

## 1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Education
Paper Name	Educational Administration, Management & Leadership in School Education
Module Name/ Title	Decentralized and Participatory School Governance: What and Why?
Module Id	e-PG-EDN_13.24
Pre-requisites	Awareness of school governance and concerned issues
Objectives	After going through this content the learner will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Know the meaning of decentralization</li> <li>● Identify the Importance of decentralization</li> <li>● Differentiate between various types of decentralization</li> <li>● Explain the meaning of school governance, decentralised school governance and participatory school governance</li> <li>● Enumerate the role of decentralised and participatory school governance</li> </ul>
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## 2. Development Team

Role	Name	Affiliation
Principal Investigator	Prof. P.K. Sahoo	Department of Education, University of Allahabad, U.P.
Co-Principal Investigator	Prof. Rajaram S. Sharma	Central Institute of Educational Technology, NCERT, New Delhi
Co-Principal Investigator	Prof. Dhananjay Yadav	Department of Education, University of Allahabad, U.P.
Paper Coordinators	Prof. Vidya Agarwal	Department of Education, University of Allahabad, U.P.
	Dr. J.S. Dhillon	Principal, Khalsa College of Education, Amritsar

Content Writer/Author (CW)	Dr. Gurmanjit Kaur Bhullar	Khalsa College of Education, Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar
Content Reviewer (CR)	Ms. Rimalpreet Kaur	Khalsa College of Education, Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar
Language Editor (LE)	Dr. Aerum Khan, Dr. Geeta Sharma	Central Institute of Educational Technology, NCERT

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Decentralization means diffusion of authority. The dispersal of authority of decision making to the lower level of management is termed as Decentralisation. Decentralization pattern is wider in scope and the authorities are diffused to the most lowest level of management.

### 2. LEARNING OUTCOMES

After studying this topic you will be able to:

- Know the meaning of decentralization
- Identify the Importance of decentralization
- Differentiate between various types of decentralization
- Explain the meaning of school governance, decentralised school governance and participatory school governance
- Enumerate the role of decentralised and participatory school governance

According to Fayol,

"Everything that goes to increase the importance of the subordinate's role is called Decentralisation."

According to another scholar Allen,

“Decentralization refers to the systematic effort to delegate to the lowest level of authority except that which can be controlled and exercised at central points”.

Where Delegation of authority is a complete process and takes place from one person to another. While decentralization is complete only when fullest possible delegation has taken place. For example, the general manager of a company is responsible for receiving the leave application for the whole of the concern. The general manager delegates this work to the personnel manager who is now responsible for receiving the leave of applicants. In this situation delegation of authority has taken place. On the other hand, on the request of the personnel manager, if the general manager delegates this power to all the departmental heads at all level, in this situation decentralization has taken place. Subordinate’s responsibility increase in this case. On the other hand, in delegation the managers remain answerable even for the acts of subordinates to their superiors. That is, why we said that “Everything that increases the role of subordinates is decentralization”. Peter Kropotkin, a Russian anarchist intellectual, defined ‘decentralization as the true measure of progress’. Kropotkin said that we should be working towards decentralizing all aspects of life, with the ideal being a society without hierarchy where all relationships are based on the free association of equals. This is a profound challenge, and may be a never-ending one. Moreover, our opinions may not always align on how to best achieve this goal. Yet, it is a goal worth striving for.

In short we can say that

1. In decentralization, the subordinates get a chance to decide and act independently which develops their skills and capabilities. This way the organization can process reserve of their talents in it.
2. Diversification of activities can place effectively since there is more scope for creating new departments.

3. In decentralized structure, operations can be coordinated at divisional level which is not possible in the centralization set up.
4. In the case of decentralization structure , there is greater motivation and morale of the employees since they get more independence to act and decide.
5. In this structure, co-ordination to some extent is difficult to maintain as there are lot many divisions of department and authority is delegated to maximum possible extent, i.e., to the bottom most level delegation reaches.

## **2. Importance of Decentralization is important**

### **a. Develop initiative and creativity among subordinates**

Passing of authority at middle and lower level shows the trust and faith of top level in their subordinates and this trust and faith motivate the employees working at different levels as they are allowed to take decisions without seeking the approval of superiors.

### **b. Develop managerial talent for future**

In decentralisation, managers working at lower and middle level also learn the art of making decisions. They get the experience of performing activities of top executives and learn to manage the authority given to them. So, whenever there is vacant job position at top level management, the managers working at lower or middle level can be promoted.

