Devolving Authority: Public Secondary Schools' Perception and Response to School-Based Management Policy in Indonesia

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Abstract: *In the post New Order Indonesia (from 1998) ideas about school based management in the education sector have become increasingly popular. One of the characteristics of this is devolving authority to the school level at least in three areas: staff, curriculum and budget. Using qualitative inquiry, the researchers collected data from schools and district level stakeholders in Mataram through questionnaire, interview, observation and document analysis to reveal their perception about devolving authority issues. It is found that the school started exercising some authorities that were previously in their superior officers' control, however some previous practices still conducted in conjunction with the school committees.*

Keywords: *school-based management; Indonesian education development; public secondary school; school committee*

Introduction

School based management policy is a popular form of educational reform that practiced in many parts of the world that has it challenges and confronts to school stakeholders. Basically, in order for the policy to succeed, it should take into account the real situations of schools, in particular the views and practices of

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educators, including school committee members. A researcher has published regard analysis of SBM policy in Indonesia (Sumintono, 2009) and thus this article will discuss the practices and views of school stakeholders about school based management in state secondary schools in Mataram, Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat. It will consider the views of principals, teachers, and school committee members. This article will firstly explore school based management issues as appeared in international scholarly publication, followed by research methodology and background information about respondents presented to give a context for the analysis of the data. Previous study like Chen (2011), Heyward, Cannon and Sarjono (2011), and Bandur (2012) discuss about primary school situation regard to this issue. This study intended to reveal stakeholders' understandings, perceptions and practices regarding the SBM policy and devolution of authority to schools at public general secondary schools context. This will illustrate the complexity of policy reform and its implementation at the school level.

Literature Reviews
Ainley and MacKenzie (2002, p. 1) stated that in the last thirty years "decentralization of decision making, increasing local authority and enhanced autonomy of schools have been common features of the reorganization of public education". This movement in North America, and by UNESCO, was labelled as school based management (see for example Brown, 1990; Leithwood and Menzies, 1998; Abu-Duhou, 1999; Payne, 2008; Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Meanwhile in the UK, it is more commonly known as the Local Management of Schools (LMS) (Bullock and Thomas, 1997). The terminology describing the policy

varies. Murphy and Beck (1995) have identified other terms, including school-site autonomy, school-site management, school-centered management, decentralized management, school-based budgeting, and shared governance.

Like decentralisation, the characteristics of school based management (hereafter called with SBM) and issues related to it can also vary depending on different perspective. Beck and Murphy (1998, p 359) for instance, claim that SBM is "a complex phenomenon that may be implemented in a variety of ways". Several other writers have already categorised SBM (Murphy and Beck, 1995; Leithwood and Menzies, 1998) and have identified key central elements, which are discussed in the sections which follow. They include definition and models, and emerging formal structures.

Definitions and Resources Transferred
From their extensive research on school based management in North America, Murphy and Beck (1995, p.13) conclude that many definitions emphasise "a major shift in the locus of decision-making responsibilities and alterations in the members of the decision making cast". Similarly, in perspective from an Asian country, Cheng (1996, p. 44) defines school based management as follows:

> that the school management tasks are set according to the characteristics and needs of the school itself and therefore school members (including board of directors, supervisor, principal, teachers, parents and students, etc.) have a much greater autonomy and responsibility for the use of resources to solve problems and carry out effective education activities, for the long term development of the school.

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The definition above show that in schools which practice SBM policy, transfer of authority takes place, giving school's some degree of decision making. In other words, autonomy is based on stipulated regulations. This is different from independent, private or non-state schools which are not supported regularly by public funds (Payne, 2008). The latter schools operate as self-governing schools.

The range of resources that devolved to SBM can also vary. Wohlstettter and Odden (1992) list at least three areas that schools minimally have authority over: budget, curriculum and personnel. More broadly, Caldwell and Spinks (1988, p. 5) explain that SBM authority can involve:

knowledge (decentralisation of decisions related to curriculum, including decisions related to the goals or ends of schooling); technology (decentralisation of decisions related to the means of teaching and learning); power (decentralisation of authority to make decisions); material (decentralisation of decisions related to the use of facilities, supplies and equipment); people (decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of people in matters related to teaching and learning); time (decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of time); and finance (decentralisation of decisions related to the allocation of money).

It appears that prior to the SBM movement, public schools in most countries were rigidly controlled, without much scope for those in leadership in governance roles to exercise full responsibility. However, many empirical studies about SBM have shown that the authority transferred to schools is often restricted. To illustrate, Wohlstetter and Odden (1992, p. 532) conclude, following reviews of several research projects, that "in sum, even where decision-making authority appears to have been delegated, the degree of real authority given to the site is often remarkably limited". In addition, a study by Meuret and Scheerens (in Leithwood and Menzies, 1998, p. 325) based on decisions at school level in public school systems in 14 countries, show that percentage of decision making approximate proportions to illustrate: "Ireland and New Zealand, greater than 70%; Sweden, 48%; Austria, Denmark, Finland, and Portugal, 38% to 41%; Belgium, France, Germany, Norway, Spain, and United States, 25% to 33%; and Switzerland, 10%." One of the explanations for this situation comes from Wohlstetter and Odden (1992), who suggest that where a district sees the school as its subordinate then that makes any authority relationship difficult to change. The implementation of decentralization in the form of SBM "appeared to be strongly influenced by districts politics". This is in fact not surprising, because the nature of the public school system is one of resistance to even minimal change, even with a decentralised policy.

