Challenges in Globalising Public Education Reform By Agustinus Bandur

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Abstract

In a globalising and internationalising world, the spread of public education reforms across national boundaries and cultures has multiplied. More particularly, efforts to restructure public schools with an emphasis on implementing School-Based Management (SBM) have become the keystones of reform in many countries. In Indonesia, since the UNDP (1997) found how the poor quality of national education and low human resources quality impacted on severe economic and social problems in the late 1990s, national education decision-makers have been struggling to create better national quality education. With the turn of the 21st Century, Indonesian education reforms agenda have been emphasized on shifting public education policy and management from centralized bureaucratic fashion to more decentralized democratic structure. This paper highlights the challenges of the globalising world in education with particular reference to the adoption of effective SBM in Indonesia. The data reported here are on the basis of an empirical survey involving 504 school council members, including school principals from Ngada Flores followed by 42 interviews with all relevant stakeholders.

Index terms— globalization, education reforms, school-based management, challenges

1 INTRODUCTION

ince the twentieth century, the development of educational policy and practice has been dominated by Anglo-American initiatives with a pre-eminent position in terms of global economic development, education, communications and technology ??Dimmock & Walker, 2000; ??alker & Dimmock, 2000;Jones, 1971). They affirm that as developed societies, they possess the resources and ideas to innovate and to lead change. The continuation of this phenomenon, known as globalisation, seems assured as other developing countries follow suit. Jones (1971) points out the major reasons of globalisation for cultural borrowing, including: the overseas education of leaders, a belief in education as a vehicle for economic and social advacement, international legitimacy for policy formulation, and even the benefits of studying foreign systems of education, including the resultant improved understanding on one's own system. However, even if the globalisation has become an emergent phenomenon, yet as theory, policy and practice are transported globally. They always interface and/or interact with the cultures of different countries. In fact, as policies of SBM spread from Anglo-American About: Research-Based Evidence from Flores Primary Schools systems to become more globalised, what are the challenges confronted by school leaders in the context of Indonesia? Responding to this question can influence the effective implementation of decentralized education policy through SBM in Indonesia. This paper highlights the challenges of SBM within an increasingly rapid globalising educational context. The article is based on a doctoral dissertation study, with an empirical survey involving 504 school council members, including school principals from Ngada Flores followed by 42 interviews with all relevant stakeholders. One of the major objectives of the study was to analyse the challenges and problems hampering the implementation of SBM and seek remedial strategies. The first part of the paper clarifies the concepts of globalisation in the context of worldwide public education reforms through SBM. In the second part, the research methodology applied in the research is explained. The third part provides

44 research findings and discussions. Finally, it presents a brief conclusion and relevant recomendations in coping
45 with the challenges.

2   II.

3   GLOBALISATION IN EDUCATION POLICY REFORMS

48 Globalisation is simply referred to the spread of ideas, policies and practices across national boundaries **??**Walker
49 & Dimmock, 2000: 227). Globalisation in the form of educational management policy implies the export of theory,
50 policy and practice from some systems, mainly the Anglo American world into developing countries **??**Dimmock
51 & Walker, 2000). In the context of public educational management reforms, the imported theory, policy and
52 practice is referred to School-Based Management (SBM). **??**andur (2008: 31) explains SBM as the a worldwide
53 education reform strategy that appears under various terms -site-based management, site-based decision making,
54 school-based decision making, shared decision making and school-based governance.

55   Nowadays, SBM has increasingly become a worldwide movement towards autonomy for shareddecision making
56 and a partnership within the school community for the purposes of achieving school improvements and student
57 achievements (Bandur, 2009; **??**andur & Gamage, 2009;Cheng & Mok, 2007; S Gamage, 2006Gamage, ,
58 1996aGamage, , 1996b;;Caldwell, 2005). On the basis of research conducted in Australia and other countries,
59 **??**amage (1996a: 65) defines SBM as a pragmatic approach to a formal alteration of the bureaucratic model of
60 school administration with a more democratic structure. It identifies the individual school as the primary unit of
61 improvement relying on the redistribution of decision-making authority through which improvements in a school
62 are stimulated and sustained. Other scholars consider SBM as the approach to serve students better by improving
63 the school practices in meeting the diverse expectations of the stakeholders in a changing environment towards
64 increasing student achievements (Cheng & Mok, 2007;Caldwell, 2005). For these reasons, models of SBM have
65 become largely accepted as a major reform initiative both in developed nations including Australia, New Zealand,
66 the UK, the USA and developing countries such as Indonesia, Hong Kong and Thailand. In Australian context,
67 decades of research have revealed that school governance with devolving of decision-making authority to school
68 level has provided greater freedom and autonomy, achieving greater equity among schools as well as creating
69 equality of opportunity for students and flexibility in using school facilities (The ACT Department of **??**ducation
70 & Training, 2004;Bush & Gamage, 2001;Gamage, 1996b;Caldwell, 1993). However, the implementation of SBM
71 in Australia faces certain challenges. Chapman (1988) has reported some principals who lost their legal authority
72 and regulatory powers experienced ambiguity of roles. Even though other principals welcome the collaboration
73 in decision-making, some Victorian principals claimed that their councils and teaching staff were inexperienced,
74 incapable, lacked necessary knowledge, and were unprepared. Other scholars in England and Wales reported that
75 school governing bodies have been given greater power to manage their own affairs within clearly defined national
76 frameworks **??**Ranson, 2008;Bush & Gamage, 2001). However, a large-scale quantitative survey conducted by
77 Dempster (2000), involving 1,053 in the first survey and 699 respondents in the second one in England and
78 Wales, as well as interviews in ten schools, indicate that workloads of principals have increased as a result of
79 more responsibilities in financial planning and management.

