



**THE CASE FOR DECENTRALIZATION AS A TOOL FOR
IMPROVING QUALITY IN EGYPTIAN BASIC EDUCATION**

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1. Introduction

Education quality in Egypt is suffering. If we go by last year's *Global Competitiveness Report 2013/2014* where Egypt ranked 148 out of 148 countries in terms of quality of primary education, or by this year's report 2014/2015 where it ranked 141 out of 144 countries (World Economic Forum 2013; 2014), the situation is very bleak.

Despite repeated efforts to reform the education sector, ever since the rule of Muhammed Ali in the nineteenth century, and up to the latest national strategic reform plan for basic education "Together We Can" dated 2014-2030 (Al-Ahram 2014; Ministry of Education website 2014), there are still very serious deforms embedded in our basic education system, its outputs and deliverables, and one of its main shortcomings is its high degree of centralization. ***The main question raised by this research paper is to what extent implementing a greater degree of decentralization in the basic education—pre-primary, primary and preparatory education—in Egypt can lead to an improvement in overall quality.*** To be able to answer this question, a number of investigative questions are posed, which constitute the various sections of this working paper. The main investigative questions are as follows:

1. What are the different forms and types of education decentralization?
2. How is education quality measured and discussed in the literature?
3. What were the previous efforts implemented by Egypt toward education decentralization? And what were the main challenges encountered?
4. What are the most up to date international experiences in education decentralization? And to what extent has decentralization impacted effectiveness, efficiency, equity, relevance and pertinence of basic education in the different experiences?
5. What lessons can be learnt for Egypt from the international experiences? And what are some policy recommendations for decision makers?

The methodology for the study entails an exploratory literature review to better define the concepts of 'education decentralization' and 'quality in education' and to examine both the Egyptian and the international experiences and success stories regarding education decentralization. The literature encompasses academic peer reviewed articles, theses and dissertations, international organizations reports, media articles and relevant Egyptian government documents governing the policy for education decentralization. Several studies that tried to assess the Egyptian experience in decentralization basic education are reviewed. Moreover, in analyzing the international experiences of education decentralization a meta-analysis of a large number of recent studies focusing on evaluating the implementation of education decentralization in various contexts was performed. Table 1 in the Annex of this study summarizes the results of the meta analysis.

An analysis of the results of the comprehensive ECES/CAPMAS survey on education, and specifically the questions relevant to education decentralization, also takes place to better understand the views of both parents and teachers regarding the different forms and types of decentralization. A schematic stakeholders' analysis is implemented of the main parties affecting and are affected by decentralization within the Egyptian basic education sector to try to discern both the pressures for and against such a move. A conceptual model is developed that explains the relationships between the different study variables and based on all the above a number of policy recommendations are identified.

2. What are the Different Forms and Types of Education Decentralization?

Centralization and decentralization are best perceived as two opposite points on a continuum, where centralization refers to the concentration of power at the top level of

the organization and decentralization refers to the extent decisions are taken at lower levels. The question usually is not whether to centralize or to decentralize, but rather the degree of going one way or the other. Education decentralization may involve various main forms: including organizational decentralization, political decentralization and financial decentralization. Simply defined, *organizational* decentralization refers to moving managerial decisions to lower levels in the hierarchy, or to elected officials, or to the school level. *Political* decentralization refers to the degree parents and other community members influence schools' operations and policies, and is usually associated with the creation of school boards and councils. *Financial* decentralization has to do with the extent financial decisions are made at the lower levels of the hierarchy, subnational governments, or school councils, or principals and the flexibility awarded to the lower levels in both mobilizing and spending resources (Shah 2010; Winkler and Gershberg 2003).

Decentralization can involve de-concentration, delegation, devolution, and may encompass privatization as well. *De-concentration* involves the transfer of tasks and work to other lower levels in the government organization, but not necessarily a transfer of powers. *Delegation* transfers decision making power to lower hierarchical levels, but on a temporary basis and with the ability to withdraw the authority at any time. Meanwhile, *devolution* is the irrevocable transfer of authority and decision making power to popularly elected regional or local governments and therefore signifies the highest degree of decentralization. *Privatization* is sometimes considered a form of devolution where decision making and often ownership is transferred from the government sector to the private sector (Hanson 1977; Winkler and Gershberg 2003). We also have to remember that decentralization is a process and not just an initiative or a program.

The educational functions that may be considered for decentralization may include: personnel, curriculum, textbooks, equipment and instructional materials, school infrastructure, student enrollment, quality control and financial and administrative control. These functions may be de-concentrated, devolved or delegated to either the regional, local or school level, or be contracted out to external parties (Fisbein 2001). Different experiences show a myriad of combinations of possible choices in making these decentralization decisions.

3. What Does Good Quality Education Mean?

Since the main reason for investigating the notion of education decentralization is to find out whether it will enable us to improve quality, we have to clearly define and operationalize what is meant by quality. The concept of quality in education has been the subject of numerous attempts of analysis and diagnosis and has generally been described as an elusive concept.

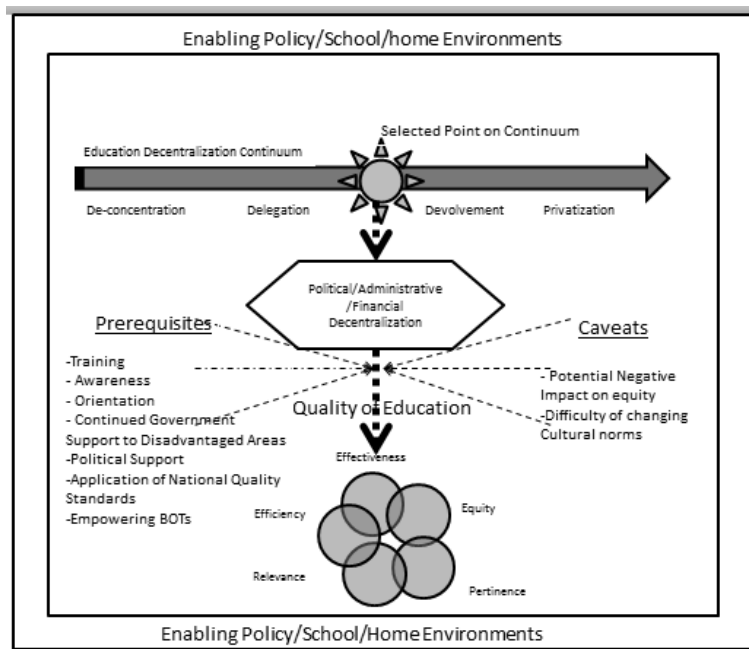
In a study by the UNESCO (2012), three main categories of approaches and frameworks used to explain quality in education, were presented. These are:

- *The learner-centered approach:* This approach emphasizes the principles of inclusiveness and equity and is described as being rights based. Quality is perceived as covering four dimensions: inclusiveness, effective teaching and learning, safe learning environment and participation in school management. Because of the focus of this approach on primary education, it is best applied in low-income countries, rather than in high income countries.
- *The inputs-process-outputs approach:* It focuses on measuring the products and performance of the educational system and there is overemphasis on quantifiable measures of performance. The perceived shortcoming of this approach is its negligence of political and social dimensions of the educational process.
- *The multidimensional social interaction approach:* This approach tries to incorporate into the definition of education quality the context through which it occurs, and the continuous tensions between the different needs of the involved stakeholder groups. Under this approach comes Tikly 2010 model of good quality

education where good quality education is perceived as the center point for the interaction between policy, school, home and community enabling environments. Additionally, under the multidimensional social interaction approach comes UNESCO's 2007 Santiago model that tries to capture the different perspectives of the various stakeholder groups through identifying five different dimensions of what constitutes good quality. These five dimensions are: *equity, efficiency, effectiveness*, in addition to *relevance* and *pertinence*, where the last two dimensions refer to the ability of the educational system to prepare students for modern life, and for the educational experience to be flexible enough to adjust to specific needs of individuals. According to UNESCO, each approach has its merits, and although the second approach of input-process-output is the most widely disseminated because of ease of application, yet the third approach has a lot to contribute to the continuous debate about education quality (UNESCO 2012). All these different aspects of educational quality are important to note in our analysis of education decentralization.

