

Decentralization, Effective Accountability, and Monitoring of Public Schools in Pakistan: Community Awareness and Reliance Indispensable

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Abstract

Empowerment of parents and community members improves accountability and monitoring of schools. Nevertheless, accountability relationships need to be accurately defined for decentralization to improve schools' performance. This study, therefore, aims to explore educationists' and Parents Teachers Council (PTC) members' perceptions of local accountability and monitoring of elementary schools in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. A semi-structured interview of two provincial and five district educational administrators, five school principals, and six PTC members inform this phenomenological study. Participants' responses were coded to identify emerging themes and patterns. The analysis reveals that PTC can become a part of the accountability and monitoring system of the public schools through empowering PTCs, awareness of the community, sharing information with PTC members and its community, and trusting the potentials of the community. This study recommends that principals and parents should be empowered and accountability procedures should be devised for an effective local accountability and monitoring of the public schools.

Keywords: Accountability, Community Empowerment, Community Participation, Decentralization, Monitoring.

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Introduction

Decentralization is considered as a reform to improve governance (Burki, Perry & Dillinger, 1999; World Bank, 2000). The waves of decentralization were initiated in Europe and the United States in the 20th century. For decades, it was a focus of policy makers in these countries. The World Bank grasped it as a major governance reform and placed it on its main agenda for Asian Countries (Bardhan, 2002). The World Bank is working for decentralization of public services such as health, and education to reduce costs and improve services (Ziba, 2011). Decentralization boosted the efficiency of schools, as the administrators are directly accountable to parents and community (Jimenez & Tan, 1987).

In education, there is a shift from traditional bureaucratic modes of coordination to decentralized administration (Coelho, 2009). Decentralization in education has been considered as a means to reform local and central administration since 1950. From the beginning, the focus of decentralization is to improve management and accountability. In the 1970s and 1980s, many countries such as Argentina in 1976, Mexico in 1978, Chile in 1981, and Colombia in 1986, initiated decentralization in education (Prawda, 1993).

Pakistan's educational system is still struggling to meet the needs of the society in terms of economic and political stability, socioeconomic development, poverty elevation, economic and social justice, and gender parity (Haidar, 2016; Memon, 2007). Teacher truancy (absenteeism), high number of out-of-school children, high number of dropout students, gender disparity, unequal access to education and resources (Haidar, 2019; Haidar & Fang, 2019), low literacy rate, and low efficiency of schools are some of the issues intrinsic to the existing system of education (Ashraf & Hafiza, 2016). It has become a great challenge for the provinces and districts of Pakistan to educate students effectively (Shami & Hussain, 2006). The implementation of the decentralization plan 2001 was designed to address these issues. Apparently, decentralization is often considered good for quality improvement in solving some of the problems of the education system in the country. It was supposed to improve the monitoring and accountability at the local level. However, little work has been done to understand the effects of decentralization in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) since its implementation in 2001. This study explores the perception of stakeholders on monitoring and accountability with research questions: How is monitoring and accountability perceived by the school principal and PTC members in the decentralized education system? How can the school management committee play a role in accountability and monitoring of schools at the local level?

The study is timely as it helps policymakers, education administrators, parents, students, principals, teachers, officers of the education department and political leaders. The policymakers could be informed about the roles, skills and capacities of the personnel involved in the policy implementation and policymaking. The parents, students and community could understand their potential role in school administration. Students could aid their parents and community to frame a school according to their needs.

Decentralization in Education

Research showed that decentralization had positive effects on public education and its output. Nicaragua reformed schools significantly improved and performed well due to self-governing and autonomy when the decisions were made by local management (King & Ozler, 1998). Similarly, in Columbia, decentralization improved the enrollment rate in public schools (Faguet & Sanchez, 2008) and in Bolivia, it made the government more responsive to the areas of greater needs. In Argentina, autonomy and parental participation had positive effects on learning (Filmer & Eskeland, 2002). If decentralization resulted in the autonomy of local school administration to manage school and teachers; participation of parents in management, curricular and pedagogical matters and policy development, then it would improve learning. Moving decision making nearer to each school improved learning environments by regional accountability and regional encouragements for accomplishments of teachers and other school personnel (Patel, Meyers, & Hinsz, 2006). Decentralization, in fact, reduced the distance between parents and schools and advocated for parent demands for superior schooling in return for the tuition or taxes they paid (Winkler & Yeo, 2007).

