



SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program (SIREP)



Decentralization of Educational Management in Southeast Asia

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ISBN 978-971-0487-59-2

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The Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH) has established the SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program (SIREP) to document the policies, structures and procedures of educational innovations across the Southeast Asian countries, and to systematically assess the implementation of the educational innovations in the region. The program hopes to facilitate policy research to better understand how to achieve stronger educational systems in the region.

One of the most significant education reforms within the region has been the decentralization of educational management. This research project *“Decentralization of Educational Management in Southeast Asia”* seeks to document the approaches to decentralization in the 11 SEAMEO member countries and how countries develop and implement policies to effectively operationalize decentralization of educational management (DEM).

The use of cross-country comparisons, and the combination of good practices about which programs work, will be key to helping Southeast Asian countries increase the effectiveness of decentralization of their education systems.

This report provides policymakers with guidance on the lessons learned from regional decentralization surveys in Southeast Asian countries. The report employed a framework for comparing decentralization in Southeast Asia in terms of context, legal basis, nature of DEM, and implementation schemes. The comparison includes successful practices and latest empirical evidence on how DEM policies and practices relate to the implementation of decentralization by the education ministries at the national and division levels. More importantly, the report presents findings related to the following:

- A summary of the country case studies highlighting successful strategies in decentralization;
- Country issues on the implementation of decentralization; and
- Continuing challenges in the implementation of decentralization.

The landscape of decentralization in Southeast Asia is outlined in this report and reveals that the key to a successful decentralization of an education system is not just success in any one area, but an overall alignment of policies, human resources, and support to decentralization by authorities.

The key messages obtained from the research report are:

1. With few exceptions, there is a high instance of implementation of decentralization in Southeast Asian countries.
2. Some countries do better in standard setting and policy development on decentralization than others.
3. All Southeast Asian countries have scope to improve capacity building for decentralization in a number of areas. While it is true that most countries have advanced policies in DEM in place, it is nevertheless the case that many need to focus on several areas in order to make the decentralization strategies and systems work more effectively and efficiently.

It is hoped that this research report will contribute to the regional knowledge base or development and be a reference to SEAMEO Ministries of Education (MOEs) as they strive to further improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their DEM systems of educational governance.

Acknowledgments

SEAMEO INNOTECH wishes to thank the regional experts and researchers from the eleven SEAMEO member countries for their country reports which they presented during the “First Regional Forum on the Impact of Decentralization of Education Management to School Improvement and Success” held in May 2009 at SEAMEO INNOTECH --- **Hajah Murni Binti Abdullah** and **HJ. Shukry Haji Kula** of Brunei Darussalam, **Sam Sopheak** and **Tek Vannaret** of Cambodia, **Suwarsih Madya** and **Yendri Wirda** of Indonesia, **Banchong Ladthavarn** and **Khounmy Phommanimith** of Lao PDR, **Jamelah Mansor** and **Chithra K.M. Krishnan Adiyodi** of Malaysia, **Htay Linn Maung** and **Than Htike Soe** of Myanmar, **Luisa B. Yu** and **Ana Marie O. Hernandez** of the Philippines, **Gek Yin Jimmy Tan** and **William Pushpam** of Singapore, **Ruangrat Wongpramote** and **Kanjanaporn Imjaijit** of Thailand, **Alfredo De Araujo** and **Justino Neno** of Timor-Leste, and **Le Thi Mai Phuong** and **Vu Thi Phuong** of Vietnam. The Center would also like to extend its sincerest gratitude to Dr. Wilfred Perera of the National Institute of Education in Sri Lanka, a member of the Asian Network of Training and Research Institutes in Educational Planning (ANTRIEP), and Ms. Rhona Caoili-Rodriguez, for their technical review of the research report.

This report was prepared under the general guidance of SEAMEO INNOTECH Center Director, Ramon C. Bacani, and Manager of Educational Research and Innovation Office (ERIO), Philip J. Purnell. Led by Senior Specialist, Ethel Agnes P. Valenzuela, the team's members include Mary Sylvette Gunigundo, Jelico Angelo Arriesgado, Elaissa Marina Mendoza, Jasper Peteza, Guillermo Cruz, and Gillian Marie Cruz.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BEIS	Basic Education Information System
BESRA	Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda
BMCs	Budget Management Centres
CCPE	Co-Curricular Program Executives
CHED	Commission on Higher Education
CPV	Communist Party of Vietnam
DBE	Decentralized Basic Education
DBEP	Decentralized Basic Education Project
DDAP	Demand-Driven Approach Project
DEB	District Education Bureau
DECS	Department of Education, Culture, and Sports
DEDC	District Education Development Committee
DEM	Decentralization of Educational Management
DepEd	Department of Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EDCOM	Congressional Commission on Education
EFA	Education For All

ESA	Educational Service Areas
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
ESSP	Education Sector Support Program
FlexSI	Flexible School Infrastructure
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GNI	Gross National Income
HDI	Human Development Index
HDR	Human Development Report
IRR	Implementing Rules and Regulations
LAO	Local Administration Organization
LTEDP	Long-Term Education Development Plan
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOEC	Ministry of Education and Culture
MOET	Ministry of Education and Training
MOEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport
NEA	National Education Act
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NGOs	Nongovernment Organizations
OBEC	Office of the Basic Education Commission
PCER	Presidential Commission on Educational Reform

PES	Provincial Education Service
PESS	Philippine Education Sector Study
PTAs	Parents Teachers Associations
PTCAs	Parent-Teacher-Community Associations
SBM	School-Based Management
SEAMEO INNOTECH	Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology
SFI	Schools First Initiative
SIREP	SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program
TESDA	Technical Education and Skills Development Authority
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VEDC	Village Education Development Committee

Context

Southeast Asia has a population of about 589.5 million as of 2010. It is estimated that this will increase to 706.6 million people in 2030. Indonesia is the most populous country with about 233 million people while Brunei Darussalam has the smallest population of less than half a million. Looking at the Human Development Index of the region based on the 2010 Human Development Report, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam were categorized under very high human development, and Malaysia under high human development. The rest of the Southeast Asian nations were described to have medium human development, except Myanmar which was under the low human development group. Overall, the Southeast Asian region can be described as having a medium human development both in 2005 and 2010. A very marginal increase of 0.030 in its average HDI value was registered for the same periods.

Southeast Asian countries exhibit generally high gross enrolment ratios (GER) in primary education. Indonesia has the highest GER while Thailand has the lowest GER. Almost all exceeded 100% GER except for Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Given the diversity of the region, the region's state of decentralization of educational management greatly differs in implementation. This report covered noteworthy practices in eleven Southeast Asian countries and investigated the remaining challenges in the implementation of DEM.

Key Findings

- 1. Rationale for Decentralization.** All Southeast Asian countries implemented decentralization in pursuit of implementing their National Education Plans (100%). About 65% of the Southeast Asian countries indicated that DEM will promote efficient governance system while 55% of the countries said that DEM is a response to the call for action for international goals such as Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
- 2. Process Strategy for Decentralization.** The most common strategy to implement decentralization of educational management is through the development of national and local policies. Some countries need to pass education law or legislation to strongly support decentralization activities.

3. **Areas for Decentralization.** Countries in Southeast Asia implemented three key DEM strategies: 1) Administrative decentralization; 2) Decentralization of teacher training and teacher professional development; and 3) Financial deregulation of schools. Almost half of the countries in Southeast Asia has decentralized curriculum development and enrichment, and school partnership and linkages leading to resource mobilization.

4. Good Practices in Decentralization

- **Brunei Darussalam** considered School Zoning Policy as an effective way to decentralize educational management programs. Through its SPN 21 (Ministry's National Education System for the 21st Century), Brunei Darussalam recognizes the need to strengthen the degree of autonomy for schools and departments within MOE using the two strategic objectives: (1) "enhance quality of service providers" by giving "discretionary authority to schools" and "optimal autonomy in the management of institutions," among others; and (2) give more "financial autonomy."
- **Cambodia's** framework for implementing decentralization is its Education Strategic Plan which allows for the transfer of responsibilities from central to local levels. Cambodia's decentralization is principally carried out using the two schemes: (1) the Cluster School Strategy, which was institutionalized in 2000; and 2) the Priority Action Program, which delivers operational budget direct to schools. It was also introduced in year 2000 to address timeliness, cash management, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Indonesia's** decentralization program ranges from delegation to devolution. Greater authority is delegated directly to schools such as in managing education programs. On the other hand, local government units are given greater autonomy in running their own affairs, including the provision of education services.
- **Lao PDR's** decentralization of education management makes use of the Demand-Driven Approach Project, a decentralization approach enacted through the decree of the Prime Minister to improve community participation in school management. This practice involves the community in improving enrolment rate in school environment, strengthened capacity of villages to encourage participation of women, and use of cluster-based evening classes and life-skills training programs.
- **Malaysia's** curriculum decentralization and financial decentralization are salient features which greatly reduced red tapes and promoted efficient delivery of educational services to the schools. Malaysia

implemented Smart Schools and Cluster Schools project schemes, The SMART Schools are those implemented using self-accessed, self-paced, and self-directed learning using information and communication technology. Cluster Schools, on the other hand, are excellent schools from specific clusters that are selected to become sites for pilot testing new approaches. These schools are given greater autonomy in managing their affairs.

- **Myanmar's** thrust to develop private schools stood out and the promotion of the use of technology aided decentralization. Decentralization in Myanmar is quite limited, however, its best practice is on allowing committees to take more responsibilities for education. These committees are the: Basic Education Council, Basic Education Curriculum Committee, Textbook Committee, and Teacher Education Supervisory Committee.
- The **Philippines'** School-Based Management strategies have been the driving force of its DEM reforms. Through SBM, the schools are at the center of DEM. Schools implement the policies set by higher authorities, provide feedback on the implementation of national and regional educational standards, and are expected to provide quantitative and qualitative upward feedback for policy formulation. The schools are also responsible for setting their vision, mission, goals and objectives. They are also responsible for establishing school and community networks, and encouraging the active participation of different stakeholders.
- **Singapore** provided greater autonomy to schools to stimulate educational innovation and to respond promptly to the needs and aspirations of pupils and parents. The MOE piloted the "Independent schools scheme," which ushered the Autonomous Schools Scheme in 1992. Aside from this, the school principals are given greater operating autonomy. Singapore also institutionalized the School Cluster System which was piloted in 1997. To support decentralization, Singapore initiated other policies in the areas of management, finance, curriculum, enrolment policies and human resources.
- **Thailand** decentralized powers in management of academic matters through area committees, educational services areas, and educational institutions. Devolution of powers covers the following areas: (1) development of local or school-based curriculum; (2) organization of teaching-learning activities; (3) development of learning process; (4) measurement, evaluation and transfer of learning outcomes; (5) student counselling; (6) development of internal quality assurance system and educational standards; (7) strengthening the academic capacity

of stakeholders and communities; (8) establishment of networks with other educational institutions; (9) preparations of regulations and guidelines on academic affairs of educational institutions; (10) selection of textbooks; and (11) development and application of media technologies for education.

- **Timor-Leste's** decentralization of educational management is emerging as it just recently drafted policies and plans for decentralization. This includes the development of a Decentralization Strategic Framework (2006 and 2008); draft Subsidiary Decentralization legislation (2009-2010); and draft local government laws.
- **Vietnam.** The government of Vietnam aims for a devolved educational management. DEM practices range from deconcentration to a form of delegation. Some authorities and responsibilities are transferred to lower levels of government, but decision-making authority remains with MoET.

The study identified the following factors as being necessary for effective implementation of DEM:

1. The existence of clear and detailed decentralization policies and plans
2. Strong support and political will from the national and local officials and education managers
3. Adequate financial support through strategic programs and projects to pilot and institutionalize DEM

While these factors stood out as the contributing factors to the successful implementation of DEM, there are also remaining challenges to deal with. These include the following:

- 1) Capacity of educational managers to handle decentralization – Almost 75% of the Southeast Asian countries reported the need to have properly trained education managers to carry out decentralization programs.
- 2) Sustaining adequate funding to implement DEM – Only four Southeast Asian countries (Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand) have been able to provide adequate financial support to sustain DEM implementation using regular national/ local funds. The rest rely on foreign technical assistance to support DEM implementation, and find it challenging to sustain adequate level of financing once foreign assistance projects end.

Although the national governments in Southeast Asia are committed to decentralization, such commitment should be shared by officials in all levels. In some cases, resistance to decentralization results in lack of collaboration and devolution. Getting the right mixture of the components is necessary to make decentralization work.

Recommendations

The following recommendations emerged from the first regional forum of decentralization as collectively endorsed by the 11 SEAMEO member country delegates:

Visionary Leadership. There is a need for a distinct high national government or ministry official who can champion DEM, inspires and motivates people to be actively involved in the decentralization process, and is able to convince everyone about the benefits and values of decentralization.

Strong Advocacy. A strong and aggressive advocacy or social marketing effort will help make reforms acceptable at all levels, and will help ensure awareness and appreciation of DEM among stakeholders.

Clear Legal Framework and Performance Standards. The Southeast Asian countries need to ensure that they have clear legal frameworks and policies to avoid varied interpretations leading to confusion and misunderstanding of decentralization.

Appropriate and Timely Capacity-Building. To ensure that personnel involved can perform their new functions efficiently and effectively, appropriate and timely capacity building for educational managers at all levels is required. This will also help ensure that they are sufficiently prepared for DEM, and will continuously update their knowledge and skills.

Adequate and Appropriate Resources. Adequate and appropriate human, financial, and material resources should be available at the levels where the functions will be decentralized. Education ministries are encouraged to allocate appropriate and continuing resources to accelerate and sustain the implementation of DEM.

Strong Community Participation. A strong support system from the community and other stakeholders, which is crucial to sustaining DEM efforts and gains, needs to be established and empowered to contribute to the improvement of basic education in localities. Clear guidelines and delineation of roles are necessary to determine the areas and manner of involvement.

Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System. Southeast Asian countries need to develop sound monitoring and evaluation systems to document the entire decentralization process and track progress towards objectives and targets, leading to an identification of the strong areas that need to be sustained and the weak areas that need to be strengthened or modified.

PART I

Introduction

Background and Rationale

Decentralization of educational management (DEM) has become a worldwide popular approach to improve the quality of education amidst growing education systems. It has become the apparent solution when heavily burdened centralized systems of education management have failed to sustain quality of services under fast increasing number of students and teachers. Widespread frustrations and disappointments from the public resulted in pressures to modify certain decision-making approaches.¹

The common argument for DEM is that it will improve management and delivery of education services based on the premise that field offices and schools are in a better position to provide immediate and relevant responses to the local needs.² Several educational systems, especially among the developing countries, have tried to decentralize because of this potential. However, DEM was hardly the “magical solution” to all education problems. Struggles for accessible and equitable quality education continue despite decentralization efforts.³ This is because DEM only created the enabling policy environment for decisive actions, timely responses and appropriate interventions otherwise not possible in a highly centralized setting to improve and enhance the teaching-learning situation in the schools, making targeted education outcomes more achievable. In examining the impact of education decentralization, Wrinkler and Yeo posited that “it is no longer a question of whether decentralization is a good thing, but more on the challenges of how decentralization should be designed and implemented to yield the best results and the conditions and supporting environment under which decentralization yields positive results.”⁴

In Southeast Asia, most of the countries have ventured into one form of decentralization or another with respect to management of their educational systems. While studies on DEM have been conducted in some countries in the region, none yet has focused on all the 11 Southeast Asia countries. Hence, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH), with funding under the SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Education Program (SIREP), undertook this initial study to determine the state of decentralization of education in Southeast Asia as well as to identify challenges and successful strategies that can serve as models towards crafting possible recommendations for realizing the full potential of DEM in the region.