For the purpose of this study, the notion of quality in education in Egypt will be perceived as multi-dimensional and will be operationalized to focus on the five overall dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency, equity, relevance, and pertinence. The assumption of this study is that educational decentralization as one of many tools of reform that may have a positive impact on the quality of education needs to be implemented within an enabling policy, school, home and community environment (see Figure 1, the conceptual model for the study).

Figure 1. Study Conceptual Model



4. Egyptian Experiences with Education Quality and Decentralization

Before embarking on the investigation of how to reform the basic educational system in Egypt through decentralization, it is essential to review how quality is defined in the Egyptian education system and what efforts have been exerted over the past years to move towards a greater degree of decentralization in education.

How Was Quality Defined by the Egyptian Educational Authorities?

A recent report about the Egyptian pre-university education entitled "Education for All 2015 National Review Report: Egypt," commissioned by the UNESCO, clearly mentions

that decentralization is a core aspect in the GOE's vision for what constitutes quality education.

"The Ministry of Education (MOE) is committed to provide a high quality pre-university education for all as one of the basic rights of the Egyptian citizen. This is carried out in a decentralized system based on community participation" (UNESCO 2015, p.2).

To achieve the above vision, three main objectives are identified in Egypt's National Strategic Plan for Education (2014/2030): availability, quality and educational systems' effectiveness. Whereas quality is discussed in terms of school based reform, using technology, developing curricula, enhancing human capabilities and caring for excellence; under 'educational systems' effectiveness' we find more explicit mention of decentralization as perceived in the need for "school based management" and "institutional decentralizations through roles and responsibilities allocation" (UNESCO 2015, pp.3-8). However, when these overall objectives are explained further through comparison with the six Education for All (EFA) recommendations/goals agreed to by all signatory nations in Dakar in 2000, we find less clear mention of decentralization per se, except perhaps in Goal 6 that focuses on improving quality (see box below for the list of EFA goals).

Box 1. The List of 'Education for All' Goals that Egypt Committed to in April 2000 are:

- Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programs;
- Goal 4: Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Source: UNESCO (2015), *Education for All 2015 National Review: Egypt*. http://unesdoc.unesco.org/Ulis/cgi-bin/ulis.pl?catno=229905&set=005450252D_0_348&gp=0&lin=1&ll=2

If we look closely at Goal 6 concerning **quality of education in Egypt**, we find that the Egyptian government reported on its strive towards improved quality by listing a number of policies pursued, including:

- First: *Curriculum reform* mainly through developing the National Standards for Education in Egypt in 2003, through the establishment of the National Authority for Quality Assurance and Educational Accreditation (NAQAEA) in 2006, and through the implementation of a number of projects and programs aiming at improving education, many of them funded by donor agencies, such as UNICEF, USAID, the World Bank, and the European Union. Under the policy of curriculum reform, the establishment of a decentralization unit at the Ministry of Education in 2012, with the mandate to facilitate decentralization at the directorate,

department and school levels, was also mentioned. However, having a centralized unit for 'decentralization' is somewhat odd.

- Second: *Teachers' professional development* through the development of a new cadre for teachers, improving their financial compensation and training.
- Third: *Updating curricula and teaching methods* at the various school stages.
- Fourth: *Expanding the use of technology* in schools through development of some advanced educational software, using video conferencing, and implementation of a number of donor supported pilot projects: such as the project involving the use of the tablet in some governorates, the Microsoft training project for teachers, and the Think.com website, a secure website enabling interaction between students and teachers.
- Fifth: *Enhancing extra-curricular activities* through cooperation with the Ministry of Culture and organizing art and innovation competitions.
- Sixth: *Improving evaluation methods* through a system of comprehensive evaluation at the basic education levels and participating in the Global Competition for Science and Mathematics (TIMSS).
- Seventh: *Paying more attention to talented students* by organizing more competitions and organizing enrichment programs.
- Eighth: *Caring for students with Special Needs* by availing modern technology and preparing curricula and textbooks to suit their needs.

The above were some of the reported policies pursued by the GOE in its strive towards quality in education. Evidently there were also a number of challenges reported in achieving the quality aspired to. Five types of challenges were identified relating to the school densities, the teachers, the curriculum, technology and evaluation systems. The high class densities, the multiple school shifts continuing in some schools, the inadequate number of teachers to cover all disciplines and all geographical areas, the disproportionate ratio of administrators to teachers, the insufficient availability of technology and the difficulty of applying comprehensive evaluation methods were some of these challenges mentioned (UNESCO 2015).

What Has Been Achieved in Terms of Decentralization in Egypt?

If we want to track the rising interest in education decentralization in Egypt, we find that ever since the early 2000s, and as a result of offered international development assistance, the Government of Egypt, led at that point by the National Democratic Party, started promoting education decentralization as a main tool for reform of the education system. This was interpreted to mean a greater role for the private sector in building schools, and for the civil society, parents and other stakeholders to have a more effective role in local councils and school boards (Ibrahim 2010). Starting 2004, and for a couple of years forward, the notion of education decentralization was repeatedly mentioned in the president's, prime minister's and minister of education speeches and identified as a main pillar of reform (Ginsburg et al. 2010). However, despite these proclaimed intentions, the GOE was perceived as exercising caution in its decentralization efforts. Among the reasons for the perceived reluctance in going forward intensively with the decentralization plans were: the scare from the Islamists' groups, the doubts the Ministry of Education had about the competence of the local bodies, the resistance from the central government officials, and the perceived looming national security and political stability concerns (Ibrahim 2010). It is noteworthy that all these concerns were before the 2011 Revolution, and with the current political situation in 2015 they may still stand.

However, several international development organizations continued to push and promote the concept of education decentralization and to encourage the GOE to move forward with its decentralization efforts. Among these driving forces were the UNDP Egypt Human Development Report of 2004 entitled 'Choosing Decentralization for Good Governance'; the USAID report on global 'Education Strategy: Improving Lives through

Learning' that called for increasing decentralization for more effective school governance, the Arab Human Development Report of 2005, which argued for greater decentralization as a way to improve the quality of education in the Arab World, and the World Bank 2005 Update of its 1999 Education Sector Strategy that also enumerated the potential benefits of implementing a greater degree of decentralization in school management (Ginsburg et al. 2010).

In response to these calls, the GOE started implementing a number of initiatives to promote the degree of decentralization in basic education. Community Schools, and One-Class Schools¹ were also examples of the Egyptian government's efforts to move towards a greater degree of decentralization. The idea behind these two types of schools is that they allow for flexibility in the provision of the educational service and take into consideration the diversion of needs in different geographical areas. Thus they are considered a positive implementation of educational decentralization. Community schools were started in Egypt early in 1991 through the support of the UNICEF and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). By 2003/2004, there were nearly 350 such schools in Egypt, all targeting specifically girls in the age bracket from 6-12 who had dropped out of the regular schooling system. Meanwhile, the One-Class schools also targeting mostly girl dropouts aged 8-12 years started in 1993/1994 with 213 schools, then by 2003/2004 reached nearly 3100 schools (El Baradei 2005).

Additional decentralization initiatives included the pilot education decentralization projects in Qena and in Alexandria governorates and later the ministerial decree No. 258 for 2005 and later its amendment No. 334 in 2006, to replace the Parents' Boards by Boards of Trustees in all schools nationwide (Ginsburg et al. 2010). The main distinguishing characteristic of the Board of Trustees was that community members, who did not necessarily have children enrolled in the schools, were included on the board.

In 2007, the Ministry of Education through technical support mainly from USAID, issued a new National Education Strategic Plan that clearly mentioned "societal participation and decentralization" as key pillars to school based reform, and starting mid-2007, decentralization pilot projects were implemented in one pilot *idarra* in six different governorates identified by the USAID funded Education Reform Program (ERP) (Ginsburg et al. 2010).