In a decentralized system, school leaders develop teams to achieve the goals of their schools. Effective school leaders have the abilities to set directions, develop personnel, and cultivate organizations (Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). They developed visions for schools and communicated the visions to all stakeholders. Through participatory communication strategies, they made a forum for decision-making. Principals in a self-managed or decentralized school have a dynamic role as the head of the school. They are considered bridge makers between a community and its school. According to Chapman *et al.* (2002), the role of head masters in the centralized system was very different from that in the decentralized system. In the centralized system, head masters were required to know and comply. In a decentralized system, a principal's role is leadership. The positive aspect of the decentralized system is local accountability and monitoring.

Local Accountability and Monitoring

Local accountability and monitoring are operationally defined as the processes adopted by the local community and school personnel to evaluate and adjust school overall performance, implementation of the budget and school improvement and or development plan, and instructional practices of teachers (Machado, 2013). It includes incentives and penalties for school personnel according to their performance. Accountability and monitoring was a problem in a centralized system of education. In centralized systems, public schools obtained funds and other resources from the central government (Winkler & Rounds, 1993). The central office had to monitor a large number of schools. The schools were accountable to multiple organizations and personnel, which created ambiguity and delays in the process of accountability (Fiske, 1996). In the decentralized system of public education, the school, administration, and community do this job quickly, and according to the needs of the students (Hill & Bonan, 1991).

Parents empowerment and involvement in school administration improve school outcomes in three ways through collaborative decision-making (Shatkin & Gershberg, 2007). First, it improves curriculum, instruction, and school environment; second, it improves school community relations; and third, it results in community development. In terms of student learning, these three areas affect the output of schools in a positive manner. Improvement in the school environment improves student learning.

Although decentralization help to improve monitoring and accountability at the school level but the capacity of the community plays a crucial role. For example, Machado (2013) compared two types of primary schools in Brazil. The study showed that accountability might not increase through decentralization if political participation, socioeconomic status, and education level of the community was low. In such cases, monitoring was difficult because it required an informed community. Similarly, Winkler and Yeo (2007) studied the promises of education decentralization increased school effectiveness through local accountability and monitoring.

In fact, transparent and publicly accessible information is necessary for effective accountability because it stimulated community interest and demand for better schools and teacher performance. The information may include a student performance report, a teacher performance report, and reports of financial matters. In Pakistan, school management committees are established with different names in different regions of the country. These were Village Education Committees (VEC) and Parents Teachers Councils (PTCs) in KP, Parent Teacher School Management Committees (PTSMCs), VECs in Baluchistan, PTAs in Sindh, and School Councils (SCs) in Punjab (Shah, 2003). The roles of these committees are limited in school administration in KP, where this research was conducted.

The Model Used for Effective Accountability and Monitoring

Empowerment of parents and community members improves accountability and monitoring of schools. In fact, decentralization does not improve school performance if accountability relationships are not accurately defined (Healey & Crouch, 2012). Comparing the accountability relationships in centralized and decentralized systems of education, Healey and Crouch provided two diagrams of accountability triangles, which are presented in Figures 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows, “an accountability triangle comprising three basic accountability sides, or relationships: side AB, or that from the citizens/clients to the politicians/policy makers; side BC, or that from politicians/policy makers to the service providers; and side AC, or that from citizens/clients to the service providers” (Healey & Crouch, 2012, p. 9).

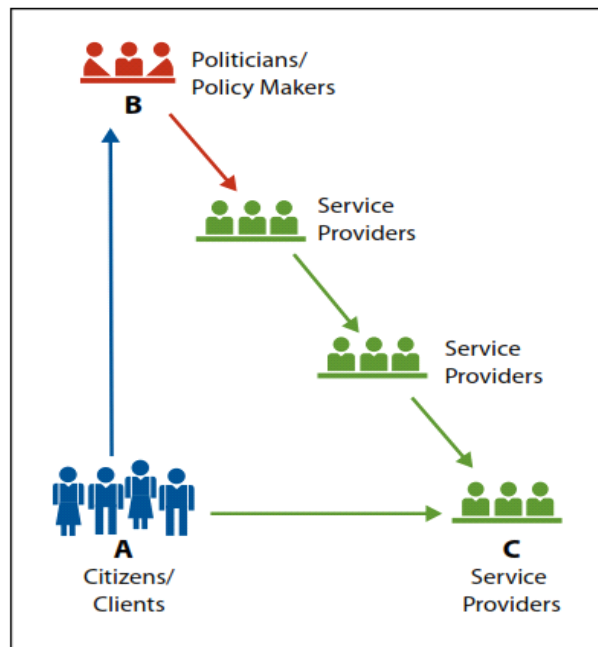


Figure 1. Accountability triangle: centralized system, Healey and Crouch (2012, p. 10)

