Decentralisation of Education System – a Panacea for School Improvement Issues? The Georgian Perspective

Nikoloz PARJANADZE

Associate Professor Dr., Faculty of Education, International Black Sea University, GEORGIA

Abstract

Almost a decade ago, Georgia, a Trans-Caucasian state, embarked on educational decentralisation reform aiming at rehabilitation of education system in order to reach high school performance. Through Local Management of Schools, the form of decentralisation implemented in Georgia, power and authority was devolved directly to individual schools. Due to the initiative principals became the fulcrum of all reform efforts. Thus the aim of the study was to observe how the central state reform informs policy and practice at school level through empowered principals and whether the new initiative was actually the answer to the accumulated educational issues. The study showed that while most principals had broad understanding of the reform, many lacked practical skills and experience in actual governance in a new mode. School governance was further complicated by insufficient funds from the central government, low community participation in school functioning and teachers' lack of training in conducting teaching and learning process in a new mode set by the new National Curriculum.

Keywords: Georgia, decentralisation, education reform, local management of schools, transition state, school improvement.

Introduction

Georgia, a Trans-Caucasian country by the Black Sea coast, has been facing constant changes in the social and political spheres throughout the recent decades. Though the transition period has not been easy, the Georgian government is trying to direct its efforts towards finding the right path leading to statehood. This paper will highlight the research which embraced school education initiatives introduced by the Georgian government by the year 2008 as these very initiatives formed a milestone for current school reform in Georgia.

Georgia was the first republic to declare independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then the nation has endured social, political, cultural and economic turmoil. In the first years of independence Georgia faced internal conflicts and a civil war. All fields of social and economic life suffered stagnation. According to the World Bank report (2006, p.1) "there was a short-lived stability and a structural reform effort in 1994." However, bureaucracy and all-pervasive corruption of the state structures curbed the progress (Perkins, 1998). These factors, along with the government's inability to address social and economic problems in a timely and efficient manner, prepared grounds for Rose Revolution in 2003 which ensured a peaceful change of the government in Georgia.

The new government of Georgia listed Education among the top priorities as the deterioration of the education system was seen as the major barrier to overcoming socio-economic problems (The MoES, 2006).Thus drastic measures have to be taken to reform the education system. Though the stance that deep

structural reforms were needed was shared by many, there remained resistance (which still persists up to these days) from some of the interested parties, including teachers, opposition parties, and parents, which could not be ignored, especially at the initial stage of the reform. However, changes in the education system were necessary in order "to meet the new demands of a market economy and a democratic society" (The World Bank, 2006, p.2).

Decentralisation of education system was initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoES) and supported by the government of Georgia and the World Bank (The World Bank, 2000, 2006). This initiative was, and is still considered to be an answer to the accumulated problems in the field of education. Following the examples of many other countries, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and New Zealand among them, the MoES decided to devolve power to lower levels. In 2005 72 Regional Educational Resource Centres (RERC) were established across the country to provide legal, financial and professional support to schools (The World Bank, 2006). The reform initiated restructuring at school level as well. The New Law on General Education of 2005 introduced by the Georgian government prepared legal grounds and in 2006 the MoES organised the election of school boards of trustees (SBT) granting them extended power and authority. The initiative aimed at making day-to-day governance of schools more effective and, in turn, leading to school improvement and higher pupil outcome. SBTs are responsible for electing school principals among the candidates presented by the MoES. They are to monitor all aspects of school leadership and management, and approve the decisions dictated by the local school context (The Parliament of Georgia, 2005). Accordingly they are expected to show the aptitude to deal with the changes accompanying the decentralisation process and assist school principals in the governance process.

The Purpose of this research paper is to explore decentralisation of the education system of Georgia. The study looked at the Georgian context and the peculiarities of the decentralisation policy implementation process. It concentrated on the issue of principal empowerment through decentralisation strategy. It looked at the practicality of the government's decentralisation initiative from principals' perspective. This research observed how school leaders perceived the educational reform and its impact over their job. It looked at the level of preparation of principals and how their perception of their role informed school policy and practice while dealing with development and school improvement issues. As such, this research enabled me to look more closely at the issues of school governance, watch the government's decentralisation policy work in practice, observe its merits or drawbacks and provide constructive feedback.