Site Council and SBM Models

Murphy and Beck (1998, p. 14) noted that a "central feature of SBM is the site council". While site councils vary in composition and responsibilities, most writers agree that it is within a site council that school stakeholders such as principals, teachers, parents, community members and students do participate in decision making.

The site council is a form of community involvement in school governance, based on regulation, with elected but voluntary membership. Certainly the intention behind site councils is to implement democratic participatory decision making. Rose (2003) differentiates community participation in schools as ranging from

genuine participation to pseudo-participation. Rose (2003, p. 47) writes that:

> genuine participation, implying the ability to take part in real decision making and governance, where all members have equal power to determine the outcome of decision and share in a joint activity…'pseudo participation' is, at best a consultative process whereby citizens are merely kept informed of developments at the school level, and are expected to accept decisions that have already been made.

McGinn and Welsh (1999) illustrate participation as a series of steps. The lower steps refer to exercising authority about building maintenance, after which authority relating to budgets, then transferred authority to make budgets (which involves hiring and firing personnel). The final step relates to authority over curriculum decision making.

A study by Rentoul and Rosanowski (2000) offers a useful map of the site council continuum from advisory role to governing role (from informing, to influencing, co-determining and finally determining). One example, in the beginning of SBM implementation in Alberta, Canada, there were no site councils (Caldwell, 1994), but then in the 1990s site councils were established, although they generally played an advisory role to the principal.

A number of models have also emerged from empirical studies on school based management. Wohlstetter and Odden (1992), and Murphy and Beck (1995) propose three models, based on who has control over decision making: administrative control (the principal is dominant in terms of power and control), professional control (teachers are dominant), community control (parents/community members are dominant).

School based management modelled on administrative control strengthens the principal's role to be more accountable. In particular, the principal has to serve the students well with efficient use of school resources as these relate to the budget, personnel and curriculum. Edmonton district in Alberta, Canada is a good example of this model, which, according to its proponents, increases school responsiveness, accountability and effectiveness (Brown, 1990).

In the professional control model of SBM, the basic assumption is that teachers as professionals know better and they are the ones with the most relevant knowledge of students. In addition, it is argued that this model increases participation. Because teachers make their own decisions about school business, this model increases employee involvement, thereby improving efficiency, effectiveness and better results (Leithwood and Menzies, 1998). Wohlstetter and Odden (1992) noted that in Los Angeles, California, this model of SBM emerged because half of the composition of site councils was reserved for teachers and the council had discretion to make decisions.

A community controlled model of SBM exists when parents and community members are the majority on a site council. This model works well as governing body when its roles are clearly defined by regulations. This can lead to increased accountability to the community and greater customer satisfaction. As its name implies, in this model it is community people not professional in schools who are in control. The model promotes the preferences and values of parents in terms of what they think are best for their children. McGinn and Welsh (1999, p. 32) argue that this model "signals a loss of public confidence in professional expertise". Since 1989, New Zealand's education reform has adopted this model of

SBM. For secondary schools, SBM extended the existing roles of its governing body, but for primary schools SBM was a really significant change (Wylie, 1995). Boards of trustees in New Zealand, the name given to the site council, have five elected parent representatives, one teacher representative (elected), the principal and one student for high schools, as stipulated by the Education Act (Wylie, 1995). Somewhat similarly, in Chicago, USA, the majority of the local school council should be six parents and two community representatives, out of total 11 to 12 members (Leithwood and Menzies, 1998).

The balance control model is intended "to make better use of teachers' knowledge for key decision making in the school, as well as to be more accountable to parents and the local community" (Leithwood and Menzies, 1998, p. 331). Both parents and teachers have equal numbers on the site council, with decision making powers regarding the budget, personnel and curriculum. This model requires that parents and the local community act as partners with the school. The model also calls teachers to be responsive to the values of the communities in which schools reside.

One negative aspect of site councils as suggested by Bray (2003, p. 37), is that they "in many cases lack expertise and understanding of their responsibilities". Bray argues that this is because members are volunteers. Furthermore, in developing countries, site councils are generally made up of people who mainly come from elite sections of the community, do not always have concerns for disadvantaged groups, and sometimes take school resources for their own purposes (Bray, 2003).

Methodology

When researcher uses particular approach theoretically and methodologically to certain research problems in the topic under study, it is called research orientation (Cumming, 1994). Merriam (1998) wrote that in social sciences research orientation can be divided into three perspectives: positivist, interpretive and critical research. Interpretive orientation is used in this research. This means the researcher doing inductive reasoning to explain educational activities comprehended by stakeholders. Interpretive research tries to uncover "the rules of the game" which deal with multiple realities that are constructed by respondents; whereas the 'game' in this study is school based management, the 'rules' is the regulation, and respondents' opinions and experiences related to the issue. In short, as Merriam (2002, p. 6) stated "the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation or phenomenon, this meaning is mediated through the researcher as instrument, the strategy is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive".

School based management practices at public general state secondary schools in Mataram, Lombok, is the phenomenon and the unit of analysis in this study. Mataram is the capital city of West Nusa Tenggara province chosen as one of the vibrant city in East Indonesia. There were five state secondary schools participated out of seven when data collection were conducted. Although a study might take place on several sites, it can be counted as a single phenomenon. This fits with Stake's (2000, p. 437) classification on the nature of the case which can be identified as a 'collective case study'. A case study approach is also useful in terms of gathering data for qualitative analysis (Yin, 1994; Stake, 2000).

