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Globalization and Decentralization of Management: A Study of the Feasibility of Application of School-Based Management in Iran's Secondary Schools

The main purpose of this study was to recognize the critical barriers of school-based management in Iran in general, and in public secondary schools of Ahvaz in particular. The subject is addressed with Lawler's (1992) theory and those of other researchers in mind. The main questions are: What are the characteristics of the new system of school-based management in Iran's secondary schools? How much do the secondary school principals, teachers, and local education authorities know about school-based management? To what extent do they agree with the application of school-based management? To what extent do they believe that school-based management is feasible for secondary schools? And what barriers hinder successful implementation of school-based management in Iran? Quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interviews) approaches were used for collecting data. Results are reported in detail. We conclude that the school-based management scheme is not developing well and needs to be reconsidered by education policymakers. Some suggestions are made to facilitate the implementation of school-based management in Ahvaz.

L'objectif de cette recherche était d'identifier les obstacles à la gestion à l'échelle scolaire en Iran en général, et plus particulièrement, celle des écoles secondaires publiques à Ahvaz. L'étude, qui s'inspire de la théorie de Lawler (1992) et de celles de d'autres chercheurs, se penche sur les questions suivantes : Quelles sont les caractéristiques du nouveau système de gestion à l'échelle scolaire dans les écoles secondaires en Iran? Que savent les directeurs d'écoles, les enseignants et les autorités scolaires locales de la gestion à l'échelle scolaire? Dans quelle mesure sont-ils d'accord avec la mise en oeuvre de la gestion à l'échelle scolaire? Croient-ils que la gestion à l'échelle scolaire des écoles secondaires est réalisable? Quels sont les obstacles qui entravent la mise en oeuvre réussie de la gestion à l'échelle scolaire en Iran? La cueillette de données a impliqué des approches quantitatives (questionnaire) et qualitative (entrevues). La présentation des résultats est détaillée. Nous concluons que la gestion à l'échelle de l'école ne se déroule pas bien et que l'élaboration des politiques scolaires doit être reconsidérée. Nous formulons quelques suggestions visant la facilitation de la mise en oeuvre de la gestion à l'échelle scolaire à Ahvaz.

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Introduction

School-based management is rooted in the theoretical ideas of participation, decentralization, delegation of authority, and competition. It contends that all teachers, students, families, and other stakeholders in the school should be involved in decision-making (Briggs, 1999; Apodaca-Tucker & Slate, 2002). In this article we address the issues of globalization, decentralization of management, and the idea of school-based management in a formal educational system. The main issue is the effect of globalization on decentralized management models such as school-based management. We also focus on the model of school-based management used in Iran's secondary schools. The Ministry of Education introduced a new scheme for the application of school-based management in secondary schools in 1998, but so far no high schools in Ahraz have implemented the scheme. So why does school-based management fail in Iran?

Through this study we take a new look at school-based management through the lens of an organizational model that has been found in the private sector to lead members of organizations to become involved in improving organizational performance. The high-involvement model stems from the work of Lawler (1986, 1992) and his colleagues and stresses creating conditions for meaningful involvement in the organization and a stake in performance.

Objectives of the Study

1. What are the characteristics of the new system of school-based management in Iran's secondary schools?
2. How much do secondary school principals, teachers, and local education authorities know about the school-based management?
3. To what extent do the secondary school principals, teachers, and local education authorities agree with the application of school-based management?
4. To what extent do secondary school principals, teachers, and local education authorities believe that school-based management is feasible for secondary school management?
5. What barriers hinder successful implementation of school-based management in Iran?