In 2008/2009, another important decentralization initiative, was piloted in the three governorates of Fayoum, Ismailiya and Luxor focusing on financial decentralization and the transfer of resources from the central level—the Ministry of Finance—directly to the local educational directorates, starting with specific budget line items such as: the schools feeding program, the one-class schools, the vocational schools, and the schools' maintenance works budgets. Equations were developed to calculate the amount of resources to be allocated to schools under the different line items and school principals were advised to develop their budget plans in consultation with the Schools' Boards of Trustees. After one year the initiative was revised and evaluated by international experts with the plan to disseminate it on a national level starting in the following year 2009/2010 (El Senbawy 2011). However with the political turbulence starting 2011, the full implementation of the financial decentralization initiative did not take place.

The few studies available concerning education decentralization efforts implemented in Egypt point out to some challenges encountered in implementation:

¹ Both the One Class Schools and the Community Schools are flexible modes for basic educational service provision. The One Class Schools, as the name implies, are usually schools formed of one class only with the intention of helping mostly girls who dropped out of the regular schooling system. Within the one class a facilitator works with different groups of children, depending on their level and age, to help them catch up and eventually join the regular schools. In Community Schools there is emphasis on engaging the community; community members participate in the school board; there are flexible hours to accommodate needs, and a combination of vocational and academic learning to entice parents to send their kids to school. The One Class School initiative was introduced by the Ministry of Education in Egypt in 1993, starting with 313 schools and then was twinned with the Community School project starting 1995 (Sidhom and Al-Fustat 2004). By 2013/2014 there were 4,780 community schools with a total of nearly 100 thousand students enrolled (UNICEF 2014).

- *Cultural barriers:* On examining the degree of shared decision making made possible as a result of the development of boards of trustees (BOTs) in schools, one study focusing on Damietta governorate (Hammad 2010) pointed to the presence of cultural barriers and dispositions that significantly hindered teachers' and parents' participation in decision making. These cultural barriers included the unwillingness to participate, unfamiliarity with shared decision making, fear of involvement and upholding seniority as a main prerequisite for participation.
- *Non-empowered BOTs:* Another study focusing on the evaluation of the BOTs experience in Fayoum governorate, using structured interviews with a purposive sample of 52 board members, noted their optimism in relating between their work and the reduction in the number of school dropouts, in improving teachers' and students' attendance, and in activating extra-curricular activities for the schools. A number of limitations were observed in the implementation relating to the limited financial responsibilities authorized to the BOT members and the lack of their authority in sanctioning teachers' performance. The study recommended the latter two areas as needing improvement in order to move away from being mere 'pseudo' participation, to 'genuine' participation (El Baradei and Amin 2010).
- *Limited proven impact on students' outcomes:* Similarly, Nasser-Ghods's study (2006) examining the impact of education decentralization in Egypt, did not come up with optimistic results. Using a quasi-natural experimental design, by comparing students' outcomes in governorates adopting the Parent Teacher Council program with a governorate implementing the Board of Trustees program, as an example for decentralization after three years of implementation, it showed that education decentralization did not have a statistically significant impact on student outcomes, as measured by attendance and repetition rates.
- *Need for organizational re-structuring:* El Senbawy's study (2011), which focused to a great extent on the financial decentralization initiative piloted in the three governorates of Ismailiya, Luxor and Fayoum starting 2009, pointed out to the need for major organizational re-structuring efforts at all levels of the education system from the headquarters to the directorate and the school as a prerequisite for smoother implementation, and as the way to overcome the challenges faced during the pilot phase.

As seen, the few studies reviewed that focused on evaluating the experience of education decentralization in Egypt, emphasized cultural barriers, limited empowerment of BOTs, limited proven impact on students' outcomes, and the need for organizational re-structuring as amongst the challenges encountered during implementation, and called for improved performance. They all found merit in education decentralization but were attempting to pinpoint the challenges faced to advocate for improvements.

The case for educational decentralization as a tool for reform was further emphasized by the results of the CAPMAS/ECES survey of teachers and parents involved with basic education in Egypt, conducted in 2014.

A preliminary analysis of the parents' survey findings point to the following:

- The majority of parents (69.5 percent) are either 'totally unsatisfied' or 'partially unsatisfied' with the quality of education given to their children; with only 2.4 percent 'fully satisfied.'
- The majority of parents (83.5 percent) think that the probability of getting rid of their children's dependence on private tutoring is either 'weak' or 'very weak.'
- Nearly all parents buy external textbooks for their children. Less than half the surveyed group (43.1 percent) of parents bear a cost of L.E. 51 to 100 per year; 22.7 percent of parents pay L.E. 101-200 per year; 17.5 percent pay more than L.E. 200; and the rest (16.7 percent) pay less than L.E. 50 per year.
- Private tutoring is costly; 38.1 percent pay from L.E. 1000-3999 per year.

Meanwhile, a preliminary analysis of the teachers' survey findings point to the following:

- 58.1 percent of the teachers surveyed confirmed that they give private lessons; 80 percent of whom were males.
- The majority of teachers (81.2 percent) agree that each governorate should have the right to introduce some modifications to the curricula to match the governorate's specific nature and needs.
- 50.8 percent of teachers perceive their financial income has a 'strong' or 'very strong' impact on their degree of job satisfaction.
- Some teachers make a lot of money out of private lessons; 1 percent stated that they make from L.E. 10-15 thousand per month; 3.7 percent make from L.E. 5-10 thousand per month; and 96.2 percent make less than L.E. 5 thousand percent month.

On reviewing the above empirical findings derived from the recently implemented CAPMAS survey, two main observations can be discerned relevant to our decentralization study:

- First, there is ample evidence for the many problems facing the Egyptian basic education system and represented in: the large percentage of dissatisfied parents with the quality of education; the high expenditure on private tutoring; the strong belief that parents cannot get rid of their children's dependence on private tutoring; and finally the high expenditure on external books. Although public basic education in Egypt is supposedly free, it seems that a parallel costly system has been created—represented in the private tutoring and external textbooks—as an attempt to overcome the perceived poor quality of the regular schooling system. These results have been further affirmed by the teachers' survey and their confirmations about giving private lessons, the importance of financial income to their job satisfaction and how some of them manage to realize very generous returns out of giving private lessons.
- Second, of special interest as well, is the confirmation by the majority of teachers (81.2 percent) that governorates should have some flexibility in introducing modifications to the national school curricula to fit its specific needs.

Both those two observations make the case for the need for educational reform and for investigating the possible merits of different options for reform; with decentralization being one such option.

5. International Experiences with Education Decentralization

The literature does not provide direct conclusive answers to the main question raised by this research paper. It abounds with examples of successful initiatives for decentralization in basic education and discussions of school based management (Rand Research Brief 2012). Less frequent are discussions of successful cases of decentralization of school curricula (Yazdi 2013). However a main concern raised in trying to provide empirical evidence for the positive impact of decentralization on the quality of education, has to do with the evaluation methods used, and the political context within which decentralization initiatives are implemented. Evaluation of the impact of decentralization on education outcomes usually follows one of three possible methodologies: first, a comparison of a pilot implementation of decentralization in experimental schools, with a control group of schools where decentralization has not been implemented; second, time series studies that statistically try to isolate the impact of decentralization; and third, studies that utilize qualitative methods focusing on specific case studies. However, in many instances, even in developed countries, where an education decentralization policy is implemented, no rigorous evaluation methods are used to assess impact, either because of the difficulty of assessing wide scale implementation implemented simultaneously on a national level, or because the

implementers who are pro-decentralization may not be keen on a rigorous evaluation effort. Most studies focus on whether education decentralization is good or bad, while the real need is for studies that examine more what makes it work and what challenges or hurdles usually hinder its effective implementation (USAID 2007). It seems that decentralization in general, and education decentralization in particular, is one of the most contested policy issues. With these caveats in mind, the current study will start by examining the evaluation studies performed and their findings and then try to identify the main challenges and prerequisites for effective implementation in the Egyptian context.