¹ N. McGinn and T. Welsh. *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?* (Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 1999).

² J. Behrman, A. Deolalikar, L.Y. Soo. *Conceptual Issues in the Role of Education Decentralization in Promoting Effective Schooling in Asian Developing Countries, 2002*; Decentralization and Education - Definition, Measurement, Rationale, Implementation, School Finance, Effects of Decentralization

³ Donald R. Winkler and Boon-Ling Yeo. *Identifying the Impact of Education Decentralization on the Quality of Education* (EQUIP2 Working Paper: USAID, 2007), 1.

⁴ Ibid, 13.

The study officially commenced during the “First SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Forum on the Impact of Decentralization of Education Management to School Improvement and Success” in May 2009 when the 11 Southeast Asian countries (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam) that are also member countries of SEAMEO, convened to engage in initial analytical discourses on how to further strengthen or improve the implementation of DEM in the region. Representatives of these countries identified the problems or challenges their countries are experiencing in the implementation of DEM and recommended actions to address these problems. This study report is far from exhaustive and does not cover all possible aspects of DEM. Nevertheless, it is expected to serve as a valuable source of information for education leaders and policymakers in the region.

Objectives of the Study

This study generally aimed to examine the state of DEM implementation in Southeast Asia by answering the following research questions:

1. What is the social and education context of the Southeast Asian countries when they implement DEM?
2. What are the policies which form the legal framework that support DEM in Southeast Asian countries?
3. What is the nature of DEM in Southeast Asian countries in terms of the following?
 - a. degree of transfer
 - b. functions to be transferred
 - c. implementation strategies
4. What are the successes and challenges experienced and lessons learned by Southeast Asian countries in implementing DEM?
5. What good practices can be identified from the DEM implementation strategies that could lead to a possible DEM model for Southeast Asia?

What is Decentralization?

Centralized countries are described to be those whose political and administrative decision-making responsibilities depend primarily on the central government. In the case of education, a single government entity, usually a ministry or agency for education, is tasked to administer, manage, supervise, and approve all school-related operations and decisions.⁵ Centralized educational management was seen as an effective approach for standardizing school content and processes and to improve and maintain the quality and structure of educational systems alongside the expansion of education systems, especially in the 20th century. This expansion occurred when education services became widely available to all segments of society and accessible to diverse learners as a result of governments investing more in education.

However, with the continued expansion of education systems due to population growth, increasing enrolment, rapid urbanization, and growing education bureaucracies, among others, the centralized management of education came under heavy strain and pressure of providing and maintaining quality services within both the urban and rural settings.⁶ It was observed that a highly centralized education set-up demonstrated a general lack of direct relationship between the central government and the direct stakeholders or end-receivers of education services often resulting in the latter's failure to address the needs of the local communities with relevant and timely interventions.⁷

Thus, an increasing number of countries started to move the responsibility of providing and managing education services away from the center and towards the periphery. This involved total or partial transfer of the decision-making responsibilities and authority traditionally vested in the central government to regional, provincial, and/or local authorities (district or municipality level) and even to communities and schools.⁸ Hanson, in his study of the key issues and core questions on strategies of education decentralization, simply defined decentralization as “the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility, and tasks from higher to lower organizational levels or between organizations.”⁹

As mentioned earlier, its potential lies primarily in giving more voice and power to local leaders and school personnel who are assumed to be more aware of the needs of the communities and in a better position to respond to local educational problems than national officials. It also reinforces accountability among those responsible for delivering services, generates local solutions to educational problems, and mobilizes local resources.¹⁰

⁵ UNICEF Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2006.

⁶ N. McGinn and T. Welsh. *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?* (Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 1999).

⁷ Donald Winkler. “Decentralization in Education.” *EQ Review: Educational Quality in the Developing World* 3, no. 4 (EQUIP 1: USAID, 2005).

⁸ Elizabeth M. King and Susana Cordeiro Guerra. *Education Reforms in East Asia: Policy, Process, and Impact*, 2005; UNICEF Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2006.

⁹ E.M. Hanson, “Strategies of Educational Decentralization: Key Questions and Core Issues.” *Journal of Educational Administration* 36, no. 2, 1998, p. 112.

¹⁰ Elizabeth M. King and Susana Cordeiro Guerra. *Education Reforms in East Asia: Policy, Process, and Impact*, 2005.

Decentralization is also believed to increase rationalized management, increase stakeholder involvement, improve resource mobilization, and improve educational governance.¹¹

Various studies generally examine decentralization in two ways: (a) type of decentralization; and (b) degree of transfer of responsibilities.

Decentralization can be categorized into four types, namely: political, administrative, fiscal, and market. **Political decentralization** involves shifting power and resources to elected local councils or outposts of sectoral ministries in order to align sectoral activities to local needs to improve delivery of services. It also aims to heighten and enhance participation of the population in political decision-making, giving the people or their elected representatives more power in public decision-making and more influence in the formulation and implementation of policies. **Administrative decentralization** refers to the transfer of planning and management responsibilities from central to local level. It redistributes responsibilities and financial resources for providing public services among various levels of government. Responsibility for planning, financing, and management of certain public functions is transferred from the central government and its agencies to lower-level authorities such as field units of government agencies, subordinate levels of government, and semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations. Administrative decentralization takes three forms: deconcentration, delegation, and devolution.¹² These forms are discussed further in the section on degree of transfer of responsibilities.

Fiscal decentralization transfers control over financial resources to local authorities and delegating or devolving revenue-collecting powers to local government units. Fiscal responsibilities of the sub-national governments may include the authority to determine tax rate and type of taxes to raise and to run deficits and borrow money. However, with varying capacities to raise local revenues as well as different priorities of allocating funds among rich and poor areas, fiscal decentralization may result in uneven funding of services. **Market decentralization**, on the other hand, takes place when the central government withdraws from providing services and allowing instead the private sector and the civil society to take up expanded roles. For instance, the central government gives nonstate providers (private sector, nongovernment organizations, or communities) roles in decision-making and management.¹³

Decentralization can also be studied according to the degree of transfer of authority from central to lower level. The degree of transfer refers to how much responsibilities are given to lower level units of government.

Three terms are used to describe the levels of degree of transfer of authority. These are deconcentration, delegation, and devolution. These are also usually referred to as forms of administrative decentralization.

¹¹ Mark Bray. *Educational Planning in a Decentralized System: The Papua New Guinean Experience*. (University of Papua New Guinea Press and University of Sydney Press, 1984).

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

Deconcentration redistributes certain responsibilities to subnational units of central government (e.g., regional ministerial offices). These units act as agents of the central government and are responsible for implementing rules but not for making decisions or policies. Overall control still remains with the central government. Because of this, deconcentration is considered the weakest form of decentralization. **Delegation** redistributes decision and operational responsibility to subnational governments (local authorities) rather than branches of central government to deliver certain services. Although they have some degree of independence, they are still under some form of supervision by the central government. **Devolution** is the strongest form of administrative decentralization. It involves the total transfer of powers for decision-making, finances, and management for delivering a set of public services from the central administration to independent or semi-independent local governments. Powers are given to local governments through legal enactments.¹⁴

These definitions and characteristics guide the current study to describe the different decentralization models being implemented in Southeast Asia. Different countries may have adopted a type or a combination of types of decentralization earlier described. Decentralization approaches may vary in degree and location (i.e., administrative level such as regional, provincial, municipal levels) and what may work in one country's education system may not necessarily be effective in another even when similarities in characteristics and profiles are observed.

Definition of Terms

The variables examined in this study are operationally defined as follows:

- **Social and Education Profile** – is a brief profile of the country in terms of its social and education situation. This presents the circumstances under which DEM is being implemented. Social profile pertains to the characteristics of Southeast Asian countries in terms of their geographical (land and water area and boundaries), demographic (population), and human development index profile. Education profile includes access to education (net and gross enrolment rates); efficiency of primary education (dropout and repetition rates) and quality of primary education (pupil-teacher ratio and percentage of teachers with appropriate training); and adult literacy rate (15 years old and above).
- **Legal Framework** – is defined as the general legal principles such as decrees, regulations, or policies to which national and subnational governments refer and from which they derive their legal standing in performing their roles and responsibilities in relation to DEM.¹⁵

¹⁴ McGinn, N. and Welsh, T. (1999). *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?* Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning. and UNESCO (2003). *Decentralization in Education: National Policies and Practices*, p. 13, (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001412/141221e.pdf>)

¹⁵ United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. *Institutional Set-up and Mechanisms for Coordination within Unit or Sector or Environment Region*.

- **Implementation Strategies** – are the methods or approaches used in executing or operationalizing a plan or program. In this study, it refers to methods or approaches by which a policy or plan on DEM was operationalized.
- **Decentralization of Education Management (DEM)** – is the transfer of decision-making and management responsibilities concerning education services from the central authority towards a regional, provincial or local authority (districts, municipalities, communities) or towards schools themselves.
- **Nature of DEM** – refers to the state of DEM in terms of two dimensions, namely, functions to be transferred and degree of transfer. *Functions to be transferred* refers to the specific tasks the national government may wish to relinquish or transfer to lower level units. This may comprise personnel management, construction, program, testing, procurement, student management, financing, and training, curriculum, or monitoring, among others.¹⁶ *Degree of transfer*, on the other hand, refers to how much responsibilities are given to lower level units of government whether they have the power to make decisions or they are limited to implement rules and regulations only. There are three levels of decentralization in terms of degree of transfer: deconcentration, delegation, and devolution.¹⁷
- **Successes and Challenges** – Successes are factors that may have contributed to realizing the implementation of DEM, while challenges are factors that may have hampered or hindered the smooth implementation of DEM.
- **Lessons Learned** – comprise the knowledge gained from the experience of implementing DEM. These include the factors that contributed to successes as well as the challenges and how those challenges were overcome. These realizations are useful for formulating related future plans and strategies.
- **Good Practices** – refer to DEM implementation practices that delivered desired outcomes.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Altner, Dominique & Bahr, Klaus. Decentralization as a Concept and in the Education Sector, UNESCO-Bangkok, <http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/UNESCO-MI-Course-Material/Session-1&2/Paper1.1.Decentralization.pdf>

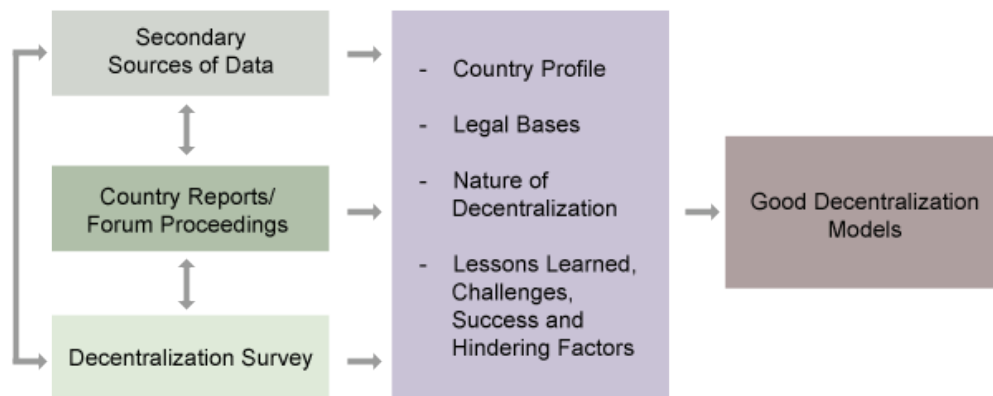
Research Framework

This study is a comparative analysis of DEM in eleven (11) Southeast Asian countries. The analysis focuses on administrative decentralization and limits itself to basic education. Basic education is the level which has the largest enrolment and employs the most number of personnel. In pursuit of broader access to and improved quality of basic education, heavy investments and various innovations are poured into basic education. In most Southeast Asian countries, basic education is usually compulsory and provided free by the national governments.

Countries included in the study are the eleven members of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO): (a) Brunei Darussalam; (b) Cambodia; (c) Indonesia; (d) Lao PDR; (e) Malaysia; (f) Myanmar; (g) the Philippines; (h) Singapore; (i) Thailand; (j) Timor-Leste; and (k) Vietnam. Although Myanmar has typically a centralized government, it is still included in the study to determine its potential for decentralization.

There are three sources of data: (a) secondary sources; (b) country reports and forum proceedings; and (c) survey results. In analyzing the data gathered, triangulation was applied wherein information from the sources were validated against each other. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Research Design Framework



The secondary sources include decentralization-related studies published by experts and international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO, and USAID.

The country reports are documents presented by delegates from the 11 SEAMEO member countries during the “*First SEAMEO INNOTECH Regional Forum on the Impact of Decentralization of Education Management to School Improvement and Success*” held

in May 2009 at SEAMEO INNOTECH. These delegates, mostly education officials and academicians from teacher education institutions, were nominated by their respective Ministries of Education as participants to the forum.

The forum served as venue for collaborative inquiry wherein participants engaged in a dialogue or discussion to address the issues on education decentralization. Focus group discussions were also conducted to deeply tackle contexts, legal frameworks, the state of DEM, and successes and challenges that characterize each country. Recommendations were also made by the participants in order to improve the implementation of decentralization of educational management in the Southeast Asian region.

Survey results were based on the responses of the delegates to the questionnaire on “*Decentralization of Educational Management: Programs and Strategies in the Southeast Asian Countries*” that was sent to them through e-mail prior to their attendance at the regional forum. Accomplished questionnaires were retrieved during the forum.

From these three main sources, data and information were compared and analyzed essentially using a descriptive or qualitative approach to determine the state of DEM in each SEAMEO member country. Similarities and differences in DEM implementation across the countries were also highlighted to come up with a regional perspective. The results are presented in part 2 of this report.

PART II

Results

The results of the study are presented following the sequence of the research questions: (a) general profile of the Southeast Asian countries; (b) brief discussion of education context and the legal framework and state of DEM in each country; and (c) the successes and challenges which include lessons learned and hindrances experienced by the SEAMEO member countries. Successes are also referred to as good practices which may be distinct to a country or practiced by two or more countries.

Profile of Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia is among the most diverse region in the world. Southeast Asian countries vary greatly in geographical size, historical background, political landscape, and socioeconomic profile, among others. These different characteristics play important roles in setting up their respective education systems as well as in pursuing DEM approaches. This section briefly discusses these profiles.

Geographical Profile

Southeast Asia is composed of 11 countries namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam (Figure 2). History shows that almost all of these countries were colonized by European powers. Thailand is the only Southeast Asian country that did not experience colonial rule.

Figure 2. Map of Southeast Asia



Source: http://wikitravel.org/en/Southeast_Asia

The region has a total area (land and water) of about 4.5 million square kilometers (km²). Indonesia has the largest area, followed by Myanmar, and then Thailand. Singapore, Brunei Darussalam, and Timor-Leste have the smallest areas in the region. Among the 11 countries, only the Philippines and Singapore do not share land boundaries with other

countries, although Singapore is very near the southern tip of Peninsular Malaysia. The rest are border countries to other nations. Lao PDR and Myanmar are border countries to five nations, Thailand to four, and Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam to three each (Table 1).