Globalization and Decentralization of Management

Globalization as a major phenomenon has changed many organizations by forcing them to redesign themselves to ensure prosperity in the new global order. At its most organic and fundamental level, globalization is about monumental structural changes that occur in the global economy in the processes of production and distribution. A fundamental debate on the nature of contemporary economic, social, and educational change is about moving from Fordism to post-Fordism. Over the past 30 years it has become clear that in advanced economies there has been a fundamental shift from the production techniques of Fordism, which generated the post-war economic boom, to a range of alternative forms of production variously described under the headings of neo- and post-Fordism (Mehralizadeh, 1999). Based on a model developed by Brown and Lauder (1992, 1997), the importance of the new economic transition is taken into account, namely, neo-Fordism and post-Fordism and their implications for skill formation and training. Some characteristics of the

new model of work and human resource management are: a flexible production system/small batch/niche markets; a shift to highly paid, highly skilled jobs; a closer integration of manual and mental tasks; a core of multiskilled workers linked to a subcontract and semiskilled labor; a proportional span of control by the team leader; continual quality control; high career path and promotion; flexible specialization/multiskilled workers; teamwork and autonomous participation; job rotation; and an organization of lifelong learning.

Theories of educational system change and restructuring identify a need to improve the formal education system. Organizational theory suggests that in a decentralized environment, employees who are responsible for decisions and are empowered to make decisions have more control over their work and are accountable for their decisions (Murphy, 1991). In fact effective employee involvement in the process of organizational improvement requires devolution to these employees of power, information, knowledge, skills, and rewards. In this study we also evaluate the importance of three additional conditions, namely, an instructional guidance system, leadership, and resources on restructuring school management (Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996). The processes of globalization as they have been understood in the context of educational practices and public policies that are highly national in character seem to have serious consequences for transforming school leadership, teaching, and learning. As Burbules and Torres (2000) have said, because the relationships between state and education have varied so dramatically by historic eras, geographical areas, modes of governance, and forms of political representation, and between the demands of varied educational levels (elementary, secondary, postsecondary, adult, continuing, and nonformal), any drastic alteration of modes of governance (e.g., a military dictatorship that may rule for several years before yielding to democracy) can have multiple, complex, and unpredictable effects on education. This situation calls for a more nuanced historical analysis of the state-education relationship. This problem is exacerbated by the trend we discuss of delegating autonomy of the nation-state in all matters, including those of educational policy.

Carnoy (1999) described the effects of globalization on education systems: the changing nature of the labor market; increasing demand for resources for education in a policy environment hostile to the expansion of the role of the public sector; increased decentralization and privatization as an effective strategy for ensuring quality and flexibility in a globalized economy; and the multiplication of cross-national measurements of education systems.

Due to the pressures of globalization in an increasing number of countries, governments have been devolving greater responsibility and authority not only to lower levels of the government, but also directly to schools. The transfer often takes the form of establishing school councils where these do not exist and conferring on them new responsibilities and greater autonomy over school operation and pedagogical matters. This type of reform has been established in diverse settings ranging from Colombia, to Chicago, El Salvador, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Victoria, Australia. These reforms have been made with the expectation that by bringing decision-making power and accountability closer to those who teach and manage schools, schools will

become more efficient in allocating and using resources as well as more effective in instructing students and keeping them in school.

Decentralization of the decision-making process in public schools has become a major centerpiece in public school education reform. In the age of globalization, attempts have been made to increase the level of participation in decision-making through the formal incorporation of various subgroups. Concerned with such issues as granting greater power and authority to local communities, as well as diffusing state authority and increasing organizational efficiency, the decentralization movements of the 1960s and 1970s saw the devolution of authority as a way to achieve political and administrative goals (David, 1989; Wohlstetter & Mohrman, 1996).

School-Based Management Theory

One way to decentralize education is to give schools more authority. Lindelow (1981) defines school-based management as a system of educational administration where decisions are made in the school. The implementation of school-based management was typically in response to perceived crises in the system or trends in management theories, and school-based management was believed to be uniquely designed to effect improvements. It was frequently adopted as a political reform that shifted the balance of power from the central office to the school community. School-based management from this perspective helped generate ownership and commitment to school reform in the local community, reflecting the idea that a redistribution of power would increase energy for school improvement and bring change (Bryk, 1993). It was assumed that school-based management ensured local control over decisions, equitable allocation of resources, effective use of resources, teacher empowerment, and diversity resulting from market-driven responsiveness to community needs. Making the school the focal point and transferring to it the decision-making power created opportunities for leadership and professional growth. Furthermore, the local nature of goal-setting would increase commitment to achieving these goals. It was believed that because decisions were made closer to the students being served, and that the people most aware of student needs were making the decisions, decentralization would result in programs more relevant to students' needs (Fuhrman & Elmore, 1995; Herman & Herman, 1993; Neal, 1991). As Figure 1 shows, school-based management will affect the educational system through delegation of power and authority and enhancement of participation of staff, parents, and the community in the administration of the school, thus making schools more competitive and encouraging research to make schools more effective.