There are a lot of successful cases of education decentralization from around the world. The attempt here is to present a sample of studies that have looked into the different applications worldwide and their main findings. Rather than presenting the different country experiences case by case, an attempt is made to extract the findings of the various studies performed on education decentralization in different parts of the world to answer the study's specific investigative questions posed earlier. More focus is given to developing countries. The findings of the international experiences are categorized based on what they tell us regarding the effect of decentralization on the various dimensions of education quality as discussed earlier: effectiveness, efficiency, equity, relevance and pertinence with the understanding that in many of the studies reviewed the impact of decentralization is assessed on more than one of these dimensions, so there may be some overlap between our five dimensions of quality.

What is the Impact of Decentralization on Effectiveness?

There are different aspects to effectiveness of education and its ability to achieve its main objectives. Effectiveness as a dimension of education quality was tackled differently in different studies reviewed. Measures of effectiveness included test scores, school enrollment rates, gender specific enrollment rates, and completion rates. Studies reviewed from Argentina, Mali, Honduras, Ethiopia, Colombia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, OECD countries in general and worldwide comparisons showed that in general with decentralization there were improvements achieved in test scores, primary schools completion rates, general enrollment rates and enrollment rates for girls. A couple of studies had inconclusive results and a couple demonstrated the need for prerequisite factors for improvements to occur.

One evaluation study performed in **ARGENTINA** to assess the impact of decentralized educational services on educational quality in 2002, compared the change in the average test scores of students in federal administered schools to the test scores of students in municipal administered schools. Results found that decentralization in secondary schools had a significant positive impact on test scores as a measure of education quality. However, the same study found that decentralization had a negative impact on test scores in poor provinces with weak administration skills. Schools in provinces suffering from fiscal deficits performed worse under decentralization and therefore policymakers should be more cautious when deciding to decentralize to provinces that do not have the necessary competencies (USAID 2007; Galiani et al. 2002).

A qualitative evaluation study conducted in **MALI** in 2004 showed that community schools—as a model for decentralized education—were able to increase access to education and increase completion rates for students enrolled, compared to traditional schools (USAID 2007). Similarly, in **HONDURAS** another qualitative study in 2005 found that that community schools supported by the USAID under the program of 'Educatoados' raised primary school completion rates, and that the students enrolled obtained similar test scores to those students enrolled in traditional schools, if not better (USAID 2007). Additionally, another qualitative study of the Basic Education Strategic Objective (BESO) program in **ETHIOPIA** in 2002, found that the program resulted in increasing enrollment rates for girls (USAID 2007) and an additional study about decentralization in Ethiopia using national official data also concluded that education decentralization led to improvements in net school enrollments (Khan et al. 2014).

In **COLOMBIA** a study assessing the impact of education decentralization, using national empirical quantitative data, proved that it had a positive impact on enrollment rates in public schools. Specifically, enrollment rates increased in provinces where local authorities had more control on educational finances and policies, and decreased in provinces under centralized financial control (Faguet and Sanchez 2008).

In **SRI LANKA** a study comparing pre and post decentralization periods using secondary educational data revealed that student performance had mostly improved, but there were losses in terms of efficiency. The author concludes that decentralization efforts were successful in satisfying the minorities and the voter communities, so they should be continued, but with further investigation for the reasons of inefficiencies, and how they can be improved (Herath 2008).

A nationwide comprehensive assessment conducted in 2011 of **INDONESIA's** School Based Management (SBM) experience, eight years after the start of implementation in 2003, revealed that the SBM had little impact on student achievements. The evaluators recommended the need to develop the school and local capacities as prerequisites for more effective implementation (Rand 2012).

In **ARGENTINA**, a study by Galiani et al. (2002) did an empirical evaluation of the impact of the national secondary school decentralization program, implemented starting the early 1990s, on students' scores in standardized tests. The study found that there were generally significant improvements in students' scores in the schools implementing the decentralization program. Public Schools used a proxy measure for decentralized programs, demonstrated a 1.2 standard deviation of improved tests over the time period 1994-1998, compared with non-decentralized private schools. However, in the same study they pointed out that the impact on test scores may become negative in provinces suffering from budget deficits or incompetent management. Accordingly, caution should be exercised before deciding to decentralize to incompetent local provinces.

Similarly, a study by Grauwe (2005) looked into the impact of School Based Management (SBM) on the quality of education and different results **WORLDWIDE**. SBM was defined as the situation where schools are given more autonomy in their own management and in making decisions about the use of human, material and financial resources. After reviewing various empirical evaluations of SBM and its impact on quality, Grauwe concludes that there is no conclusive evidence to support the causal effect of SBM on improved educational outcomes, and urges the continuation of research to identify what needed supporting factors should be made available in order to ensure that SBM has a positive impact.

Another study performed on **OECD** countries using the Program for International Student Assessment Data (PISA) for the year 2000, tested to what extent countries that implemented decentralization in schools managed to achieve improvements in educational quality. Results showed that only those who devolved more authority in personnel management to the school level, managed to realize improvements in students' reading literacy. There were no significant relations proven for the other forms of decentralization such as that related to decentralizing decision making related to financial resources, student policies or the curriculum (Maslowski, Scheerens, and Luyten et al. 2007).

What is the Impact of Decentralization on Efficiency?

A number of studies implemented in Colombia, El Salvador, Nigeria and in Chicago investigated the impact of decentralization on the general efficiency levels of schools as defined by their ability to achieve improved governance, and better use of financial, physical and human resources. Most of the results were positive with documented improvements in the use of physical facilities, their availability, reduction in teachers' absenteeism, and greater availability of financial resources. One study portrayed mixed results and one showed inefficiencies in some local communities that lacked the needed competencies for managing the resources.

A study examining educational decentralization efforts in **COLOMBIA** using national empirical evidence found that with decentralization there were shifts in investment allocations away from infrastructure and towards social services, and in specific towards education. Local governments, when given authority, chose to invest heavily in education. Additionally, enrollment rates improved in public schools where local authorities had more control (Faguet and Sanchez 2008). This means that more resources were made available to schools as a result of decentralization.

A study of **EL SALVADOR**'s Education with Community Participation Program (EDUCO) based on control and experimental schools showed that teacher absenteeism was lower in the community schools than in the traditional schools. These improvements were attributed to the increased participation of parents in the school management and the increased monitoring of the schools by the community (USAID 2007).

A study in **NIGERIA** of the impact of decentralization on the management of physical facilities proved that with decentralization there is improvement in the availability, functionality and adequacy. The study employed a survey method on a representative sample of school principals, teachers, students and community members to compare the situation in centralized with that in decentralized schools. By physical facilities were meant: classrooms, school fences, teaching materials and lab equipment. Findings showed that physical facilities were more available in decentralized schools, the adequacy ratio of schools physical facilities was higher in decentralized versus centralized schools, and that ratio of functioning physical facilities in decentralized schools was higher than the ones in centralized schools (Ikoya 2008).

In **COLOMBIA**, a study was conducted to investigate the impact of different levels of fiscal decentralization on public schools' educational outcomes. The methodology relied on the calculation of cost and production functions to depict levels of efficiency nationwide. Results showed that with increased levels of decentralization, although enrollment improved, yet inefficiencies in utilization of resources occurred in various regions. Different regions managed their financial resources differently, and some were more efficient than others. This means that transferring more financial resources to the different regions will not necessarily translate into similar positive educational outcomes. Better than just focusing on increasing public expenditure on education, decentralization policies should focus also on how those resources get spent (Becerra 2012).

A study was carried out to evaluate **CHICAGO**'s experiment with educational decentralization through Site Based Management implemented from 1989 to 1994, which gave individual schools the authority to select and evaluate principals, and to make decisions with reference to budgeting and planning. The aim of the study was to discern the impact of decentralization on schools' performance. Using a methodology relying on quantitative modeling comparing between pre and post decentralization revealed mixed results; half the schools achieved improvements in efficiency, but the other half achieved declines (Grosskopf and Moutray 2001).

