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RESEARCH ARTICLE

ASSESSMENT OF DECENTRALIZED EDUCATION SERVICE DELIVERY (A CASE STUDY OF DUBTI WOREDA AFAR NATIONAL REGIONAL STATE)

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ABSTRACT

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This study was to assess the nature of Decentralization on Education Service Delivery in view of having the required institutions, manpower, availability of adequate finance and community participation in the provision of service delivery in the Woreda. The study was conducted Dubti Woreda of Afar National Regional State. To meet the above objective, Focus group discussion, In-depth interviews, and Observation were conducted with key informants, professionals, and community representatives. Secondary was also equally reviewed to assess the nature and performance of decentralization on education service delivery in Woreda.. The finding was found out that Education Officials in the Woreda confirmed that currently the student enrollment in the Woreda show that there is less increment in student enrolment which is not the case for years back.. According to the Education Office in Woreda, the gross enrollment of students' was 16%, 18.5%, 19.5%, 23, and 23.4% in the year 1999, 2001, 2002, and 2003 respectively which is very low progress throughout the year. It was also identified by the study that, in the Woreda communities have demonstrated minimum willingness to contribute in cash, labor and material support for the construction of schools and teachers' house as well as the act of enrolling school age children. This is due to the fact that, the practice of involving community at large in identifying problems and prioritizing their needs, planning and monitoring is almost inexistent in the Woreda. Regarding Woreda Education Office, among others, the Ministry of Education gives responsibility for supervision, coordination and implementation of education service including primary school construction. However, as the findings indicated that all above activities are not made by the Woreda Education Office. Thus, the above duties and responsibilities are made by the Regional Education Bureau. The findings indicated that the Woreda Education Office is found to have manpower and budget problems which appears to have negatively impacted the service of the office. Finally, Decentralized education service delivery requires available envir on ment. However, since Woreda is characterized by Desert it is difficult to deliv er education service delivery in the Woreda.

INTRODUCTION

Now a day, decentralization is becoming a popular and prominent development strategy in most developing countries. Most research findings indicate that it has been highly accepted since the late 1980s. Decentralization helps to reduce the highly centralized system of government and administration in developing countries. A complete centralization of provision of public services, increasingly led to problems. As a result, many countries have implemented decentralization to provide effective public service delivery and local self rule. Ethiopia with different ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity requires state organizations that allow autonomy power and decision making authority at regional and local levels.

Beginning from the late 19th century, Ethiopia has been exercising a strong centralized state. The first serious attempts to introduce a centralized system of administration in Ethiopia were undertaken during the period of Menelik II. However, the process of centralization was further strengthened and institutionalized in modern sense during the imperial regime (Eshetu, 1994; Tegegne, 1998). The Derg Regime attempted to introduce decentralization within the unitary system which was inherited from Haileselassie I. There was administrative the territorial reorganization on which resulted in twenty five administrative provinces and five autonomous regions (Solomon, 2007).

The Ethiopian federal system assumed its present shape and form in 1995 following the adoption of national constitution. The 1995 federal constitution recognized nine regional states (Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somalia, Benishangul Gumuz ,SNNPS, Gambella and Harari) and two special administration areas (the cities of Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa) (Solomon, 2007, Tegegne and Kassahun, 2007). The National Regional States and City Administrations are further divided into 611 Woredas (FDRE, 1994). Woreda is the basic decentralized administrative unit and has an Administrative council composed of elected members.

We know that in 1991, Ethiopia has embarked on extensive decentralized system of administration which is mainly to improve democracy, popular participation and service delivery. Lim and Fritzen (2006:35) argue that decentralization has a potential of improving quality, increasing innovation, increasing effectiveness and efficiency, redistribution of power r, solving the problem of financing education.

Meheret (2007) also confirms that one of the main objectives of decentralization is to increase the coverage access, effectiveness, efficiently and quality of social services in accountable, responsive and transparent fashion.