A review of the literature in several countries yielded numerous convergent and divergent findings about the *do's* and *don'ts* of school-based management. Wohlstetter (1995) observed that school-based management fails because: (a) it is adopted as an end in itself; (b) principals work from their own agenda; (c) decision-making power is centered in a single council; and (d) it results in business as usual. Critics identify a number of problems, some of which arise from differences in perceptions and objectives. In terms of a clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of the principals, central offices, and local school boards, Walker (2002) stated, "When authority is being shifted or redistributed among various power sites, it is important that the spheres of responsibility be

thoroughly clarified.” One view recognizes this as another example of applying theories to education that come from the business world after corporations have abandoned them. Peters and Waterman (1982) recommended site-based management for business, and now these theories are being applied to education. Calls for site-level management are now in the context of reducing resources for education. The conjunction of budget reduction and site-based decision-making creates a situation where decisions about where to make cuts are now made by teachers, administrators, and sometimes parents. This gives rise to new conflicts as diverse teachers and programs must compete for scarce resources. This has been described as “professional cannibalism.”

This conflict also produces pressures that intensify the work of teaching. If reduced resources mean loss of a program or activity, the teachers face pressure—from themselves and from colleagues, parents, and students—to increase their workload rather than lose the activity. Such pressures are more intense when the decision is made at the school rather than the system level.

Principles of School-Based Management

Research on the private sector also reveals that control over four resources needs to be decentralized throughout the organization in order to maximize performance improvement. In relation to this, Lawler (1992) has developed a theory for school-based management as follows.

- *Power* to make decisions that influence organizational practices, policies, and directions;
- *Knowledge* that enables employees to understand and contribute to organizational performance including technical knowledge to do the job or provide the service; interpersonal skills, and managerial knowledge and expertise;
- *Information* about the performance of the organization, including revenues, expenditures, unit performance, and strategic information on the broader policy and economic environment; and
- *Rewards* that are based on the performance of the organization and the contributions of individuals.

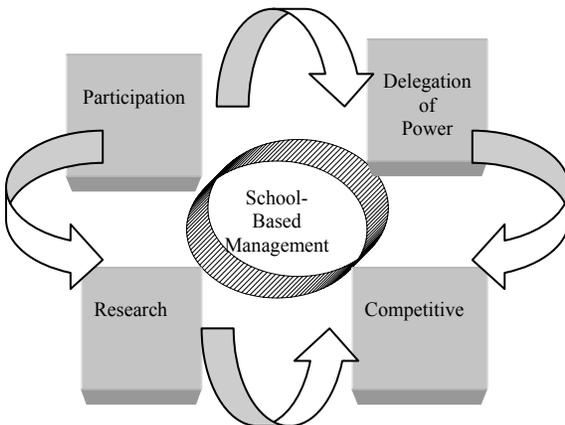


Figure 1. The effects of school-based management.

In relation to school-based management, Levacic (1995) has also developed a framework for describing the constituent elements of a school-based management model, which is helpful in guiding our understanding of the key features. Levacic's framework focuses on three essential elements of school-based management: (a) the stakeholders to whom decision-making power and responsibility are decentralized, (b) the management domains over which decentralized power can be exercised, and (c) the form of regulations that control the discretion of the local decision-makers and how they are held accountable for their decisions and actions (Karsten & Meijer, 1999). The interaction between Lawler's and Levacic's theories is shown in Figure 2.

