

Global and regional patterns in education decision-making

Governance reforms in education involve the reallocation of decision-making authority across levels of government. These arrangements affect the roles of parents, teachers, civil servants and politicians at local and national levels. The issues at stake range from financing to school supervision, curriculum development, and teacher recruitment and management. Decentralization has been a dominant theme in governance reforms. What does this mean in practice for the locus of decision-making? A mapping of 184 countries, described in the accompanying box, finds that some broad patterns in levels of decision-making are discernable, as Table 1 shows. One prominent finding is that, even in nominally decentralized structures, central government continues to play a key role in various areas of education service delivery – notably in designing curricula and instructional materials, in teacher governance and management, and in financing arrangements. Other actors – including local government, schools and communities – play a highly variable role. The following are among the findings to emerge:

- In most countries, the central government continues to take overall responsibility for curriculum development and the design of instructional materials. In two-thirds of countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and North America and Western Europe, the curriculum is jointly developed by schools and teachers based on a general framework established by the central government.
- The central government remains strong in many aspects of teacher governance and management, especially with regard to training standards, salary levels and conditions of service. Teacher training is organized and run by the central government in sixty-eight of the seventy-six countries with the relevant information.
- When teacher recruitment, appointment and deployment are not centralized, as in around half the cases covered, this administrative role is usually undertaken by a mix of provincial or municipal governments. In one-quarter of Latin America and Caribbean countries, decisions in this area are shared

among various government levels. Generally, schools have little control over teacher management.

- With respect to infrastructure, school mapping and other decisions regarding the opening and closing of schools occur at all levels of government. The decisions may originate at one government level and the budget to implement them at another. In Croatia, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Latvia, Nepal and the Syrian Arab Republic, for example, the largest source of capital funds is the central government, while school infrastructure decisions are taken at municipal or provincial levels.
- School inspection and supervision occurs at either national or municipal level in most countries.
- The central government is the main source of funding for primary schools in more than three-quarters of the countries surveyed. Although financial responsibility in some countries is located at the level of provinces (7% of cases) or municipalities (13%), this does not preclude high levels of central government involvement. Municipalities are responsible for operating expenditure in one-third of the countries surveyed, mostly developed countries or countries in transition.
- Parental involvement in school governance and management tends to be limited in most countries to providing additional funding and, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, supporting school construction.

While these broad patterns are informative, there is a need to understand in more detail how decisions are made, by whom and for what purpose, within a given context. Decisions are sometimes made at more than one level and patterns are not static – countries that have decentralized aspects of service delivery may later recentralize them. Of particular concern for this Report, as Chapter 3 highlights, is that the ways in which decisions are made within a particular context can significantly affect educational opportunities available to the poor.

Box 1: Mapping levels of decision-making in primary education

UNESCO's International Bureau of Education (UNESCO-IBE) has compiled data for 184 countries on governance, management and financing of formal education, focusing on who makes key decisions. The regional compilations of country reports, commissioned for this Report and available online (www.efareport.unesco.org), were used to develop a database of levels of decision-making and responsibility for primary education in six key areas:

- curriculum and learning materials;
- teacher training, management and employment conditions;
- school infrastructure;
- school supervision and inspection;
- financing arrangements;
- administration/management.

For each function, the database identifies the level at which decisions are made, including whether decision-making is shared by multiple levels. Five levels of decision-making authority are identified: central government; subnational government (state, province, region or governorate); local government (district, municipality or other locality); school boards or other school authorities; and non-state (including the private sector, non-government organizations, communities and aid donors). Table 1 presented in this Annex presents a summary of some indicators available in the database.

UNESCO-IBE compiled the information for the database from an array of sources, including its own 2006/2007 World Data on Education database and 2004 series of National Reports, as well as sources such as websites of ministries of education, World Bank public expenditure reviews, regional development bank reports and education reports by various international organizations.

Table 1: Levels of decision-making in primary education, by function and region, circa 2006/2007

	Central government	Subnational government ¹	Local government ²	School ³	Joint responsibility ⁴	Non-state ⁵	Number of countries in the sample
Curriculum and learning materials							
Curriculum development/revision							
Arab States (20)	14	0	0	0	0	0	14
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	4	1	0	0	9	0	14
Central Asia (9)	3	1	0	0	2	0	6
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	11	2	0	0	2	0	15
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	17	0	0	0	5	0	22
North America and Western Europe (26)	5	1	0	0	11	0	17
South and West Asia (9)	8	0	0	0	0	0	8
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	28	1	0	0	0	0	29
Total	90	6	0	0	29	0	125
Development of instructional materials							
Arab States (20)	15	0	0	0	0	0	15
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Central Asia (9)	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	7	0	1	0	0	0	8
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	6	0	0	0	0	0	6
North America and Western Europe (26)	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
South and West Asia (9)	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	15	0	0	0	0	0	15
Total	61	0	1	0	0	0	62

Table 1 (continued)