The participants of this study involve people from district level and school level. The researchers collect data using four different techniques: questionnaires, interviews, observations and document analysis. The different instruments are adopted to ensure that rich data and information can be obtained in this research (Punch, 2009). The questionnaires were only given to respondents at school level, there were 5 principals, 57 teachers and 21 school committee members who participated. There were 4 principals, 6 teachers and 5 school committee members were individually interviewed at the time and place convenient to both the researchers and participants. The questions asked to the participants are meant to find the answers of the questions that are posed in this study. All the interviews were recorded using an analog voice recorder. A number of observations were conducted in schools and classrooms to obtain a deep understanding as to the process that relate to school based management issues (two out of five secondary schools participated in site studies during two months). These observations were used as a means to validate the information provided by the participants in the interviews. Documents such as school committee reports, school strategic plan and school budget were collected and analyzed. Analyzing these documents enrich the information obtained in this research.

The data analysis involves the process of data reduction and simplification (Miles & Huberman, 2005). The data of this research uploaded into NVivo software. With this tool, themes emerging from the data were identified and coded. These themes supported with important narratives from the interviews were included in the reporting the findings of this research.

Findings and Discussion
Authority Devolved to School
Table 1 shows the views of three respondent groups regarding the authority they think that schools can exercise trough questionnaire. Although the three groups responded slightly differently, they agreed that a school development plan, managing school facilities

Table 1. Authority devolved to school

What kinds of authorities do you think that can be given to school?[1]		
Principals: N= 5	school development plan	5
	managing school facilities	5
	staff management	5
	generating other resources	5
	budget allocation and management	4
	student management	4
	teachers training	3
	curriculum management	2
Teachers: N = 57	managing school facilities	44
	budget allocation and management	41
	school development plan	38
	student management	33
	curriculum management	29
	staff management	25
	teachers training	25
	generating other resources	24
School Committee N= 21	school development plan	16
	managing school facilities	14
	budget allocation & management	12
	student management	10
	generating other resources	10
	teachers training	10
	curriculum management	9
	staff management	8

Notes: [1] respondent can answer more than one choice

and budget allocation and management are the three key roles that should be transferred to schools. However, it was found that, Indonesian state secondary schools had already exercised these kinds of de facto authority for years. In this sense, it was not a new thing for school stakeholders. However SBM policy made this authority more salient, requiring all schools to use strategic management tools (such as SWOT analysis to make their own vision and mission statements), plan for the school's future, and identify resources.

As a group, the principals were in favour of authority transfer to schools; generally they wanted all authority to be devolved to site levels. With regard to teacher training, only three of the principals thought it could be organised in schools and only two out of 5 principals felt that curriculum management should be authorised by the school. In the previous and present systems government regulation stated that only the central office had the responsibility for curriculum issues. The following comment from two principals reflected this concern:

> In managing the school, with SBM policy, it was given much flexibility to develop itself and that included curriculum management, based on regulation of course, but it was not unlimited freedom. We also have flexibility in instruction and its management and source of fund (I-8)[1].
> The basic foundation of SBM in the decentralisation era is school autonomy and participatory decision making which involves all school stakeholders (I-16).

These statements from principals show their knowledge and awareness about the issue, but this awareness did not emerge from

[1] I-8, is "I" was the code for data from interview, and "8" was the number of the participants in my list.

teachers or school committee members. For principals, SBM can be used to legitimate extra school activities such as an English day programme (compulsory English speaking in school for a whole day), building refurbishment and improving student discipline. Those efforts regarded as innovation that make the school look better, and will make their school impress by the public.

Teachers on the whole felt that the authority for making decisions regarding maintenance, budget, school plan, student and curriculum ought to be devolved to schools. Less than half the teachers felt that schools should have authority for staff management and teacher training. It appears that many teachers did not think that schools would give them better service than the present district-centralised system.

About one half of the school committee members felt that managing students, generating other resources and teacher training should be devolved to schools. In contrast, committee members did not see schools managing curriculum and staff. These views were similar to the views of other stakeholders; and were indicative of their belief in a limited school capacity.

Several comments from the questionnaire and interview data revealed some of these issues. Two school supervisors, for instance, explained what they saw happening in the schools:

> One of the real obstacles in schools and for school principals particularly, is that they don't fully understand the changing system. As a result, in many schools we could find many principals who are not used to school autonomy as an opportunity. This is because under the previous system the practice was to wait for technical instruction from our superior officers. Furthermore, there was little training and preparations for this to occur (I-1).

In terms of substantive change, I don't see any significant
things happening at school. This is because the changes involve
a way of thinking and attitude, which are not simple (I-2).

One teacher had also had similar view about what occurred at
the school level:

Institutionally I think our school is not ready to take its' own
action as mandated on the SBM system. In addition we also
have what I call 'centralisation syndrome' which means we don't
have courage to take any action without the superior officer at
district level knowing about the content of decision. As far as I
know, there is no principal who takes such actions which is his
legitimate authority without obtaining agreement from
education district office (I-13).

These three explanations above indicate who the participants
believe is the real authority on education in the autonomy era. It is
not surprising that the principals were the individuals who most
fully understood this situation because they were selected by the
bureaucratic process. If they made unfavourable decisions without
consultation with their superior, these could jeopardise their
careers. So it was prudent to simply follow the traditional means
of decision-making.

However, when an official from an education district office
was asked about authority that could be executed by schools, his
response was as follows:

Devolved authority is a good thing, but it can become a really
big problem when directed by an incompetent principal. It can
destroy the school. However, if the principal is good, the school
can make great achievements (I-7).