Models of School-Based Management

From the interaction between the relations depicted in Figure 2, four models are developed in schools with varying socioeconomic bases. These are the most prevalent models of school-based management (David, 1990; Murphy & Beck, 1995). Although a given situation may present elements of more than one model, it is likely to feature one element more than others (Kuehn, 2002).

Model 1: Principal-directed site-based management. This may involve some consultation with staff and/or parents, but is ultimately controlled and directed by the principal and other administrators.

Model 2: A school-based committee that operates with a limited mandate, but may have a significant influence in this area. An example of this type might be a school-based team for deciding on special education or a school committee that decides about expenditures from learning resource funds allocated by the district.

Model 3: A parent committee operating somewhat like a board of governors. In many cases these committees are elected and are often part of reforms that eliminate or reduce the role of a school board with jurisdiction over many schools. In some areas where this model has been adopted, it strongly resembles that of charter schools.

Model 4: Collegial, participatory, democratic management, which involves all the school staff in making decisions, whether through committees or full-staff processes. This is a model advocated in the United States by the two major teacher organizations: the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers.

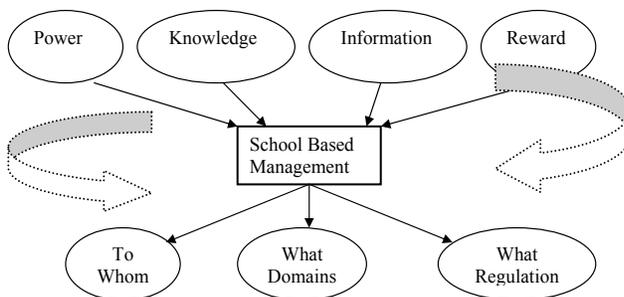


Figure 2. Interaction between Lawler's and Levacic's theories.

An examination of these models reveals that they are rarely implemented in a pure form and typically face obstacles during implementation. The form usually fluctuates due to strong influences of local context and policy.

Methodology

A quantitative and qualitative method was used. The participants in the study were randomly selected from three groups in four local zones in the city of Ahvaz: secondary school principals ($n=40$), teachers ($n=200$), and local education authorities ($n=40$). Twenty interviews were conducted, two with secondary school principals, two with teachers, and one with a staff member from each zone in local education authorities, randomly selected. Data were collected through researcher-designed questionnaires, semistandard interview forms, and related documents and materials. The interviews were recorded and analyzed based on the research questions. The questionnaires, using a 5-point Likert scale, were piloted with a sample of 200 people from three groups. Reliability analysis was calculated using SPSS; Alpha (Cronbach) for the questionnaire was .93.

After the pilot study, a factor analysis was calculated to identify underlying variables or factors to explain the pattern of correlations in a set of observed variables related to the barriers of school-based management in secondary schools. Factor analysis is often used to identify a small number of factors that explain most of the variance observed in a larger number of manifest variables. A KMO test of sphericity was conducted to test the suitability of data for structure detection, and the data were statistically significant (KMO .82, $p \leq .05$). Five optimal factors are described, named as: management barriers, six items; information and knowledge barriers, five items; structural and organizing barriers, 10 items; cultural barriers, five items; and power and political barriers, five items. The Alpha (Cronbach) for each subscale consequently were .91, .80, .76, .60, and .75. To specify the method of factor extraction, principal factor component and Varimax method of factor rotation were used, and all factors with given values over 40 were selected. The results revealed that five factors with a total of 31 items comprised 52% of variance related to barriers of school-based management.

Results and Discussion

What are the characteristics of the new system of school-based management in Iran's secondary schools?