What is the Impact of Decentralization on Equity?

Based on a number of studies implemented in Argentina, Chile, Turkey, South Africa, India and Indonesia, it was perceived that decentralization sometimes had a negative impact on social equity. Poor municipalities did not always manage to achieve the same improvements in performance as the more privileged municipalities; parents from lower classes did not participate as actively as their peers from middle and higher income classes, and laws against discrimination were sometimes violated and disregarded. Orientation, preparation, capacity building, and strict application of national minimum quality measures were the solutions proposed.

In **ARGENTINA** a study comparing secondary schools managed through a decentralized system by the provinces, to those managed by central government, found that after five years of decentralized management there was a positive impact on students' outcomes, but not on equity. In specific, they found that while scores in math

and Spanish improved by 5.4 percent and 3.5 percent on average respectively in rich municipalities after the five years, this did not happen in poor municipalities and thus they concluded that decentralization increased inequality in education outcomes (Galiani, Gertler, and Schargrodsky 2008).

In **CHILE**, education decentralization has been implemented for over two decades as a result of the 'municipalisation' program, which transferred many responsibilities to the municipal level, yet some criticism was directed to the resulting negative impact on social equity and social divide in the society (Van Der Wal 2007). Ever since the eighties, a school voucher system was implemented that enabled parents to select the best school for their children. Schools competed for students as their main resource. However, private schools were permitted to select students as related to their schools' objectives, while public schools had to accept all applicants. Gradually, the quality of education deteriorated in public schools compared to the private schools and the decentralization reforms were thus described as institutionalizing inequality (Maguire 2014).

In **TURKEY** a decentralization initiative through enhancing parents' participation in school administration started in 2008. A qualitative study using a purposive sample of school administrators working in schools located in diverse socio-economic communities found that parents from the lower socio-economic classes did not participate as much in school administration as the parents from the middle and higher socioeconomic classes. Only in the latter communities did parents manage to make schools more transparent and accountable (Yolcu 2011). This is again an effect of the inequitable impact of decentralization efforts and points to the need for greater preparation and orientation efforts before the start of the process, especially in under-privileged areas.

In **SOUTH AFRICA**, a study examining the impact of education decentralization policy post the apartheid period, using the case study method over a two year period in three different provinces, concluded that policies of education decentralization sometimes result in exacerbating, rather than reducing, inequities in society. Although the main focus of the education decentralization policy in South Africa was to enhance inclusion, the outcomes of the implementation turned out completely in contradiction with the policy intentions. What happened was that in the implementation the schools 'worked the law' and when poor or black people complained of discrimination—for example not getting hired in previously all white schools, or their kids not getting accepted—the conflict was handled at the local level and kept out of the national scrutiny. The study recommends the need to build the capacity of the disadvantaged groups to enable their real participation (Sayed and Soudien 2005).

In **INDIA** a qualitative study was conducted focusing on the impact of community participation on the quality of education. Through around 155 in-depth interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders to the village Education Committees (ECs) in Andhra Pradesh, a state of 76 million people, the impact of those ECs on nature and quality of participation and the service access and quality were investigated. Findings revealed that although there were some improvements in access and in infrastructure development, yet there was less obvious impact on educational quality improvements. Gender, educational level, class and caste affected the ability and willingness of community members to participate effectively in the ECs. The authors recommend greater investment by governments in capacity building at the local levels especially to the underprivileged (Jones et al. 2007).

In **INDONESIA**, with the fall of the Soeharto's regime in 1998, decentralization has been placed on top of the government's agenda to try to compensate for the long years of a very centralized rule of a nation made up of more than 17,000 islands. The education law of 2003 promoted education decentralization through School Based Management (SBM) in parallel to nationally set minimum service standards to ensure quality. Contrary to other parts of the world, the private sector in Indonesia provides educational services mostly to the disadvantaged students who cannot get into public schools, either because of geographical, academic or economic barriers, since government schools are known for their practice of collecting different sorts of charges

from parents, and thus prove costly. With the implementation of the relatively new decentralization policies, the private schools are now more restricted in their work by having to abide by the minimum service standards. A study by Bangay (2005) suggests that the important thing in applying the standards is to work on resolving the deficiencies in the private schools once identified. Thus, in Indonesia's case the national decentralization policy helped in overseeing and raising quality of education in the private schools that already existed and which catered to the less advantaged segments of the population.

What is the Impact of Decentralization on Education Relevance and Pertinence?

The relevance and pertinence of the educational service are related to curricula. Relevance of the curricula looks into what extent it helps prepare students for modern life, while its pertinence refer to the extent of its flexibility and ability in meeting students' needs. There is a great deal of overlap between the two concepts when applied. In a number of studies implemented in Singapore, Japan and Ghana it was realized that the main motivation for pursuing educational decentralization was to enhance the degree of creativity, innovation and flexibility in the educational systems involved. Schools were allowed discretion in deciding on 10-20 percent of the curricula with these purposes in mind. Strong resistance to change was encountered and it was realized that a lot of preparatory work is required to change deeply entrenched cultural norms.

The experience of **SINGAPORE** in decentralizing education was initiated with the main purpose of enhancing creativity and innovation among students. Since 1986, the government decided to enhance creativity in schools by giving principals and teachers more authority. In 1988, three independent schools were established in the city state with greater administrative and professional authority. In 1994, six additional 'autonomous' schools were established, and although not similarly independent like the first batch, were given flexibility in organizing curricula of non-core subjects (Leung 2004). The slogan 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nations' (TSLN) introduced in 1997 became the main theme for the education reform efforts in Singapore since then. The School Excellence Model (SEM) was one of the decentralization tools used to turn schools to creative and innovative learning organizations. Central to the SEM was the idea of schools' self-assessment that requires schools to examine their results and outcomes and draw plans for their own improvement (Mok 2003). The curriculum allows for flexibility in implementation and teachers are expected to be resource persons who facilitate students' creativity, rather than act as technical experts. Annual Ministry of Education festivals are held to show case innovation in schools and in methods of learning. However, several challenges remain in realizing the envisioned level of creativity in schools. On top of those challenges are the sometimes inability of teachers to act as role models for creativity and the difficulty of achieving the sensitive balance between enhanced creativity and continued excellence in academic performance as measured by national and international examinations (Ng 2004).

Various international ranking systems point out to the advancement of education in Singapore. Singapore ranks 3rd in the quality of primary education (Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011); Singapore students rank 2nd in reading, mathematics and science (PISA 2012); and rank number 1 in both mathematics and science for both fourth grade and 8th grade, respectively (TIMSS 2011). However parents may sometimes be reluctant in sending their children to innovative schools and by doing so limiting the chances of their kids getting the required grades for acceptance into favored universities (Ng 2004).

Thus, Singapore's schooling system is one of the best in terms of students' outputs, especially in math and science as assessed by international rankings, and although creativity is not recognized as one of the main strength points in the literature, it was one of the main drivers behind the country's strive for a greater degree of decentralization.

In **JAPAN**, a study was conducted to examine the decentralization of curriculum and the drive by the government to enhance students' creativity and entrepreneurship skills. As a result, schools—from Kinder-garden to secondary—were mandated to start by 1998 a course under the title of 'Integrated Study' that would cover ten percent of teaching time and for which teachers would have full control in deciding its content, with the ultimate aim of enhancing students' creativity, and instilling a greater degree of flexibility in the education system. However, because the shift to that system was so dramatic for a very centralized educational system bound for a very long time to following rules and directives from above, teachers and schools expressed a lot of resistance. They insisted on being provided with a guidebook for developing the course, and when that was made available, they heavily relied on it and followed it to the letter (Muta 2000). Changing a deeply entrenched cultural norm does not happen overnight. It takes time for principals, teachers and students to adapt to change.