Literature Review

Globalisation and Education

Globalisation is a highly disputable concept in terms of its essence and effects over the nations (Rhoten, 2000). Open and easy communication in compressed time and space (Green, 1999; Papastephanou, 2005) promotes the development of one global world (Giddens, 1999; Held, 2004a; Waks, 2006). The tendency is determined by many factors. Money, international communication and trade, intercultural relations, environmental concerns, global security and social issues create grounds for cultural homogenisation(Angus, 1993). This has brought along re-shaping and re-thinking of values, re-modernisation of traditions and attitudes (Held, 2004b), and in this process education has to play a leading role.

Globalisation has greatly affected the field of education by increasing its role and importance. Through efficient education systems Western states try to be competitive on the global market, retain their dominance and challenge fast growing Eastern economies (Green, 1999). The essence of education in the context of transition states is even greater because, as Sahlberg (2006) claims, there is strong evidence that education has great impact over economic growth and development of a state. To raise competitiveness of national education systems many OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) states adopted the policies of deregulation, decentralisation and marketisation which are believed to meet school efficiency and

effectiveness considerations (Green, 1999; Langen and Dekkers, 2001; Rhoten, 2000). These policies are increasingly employed in transition states through the efforts of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) who make them an aid condition often without proper consideration of the local context (Chieuw and Mandolang, 1992; Green, 1999; O'Dwyer and Ziblatt, 2006).

The introduction of deregulatory initiatives through decentralisation policies and market principles in the public sector determined the appearance of new mode of governance known by different names – 'new public management', 'new managerialism', 'economic rationalism' and 'entrepreneurial governance' (Poole, 2008; Power et al., 1997). These terms vividly show that public sector, schools in particular, has been influenced by managerial, rational approaches. However, these policies need to be carefully evaluated because, as Held (2004a) argues, in many of the former Soviet states, and Georgia among them, they did not prove effective in solving economic problems. This generates the necessity for proper evaluation of decentralisation policies before implementing them in an educational context. Besides, an education system is a living structure which reflects the culture and values of the nation. Thus compatibility of common global reform initiatives with individual contexts can be disputed. This necessitates, as Cheng (2004, p.7) claims, 'localization' and 'individualization' of educational reforms 'to moderate' possible adverse effects of global policy trends broadly implemented through international policy borrowing and lending.

Decentralisation and Education

There might be discussions about the forms and effectiveness of decentralisation, but all agree that it is about devolving power and authority from the centre. According to Welsh and McGinn (1999, p.17) decentralisation can be described as "shifts in the location of those who govern, transfers of authority from those in one location or level to those in another level."

According to the form political, administrative and fiscal decentralisation can be singled out. Rondinelli (1990, cited in Hanson, 2000, p.9) explains political decentralisation as a process of giving "political power for decision-making to citizens or their elected representatives." He describes administrative decentralisation as the shift of responsibilities from the central government to lower levels within the central structure. Fiscal decentralisation is equally important and is linked with the devolution of decisions concerning budgets and financing to local bodies.

Decentralisation of political, administrative and fiscal functions to sub-national and local units, as well-as to the private sector is often viewed by governments as "a panacea to solve broader political, social and economic problems" (Naidoo, 2003, p.2). Pursuing decentralisation policies states often aspire to raise governance efficiency and effectiveness, meet local needs and promote equality as well as accountability (Angus, 1993; Hodgson and Spours, 2006; Leithwood, K., Edge, K. & Jantzi, D.1999; Lloyd and Peel, 2006). However, the evidence is scarce to validate the effectiveness of decentralisation (Giles, 2006; Power et al., 1997). This provides impetus for putting decentralisation policies under scrutiny.

It is often claimed that states choose to devolve power and authority not for educational efficiency and effectiveness considerations but a simple desire to avoid blame and responsibility (Apple, 2004; Hargreaves and Hopkins, 1991, cited in Amelsvoort et al., 1995; Hoyle and Wallace, 2007; Lauglo, 1995).However, there are many considerations determining the necessity for decentralisation of education system which are worth discussing.

Political decentralisation in education "is a means to establish institutional legitimacy by redistributing power and giving local communities a greater management role and voice" (Naidoo, 2003, p.5). It allows community to state their preferences through the representatives (Welsh and McGinn, 1999). The idea is further strengthened by Jütting et al. (2005, p.627) who argue that "decentralisation can be a tool for central authorities to better identify people's needs and preferences." However, it should be noted here that from

political angle decentralisation can be rather a vague framework to determine the nature of interdependence in terms of power and accountability (Giles, 2006).