To answer this question we verified all materials and documents related to introduction, advantages, and characteristics of the new scheme of school-based management compared with the current system of secondary school management in Iran. An Overview of Iran's Model of School-Based Management revealed that the education system in Iran has for years faced a number of problems. Historically, planning and management in Iran was centralized. In 1998, to shift toward decentralized management of education, the government launched a model of school-based management. According to regulations published by the Ministry of Education, the process of implementing the reforms was to be carried out by the general directors at the provincial level, the local education authority at the local level, and principals at the school level. In this system the Ministry of Education assigned new roles for all school

Table 1
Comparing Present Secondary Schools Management and New Scheme
of School-Based Management in Iran

<i>Management tasks</i>	<i>Present education system</i>	<i>New scheme of SBM</i>
1. Structuring the education system	Ministry and PEA, LEA	Ministry and PEA
2. Staff promotions policy	Ministry and PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, and schools
3. Setting the curriculum	Ministry	Ministry, PEA
4. Certifying teachers	Ministry, PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, and schools
5. Expanding classroom hours by subject	Ministry	Ministry, PEA, LEA, school council and teachers' council
6. Programming additional curricular and extracurricular activities	Ministry, PEA, LEA	School councils, teachers' council and students' council
7. Establishing pedagogical methods	Ministry, PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, school council, and teachers' council
8. Formulating the annual pedagogical plan	Ministry, PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, and school council
9. Selecting textbooks	Ministry	Ministry
10. Evaluating students	Ministry	Ministry, PEA, LEA, school council, and teachers' council
11. Academic requirements for accepting and transferring students	Ministry	Ministry, PEA, LEA, and school council
12. Hiring and firing teachers and administrative personnel	Ministry, PEA, LEA	LEA and school council
13. Setting student and staff obligations, rights and sanctions	Ministry, PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, and school council
14. Setting and administering the school budget	Ministry, PEA, LEA	School council
15. Setting school fees for goods and services	Ministry, PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, and school council
16. Setting voluntary school fees	Ministry, PEA, LEA	School council
17. Setting regulation of students transfer among schools	Ministry, PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, and school council
18. Setting students discipline regulations	Ministry, PEA, LEA	Ministry, PEA, LEA, school council, and students' council
19. Power and importance of school council	Very low	Moderate

SBM: school-based management; PEA: provincial education authority; LEA: local education authority.

stakeholders, and some of the business formerly conducted by provincial education authorities and local education authorities was shifted to schools. New powers were delegated to school councils (school, teachers, and students) and

school principals. How the new system of school-based management differs from the present system of high school management is summarized in Table 1.

Briefly, the new scheme of school-based management compared with the current system in secondary schools differs in three areas. The office of administrative affairs now works under the supervision of the school council, which has authority over the hiring and firing of the principal; the power of veto over the principal's sanctions against students (but not the right or authority to modify the obligations, rights, and sanctions established for the principal, the student, and the teacher by the Ministry of Education).

Second, the school council with the cooperation of the teachers' and students' councils is responsible for and committed to the innovations in teaching and improving the quality of learning and pedagogy in general. The entire school curriculum, however, is developed by the Ministry of Education.

Third, the school council is responsible for financing, setting and administering the school budget, fees, and informing the community about the state of the school's finances. They may not force students to pay tuition fees, but may motivate parents and other stakeholders to volunteer in the school.

To what extent do secondary school principals, teachers, and the local education authorities know about, agree with, and believe in the feasibility of the school-based management in secondary schools?

Most of our interviewees supported the importance of school decentralization and shared decision-making, but most had hardly heard of the new scheme of the Ministry of Education about school-based management or its regulations. The data from the questionnaires showed that sample average information about school-based management in secondary schools was 3.1 on a scale of 5. In fact information had not been disseminated broadly enough for school-based management participants to have made informed decisions about school organization. Most participants agreed on the importance and urgency of delegating decision-making to school councils. They also revealed that the feasibility of the current school-based management scheme launched by the government in Iran's secondary schools was a low 2.81 (see Table 2).

These results indicate that the new scheme does not have the necessary criteria for success. To focus on these issues we consider the factors and how barriers could be removed to make school-based management feasible in secondary schools.

What are the main barriers of school-based management in Iran?

Based on the theoretical framework of this research, five main factors are described as barriers to school-based management. These are management barriers, information and knowledge barriers, structural and organizing barriers, cultural barriers, and power and political barriers. Five hypotheses were tested. We hypothesized that in the view of secondary school principals, teachers, and staff in the local education authority, five factors—management, information and knowledge, structure and organization, cultural, power and political issues—are barriers to establishing school-based management in secondary schools. After calculating the ANOVA to compare our participants' responses, we observed no significant differences (see Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 3).