### **c. Quick decision-making**

In the decentralisation process decision-making is not restricted in few hands only but decision-making power is entrusted to all the managers who are taking actions or performing the activities. This leads to faster decision because employees who have to perform the activities are allowed to take decision also. In the process of decentralisation, top level managers are not overburdened with the responsibilities and authority as they systematically pass the authority and responsibilities at different levels.

#### **d. Facilitates growth**

Decentralisation grants more autonomy or freedom to lower level. This helps the subordinates to do the work in the manner best suited for their department. When each department is doing to their best then productivity increases and it will generate more revenue which can be used for expansion.

#### **e. Better control**

In decentralization, employees working at different levels take their own decisions and they are personally accountable for their decisions, they cannot pass the blame to their superiors. With decentralisation better control can be exercised through Scorecard, Management Information System, etc.

#### **f. Improves teamwork**

In decentralisation all the managers and employees are sharing the decision-making powers; all are given some kind of autonomy and freedom of action. This sharing of decision and freedom of action integrate the employees as one team and develop team spirit among the employees.

The Constitution of our country embraced in 1950 made this obvious by directing all states to create local self-government bodies under the framework of Panchayati Raj through an electoral process. However, the spirit of this directive was by and large ignored for the next four decades up to early nineties. The decentralisation of education governance finds mention in many education documents Education Commissions such as the Kothari Commission (1964-66) reiterated national commitment to it, while the various National Curriculum Framework (NCF) documents since the 70's implied decentralisation in terms of creating space for local knowledge and experience to be weaved into the curriculum. The National

Policy on Education (NPE) of 1986 was a significant development in the education landscape of the country. It articulated grassroot level involvement through micro-planning. The first significant response to the constitutional directive came sometime during the late eighties , in the form of the 64th Constitutional Amendment Bill, which was finally adopted in 1992 as the 73rd and 74th Amendments. A clearer articulation of the link between education and decentralisation had to wait till these constitutional amendments which provide a mandate for the control and governance of education by the elected Panchayat bodies. The delineation of specific powers and responsibilities to be transferred from the state to the local bodies is featured in these amendments. Article 243G of the eleventh schedule; for instance, provides that the states and union territories may, by law, endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and to prepare plans for economic development and social justice.

### **3. TYPES OF DECENTRALIZATION**

Types of decentralization include political, administrative, fiscal, and market decentralization. Drawing distinctions between these various concepts is useful for highlighting the many dimensions of successful decentralization and the need for coordination among them. Nevertheless, there is clear overlap in defining any of these terms and the precise definitions are not as important as the need for a comprehensive approach. Political, administrative, fiscal, and market decentralization can also appear in different forms and combinations across countries, within countries and even within sectors.

#### **a. Political Decentralization**

Political decentralization aims to give citizens or their elected representatives more power in public decision-making. It is often associated with pluralistic politics and representative

government, but it can also support democratization by giving citizens, or their representatives, more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies. Advocates of political decentralization assume that decisions made with greater participation will be better informed and more relevant to diverse interests of society than those made only by national political authorities.

### **b. Administrative Decentralization**

Administrative decentralization seeks to redistribute authority, responsibility, and financial resources for providing public services among different levels of government. It is the transfer of responsibility for the planning, financing, and management of certain public functions from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, or area-wide, regional, or functional authorities.

The three major forms of administrative decentralization are deconcentration, delegation, and devolution, each have different characteristics.

#### **i. Deconcentration**

It is often considered to be the weakest form of decentralization and is used most frequently in unitary states redistributes decision making authority and financial and management responsibilities among different levels of the *central* government. It can merely shift responsibilities from central government officials in the capital city to those working in regions, provinces, or districts, or it can create strong field administration or local administrative capacity under the supervision of central government ministries.

#### **ii. Delegation**

It is a more extensive form of decentralization. Through delegation central governments transfer responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the central government, but ultimately accountable to it. Government delegates responsibilities when they create public enterprises or corporations, housing authorities, transportation authorities, special service districts, semi-autonomous school districts, regional development corporations, or special project implementation units.

### **iii. Devolution**

When governments devolve functions, they transfer authority for decision-making, finance, and management to quasi-autonomous units of local government with corporate status. Devolution usually transfers responsibilities for services to municipalities that elect their own mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions.