This officer seemed to think that the important component
for SBM was a good school principal. Schools would not be ready
to manage themselves unless they had a good principal. This

respondent's perspective also suggested that devolving power did
not necessarily result in a competent principal.

Another issue related to the perception by principals and
superior officers about what constituted a good school. A school
supervisor describes it as follows:

I really understand that most principals perceived the success of
their leadership was not based on intangible things, something
ideal, such as managing the school to become more
independent. But they perceived physical appearance such as
refurbishment of school buildings, new painting of fence and
fine-looking school yard as the indicator of school achievement
(I-1).

A different view was expressed by a teacher, who saw that one
impact of the implementation of SBM policy was reducing the
uniformity that had usually been practiced during the previous
regime:

If there is no uniformity about regulations, this would result in
the community complaining, especially in terms of new student
entrance requirements (Q-65)[2].

The above comments are undoubtedly indicative of the extent
of influence of the previously centralised system. The comment
indicates that some teachers regard change as likely to pose risks to
their careers. It cannot be denied that devolved authority to
manage dissimilar problems and priorities is likely to pose different
challenges for different schools. In the Indonesian situation,
student admission to certain public school has the potential to
become big news. This is because of the way good quality schools
are perceived and competition for places in schools is high.

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[2] "Q" was the code for data from questionnaire, and "65" was the number of the
participants in my list.

Further, in state secondary schools nowadays, entrance is not only based on academic performance but also on the willingness of parents to pay funds to the school.

Interviews with groups of respondents revealed that student admission was most critical because strategic manoeuvres by each party ensured maximum influence to achieve their intentions. This is because state secondary schools were perceived as directly responsible for achieving a better future for students. As a result, a school's authority, particularly the principals', in terms of student admission is marginalised. One state secondary school has to follow community pressure to accept students from a nearby school as one principal illustrated:

We plan to accept four parallel classes; each class consisting of 40 students. But, people who live close by school, the sub-district government official forces us to accept more, and so in the end we have six classes which contain of 48 students per class, which is certainly too many (I-8).

For other schools, the party who usually persuades the school to increase the number of student admissions is superior officers (the mayor and education district office):

Our school has to add one class (40 students), because they demanded that. We can do nothing about that even when we explain we don't have enough class rooms for that (I-20).

As a principal who originally was a science teacher, I feel ashamed. This is because we use the science laboratory as a regular class room. We just follow orders to increase new student numbers (I-16).

Moreover beside this there are also personal requests to the principal, usually from officials in the education district office, to enrol certain students. Undoubtedly this results in conflicts of interest. One principal noted:

Student admission is a sensitive practice and at times intervention occurs from outside.. It is because students who do not pass the test can actually be accepted because they are the child of an important government official. This is unfair to others, and makes me have sleeping problems…. Sometimes I can refuse one or two but as a result my superior officer gets really angry with me (I-20).

Another principal, however, welcomed the request:

Because we have specific instruction from the mayor which states 'children who live close to school shouldn't be rejected as students.…..There was also a new student enrolled in our school, the father was an important bureaucrat and had recently transferred to this city.... the district education office gave me an unofficial request to admit the student, so I just put him into our school. It seems everybody was happy (I-12).

What this all implies is that student admissions are an indicator of authority and one way in which the degree of school autonomy can be measured.

Financial management authority

With regard to devolved authority relating to finances, the view of the three groups of school stakeholders appeared to be the same (Table 2). It seems the groups consistently held similar views regarding priority and the nature of financial authority.

For a long time, all stakeholders knew that one of a school's main tasks was planning the school budget. For stakeholders, this was a priority task. As public institutions, state schools were regularly provided with funds from the central government through a block grant to the district government for salaries and operational costs (recurrent budget). Yet, stakeholders' ranked the management of government funds second, compared to managing funds from parents, which was ranked first. This ranking

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supports the view that money from parents was seen as more significant for schools. Further, unlike funds from the government which is often outside their influence in terms of the amount and timing of receipt, the money from parents comes on a regular basis (monthly), and is more flexible in terms of spending. Parental funds are decided by schools and remain in the hands of the schools. Schools use these funds to meet their needs, because funds for operational costs from the government are very limited even for the school's basic expenses such as electricity, water, telephone bill and paper. For the school staff the funds are a source of additional income for them as well, depending upon their hours of teaching and position.

Table 2. Schools authority in terms of financial management

What kinds of authorities in terms of financial management do you think that can be given to the schools?[1]		
Principals: N= 5	planning for school's budget	5
	managing fund from government	4
	changing budget allocation	2
	managing teachers salary	1
Teachers: N = 57	planning for school's budget	53
	managing fund from parents	44
	managing fund from government	37
	changing budget allocation	17
	managing teachers salary	7
	I don't know	1
School Committee N= 21	planning for school's budget	21
	managing fund from parents	20
	managing fund from government	14
	changing budget allocation	10
	managing teachers salary	2

Notes: [1] respondent can answer more than one choice

When respondents were asked about changing budget allocations, there appeared to be little support for this. Participants felt that schools were restricted by government regulation, particularly for funds from the government. The idea of managing teachers' salaries, giving the school the right to decide their salaries and to deliver these regularly, was not considered favourably. Few respondents supported this kind of devolved financial authority. Participants felt that managing teachers' salaries is a difficult task and school administrations do not has the capacity to satisfactory handle it.

Data from interviews were consistent with the questionnaire. Two significant issues emerged in terms of financial management in school: the funds from the government and from the parents. But these two funds had different sources and were treated differently.

