decentralization aimed at encouraging the participation of community members in accommodating local needs. In terms of successful movements towards decentralization, Guess (2005: 220) claims that the Indonesian ‘big bang’ devolution programs have been described as one of the fastest and most comprehensive decentralization initiatives ever attempted by any country in the region. The decentralized system led to the implementation of educational decentralization which has been considered as a milestone in developing a better quality of national education (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2002, 2004). Moreover, the local assemblies are operating in a more accountable and democratic fashion than ever before (Guess, 2005: 220).

The Implementation of SBM

The implementation of SBM was triggered by the fact that Indonesian educational stakeholders have been struggling with the quality of national education over the last two decades leading to the financial crisis in 1997, which created severe economic and social problems (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2001; Mulyasa, 2004; Nurkolis, 2005). For these reasons, the Indonesian Ministry of National Education appointed a Komisi Nasional Pendidikan (KNP) or Commission of National Education in February 2001. The KNP worked until December 2001 with responsibilities to: (1) formulate policy recommendations to have a better quality education; (2) provide inputs to government about educational decentralization. It was expected that the work of this Commission would become a basis from which to comprehensively reform Indonesian education. One of the recommendations of the KNP was to develop educational councils at district level and school councils at school level.

Thus, developing educational and school councils was one of the educational decentralization policies, aimed at devolving authority from central government to district governments and schools, resulting in improvement of democratic principles, community participation, equity, as well as accommodation of diverse local interests and needs (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2001: 26). It was believed that local communities are the ones who will understand their own problems and needs better and decided to provide them greater roles and responsibilities in terms of operational decision making on national education policies. For this purpose, the central government embarked on the formation of educational and school councils in each district of Western Sumatera, Bali, and Eastern Java. On the basis of these trials, the councils were considered strategic in coping with improving the Indonesian national education.

Then, central government issued a set of guidelines in relation to the implementation of SBM in 2002, later revised in 2004, in order to provide

mandatory corporate governing body type of school councils. Further, Education Act 20/2003 on National Education System strengthened the formation of school councils. In accordance with the involvement of local community in achieving better quality education. Article 56 of the Act indicates that community members are required to participate in improving the quality of education. Accordingly, the educational councils and school councils are required to perform the following function:

Community shall take part in the quality improvement of educational services, which include planning, monitoring, and evaluation of educational programs through the Educational Council and School Council (Education Act 20/2003, article, 56).

Power and Authority Vested in School Councils

The Education Act 20/2003 defines a school council as an independent body established to provide advice, directions and support for personnel, facilities and equipment, and monitoring of a school (Article 56). On the basis of the Act, central government regulates the power and authority vested in school councils, as well as characteristics and formation, membership and structure of a school council.

The power and authority of a school council relate to the four major roles of school councils, which are: to be an advisory agency in determining and/or approving educational policies at the school level; to be a supporting agency in supporting the school both in financial and non-financial matters; to be a controlling agency for the purpose of transparency and accountability at school

level; and to be a mediator between school, government, and community (Ministry of Education, 2002, 2004).

Accordingly, in line with the guidelines of the Ministry of National Education issued in 2002 and 2004 and Education Act No.20/2003, each Indonesian school council is empowered to: formulate and approve the school policies; formulate and approve the school's mission and vision; formulate and approve annual school programs including annual school budget; design strategic planning for school development; determine learning standards in the school; decide on the provision of incentives to the principal, teachers, and administrative staff; develop school potential factors for increasing student achievements both academic (school examinations) and non-academic (religious life, sports, arts, skills which are appropriate to school environment such as agricultural skills, weaving skills, and simple technology); raise school funds for the purpose of financing the school; mobilize school resources both financial and non-financial (human power for school building and facilities, ideas and recommendations); encourage more participation of school stakeholders in formulating, implementing, and monitoring school policies; create a transparent, accountable, and democratic atmosphere in the school for the purposes of quality education in the school; respond to the national and local curriculum requirements; coordinate networks and partnerships between school and external organizations for improving educational processes and outcomes; identify and solve school problems; and evaluate school policies and programs including the control of using school buildings and facilities as well as school grants.

Characteristics and Formation of a School Council

The fundamental characteristic of a school council is its independence. A council does not have hierarchical relationships with the government, while the principles of forming school councils should be transparent, accountable, and democratic (Ministry of National Education, 2002, 2004). Many approaches are taken by schools in forming their governing bodies. However, Ministry of National Education (2002) proposed a mechanism for this process.