Economic(fiscal) decentralisation is aimed at relieving the burden of public expenditure from the central government (Chieuw and Mandolang, 1992, Naidoo, 2003). The initiative is introduced when "central governments do not or cannot provide the finance to meet the demand for schooling" (Welsh and McGinn, 1999, p.29). Decentralisation is expected to generate additional revenues from the local sources of taxation and involve regional or local government, parents and other stakeholders to provide financial support.

Efficiency considerations underpin the central government's endeavour to employ dcentralisation policy in order to identify local needs and respond to individual demand. However, the same aspirations underpinned centralisation process aiming at equality and broader access to education and public services (Welsh and McGinn, 1999). "The efficiency rationale suggests that local decision-making in education will alleviate problems of wastage and mismanagement and lead to more efficiency by eliminating inefficient bureaucratic procedures and motivating officials to be more productive" (Naidoo, 2003, p.5).

Education improvement is one more rationale for the central government to employ decentralisation as a key to improving the quality of teaching and learning, because decisions move closer to the context of practice (Naidoo, 2003). This gives educators, parents and other stakeholders increased power and authority to decide what measures can more effectively meet their goals and demands.

Local Management of Schools

Local Management of School (LMS), the most widespread form of educational decentralisation (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Gaynor, 1998; Giles, 2006) "has become a centerpiece in the broader school restructuring agenda of 1990s" (Leithwood and Menzies, 1998, p.326). Modern world is often viewed in terms of megatrends which affect socio-economic, political and cultural life of our time (Naisbitt and Aburdene, 1990, cited in Abu-Duhou, 1999; Botha, 2007). LMS is described as one of the megatrends within a broader context of decentralisation (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992).

LMS presupposes the devolution of authority over governance to educators and community to make solutions context-specific. Supervision and management functions can be performed by sub-national agencies within the same state hierarchy, local authorities or individual educational entities (Abu-Duhou, 1999, Gaynor, 1998).

The degree of centralisation/decentralisation of the system determines how LMS is perceived and defined. LMS can be viewed as the devolution of authority to individual schools empowering them as self-governing units (Malen et al., 1990). However, there can be another, a rather radical stance which defines LMS as "a way for forcing individual schools to take responsibility for what happens to the children under their jurisdiction" (Candoli, 1995, cited in Abu-Duhou, 1999). This stance considers educational decentralisation as the state's "effective strategy for shifting the blame" (Power et al., 1997, p.358) and "the burden of responsibility for unpopular measures" (Green, 1999, p.60). LMS is also "a significant and consistent decentralisation" of responsibility, decision-making, and authority over educational resources to schools. The process is claimed to carry administrative rather than political nature (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992; Leithwood and Menzies, 1998).

Common for all these stances is that LMS aims at improving and sustaining teaching and learning. It devolves authority to individual schools at the same time increasing their accountability through centrally determined regulations (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992). Proponents of LMS argue that the involvement of those affected by the decisions about educational issues will result in the better quality of education and higher teacher performance (Gaynor, 1998).

Financial considerations and teaching and learning issues are closely intertwined and form the core of

LMS. "Control over the budget is considered at the heart of SBM effort" (Abu-Duhou, 1999, p.35). The initiative is expected to reduce the central state expenditure (Green, 1999) and make local financial transactions more efficient. LMS is aimed at improving teacher payment conditions encouraging professional advancement and promotion. The initiative needs careful implementation so that the system is reasonable and provides everyone with equal opportunities. LMS should "promote good relations and communication between teachers and other stakeholders in education, such as parents and educational management" (Gaynor, 1998, p.11). However, improvements at the local level is not enough if capacity building does not take place simultaneously at a national level (Chieuw and Mandolang, 1992).

Decentralisation and Re-shaping of Principalship

Decentralisation resulted in changes of different aspects of school day-to-day governance – mission, operations, personnel, client and finance, most of which were previously centrally regulated but came under direct school authority due to educational decentralisation. School principals have become a core of all activities through LMS (most wide-spread form of education decentralisation). All these reform initiatives have caused drastic changes in the role of principals posing lots of challenges. The state reforms which can be grouped into three clusters of market, management and curriculum are often underfunded with very little time and no proper preparation and training for implementation (Ball, 1994). The process is often stressful lacking cohesion but still, school principals supported by leadership teams "must put these bits and pieces together" (Ball, 1993, p.64).