4   III.

5   RESEARCH IN FLORES PRIMARY SCHOOLS a) Methodology and Sampling Design

83 The research methodology consisted of both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of research, comprising an
84 extensive empirical survey followed by semi-structured and focused group interviews and examination of relevant
85 documents. In particular, the analysed using SPSS, while interviews and other documents were analysed using
86 NVivo. For the purpose of both quantitative and qualitative data analyses, this study used probability (systematic
87 random) sampling and non-probability (purposive) sampling.

88   These sampling techniques were employed based on the requirements of a good sampling design: (1) goal
89 orientation, (2) measurability, (3) practicality, and (4) economy (Kish, 1965, cited in Wiersma & Jurs, 2005:
90 302). For these purposes, a sample of 42 schools was then randomly selected from 287 schools located both
91 in urban towns and rural areas. With respect to sample size for quantitative analysis, 675 questionnaires were
92 delivered to 42 schools. Seventy-five percent of the questionnaires were returned (N = 504). In addition to the
93 empirical survey, 42 interviews were conducted with different categories of school stakeholders.

6   b) Instruments

95 The questionnaire developed by Gamage (1996a) was adapted with appropriate modification. The instrument was
96 then refined further with a pre-test after approval by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of
97 Newcastle, Australia. The questionnaire was further refined and finalized after a pilot study. The pilot study was
98 conducted in seven primary schools comprising of urban and rural schools in two districts (Western Manggarai
99 and Manggarai) of Flores. A total of 180 questionnaires were distributed to the schools that agreed to take part
100 in completing the questionnaire and 155 questionnaires were completed and returned. c) Reliability and Validity

of the Questionnaire Even though the items were adapted from questionnaires which were previously validated in early research (San Antonio & Gamage, 2007; Gamage & Sooksomchitra, 2004; Gamage, 1996a), the items were measured using the factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha. In this study, the values of coefficient alpha ranged from .75 to .84, indicating an acceptable and good reliability (Gregory, 2000 cited in Manning & Munro, 2006). On the basis of the Principal Component Analysis (PCA), the results of pilot study demonstrate that the factor loadings ranged from .732 to .787. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .640 with the Barlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at less than .05, indicating an acceptable factorability. However, after the revision of item variables, the results of factorability in the main study were higher. The results of data analysis demonstrate that the factor loadings ranged from .779 to .883. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) of Sampling Adequacy was .682 with Barlett's Test of Sphericity p = .000, indicating a

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Challenges in Globalising Public Education Reform good factorability **??**Brace, Kemp, & Snelgar, 2006: 318). data gathered from the empirical survey were

8 IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS MAJOR PROBLEMS AND/OR CHALLENGES

The following table presents the responses of principals and other representatives of school councils (teachers, school administrative staff, parents, community members, local government, and alumni) on the common problems and/or challenges community members, local government, and alumni) on the common problems and/or challenges.

Table **??** shows that 55.6% of respondents either agreed (41.7%) or strongly agreed (14.9%) that lack of appropriate professional development for school leaders was a problem. Lack of school facilities was another problem, identified by 60.5% of the respondents who either agreed (36.9%) or strongly agreed (23.6%). Sixty-eight per cent of respondents either agreed (51.4%) or strongly agreed (16.9%) that lack of knowledge about SBM was a problem, while 64% of them either agreed (40.7%) or strongly agreed (23.4%) that inadequate finances was a problem confronted in the implementation of SBM.

The qualitative data of this study revealed that there had been a lack of coordination in decisionmaking between the president of the school council and the principal. In this case, the school council president made decisions with regard to grant proposals for external funding without coordinating it with the school principal. Two principals stated: I don't find any major difficulties, but there are always problems in terms of difficulties of coordination and clarity of roles. A couple of times our head of the school council made grant proposals without consulting me. This is certainly not a good practice as no single authority figure can take decisions in school matters (Principal, W10).