In **GHANA**, starting 1987 the government decided to start a very ambitious program for education decentralization including decentralizing a portion of the curriculum. They thus started piloting the Local Content Curriculum program (LLC). The aim was to allow schools to adapt 20 percent of the curriculum to the community needs, introduce students to life skills that would help them earn a living and attract them to school. An ethnographic study conducted to assess the pilot LLC experience unveiled the fact that decentralization of the curricula had occurred only on paper, but in reality the teachers were reluctant to take on a leading, proactive role in determining content, after being used for long periods of time to just implementing central directives. Course titles were changed, sections were moved from one time slot to another, but no real new content was introduced. The sociopolitical context in Ghana was not sufficiently prepared for the change (Osei 2010). Here again it is revealed that changing cultural norms is not easily attainable and takes time.

Summary of Findings from the Meta Analysis:

An analysis of the main results of the meta analysis performed on the Education Decentralization studies evaluating implementation in various international contexts revealed the following main results:

- A total of 22 different evaluation studies were reviewed, all published within the time period 2000-2014.
- Twelve of the studies reviewed utilized a quantitative methodology, while ten utilized a qualitative methodology. The data collection tools varied among the different studies. There was strong reliance in nearly 10 studies on published nationwide data related either to students' performance in examinations, school enrollment, school finances, and other educational outcomes. In nearly six of the studies a comparative approach was utilized to compare either between students in community schools versus those in traditional schools, or between pre and post decentralization, or between test scores in federal administered schools and municipal administered schools. The survey and focus group method was used in nearly five studies to collect first-hand information from various stakeholder groups, including: parents, school administrators and teachers. One study used the case study method extending it over two years and one relied on the ethnographic method in collecting sociological data.
- In all the twenty two studies, education decentralization was the independent variable while the dependent variable differed between: quality of education (defined differently in different studies), access and completion rates, creativity, curriculum decentralization, enrollment rates, inclusion, management of physical facilities, parents' participation in school administration, primary schools completion rates and test scores, public schools test outcomes, schools' performance, students' educational outcomes, teachers' absenteeism, and students' performance and effectiveness.

- With the exception of two evaluation studies that adopted either a worldwide scope or a focus on OECD countries, the remaining studies focused on individual countries and covered a total of sixteen different nations, as there were three countries from which more than one study by different authors was reviewed.
- The geographical distribution of the twenty country specific evaluation studies were as follows: Africa (five studies), Asia (six studies), South America (seven studies), Turkey – falling within both Asia and Europe (one study) and Chicago (1 study). There was thus a fair distribution of studies from the three main geographical continents of Asia, Africa and South America. The United States and Europe were included collectively within the two worldwide and OECD studies reviewed. The greater focus was directed to those parts of the world where education decentralization is a relatively newer concept.
- Out of the 22 evaluation studies investigated, there were 10 studies with overall positive results, 6 with mixed results, 4 neutral and 2 negative. **This means that the positive evaluation results represented the biggest category.**
- The mixed results studies were termed as such because they pointed to a mixture of both positive and negative impacts of decentralization in the same study.
- If we merge the positive impacts of education decentralization, whether those which were revealed in predominately positive studies, or which appeared within the 'Mixed Results' studies, we find that these covered four of the five educational quality dimensions as adopted by this study:
 - **Effectiveness:** Improvement in enrollment (Colombia), in access and completion rates in community schools (Mali), in net school enrollment (Ethiopia), in public schools enrollment rates where local authorities had control (Colombia); a limited improvement in students' creativity (Japan), an improvement in quality of education through more careful monitoring (Indonesia), improvement in math and science scores (Argentina), in test scores in non-poor provinces (Argentina), improvement in primary schools completion rates (Honduras), and an improvement in students' performance (Sri Lanka), plus an improvement in students' literacy (OECD);
 - **Efficiency:** Improvement in availability, adequacy ratio and functionality of physical facilities (Nigeria), improvement in access and in infrastructure development (India), improvement in teachers' absenteeism (El Salvador), in some schools efficiency performance (Chicago);
 - **Relevance and pertinence:** In parents' participation in school administration in middle and higher socioeconomic classes (Turkey), improvement in voters' and minorities satisfaction (Sri Lanka),
- If we merge the negative impacts of education decentralization, whether those, which were found in predominately negative studies, or which appeared within the 'Mixed Results' studies, we find that these were mainly concentrated in two dimensions:
 - **Equity:** Increase in inequality in education outcomes (Argentina), negative impact on social equity and social divide (Chile), continued discrimination against black and poor people (South Africa), limited participation by parents from lower socioeconomic classes in school administration (Turkey), lack of positive impact on test scores in poor provinces with weak administration skills (Argentina),
 - **Efficiency:** Reported inefficiencies in use of resources in some regions (Colombia), inefficiency in some schools' management (Chicago), losses in inefficiencies (Sri Lanka),

- As for the group of four studies with neutral results, these were the ones that failed to prove a conclusive impact of decentralization on either improved educational outcomes (Worldwide study), on students' achievements (Indonesia), on creativity (Singapore), or on curriculum decentralization (Ghana).

The most important conclusion derived out of this meta-analysis of evaluation studies regarding education decentralization is that the benefits greatly outweigh the costs. The number of positive evaluation outcomes exceeds those either with mixed results or with neutral results. The number of studies that proved a negative impact was minimal.

Different forms of decentralization had different impacts on each of the five dimensions of quality of education. Empirical evidence is mostly positive for the impact on effectiveness, efficiency and less so on equity, relevance and pertinence.

A strong case is thus made for decentralization as an option for basic education reform taking into consideration a number of caveats and while making sure to make available a number of prerequisite conditions as shown in the following section and as illustrated earlier in the paper's conceptual model.

6. Stakeholders Analysis of Main Actors/Entities Involved in Education Decentralization in Egypt

It is noteworthy that different groups of stakeholders impact the Government of Egypt's strive towards implementing a greater degree of decentralization in the basic education sector. Some of the main players in the education decentralization sphere include: the Ministry of Education, teachers, parents, international development organizations, and accreditation bodies; each group having different interests that it seeks to achieve and therefore this affects its level of advocacy or opposition towards a greater degree of decentralization in basic education. Table 1 below shows a schematic representation of expected reaction by the different stakeholder groups in the basic education sector in Egypt towards increased levels of decentralization. For the expected reactions, demands and needs of the different groups, different references are cited as evidence, whether those are published analytical scholarly articles, international organizations reports, survey results or newspaper articles.

Table 1. Stakeholders' Analysis of Main Expected Source of Support and/or Opposition for Basic Education Decentralization in Egypt

<i>Main stakeholder group (alphabetical order)</i>	Expected demands/ requests/views relevant to decentralization	Sources supporting the positions stated for the different stakeholder groups	Support for/opposition to decentralization
<i>Businessmen community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decentralization may have a positive effect on educational effectiveness and may lead to better qualified students more fit for the labor market and more employable. ▪ Decentralization may create more business opportunities whether in building schools, or in publishing and printing books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Nasser-Ghodsi (2006). ▪ El Baradei (2005). ▪ Abdel Razak (2004). 	Support +
<i>Government printing houses</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Would like to maintain monopoly on book publishing and printing. Expected resistance to education decentralization if entailing a break-down of monopoly situation related 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ World Bank (2005). 	Resistance (-)