Leading and managing change is one of the challenges inherent in the role of principals through new decentralisation policy initiatives. Principals are "the fulcrum of education, right at the centre between central government as policy-makers on the one hand and teachers as implementers on the other hand" (Kalanda, 2007, p.35). Aspirations of pupils, parents, community and other stake-holders are also at play. Thus principals have to negotiate various interests and give expression to "an image of the way they would like their school to be at some time in the future" (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, p.50).

Providing visions and introducing reform initiatives is not enough for school governance. The way these innovations are implemented and managed greatly affects overall outcome and here consolidation of short-term and long-term objectives is important (Davies, B., 2007). External accountability (to the central government, local educational authorities) may often tempt schools to concentrate on short-term agendas which will produce measurable results, for example test scores. Unfortunately, this may lead to shallow learning and not deep knowledge when information is just replicated and not personalized (ibid). On the other hand, if pupils are not making progress, drawing glorious future objectives will do them no good and schools should turn to short-term remedial measures.

Sustainability is one more important aspect in leadership and management. It ensures that principals build on what is positive practice within school culture but constantly seek new approaches. Sustainable leadership "acts as a catalyst without which other good things are quite unlikely to happen" (Leithwood et al., 2006, p.4). However, realising their importance should not lead principals to the assumption that they are solitary heroes. Through distributed leadership approach they should promote and sustain the culture of cooperation among the staff so that they have a sense of belonging. "Leadership which empowers others is central to success in a self-managing school, especially in respect to decision-making" (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992).

Managing the market requires a principal to take much endeavour. Introduction of quasi-market into education underpinned by market-efficiency principles are argued to put pressure on principals (Olssen et al., 2004). "The money follows the student" policy (Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, p.12) requires entrepreneurial and marketing skills to make schools popular and attract maximum number of students allowed by standards. Preoccupation with school marketisation is likely to leave school leaders with hardly any time and energy for

instructional leadership role (Chieuw and Mandolang, 1992).

There can be arguments against other aspects of market policies. Choice and competition are intended to raise standards and increase diversity. However, as evaluation largely depends on benchmarks against which schools are compared, it causes less heterogeneity and more standardisation rather than pluralism and multiple choice (Morley and Rassool, 2000). Market policies are also expected to meet equity demands. "Markets, by reducing bureaucratic rules … enable families and individuals to make choices … seeking a better quality of service" (Gorard et al., 2003, p.15). However, there is often scepticism towards a positive effect of market over educational improvement as well as equity (Power et al., 1997). In the UK for example, in order to raise test score results and improve their league table positions schools tend to give priority to middle class students as they are assumed to perform better. This leads to claims that market increases social polarization and stratification (Ball, 1993; Whitty, 2002).

One more burning issue is a compatibility of policy of choice to educational context. The UK example shows that the initiative does not work equally effective in London and the rest of the territory, especially in rural areas where there is traditionally less competition and more cooperation (Gorard et al., 2003). Instead of competing with each other many schools in the UK consider that "staying within school's own geographical area when recruiting is one solution to the dilemmas presented by LMS" (Edwards et al., 2000, p.324). Cooperation carries crucial importance because markets tend to put schools in spiral of decline where they lose students and accordingly resources attached to them (ibid).

Managing human resources was centrally regulated before decentralisation policies were employed. Through LMS the authority over teacher selection and employment often goes directly to schools. In theory, this empowers principals to nurture the team they can rely upon in the process of leading and management which is "about achieving results with and through those people" (Oldroyd, 2005, p.188). Leaders should recruit highly qualified professionals and they also need to practice distributed leadership approach when power and authority are equally shared among educators. This will build the school culture of collegiality, participation and cooperation. This will promote the sense of belonging and at the same time will ease the burden of principal workload (Bush, 2003).

Though important, collegiality and cooperation are not enough for efficient leadership and management. Principals should correctly identify the need for "motivating and nurturing those who perform the tasks" (Oldroyd, 2005, p.189). This should be done, as Earley and Weindling(2004, p.86) suggest, through 'praise and constructive feedback' on the one hand and by providing professional training on the other hand. The need for teacher training and professional development should form a substantial part of school life. Highly qualified educators should be school priority when it comes to student achievement because, though very important, leading and managing provide means how to get desired results being "second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning" (Leithwood et al., 2006, p.4).