The triangle ABC showed that the possible accountability path was AB and BC, which was the longest, while AC was the shortest path. Horizontal accountability, side AC of the triangle, could be strengthened through the participation of the community in the accountability process. For example, an elected school management committee might strengthen the horizontal accountability of schools by offering parents meaningful input in the schooling processes. Figure 2 showed multiple shorter paths of accountability in a decentralized system.

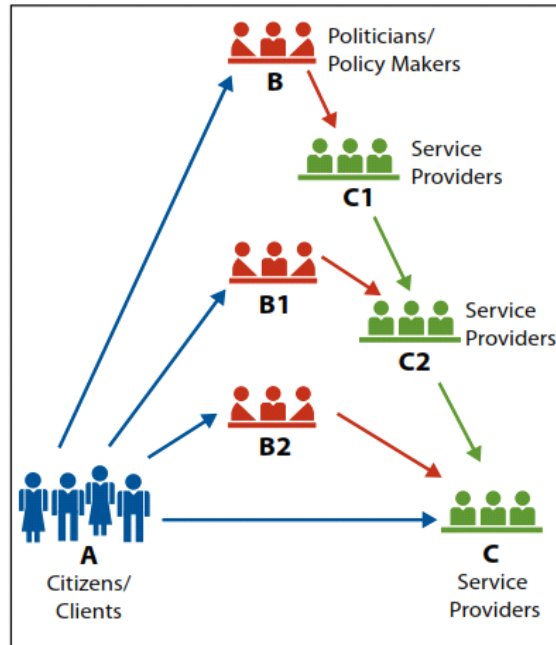


Figure 2. Accountability triangle: decentralized system, Healey and Crouch (2012, p. 12)

Research Design and Methodology

The study is qualitative as it aims to understand the implementation of devolution plan in a natural environment. Data collection in a natural setting is crucial for understanding a social phenomenon, as human knowledge is socially constructed, individually and collectively, as a result of human engagement with the world (Crotty, 2003; Guba & Lincoln, 2000). As interpretivists, we believe that reality is socially constructed and the purpose of research is to understand people meaning making of that reality (Check & Schutt, 2012). Therefore, the meaning of the decentralization and its impact on monitoring and accountability can be better understood through qualitative methods.

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to analyze decentralized local accountability and monitoring of public education in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan. Phenomenology is basically focused on the meaning making of the participants lived experiences (Creswell, 2012). The devolution plan is already implemented in schools and understanding stakeholder experiences with the plan are crucial to understanding its effectiveness. Educational leaders (principals of the public schools, and district education officers), and community leaders (members of Parents' Teachers'

Council (PTC) were interviewed. These leaders were the main stakeholders of the public schools. Comparing their views helped in understanding the phenomenon of local accountability and monitoring of public schools. Semi-structured interview protocols were used to get information from leaders individually. Interview protocol questions were developed around five dimensions: perception and understanding of decentralization, roles and responsibilities, skills and capacities, teaching learning improvement, and local accountability and monitoring.

Description of Participants

The participants of the study were educational leaders and community leaders. Five principals of public high schools, five District Education Officers (DEOs), two officers from the Ministry of Education, and six Parents Teachers Council (PTC) chairs, were chosen from the 25 districts of KP. All of the participants were male except one DEO and one principal. Demographics of each group of participants are given in table-1 below.

