

# Decentralisation, Disadvantage & Incentives

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# Background

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- ▶ Although there have been improvements, access to (and quality within) education systems in many low and middle income countries remains limited
  - ▶ National governments and international organisations have proposed a number of solutions to addressing these concerns
  - ▶ One particularly popular model of reform, given strong support from organisations such as the World Bank, has been *decentralisation*
    - ▶ Within this, there has been a particular focus on the *devolution of decision making authority to schools*
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# School-based decision-making

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## ▶ Various models

- ▶ *Devolved decisions*: financial; personnel-related; administrative; related to curriculum/pedagogy
- ▶ *Decisions taken by*: individual principal or head teacher; professional management committee within a school; management committee involving local community members
- ▶ *Decision-making process*: 'Top down' or participatory; Community members given lots of authority or very little

## ▶ Similar assumptions

- ▶ Increased accountability, responsiveness to local needs and efficiency
- ▶ Improved educational outcomes



# Review questions

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- ▶ What is the impact of school-based decision-making on educational outcomes in LMICs?
- ▶ What are the barriers to (and enablers of) effective models of school-based decision-making?

In this review, 'school-based decision making' defined as:

*Any model in which at least some of the responsibility for making decisions about planning, management and/or the raising or allocation of resources is located within schools and their proximal institutions (e.g. community organisations), as opposed to government authorities at the central, regional or district level*

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# Methodology

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- ▶ Mixed methods review, following guidelines developed by Snilstveit (2012), Campbell Collaboration and EPPI Centre
  - ▶ Broad five-stage search strategy, incorporating: existing reviews, academic and grey literature (database searches, web searches, hand searches of journals), citation chasing, correspondence with experts
  - ▶ Inclusion criteria
  - ▶ Analysis: meta-analysis, with heterogeneity analysis, supplemented by framework synthesis
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# Description of included studies

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- ▶ 26 'impact' studies focused on 17 discrete interventions (4 'high' decentralisation, 12 'medium' and 1 'low')
- ▶ Geographic diversity (12 from Latin America, with 5 of these from Mexico; 7 from Africa; and 7 from South or Southeast Asian contexts, with 5 of these from the Philippines)
- ▶ Mostly focused on primary level (23/26)
- ▶ Mostly classified as 'medium' risk of bias (18/26)
  
- ▶ 9 'non-causal' studies (2 multi-country; 7 focused on four of the interventions discussed in impact literature)



# Results of meta-analysis

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- ▶ Somewhat beneficial effects on drop-out (statistically significant in middle-income contexts) and repetition
- ▶ Evidence does not suggest that effects on teacher attendance are significant overall, but there is evidence that effects are stronger in contexts of high decentralisation
- ▶ Effects on test-scores more robust, suggesting a positive and significant improvement in aggregate test scores on average, and positive and significant improvements in scores on separate language and maths tests.
  - ▶ Further analysis suggests that these results pertain to middle income countries; we were not able to find statistically significant improvements in test scores in low income country settings, with the exception of one study in Kenya (now a middle income country).



# Additional heterogeneity analysis

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- ▶ Student Level Factors (e.g. gender, socio-economic status; grade level)
- ▶ School Level Factors (e.g. teacher characteristics)
- ▶ Community Level Factors
- ▶ Implementation Factors





# Community level factors

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- ▶ Only seven of 26 impact studies explicitly considered community level factors in their analysis, but results consistent across studies
- ▶ Factors explored:
  - ▶ Level of development of particular communities
  - ▶ Level of parental education within communities
  - ▶ Level of community participation



# Community characteristics

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- ▶ Greater impact found in urban areas by one study (Skoufias & Shapiro, 2006).
- ▶ Four studies (Gertler et al., 2012; Murnane et al., 2006; Rodriguez et al., 2010; Skoufias & Shapiro, 2006) find that school-based decision-making reforms are likely to have a stronger impact on more advantaged (i.e. wealthier) communities.
- ▶ Other studies showing positive impact explicitly acknowledge having avoided including more remote areas in their analysis (e.g. Glewwe & Maiga, 2011, and Lassibille et al., 2010).



# Community characteristics continued

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- ▶ Two studies consider characteristics of community members (Beasley & Huillery, 2014; Blimpo & Evans, 2011).
- ▶ Both find that communities with a higher proportion of educated school management committee members are more likely to see positive results of school-based decision-making reforms.



# Community participation

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- ▶ Two studies investigate the possibility that some communities will opt to participate more actively in school decisions, as a result of school-based decision-making reforms, than others (Jimenez & Sawada, 1999; King & Ozler, 2005).
- ▶ Both find strong evidence that community participation levels are a critical factor.