Managing curriculum is one of the challenges posed by new education reforms through new national curriculums. There is growing tension between the traditional role of principals as curriculum leaders and a new role of financial managers (Simkins, 2000). In decentralised systems educational leaders tend to be more absorbed in administrative and budget issues rather than direct instructional leadership. This may distance them from teaching profession leaving them with no time to affect actual teaching and learning process (Power et al., 1997). Claims are critical enough as LMS intends to provide autonomy equally over budget and day-to-day school governance and curriculum content as well. However, self-governance does not always provide freedom over pedagogical issues. The National Curriculum of England and Wales, for example, are often perceived as 'straitjackets' rather than a framework which should leave educators space for creativity and freedom of action (Arnot, 1991). This kind of disposition may curb correct understanding of instructional leadership which actually is "purposeful, inclusive and values-driven … and focuses on learning and

empowerment" (Hopkins, 2003, p.59). Hopkins argues here that learning implies not only individual pupil achievement but a broader sense of self-development of teachers and leaders. "Without such a holistic view of learning for leadership the rhetoric of school improvement will remain just that" (ibid, p.60).

Managing funds largely, if not decisively, determines the success of school. Through LMS often per capita funding determines resource allocation to schools based on special formula. That is where principals should develop awareness of market demands so that efficiently and effectively transact financial process which directly affects school status on educational market. How successfully principals along with school boards attract funds and plan the budget may "magnify difference between schools" (Abu-Duhou, 1999, p.96). Accordingly, this will determine whether schools flourish or enter a spiral of decline.

Decentralisation of Education in the Georgian Context

Current formal education system of Georgia should be viewed in terms of two stages – before and after the declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. During the Soviet era the Georgian system of education was characterized by extreme centralism, when instructions about local management was directly transferred from Moscow, common Soviet ideology, centralized financial management, again geared from the centre. However, "democratic movements in the political and social life of Georgia led to cardinal changes in the education system" (Sharvashidze, 2003, p.37).

In the first years of independence all the fields of socio-economic life suffered greatly. Before independence, Georgia, like other Soviet republics, was controlled from Moscow where the whole decision-making and planning took place. The attempts to reform the completely deteriorated education system were taken by the Georgian governments since 1991. However, Sharvashidze (2003) clarifies that there was no clearly stated vision, initiatives lacked cohesion and often came into contradiction with each other. Bureaucracy and all-pervasive corruption of the state structures posed additional problems. Always underfunded the reform could not progress.

In 2005 the Georgian Parliament issued a New Law on the General Education of Georgia which substituted the previous law of 1997. The document informed new state educational policy and its priorities claiming that the old law could not ensure legal basis for the new governance of the system (The Parliament of Georgia, 2005). Based on consultation from international partners (the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund) the Georgian government adopted decentralisation policy which aimed at educational system rehabilitation and school improvement (The World Bank, 2006). The reform intended to ensure transparency of resource transaction and delegation of functions which are expected to affect governance positively. The new state policy encouraged social inclusiveness and puts unprecedented emphasis on an individual learner and learning outcomes (The Parliament of Georgia, 2005).

Through the educational decentralisation agenda the Government of Georgia devolved power and authority to individual schools which are established as public legal entities (The Parliament of Georgia, 2005) Like in cases of many other states at the initial stage of decentralisation process top-down reform strategy was employed. The process carried political meaning and was an attempt to meet the demands of participatory democracy and reflect its values. Through school boards educators, pupils, parents, community and other stakeholders were given power and authority to express their will and shape the decisions concerning themselves.

The Georgian educational decentralisation policy informed financial management of educational establishments. Schools are directly funded from the central budget which intends to ensure transparency and efficiency of transactions. Their legal status allows schools to raise and spend funds based on decisions taken locally. School budget is determined through per capita formula which is calculated according to urban, rural and high mountainous areas to reflect local context more efficiently (The Parliament of Georgia, 2005). This

form of financing requires schools to use human and financial resources rationally and be competitive. For small size schools it provides opportunity to set up school consolidation schemes (The World Bank, 2006).

Complete secondary education now encompasses 12 years instead of eleven – primary education (year 1-4), incomplete secondary education (year 5-9), and complete secondary education (year 10-12). Schools accommodate all three levels of education and are run by one principal. The national average of pupil/teacher ratio according to the data of 2006 was 12/1 and it was planned to increase the correlation to 16/1 (The World Bank, 2006). The new school structure includes a pedagogical council, board of trustees, school management team, pupil self-governance and disciplinary committee (The World Bank, 2006).