Table 1

Demographics of the Participants

Participants	Gender	Years as Principal	Qualification	Experiences (years)	Trainings Done	Prior Jobs Done
P1	Male	8	M.Ed.	23	**PTC Master trainer	teaching
P2	Male	1	M.Phil (edu)	16		SET, DEO
P4	Male	3	MA, B.Ed.	30	No training	Teacher
P5	Male		MA, M.Ed.		Vision and Mission	SS
D1	Female	4	MA, M.Ed.	15	Finance management at AEPM	Teacher, ADEO
D2	Male	1	MS, M.Ed.	15	No training	SS
D3	Male	1	BA		MS office, Rules and regulations	Clerk, SO, DD (admn)
D4	Male	2	M.Sc, B.Ed.	15	No training	SST, SS, Principal
D5	Male	4	MA, MS (Edu)	18	No training	teacher, Do, Principal
C1/Male	M		Inter	Principal nominated and 25 parents endorsed	No training	Repair of building and furniture.
C2/Male	M		9 th grade	Nominated by school administration and endorsed by 125 parents	No training	Repair of building/ purchase of security equipment

C3/Male	M	Inter	Principal decision	No training	Repair of building/ purchase of furniture, appointment of two temporary teachers
C4/Male	M	SSC	A committee of 5 formed by 90 parents	No training	Repair of building/ purchase of security equipment
C5/Male	M	SSC	The principal of the school selected me the chairman	No training	purchasing of fans and sports items, and construction of boundary wall
C6/Male	M			No training	Repair of building/ purchase of security equipment

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using qualitative data analysis software NVivo 10. The interviews were transcribed. The textual data were analyzed using open coding. The open coding is a technique used to open up text and expose its meaning, idea, and thoughts (Saldaña, 2010). The process of open coding includes labeling, defining of textual data, and categorizing on the basis of similarities and differences (Khandkar, 2009). The analysis of the responses of the community leaders, the PTC chairs, and members revealed the theme and patterns, shown in table-2.

Table 2
Themes and Patterns: Accountability and Monitoring

Group of Participants	Emergent Themes	Patterns
Community leaders	PTC can Become Part of the Accountability and Monitoring system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Through Empowering PTC. •Through Awareness of the Community. •Sharing Information with PTC and its Community. •Believing in the Potentials of the Community.
Educational Leaders-DEOs	Only Principals Can do Accountability and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •PTC Members do not Understand Accountability. •DEOs had High Work Load
Educational Leaders-Principals	Local Community and Parents can Become a Part of the Accountability and Monitoring System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •If Community and Parents are Aware •If PTC is Actively Involved •Community Based Accountability and Monitoring is the Only Option

Findings

The study found contradictions in perceptions of schools principals, district education officers, provincial education officers and PTC members about the involvement of the community in accountability and monitoring. The principals and PTC members were supporting the involvement of community but the district and provincial education were not in favor to trust the community for the monitoring.

PTC Members Perspectives on Accountability and Monitoring

Community leader participants were of the opinion that they can play a role in school administration. They stated that their involvement might bring transparency and efficiency to the system. A Community leader (C1) said, "As a chairman of PTC, I can manage to spend money transparently and efficiently" (Interview C1, 02/8/2015). Community leader (C2) believed that he could work with school administration and teachers to solve school problems. He added, "We can work with teachers to resolve their issues and to improve teachers' students' relation, the environment will be good for learning" (Interview C2, 02/9/2015). Participant (C4) committed that he could become part of the accountability system if empowered. He commented, "I can control absenteeism and can evaluate a teacher if I have the power of doing this" (Interview C4, 02/11/2015). Participant (C5) made similar comments. He added, "I can monitor the performance of a teacher. I will check it to ensure that the teacher is present in the class and he is teaching" (Interview C5, 02/12/2015). Participant (C6) believed that PTC was a platform that could be used by the community for monitoring. He commented, "our job is very limited...If PTC is empowered then school monitoring will be effective" (Interview C6, 03/9/2015). This means that the community is willing and confident to be part of accountability and monitoring at the local level. Therefore, they should be trusted and involved in monitoring. However, the system does not rely on them and thus they have little role to play in monitoring.

Lack of Empower with PTC

Community leader participants' reactions to the interview questions revealed that if they were empowered they would be able to monitor schools and teachers. They showed interest in monitoring and accountability of schools' staff. However, they were not having the authority to monitor the school. For example, the participant (C1) expressed that he could control the absenteeism of teachers if empowered. He commented, "I will motivate teachers for better performance and if it did not work then I will think about disciplinary action. But I do not have this authority" (Interview C1, 02/8/2015). Participant (C4) made similar comments and went one-step further in empowerment. He adding, "I can control absenteeism and can evaluate a teacher if I have the power of doing this" (Interview C4, 02/11/2015). Community leader (C6) criticized

public school teachers for having good salaries but perform worse than the private school teachers. He linked the poor performance of teachers with the PTC empowerment. He commented, “When we report such a case (lower performance of school teacher) no body bother” (Interview C6, 03/9/2015). This shows that the current involvement of the community in schools is not effective. The devolution plan basically focuses on empowering the local community to own and regularize public education (Paracha, 2003) but it is not happening. In order to ensure the involvement community, the PTC members must be empowered.