Firstly, a school needs to form a committee. This committee should have a minimum of five members comprising educational practitioners (i.e. representatives of teachers, principal, and educational foundations), community representatives (NGOs, local authority, a public figure, religious leaders, businessmen), and representatives of parents. Secondly, the committee prepares and facilitates the election of school council membership. At this stage, the committee should take the following steps: (1) informing community members about the need to form a school council; (2) determining the criteria for the election of school council members and identifying candidates based on the aspirations of the community; (3) selecting candidates based on the community's aspirations; (4) announcing the names of candidates to the community; (5) arranging names of the selected school council members; (6) facilitating election of council executives, standing committees, and members; and (7) reporting the membership of the elected school council to the principal.

Membership and Structure of School Councils

When SBM was implemented, the government decided on the structure and composition of the councils to be a minimum of nine members depending on the size of the school. The membership of a school council should consist of

representatives of teachers, government, and legislatures. Community representatives should consist of: (1) parents; (2) public figures (religious leaders, *pemuka adat* ‘chief of village’, etc); (3) NGOs who are concerned with educational matters; (4) community members who show an interest in educational quality improvement; (5) educational specialists who are concerned with educational quality; and (6) school foundations, professional organizations, and industry associations. Apart from electing and/or nominating four to five representatives only from the local educational government officials and local parliament members, there is no limitation of the total number elected from other representative categories to the school councils.

Each school council has authority to elect school council executives and standing committees. The council executive of each school council consist of minimum of a Council President, Secretary, and Treasurer. It is ruled out that a school principal can not be elected as the Council President, while the executive members and standing committees are elected from and by school council members. Depending on the need of the schools, the standing committees of the school councils can be elected for: 1) Finance, 2) School Quality Control, 3) Partnership Networks and Information System, and 4) Building and School Facilities.

Limited Evidence about Indonesian SBM

Research on SBM in Indonesia is very limited. However, Caldwell (2005: 9) reports that the implementation of SBM in Indonesia has led to improvements in student achievements. He clarifies that dramatic improvements in student achievements were evident within twelve months after the implementation of SBM policies, including the provision of a small budget to each of the 79 schools

to conduct professional development programs for teachers, and to engage in community development to encourage parents supporting their schools.

Yuwono (2005) also conducted a research on how SBM policies and programs impact in the teaching of English aiming at linking the SBM and the schools' English language programs. On the basis of perceptions of principals and English language teachers from six secondary schools of Salatiga municipality, she found that SBM is one of the reforms to improve teaching-learning English in Indonesia. However, some problems were confronted by private schools whose school resources are poor, including lack of funding and support from school stakeholders.

More recently, Bengoteku & Hayward (2007) argue that SBM is working well in Indonesia. They affirm that the Indonesian government's cooperation with USAID, UNICEF, the World Bank and other bilateral/multilateral organizations and projects demonstrates that SBM approach does improve the quality of education and makes schools better places for children.

Research on the Implementation of SBM in Flores

In response to the limited research on the implementation of SBM in Indonesia, this study about the implementation of SBM in regional levels would be a very significant one. In this context, the findings could be helpful in informing the practitioners, the local and national authorities and all those interested in school reforms and SBM implementation in primary schools. This section addresses a study of the implementation of SBM in Flores primary schools.

Context of School Developments in Flores

Similar to other schools in the world, schools in Flores are supported by the government and are known as state schools, while religious foundations manage others. There are 1,459 primary schools in seven districts of Flores (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, 2007). Historically, school development has long established since 1863 by the Catholic foundations (Mali, 2003). In 1913, authority in all schools was transferred by the Dutch Colonialists to the Church. The Church then encouraged parents and community participation in school buildings, maintenances, and renovations as well as building houses for teachers and development of school farms.

Then, under the Soekarno's government (1945-1965), parents and community participation was strengthened by Education Law 4/1954. On the basis of the Law, associations of parents and teachers were formed in all primary schools, known as *Persatuan Orang Tua Murid dan Guru (POMG)*. The main responsibility of the POMG was limited to non-instructional matters such as school building and school finances, while authority in terms of teaching/learning was vested in school staff (Education Law 4/1950, Chapter 78, article 4).

Between 1970s and 1990s, POMG was substituted by *Badan Pembantu Penyelenggara Pendidikan (BP3)*. The authority and responsibility of the BP3 was limited to support school finances. Authority with regard to deployment and development of staff, curriculum, textbooks, and school facilities were the responsibility of central Government, while responsibility in building maintenance and renovations was devolved to district governments (Government Regulation 28/1990, article 9). On the basis of the regulation, principal was given responsibility in terms of teaching-learning operation in school, school administration, staff training, and school facilities maintenance. Then since 2002, Flores primary schools have implemented SBM. Three districts (Ngada, Ende,

Sikka) are guided by SBM advisors from the Australian Agency of International Development (AusAID) and Indonesian advisors.