The reform largely relied on efficient functioning of school boards of trustees (SBT). The number of members depends on the amount of pupils in school. SBT consists of teachers, parents, pupils and community representatives and are given extended power over day-to-day governance, determining individual school policy and dealing with funds (The Parliament of Georgia, 2005). SBT also elects school principals out of three candidates presented by the MoES and the choice is based on the merits of the programmes presented by the candidates. They are selected through strong competition which encompasses three stages – CV-based selection, a written exam and a presentation of individual school development programmes. 20 per cent of candidates with the highest scores receive an advantage to name the school of their choice and the rest are assigned to schools randomly by simply picking up school numbers. This rigorous process is expected to ensure selection of strong candidates who will positively affect school efficiency issue.

Research Methodology

For this piece of research I chose a case-study approach as it allows "to focus on one (or just a few) instances of a particular phenomenon with a view to providing an in-depth account of events" (Denscombe, 2007, p.19). Educational decentralisation pursued by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia (MoES) is an instance within a broader context of educational reform. Thus, the case-study contributed to an in-depth understanding of the process through qualitative data. Primary and secondary data for the research was obtained through semi-structured interviews with 7 school principals of Georgia and vast literature on decentralisation and official documents of the government of Georgia accessible through their official websites. The questions for the semi-structured interviews were shaped by the issues highlighted in the literature review.

Research Findings

The research showed that decentralisation has brought increased power and authority to school principals which enable them to govern their schools more effectively based on local needs and specificity of the context. However, the process resulted in the increase of the workload of principals as they had to deal with educational as well as financial and school marketisation issues.

The analysis of the research findings showed that school principals had increased accountability. They stood right at the interface between the government and local stakeholders. Accordingly, they were accountable to the state for implementing the state educational policy. Another spectrum of their accountabilities was pupils, parents, teachers and other stakeholders. But these parties had been present before decentralisation. What increased their workload was the necessity to lead and manage school in a new mode through LMS. This meant they had to deal with issues which were previously managed from the centre. Thus the job proved to require much endeavour.

The research showed that through LMS principals in Georgia had to claim new functions:

• Recruiting teaching personnel

• Encouraging professional upgrade

- Conducting school self-evaluation

- Conducting staff evaluation

- Establishing typically new-mode relations with the community

- Seeking links with NGOs and international partners

- Marketing schools

- Seeking additional financial support

The research showed that dealing with these issues of school governance did not always go smoothly. Implementing innovations and reform initiatives created dilemmas for school principals and they required strong leadership traits as well as managerial skills to cope with them. This has resulted in a complete rethinking of the roles of educational leaders.

LMS was a completely new initiative and its institutionalisation relied upon a principal. To support principals through the process the MoES provided training but the research showed that often they were not enough, especially for those with no or a relatively moderate leadership experience.

One more dilemma detected through the research was school boards of trustees. LMS presupposes wide participation of stakeholders in decision-making to provide support to principals. The job of principals might involve even more stress due to reluctance of SBTs to assume their responsibilities. Principals themselves explained their reluctance and inactivity by the lack of training and experience. Besides, social and cultural aspects were also at play and changing mentality would require much more endeavour and time.

The literature review highlighted that in many cases the national curriculum was perceived to be a straitjacket ensuring the central state control of schools. The research showed quite the opposite in the context of Georgia. The national curriculum was considered to be a flexible and well-organised standard which should be followed by schools. Only one respondent thought that some parts were vague. In most of the cases even 25 per cent of freedom allowed in the curriculum was not used by the principals.

The biggest dilemma in the implementation of the national curriculum was teachers. The research observed the claims that in many cases teachers retained old modes of teaching which were incompatible with the requirements of modern teaching and learning process and posed problems to the implementation of the curriculum. The research showed that at that stage of the reform there was more need for teacher training.

Conclusion

To conclude, it should be firmly stated that educational reform in Georgia was necessary as the deteriorated system called for rehabilitation. The devolution of power and authority directly to schools made principals a core of the educational system. They have to deal with various functions – some inherent in their traditional roles and some brought along by the reform formerly dealt with by central and regional agencies. Thus principals should try to make their school boards of trustees more active so that they would assume the responsibilities determined by the law. Lack of support from SBTs as well as some central intervention make the burden of school leaders even heavier. The research showed that at the initial stage of the reform principals mostly had to act as solitary heroes to deal with dilemmas in school governance brought along by the change.

References

ABU-DUHOU, I. (1999) School-Based Management, Paris, UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning.