Table 1. Geographical Profile of Southeast Asian Countries

Country	Area			Boundaries	
	Land	Water	Total	Land Boundaries	Border Countries
	(km ²)	(km ²)	(km ²)	(km)	
Brunei Darussalam	5,265	500	5,765	381	Malaysia
Cambodia	176,515	4,520	181,035	2,572	Lao PDR, Thailand, Vietnam
Indonesia	1,811,569	93,000	1,904,569	2,830	Timor-Leste, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea
Lao PDR	230,800	6,000	236,800	5,083	Myanmar, Cambodia, China, Thailand, Vietnam
Malaysia	328,657	1,190	329,847	2,669	Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Thailand
Myanmar	653,508	23,070	676,578	5,876	Bangladesh, China, India, Lao PDR, Thailand
Philippines	298,170	1,830	300,000	0	None
Singapore	687	10	697	0	None
Thailand	510,890	2,230	513,120	4,863	Myanmar, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia
Timor-Leste	14,874	0	14,874	228	Indonesia
Vietnam	310,070	21,140	331,210	4,639	Cambodia, China, Lao PDR
Southeast Asia	4,341,005	153,490	4,494,495	29,141	

Source: CIA. *The World Factbook 2011*, (retrieved online).

Demographic Profile

Southeast Asia has a total population of about 589.5 million as of 2010. It is estimated that this will increase to 706.6 million people in 2030. Indonesia is the most populous country with about 233 million while Brunei Darussalam has the smallest population with less than half a million.

In terms of age structure, Lao PDR has the largest proportion of 0-14 years old at 36.7%. The Philippines (34.6%), Timor-Leste (33.8%), and Cambodia (32.2%) are the other countries with more than 30% of the population within the same age group. Singapore has the smallest 0-14 population at 13.8%. On the other hand, Singapore registered the largest percentage (77%) of 15-64 years old, followed by Thailand (70.9%) and Brunei Darussalam (70.9%). For the 65 and above age group, both Singapore and Thailand have the highest percentage at 9.2%. It should be noted that the 0-14 age group largely comprises the school-age group. In magnitude, Indonesia has the largest 0-14 years old population at around 62.8 million, followed by the Philippines at 32.8 million while Brunei Darussalam and Timor-Leste have the smallest at less than half a million, estimated at 130,000 and 408,000, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Demographic Profile of Southeast Asian Countries

Country	Population					
	Total ^a	Projected Total ^b	Age Structure ^c			Urban Population ^d
			0-14	15-64	65 +	
	(millions)	(millions)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
	2010	2030	2011 est.	2011 est.	2011 est.	2010
Brunei Darussalam	0.4	0.5	25.5	70.9	3.5	76
Cambodia	15.1	20.1	32.2	64.1	3.8	20
Indonesia	232.5	271.5	27.3	66.5	6.1	44
Lao PDR	6.4	8.9	36.7	59.6	3.7	33
Malaysia	27.9	35.3	29.6	65.4	5	72
Myanmar	50.5	59.4	27.5	67.5	5	34
Philippines	93.6	124.4	34.6	61.1	4.3	49
Singapore	4.8	5.5	13.8	77.0	9.2	100
Thailand	68.1	73.5	19.9	70.9	9.2	34
Timor-Leste	1.2	2.1	33.8	62.5	3.6	28
Vietnam	89.0	105.4	25.2	69.3	5.5	30
Southeast Asia	589.5	706.6	27.83 (Ave)	66.8 (Ave)	5.35 (Ave)	47 (Ave)

^{a,b} Source: UNDP. Human Development Report 2010, (retrieved online).

^{c,d} Source: CIA. The World Factbook 2011, (retrieved online).

On the average, about 47% of the population of Southeast Asia live in urban areas while 53% live in rural areas. All the people in Singapore are urban dwellers while more than half of the population of Brunei Darussalam (76%) and Malaysia (72%) comprise their urban population. For the rest of the Southeast Asian countries, majority of the people live in rural areas, with Cambodia having the most at 80%, followed by Timor-Leste (72%), Vietnam (70%), Lao PDR (67%), Myanmar and Thailand (66%), Indonesia (56%), and the Philippines (51%).

Human Development Index Profile

The Human Development Index (HDI), developed by Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq in 1990, aims to refocus development economics from national income accounting to people-centered policies, supportive of the principle that the real worth of a nation is its people. It is basically a composite statistic of three indices, namely, life expectancy index (life expectancy at birth), education index (mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling), and Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. It has been used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to categorize and rank countries worldwide into four human development levels: very high human development, high human development, medium human development, and low human development.¹⁸

Based on the 2005 and 2010 Human Development Reports (HDR), Singapore and Brunei Darussalam were categorized under very high human development and Malaysia under high human development. The rest of the Southeast Asian nations were described to have a medium human development, except Myanmar which was under the low human development group (Table 3).

Although Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, and the Philippines maintained their respective human development category, they slid down in terms of rank while the other eight Southeast Asian countries improved their HDI ranks. Timor-Leste moved up by 11 ranks, Myanmar by six, Lao PDR by four, Indonesia by two, and Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia by one each.

The entire Southeast Asian region can be described as having a medium human development both in 2005 and 2010. A very marginal increase of 0.030 in its average HDI value was registered for the same period.

¹⁸ UNDP. *Human Development Report 2010*, (retrieved online).

Table 3. Human Development Index Profile of Southeast Asian Countries

Country	2005		2010		2005-2010
	Rank	HDI Value	Rank	HDI Value	HDI Rank Change
<i>Very High Human Development</i>					
Brunei Darussalam	32	0.801	37	0.805	-5
Singapore	28	0.826	27	0.846	1
<i>High Human Development</i>					
Malaysia	55	0.726	57	0.744	-2
<i>Medium Human Development</i>					
Cambodia	125	0.466	124	0.494	1
Indonesia	110	0.561	108	0.600	2
Lao PDR	126	0.460	122	0.497	4
Philippines	95	0.619	97	0.638	-2
Thailand	93	0.631	92	0.654	1
Timor-Leste	131	0.428	120	0.502	11
Vietnam	114	0.540	113	0.572	1
<i>Low Human Development</i>					
Myanmar	138	0.406	132	0.451	6
Southeast Asia		0.588 (Ave)		0.618 (Ave)	

Source: UNDP. Human Development Report 2010, (retrieved online).

Table 4 shows some of the specific indicators corresponding to the dimensions of the HDI. Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, the two countries classified as having a very high human development index, have the highest life expectancy at birth, expected years of schooling, and GNI per capita. For the mean years of schooling, Malaysia has the highest value while the Philippines' value is very close to Singapore's and more than that of Brunei Darussalam.

Table 4. Dimensions and Indicators of 2010 HDI

Country	Life Expectancy Index	Education Index		GNI Index
	Life Expectancy at birth	Mean Years of Schooling	Expected Years of Schooling	GNI per Capita
	(years)	(years)	(years)	(PPP 2008 US\$)
	2010	2010	2010	2010
<i>Very High Human Development</i>				
Singapore	80.7	8.8	14.4	48,893
Brunei Darussalam	77.4	7.5	14.0	49,915
<i>High Human Development</i>				
Malaysia	74.7	9.5	12.5	13,927
<i>Medium Human Development</i>				
Cambodia	62.2	5.8	9.8	1,868
Indonesia	71.5	5.7	12.7	3,957
Lao PDR	65.9	4.6	9.2	2,321
Philippines	72.3	8.7	11.5	4,002
Thailand	69.3	6.6	13.5	8,001
Timor-Leste	62.1	2.8	11.2	5,303
Vietnam	74.9	5.5	10.4	2,995
<i>Low Human Development</i>				
Myanmar	62.7	4.0	9.2	1,596

Source: UNDP. Human Development Report 2010, (retrieved online).

Education Profile

This subsection presents selected indicators that characterize the Southeast Asian countries' education profile with respect to access and quality.

Table 5 shows the gross enrolment ratio (GER) and net enrolment ratio (NER) indicators of access for the three education levels, and each country's expenditure on education expressed in percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Southeast Asian countries exhibit generally high enrolment ratios in primary education. Indonesia has the highest GER while Thailand has the lowest GER. Almost all exceeded 100% GER except for Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand. GER is the total enrolment, regardless of age (some may be overaged or underaged), over the total population belonging to school-age group, which in this case is the primary age group.

For secondary education, Brunei Darussalam has the highest GER while Cambodia has the lowest. For tertiary education, Singapore has the highest GER at 34% while Cambodia has the lowest at 7%.

In terms of NER, Malaysia has the highest NER for primary education and Brunei Darussalam for secondary education. Timor-Leste has the lowest NER for both primary and secondary levels. NER is the recorded enrolment of children belonging to the school-age group over the total population of the same age group.

Table 5. Access to Education in Southeast Asian Countries

Country	Access to Education				
	Primary Enrollment Ratio ^a		Secondary Enrollment Ratio ^b		Tertiary Enrollment Ratio ^c
	Gross	Net	Gross	Net	Gross
	1995; 2001-2009	1995; 2001-2009	1995; 2001-2009	1995; 2001-2009	1995; 2001-2009
Brunei Darussalam	106.7	93.3	96.7	88.2	16.0
Cambodia	115.9	88.6	40.4	34.1	7.0
Indonesia	120.9	94.8	75.8	69.7	18.0
Lao PDR	111.8	82.4	43.9	36.0	13.4
Malaysia	97.9	97.5	69.1	68.7	29.7
Myanmar	115.0	..	49.3	46.4	10.7
Philippines	108.2	90.4	81.4	59.9	27.8
Singapore ^d	95	93	73	..	34
Thailand ^e	91	90	75.6	72.2	31.9
Timor-Leste	106.6	75.9	54.7	31.4	15.2
Vietnam	104.1	94.0	66.9	62.3	9.7
Southeast Asia	106.7 (Ave)	90.0 (Ave)	66.07 (Ave)	56.89 (Ave)	19.4 (Ave)

^{a, b, c.} Source: UNDP. *Human Development Report 2010*, (retrieved online)

^d Source for enrolment ratios in Singapore (1995): <http://www.ilo.org/>

^e Source for enrolment ratios in Thailand: <http://www.childinfo.org/>

Table 6 shows selected data on efficiency and quality of primary education based on the indicators used in the 2010 Human Development Report.

The average dropout rate across Southeast Asian countries was rather high at 21%. The dropout rate ranged from about 2% (Brunei Darussalam) to 46% (Cambodia). Similarly, average repetition rate was also high at 6%, ranging from 0.3% (Singapore) to about 17% (Lao PDR).

For quality of primary education, the indicators were pupil-teacher ratio and percentage of primary school teachers trained. On the average, Southeast Asia has 26 primary school students per teacher, and 96% of the primary school teachers were trained to teach in this level. Cambodia has the highest pupil-teacher ratio at around 49 pupils per teacher while Brunei Darussalam has the smallest ratio at 10. Almost all countries have a high percentage of teachers trained to teach, approaching 100 percent. In the Philippines, all of their primary school teachers were trained to teach primary level.

Adult literacy rate (15 years of age and above who can read and write) in Southeast Asia was about 87%. Most of the Southeast Asian countries have adult literacy rate of above 90%. Three countries registered below-80% adult literacy. These are Cambodia, which has about 77%, Timor-Leste, 59%, and Lao PDR, 73%.

Table 6. Efficiency and Quality of Primary Education and Adult Literacy in Southeast Asian Countries

Country	Efficiency of Primary Education ^a		Quality of Primary Education ^b		Adult Literacy ^c
	Dropout Rate, All Grades	Repetition Rate, All Grades	Pupil-Teacher Ratio	Primary School Teachers Trained to Teach	15 and above
	2005-2008	2005-2008	2005-2008	2005-2008	2002-2008
Brunei Darussalam	1.6	0.8	10.1	84.3	95.0
Cambodia	45.6	11.2	48.5	98.2	77.0
Indonesia	19.9	2.9	21.4	93.5	92.0
Lao PDR	33.2	16.8	..	96.9	72.7
Malaysia	7.8	..	17.5	..	92.1
Myanmar	26.1	0.4	28.8	99.0	91.9
Philippines	26.8	2.3	33.7	100	93.6
Singapore	..	0.3	19.5	97.1	94.5
Thailand	..	9.2	21.2	..	93.5
Timor-Leste	..	12.5	37.4	..	58.6 ^d
Vietnam	7.9	1.0	20.9	98.6	92.5
Southeast Asia	21.11 % (Ave)	5.74 % (Ave)	25.9 % (Ave)	96.0 % (Ave)	86.7 % (Ave)

^{a, b, c} Source: UNDP. Human Development Report 2010, (retrieved online)

^d Source: CIA. The World Factbook 2011, (retrieved online).

Policies and Practices of DEM in Southeast Asian Countries

Southeast Asian countries adopted various decentralization strategies they consider fit for their objectives and targets for the delivery and management of their basic education services. The decision to implement DEM usually emanates from the central or national government. These are often anchored on constitutional provisions, education laws, administrative directives, strategic plans, and even pronouncements of high government officials. These form the legal frameworks that serve as the general principles and guidelines to clarify or resolve issues related to their roles and responsibilities in 'decentralized' settings. This section discusses each country's general education context, the legal bases that support the decentralization efforts, and the nature or state of DEM implementation in Southeast Asian countries.

Brunei Darussalam

Education Context

Brunei Darussalam is a wealthy economy primarily due to its petroleum and natural gas resources. Brunei Darussalam is able to provide free medical and educational services to its people up to the university level.¹⁹ In Southeast Asia, Brunei Darussalam and Singapore rank highest (very high HDI category) in Southeast Asia as reported by the UNDP. Both are also the two smallest countries in Southeast Asia in terms of total land and water area and total population. One may think that education services in these two countries can easily be managed by the central government and thus, there might be no need to decentralize. However, both countries made efforts to implement DEM. Some responsibilities were even transferred from the national education agency direct to the schools by enabling school heads to become empowered in making decisions and yet remain accountable to the central government.

Brunei Darussalam is a sovereign and constitutional sultanate that is physically separated by Malaysia into two parts. The state capital is Bandar Seri Begawan. This nation is divided into four administrative districts which are further divided into sub-districts or *mukims*, then into villages or *kampongs*. Each district is governed by a district officer, each



Figure 3.
Map of Brunei Darussalam

¹⁹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bx.html>

mukim by a head of county or *penghulu*, and each *kampong* by a head of village or *ketua kampong*. The head of state and government is Sultan and Prime Minister Sir Hassanal Bolkiah who has been serving in these positions since 1967.²⁰

The major agency responsible for Brunei Darussalam's education system is the Ministry of Education (MOE) although some schools are regulated by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports, and the Prime Minister's Office. The country's educational system consists of basic education, technical vocational education, and higher education programs. Its basic education consists of 12 years (one year of preschool, six years of primary education, and five to six years of secondary education). At a certain year during the secondary education, students need to take an examination to determine whether they are to proceed to the secondary mainstream curriculum leading to a higher education degree or take the technical vocational track instead. There are 120 primary schools, 36 secondary schools, 3 higher education institutions, and 8 technical vocational schools in Brunei Darussalam.