Studies undertaken by researchers like, Meheret, (1998:7), Kumera, (2006:6), Tegegne and Kassahun (2004:45) show that financial, human and physical resource constraints have inhibited the successful implementation of decentralization in the provision of public service delivery in Ethiopia. As they pointed out, most of the problems in the successful implementation of decentralization in the provision of public service delivery in the Woreda, government are inadequate budget allocation, poor and inadequate revenue base to undertake service delivery, scarcity of skilled manpower to provide public service delivery, lack of experience in decentralizes government and effective legal and policy framework, absence in the process of popular community participation, and lack of efficient organizational structure and locally adopted working system for planning and budgeting.

Apart from this, insufficient experiences in managing federalism, wide gap in administrative and institutional capacity among the regions have posed serious challenges to the success of Ethiopia's decentralization policy (Fenta, 1998). These factors affect the successful implementation of decentralization to provide service delivery in Ethiopia in general and the study areas of Woreda in particular.

Decentralization service delivery in Afar National Regional States is unique from other National States in such a way that it is highly characterized by mobile due to their nature activities are characterized by pastoralist and semi pastoralist. Therefore, the study would try to assess how this typical characteristic of the Region affects decentralized public service delivery particularly decentralized education service delivery in the selected woreda.

Objectives of the Study: General Objectives

The general objectives of the study is to assess the opportunities, challenges, and performance of decentralized service delivery particularly emphasizing on education service by concentrating on variables like institution, manpower, availability of adequate finance, environment and community participation in the provision of service delivery in the woreda.

Research Design and Methodology

According to Yeraswork (2000), the use of qualitative method of data collection techniques such as, focus group discussion, in-depth interviews, and observation are helpful to collect adequate information and get individual group and institutional views. Thus, in this study in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and passive observation were used in order to get sufficient information on the issue.

The researcher used descriptive case study type of research which can provide information which can be best described in words in describing situation, events, people interaction, and observed behaviors and mostly studies the subject matter qualitatively and covers all aspects of single unit at community levels.

Woreda institutions that have more relevant to the study due their nature in improving of the life standard of the population and related institutions whose working relations is vital to the performances of the public education

service were included for the purpose of collecting related data.

Sources of Data

Primary and secondary data were used to assess the nature and performance of decentralization on Education service delivery in the Woreda.

Primary sources: A primary source was used by using data gathering of in-depth interview, focus group discussion and observation.

Secondary Sources: In this study secondary sources both published and unpublished material such as government policy documents official report and publication, laws, book, workshop proceedings, research reports and periodic and statistical reports, journal, etc were reviewed. Moreover, semi-structured document review checklist was used to collect secondary data on the socio economic and demographic profile of the sample Woreda i.e. their current administrant structure distribution and coverage of the social services.

Significance of the Study: The significance of this study was Highlighted the opportunities and challenges for effective implementation of decentralized education service delivery, Provided valuable information on the existing practices of decentralized service delivery in education and forward relevant intervention modalities to minimize the identified gaps, Created the awareness to the concerned government authorities so that they can take corrective measures accordingly , Created the awareness to communities about the education service delivery and It paved a way for interested groups for future and in-depth studies

RESULT AND ANALYSIS
Formal and Non-Formal Education in the Study Woreda
Formal Education in Dubti Woreda

In the interviews, Woreda Education Officials reported that, currently Dubti Woreda has 3 full cycle primary schools (1-8), 14 first cycle primary school (1-4), 2 first cycle secondary schools (9-10), 1 second cycle secondary school (11-12) but no kindergarten school.