AMELSVOORT, H. W. C. H. V., SCHEERENS, J. & BRANDERHORST, E. M. (1995) Decentralization in Education in an International Perspective, Enschede, University of Twente, Faculty of Educational Science and Technology, Department of Educational Administration

ANGUS, L. (1993) Democratic Participation or Efficient Site Management: The Social and Political Location of the Self-Managing School. IN SMYTH, J. (Ed.) A Socially Critical View of the Self-Managing School. London, The Falmer Press.

APPLE, M. W. (2004) Creating Difference: Neo-liberalism, Neo-Conservatism and the Politics of Educational Reform. Educational Policy. SAGE Publications.

BALL, S. J. (1993) Culture, Cost and Control: Self-Management and Entrepreneurial Schooling in England and Wales. IN SMYTH, J. (Ed.) A Socially Critical View of the Self-Managing School. London, The Falmer Press.

BALL, S. J. (1994) Education Reform A critical and Post-structural Approach, Buckingham, Open University Press.

BOTHA, R. N. (2007) School-based Management: stakeholder participation and the impact of stakeholder values. Africa Education Review. Routledge.

BUSH, T. (2003) Theories of Educational Leadership and Management, London, SAGE Publications Ltd.

CALDWELL, B. J. & SPINKS, J. M. (1992) Leading the Self-Managing School, London, The Falmer Press.

CHENG, Y. C. (2004) Fostering Local Knowledge and Human Development in Globalization of Education. The International Journal of Educational Management. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

CHIEUW, J. S. & MANDOLANG, N. H. (1992) Literature Review on Decentralization: Strengthening Local Educational Capacity. Jakarta, Indonesia, Ministry of Education and Culture, USAID Project.

DAVIES, B. (2007) Sustainable Leadership. IN DAVIES, B. (Ed.) Developing Sustainable Leadership. London, Paul Chapman Publishing.

DAVIES, M. B. (2007) Doing a Successful Research Project Using Qualitative or Quantitative Methods, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN.

EARLEY, P. & WEINDLING, D. (2004) Understanding School Leadership, London, Paul Chapman Publishing.

EDWARDS, P., EZZAMEL, M., MCLEAN, C. & ROBSON, K. (2000) Budgeting and Strategy in Schools: The Elusive Link. Financial Accountability and Management. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

GAYNOR, C. (1998) Decentralization of Education, Teacher Management, Washington, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/The World Bank.

GIDDENS, A. (1999) Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives, London, Profile Books.

GILES, C. (2006) School Development Planning in England and Wales (1988-1992): An Insight into the Impact of Policy Recontextualisation on the Initiation and Early Implementation of Decentralized Reform. Journal of Educational Administration and History. Routledge.

GORARD, S., TAYLOR, C. & FITZ, J. (2003) Schools, Markets and Choice Policies, London, Routledge Falmer.

GREEN, A. (1999) Education and Globalization in Europe and East Asia: Convergent and Divergent Trends. Journal of Education Policy. Routledge.

HANSON, E. M. (2000) Democratization and Educational Decentralization in Spain: A Twenty Year Struggle for Reform. Education Reform and Management Country Studies. Washington DC, The World Bank.

HELD, D. (2004a) Globalisation: The Dangers and the Answers. Open Democracy.

HELD, D. (2004b) Democratic Accountability and Political Effectiveness from a Cosmopolitan Perspective. Government and Opposition .Blackwell Publishing.

HODGSON, A. & SPOURS, K. (2006) An Analytical Framework for Policy Engagement: the Contested Case of 14-19 Reform in England. Journal of Education Policy. Routledge.

HOPKINS, D. (2003) Instructional Leadership and School Improvement.IN HARRIS, A., DAY, C., HOPKINS, D., HADFIELD, M., HARGREAVES, A. & CHAPMAN, C. (Eds.) Effective Leadership for School Improvement. New York, Routledge Falmer.

HOYLE, E. & WALLACE, M. (2007) Educational Reform: An Ironic Perspective. Educational Management, Administration and Leadership. London, Sage Publications.

JÜTTING, J., CORSI, E., KAUFMANN, C., MCDONNELL, I., OSTERRIEDER, H., PINAUD, N. & WEGNER, L. (2005) What

Makes Decentralisation in Developing Countries Pro-poor? The European Journal of Development Research. Routledge.

KALANDA, S. C. H. (2007) Decentralisation and the Changing Role of the Primary School Headteacher in Malawi. London, University of London, Institute of Education.