Lack of Awareness of the Community

Community leaders referred to their unawareness and said that if the community was well informed of the schools’ administration and benefits of education, they became involved in the system. Information plays a role in the realization of duties and responsibilities (Karyda, Kiountouzis, & Kokolakis, 2005). The parent’s participation in the schools’ matters was very low because they were not aware of their duties and responsibilities. If they had known, they would have asked principals and teachers about their children. Participant (C3) commented, “The community is... actually unaware of the benefits of the education” (Interview C3, 02/11/2015). The participants also stressed awareness of the PTC members and chairs, as participant C4 stated:

I do not know about the PTC guide. I do not have it. Awareness is necessary. PTC members and chair should be guided properly showing them all rules and regulations...Parents should spare their children for education. They can be aware by running aids on TV and radio. (Interview C4, 02/11/2015)

Most of the PTC members and chairs were unaware and they were not having the information booklet called PTC guide. Hussain and Naz (2013) studied the performance of PTC committees in KP and found that the PTC chairpersons and members need training to play their role effectively. This awareness problem is not only here in Pakistan, but it also exist in many developing countries (Winkler & Sevilla, 2004). Henceforth, for the effective role of PTC, they must be provided access to information which so far has not been provided.

Community leaders described their need for information. There was no system of information sharing in the public schools. Sharing of information improves monitoring and accountability. They were even not informed about their role as PTC members. The community could be sensitized to the educational issued by informing them continuously. For example, the participant (C1) stated, “Yes I need much information. PTC role and scope should be increased... I did not get any information especially about my role as a chairman of the PTC” (Interview C1, 02/8/2015). Participant (C2) made similar remarks, he said, “Yes I need information but never get information even about the PTC

responsibilities and authorities. I did not get a copy of the PTC guide from the school” (Interview C2, 02/9/2015). Participant (C3) believed that if he was provided information in written form, his performance would have improved. He added, “Information about teachers’ performance can be got from his students. We discuss many things in the meeting but never got information in written form. If we are provided information we will be able to work more efficiently” (Interview C3, 02/11/2015). Henceforth, in order to implement the devolution plan effectively role should be assigned to PTC members. They should be provided access to information. Just the formation of PTC in the present form is not effective for increasing community involvement in education (Gordon & Louis, 2009).

Low Capacity of PTC Members

Most of the participant from the other groups of leaders expressed that community capacity was very low and PTC could not be trusted for monitoring and accountability. However, the community leader participants were confident about their potentials. They believed that the community has the potentials to play its role in schools’ monitoring and to take accountability steps against the school personnel. Participant (C1) commented, “For the last thirty-five years I am attached with the teaching in a madrassa (religious school). I understand the process and I can monitor teachers’ performance” (Interview C1, 02/8/2015). Participant (C2) explained how he would be able to help a principal, he added, “I can help the principal to know about the performance of a teacher. If there was any shortcoming I would sit with the principal, will have a discussion with him to fix it” (Interview C2, 02/9/2015). Community leader (C3) told his story of how he was effective in solving school problems and monitoring teachers for their regularity, he said:

I used to come to school daily and advising teachers to be regular and punctual.... There was a bullying issue we (the PTC council) resolved it nicely. If we were given the responsibility of making the budget for the whole fiscal year, we will learn it and we will do it. The council consists of five members and we can work collectively to make it possible. (Interview C3, 02/11/2015)

Participant (C6) said that if he was empowered he could control teachers’ absenteeism. Teachers’ absenteeism is one of the big problems for the government. He added, “Yes I can. If I have the power, then I can control teachers’ absenteeism”. This shows that the community is contributing to the betterment of education if trusted. However, the provincial and district administration is reluctant to empower the community. The present involvement of the community in PTC is pseudo as obvious from responses of administrators.