### **c. Fiscal Decentralization**

Financial responsibility is a core component of decentralization. If local governments and private organizations are to carry out decentralized functions effectively, they must have an adequate level of revenues either raised locally or transferred from the central government as well as the authority to make decisions about expenditures. Fiscal decentralization can take many forms, including:

- i) self-financing or cost recovery through user charges;
- ii) co-financing or co-production arrangements through which the users participate in providing services and infrastructure through monetary or labor contributions;
- iii) expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes, or indirect charges;



- iv) intergovernmental transfers that shift general revenues from taxes collected by the central government to local governments for general or specific uses; and
- v) authorization of municipal borrowing and the mobilization of either national or local government resources through loan guarantees.

#### **d. Economic or Market Decentralization**

The most complete forms of decentralization from a government's perspective are privatization and deregulation because they shift responsibility for functions from the public to the private sector. Privatization and deregulation are usually, but not always, accompanied by economic liberalization and market development policies. They allow functions that had been primarily or exclusively the responsibility of government to be carried out by businesses, community groups, cooperatives, private voluntary associations, and other non-government organizations. Here *Privatization* means leaving the provision of goods and services entirely to the free operation of the market to "public-private partnerships" when government and the private sector cooperate to provide services or infrastructure. The word *Deregulation* means reducing the legal constraints on private participation in service provision or allows competition among private suppliers for services that in the past had been provided by the government or by regulated monopolies.

#### **4. SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

A school governance is a government for the school. It includes all the principles, models, and practices that enable a school district board to effectively direct the working of the schools within its boundaries. Most of its members are elected. The law says that every public school must have an elected governing body, which meets at least once every school term. School governing bodies are responsible for school governance. Decentralized school governance means giving power to communities, instead of having all the power to run schools being held by the national government. It includes

- a. Parents or guardians of learners at the school. Parents should form the majority of the School Governing body.
- b. Teachers (educators) at the school
- c. Members of staff who are not teachers, for example administrative staff or caretakers
- d. Learners in Grade 8 or higher who are elected members of the Representative Council of Learners

The Participatory school governance means active, collectively organized and continued involvement of all these members of community in setting goals, pooling resources together and taking actions which aims at improving functioning of school and education standards. Practicing participatory school governance has been long acknowledged as an essential ingredient in the quest for better schools.

## **5. THE ROLE OF DECENTRALIZED AND PARTICIPATORY SCHOOL GOVERNANCE**

Extensive literature research has resulted in identifying the many rationales that explain the importance of community participation in education.

### **a. Maximizing Limited Resources**

Most governments all over the world have been committed to deliver education for their citizens. Particularly after the World Conference on Education for All, assembled in Jomiten, Thailand in 1990, an increasing number of countries have attempted to reach the goal of providing education for all. However, governments have found themselves incompetent to do so because of lack of resources and capacities. Learning materials as well as human resources are limited everywhere, particularly in developing countries. The focus has shifted to finding efficient and effective ways to utilize *existing limited resources*. Involving parents, families, and communities in the process of research and data collection can reveal factors that contribute to lower enrollment and attendance, and poor academic performance in their

schools. Furthermore, parents are usually concerned about their children’s education, and often are willing to provide assistance that can improve the educational delivery. In places where teacher absenteeism and poor performance are critical issues, parents can be part of the system of monitoring and supervising teachers, ensuring that teachers arrive at classrooms on time and perform effectively in the classrooms. The absence of government support leaves the school infrastructure, equipment, and pupil supplies to the parents and the community. As a result, community and parents are in the center “in keeping the schools going”.

#### **b. Developing Relevant Curriculum and Learning Materials**

Participatory governance helps achieve curriculums and learning materials that reflect children’s everyday lives in society. When children use textbooks and other materials that illustrate their *own* lives in their community, they can easily associate what they are learning with what they have already known.

#### **c. Identifying and Addressing Problems**

Communities can help identify and address factors that contribute to educational problems, such as low participation and poor academic performance.

#### **d. Promoting Girls’ Education**

Community participation can contribute in promoting girls’ education. Through participating in school activities and frequently communicating with teachers, parents and communities can learn that girls’ education contributes to the improvement of various aspects of their lives, such as increased economic productivity, improved family health and nutrition, reduced fertility rates, and reduced child mortality rates. Involving parents and communities in discussions as part of school activities also helps to identify factors that prevent girls from schooling. Parents are encouraged to express their concern, and reasons why they are not

sending their daughters to school. For instance, many parents in rural areas are reluctant to send their daughters to schools located at a distance, being concerned about the security of their daughters on the way to and from the school. In addition, since girls are important labors, helping their mothers to do the household chores and take care of their young siblings. The time required in going to and from school seems too much wastage for the parents. These issues are serious obstacles and have to be addressed and overcome in order to promote girls' education.