LANGEN, A. V. & DEKKERS, H. (2001) Decentralisation and Combating Educational Exclusion. Comparative Education. Routledge.

LAUGLO, J. (1995) Forms of Decentralisation and Their Implications for Education. Comparative Education. Routledge.

LEITHWOOD, K., DAY, C., SAMMONS, P., HARRIS, A. & HOPKINS, D. (2006) Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership. Nottingham, NCSL.

LEITHWOOD, K., EDGE, K. & JANTZI, D. (1999) Educational Accountability: The State of the Art International Network for Innovative School Systems (INIS), Gutersloh, Bertelsmann Foundation Publishers.

LEITHWOOD, K. & MENZIES, T. (1998) Forms and Effects of School-Based Management: A Review. Educational Policy. Corwin Press, Inc.

LLOYD, M. G. & PEEL, D. (2006) Devolution, decentralization and dispersal: Asserting the spatiality of the public sector in Scotland. European Planning Studies. Routledge.

MALEN, B., OGAWA, R. T. & KRANZ, J. (1990) What Do We Know About School-based Management? A Case Study of the Literature - A Call for Research IN CLUNE, W. H. & WHITTE, J. F. (Eds.) Choice and Control in American Education, Volume 2: The Practice of Choice, Decentralisation and School Restructuring. London, The Falmer Press.

MORLEY, L. & RASSOOL, N. (2000) School Effectiveness: New Managerialism, Quality and the Japanization of Education. Journal of Education Policy. Routledge.

NAIDOO, J. (2003) Implementing Educational Decentralization. Policy and Strategy Paper.

O'DWYER, C. & ZIBLATT, D. (2006) Does Decentralisation Make Government More Efficient and Effective? Commonwealth & Comparative Politics. Routledge.

OLDROYD, D. (2005) Human Resources for Learning.IN COLEMAN, M. & EARLEY, P. (Eds.) Leadership and Management in Education: Culture, Change and Context. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

OLSSEN, M., CODD, J. & O'NEILL, A.-M. (2004) Education Policy Globalization, Citizenship and Democracy, London, SAGE Publications.

PAPASTEPHANOU, M. (2005) Globalisation, Globalism and Cosmopolitanism as an Educational Ideal. Educational Philosophy and Theory. Blackwell Publishing.

PERKINS, G. (1998) The Georgian Education System: Issues for Reform Management. Background Paper for Georgia Education Sector Strategy Note.

POOLE, W. L. (2008) Intersections of Organizational Justice and Identity under the New Policy Direction: Important Understandings for Educational Leaders. International Journal of Leadership in Education. Routledge.

POWER, S., HALPIN, D. & WHITTY, G. (1997) Managing the State and the Market: 'New' Education Management in Five Countries. British Journal of Educational Studies. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.

RHOTEN, D. (2000) Education Decentralisation in Argentina: a 'Global-local Conditions of Possibility' Approach to State, Market, and Society Change. Journal of Education Policy. Routledge.

SAHLBERG, P. (2006) Education Reform for Raising Economic Competitiveness. Journal of Education Change. Springer.

SHARVASHIDZE, G. (2003) Educational Reform, Curriculum Change and Teacher Education. Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform in the South Caucasus Region: From Vision to Practice. Final Report of the Sub-Regional Seminar, Tbilisi, UNESCO/International Bureau of Education.

SIMKINS, T. (2000) Education Reform and Managerialism: Comparing the Experience of Schools and Colleges .Journal of Education Policy. Routledge.

The Ministry of Education and Science (2006) The President's National Programmes. Downloaded from the Ministry of

Education and Science of Georgia official web-site: www.mes.gov.ge

The Parliament of Georgia (2005) The Law on General Education of Georgia. Downloaded from the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia official web-site: www.mes.gov.ge.

WAKS, L. J. (2006) Globalisation, state transformation, and educational re-structuring: why postmodern diversity will prevail over standardization. Studies in Philosophy and Education. Springer Netherlands.

WELSH, T. & MCGINN, N. F. (1999) Decentralization in Education: Why, When, What and How?, UNESCO.

WHITTY, G. (2002) Making Sense of Education Policy Studies in Sociology and Politics of Education, London, SAGE Publications.

The World Bank (2006) Georgian Education System Realignment and Strengthening Project in Support of the Second Phase of the Education System Realignment and Strengthening Programme. The World Bank. Downloaded from the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia official web-site: www.mes.gov.ge.