Dealing with the routine fund that incorporated the yearly school budget was mainly the authority and responsibility of the principal. Deliberations regarding it were conducted mostly in secret, from it's planning to reporting stages, even after the introduction of the SBM policy. The following comment from a teacher typifies the common practice that happened in many schools:

> The routine fund comes from the government; we do not know how much it is. According to the principal, the school committee members and the teachers are not allowed to know about it. In short, most principals have an attitude that they do not want to share such information. Only two people have access to it [the principal and school treasurer]. As a result we do not know about the routine fund contribution to the school budget, it could be that some bills are paid twice from two sources [routine fund and parent's money] (I-13).

A school committee member who had been experienced as a member of BP3 in two consecutive periods (about 6 years) expressed a similar view:

> Regarding the routine fund, we are not involved at all. The routine fund is managed by the principal. But the school committee may be invited to talk about it and make the decision   (I-11).

The above comments indicate who is significantly in control of the school budget, particularly the routine fund from the district government.

In the autonomy era, contrary to the previous system where funding was directly given to the school from central office, state secondary schools had to deal with considerable bureaucratic red tape at the mayor's office in order to obtain non-salary funds (to meet school operational costs). It often did not come in the full amount and was delayed. That is one reason why schools relied on money from parents.

With regards to the fund that came from parents, the budgeting process was somewhat different. This is because at the beginning many parties were involved and shared information. Usually the budget planning process was started at the end of academic year (June). The draft was mainly developed by the principal and then given to a delegated teacher. Undoubtedly, the budget proposal had more than one draft. The following comment from a teacher (I-21) illustrates this:

> Researcher (R): How is the school budget proposed to the committee?
>
> Participant (P): The school proposes the budget to the committee and I make the budget plan for this academic year. Actually I made ten budget plans over one week.
>
> R: Why do you have to make that many plans?

> P: The ten budget plans were shown to the principal, and then he with the committee choose and decide which one is appropriate.
>
> R: What are the differences between those ten budget plans?
>
> P: Basically it is the amount of monthly school fee that has to be paid by parents. The principal and the committee select which one is the best, and then the committee will release this to the parents in the committee general meeting. Certainly the meeting is the most risky one, because it could be the parents don't agree…. After the budget officially is accepted, we disseminate the details to teachers and administration staff. This ensures they know about the amount of money they will receive and are aware of the kind of school programmes that are funded from the parents' money.

The principal (I-16) from another state secondary school explains the process slightly differently as follows:

> The budget plan was developed only by the principal. I made a draft then we discussed it in a meeting with teachers and administration staff, collected comments and made revisions. After that we asked the school committee members to brainstorm about the programmes that were to be funded by the budget.. The committee were always curious about the program that we planned, and asked, why is there urgency for this? This then led to another revision of the budget plan and agreement reached. Early in the academic year we print the budget plan and distribute it to parents at the annual school meeting. Subsequently, there was bargaining with parents [about amount of school fee].

Those two quotations indicate that the budget planning process with the parents' money was more transparent and democratic than the government fund, certainly as far as these respondents were concerned.

In contrast, some parents considered the method of developing the school budget manipulative. Only parents of new students were invited, the meeting agenda had already been drawn up by the school, it followed its interests, and there little time was provided for understanding or questioning it. Many believed that parents were driven by the school to accept the plan without listening to their concerns. This practice is similar to what happened with the POMG and the BP3 in the previous era. In addition, inflation accumulation since the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the perception that state schools are of superior quality, resulted in 'stipulated' school fees which became a burden to the average parents' financial situation.

Two state secondary schools which volunteered details of their school budget documents, and these revealed interesting information. Firstly, in terms of total amount, parents' money collected by the school in a year was much greater than the operational fund from the government. According to Supriadi's (2003) study, state secondary schools are regularly given around 30 million rupiahs (equivalent to US$ 3,000) for operational costs from the government annually. However the two site study schools could collect 10 to 15 times that amount. Secondly, 40% of the fund was allocated to school staffs (which already had regular salary as civil servants) based on their position (principal, vice-principals, administration staff, teachers); an additional amount of money also based on teachers' teaching time and extra responsibility (such as home-room teachers, teachers responsible for extracurricular activities, and teachers who were assistant to vice-principals). Thirty percent of the fund was allocated for non-permanent staff (non-civil servants) and an additional fund to cover school over-head costs; around 20% of the fund is used to support teaching and learning processes. Thirdly, what the school indicated about

their innovative programmes was under-funded and unsustainable. This is because many programmes that were listed in the budget plan were in the main not supported with enough funding or had inadequate capacity to fulfil the programme, its intention was more to show that the school had a wonderful plan.

From a legal perspective, public secondary schools that collect funds from parents don't have enough legislation and regulation to back up their actions. Although in the budget plan stated by the education district office a 'school levy' regulation existed, and a circular from the mayor commented on its use this did not make it legitimate. Moreover, the school committee also stipulated that an additional amount of money had to be contributed by parents regularly, which was 55% higher than the 'school levy' stipulated by the head of district education office. However, nobody questioned this kind of activity - school stakeholders such as principals, teachers, parents, and the community regarded it as something ordinary and were accustomed to it.

Undoubtedly, this kind of fund is very flexible for the school in terms of spending, which is not a characteristic of the routine fund. A principal explained it as follows:

As long as we talk about our request and give clear and rational argument for that to the parents' representative, they will provide authorization. Changing allocation of the budget should be informed and accountable. So, changing school budget allocations is permitted as long as they know about it (I-16).