Involving parents and communities in school activities also helps to identify possible teachers in the community, especially local female teachers which greatly help girl education. Furthermore, in places where communities are indifferent to girls' education, elderly people or religious leaders who are respected by community members can convince them to send their girls to schools, if the dialogue with these respected people takes place successfully.

#### **e. Creating and Nourishing Community-School Partnerships**

There are various ways to bring parents and community members closer to schools, including:

- (a) minimizing discontinuities between schools and communities, and between schools and families;
- (b) minimizing conflicts between schools and communities, schools and families, teachers and parents, and what is taught in school and what is taught at home;
- (c) making easy transition of pupils going from home to school;
- (d) preparing pupils to engage in learning experiences; and
- (e) minimizing cultural shock of new entrants to schooling.

Communities can contribute to schools by sending respected community members, such as religious leaders or tribe heads, to the classrooms and talk about community history, traditions, customs, and culture, which have been historically celebrated in the community.

Schools themselves can contribute to community efforts by developing sustainable solutions to local problem.

#### **f. Realizing Democracy**

Where schools are perceived as authoritarian institutions, parents and community members do not feel welcomed to participate in their child's education. They are not capable of taking any responsibility in school issues and tend to feel that education is something that should be taken care of by educational professionals at schools. Many people, especially minority groups in many developing countries, develop this kind of negative attitudes towards school because they are not treated by teachers with respect. For instance, those who do not speak the country's official language and embrace other than mainstream traditions and culture feel discouraged in classrooms where teachers don't show respect to their linguistic and cultural diversity. In the history, there were times when children were prohibited from speaking their first language in schools and they got severe punishment when they broke the rule imposed by the school or the government. This educational environment is unfavorable to parents and children and, therefore, contributes to low participation, poor academic performance, and high repeat and dropout rates of these students. Involving communities in schools is a way of reaching democracy through identifying and addressing inequalities embedded in institutions and society as a whole. In addition, it is a strategy to create an environment in which parents feel comfortable participating in schools.

#### **g. Increasing Accountability**

Parental involvement in education, particularly in school governance, is seen as a means of making schools more accountable to the society which funds them. This has been witnessed in some places such as England and Wales, Canada and the United States. The notion of

parental involvement for accountability derives from a more market-oriented concept in which school-family partnerships are viewed rather like business partnership, through which the two parties receive mutual and complementary benefits which enable them to operate more effectively .

#### **h. Ensuring Sustainability**

One of the major factors to ensure sustainability of programs is the availability of funds, whether from governments, private institutions, or donor organizations. In this regard, community participation in education cannot ensure the sustainability of schools by itself since oftentimes communities have to rely on external funding to keep the program sustained. However, involving community is a way to ensure that the benefits brought by a development program will be maintained after the external interventions are stopped.

#### **i. Improving Home Environment**

Furthermore, families who are involved in schools not only have a better understanding about education but also become more willing to cooperate with schools in attempts to improve child's learning. In addition, parents can help their children with homework, and make sure that children are physically ready to learn at schools.

To conclude, we can say that decentralized and participatory school governance can solve varied problems of our school education system if implemented properly. Though there are many factors which affect the effectiveness of such governance like high cost involved, ignoring specialization, unequal distribution of work etc. managing and overcoming these factors efficiently will definitely result in higher grades, students attend school more regularly, stay in school longer, and enroll in higher level programs.

## **6. SUMMARY**

To summarize, this module discusses about the dispersal of authority of decision-making to the lower level management which is termed as decentralization. Decentralized school governance means giving power to communities, instead of having all the power to run schools being held by the national government. Decentralization is important as it develops initiative and creativity among subordinates, develops quick decision-making, maximizes growth, ensures help in team work. Broadly, the areas which practise decentralization are political, administrative, fiscal and market decentralization. As far as the role of decentralized and participatory school governance is concerned it helps in maximizing limited resources, developing relevant curriculum, learning materials and realizing democracy, identifying, and addressing problems, creating, and nourishing community-school partnerships, ensuring sustainability, improving home environment and increasing accountability.