Do education systems trust decentralization?

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Decentralization is important to study.

Decentralization is hard to study.

Trust is a good proxy.
2018 The year of Nepal’s big-bang decentralization

- 753 local government units were created
- Local governments given the responsibility for managing school education
Dec 2017 - Dec 2018

1. Surveys & survey experiments
   - Local leaders (196)
   - Head-teachers (286)
   - Teachers (540)

2. Focus group discussions
   - 130 head-teachers
Teachers will start expecting them
Refuse to do their job without them
Schools welcome decentralization
Voice | “Now things will be easier ... our concerns will be heard”

We had to go to up to the Regional education office ... now things will be easier.

We will know the gaupalika (local govt) representative- so, our concerns will be heard.

The chances of us getting neglected or our concerns getting bypassed will be minimized. They will be compelled to listen to our concerns.

Having competent authorities closer is more useful than having highly qualified ones afar.
Voice | LGs will be more accountable than the center

Yes, 86%

No, 14%
Trust | Schools more likely to ascribe positive motives to LGs than Center

- Survey experiment: same hypothetical situation was described. One random group was asked about the intentions of: (i) an official from Center (DEO); and other about (ii) an LG official

"Are Officials trying to improve education quality"

**Head Teachers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Official Type</th>
<th>Agree, 24%</th>
<th>Agree, 35%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>LG officials</td>
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Note: Difference in share who agree/strongly agree LG officials are trying to improve education quality vs DEOs is statistically significant at the 95% level among HTs.
Autonomy | LGs will provide support to improve quality

Yes, 86%

No, 14%
Autonomy

Are they afraid to sanction poor performing teachers?

Central govt is afraid: 67% of headteachers agree

Local govt is afraid: 49% of headteachers agree
Teachers will start expecting them.
Refuse to do their job without them.
But some of their faith could be misplaced.
Only 1 in 3 local leaders are actually willing to sanction under-performing teachers

How would you reduce teacher absenteeism?

- Take disciplinary action against teachers with over 50% absenteeism
- Give management training so schools can handle it
In survey experiment(s), we test whether local leaders support sanctioning teachers for high absenteeism if Center does it vs. if they have to do it.

Elected local leaders are more likely to support the sanctioning of teachers if Center has to do it vs. when they have to do it.
Teachers will start expecting them
Refuse to do their job without them
Responsibility without accountability
“Agree that Center should be responsible for hiring teachers”
“Agree that Center should be responsible for hiring teachers”
“Agree that center should be responsible for teacher promotion?”

Head-teachers

Local leaders
Most LG officials prefer independence in key education tasks; especially teacher supervision

Who should implement the following ...

- Making data on school grants and other school characteristics available to the public: 54% Local Leaders, 42% Joint Implement, 4% Center
- Implementing National Early Grade Reading minimum package in community schools: 59% Local Leaders, 37% Joint Implement, 4% Center
- Tracking teacher time spent teaching in schools: 72% Local Leaders, 25% Joint Implement, 3% Center
- Performance-based grants to schools (based on meeting minimum accountability requirements): 54% Local Leaders, 40% Joint Implement, 6% Center
**Teacher Politics**

"new elected representative will have an attitude of... “this person didn’t vote for me, so I’ll transfer him or her out.”

"Teachers may be even closer to politicians now.”

"We used to only have to talk to the SMC about appointing teachers. Now we have to talk to the winning party and try to appease other parties as well.”

if the leader wants to be re-elected, he/she cannot take strict action against teachers... this is a big problem.”
The thorniest question of decentralization is how to align teacher management & accountability?