The MOE is divided into two sections: (1) the Core Education Section which is responsible for basic education; and (2) the Higher Education and the Planning Section, which is responsible for higher education and technical and vocational education. Each of the four districts of Brunei Darussalam is under the supervision of a MOE District Officer. The Ministry manages a total of 200 primary, 30 secondary, 13 post-secondary, and 4 tertiary public and private schools in Brunei Darussalam spread across the districts.²¹

Policies on DEM

The legal bases for DEM are the policy directives issued by the MOE and its strategic plan. The Ministry's National Education System for the 21st Century 2007-2011 or *Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad Ke-21 (SPN21)* aims to develop high quality, effective and efficient education services that will: (1) meet the social and economic challenges of the 21st century; (2) realize MOE's vision (Quality Education Towards a Developed, Peaceful and Prosperous Nation) and mission (Provide Holistic Education to Achieve Fullest Potential for All);²² (3) equip students with 21st century skills; and (4) fulfill the identified strategic themes.²³

SPN21 adheres to three strategic themes: (a) professional, accountable, and efficient organization; (b) teaching and learning excellence; and (c) quality education. For the first and second themes, the Ministry aims to provide an effective governance that is both transparent and accountable. The Ministry wants to have at the school level school administrators who are transformational and instructional leaders. For the third theme, the Ministry targets greater parental participation in the monitoring of education. Through the

²⁰ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bx.html> and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunei>

²¹ Ministry of Education-Brunei Darussalam. *2010 Education Statistics Brunei Darussalam*. Department of Planning Development and Research, Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam, 2010. (retrieved online).

²² Ministry of Education-Brunei Darussalam Website (<http://www.moe.edu.bn>).

²³ <http://www.moe.edu.bn/web/spn21>

SPN21, Brunei Darussalam recognizes the need to strengthen the degree of autonomy for schools and departments within the MOE by including two strategic objectives that pertain to decentralization: (a) “enhance quality of service providers” by giving “discretionary authority to schools” and “optimal autonomy in the management of institutions,” among others; and (b) give “more school financial autonomy.”²⁴ The word decentralization is not explicitly stated in SPN21 but implied by its reference to autonomy.

DEM Practices

Brunei Darussalam’s current DEM practice ranges from deconcentration to delegation, depending on the functions being decentralized, such as capacity-building that is focused on the school heads and teachers. Some DEM initiatives implemented include: (a) empowering school leaders and teachers; (b) developing a zoning system for primary schools and cluster system for secondary schools; and (c) enhancing community involvement in schools. These are discussed in detail below.

School leaders are given autonomy to determine their own organizational structures, delegate tasks to teaching and nonteaching staff, and plan school activities and projects. They are also expected to implement the national curriculum development plan, provide conducive learning environments, check the suitability of teaching contents with teaching objectives, and monitor teachers’ record books. School heads are given the responsibility to promote professional growth and development of school personnel. They manage funds provided by the national government and sourced from school fees and canteen rentals and are allocated for teaching aids and library books. They are also tasked to disseminate information and publications on the latest educational developments/trends to teachers and to communicate student progress reports to parents. Essentially, school leaders have autonomy in terms of managing their institutions/schools and, to a certain extent, finances.

School teachers, for their part, are responsible for preparing classroom-based assessments, major examinations, and assessment of student progress in close coordination with the school heads. They are given the power to decide on and provide instruction according to the specific needs of their students.

The government-owned primary and secondary schools within a district are grouped together into zone and cluster systems, respectively. Each zone or cluster forms a Leaders’ Committee wherein members can share information, ideas, good practices, and current issues to formulate necessary action plans or interventions to improve school academic and nonacademic performance. However, decision-making is limited because the Leaders’ Committee cannot decide on major issues which need to be elevated to the Ministry.

²⁴ Ibid.

At present, the Ministry is also trying to encourage greater community participation in education by urging nongovernment organizations (NGOs) and Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) to get more involved in raising funds and in the learning activities of children.

Cambodia

Education Context

Cambodia is a multiparty democracy under a constitutional monarchy. The King is the chief of state while the Prime Minister is the head of government. Cambodia is composed of 23 provinces and one municipality which are further subdivided into 185 districts, 1,621 communes, and 13,707 villages.²⁵

The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MOEYS) is responsible for the entire educational system of Cambodia. It has departments for administration and finance, education, higher education, youth and sport. The country's basic education consists of primary (6 years) and secondary (3 years lower and 3 years upper) levels. Prior to primary, children go to preschool for three years. At the end of the lower secondary education, graduates take an examination to determine whether they are to proceed to the upper secondary level or take technical vocational education training instead. Graduates of upper secondary education take another examination to determine if they are qualified to proceed to higher education or take the technical vocational education path.

Based on School Year 2007-2008 statistics, 1,202 schools were located in urban areas, 7,587 schools in rural areas, and 642 schools in remote areas. This is because around 80% of its population are rural dwellers. In terms of number of schools per year level, there were 1,634 preschools, 6,476 primary schools, 1,303 lower secondary schools, and 315 upper secondary schools. In terms of student population, there were about 80,000 preschoolers, 2.3 million primary school students, 640,000 lower secondary students, and 260,000 upper secondary students. Teachers number about 3,000 in preschool, 47,000 in primary, 23,000 in lower secondary, and 6,800 in upper secondary level.²⁶

Cambodia's human capacity suffered significantly as a result of many years of conflict. When peace was secured in the 1990s, the Cambodian government strived to



Figure 4.
Map of Cambodia

²⁵ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>

²⁶ <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/Includes/Contents/EMISStatistic0708/Kingdom%20of%20Cambodia.pdf>

develop its human resources as among the strategies to reconstruct the country. Through the Rectangular Strategy to rebuild Cambodia, the government identified four interrelated strategies anchored on good governance: (a) enhancement of agricultural sector; (b) further rehabilitation and construction of physical infrastructure; (c) private sector development and employment generation; and (d) capacity building and human resource development.

DEM Policies

The MOEYS is primarily tasked with the fourth strategy, which aims to enhance the capacity of Cambodia's human resources with high technical and scientific skills responsive to the labor market and which promotes development. To achieve this, the MOEYS formulated the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2006-2010 and an accompanying Education Sector Support Program (ESSP) 2006-2010. ESP identifies three main policies: (a) equitable access to education service; (b) quality and efficiency of education services; and (c) institutional development and capacity building for decentralization. ESSP, on the other hand, defines how the policies and strategies laid out in ESP will be put into practice. It emphasizes that close collaboration between the government and the civil society groups including NGOs would help achieve national education goals. The ESSP provides the main DEM guidelines and outlines the roles and responsibilities of Provincial and District Offices of Education, Communes and Individual Schools.²⁷

DEM Practices

There are two important initiatives for DEM in Cambodia – the Cluster School Policy and the Priority Action Program.

The Cluster School Strategy precedes the ESP and ESSP. In the early 1990s, Cambodia responded to the prevailing education management issues (such as low quality of teaching, inadequate basic education resources, and centralized decision-making, which limited school participation) by piloting Cluster School in three provinces. It was eventually institutionalized with the establishment of the National Cluster School Committee which was tasked with nationwide implementation. It was considered as an effective mechanism for directly supporting the community in providing for the educational needs of children. The Cluster School System has become a policy when the MOEYS issued a formal directive, the Cluster School Guidelines, in 2000.²⁸

The Priority Action Program, on the other hand, delivers operational budget direct to schools. It was introduced in Yr 2000 and through continued review and assessment, the approach is continuously being improved, especially in the area of monitoring and reporting, timeliness, and cash management.²⁹

²⁷ Arnaldo Pellini, *Decentralization Policy in Cambodia: Exploring Community Participation in the Education Sector*, University of Tampere, Finland, 2007. <http://acta.uta.fi/pdf/978-951-44-6978-7.pdf>

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ World Bank, *Cambodia: Public Expenditure Tracking Survey in Primary Education*, Washington, 2005. (http://www.glp.net/c/document_library/get_file?p_l_id=473577&folderId=12858&name=DLFE-704.pdf)

To ensure equitable access to quality and efficient education services as well as to facilitate institutional development and capacity building for decentralization, the Ministry further developed 14 priority action programs, namely: (a) education service efficiency; (b) early childhood education expansion; (c) primary education quality and efficiency; (d) lower secondary education access, quality, and efficiency; (e) upper secondary education access and equity; (f) higher education quality, efficiency, and equity; (g) continuous teacher education; (h) sustainable supply of core instructional materials; (i) non-formal education expansion; (j) youth and sport development, (k) strengthened monitoring systems; (l) secondary scholarship for the poor; (m) education facilities development program; and (n) institutional development and capacity building.³⁰

The practice of DEM in Cambodia is considered to be more at the level of deconcentration. The Ministry is in charge of the overall management and monitoring of early childhood, primary, secondary, and higher education programs. The provincial and district school inspectors and supervisors are responsible for regular monitoring of progress and performance of schools. Education financial expenditure progress monitoring is delegated to the provincial and district Budget Management Centres (Committees) (BMCs). For School Year 2005-2006, a new financial planning and accountability system for upper secondary school operating budgets was introduced to increase parent and community management.

The government intends to further strengthen selected directorates and departments at the central and provincial levels by increasing delegation of authority and responsibilities to provincial, district, cluster/commune and school levels.³¹ To prepare for this greater decentralization initiative, the Ministry plans to implement policies and develop strategies to build the technical capacity of its human resources at these levels.³²

The MOEYS also manages and monitors early childhood education (ECE) which is not yet considered part of the basic education program of Cambodia. Thus, the government largely relies on the support of NGOs, private sector, and communities for funding and sometimes management of ECE programs. For higher education programs, public colleges/universities directly manage the funds they receive from the government. The Ministry encourages these institutions to set up their own systems of governance and management that promote transparency and accountability.

³⁰ <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/Includes/Contents/EMISStatistic0708/Kingdom%20of%20Cambodia.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/DownLoads/Publications/esp06-10.pdf> and
<http://www.moeys.gov.kh/DownLoads/Publications/essp06-10.pdf>

³² <http://www.moeys.gov.kh/DownLoads/Publications/esp06-10.pdf>

Indonesia

Education Context

Indonesia is the biggest country in Southeast Asia in terms of both land area and population. It is the world's third largest democratic country, the world's largest Muslim population, and the world's largest archipelagic state.³³ It has 17,508 islands with 6,000 inhabited. The official language is Bahasa Indonesia. It has more than 300 ethnic groups with more than 700 local languages. It is composed of 30 provinces, 2 special regions, and 1 special capital city district which is Jakarta. Each province is subdivided into regencies and cities, which are further subdivided into sub-districts, villages, citizen-groups and neighborhood-groups. As a republic, the Indonesian president serves as both chief of state and head of government.³⁴



Figure 5. Map of Indonesia

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MOEC) oversees the educational system of Indonesia, from primary to higher education. Its basic education is composed of 12 years comprising six years of primary school, three years of junior secondary school, and three years of secondary education. Indonesia has about 2.7 million teachers serving in nearly 250,000 primary and secondary schools that have more than 45 million students.

DEM Policies

Indonesia first implemented DEM in 1975 to elementary schools in the areas of finance, infrastructure, and personnel. However, it was only in 1999, after the end of the Suharto regime, that decentralization policies were developed. These policies include: (a) Law 22/1999, which gives almost all central government functions to the local government, mostly at the district level; (b) Law 25/1999, which balances finance between central and local government by regulating the distribution of income from various resources to central, provincial, and district government; (c) Law 20/2003, which recognizes the importance of community participation and identifies the rights and obligations of the central and local

³³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html>

³⁴ Ibid

government units (it provides that the community has the right to take part in planning, implementing, supervising and evaluating education programs and has the obligation to support the provision of resources; central and local government units are expected to direct, guide, assist, and supervise education implementation and provide education services as well as budget); (d) Law 32/2004, which renews the Law on Local Government and gives more authority to the provincial government. The management of preschool, basic, and secondary education is under the district authority while management of special education is under the provincial authority; and (e) Government Regulation 38/2007, which distributes government affairs among central, provincial, and district government (31 affairs, one of which is education, which was transferred to the provincial and district government).

The sheer size of Indonesia makes decentralization a very practical and logical framework of governance. Provided that proper and timely combination of policy and financial support and capacity-building interventions are carried out, DEM can be expected to make the education system more efficient and effective. In implementing regional autonomy, the regencies and cities have become the major administrative units that provide most government services.

Law No. 32/2004 describes three approaches of decentralization system in Indonesia: decentralization, deconcentration, and assistance task. Decentralization is the transfer of authority by central government to decentralized districts to organize and manage government affairs. Deconcentration is the transfer of government authority by central government to a governor as the government representative and/or to vertical organization in certain territory. Assistance task is assignment from central government to district/village, from provincial government to district/village government, and from district government to village government to carry out certain tasks. As discussed in Section 1.3 earlier, decentralization described in Law No. 32/2004 essentially pertains to devolution while deconcentration and assistance task refer to delegation.

DEM Practices

As a major approach in implementing DEM, MOEC adopted the School-Based Management (SBM) policy pursuant to Law No.20/2003. Through the ADB-funded Decentralized Basic Education Project (DBEP), which served as an impetus in developing and implementing SBM, the approach is now being institutionalized nationwide by Indonesia. The DBEP also focused on the physical rehabilitation of schools located in four underserved areas and improvement of quality of teaching and learning. Capacity-building activities were also conducted to ensure proper implementation of decentralization. The project fund was directly managed by the local government units of these areas.

SBM was complemented with the introduction of School Operational Funding or *Bantuan Operasional Sekolah (BOS)* in 2005, which allows schools to receive direct funds from the central government. The certain degree of financial independence gained by the schools as well as the involvement of the community through school committees, among others, make school planning very critical. Thus, another project, the Decentralized Basic

Education - Component 1 (DBE1) was implemented pursuant to Law No. 20/2003. It aimed to provide technical services necessary to improve education planning, management, and governance at the district and school levels to attain a more effective decentralized education management and governance (DBE2 is focused on improved quality of learning and teaching and DBE3 on increased relevance of junior secondary and nonformal education to life skills). Funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and covering six geographical areas from 2003 to 2008, it aimed to strengthen DEM with emphasis on improving educational quality and life skills in general.

DBE1 involved two subprograms: (a) School Development Plan and Replication Program and (b) the Strengthening School Committees and Governance program. These subprograms aimed to improve school planning by introducing the ‘bottom-up’ planning approach. Traditionally, school planning and budgeting has been a “closed” process conducted by the school principal and a few teachers. Under the new program, all stakeholders including members of the School Committees (composed of parents and community officers) were trained on school plan formulation, complemented by trainings on the roles and functions of principals, teachers, and school committees. The subprograms also promoted transparency and accountability by involving the whole school community in the planning process. The head of the School Committee countersigns completed school plans.

DEM in Indonesia ranges from delegation to devolution. Greater authority is delegated directly to the schools such as in managing education programs, which are either implemented at the district or at the school level. On the other hand, local government units are given greater autonomy in running their own affairs, including provision of education services.