Scope and Purpose of the Study

This paper primarily aims at investigating whether SBM policies and programs in Flores have resulted in achieving power and authority in school decision-makings, increasing community participation, and changing school culture which in turn contribute to improvements in teaching/learning environment and student achievement. Specifically, the paper attempts to: identify the power and authority of the school councils as perceived by the members on the current structures of school councils; identify whether there have been improvements in student achievements resulting from the implementation of SBM; analyze the challenges and problems hampering the implementation of SBM and seek remedial strategies; and examine how the school principals and council members cope with the new challenges and identify the types of assistance and/or support required.

Methodology and Research Design

The research methodology in the study included both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of research, comprising an extensive empirical survey followed by semi-structured and focused group interviews and examination of relevant documents. In particular, the data gathered from the empirical survey were analysed using SPSS, while interviews and other documents were analysed using NVivo.

Participants

Respondents in this study came from one large district in Flores. Five hundred and four out of 675 school council members who implemented SBM returned completed questionnaires. This represents a 74.7 percent response rate. In addition to the empirical survey, 42 interviews were conducted with different categories of school stakeholders.

Instruments

The questionnaire developed by Gamage (1996) was adapted with appropriate modification to determine the perceptions of the participants on the current developments of school councils, power and authority vested in school councils and decision-making process, impacts of SBM programs in creating higher participation of school stakeholders and school culture changes, as well as opinions on improvements of teaching learning environment and student achievement. The questions were mostly of the multiple-choice Likert-type with open-ended questions in relevant areas.

The instrument was then refined further with a pre-test after approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Newcastle. For this purpose, the questionnaires were distributed to 30 educators, representing school council member categories, including: primary school principals, primary and secondary school teachers and lecturers, and representatives of District Education Department. They were given opportunities to provide general comments and/or inputs on the clarity, ambiguities and difficulties on understanding the items. The results of the pre-testing indicate that the questionnaire items provide clear information about issues and problems related to SBM programs and convey a

clear meaning. However, most of them suggested that some words need to be simplified, for example, the word *bujet* which was translated from English word, *budget*. The other word needed to be clarified was *stakeholder sekolah*, translated from English phrase *school stakeholders*

The questionnaire was again further refined and finalized after a pilot study. The pilot study not just provided the opportunity to identify confusing and ambiguous language, but also to obtain information about possible patterns of results (Mertens, 1998; Wiersma and Jurs, 2000). The pilot study was conducted in seven primary schools comprising of urban and rural schools in two districts (Western Manggarai and Manggarai) of Flores. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed to the schools that agreed to take part in completing the questionnaire and 155 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Considering that the items used were adapted from questionnaires previously validated in early research, no attempt was made to measure the reliability and validity of the items. It was assumed that the questionnaire items used constitute a valid tool for measuring the variables. However, items related to process of school council formation, current composition of school councils, and overall functioning of school councils were measured using the factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha reliability of .751 while the factor loadings in the principal component analysis ranged from .779 to .843. The Kaiser-Meyer – Olkin (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy was .682 with Barlett's Test of sphericity $p = .000$, indicating a good factorability. Currently the study is progress.

Conclusion

School-Based Management (SBM) policies and programs have become more crucial in current Indonesian schooling for the purposes of improving national education quality, including improvements to the teaching-learning environment, change of school culture, encouragement of parents and local community, and improvements in student achievement.

As this is still an early stage of my data analysis, I can only briefly point out several key issues. Firstly, adequate decision-making power and authority on key areas are vested in school councils, including school mission, school vision, school goals, school budget, school building renovation, new school buildings, school building maintenance, students' discipline policy, selecting teachers, selecting school principal, selecting administrative staff, selecting text books, and local curriculum development. These areas of authority need to be independently designed by school council members with the guidance but not pressure from either provincial or district education officials. Secondly, any types of grants from central government need to be transferred directly to the school, such as a block grant. Provincial and district governments are not expected to interfere in the process of allocating the grant for any areas of school development.

Thirdly, government officials in coordination with academic specialists needs to be responsible for the provision of training of school leaders and school council members in the areas of educational leadership and management, workshops on SBM, strategic planning, and regular professional development sessions. Such training is relevant for the purposes of helping school stakeholders to implement SBM effectively, as well as to overcome the challenges and problems faced in the implementation of SBM, including coordination difficulties and lack of clarity of the roles between district government, school leaders, and school council. In conclusion, the implementation of SBM in Flores could be significantly effective to improve school environments and student achievements

as long as Government authorities empower school councils with decision-making authority in key areas. This is one of the key issues: not just to promote a collaborative working environment, but also to rebuild the high commitment, ownership, genuine partnership and high participation of parents and local community in developing their communal schools which were forgotten in the last three decades under Soeharto's centralized education system.

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