Administrators Perspective on Community Role in M & E

The DEOs and the Ministry of Education officers' responses revealed that only the principal could perform monitoring and accountability. Therefore, they stressed principal empowerment for the decentralization. Principals are directly involved in the school business, and therefore should be the next empowered personnel. Principals' unique position in the stakeholders has made them important. DEOs are district level leaders lead a large number of schools, 1500 approximately. Therefore, they supported school principal's empowerment. DEO (D1) commented, "School principals can do monitoring more effectively. They should have this authority...Head mistress can do teachers' evaluations more effectively" (Interview D1, 02/06/2015). The Ministry of Education officer (D2) preferred monitoring by principal "Principals can evaluate teachers more effectively" (Interview D2, 03/05/2015). Similar comments were made by the Ministry of Education officer (D3), he commented, "School principals can do it more effectively. They should have this authority" (Interview D3, 03/10/2015). DEO (D4) said that principals should perform the monitoring instead of DEOs, as DEOs workload was very high. He commented, "a DEO has to take care of the whole district so he will not be effective... For directorate and secretariat, it is impossible to do the evaluation" (Interview D4, 03/20/2015). DEO (D5).

This shows a lack of an effective monitoring system in education in KP. District and provincial level management rely on school principal who is neither empowered nor have the capacity to the monitoring and evaluation. Moreover, they are reluctant to trust the community for the purpose. The main objective of the devolution plan is to empower local community and local administration which still seems a dream.

Undermining PTC Concerns and Interests in Education

The participants expressed that PTC and the community cannot monitor and evaluate school staff for not having expertise. The community was not interested in education. This pattern reinforced the theme that only principals should be empowered for monitoring and accountability. Although potentials of the PTC and community realized, but for their low capacity they were not supported for monitoring of schools. DEOs stressed on principals' empowerment instead of PTC members. DEO (D1) commented, "PTC can do an evaluation of school staff only if they understand their responsibilities and are aware of it" (Interview D1, 02/06/2015).

The Ministry of Education officer (D2) rejected the role of the community in monitoring and accountability. He said, "Community should not evaluate teachers because they create problems because of their personal likes and dislikes. They also do not know how to evaluate a teacher" (Interview D2, 03/05/2015). The Ministry of

Education officer (D3) said that they would not involve PTC in evaluation. He mentioned, "I did not see any benefit of PTC. We don't have any idea or intention of involving PTC in evaluation" (Interview D3, 03/10/2015). DEO (D4) believed that the community was not able to do monitoring. He added, "Community could do it but it does not have the capacity" (Interview D4, 03/20/2015). Analogous comments were made by DEO (D5) who stated, "Professionally qualified can monitor school more effectively ... Only an educationist can evaluate an educationist. PTC/community cannot monitor a school"(Interview D5, 03/21/2015).

The district and provincial administration are thus, reluctant to trust the community. This shows that the department does not trust the community and then also lament that the community is not taking an interest in education. This may be one of the reasons for not allowing the community to take ownership of public institutions in the country.

DEO-High Workload

DEOs and the Ministry of Education officers expressed that DEOs cannot do monitoring and accountability, because of the high workload. This pattern supported the theme that only principals should be empowered for monitoring. DEO (D1) said that though school monitoring was the responsibility of Assistant District Education Officers (ADEO), which is ineffective. She commented, "ADEOs are also for this purpose but they are not effective. As they have to monitor a high number of schools, there are more than 100 schools/ ADEO" (Interview D1, 02/06/2015). Similar comments were made by DEO (D4), who stated:

I have one ASDEO (Assistant Sub Divisional Education Officers) for 165 schools. The schools are scattered in a vast area. In addition, the officers don not have a vehicle for commute to the schools. It is very difficult for them to monitor schools effectively...There is a specific procedure of evaluation of school principals. However, the workload is so high that we are unable to spare time for evaluation of school principals. (Interview D4, 03/20/2015).

Similarly, DEO (D5) stated, "I was unable to control absenteeism. My subordinate officers do not have any facility to check attendance of teachers on a daily basis" (Interview D5, 03/21/2015).

The district administrators accept that they fail to do monitoring and evaluation effectively. They mentioned several weaknesses in the system but still, they are reluctant to trust the community for the purpose. Thus, mere decentralization without community participation is not going to improve the system. For effective implementation, the community should be involved that it may take ownership of schools.