Table 1. Trends of School Enrollment in Dubti Woreda

Year (E.C)	Enrollment			Dropouts		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Total**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
1999	2,856	2,342	**5,198**	292	421	**719**
2000	3,366	2,593	**6,147**	535	408	**943**
2001	3,862	2,385	**6,254**	495	521	**1016**
2002	4,525	2,986	**7,511**	425	689	**1114**
20031 st seme	4,558	3,055	**7,613**	-	-	**-**

Source: Woreda Education Office (2011)

With regard to student's enrollment, as it can be seen from table 1, in the year 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003 E.C the total number of students was 5198, 6947, 6254, 7511, and 7613 respectively. The data shows that there is a less progress in enrollment rate of students and high the dropout rate for the consecutive five years. During the interview with Woreda Education Office head and schools directors and focus group discussion made with teachers less enrolment of the student in the Woreda is due to low level of community participation in education, environmental influence, and lack of decision making ability by Woreda.

Table 2. Dubti Woreda Education Service Delivery Performance ratio (1999-2003)

Years (E.C)	Gross Enrollment	Percentage student of enrollment	Teacher-Student	Classroom-Student	Text-Student
1999	5,198	16%	1:75	1:70	1:4
2000	6,147	18.5%	1:70	1:70	1:4
2001	6,254	19.5%	1:65	1:60	1:3
2002	7,511	23%	1:60	1:55	1:2
2003	7,613	23.4%	1:60	1:60	1:2

Source: Dubti Woreda Education Office (2011)

The data in table 2 reveals that the student enrollment ratio was 16%, 18.5%, 19.5%, 23%, and 23.4% in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 respectively in the Woreda. As Schools directors assured during interview, there was still less radical change in enrollment performance students in the Woreda due to the fact that the Woreda Officials are unable to motivate and mobilize the people at grassroots level using public conferences and others.

Table:3 Over all Schools Distribution in the Dubti Woreda (2011)

	Name of the Schools	No. sch	hGrades				
			11-12	9-10	1-8	1-6	1-4
1.	Semera High School	1		1			
2.	Dubti High School	2	1	1			
3.	Semera Primary School	2		1	1		1
4.	Logia Primary school	3			1		2
5.	Dubti Primary school	10			1		11
	Total	20	1	2	3		14

Source: Woreda Education Office (2011)

As can be shown from table 4, Primary Education full Cycle (1-4) is 14 in number, (1-8) Elementary School is 3, (9-10) High School is 2, and (11-12) Preparatory School is 1 in number. According to the information obtained from Woreda Education Officials and the researcher observations indicated that only 1 full Preparatory School are located in relatively closer to the Woreda town. This shows the difficulty of getting the Preparatory School which is found in the capital of the Woreda and thus it further contributes to increase dropout rates of the students in the Woreda.

Community Participation in Education Service Delivery in the woreda

USAID (1997) defined decentralization as it is the active engagement of partners and customers in sharing ideas, committing time and resource, making decisions and taking action to bring about a desired development objective. In the field of education, many believed that community engagement in the delivery and management of schooling is crucial to achieving universal primary enrollment.

In light of the above how does community participation look like in Dubti Woreda Afar National Regional State?

As the report from Woreda Education Office reveals and interview made with the Woreda Education Office head, out of 20 Formal Education centers only one formal education center, which have four classes was constructed in collaboration with the community with the cost of 32, 000 birr in 2002. Generally, as Woreda Education Office Head and Teachers revealed during interview and focus group discussion respectively, community contribution in cash, in labor and material is inadequate due to lack of awareness and weak capacity to mobilize the community in the Woreda.

Institutional Arrangement for Decentralized Education Service in the Woreda

Woreda Education Office

Accordingly, based on the book entailed Educational Managment, Community Participation and Finance Guideline of Ministry of Education (2002), and proclamation no. the Education Office of Dubti Woreda adopt the following major duties and responsibilities

1. Build and manage ABE centers, formal schools, boarding schools and hostel with the active participation of the community.