	Central government	Subnational government ¹	Local government ²	School ³	Joint responsibility ⁴	Non-state ⁵	Number of countries in the sample
Teachers							
Teacher training							
Arab States (20)	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	7	0	0	0	0	0	7
Central Asia (9)	4	0	1	0	0	0	5
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	9	1	0	0	0	0	10
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	17	0	0	0	2	0	19
North America and Western Europe (26)	3	2	0	0	0	0	5
South and West Asia (9)	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	16	2	0	0	0	0	18
Total	68	5	1	0	2	0	76
In-service training							
Arab States (20)	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	6	0	0	0	1	0	7
Central Asia (9)	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	3	0	1	0	0	0	4
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	7	1	0	1	0	0	9
North America and Western Europe (26)	4	2	1	0	1	0	8
South and West Asia (9)	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	15	4	0	0	0	0	19
Total	48	7	3	1	2	0	61
Teacher management (recruitment, appointment, dismissal, deployment, promotion, transfer, discipline)							
Arab States (20)	0	3	0	0	0	0	3
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Central Asia (9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	1	0	1	2	0	0	4
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	10	1	1	0	4	0	16
North America and Western Europe (26)	2	2	4	0	0	0	8
South and West Asia (9)	2	0	1	0	0	0	3
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	11	1	2	0	2	0	16
Total	26	7	9	3	6	0	51
Establishment of teacher salary levels and other conditions of service (allowances, vacations, promotions)							
Arab States (20)	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	4	0	0	0	2	0	6
Central Asia (9)	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	12	0	1	0	0	0	13
North America and Western Europe (26)	6	2	0	0	0	0	8
South and West Asia (9)	1	1	0	0	0	0	2
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Total	36	4	1	0	3	0	44
Infrastructure							
Establishment/opening and closure of schools, school mapping							
Arab States (20)	5	2	2	0	0	0	9
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	0	0	7	0	0	0	7
Central Asia (9)	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	1	0	2	0	0	0	3
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	4	1	5	0	0	0	10
North America and Western Europe (26)	0	2	7	0	0	0	9
South and West Asia (9)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	3	2	3	0	0	0	8
Total	13	7	29	0	0	0	49

Table 1

Table 1 (continued)

	Central government	Subnational government ¹	Local government ²	School ³	Joint responsibility ⁴	Non-state ⁵	Number of countries in the sample
Supervision							
School supervision/inspection practices⁶							
Arab States (20)	2	1	6	0	0	0	9
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	5	0	5	0	0	0	10
Central Asia (9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	2	0	2	0	0	0	4
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	11	0	2	0	0	0	13
North America and Western Europe (26)	3	1	3	0	0	0	7
South and West Asia (9)	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	9	2	8	0	1	0	20
Total	32	5	27	0	1	0	65

Financing arrangements⁷							
General							
Arab States (20)	15	0	0	0	0	0	15
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	9	1	6	0	0	0	16
Central Asia (9)	2	0	6	0	0	0	8
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	14	2	0	0	0	1	17
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	20	1	0	0	1	0	22
North America and Western Europe (26)	11	4	4	0	0	0	19
South and West Asia (9)	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	24	0	0	0	0	0	24
Total	99	9	16	0	1	1	126
Capital expenditure							
Arab States (20)	6	0	1	0	0	0	7
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	2	0	3	0	0	0	5
Central Asia (9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	1	0	2	3	0	1	7
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	6	0	0	0	2	0	8
North America and Western Europe (26)	2	0	8	0	0	0	10
South and West Asia (9)	2	1	0	0	0	1	4
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	6	0	0	0	0	5	11
Total	25	1	14	3	2	7	52
Personnel expenditure							
Arab States (20)	5	0	0	0	0	0	5
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	8	0	1	0	0	0	9
Central Asia (9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	16	1	0	0	0	0	17
North America and Western Europe (26)	6	4	1	1	0	0	12
South and West Asia (9)	3	1	0	0	0	0	4
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	22	0	1	0	0	0	23
Total	64	7	3	1	0	0	75
Current or operating expenditure							
Arab States (20)	5	0	1	0	0	0	6
Central and Eastern Europe (20)	1	0	8	0	0	0	9
Central Asia (9)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
East Asia and the Pacific (33)	1	0	1	3	0	0	5
Latin America and the Caribbean (41)	10	0	1	0	0	0	11
North America and Western Europe (26)	2	0	6	1	0	0	9
South and West Asia (9)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Sub-Saharan Africa (45)	10	0	0	0	0	2	12
Total	29	1	17	4	0	2	53

1. State, province, region or governorate.
 2. District, municipality or other locality.
 3. School authorities or school boards.
 4. Only where explicitly indicated.
 5. Private sector, non-government organizations, communities, aid donors and other non-state entities.
 6. Supervision/inspection practices, unlike standards, imply direct involvement of schools.
 7. Indicates the level providing the largest share of funding.
 Sources: UNESCO-IBE (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2008f, 2008g, 2008h).