Interestingly, this study found that there was a statistically significant difference in terms of opinions of the respondents on the problem related to difficulties of coordination (Chi-Sq = 8.61, N = 441, p = .03), as shown in demonstrates that 44.2% of the respondents in urban areas either agreed (38.0%) or strongly agreed (6.2%) that difficulties of coordination is one of the problems confronted in the implementation of SBM, compared with 34.3% of respondents from schools in rural areas either agreed (27.1%) or strongly agreed (7.1%) with the statement. This indicates that problem with regard to difficulties of coordination is more likely faced by school council members in the urban areas rather than council members in the rural areas.

V.

9 Conflict of Interest

A female principal reported about the conflict of interests between the District Education Department and her school in terms of decision-making authority relating to textbook selection. The decision-making authority for selecting school textbooks was given to the school by Minister. However, two principals referred to instances where the District Education Department interfered: In practice, local government officials have taken over decision-making authority which is supposed to be made by the school. I refer particularly to how the school text books are dropped by the local education department, whereas the block grant for books has been allocated directly to the school bank account from the central government. I think this is still a problem (Teacher representative, W05). We finally received math textbooks from the District Education Department after a long argument because the decision for distributing the books was without the approval from the school council. When the teachers counted the books, the total books were double than what was needed by 26 students. We did not need such books and the books were supposed to be distributed or given to other schools (Teacher representative, W08).

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11   VI.

12   BUILDING AWARENESS

Other principals faced the challenges in conjunction with building up the awareness of the whole community-members and parents to actively participate in school decision-making. Respondents Nos. 12 and 17 have raised some concerns as follows:To build up the awareness of members of th whole community is difficult. At the moment, principal, teachers, government, and parents who have children in the school are those who are actively participating in school programs. School council members have encouraged the whole community to actively participate in school programs but it takes time to involve the whole community (Principal, W12)There are some parents who are too busy in the garden and don't pay attention to their children's homework. In this case, we call the parents and have a dialogue. Finally, they are aware of the importance of education (Principal, W17) VII.

13   LACK CLARITY OF AUTHORITY

Six teachers also reported that there had been a problem relating to the lack of clarity of authority between school and district government. In relation to this case, a teacher representative stated: Again, the government may think that they have absolute power and authority. I think they are the people who need more training about SBM, not just provide training for school principals. Other challenge is that how to create strong collaborative work-practices to create better quality schools (Teacher representative, W06). In a school where the principal still controls the decisionmaking authority in the school, a government representative stated: It is not 100% clear because the school principal still controls the whole school, but in general the school principal himself cannot make all decisions (Government representative, W41).

14   VIII.

15   LACK UNDERSTANDING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINING

Other teachers acknowledged that the lack of comprehensive understanding about SBM has become the challenge and stated: "With my lack of knowledge about SBM, I just tend to follow higher level authorities in the education departments" (Teacher representative, W07). Four community representatives stated that they have not being provided with access to attend professional sessions and training on SBM provided by both District Education Department and Nusa Tenggara Timur Primary Education Partnership (NTT-PEP). In regard to this case, respondents 33 stated: The principal is the person who always joins training on SBM. I hope all school council members will be able to involve in training on SBM" (Community representative, W33). Another community representative stated:In terms of professional development for principals and council members, as far as I know, the principals are guided by the local district government and NTT-PEP advisors in terms of leadership and roles as principals, but I'venever attended any professional development sessions or training (Community representative, W34). The findings of this study are associated with similar problems in other developing countries. Researchers have indicated many problems and issues confronted by school leaders and school councils in the implementation of SBM, including poor resources in schools, lack of school textbooks, lack of professional development in leadership for school leaders and confusion on the part of school councils in relation to new roles and responsibilities, difficulties of coordination, lack of decision-making authority, lack of knowledge, low parental participation, under funding of education by governments, dependency on central government, and even lack of time (Gamage and Sooksomchitra, 2004; **??**ndriyanto, 2004;Cotton, 2003;Munn, 2000).

16   IX. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, importing education policy reforms implemented elsewhere under different economic, political and cultural conditions can present many challenges. Therefore, imported educational policy may be accepted, but should be adapted for implementation in order to minimize problems at the implementation stage. In coping with the problems and/or challenges, first of all, school council members should be encouraged to attend regular workshops on SBM. The District and/or Provincial Education Departments should facilitate such programs for the school principals, the heads of school councils, and other representatives of school councils. The training/workshops should be aimed at providing better knowledge and understanding about SBM policies and programs at the regional, national, and international levels.

Then, sustainable training programs for all primary school principals should be considered as a matter of urgency, enabling them to effectively implement SBM in school settings. These programs need to be designed for the purpose of providing comprehensive knowledge and better understanding for school leaders in leading and managing effective schools under the new SBM system. These recommendations are primarily aimed at building

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below:

Figure 1: Table 2

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Figure 2: Table 1 :Table 2 Table 2 SD

capacity in education which would help address the challenges and opportunities lying ahead for Indonesian school system in the 21 st century. [1] [2] [3]

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