Principal Perspective on PTC Role in A & M

Responses of participant principals emerged into the theme that the local community and parents became a part of the accountability system. Principals were the school administrators who had direct contact with the community and parents. They expressed their trust in the community and parents and realized their potentials. Principal (P1) added, "I will say the shopkeeper in front of my school will monitor the school better than all" (Interview P1, 03/05/2015). Principal (p2) believed that the urban community was effectively monitoring the school, he said, "Some community in an urban area does understand and try to check principals and staff and they are very effective" (Interview P2, 03/06/2015). Principal (P4) expressed his trust in PTC adding, "PTC can do monitoring more effectively" (Interview P4, 03/20/2015). Henceforth, the district and provincial administration are of the opinion that principal should be empowered but paradoxically principal the actual implementers of the policy recognize the potential and role of the community for improving the quality of education.

Awareness of PTC

Principals believed that parents and community awareness prepared them for monitoring and accountability. Principal (P1) commented, "Most parents can monitor but they don't know that a platform like PTC is available for this purpose... their role in administration; once they know it they will be very effective" (Interview P1, 03/05/2015). Principal (P4) referring to the awareness of parents said, "If they are aware they will certainly participate actively and will do monitoring effectively" (Interview P4, 03/20/2015). This shows that for effective implementation of devolution plan community awareness is crucial. The government should develop a mechanism to train PTC members and the local community for the effective running of the education system. The community has high stakes in the system and their awareness and involvement can bring a positive change in the system.

Active Involvement of PTC

This pattern emerged from the responses of principals about the participation of the parents and PTC members. Principal (P2) said, “There is passive monitoring by parents. If the parents are educated and PTC is active, then they will be able to monitor schools” (Interview P2, 03/06/2015). Principal (P5) while referring to the resistance by the principals, added, “In many cases, principals also resist parents’ involvement because then they will not allow them to do corruption and teachers’, and principals’ weaknesses will become visible” (Interview P5, 03/25/2015). This pattern emerged from the response of the principal (P1). She, while realizing the potential role of the community, commented, “There is no other option except the community-controlled monitoring and supervision. The local community can monitor and supervise public schools on a daily basis” (Interview P1, 03/05/2015).

Discussions and Conclusion

The study emphasizes the involvement of the community and parents in the process of accountability and monitoring. Without involving the community, effective accountability and monitoring is impossible. The PTC members and parents are willing to participate in school management. The main purpose of the devolution plan was to involve the community in public institutions, to make them own these institutions and provide their support and help. The study found that the community is willing to contribute; however, the administration is reluctant to trust the community. The present PTC is not effective as most members are unaware of their roles and have no access to information. Therefore, in order to make it effective PTC members need to be trained and provide information to enable them to perform their role effectively.

Another important aspect which can be seen that present accountability and monitoring system is ineffective. The district and provincial administration realize their limitation to do monitoring and accountability due to their other responsibilities and the number of schools they are supposed to take care of. They interpret the devolution plan to empower the school principals instead of relying on the community. However, the principals themselves are aware of their limitations and they suggest a greater role for the community. The principal is of the opinion that without the involvement of the community, the devolution plan cannot be implemented effectively. It is very crucial that the district and provincial administration realize the role and capacity of the community and involve community members in the monitoring and accountability of schools.

Accountability and monitoring are necessary components of decentralization. The accountability and monitoring structure given by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Governments Act (2013) is a step towards strengthening of the local accountability and monitoring of the public schools. However, for its effective implementation awareness, empowerment and active involvement of the local community is necessary, as mentioned by the participants of the study. PTC members and school principal are of the opinion that for effective implementation involvement of the community in monitoring and evaluation is necessary. In fact, for effective decentralization the ownership of schools by the community is crucial. Without this, the system is not going to change. The district and provincial administration need to change their attitude. Moreover, the PTC members and general community need to be made aware of their responsibilities for enabling them to play an active role. Similarly, workshop and training should be arranged for PTC to understand the functioning of school and play their role effectively.

The Department of Education should empower PTCs and principals to make on-time and informed decisions. PTCs capacities are needed to be developed for decision-making and accountability. Accountability procedure is needed so that there is no ambiguity and delay in decisions. There is a need to improve the horizontal accountability through defining participatory roles of local governments and local representatives. A system of information sharing among the stakeholders is required for effective decentralization.

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