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	to school books publishing and printing.		
Ministry of higher education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The ministry will likely support basic decentralization initiatives as it will eventually lead to a better basic educational system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry of Education (2014). ▪ Ali (July, 2014). 	Support+
International developmental organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ USAID was one of the main donors in support of education decentralization in Egypt through the various programs and projects implemented including the Egypt Education Reform Program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ World Education (2015). ▪ USAID (2011). 	Support +
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May support government efforts to decentralize if politicized and working to promote the government's agenda; ▪ Or may resist decentralization and highlight its potential negative impacts on equity and efficiency if representing opposition parties. 	<p>A number of media associations supporting the decentralization in education:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Badr El Din, (2015), Alaa (2014). 	Mixed reaction +/-
Ministry of education (MOE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The latest published strategy of the Ministry of Education 2014-2030 claims the commitment to quality education based on a decentralized system and community participation. ▪ Financial decentralization initiative started but not disseminated on a national level. ▪ Elderly officials may be resistant to change. ▪ Local officials may be in need of administrative and financial capacity building. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ministry of Education (2015). 	Mostly support+
National security agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Idea of flexibility in developing 10-20 percent of curriculum may not be acceptable for fear of Islamists' movements interfering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ USAID (2010), pp.49-51. 	Mostly resistance (-)
NAQAAE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Egyptian Education (NAQAAE) was established by virtue of Law 82, 2006. Community participation is mentioned as one of the main tools for institutional development in pre-university education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NAQAAE (2015). 	Support+
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dissatisfied about quality of educational service and pessimistic about option of getting rid of private lessons or external books. ▪ Not clearly aware of what decentralization may entail ▪ Parents from low socioeconomic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAPMAS Survey on Basic Education in Egypt (2014). 	Mixed +/-(-)

Table 1. Stakeholders' Analysis of Main Expected Source of Support and/or Opposition for Basic Education Decentralization in Egypt

	classes may be reluctant to participate in school boards.		
Political parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Socialist political parties expected to be worried about potential impact of decentralization on social equity. ▪ Liberal and market oriented parties expected to be in support of more privatization and contracting out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hamam (2011). ▪ Mahmoud (2012). 	<p>Opposition (-)</p> <p>Support +</p>
Private schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May worry that with decentralization there will be increased competition from public schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Makar (2014). 	Mixed reaction +/-
Private tutors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Need to ensure continuous demand for their services. ▪ Rapid changes in curricula would not be welcome. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAPMAS (2014). 	Opposition (-)
School boards of trustees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Would like to have more authority in monitoring teachers' performance and in mobilizing resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ El-Zeki (2009). ▪ Hammad (2012). 	Support +
School principals and administrative staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May resist decentralization for fear of taking on increased responsibility and being held accountable based on outputs and outcomes achieved. ▪ May resist because not financially or managerially competent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ USAID (2007). 	Mixed reaction +/-
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Majority in support of introducing modifications to curricula to match different governorates' needs and may support other features of decentralization so long as it does not negatively affect their take-home income. ▪ Want to maintain ability to give private lessons. ▪ May resist decentralization if it entails more scrutiny of performance by school councils. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ CAPMAS (2014). 	Mixed +/- support

If we look at the previous table we find that there were fifteen different stakeholder groups identified as the main parties that either have an impact or are impacted by the efforts to decentralize basic education in Egypt. Some of the groups were perceived to be in support, others perceived to be in opposition, and some expected to have mixed reactions.

Knowing that this is the case, for successful advancement in the implementation of education decentralization, we have first to understand these different sometimes conflicting pressures, capitalize on the forward driving forces and try to alleviate the impact of the resisting pressures.

For example:

- **Support** for education decentralization is expected from international development organizations, from the businessmen community, the Ministry of Education officials, NAQAAE, the Ministry of Higher Education, liberal political parties, and schools' boards of trustees. For maximum capitalization on these

positive driving forces, there needs to be better coordination between all to push the agenda forward. A high level committee for basic education decentralization may be established for coordination purposes, for developing main messages and content for a citizen awareness campaign, and for engaging in a participatory strategic planning effort to decide on priorities, strategies and how to overcome challenges.

- **Resistance** to education decentralization is expected from government printing houses, national security agencies, socialist political parties, and private tutors. For each of those groups there should be separate strategies pursued to alleviate the resistance. To break the monopolistic system of government printing and publishing houses, maximum transparency should be advocated and employed so that the best deals that realize the maximum cost efficiencies should be the ones selected, regardless of historical associations. For national security agencies fearing interference in curricula by Islamists' groups for example, there should be special efforts to explain what the intended decentralization package would involve and how curricula can still be set at the central level under the scrutiny of the MOE. For current political leadership, there is a need to re-assure them of a functioning administrative and financial decentralization package and its benefits, and as for the discretion in designing curriculum, this can still be piloted in areas upon which there is no controversy, such as vocational and business skills development. For private tutors, to alleviate their resistance, some of them can be lured by the prospect of schools having more flexibility in giving incentives to teachers and better compensation.
- For the media, private schools, public schools teachers, traditional MOE employees who are expected to have **mixed reactions** to decentralization, again each group should be handled by separate strategies and tactics. For example, the media should be made more aware of the overall benefits of the selected decentralization package selected and the need to reform the deteriorating quality of education and engage with the community more. Traditional bureaucrats and public school teachers should be assured of the continuing need for their services and the possible increase in incentives with the implementation of a greater degree of decentralization. Private schools should be made aware of the increased scope for opportunities in a decentralized working environment.

7. What Lessons Can be Learnt for Egypt from the International Experiences? And What are the Policy Recommendations for Decision Makers?

Decentralization will not provide a panacea for all our basic problems in Egypt, but there may be some benefits that may help us move in the right direction. Over the past decades a lot of efforts were expended by successive ministers of education towards reforming the basic education system. More schools were built, many pilot projects were initiated, strategy papers were developed, international development partners provided both financial and technical assistance, national standards of education were developed and published, and a good number of teachers were trained locally and internationally. However, despite all these measures, the end results are not looking good. The mere fact that the quality of primary education was ranked by the Global Competitiveness Report as being literally at the end of the list, 148/148 in 2013/2014, and then 141/144 in 2014/2015, is indeed shocking.

There are a lot of explanations—both evidence based and anecdotal—for what went wrong regarding educational quality, including: the high density of classes, the under paid and lack of motivated teachers, the parallel system for private tutoring, most often by the school teachers themselves in order to pass the students, the automatic passing of students from year to year in schools because there are no sufficient places for repeats, the phenomenon of group cheating during national school exams, by the exam proctors believing they are doing a favor to students, by the school officials to make their schools look good, and by the parents through using microphones to make sure their

students pass the exams, even on paper. We can also add to that the fact that parents and students have little influence on holding the service providers accountable, citizens have limited authority in holding their governments accountable, and government officials are mostly in denial when discussing education, choosing to focus on achievements, rather than highlight problem areas in preparation for resolving. All of the above issues merit further study and research.

Can decentralization provide some assistance in tackling some of these problems? Yes, decentralization is one important means for basic educational reform. From the international experiences and from the assessment of the Egyptian efforts with education decentralization so far, the following are some prerequisites for successful implementation.

- **Low socio-economic regions need additional national government support and strict application of national standards of quality assurance:**

Inequity is a major concern with education decentralization. To avoid potential drops in educational quality in disadvantaged regions, it is recommended that the central government continues to nurture and support these regions before deciding on full scope decentralization similar to the more privileged regions. National Quality Assurance standards of education when applied diligently in parallel to decentralization may have a positive impact on improving the quality of educational service offered in disadvantaged communities.

- **Building competence of local administrators before decentralization:**

In provinces with poor administrative capabilities, decentralization did not achieve similar positive impacts as in other areas possessing the needed competencies and skills. Furthermore, in some regions inefficiencies occurred. Enhancing administrative and financial skills at the local level, and developing the administrative and financial processes and management tools, are thus essential prerequisites to decentralization.

- **Sufficient training and preparation for teachers:**

There needs to be sufficient training and preparation for teachers and for the local community before the decision is made to devolve more authority in deciding on a portion of the curriculum, or else they will not comply with the directive coming from above.

- **Creating awareness and providing orientation to parents especially in low socio-economic classes:**

We should note that lower socio-economic classes in society need extra orientation and awareness so that parents are convinced to participate more actively in school administration when needed.

- **Changing a deeply entrenched cultural norm does not happen overnight:**

It takes time for principals, teachers and students to adapt to change. When trying to shift towards more flexibility in curriculum design and calling upon teachers and principals to elicit their participation, with the purpose of fostering creativity and innovation, it should be remembered that changing a cultural norm is difficult, but not impossible and time is needed to adapt to the change. Using the schematic stakeholders' analysis, it may be advisable to capitalize on the expected support—for example from donors, businessmen, liberal political parties, NAQAAE—and work on alleviating the expected resistance—from national security agencies, socialist parties, private tutors—and a social marketing campaign may be one tool used to create awareness about the benefits of education decentralization and to dissipate fears from many of the groups who still have mixed thoughts about decentralization—media, the entrenched bureaucratic staff within the MOE, parents, school principals and administrators.