# Implementation factors

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- ▶ Small number of studies using experimental designs consider implementation factors by creating discrete treatment arms (Blimpo & Evans, 2011; Bold et al., 2013; Duflo et al., 2012; Pradhan et al., 2011; World Bank, 2011) – but most do not
- ▶ Factors considered include:
  - ▶ Incorporation of a grant
  - ▶ Incorporation of training
  - ▶ Incorporation of a report card or other accountability mechanism
  - ▶ Mechanism by which school management committee members are selected
  - ▶ Relationship between schools and the surrounding community
  - ▶ Implementing body.



# Results from Pradhan et al. (2011)

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	<b>Grant</b>	<b>Training</b>	<b>Elections</b>	<b>Linkage</b>	<b>Linkage + Election</b>	<b>Linkage + Training</b>	<b>Training + Election</b>
Drop-out (n=517)	-0.005 (0.005)	0.007 (0.006)	-0.003 (0.006)	-0.002 (0.006)	-0.005 (0.011)	0.003 (0.006)	0.004 (0.006)
Repetition (n= 517)	-0.004 (0.008)	-0.006 (0.005)	-0.001 (0.005)	0.007 (0.005)	0.007 (0.008)	0.001 (0.009)	-0.006 (0.008)



# Providing grants

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- ▶ Comparison of overall results of studies which do and do not include a grant component shows a mixed picture.
- ▶ Although a number of studies show positive impact of reforms including grants, others show mixed – or even negative – impacts.
- ▶ The studies investigating the AGEMAD programme in Madagascar and the early version of the SBM reform in the Philippines (neither of which included a grant), meanwhile, suggest that school-based decision-making reforms can be effective without providing grants to schools.



# Providing training

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- ▶ In addition to Pradhan et al. (2011), three other experiments included in the review explicitly investigate the marginal impact of incorporating a training element into a school-based decision-making intervention (Blimpo & Evans, 2011; Bold et al., 2013; Duflo et al., 2012).
  - ▶ Both studies of ETP in Kenya suggest that training increases the impact of the programme.
  - ▶ However, this result is not replicated in Blimpo and Evans (2011), who find that, although training seems to increase the impact on teacher attendance, it does not appear to have a similarly positive effect on student learning (as measured through test scores).
- ▶ In addition to this experimental evidence, also possible to compare studies of reforms with and without a training element.
- ▶ As with the evidence relating to grants, the comparison presents a mixed picture.





# Other implementation factors

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## ▶ Accountability mechanisms

- ▶ One study explicitly considers marginal impact of adding a report card to a school-based decision-making intervention (World Bank, 2011) and finds that the addition of the report card actually *reduced* the impact of the intervention.
- ▶ Five other included studies discuss interventions which include school report cards but evidence is very difficult to synthesise.

## ▶ Implementing body

- ▶ One study (Bold et al., 2013) shows that the ETP in Kenya – found to be quite effective when implemented by an NGO - had no impact when implemented by the government.
- ▶ Studies of AGEMAD in Madagascar (Glewwe & Maïga, 2011; Lassibille et al., 2010) indirectly support this conclusion by acknowledging that the school-level trainings (found to have the greatest impact) were provided by an NGO



# Identified Barriers

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- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Low levels of 'capacity' within communities
- ▶ Limited desire for autonomy
- ▶ External factors, including strength of teachers unions, strength of teacher job market, centralised mechanisms (i.e. payment of salaries) and security



# Identified Enablers

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- ▶ Smaller schools
- ▶ Devolving personnel decisions (particularly in terms of teacher attendance)
- ▶ Additional elements (e.g. grants, training, etc) may be important – although more about particular characteristics than simple incorporation



# Conclusions

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- ▶ Devolving decision-making authority to the school level can have a positive impact on educational outcomes
- ▶ However, this is only likely in more advantaged contexts in which community members are largely literate and have sufficient status to participate as equals in the decision-making process



# Implications for Policy and Practice

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- ▶ School-based decision-making reforms in highly disadvantaged communities are unlikely to be successful.
- ▶ The involvement of school management committees in personnel decisions (particularly hiring and firing) appears to play an important role in improving proximal outcomes, particularly teacher attendance.
  - ▶ However, also likely to be linked to the overall teacher job market and the possibility of long-term employment.
- ▶ Specifics of programme design appear to be crucial
- ▶ Policy makers should proceed with caution when using the results from small-scale pilot programmes to inform national programming



# Implications for Research

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- ▶ General need for further robust analysis of national school-based management reforms
  - ▶ Within this, clear need to focus on potentially *negative* impacts
- ▶ Scope for further longitudinal investigation of how school-based management reforms play out over time
- ▶ Additional research needed into the relative impact of different models of school-based decision making
- ▶ Another review of the same topic, utilising a different review methodology, could usefully complement the findings of this study, particularly in terms of synthesising substantial qualitative literature in this domain



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**Full report available at:**

[http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer\\_public/2015/11/20/dfid-funded-decentralisation-review.pdf](http://www.3ieimpact.org/media/filer_public/2015/11/20/dfid-funded-decentralisation-review.pdf)