Table 2
Participants' Views of the Application of School-Based Management

<i>Views</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Sample information and knowledge of school-based management	239	5	1	.95	3.14
Rate of agreement of sample with school-based management	241	5	1	1.01	3.49
Importance of school-based management	241	5	1	1.03	3.51
Feasibility of school-based management in Iran's secondary schools	240	5	1	.93	2.81

The assessment of school-based management reported in this research explored the possibility that organizational and school performance improved by this scheme were limited because the reform had been inadequately conceptualized in terms of the current structure of schools, LEAs, PEAs, and the Ministry of Education. Considering the current centralized regulations, registration conditions, curriculum development, hiring and firing of teachers and other staff, the school's relationship with students and parents, and the structure of school organization that is currently applied in Iran's secondary schools, it is difficult to discuss the application of the new school-based management program. If local stakeholders are to use their power to improve the education offered in schools, the design of the organization must change in many ways to support the informed and skilled application of this power and to provide incentives for people to make fundamental changes in how to play their roles. The underlying assumption of this research is that a true test of school-based management requires the reform to be implemented as part of a systemic change. School-based management must include the development of an organizational design that supports and values high levels of involvement throughout the organization, simultaneously focusing on fundamental change

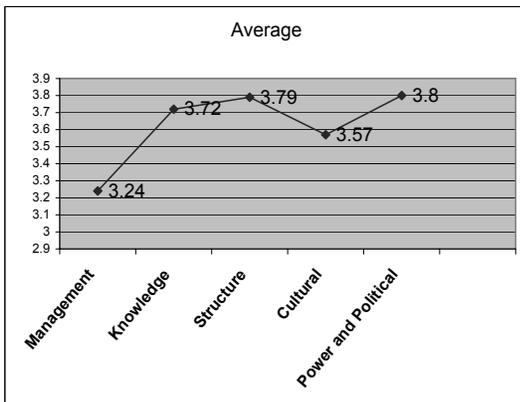


Figure 3. Ranking main barriers from the views of participants.

Table 3
One-Way Analysis of Comparison Views of Participants

Main Barriers	Participants	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.	F.	Sig.
<i>Management issues</i>	Principals	35	3.28	.79	1.33	4.83	.139	.87
	Teachers	154	3.23	.79	1.17	4.83		
	Staff of LEA	30	3.30	.7	1.00	4.50		
	Total	219	3.24	.78	1.00	4.83		
<i>Knowledge issues</i>	Principals	37	3.57	.75	1.40	5.00	1.446	.23
	Teachers	162	3.72	.72	2.00	5.00		
	Staff of LEA	30	3.87	.69	2.00	5.00		
	Total	229	3.72	.72	1.40	5.00		
<i>Structure issues</i>	Principals	35	3.78	.63	1.90	4.60	.139	.87
	Teachers	157	3.78	.57	2.00	5.00		
	Staff of LEA	28	3.84	.59	2.40	4.90		
	Total	220	3.79	.58	1.90	5.00		
<i>Cultural issues</i>	Principals	37	3.51	.73	1.40	4.80	.475	.62
	Teachers	160	3.56	.68	1.80	4.80		
	Staff of LEA	31	3.67	.53	2.60	4.80		
	Total	228	3.57	.67	1.40	4.80		
<i>Power and political issues</i>	Principals	34	3.86	.73	2.20	5.00	2.311	.10
	Teachers	155	3.83	.68	1.80	5.00		
	Staff of LEA	31	3.54	.89	1.40	5.00		
	Total	220	3.80	.72	1.40	5.00		

LEA: local educational authority.

to the educational program that supports new approaches to teaching and learning.

It is said that as a vital factor, school-based management is a popular political approach to redesigning education and giving local school participants, teachers, parents, students, and society at large the power to improve their schools. We find that principals, teachers, and local education authorities diverge significantly on how much influence they have over school decisions once the scheme is implemented. For the most part, local and national education authorities and principals in secondary schools enjoy more influence, whereas teachers feel less empowered (and even threatened) under the reform.