2.   Devise strategies for the realization of EFA goals in the woreda.
3.   Provide consolidated supervisory support to ABE centers and allocate the necessary
    a.   budget and transportation facility accordingly.
4.   Organize forums for continuous short-term in -service training and experience -sharing for ABE facilitators in the woreda.
5.   Put in place an incentive system that will attract teachers and professionals to work in the
6.   Sensitize, mobilize and build the capacity of the woreda community so as to enable it to actively participate in the construction of schools educational management.
7.   Establish close working relationship with governmental and non - government partners so as to collaborately work for the common goalsof pastoralist education in the woreda.
8.   Encourage educated people working in other sector offices in the Woreda to participate in the education of pastoralists
9.   Make situational assessment of educational activities in the woreda, identify needs for special support and apply the support received toimprove education in the woreda

To carry out the above duties and responsibilities, the study Woreda has been attempted to implement different activities. According to the information obtained from school directors and teachers through interviews and focus group discussions respectively pointed out that school director, teachers and PTAs were not participated in the above duties and responsibilities of Woreda Education Office.

In the study Woreda schools are mainly focused on increasing number of students to enroll especially female students, upgrading school coverage, mobilizing the community to participation in school development, providing quality education, upgrading and expansion of classrooms, and establishing and strengthening Parent Teacher Associations.

As Woreda Education Office head, Schools directors and teachers disclosed that schools planned the above and other activities and then submitted to the Woreda Education Office. The Woreda Education office rejected, approved or modified the plans. This tells us schools decision making power is too limited or power is not devolved from Woreda to schools.

From the above evidences, one can understand that in Dubti Woreda power is not developed to the Woreda Education Office and Schools practically. Devolution grants a full transfer of responsibility, decision-making, resources and revenue generation to a local level of public authority that is autonomous and fully independent from the devolving authority (Robertson, 2005). But still there is big interference of Regional government in the Woreda.

The Ministry of Education provides duties and responsibilities to Woreda Education Office for supervision, coordination and implementation of education service including primary school construction. Despite this reality, Dubti Woreda resource and capacity constraints have undermined that power and to reach the objectives set.

To this effect, all the above activities are currently carried out by the Regional Education Office in the Woreda in which the tasks are a non participatory and disciplined environment in the teaching learning process.

In the Woreda KETB's and PTAs have been established. It was reported that the need for organizing KETB's is due to the reasons that especially in the rural part of the country schools are located in distant and inaccessible areas from the Woreda, that decision making and communication is delayed.

African International Journal of Research in Management

Therefore, organizing KETBs is believed to assist to overcome this problem. But in the study Woreda, as interview made with schools of directors and Woreda Education Office head and focus group discussions with teachers disclosed that KETB is non-functional in education service delivery as compared to PTAs. The

role of PTAs is advisory and limited to working closely with schools on issues of student and staff

The Level of Coordination and Integration between KETBs, PTAs and Schools
According to the responses obtained from schools directors, teachers and officials at Woreda Education Office, the coordination and work relationship between KETBs on the side and PTAs and schools on the other is characterized as being very minimal. During the interview the researcher asked PTAs and schools directors and they responded that KETBs are not fulfilling their duties and responsibilities given to them.

Human Resource Capacity of the Schools of the Woreda
Table 4 Capacity for Decentralized Education Service in the Woreda

Education Status	Dubti Woreda Education Office					
	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
Degree	6	4.46	1	0.01	7	4.01
Diploma	62	37.5	32	31	94	67.5
Certificate	96	58.18	70	67.9	156	115.9
Total	**165**	**100**	**103**	**100**	**268**	**186.6**

Source: Woreda Education Office (2011)

As can be inferred from the table 4, almost all the professionals are Diploma. According to the interview with schools directors and focus group discussion with teachers, most of the professionals of education office are political appointee. From this, it is possible to understand that the Woreda is found in condition manpower problem. The constraints of the Woreda manpower both in number and qualification

level creates big obstacle for the performance of the office to provide education services.
Thus, this situation has an impact in Education service delivery. Moreover, the Education Office of the Woreda mentioned that 90% of the directors in schools have qualification that is below national standards.