On one hand, funds from parents are becoming a significant contribution towards school operational costs (non-salary budget). On the other hand, this did not result in a bigger bargaining position for parents or their representatives on the school committee. A school supervisor explained this issue as follows:

Some principals don't want to be controlled at all by the school committee. However, it depends on each individual. Although the principal in some schools may have that attitude, in terms of financial accountability he must make it very clear. It was not only implementing what the principal wants…..at least before the money is spent there was an agreement from the committee (I-2).

One school tried to involve as many parties as possible in the school budgeting process for all funds. The principal, who has a postgraduate degree from an overseas university, used different practices to empower teachers in relation to the school budget. The following comment illustrates this:

For transparency in our school, the practice at the beginning of the academic year was to appoint a teacher responsible for a certain program.. There was a teacher responsible for religious instruction, increasing academic performance program, vocational activity, information technology, sport activity, (etc.) ... outside the vice-principals who have their own program. Then other teachers were grouped to each program, to make their own budget plan together. After that, all plans were gathered, related to the available funds for that year, and then a spreadsheet was developed. One example … for the sport activity the teacher he will know where the money to finance sporting activity will come from; it could be from the management operational assistance fund … some million rupiahs [routine fund], and from BP3 [parents] another million rupiahs etc…Each teacher who had such responsibility knew the amount of his/her budget in a year including its source. As the principal I monitor what is happening (I-8).

One teacher who came from the same school was interviewed and confirmed the principal's explanation (I-22). Interviews and observations in other schools revealed, however, that such practice was not common.

Authority in Staff Management

Unlike the results discussed in previous sub-sections, participants' responded differently regarding the matter of authority in staff management. It seemed that each group had a different priority regarding this issue. Data from questionnaires and interviews indicated a number of complex issues surrounding devolved authority on staff management.

As a group, the principals felt that schools should be responsible for selecting and recruiting administrative staff (Table 3). Their attitude shows that the principal's job as school administrator depends on the administration staff who were often seen as inadequately trained. Unlike teachers who have a university education, nearly all administrative staff were secondary school graduates. Principals found their close supervision of the day-to-day activities of administrators was not beneficial. They felt that the administrative staff did not provide the kind of adequate performance required, which is generally consistent with how others think about the public sectors (see for example Rohdewohld, 2003; Filmer and Lindauer, 2001). The teachers' response revealed a similar perspective. Only school committee members who were not involved in daily school activities had a different view. A total of eight out of 21 school committee members agreed with such devolved authority.

Respondent groups felt that the evaluation of teachers' performance should be a devolved authority. Principals already exercised annual performance assessment for the teacher as a government employee. But this evaluation was administrative and too general. The teachers' performance evaluation in teaching and learning was still conducted by the district office, but this exercise was basically a paper exercise, and did not measure the

Table 3. Schools authority in terms of staff management

What kinds of authorities in terms of staff management do you think that can be given to the schools?[1]		
Principals: N= 5	administrative staff recruitment	5
	teacher performance evaluation	5
	teacher professional development	3
	teacher recruitment	2
	principal recruitment	1
Teachers: N = 57	teacher professional development	42
	teacher performance evaluation	41
	administrative staff recruitment	28
	principal recruitment	18
	teacher recruitment	15
	I don't know	5
School Committee N= 21	teacher performance evaluation	16
	teacher professional development	14
	administrative staff recruitment	8
	teacher recruitment	4
	principal recruitment	1
	I don't know	1

Notes: [1] respondent can answer more than one choice

effectiveness of teachers' work (see Nielsen, 2003). So the idea that schools appraise teachers was not only supported by principals, but also by teachers and school committee members. It seemed that principals were confident about their own abilities to undertake performance evaluation of teachers.

However for the teachers, their professional development was their priority (42 out of 57 were in favour). This was not a coincidence since most in-service training was organised and conducted by their superior officers who were education district officers, provincial officers or officers from central office. From the

teachers' point of view, professional development sessions generally made them feel disempowered (see for instance Thair and Treagust, 2003). To them, the professional development activities use one-way communication, with the main purpose being to socialise them into new government policy or educational innovation. A representative from the teachers union argues that this is why it does not empower teachers:

The administrative purpose is the essential purpose. .... it is just to spend the money. They don't think some kind of need analysis is required, which would demonstrate different needs for different teachers. Experienced biology teachers, for example, their need for professional development is different from novice teachers. They don't care about it, that's why the results are far from optimal (I-3).

On the other hand, teachers who attend professional development training had free time from their teaching. Furthermore, they got additional money just by attended the training and sometimes an opportunity to see other places. Unsurprisingly, for training in other provinces or in the capital city, teachers were competing to get the chance.

One promise that came with the implementation of the SBM policy was that professional development for teachers could be conducted as they wanted. However, there appeared to be no changing practice regarding this issue. As indicated in this comment from a school supervisor, change at the school level was not happening:

Any kind of previous professional development efforts for teachers at district level like PKG [*pemantapan kerja guru*, the strengthening of teachers' work] or MGMP [*musyawarah guru mata pelajaran*, the consultation of subject teachers] organised by bureaucrats didn't work very well. Then we came to the idea, why don't we give money directly to the teachers and let them

make their own program for professional development at school level. Unfortunately, this idea was not supported by a group of principals, they were afraid. They even influenced the education district office to ensure this did not happen, and suggested it would be best to implement another year… a buying time strategy (I-2).