Lao PDR

Education Context

The Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR) is a landlocked, mountainous, and thickly forested country. It is divided administratively into four levels—central level or government level (14 ministries), provincial level (17 provinces), district level (140 districts), and village level (11,640 villages). The state capital is Vientiane and the official language is Lao. The chief of state is the president while its head of government is the prime minister.³⁵



Figure 6. Map of Lao PDR

³⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lao_PDR

The Ministry of Education governs over the entire educational system (primary to higher education) of Laos. Basic education comprises three years of preschool education, five years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education (which will be increased by 1 year in 2010), and three years of upper secondary education leading to either higher education or technical vocational education.

DEM Policies

In 1999, Laos adopted the deconcentration process in administering its national programs. The provincial and district government units were given authority to formulate, plan, and budget for the development of their respective provinces and districts. The Ministry of Education developed the Education Strategic Vision 2000-2020 that outlined the educational development priorities of the Lao government. Deconcentration management was adopted at four levels, namely, the central level (the Ministry), provincial level (Provincial Education Service), district level (District Education Bureau), and the school level. The education offices at these levels implement national education policies through planning, programming, projecting, budgeting, directing, and evaluating.

At the central level, the Ministry is responsible for macroplanning, teacher training, textbook development, inspection and supervision, capacity building of educational administrators, developing norms and standards as well as rules and regulations, experimentation, and evaluation. It also oversees the technical vocational and higher education programs. The Ministry manages and monitors finances allocated for pre-service teacher training, curriculum development, textbook purchase, capacity building, and operational and investment budget for technical and higher education institutions.

At the provincial level, the Provincial Education Service (PES) is tasked to control and supervise the District Education Bureau, and to plan and develop secondary school (lower and upper) and technical vocational programs in the province. PES also manages and monitors funds allocated to secondary and technical schools in line with teacher salary and incentives, in-service training, investment and operational budget, and school maintenance.

The District Education Bureau (DEB), for its part, is tasked to plan and develop programs for preschool and primary school, including primary education for adults at the district level. It also manages and monitors financial resources provided to the preschool and primary education schools for teacher salary and incentives, in-service training, investment and operational budget, and school maintenance.

DEM Practices

In 2005, Laos piloted the Demand-Driven Approach Project (DDAP) in two districts. The project, which was funded by the Sweden International Cooperation Agency, aimed to improve community participation in school management at the district and school levels, provide schools with teaching and learning materials to reduce pupil repetition and drop out, and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Under the project, two committees

were established: the Village Education Development Committee (VEDC) chaired by the head of the village, and the District Education Development Committee (DEDC) chaired by the District Governor. Each committee consisted of 15-20 members comprising a school principal and a representative from teachers, parents, mothers, business owners, retired civil servants, mass organizations, and pupils.

The main functions of the VEDC and DEDC were to collect and analyze educational data, formulate education plans, resolve problems, set up school promotion fund, and mobilize the community. They implemented the following activities to realize the objectives of the Demand-Driven Approach project: (a) involving the community in improving the enrolment rate in schools; (b) strengthening capacity of the village and district to encourage participation of local women; (c) involving community to improve school environment and quality of teaching and learning; and (d) providing new opportunities for poor adolescent youth in all project villages through the conduct of cluster-based evening classes and life-skills training programs.

The positive outcomes from the project include high participation of the community in school management and activities, significant increase in net enrolment rate, and dramatic decline in repetition and drop out incidence, as well as improvement in the teaching-learning situation. As a result, the government of Laos mandated the nationwide implementation of the DDAP through a decree from the Prime Minister. It has become the catalyst and model for DEM in Laos. To date, VEDC and DEDC have been institutionalized in almost all districts and villages.

Malaysia

Education Context

Malaysia is geographically divided by the South China Sea into two regions, Peninsular Malaysia and Malaysian Borneo or East Malaysia. It is a constitutional federal monarchy consisting of 13 states and three federal territories. Eleven states, two federal territories, and the state capital, Kuala Lumpur, are in Peninsular Malaysia while the other two states and one federal territory are in East Malaysia.³⁶ The state capital is Kuala Lumpur and the official language is Bahasa Malaysia. The prime minister is the head of the government.

The Ministry of Education oversees the educational system of Malaysia, from primary to higher education programs. Basic education in Malaysia consists of six years of primary, four years of lower secondary, and two years of upper secondary leading to higher education.

In the 1970s, various programs and projects were carried out to improve the education system of Malaysia. However, despite these efforts, the Ministry discovered a

³⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malaysia>

wide disparity in student achievement across communities. Steps were taken to reduce this gap and one of the changes advocated was giving autonomy to teachers in providing lessons that cater to the different learning profiles of the students. By the early 1980s, Malaysia started giving its teachers decision-making power over classroom instruction. Teachers can decide what should be taught and how it should be taught in the classroom.



Figure 7. Map of Malaysia

DEM Policies

The Ministry developed the ten-year Education Development Plan 2001-2010 with emphasis on the management of education, among others. The Plan recognized that its “hierarchical, centralized, heavy-at-the-top and small-at-the-bottom way of management” was a barrier for efficiency and effectiveness of educational management. Measures were thus undertaken to improve the quality of leadership at all levels of the Ministry and the schools in order to increase autonomy and decentralization of the process of decision-making and problem-solving in the areas of assessment, curriculum, and co-curriculum.

The type of decentralization being carried out in Malaysia leans toward deconcentration, although delegation is also embedded in the Ministry at certain levels and privatization is also practiced, albeit in a smaller scale. The Malaysian government considers deconcentration as giving autonomy to those in the lower levels of the hierarchy to make decisions and solve problems. The Ministry also defines delegation as empowering lower level officers in the hierarchical system of management by delegating to them some duties. By definition in Section 1.3, this is still a form of deconcentration as the mandate and responsibilities remain within the branches of the Ministry.

DEM Practices

The first official step by the Ministry to implement decentralization was to make changes in the financial management of education budget. While local education leaders can plan and bid for the finance needed to manage their divisions, departments, or schools, the funds are still mainly provided by the central Ministry. Each unit is also held responsible for its own financial management. Subsequently, decentralization was introduced in the areas of curriculum and instruction. The state and district education departments and the schools have created specific committees that are in charge of curriculum implementation. Teachers are empowered to provide instruction according to the needs of the students.

The Ministry also implemented the Smart Schools and Cluster Schools projects. The smart schools are those that implement self-accessed, self-paced, and self-directed learning using information and communications technology. There are currently 88 smart schools in Malaysia. Cluster schools, on the other hand, are excellent schools from specific clusters that are selected to become sites for pilot-testing new approaches, ideas, and changes that will give the Malaysian educational system recognition and make it a benchmark in the world education system. These selected schools are given greater autonomy in managing their affairs.

Myanmar

Education Context

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar has been governed by a civilian parliamentary government since March 2011. The President serves as the head of state. Myanmar has seven states, seven regions, 63 districts, 324 townships, 312 cities/towns, 13,742 village groups, and 65,148 villages.³⁷ The capital used to be Rangoon, but in 2006, Naypyidaw was declared by the government to be the new administrative capital.³⁸ Basic education comprises five years of primary school, four years of middle school, and two years of high school leading to higher education. There is also a technical, agricultural and vocational education track being offered after primary, middle, or high school.

The number of basic education schools increased by 20.2% in the last two decades resulting in an increase in school density. Currently, there are 40,574 basic education schools in Myanmar. Although the State provides most of the education services, there are also policies and education acts that allow the establishment of private schools and learning centres in the country.

DEM Policies

The Ministry of Education oversees the educational system of Myanmar, especially in the areas of basic education, teacher education, and higher education. Under the Ministry, there are 10 departments or boards for: (a) Basic Education No.1 – Lower Myanmar; (b)



Figure 8. Map of Myanmar

³⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myanmar>

³⁸ Ibid

Basic Education No.2 – Upper Myanmar; (c) Basic Education No.3 – Yangon City; (d) Education Planning and Training; (e) Higher Education (Lower Myanmar); (f) Higher Education (Upper Myanmar); (g) Board of Examinations; (h) Education Research Bureau; (i) Myanmar Language Commission; and (j) Universities Historical Research Centre.

The functions of the Ministry include: (a) promoting vocational and technical education; (b) allowing private and non-government organizations to participate in the development of education to a certain degree; (c) reviewing curricula and syllabi to modernize them in line with the prevailing situation; (d) promoting educational research; (e) developing an educational system that uplifts patriotism and morale, safeguards cultural heritage and national character, and in consonance with the political, economic, and social situation of Myanmar; (f) narrowing the gap among urban, rural, and border areas regarding access to basic education; (g) universalizing primary education; (h) increasing enrolment and retention rates at all levels of basic education; (i) enhancing teacher education; and (j) expanding nonformal education.

The Ministry's Executive Committee, composed of the minister, deputy ministers, director-general, and department chairpersons, still makes the decisions regarding education matters. All basic education schools are under the direct supervision of the Ministry. The administration and management of basic education programs are undertaken by the Ministry's three Departments of Basic Education (for Upper Myanmar, Lower Myanmar and Yangon) and the Department of Educational Planning and Training in accordance with directives from four statutory bodies and organizations namely, the Basic Education Council, Basic Education Curriculum Committee, Syllabus and Textbook Committee, and the Teacher Education Supervisory Committee. These four bodies are responsible for decision-making on all matters concerning primary education, secondary education/middle school, and high school as well as teacher education, curriculum development, inspection and supervision of schools, educational planning and management, and staff development and student affairs.

The Executive Committee has developed a 30-Year Long-term Education Development Plan (LEDP) divided into six medium-term (5 years) plans starting 2001 and ending 2030. The plan covers 10 tasks and 31 projects and anchored on the directives given by former head of state, Sr. Gen. Than Shwe, for the Ministry to: (a) ensure teacher quality; (b) upgrade syllabi and curricula to international level; (c) use teaching aids effectively; (d) respect and abide by laws, regulations, and disciplines; and (e) equip students with patriotic spirit and union spirit.

DEM Practices

Decentralization in Myanmar is very limited. Educational management at the lower level is restricted to inspection and evaluation of schools based on the following criteria: (a) accomplishment of the principal; (b) number of students attending school; (c) ability to follow the monthly lesson plans accordingly; (d) achievement of students; (e) use of teaching aids, multimedia facilities, and laboratories in teaching and training; (f) morale

and ethics; (g) full capacity of teaching staff; (h) adequate classrooms and furniture; (i) adequate sanitation and tidiness; (j) adequate teaching aids and multimedia facilities; (k) greening of the school; and (l) image of the school.

Philippines

Education Context

The Philippines is an archipelago composed of 7,107 islands that are grouped into three geographical divisions: Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. These are further divided into regions, then into provinces, municipalities/cities and then into *barangays*. Currently, there are 17 regions, 80 provinces, and 138 cities, 1,496 municipalities, and 42,025 *barangays*.³⁹ As a constitutional republic, the Philippine president serves as both the chief of state and head of government.

Currently, basic education in the Philippines consists of six years of elementary or primary education and four years of secondary education leading to either technical vocational courses or to higher education degrees. Recently, there have been initiatives to increase basic education by three years, adding one year of universal kindergarten and two years of senior high school.

The Department of Education (DepEd) oversees the implementation of basic education programs; the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), higher education; and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), technical vocational education programs. Previously, the functions of the three entities belonged to one government agency. Through the recommendation of the Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) of 1991, the governance and delivery of the country's education services were 'trifocalized' or divided into three areas so that each education agency can better focus on their respective mandates and achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness.

Two other major reviews of the Philippine education system, namely, the Philippine Education Sector Study (PESS) of 1998 and the Presidential Commission on Educational Reform (PCER) of 2000 recommended decentralization through promotion of school-



Figure 9. Map of the Philippines

³⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philippines>

based management as an approach to empower the school head to provide leadership and for the community to have ownership of its schools. Decentralization was recommended to ensure adequate financing, improve the quality of basic education, and improve overall sector management through greater local participation and accountability.

DEM Policies

The following laws and policies form the legal framework of DEM in the Philippines: (a) Philippine Local Government Code of 1991 or Republic Act (RA) 7160; (b) Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), now DepEd, Order 230, series of 1999 defines decentralization; (c) Governance of Basic Education Act 2001 or RA 9155 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR); and (d) DepEd Order 252, series of 2006. The DepEd Order 252, s. 2006 instructs the Physical Facilities and Schools Engineering Division to use the principal-led school building modality for building schools.

The above policies aim to achieve the following towards sustained promotion and implementation of DEM: (a) vesting of authority, responsibility, and accountability upon the lower level units of governance in managing affairs; (b) enabling local communities to be self-reliant; (c) sharing governance in which development is focused at the school level; (d) creation of Local School Boards to serve as local advisory committees on educational matters as well as a source for funding to financially support local educational needs; and (e) recognition that every unit or level in the education bureaucracy has a particular role, task, and responsibility to play.

DECS Order No. 230, series 1999, defines decentralization as: (a) the promotion of school-based management and community-based literacy programs; (b) transfer of authority and decision-making from the central and regional offices to the provincial (divisions) and schools; (c) sharing education management responsibilities with other stakeholders such as the local government units (LGUs), parent-teacher-community associations (PTCAs), and NGOs; and (d) devolution of education functions.

RA 9155 and its IRR reinforce the implementation of DEM and specify the responsibilities of the heads of education offices at different levels. The IRR provides that the education managers at the national, regional, division, school district, and school levels share responsibilities in seven areas: (a) policy formulation; (b) educational standard-setting; (c) educational planning; (d) learner development; (e) learner outcome monitoring; (f) research and development; and (g) human, physical, and fiscal resource development and management.

The national office of the DepEd formulates the national education policies and plan, manages the basic education information system (BEIS), and develops the national education standards. It also sets the framework for the total development of learners that promotes knowledge, skills, and values among pupils and students to make them caring, self-reliant, productive and patriotic citizens through local and national programs and projects.

The national office monitors, assesses, and enhances the national learning outcomes for policy formulation and standard-setting, and undertakes national educational research and studies to guide policy formulation, standard-setting, and program development.

In the area of human, physical, and fiscal resource development and management, the national office implements programs to enhance employment status, professional competence, welfare, and working conditions of all personnel of the agency. It is responsible for the continuous development of all education personnel, defines personnel competency framework and prescribes qualification standards, and provides overall guidelines in the selection, hiring, and promotion of personnel, among others. The national office exercises disciplinary authority over all personnel of the Department.

Through the assistance and guidance from the national office and consistent with the national policies and plans, the DepEd regional offices formulate their respective regional educational policy frameworks and educational standards and develop and implement basic education development plan. They also prepare the regional budget and assist, monitor, and supervise the division offices in these seven areas of responsibilities. The regions are also responsible for the monitoring and evaluating regional learning outcomes, managing the regional database and management information system, undertaking region-based educational research projects, and developing and managing region-wide projects. Based on the national criteria for the recruitment, selection, and training, the regions hire, place, and evaluate all employees in the regional office except for the position of assistant regional director. They also evaluate the performance of all schools division education officials, implement and manage regional staff development programs, and plan and manage effective and efficient use of personnel, physical, and fiscal resources of the region.