Financial Capacity in Education Service Delivery in the Woreda
Table: 6 Budget Allocation in Education Service Delivery in the Woreda (2002/03)

Sector	2002 E.C			2003		
	Amount	Cent	%	Amount	Cent	%
Education	4,851,610	00	47	5,712,714	02	48.5
Health	2,025,430	00	19.6	2,776,252	91	23.5
Agriculture	1,897,050	00	18	2,135,418	64	18
Water	2,78370	00	2.7	804,392	54	6.5
Administrations	1,254,821	00	12	1,345,952	42	11.4

Source: Woreda Finance and Economy office (2011)

As it inferred from the above table 6, there are great variations in the budget allocation for the sectors. Education has got the biggest share of the budget where as Administration, Health, Agricultural and Water sectors receive the lowest share. In the Woreda Education sector has got 47 percent in 2002 and 48.5 percent in 2003 E.C respectively. In the Woreda health sector has got 19.6 percent and 23.5percent in 2002 and 2003 E.C of the total budget respectively. Regarding agriculture sector, Woreda has got 18 percent in 2002 and 2003 E.C of the total budget respectively.

Even in Education where there is relatively better allocation the sector faces constraints. According to the respondents from school directors and teachers there is scarcity of budget for operation cost. The schools receive only stationery materials kind bought by operation budget allocated to them from the Woreda Education Office, which do not meet their annual requirement.

According to the book entitled Education Management, Community participation and Financ e Guideline produced by the Ministry of Education; schools in the Woreda are supposed to receive annually an amount of money calculated on the basis of 10 Birr, 15 birr and 20 birr per student for primary first cycle, primary second cycle, and high school respectively.

However, Table 6 below indicates that, the educational budget allocated per student is much lower than the national standard. When we compared with the Woreda budget allocated for the year 2000-2003 the per capital budget per student was 6.98birr, 7.95birr, 7birr, and 7.05birr, which is extremely below the standard. This happened because of severe budget constraint as the Woreda Education Office head and schools directors attested during the interview.

Environmental Influences on Education Service Delivery in the Woreda

One of the unique characteristics that make Afar National Regional State from other national regional states is that it is characterized by Pastoralist and Semi-Pastoralist. As interview made with Woreda Education Office Head and schools directors' desert climate influences Education Service Delivery in such a way that teacher cannot deliver the intended Education service to the students and students also cannot be motivated to learn due to the fact that they are moving from place to place as result of climate and their nomadic nature of life. This increase students' dropout and negatively affects education service delivery in the Woreda.

Woreda Education Office Officials assured that due to climate in the region there is no

regular rainfalls. Therefore, sometimes unexpected rainfalls erode people's houses, which can lead to the movement of peoples from one place to other place. This can also accelerates students' school dropout and inadequate education service delivery in the Woreda.

Woreda Administrator and Council of the Woreda also attested that even if they have a budget due to the unavailability of place they left to construct a school in the Woreda which can have an adverse impact on Education Service Delivery in the Woreda. This can be confirmed by Morrison (2009) living in remote settlements will have very different levels of exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity.

Socio-Economic and Cultural Problems

Moreover, discussions held with experts and officials of education bureau of pastoralist regions in various consultative meetings have revealed the prevalence of numerous bottlenecks that hinder the expansion of Quality education in pastoralist areas The down-trodden economic status of pastoralists that is mainly based on backward animal rearing practices and severely limits their capacity to support the education system financially and materially.

CONCLUSION

1.   In the Woreda the effort made to increase the number of schools and reenrollment rate is not a encouraging. Also, this achievement could not be replicated in the quality of education could not achieved which is affected by teacher-student ratio, classroom student ratio and text-student ratio.

2.   Support for decentralized education service delivery is premised on the understanding that local communities have better experience and knowledge about their environment and can therefore better identify their development needs and potentials and

initiate development activities that address these needs.