However, the ideas of recruiting principals and teachers at the school level were not supported by all groups of respondents. Only one out of five principals, one school committee members from 21 participants, and 18 out of 57 teachers agreed that schools should select their own principals. These small numbers demonstrate that delegating this kind of authority may be far too ambitious at this time. These views also parallel responses about schools recruiting their own teaching staff. Teachers, in particular, considered this to be a low priority. A comment from a teacher reflected this view:

At this time only half-policy about SBM is really implemented, which means only some particular and trivial things get done. Far too difficult for it to include exercising authority about principal selection, I think that's very hard (I-15).

Becoming a principal in Indonesia's state secondary schools is regarded as a privilege by many. The principal is selected through a very routines bureaucratic selection process between senior teachers. Once a person is selected, it is unlikely s/he will return to work as a teacher in the future. This means that the system will maintain s/he to continue as a member of this exclusive group with 'powers' in the education sector. Principals also have an opportunity to obtain more prestigious positions later. So it is not surprising to see the principal's perspective appearing to support their own interest.

A teacher who opposes principal recruitment by schools explains his concerns as follows:

I am afraid, that if we choose our own principal, then the person, who emerges, based on popular vote, may be a dictator or may be obsessed with the need for respect. This will result in very bad impacts on the school (Q-65).

A school committee member also believes that the real implication of selecting principal by school committee will create a worse situation:

I think that will be more risky to the school. How do the committee members know which principal candidate is better? Nowadays it should be acknowledged that we are faced with nepotism, when the committee has a right to principal selection the level of nepotism will be higher (I-11).

These two perspectives implied that a 'democratic election' to recruit principals by school stakeholder was not advisable either. A teacher and a school committee member thought the worse case scenario involved a lack of capacity to judge possible principal candidate which can result in favouritism based on nepotism. In another response, it was suggested that teachers generally were inadequate to become principals. An official at district level supported this view:

At this time, we can choose someone to become principal from eligible teachers but most of them are unqualified. There are few who are qualified, they may be too young and his/her rank position is not sufficient. Also we are not ready for a young person to become principal. In short, still lots of obstacles (I-7).

However, by contrast, another teacher supported the idea of principal selection by the school. But he believed that teachers should have this authority:

I think school committee members do not know much about the performance of each teacher. Only teachers at the school who are acknowledgeable about a particular teacher if s/he is suitable, capable or smart enough to become a principal. The

teachers should be given rights to choose their own principal (I-21).

He believed that teachers know more than school committee members, and that this should be a leverage to use in gaining what teachers want.

Others responded differently – some believed that the best way was by a clear and transparent mechanism. Comments from two education council members illustrate this as follows:

In the previous system, the appointment of principal was merely based on like and dislike. A new principal can be completely unaccustomed to our school situation. At this time we want at least school stakeholders to be asked about who they want… if they have a candidate, or the authority can be given some alternatives before appointment (I-4).

Principal selection at school level obviously will draw conflict between school, school committee, district education office and of course the mayor. The first thing that has to be established is a mechanism for that, it should be open and fair for every party (I-23).

With regards to teachers' recruitment at school level several issues were also identified. All secondary schools which participated in this study reported that currently some teachers were needed to teach particular subjects, although it would probably be a long wait before appointments were made. A principal explains this situation as follow:

From the school side, we have a responsibility to ask the district education district for some teachers. A couple of days ago I asked for a qualified teacher….just move him to our school. But, the office answer was that we will consider that later, just use who is already eligible (I-20).

Because it was difficult to attract teachers via the district government, the school itself selected non-permanent teaching

staff. This response from a teacher illustrates an experience which others have had:

Usually the vice-principal for curriculum affairs tells the principals that there is no teacher for specific subject matter or that a particular teacher has a heavy teaching job. Then they look for a nonpermanent teacher, they select from available candidates who meet requirements. The principal and one teacher decided which one passed the selection (I-15).

In contrast, for the appointment of a permanent teacher (civil servant teacher) the schools did not have any choice except to receive who was appointed. So the notion that schools could select their own permanent teachers was an appealing idea for principals and teachers. One principal who was excited with this possibility noted that the:

Principal should be given authority to appoint and fire permanent teachers and administration staff (Q-22).

Teachers also supported the idea because they found that the performance of permanent teachers was not always satisfactory. Three permanent teachers from three different secondary schools shared their experience regarding their counterparts:

Regarding teacher's recruitment, schools can only take it for granted and cannot select and refuse who is coming to our school. This is our weakness, we do nothing about it. There are some teachers who have big problem here, we cannot reject or fire them because they are government employees who hold an official appointment letter from the government (I-19).

We have difficulty in dealing with teachers who sometimes come late to the class or their teaching work is inadequate. They were permanent teachers and it was difficult to fix (I-15).

I always find it frustrating when I have to manage students in relation to teacher absence. That is our classic problem. I only can give suggestions to the principal regarding that teacher's

performance, but mostly there was no good solution (I-13).

As a result, permanent teacher selection was viewed a key task that many wanted devolved to the school level. This was because the school could have greater flexibility to manage permanent teachers and minimise bad performance.

Another sensitive issue that emerged more openly in Indonesia during the autonomy era related to diversity. For example, one educator wrote:

Enhancing nationalism, abolish preference which is based on race, culture, religion, ethnicity/local identity (Q-64).

This view has become more accepted and was practiced at the district level across Indonesia, in terms of new government employee recruitment or appointments to strategic positions (see for example Sagala, 2003; Soewartoyo, 2002). The respondents undoubtedly perceived that if the school was given the power to recruit principals and teachers, then some preferences were likely to be shown. Like other areas in Indonesia, Lombok has people from diverse community backgrounds within its education sector and one group (usually the local ethnicity) dominant in its bureaucracy. Other groups who are minorities in the local population (but usually the majority in their place of origin, such as Javanese in Java) often do not really enjoy such privileges.