Under the DepEd regional offices are the division offices that recommend education policies, programs, plans, and standards to the higher levels that could serve as bases for the regional and national educational policy frameworks. The divisions are also tasked with ensuring compliance of quality standards for basic education programs and strengthening the role of the division supervisors as subject area specialists. They are also responsible for promoting in all schools and learning centers awareness of and adherence to the accreditation standards prescribed by the national office. The divisions assist the schools in ensuring the total development of learners and monitor and assess division learning outcomes. They also supervise the operations of all public and private elementary, secondary and integrated schools, and learning centers in their areas. The divisions may also conduct educational research on improving the teaching-learning process. They also hire, place, and evaluate all division and district supervisors as well as all employees in the division, both teaching and nonteaching personnel including school heads except for the assistant schools division superintendent. The divisions, for their part, plan and manage the effective and efficient use of all personnel, physical, and fiscal resources of the division.

The district offices have the least educational management functions. They have functions in the areas of learner development and the human, physical, and fiscal resource development and management, but such involvement is very minimal compared with the other levels. The districts monitor, assess, supervise, and evaluate the implementation of

various curricula in basic education in both public and private schools, including early childhood education, special education, and the alternative learning system. The districts provide professional and instructional advice and support to the school heads and teachers/facilitators of public and private elementary and secondary schools and learning centers.

DEM Practices

Through the School-Based Management (SBM) approach, the schools are at the center of DEM in the Philippines. They implement the policies set by higher authorities. The schools provide feedback on the implementation of national and regional educational standards and are expected to provide quantitative and qualitative upward feedback for policy formulation. The schools set their respective vision, mission, goals and objectives through the school improvement plans and school education programs. They are also responsible for establishing school and community networks, encourage the active participation of different stakeholders, conduct periodic school-based evaluation, and report the results to stakeholders.

The schools are expected to conduct school-based action research for improvement of teaching-learning outcomes and for formulating school plans, programs, and activities. They encourage staff development and organize continuing professional development activities. They also recommend the staffing complement of a school based on its needs and provide opportunities for broad-based capacity building for leadership to support SBM. They also administer and manage all personnel, physical, and fiscal resources of the school and generate resources including donations and grants for the purpose of upgrading teachers' learning and facilitators' competencies, improving and expanding school facilities, and providing instructional materials and equipment.

The DepEd also developed various strategic plans and national programs since 1995 that incorporated decentralization strategies. These include: (a) the Ten-Year Master Plan 1995-2005, which gave more decision-making powers to local officials in terms of repairs, maintenance, textbook and supplies, and equipment procurement; (b) Philippine Education for All 2015 National Action Plan; (c) Schools First Initiative (SFI) 2005-2010, which accelerated the implementation and operationalization of school-based management (SBM) approach for decentralization that intends to empower school heads to provide leadership and for communities to have ownership of their schools; and (d) the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) 2006-2010, which supported the Philippine EFA 2015 objectives and SFI campaign. The SFI and SBM approaches emphasized school-based planning and community involvement. All of these educational plans and programs should be consistent with and supportive of the national development plans. The SBM, for example, was consistent with the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan 1999-2004, which promoted decentralization of educational management so that schools become the foci for enhancing initiatives, creativity, innovations, and effectiveness.

Singapore

Education Context

The Republic of Singapore is an island-country that is located between Malaysia and Indonesia. It is a city-state divided into five districts. Singapore is a parliamentary republic with a President as the chief of state and a Prime Minister as the head of government. Majority of the executive powers rest with the cabinet headed by the Prime Minister.



Figure 10. Map of Singapore

The Ministry of Education governs the educational system of Singapore. The school system in Singapore provides students with six years of primary education and four years of secondary education leading to post-secondary education that either follows the higher education or technical education track. It features a national curriculum with major national examinations at the end of the primary, secondary, and junior college years. In 2007, there were 285,048 public primary school students and 218,062 public secondary school students.

DEM Policies

The Ministry started considering decentralization in the 1980s through discourses among high government officials, after which major initiatives on DEM followed. In 1981, it created the Schools Council, giving school principals the opportunity to contribute to the development of national education policies.⁴⁰ The government formally recognized the need for more autonomy in schools in 1985, giving school principals the authority to appoint staff, devise school curricula, and choose textbooks. However, all of these must still conform to the national education policies of the Ministry. In his concurrence with the concept of decentralization, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew stated in 1986 that government domination of educational provision could result in lack of competition and diversity. This was complemented by the statement from the Minister of Education that creativity and innovation in Singapore schools could only be fostered through a “bottom-up” approach wherein initiatives could come from the school principals and teachers and not always from the Ministry.

By the end of 1986, 12 school principals, together with the Minister of Education, visited the United Kingdom and United States for a benchmarking study and observed how 25 successful schools in these nations were being managed. The group recommended that greater autonomy should be given to schools in order to “stimulate educational innovations” and to “respond more promptly to the needs and aspirations of pupils and parents.”⁴¹ The Ministry piloted the recommendations through the implementation of the *independent schools scheme*. The scheme was piloted among selected well-established secondary schools

⁴⁰ Frederick K.S. Leung. “Educational Centralization and Decentralization in East Asia.” *Paper presented at the APEC Educational Reform Summit held in January 2004 in Beijing, China.*

⁴¹ Pushpam, W. and Tan, G.Y. (May 2009). *Decentralization of Educational Management in Singapore.*

wherein capable principals, experienced teachers, strong alumni, and responsible board of governors were given autonomy and flexibility in staff deployment and salaries, finance, management, and the curriculum. With the success of the pilot project, the Ministry introduced the *autonomous schools scheme* in 1992 in which selected schools were given additional funding and more flexibility to organize their curriculum.

Aside from the independent and autonomous schools schemes, the Ministry also took steps to grant all school principals of other regular schools greater operating autonomy. In 1997, it launched its “Thinking Schools, Learning Nation” mission statement and, in 2005, its “Teach Less, Learn More” as a major strategy to fulfill such mission.

DEM Practices

Singapore created school clusters to serve as a monitoring and feedback structure for the decentralization policies at the ground level. Piloted in 1997, the school cluster system was found to be successful, thereby leading to its institutionalization to cover all schools. Currently, there are 28 school clusters in Singapore, each containing 10 to 14 schools. Some clusters consist entirely of primary schools, while others contain a mixture of levels. A Cluster Superintendent, usually a principal or a headquarters staff with principalship experience, act as facilitator of a school cluster. In collaboration with the other principals in the cluster, the Cluster Superintendent charts the direction for the cluster and is accountable for the progress and development of the schools under it. This, however, does not undermine the role of the principals who are still fully responsible and accountable for their schools.

Each school cluster belongs to a zonal branch under the Ministry. The zonal branches oversee the management of all primary and secondary schools, junior colleges and centralized institutes. The Ministry provides the Cluster Superintendents with an annual budget to develop, guide and supervise the school leadership teams. They ensure that there is networking, sharing and collaboration among the member schools within the cluster in order to raise the capacity of the leadership teams and the level of performance in each school. They are expected to develop principals who could lead schools that will be given a high degree of autonomy. They are also responsible for the professional development of cluster personnel. They also have to ensure that finances are used on worthwhile school projects and activities.

The Ministry also established the Education Leadership Development Center to coordinate various leadership development efforts that will enhance the ability of school leaders to customize curriculum in accordance with the needs of their students.

Singapore also initiated other policies and innovations to support decentralization in the areas of management structure, finance, curriculum, enrollment policies, and human resources. The schools that benefitted from these programs are given more flexibility to be innovative as long as their actions are in line with the broad guidelines of the Ministry. These activities include the following: (a) management structure; (b) finance; (c) enrolment policies; (d) curriculum; and (e) human resources.

In the area of management structure, the Ministry undertook activities that would enable schools to freely reorganize their management structures to make them more responsive to the needs of all students. In 2005, the Ministry created a new position for Vice Principal for Administration who shall assist the School Principal in resource management and overseeing routine administrative matters. This move enabled principals to focus on their leadership strategies and on changes that could be implemented in the area of instruction.

In the area of finance, the Ministry gave additional funding assistance to schools to increase their autonomy to innovate in areas such as curriculum and staff development. In 2005, The Ministry launched the School-Based Excellence Program that provided a grant of up to \$100,000 a year to selected primary schools that wish to develop a strong niche school program. In the next five years, the Ministry targets at least half of all schools to be niches of excellence.

As for enrolment, the Ministry introduced the Direct School Admission Scheme that would allow secondary schools under the Peaks of Excellence Program to admit 5% of their students based on criteria the schools themselves set. Even the junior colleges and tertiary institutions are allowed to admit a certain percentage of their students based on school-based admission requirements. This scheme enabled the schools to consider both the academic and non-academic achievements of students. However, not all can enjoy this flexibility. Only those who fall under a certain classification can admit from 5% to 100% of their students using school-based criteria.

In the area of curriculum, the Ministry has been issuing macro policies since 2000 to enable schools to innovate their curricula. Some of the reforms employed included revising the school ranking system, increasing teacher resources, reducing class size, customizing subject offerings to the needs of the students, and reducing curriculum content. Most notable of these activities was the reduction of curriculum content. In 2005, the Ministry reduced curriculum content to give teachers 10 to 20% free time or “white space” to have the autonomy to experiment with their teaching and assessment methods. Through this initiative, the Ministry sought to improve the quality of student-teacher interaction resulting in greater student engagement in learning.

By 2010, the Ministry gave teachers around two hours per week to meet with other teachers for professional planning and collaboration. The teachers were also given one hour per week to reflect, discuss, and plan their lessons plans with other teachers. The Ministry also introduced the Flexible School Infrastructure (FlexSI) project to give primary and secondary schools more infrastructural flexibility to enable teachers to try out different teaching approaches.

The Ministry has also implemented policies that gave autonomy to schools in the area of human resources. For instance, it provided manpower grants to schools to hire temporary relief personnel to address their manpower or administrative needs. The Ministry also recruited Co-Curricular Program Executives (CCPE) to offload the administrative workload of teachers on co-curricular activities to give teachers more time for professional

planning and collaboration. Many of the policies are about giving certain schools the liberty to hire additional administrators or teachers within the boundaries of the guidelines of the Ministry.

Singapore's motivation for DEM is not simply to ensure that school finances are handled more judiciously, efficiently, and effectively, but primarily to stimulate educational innovations to be globally competitive, provide more competition and diversity, and allow schools to respond more promptly to the needs and aspirations of pupils and parents.

While the development and implementation of DEM in Singapore was supported by policy directives from the Ministry of Education, some decision-making responsibilities were transferred from the national government directly to schools. DEM also had strong support from high government officials considering its development through successful pilot-testing and strategic step-by-step planning. Decentralization in Singapore adopts the approach of “top-down support for ground-up initiatives.” Although greater operating autonomy is granted to the schools, the primary decision-making power continues to rest in the hands of the national government. Being a small country in terms of area and population, this arrangement has proven to be efficient and effective with respect to its DEM objectives.

Thailand

Education Context

Thailand is the only country in Southeast Asia that was never colonized by a European power. It has 76 provinces, including its capital Bangkok. Each province is divided into districts and each district is further divided into sub-districts.⁴² The educational system of Thailand provides free 12 years of basic education - six years of primary education, three years of lower secondary education, and three years of upper secondary education.

The educational system of Thailand has gradually shifted to decentralization allowing local authorities to take increased control of local education. By a series of rules and regulations, local authorities were enabled to provide educational service, as well as professional training in the areas of policymaking and planning, budgeting, and self-governance.



Figure 11. Map of Thailand

⁴² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thailand>

DEM Policies

The 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand and the National Education Act (NEA) of 1999 state three major principles: (a) the State, as the center of educational policymaking and planning, would allow stakeholders to take part in all types and levels of delivery services under agreeable standards and frameworks; (b) the government would operate all educational functions with decentralization of public resources whereby the local authorities could enlist themselves as the service providers (if some of them are not quite ready, the central government still carries on this role to be able to deliver free 12 years basic education and would gradually put in place administrative and financial safety nets to capacitate all types of local-elected bodies to take charge of most public schools in the area. At the institutional level, schools nationwide can make major academic, budgetary, personnel, and administrative decisions as legal entities, while the educational service areas assist schools to be ready for decentralized budget and authorities); and (c) the Thai government advocates the concept of “All for Education” that envisions the public sector working together with private partners (individuals, parents, local communities, entrepreneurs, religious communities, and other professionals) to achieve the quality improvement in formal, non-formal, and informal education.

The following presents the chronology of decentralization of educational management policy development and reforms in Thailand:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 1997 | Enactment of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, which acknowledges the right of local authorities to provide community services including education |
| 1998 | Decentralization Phasing for the Local Authorities Act was approved by the Parliament allowing 4 to 10-year period for school transfer. In terms of financing this concept, the local communities are entitled to collect and allocate their local taxes for service delivery. |
| 1999 | Enactment of the National Education Act of 1999, which was amended in 2002 |
| 2002 | Enactment of the Administration Act of the Ministry of Education that assigns the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) to supervise public schools. Action plans were also developed to accommodate this administrative restructuring. |
| 2004 | 175 educational service areas were set up to supervise OBEC schools. Capacity assessment of local authorities was conducted nationwide. |
| 2007 | The Ministry issued the ministerial rule of decentralization phasing, which allowed schools and school councils to make decisions. |
| 2008 | The ministerial rule of decentralization to local authority was announced. |
| 2009 | The second wave of education reform was initiated by the government. |

DEM Practices

At present, the educational system in Thailand is managed on three levels: central agencies, educational service areas (ESA), and local administration organizations (LAO).

At the central level, the Ministry of Education oversees the Thai educational system. It is responsible for promoting and managing all levels and types of education; formulating policies, plans and standards; mobilizing resources for education; promoting and coordinating religious affairs, arts, culture, and sports relating to education; and monitoring, inspecting and evaluating educational provision. It has five main bodies that take overall charge of educational management: (a) Office of the Permanent Secretary; (b) Office of the Education Council; (c) Office of the Basic Education Commission; (d) Office of the Vocational Education Commission; and (e) Office of the Higher Education Commission.

ESAs, for their part, were established to comply with the requirement to decentralize authority. In 2008, there were 185 ESAs in 76 provinces. Each ESA has an Area Committee for Education that is responsible for approximately 200 educational institutions and 300,000 to 500,000 students.

LAOs, on the other hand, were established to provide education services in the local areas. Currently there are 7,853 LAOs in Thailand. These can be divided into four levels: (a) Provincial Administration Organizations; (b) Municipality Administration Organizations; (c) Sub-District Administration Organizations; and (d) Special Local Administration Organizations (Bangkok and Pattaya City). Besides the subsidy coming from the national government, the LAOs are expected to allocate funds for their local educational institutions. These financial assistance may come from the income of LAOs collected from taxes, service charges, fines, license fees, properties, public utilities, among others.

In accordance with the 1999 NEA, the Ministry promulgated the Ministerial Regulation concerning the criteria and methods for decentralizing power in educational administration and management in 2007. The Regulation provides that power will be decentralized in the areas of financial management, in particular, and academic affairs, in general.

On financial management, the 1999 NEA stipulates the decentralization of powers for administration and management of budgets directly to educational service areas and educational institutions. It also mandates educational institutions to prepare their own budget estimates. These institutions are also responsible for the disbursement of budgetary appropriations; mobilization of resources for education; and governance, maintenance, utilization of their school properties as well as generation of income from these properties.