3.   In many instances, the introduction of decentralization policies aims, at among other things, providing a structural arrangement and encouraging practices that support the participation of the people in the planning, implementation, management, monitoring, control and evaluation of their development nevertheless, the participation of the people in the planning, implementation, management monitoring control and evaluation of their development is almost inexistent in the Woreda

4.   One important aspect of decentralized education service delivery concern is the degree to which there is effective cooperation and integration among stakeholders Ke bele Education Training Board, Parent Teacher Associations, schools and the commu nity. Such can happen at the community, schools and Woreda Education Office levels that facilitate the coordination of efforts and resources in the delivery of education service. Despite this reality, Woreda of Kebele Education Training Board and Parent Teacher Associations' have no coordination and integration.

5.   In order to manage and sustain decentralization for effective delivery of education service, it needs adequate capacity of manpower. Unfortunately, Woreda is endowed with a problem of manpower.

6.   Decentralized education service delivery requires ample amount of financial resource. In order to realize the decentralized education service duties and responsibilities, proportionate amount of budget should be decentralized to

Woreda Education Office and schools. However, lack of appropriate tax-base identification in the Woreda, the Woreda faces budget shortage. To this effect, capital budget is minimal.

7. Decentralized education service delivery requires available environment. However, Since Woreda is characterized by Desert; it is difficult to deliver education service delivery in the Woreda.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Schools in the Woreda have shortage of teachers both in number and qualification. However, decentralization program cannot be useful mechanism for enhanced and efficient education service delivery without well-trained professional and qualified teachers at a school level. Thus, the Woreda Education Office has to strengthen the capacity of manpower both in number and qualification at school level. Besides, it is commendable to give training for teachers.

2. One of the problems for decentralized education service delivery in the Woreda are lack of integration and cooperation of different actors such as Kebele Education T raining Board, parent teacher associations, and school in education service. This has an impact for education service delivery. Thus, in order to provide education service delivery sufficiently there must be coordination and integration of Kebele Education Training Board, Parent Teacher Associations, and school.

3. Although the block grant transfer has been increased for Woreda development in general and education service delivery in particular, Woreda own budget coverage is insignificant due to lack of appropriate tax base identification. Therefore, the Woreda should appropriately identify tax sources in the Woreda to increase its own revenue.

4. The practice of involving the community in identifying problems and prioritizing their needs, planning and monitoring in the provision of education is minimum. This situation is incompatible with decentralization principle: involving the community in identifying problems to implementing is crucial for true empowerment. So, the local governments and Woreda Education Officials should make an effort to practically involve the community in identifying problems, planning and closely monitoring school related activities.

5. Woreda has the decentralization education service delivery and the problems may not solve in a very short time with the communities and government alone. Hence, the Woreda should mobilize other stakeholders like non government organizations and Civil Organization to participate in filling the gaps of the Woreda to provide decentralization education service delivery.

6. Woreda Education should have to extend Education to nomadic communities that can be essential in raising basic literacy and numeracy skills among rural children of both sexes. The timing of semesters and the location of schools could be modified to better reflect the migratory cycles of nomadic families and pastoral students may well be better off attending schools even boarding schools in a rural setting instead of spending months at a time in the alien, relatively unsanitary environment and Woreda Education Officials would

African International Journal of Research in Management

consider the curriculum that must be adapted to meet local needs education in the Afar language and courses relevant to Woreda society.

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ABBREVIATIONS
ANRS-Afar National Regional States
E.C-Ethiopian Calendar
NGOs-Non Government Organizations
NFE-Non Formal Education
TTI-Teachers Training institute
WEO- Woreda Education Office
    ACRONYMS
EMA-Education Media Agency
ESDP -Education Sector Development Program
ETP-Education and Training Policy
FDRE- Federal Democratic Republic Of Ethiopia
FDREG-Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian Government
GoE- Government of Ethiopia
ICDR- Institute of Curriculum Development Research
KETB- Kebele Education and Training Board
PRSP- Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PASDEP-Plan Accelerated Sustainable Development Ending Poverty
TGE- Transitional Government of Ethiopia

USAID-According United States Agency for International Development
UNESCO-United Nation Economic, Social and Cultural Organization