A school supervisor who came from another island also indicated the possibility of this becoming an issue:

I have a concern that the employee recruitment mode in the future may be based not on the quality of candidates, but on their identity, using the authority opportunity that is given by autonomy. My worry is that there is something sad in this regional autonomy policy that a person who governs education, because of the autonomy spirit, has to be governed by local people. I think this one is not a possibility anymore. It is a reality (I-1).

A teacher who was born in Lombok also had a similar perspective:

I hate to see preferences such as ones based on locality or religion for a reason, they hide themselves from incapability. It is not fair and also it will jeopardize the future of this island (I-15).

However, two respondents who had years of experience in government positions acknowledged the practice could happen and suggested solutions for that. An official from the education district office argued as follows:

Let's see what happened in Java. Central Javanese civil servants cannot get a position if they worked in East Java, and vice versa. Even in Bali, for a long time that was the common practice. I think in Lombok the situation is different, we welcome the others. Of course with the autonomy, there were people who use this opportunity. It is something that cannot be avoided, so we have to establish a regulation about that (I-7).

Authority in curriculum management

Table 4 shows participants' responses about the 'core business' of schools - curriculum management. Only teachers, amongst the respondent groups favoured devolved authority to schools for curriculum management. It seems that teachers are ready to implement it without hesitation.

From the principals' point of view, teaching methods, and curriculum development along with textbook choice are favoured areas for devolved authority. There seemed to be less support for other teaching materials and the graduation examination. These choices certainly reflect the position of principals more than education officials who tend to stick to current regulations. For instance, on the one hand, principals favour being able to decide which textbooks showed be used in school, but on the other hand

other they do not support control new other teaching materials. This is because any textbook that is used in school has to be short-listed through a central government selection process, but other teaching materials mainly come from teachers' efforts to enrich students' learning.

Table 4. Schools authority in terms of curriculum management

In terms of curriculum management, what kind of authority do you think that schools can be exercised?[1]		
Principals:	teaching methods	4
N= 5	curriculum development	4
	textbook choice	4
	teaching materials	3
	graduation examination	2
Teachers:	teaching methods	49
N = 57	teaching materials	44
	graduation examination	40
	curriculum development	37
	textbook choice	33
School	teaching materials	14
Committee	curriculum development	14
N= 21	teaching methods	11
	textbook choice	10
	graduation examination	9

Notes: [1] respondent can answer more than one choice

Unlike principals, school committee members chose other teaching materials as their first choice for devolved authority. However their perceptions tended to be different to those of teachers and principals. A comment from a school committee member is indicative of the difference:

Choices of curriculum, book and other teaching materials should be based on national standards, not devolved authority (Q-17).

For principals and school committee members, the idea that schools should create their own graduation examinations received the lowest priority. But for each group it was based on different reasons. The principals considered that the MoNE should continue to conduct the final examination. This process involved the central government having veto over planning, implementation and establishing passing standards to be achieved by students. For committee members, quality and state certification tended to be their main motives as most of them were higher educated parents who wanted their children to pursue higher education.

Other issues raised by a teacher reflected some of the wider concerns:

There needs to be a streamlining of teaching subjects and curriculum loads. School infrastructure needs upgrading to support teaching and learning in terms of school based management (Q-64).

The points above are classic complaints by teachers about Indonesia's school curriculum. Teachers have, for some time, felt that there are too many subjects to teach to students and an over-whelming syllabus in each subject. In addition, teachers regard, there was having been no changing practice regarding this, especially with regard to the curriculum target which has to be completely delivered to students in an academic year. One teacher complained as follows:

The principal said we had come to the end of the curriculum target. There were no such things like mastery learning, he

never thought about it. The curriculum targets were to be 100% delivered, if there was a teacher who wrote 75% or 80%, this became a big question (I-13).

Another teacher sharing his experience and noted that:

The principal and school supervisor always had concerns about the curriculum target and its level of absorbability. Curriculum target had to be 100% delivered, and its level of absorbability reaches the same point. I had a heated discussion with a supervisor regarding this, but the answer is very clear, we have to follow the establishment (I-17).

Those views reflect the facts that for teachers, having authority in curriculum management is positive for them. They hoped that one of the outcomes of the transfer of this authority would be to resolve such concerns. It is a hope based on the perception that school based management is the catalyst for innovation in education for all Indonesian schools.

Conclusion

This paper has unfolded the perspectives and practices about the SBM policy as perceived by school stakeholders regards to devolving authority to school level. Principals, teachers and school committee members gave the same response in one aspect (financial management), and responded differently (general, staff and curriculum issues). Regarding financial management, it shows that school stakeholders are still practicing what were usually done in the previous era, the emergence of school committee do not change much. On the other aspects reveal that the principal power is salient, and this also acknowledged by the teachers and school committee members. This means that principals highly influenced the kinds of implementation of the SBM policy in the public state secondary schools. At the same time the district government

power still has the final say regarding the authority that can be exercised at school level.

The findings provide suggestions for reform of the existing SBM policy in Indonesia. The centralisation of power that had been practiced in the previous era at every level of the education system is still prevalent where in the autonomy era it is devolved to district government, but not to the school level. It is suggested that the policy-makers who wanted to transform the system, can construct a policy that actually became an instrument to strengthen if it is clearly stated rights and authority for each stakeholder could lead to different and more positive outcomes. Also the whole process has to be transparent and accessible to every party involved, which would lead to practicing more genuine power sharing.

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