The Ministry also decentralized powers in management of academic matters to area committees, educational service areas, and educational institutions. Devolution of powers to these entities covers the following major areas: (a) development of local or school-based curriculum; (b) organization of teaching-learning activities;

(c) development of learning process and learning resources; (d) measurement, evaluation and transfer of learning outcomes; (e) student counseling; (f) development of internal quality assurance system and educational standards; (g) strengthening the academic capacity of all stakeholders and communities; (h) establishment of networks with other educational institutions; (i) preparation of regulations and guidelines on academic affairs of educational institutions; (j) selection of textbooks; and (k) development and application of media technologies for education.

At present, however, the Ministry still prescribes a national education curriculum, education standards, assessment of educational achievement, and quality assurance for all educational institutions to follow.

The Ministry adapted the school-based management as its decentralization framework. To prepare for its implementation, the Ministry aimed to make decisions on academic affairs, personnel, budget, and administration to be more flexible and more systematic; improve the professional development programs for teachers, school principals, and staff to enable them to handle new functions and responsibilities; and conduct pilot projects in selected schools to explore other administrative innovations.

Timor-Leste

Education Context

The Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste is the youngest country in Southeast Asia, having been internationally recognized as an independent state in 2002. Timor-Leste is another small country in the region. It is divided into 13 administrative districts, 67 subdistricts, 498 villages or *sukus*, and 2,225 hamlets or *aldeias*. Its capital is Dili and the official languages are Tetum and Portuguese. The President is the chief of state while the Prime Minister is the head of government.⁴³ After a long struggle for independence, Timor-Leste was faced with many problems, including delivery of education. Nevertheless, Timor-Leste has intensively rebuilt its nation, as well as its education system with the assistance of many international organizations.⁴⁴



Figure 12. Map of Timor-Leste

The Ministry of Education and Culture (MoEC) oversees the educational system of Timor-Leste. Among the challenges the MoEC faced were high adult illiteracy rate (almost half of the adult population), lack of school buildings (many schools were destroyed during

⁴³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Timor and <http://timor-lesle.gov.tl/?p=91&lang=en>

⁴⁴ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tt.html> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Timor

the struggle for independence from Indonesia), and low school attendance rate among primary school students (in 2006, up to 70% of primary school age children did not attend school).

DEM Policies

The 2002 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste adopts the principles of decentralization and deconcentration of public administration. Although there is a constitutional commitment to the principles of decentralization and deconcentration, laws are yet to be formulated and enacted. However, some policies and plans for decentralization have already been drafted and approved. These include the following⁴⁵:

- Decentralization Policy and Decentralization Strategic Framework I (2006);
- Decentralization Policy Orientation Guidelines and Decentralization Strategic Framework I (2008);
- Decentralization Strategic Framework II (2008);
- Draft Local Government Laws (2008-2009);
- Draft Subsidiary Decentralization Legislation (2009-2010);
- Draft Decentralization Capacity Development Strategy (2009-2010);
- Strategic Plan for Universal Primary Completion by 2015; and
- Programme of the IV Constitutional Government (2007-2012).

DEM Practices

The DEM practice in Timor-Leste is based on the Organic Law that was passed in 2008. The national government, through the MoEC, makes decisions and develops policies on matters related to education, and the regional offices implement these policies in the field. The responsibilities given to the regional offices include: (a) providing the national office recommendations regarding staff recruitment and training; (b) managing the implementation of school grant programs; (c) overseeing distribution of resources to schools; (d) monitoring quality of education provided in schools; (e) collecting school data; and (f) recommending locations for new schools or locations that are in need of rehabilitation. Other responsibilities that are slowly being transferred to the regional level pertain to financial and administrative management. Meanwhile, the Ministry is already starting with school-based management and community involvement in schools.

⁴⁵ Kuehn, Susanne (January 18, 2010). *Draft Briefing Note on the Decentralization Process in Timor Leste*. UNDP-UNCDF Local Governance Support Program.

Vietnam

Education Context

The Socialist Republic of Vietnam is divided into 58 provinces and five centrally controlled municipalities, one of which is Hanoi, also the state capital. Each province is divided into provincial municipalities, townships, counties, and then into towns or communes. The five centrally controlled municipalities which exist at the same level as provinces are also divided into districts, counties, and then into wards.⁴⁶

The 1992 Constitution of Vietnam stated that education is among the government's highest priority tasks and the government will manage the education system along the areas of education targets, programs, content, plans, teaching criteria, examination policies, and awards system. The education system of Vietnam consists of infant education (*creches* and preschool education), five years of primary education, four years of basic secondary education, three years of general secondary education, vocational education (vocational secondary education and job training secondary education), and higher education (college or university degrees and graduate studies).



Figure 13. Map of Vietnam

DEM Policies

Vietnam is a single-party state ruled by the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV). The President is the titular head of state while the Prime Minister is the head of government, presiding over a council of ministers composed of three deputy prime ministers and the heads of 26 ministries and commissions.⁴⁷ The CPV and the government of Vietnam has issued various policies on educational development. Some of these policies include the Resolutions of the VII and VIII Party's Congresses and the 1992 Constitution, all of which affirm education as the first priority among the national policies. The 4th Central Committee Session of the VII Term and the 2nd Central Committee Session of the VIII Term laid down the immediate tasks and long-term orientations to be undertaken for education and training development. The Education Law, approved in the 4th Session of the National Assembly's 10th term (December 1998), sets a legal framework for future development of education and training.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

DEM Practices

The Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) oversees the educational system of Vietnam and exercises general supervision over all the public and private schools in the country. However, there are certain schools under the supervision of other Ministries and Committees. For instance, the Ministry of Public Security manages some specialized schools. Nonetheless, the MoET is responsible for formulating plans and programs to improve student learning pursuant to the education policies issued by the national government and the CPV.

On financial management, the Prime Minister decides where to invest and allocate education budget which is usually used for building infrastructures. Regional offices are, however, responsible for preparing their own budgets.

The government of Vietnam aims for a devolved educational management. It has been implementing education reforms in order to improve efficiency of state governance and promote the initiatives and responsibilities of local authorities and educational institutions in coming up with solutions to the educational problems. It has taken the following initiatives, among others, to achieve this goal:

- Implementation and promotion of decentralization in various ministries, including MoET, and local authorities by empowering them to have a sense of ownership and by giving them responsibilities on financial and staff management;
- Institutionalization of the roles, functions, duties, powers, and responsibilities in educational management at all levels;
- Strengthening of staff development by continuously conducting trainings for education personnel to acquire managerial knowledge and skills, thus, improving their qualifications as educational managers (every year, about 400-500 personnel are appointed to take training courses offered by developed countries); and
- Developing management information systems that could improve the effectiveness of governance and provide data that would inform the Vietnam government about international education trends which could be the basis for its immediate and future actions.

The government of Vietnam gives importance to the role of education and training in the preservation, development, and continuation of human civilization. It views the development of human resources as key to defining levels of development. It recognizes decentralization as one important initiative to improve its educational system.

DEM practice in Vietnam ranges from deconcentration to a form of delegation. Some responsibilities and authorities are transferred to lower levels of government, but decision-making authority remains with the MoET. For instance, the MoET, in coordination with the Ministry of Home Affairs, issues regulations and procedures on teacher recruitment.

The actual implementation of regulating and hiring of education personnel, however, is assigned to the Provincial and City People's Committees. Their responsibilities include hiring, promoting, disciplining, and redeploying public school teachers at their localities. Local government units have also been assigned some administrative tasks such as human resource management, infrastructure management, and building schools.

Conclusion

The Southeast Asian countries experienced distinct as well as common challenges and had varying levels of success in implementing DEM. This is largely because of their different contexts and the DEM approaches they adopted. Thus, identifying the “best” model may not only be impractical but may also be inappropriate and misleading. Each country, nonetheless, identified areas of success, including the factors that contributed to the gains of their DEM initiatives.

Good Practices and Challenges

Good Practices

Brunei Darussalam and Lao PDR attributed their DEM success to feasible implementation strategies. Brunei Darussalam identified its zoning and cluster system as a good practice in providing stakeholders at the school level a platform to share their opinions, brainstorm, and act on education matters or issues to improve performance of schools. The Demand-Driven Approach of Lao PDR subsequently contributed to a nationwide implementation of decentralization. Similar strategies that worked include Thailand's ESA, Vietnam's Local People's Committees, Malaysia's smart and cluster schools, and Singapore's cluster system. On the other hand, the SBM framework is the center of DEM approach in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and even Timor-Leste. In Brunei Darussalam and Singapore, they refer to this as school autonomy.

The most common success factors identified are: (a) the existence of clear and detailed decentralization policies and plans; (b) strong support and political will from both national and local officials and education managers; and (c) adequate funding support through strategic programs and projects to pilot and institutionalize DEM. The table below shows some of the good DEM practices by the 11 Southeast Asian countries.

Table 7. Good Practices Identified by Southeast Asian Countries

Good Practices	Country	Description
Zoning and cluster system	Brunei Darussalam Other countries with similar practice: Singapore and Malaysia	Government-owned primary schools are grouped into zones and secondary schools into clusters. These zones or clusters identify their leaders who comprise a Leaders' Committee where members share information, ideas, and good practices; and discuss issues leading to action plans. Stakeholders at the school level are thus given a platform to share their opinions, brainstorm, and act on education matters or issues that could improve academic or non-academic performance of their schools.
Rationale detailed decentralization plan	Cambodia Other countries with similar practice include: Brunei Darussalam	Plans were crafted to provide direction and specific strategies on DEM implementation. Clear descriptions of the roles and responsibilities of the central, provincial, and district education offices enabled the central government to move public administration closer to the schools and, thus, closer to the people. This increased community participation in school development and management helped improve the quality of education service.

Good Practices	Country	Description
Clear decentralization policies and regulations	Thailand Other countries with similar practice include: the Philippines and Indonesia	Laws and other policies detail how DEM will be implemented and embedded in its major education reforms. For example, through these policies, the education ministry formulated specific regulations on the criteria and methods for decentralizing power in educational administration and management.
Political will and commitment of national and local government leaders and officials	Indonesia and the Philippines Other countries with similar practice include: Singapore and Thailand	Granting the local government more authority over educational management made the education programs of Indonesia more responsive to the needs of the local communities as this process shortened bureaucratic procedures. The Philippines' national and local government officials strongly believe that DEM can improve the quality of education. Major interventions and investments have been undertaken to implement DEM, particularly through the SBM approach which is now being institutionalized. The SBM approach is also being institutionalized by other countries, including Indonesia and Thailand.
Demand-driven approach project	Lao PDR	The successful piloting of the project led to the nationwide implementation of DEM in the country. It primarily aimed to improve community participation in school management at the district and school levels. Among the results of the project are higher participation of the community in school management and activities, increase in net enrolment rate, and decline in repetition and drop out incidence.
Identification of areas for decentralization	Malaysia Other countries with similar practice include: the Philippines and Thailand	Identifying the education management areas for and the degree and level of decentralization enabled Malaysia to implement DEM systematically. Among these areas are financial management, curriculum, and instruction. DEM in Malaysia improved management and monitoring of financial expenditures, provided greater school autonomy with respect to implementation of the standard curriculum, and reduced red tape in education management and delivery.
Constant research-based evaluation and refinement of its policies on decentralization; Strong funding support from the national government	Singapore Other countries with similar practice include: the Philippines and Indonesia	Over the last two decades, the government of Singapore has continuously refined its DEM policies and initiatives alongside constant reexamination and redefining of its education objectives and goals. Implementation of necessary reforms related to DEM has been backed up by massive financial support from the national government.

Good Practices	Country	Description
Intensive capacity-building	Vietnam Other countries with similar practice include: Singapore, Malaysia	Trainings were conducted to build the technical capacity of education personnel and to clarify functions, duties, powers, and responsibilities of local education leaders in educational management at all levels. Trainings in the areas of information management technology to support DEM efforts were also widely implemented.
Strong support from partners	Timor-Leste Other countries which have strong support from partners include: Indonesia, the Philippines	Although decentralization in Timor-Leste is still in its initial phase, implementation of DEM was accompanied by support and strong policy commitment from the national government, which gets sufficient financial resources from international organizations.
Being open to the possibility of DEM	Myanmar	Although the central government has absolute control over the educational programs of the country, it has remained open about sharing monitoring responsibilities with education units at the lower levels. Moreover, the national government of Myanmar has already enacted a law that allows establishment of private schools and learning centers.
Clearly defined national standards as framework for quality assurance of DEM	Philippines	In the Philippines, clearly defined national policies and protocols for decentralized financial management among secondary schools provide a systematic framework for fiscal quality assurance by supervisors and school division managers. Likewise, clearly defined performance standards for teachers (known as the National Teacher Competency-based Standards) provide a clear framework for instructional supervision at the field level and a benchmark for teacher professional development.

Southeast Asian countries have attained significant gains in DEM and can identify successful practices and concrete gains in terms of its impact on education outcomes. However, these achievements were realized after overcoming certain challenges and learning some critical lessons. Some are being continuously addressed.

Challenges

The most common challenges in DEM across the Southeast Asian countries are: (a) shortage of competent educational managers on the levels to which education management functions will be decentralized; (b) inadequate funding to implement and sustain DEM; and (c) lack of support and commitment from education managers and officials at the lower level.

Lack of Educational Managers with Adequate Training on DEM

Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam reported to have education managers without the necessary capacity to properly implement DEM. Their educational managers at the lower levels lack the knowledge and skills to handle the finances of their schools, formulate budget proposals, and develop strategic plans, among others. Because of long dependence on the national government, school principals in Lao PDR lack the knowledge and skills to effectively manage their schools. Conflict-affected Timor-Leste simply had insufficient people to manage their schools. Indonesia, on the other hand, is confronted with varying competencies of education managers across schools and districts.

Insufficient Funding

Southeast Asian countries except Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand lack sufficient funds to support implementation of decentralization. Adequate funding is required to implement capacity-building programs for school leaders and managers as well as to expand school buildings and upgrade education facilities. The Philippines and Cambodia, for instance, rely heavily on foreign loans for their education reforms, including DEM.

Lack of Support and Commitment at the Lower Level

Although the national governments of Southeast Asian countries are committed to decentralization, such commitment is often not shared by all officials at the lower levels. There has been resistance from local government units and other educational officials resulting in lack of collaboration and coordination among educational units at different levels.

Table 8 enumerates the specific challenges identified by each Southeast Asian country.

Table 8. Challenges Encountered by Southeast Asian Countries in Implementing DEM

Country	Specific Challenges Encountered in Implementing DEM
Brunei Darussalam	Schools may have been given more autonomy to manage their educational finances, but some government schools lack the capacity for this function. There is still a need to build the capacity of school officials or administrators to manage finances effectively.
Cambodia	There is a lack of capable people, especially at the school level, who could develop the required strategies such as budget plans, action plans, and annual operational plans. Cambodia also has insufficient budget allocated for school operations, which is also not released on time to the schools.