- **Maintaining national education quality standards:**

Decentralization can improve quality of education whether in public or private schools so long as national standards of education quality are abided by and pursued. Decision making power can be devolved to lower levels, but when governments maintain some discretion in monitoring and evaluating quality, it is for the interest of education quality.

- **Devolving genuine authorities to school boards:**

After setting national quality standards, clarifying roles and responsibilities and putting in place effective accountability mechanisms, school boards should be empowered with real decision making powers.

- **Piloting a five to ten percentage of curriculum decentralization:**

Based on the CAPMAS teachers' survey, there is a need for devolving authority to the school level allowing them to contribute to curricula design on a pilot basis for the maximum equivalent of 10 percent of curriculum. This will help serve multiple purposes. It will help cater to different community needs whether in knowledge or skills, and it will help in instilling a greater degree of flexibility, and make room for creativity and innovation.

- **Developing an action plan for the targeted educational decentralization package in basic education:**

This may entail choosing which functions and tasks to decentralize to which level based on lessons learnt from both the international and local experience, and based on political acceptability and perceived support/resistance from the different stakeholder groups in society. Table 2 illustrates a suggested package for basic education decentralization where the implementation of some educational tasks are perceived to remain at the central headquarters, such as decisions concerning personnel salaries, curriculum content and standards, textbook criteria, infrastructure planning, quality control and financial control. Governorates can have a role in training teachers, in contributing to the development of a portion of the curriculum, in procurement and distribution of textbooks, in planning and construction of infrastructure and in financial administration. At the school level there can be a role in personnel career path development, training and evaluation, in schools' maintenance, in students' assessment and monitoring, and in financial administration and control. Additionally, the private sector can have a role in teachers' training, in textbooks production, procurement and distribution, in schools construction and maintenance and quality control for both students and schools.

This is a preliminary suggested package for basic education decentralization in Egypt that can be subject to further in-depth research and community deliberation.

Table 2. Suggested Template for Basic Education Decentralization in Egypt: Educational Tasks and Optimal Level of Decentralization

✓ **Suggested Levels of Involvement**

Educational Tasks	Implementation Level			
	Central headquarters	Local/ governorate level	School level	External/ private sector
1. Personnel				
Salaries	✓			
Career path			✓	
Training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Evaluation	✓		✓	
2. Curriculum				
Content & standards	✓			
Development	✓	✓		
3. Textbooks, equipment, instructional materials				
Criteria and standards	✓			
Production	✓			✓
Procurement & distribution		✓		✓
4. School infrastructure				
Planning	✓	✓		
Construction		✓		✓
Maintenance			✓	✓
5. Student enrollment				
Regulations	✓			
Selection criteria	✓			
6. Quality control				
Student assessment and monitoring	✓		✓	✓
School assessment and monitoring	✓			✓
7. Financial affairs:				
Financial administration	✓	✓	✓	
Financial control	✓		✓	

Source: Adapted from Fisbein (2001); El Baradei (2005).

Annex. Table 1. Meta-Analysis of Empirical Education Decentralization Studies

#	First Author	Publishing Date	Country	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Methodology	Data Collection Tools	Results	Results Summary	in
1	Bangay	2005	Indonesia	Decentralization	Quality education of private schools	Quantitative	Published data (authors and government)	Improved quality	Positive	
2	Mok	2003	Singapore	Decentralization	Creativity	Qualitative	Published data	Inconclusive	Neutral	
3	Muta	2000	Japan	Decentralization	Creativity	Qualitative	Published data worldwide	Limited Impact	Positive	
4	Osei	2010	Ghana	Decentralization	Curriculum Decentralization	Qualitative	Ethnographic	No real content introduced	Neutral	
5	USAID	2007	El Salvador	Decentralization	Teachers' absenteeism	Quantitative	Surveys and tests	Improvement in absenteeism	Positive	
6	Ikoya	2008	Nigeria	Decentralization	Management of Physical Facilities	Qualitative	Survey methods comparing centralized and decentralized schools	Improvement in availability, adequacy ratio and functionality of physical facilities	Positive	
7	Becerra	2012	Colombia	Fiscal decentralization	Public Schools' educational outcomes	Quantitative	Nationwide published data	Enrollment improved, inefficiencies in utilization of resources in some regions	Mixed	
8	Grosskopf	2001	Chicago	Decentralization	Schools performance	Quantitative	pre and post decentralization data	Mixed results: half the schools achieved improvements in efficiency, half achieved declines	Mixed	
9	Galiani	2008	Argentina	Decentralization	Students educational outcomes	Quantitative	pre and post decentralization data after 5 years	Scores in math and science improved by 5.4 percent and 3.5 percent, respectively; no improvements in poor municipality; increase in inequality in education outcomes	Mixed	

10	Van Der Val	2007	Chile	Decentralization	Social equity and social divide	Quantitative	published data and research	Negative impact on social equity and social divide	Negative
11	Yolcu	2011	Turkey	Decentralization	Parents' participation in school administration	Qualitative	Purposive sample of school administrators in diverse communities	Parents from lower socio-economic classes do not participate as much as parents from middle and higher socio-economic classes; the latter managed to have a positive impact on school accountability and transparency	Mixed
12	Sayed	2005	South Africa	Decentralization	Inclusion	Qualitative	Case study over two years in three different provinces	Black and poor people were still discriminated against and conflicts kept away from national scrutiny	Negative
13	Jones	2007	India	Decentralization through community participation	Quality of education	Qualitative	155 in-depth interviews and 15 focus groups with various stakeholders to village Education Committees in state of Andhra Pradesh	Improvements in access and infrastructure development; less obvious impact on educational quality; gender, class, educational level and caste affected ability of community members to participate	Positive
14	Galiani	2002	Argentina	Decentralization	Educational quality	Quantitative	Comparison between test scores in federal administered schools to those in municipal administered schools	Positive impact on test scores with the exception of poor provinces with weak administration skills	Mixed
15	USAID	2007	Mali	Decentralization through community schools	Access and completion rates	Qualitative	Comparison between students in community schools versus those in traditional schools	Improvement in access and completion rates in community schools	Positive

16	USAID	2007	Honduras	Decentralization through community schools	Primary Schools completion rates and test scores	Qualitative	Comparison between students in community schools versus those in traditional schools	Improvement in primary schools completion rates and similar test scores to those in traditional schools	Positive
17	Khan	2014	Ethiopia	Decentralization through Basic Education Strategic Objective (BESO) program	Enrollment rates	Quantitative	National official data	Improvement in net school enrollment	Positive
18	Faguet	2008	Colombia	Decentralization	Enrollment rates	Quantitative	National empirical data	Positive impact on enrollment rates in public schools where local authorities had more control on school finances	Positive
19	Herath	2008	Sri Lanka	Decentralization	Students performance and efficiency	Quantitative	Comparison of data pre and post decentralization	Students' performance improved; minorities and voters satisfied, losses in efficiencies.	Mixed
20	Rand	2012	Indonesia	Decentralization through School Based Management	Students Achievements	Quantitative	Nationwide comprehensive assessment after 8 years of implementation	Little impact on students achievements.	Neutral
21	Grauwe	2005	Worldwide	Decentralization through School Based Management	Quality Education of	Qualitative review of empirical studies	Published data worldwide	No conclusive evidence of causal effect of SBM on improved educational outcomes	Neutral
22	Maslowski	2000	OECD countries	Decentralization	Educational quality	Quantitative	PISA Data for 2000	Devolvement of authority in personnel management led to improvements in student literacy; no significant relation for other forms of devolvement of decisions related to finances, student policies or curriculum	Positive

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