Country	Specific Challenges Encountered in Implementing DEM
Indonesia	<p>Indonesia faces various challenges in the implementation of DEM. These include the diverse understanding of decentralization and interpretation on how they should be carried out at the provincial and district levels. Another challenge is the varying levels of competence among local education managers which resulted in either readiness or hesitation of the local governments to exercise their new authorities. Since local government units have varied incomes, many are still highly dependent on the central government. There are also some local government units that lack commitment to implement the policies of the central government, including the DEM policy. Given the large number of schools geographically dispersed across Indonesia, another challenge is the significant variation in the quality of schools across the country.</p>
Lao PDR	<p>The major hindrance to the implementation of DEM is the lack of management knowledge and competencies among school principals.</p>
Malaysia	<p>The challenges to Malaysia's successful implementation of DEM are dependence on Ministry circulars; lack of trust and confidence in lower level education managers to handle greater authority; and the examination-oriented culture among school managers.</p> <p>Lower management levels (department, division, district, and school) rely heavily on circulars issued by the Ministry for the daily operations of their institutions. This reduces creative thinking among the leaders and stifle their motivation to update their knowledge on administrative matters, making them mere followers of the printed orders and hesitant to make decisions on their own.</p> <p>The Ministry is also concerned that the autonomy given to divisions, departments, and schools could be mismanaged in the areas of finance, teacher appraisal, and student assessment. Furthermore, the tendency of school heads to project positive images of their school's academic and co-curricular performance may lead them to manipulate the grades of their students to either maintain a certain image or to help their students secure places in higher education institutions. Because of these concerns, the Ministry has been reluctant to give total autonomy to school heads.</p> <p>The Ministry gauges the quality of a school by the number of "A's" their students achieve in various examinations. As a result, this exam-oriented culture does little to promote child-centered learning in schools. Good students are constantly coached on ways to answer the examination questions while their weaker classmates listen without gaining much education.</p>
Philippines	<p>Education managers at the lower levels generally lack skills and the capacity to perform their new functions. Some school heads and education officials are not trained on administrative and financial management and instructional leadership.</p> <p>Another challenge is local political interference in the schools such as in the area of school building program. There is also the challenge of mobilizing domestic resources to finance the DEM projects so that the country could substantially reduce dependence on foreign funding, especially loans.</p> <p>The main difficulty for the Philippines is getting the right mixture of components to make decentralization work. The education system is struggling to orchestrate interventions into coherent, harmonious, efficient and effective systems or mechanisms to maintain focus on the desired outcomes and sustain the gains and success.</p>

Country	Specific Challenges Encountered in Implementing DEM
Singapore	The leading impediment to DEM during the early years of decentralization is the presence of restrictive regulations and guidelines. Although school principals are given greater flexibility to be more innovative, the Ministry has issued certain regulations and guidelines that constrain the principals in making decisions. For example, certain schools are also given grants but there are restrictions on where to use the funds, thus, restricting these schools in terms of using the funds for other innovative undertakings not listed in the grants.
Thailand	<p>At the level of Educational Service Areas, teachers and personnel who might lose their positions due to the restructuring of their organizations resist decentralization. An atmosphere of distrust and conflict may be instigated by disgruntled employees as a result. There is also the lack of coordination among committees in charge of educational management, thus, rendering them inefficient and ineffective.</p> <p>On the other hand, Local Administration Organizations are confronted with continued resistance to transfer the management of educational institutions to the local administration organizations. Some offices at the Ministry have not given enough attention to coordinating with and supporting local administration organizations in providing education services to their local communities. There are also conflicting laws such as the budgeting regulations that impede educational management of the local administration organizations. Finally, some local administration organizations are not prepared or lack the capacity to perform the duties assigned to them such as the role of instructional leaders.</p>
Timor-Leste	As a young country, Timor-Leste does not yet have enough people who are capable to implement decentralization and to manage educational services.
Vietnam	<p>The country faces the following challenges in implementing DEM:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vietnam lacks sufficient funds to meet the cost of devolution. • There is still a lack of concrete policies, system or mechanism to decentralize educational management. • There is a lack of collaboration, coordination, and information sharing between and among education units at all levels regarding their roles and responsibilities. • Educational managers and teachers at the local levels have not properly performed the functions and responsibilities assigned to them. This may be due to their lack of skills to manage education services on their own, develop strategic plans, manage finances, and look for local financial resources. • School infrastructures and teaching aids are insufficient and outdated.

The challenges in DEM implementation identified by the Southeast Asian countries are consistent with White and Smoke's (2005) findings in their study on decentralization patterns in East Asia. They identified three major challenges that national governments throughout the world could face in their implementation of decentralization, namely: (a) design of sound intergovernmental organizational arrangements; (b) development of robust financial mechanisms for channeling money to subnational governments; and (c) accountability and capacity of the management systems of local government units.⁴⁸ Another extensive research on decentralization by McGinn and Welsh confirms that support from stakeholders and adequate technical capacities of those who will be delegated with the tasks of decision-making and management are crucial to the success of any decentralization effort.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Roland White and Paul Smoke. *East Asia Decentralizes*. In *East Asia Decentralizes: Making Local Government Work*. (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2005), 1.

⁴⁹ McGinn and T. Welsh. *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?* (Paris: UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 1999).

PART III

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

Most of the Southeast Asian countries have DEM policies and regulations that provide the legal framework for delivering education services under a decentralized set-up. These are usually anchored on their constitutions, education laws, and strategic plans. In addition, most countries specifically state the adoption of decentralization of educational management in laws and education development plans in varying details.

Countries like Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines have specific laws that provide almost detailed implementation strategies while in Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam, DEM is embedded in their education plans. Myanmar, on the other hand, remains highly centralized, but has started allowing the establishment of private schools and learning centers, and the national government is open to a future sharing of monitoring responsibilities with education units at the lower levels.

Southeast Asian countries adopt DEM for different objectives. Singapore wants its schools to be autonomous and innovative. Indonesia and Timor-Leste want their education governance to be transparent. Vietnam views education as an investment for the future. Underlying these different specific objectives, however, is the goal to make the management and delivery of education services to be more efficient and effective to produce better outcomes. And DEM is believed to be one of the efficient and effective approaches or means by which provision of quality education services is ensured.

Southeast Asian countries continue to encounter challenges in DEM implementation. Most common among these challenges is the lack of competent education managers at the lower level as experienced by Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. This is being addressed through intensive capacity building programs on instructional leadership, financial management, planning and decision-making, among others.

Inadequate funding support for DEM was experienced by Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam. Partnership with foreign funding agencies in implementing programs and projects which pilot DEM practices partially addressed this problem. For example, the Philippines, Indonesia and Cambodia utilize official development assistance from multilateral and bilateral development agencies to fund DEM undertaking.

Another challenge is the lack of support and commitment from the local levels such as resistance from local government units and other education officials to decentralization. This often results in weak collaboration and coordination between and among educational units at different levels. Some countries try to overcome this problem with orientation and advocacy activities alongside capacity building initiatives.

Ensuring the quality of education services within a decentralized context is also a common challenge in most SEA countries. This is being addressed by the development of national quality standards for different education inputs, e.g., instructional materials, learning environment as a benchmark for quality assurance in schools.

Southeast Asian countries have considerable achievements in DEM. The difference lies in the extent of DEM implementation which can be examined through three basic parameters: (a) degree of transfer; (b) functions transferred; and (c) the implementation strategies used.

Degree of transfer

Most countries deconcentrated some of their educational functions from central to lower levels by transferring implementation authorities, but decisions are still maintained at the central level. There are also countries where central education agencies have started delegating some decision-making responsibilities to lower level governance units, making them accountable for their decisions. These are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Singapore, and Vietnam. However, major decisions would still be made by the central unit. Singapore calls its approach as “top-down support for ground-up initiatives.”

Devolution is already being practiced in Southeast Asia. Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand have laws that permanently transfer certain authority to govern and manage schools to local government units. The Philippines and Indonesia are also institutionalizing SBM as a major DEM strategy.

Functions transferred

The area of education management and decision-making transferred to local authorities and lower level education managers also vary across countries. The education function that is most decentralized in Southeast Asia is financial management. Lower level units are given the responsibility to propose their budget and manage their own financial resources and sometimes even generate their own funds to augment budget allocation from central education agencies.

Schools are also given some freedom to manage their own curriculum and instruction. Teachers are given some flexibility to adopt their own teaching methodology. However, they still need to follow the prescribed national curriculum. Teachers are also responsible for formulating classroom-based and school-based examinations, although national standard examinations are still managed at the central level.

Another area of decentralization is human resource management. Hiring, promotion, and firing of teaching personnel are decentralized in Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam. This function is executed in accordance with the criteria and guidelines developed by the central agency. Other educational functions that are being decentralized in Southeast Asia are staff development, construction and maintenance of school infrastructures, maintenance of management information systems, monitoring and evaluation, research and development, health and safety management, networking with different stakeholders, and strategic planning.

Implementation strategies

Southeast Asian countries have adopted different strategies and approaches in implementing DEM. Usually, decentralization of authority and decision-making follows the administrative subdivisions of a country such as provinces, districts, down to the schools. The Philippines and Indonesia are among the countries that have adopted this style. Vietnam's provincial and city people's committees are variations of this approach. These committees assist educational offices in overseeing the educational system in charge of hiring, promoting, disciplining, and deploying public school teachers.

There are also countries that found it necessary to form new practical arrangements. For instance, Brunei Darussalam has a zoning system wherein schools are grouped together. Each zone has a Leaders' Committee comprising representatives from schools and communities within a zone. These committees serve as a venue for dialogues on how to solve educational problems of their zone, as well as for brainstorming on the improvements and innovations. A similar strategy is Singapore's cluster system wherein 10 to 14 schools are grouped into clusters. Each cluster has a superintendent whose office monitors school operations at the primary, secondary, and junior college levels. The cluster superintendent, in collaboration with the school principals, charts the direction of the cluster.

Thailand's educational service areas also formed the Committee for Education, which is responsible for about 200 schools and 300,000 to 500,000 students. Malaysia gives greater autonomy to its smart and cluster schools to encourage other schools to perform better. Smart schools could implement self-accessed, self-paced, and self-directed learning using ICT. Cluster schools are excellent schools that are pilot sites for new educational approaches.

Lao PDR has its Demand-Driven Approach which essentially aims to improve community participation in school management. District and Village Education Development Committees have been established with the different sectors of the community as members. The committees are mandated to collect and analyze educational data, plan and resolve problems, set up school promotion fund, and mobilize community. Cambodia, for its part, has its Budget Management Centres at the provincial and district levels to monitor the financial expenditure and progress of schools.

At the lowest, but also the most important, level in DEM efforts are the schools which are at the forefront of education service provision. Most DEM strategies involved school empowerment. Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand target school empowerment as the core of their DEM approaches through the SBM. Greater school and school head empowerment make the schools more responsive and innovative with respect to the learners' needs, and promote and initiate stronger cooperation with the community.

Conclusion

Introducing reforms to an education system is often a grueling process filled with setbacks and dissatisfactions. Choosing an appropriate DEM model is challenging because it concerns the redistribution of decision-making powers and execution of decisions among education managers. The path to successful reforms of this kind is certain to be initially met with reluctance, doubt, and mistrust among stakeholders.

Determining the areas of educational management that should remain centralized and those that should be decentralized and to what level or unit certain management responsibilities will be transferred is an area of continuous debate among educational policymakers and managers.⁵⁰ Absolute and complete decentralization is neither possible nor advisable in the same manner as complete centralized governance.⁵¹ The key to an efficient and effective education service delivery and management is finding the workable combination of what functions should remain in the central power and what should be best deconcentrated to the field offices, delegated to or totally devolved to the local governments. In making these decisions, utmost consideration of the diverse socioeconomic, political, and cultural conditions in a country is imperative and prudent. Implementation of DEM depends not only on the administrative structures and mechanisms, but also on the political will and commitment of the national government officials and the support, willingness, and preparedness of local government officials and education leaders.

To reiterate, the actual DEM practices significantly vary from one country to another, even within Southeast Asian region where countries share several socioeconomic and cultural characteristics. Thus, the effectiveness of a country's decentralization practices cannot be totally recommended as a model for other countries to follow, but the lessons learned from those experiences can serve as reference to guide complementing research-based formulation of DEM policies and implementation strategies.

Recommendations

Each country has its own unique characteristics and thus, needs a decentralization framework and implementation strategy that best fits its context and vision. The 11 SEAMEO member delegates to the first regional forum on decentralization collectively recommended the following actions that could lead to more effective implementation of DEM:

Visionary Leadership

Although it was earlier mentioned that decentralization initiative usually comes from the central office, there is a need for a distinct high national government or ministry

⁵⁰ Govinda, R. (1997). *Decentralization of Educational Management: Experiences from South Asia*. UNESCO Paris: International Institute for International Planning.

⁵¹ McGinn, N. and Welsh, T. (1999). *Decentralization of Education: Why, When, What and How?* Paris: UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning.

official to champion DEM. This official should be a visionary leader who can inspire and motivate people to be actively involved in the decentralization process and able to convince everyone about the benefits and values of decentralization.

Strong Advocacy

A strong and aggressive advocacy or social marketing effort will help make reforms acceptable at all levels. It will also help ensure awareness and appreciation of DEM among stakeholders, thus, creating an environment that is conducive for sustained efforts and cooperation towards DEM objectives.

Clear Legal Framework and Performance Standards

The Southeast Asian countries need to ensure that they have clear legal frameworks and policies to avoid varied interpretations leading to confusion and misunderstanding of decentralization. These policies should discuss in detail how the central government will transfer additional authorities/responsibilities to lower levels, in what areas of educational management will decentralization take effect, and the specific responsibilities of each level and people involved. Clear guidelines will make implementation easier because entities involved will have a common understanding of their roles and deliverables. Clearly defined performance standards will also provide a systematic framework for quality assurance.

Appropriate and Timely Capacity Building

Since decentralization entails giving new roles or responsibilities to education managers at lower levels, it is crucial to ensure that they possess the knowledge, skills, competencies, and appreciation for these roles and functions. Most often, appropriate and timely capacity building is required for major reforms such as DEM to ensure that personnel involved can perform their new functions efficiently and effectively. Financial management is usually an area in which most education managers at the lower levels lack experience. A systematic and comprehensive capacity building program for educational managers at all levels will not only ensure that they are sufficiently prepared for DEM, but will also continuously update their knowledge and skills.

Adequate and Appropriate Resources

Adequate and appropriate human, financial, and material resources should be available at the levels where the functions will be decentralized. Some Southeast Asian countries used foreign funding in order to decentralize their educational programs. These foreign-assisted projects helped the education ministries in the operationalization of decentralization. However, once the foreign-assisted projects wind up, educational ministries are sometimes not able to provide the necessary human, financial and material resources to maintain the implementation and quality assurance systems underlying DEM. Education ministries are thus encouraged to allocate appropriate and continuing resources to accelerate and sustain the implementation of DEM.

Strong Community Participation

A strong support system from the community and other stakeholders is crucial to sustain DEM efforts and gains. Mechanisms such as local school boards and education committees are important venues to encourage their participation in education administration. Parent-Teacher Associations and NGOs, among others, should be empowered to contribute to the improvement of the basic education in their localities. However, clear guidelines and delineation of roles are necessary to determine the areas and manner of involvement to ensure smooth processes, efficiency, and effectiveness of such mechanisms.

Effective Monitoring and Evaluation System

Southeast Asian countries need to develop sound monitoring and evaluation systems to document the entire decentralization process and track progress towards objectives and targets. This could lead to identifying the strong areas that need to be sustained and the weak areas that need to be strengthened or modified. Crucial to this system is a functional, updated, and efficient management information system that will provide information for timely and critical decision-making, as well as help determine DEM's impact on education outcomes.

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