A key issue is that centralized management has a long history in Iranian school management. For several decades school management and organization have been highly centralized so that school-based management would not culturally bring about rapid improvement. In the education arena school-based management has been viewed largely as a political reform that transfers power

Table 4
Ranking of Main Barriers in Terms of Mean

<i>Barriers</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Power and political issues	220	3.80	.72	1.40	5.00
Structure issues	220	3.79	.58	1.90	5.00
Knowledge issues	229	3.72	.72	1.40	5.00
Cultural issues	228	3.57	.67	1.40	4.80
Management issues	219	3.24	.78	1.00	4..83

(authority) over budget, personnel, and curriculum to individual schools. Little attention has been given to empowering school sites with control over information, professional development (knowledge), or compensation systems (rewards). Furthermore, an analysis of school-based management programs concludes generally that the extent of decision-making responsibility transferred to site teachers and administrators is limited. In most schools under study, principals are key players in the budgeting process. Although school autonomy is the main target of school-based management, this key component must be accompanied by robust staff development programs to provide those involved with the necessary skills to engage in effective discussion and informed decision-making. In addition, a principal with leadership skills who shares decision-making must be in place. Principals must be strong instructional leaders, astute community organizers, sharp managers, skillful facilitators, and optimistic visionaries of school environments. Those involved need time to acquire decision-making skills and to use them to exercise their autonomy. In this study we analyzed leadership qualities required for effective organizational leadership using a model of developmental leadership, which focuses on five key activities (adapted from Robertson & Briggs, 1995). We found that teachers believed that their principals in Ahvaz secondary schools did not possess the skills or ability to develop a vision, commitment, teamwork, individual talents, and opportunities.

Although this finding revealed that secondary school principals seem to lack management skills to undertake additional responsibilities, the role of the principal is still pivotal in the implementation of school-based management. In the framework of school-based management the principal is viewed as a member of a decision-making team, not as a lone decision-maker. Principals should also be viewed as organizers, advisers, and consensus-builders who provide staff with current research and relevant school information (David, 1989). In general, the principal would adopt a democratic style of leadership, actively seeking input from others and believing that others have valid opinions and can make effective decisions. The results, however, did not bear out this assumption, and the participants, particularly the teachers, said,

In our secondary schools, generally, principals do not let teachers have their voice by following the traditional style of management. They usually work from their own agenda and very often like to dominate and rule over the whole of school activities.

These are important factors that affect the implementation of school-based management in Ahvaz secondary schools. This study revealed considerable uncertainty about the division of responsibilities among the local council and the central authorities and about the policymaking function of school councils. Schools also tended to vary because a dictatorial management style in some schools made change difficult. Hence the gap between policy and fact may be more than a lag in implementation; it may be signaling a real impediment to change.

Our study revealed that school-based management regulations in Iran require a redesign of the whole school organization that would go far beyond a change in school governance. For school-based management to work, people in schools must have real authority over budgeting, personnel, and the curriculum. Equally important: authority must be used to introduce changes in the functioning of the school that have a real effect on teaching and learning if school-based management is to help improve school performance.

Conclusion

Although the regulations clearly state that the constituent groups that must be represented in school management teams are principals, teachers, school-level support staff, parents, the community, and the students, the model faces major problems such as delegation of power, principals' knowledge, information, and the current compensation system. Teams are expected to create systems that will reward various individuals such as administrators, teachers, and parents for their contributions to the attainment of standards, whereas national budgeting does not support this system. The struggle for power is clearly described by Ball (1993), who suggested that state policymakers and other interest groups might push for decentralization motivated more by protecting their self-interest than any deep-seated belief in social democratic principles. In such instances communities unwittingly grant these groups legitimacy.

This study provides an opportunity to evaluate the new government agenda in relation to school-based management. For this to be successful the following are recommended.

- This reform must first effect a transformation of relationships among the agents in the system—school principals, teachers, parents (even students), and government officials—and a real change in the school's decision-making process and operations.
- The change must also affect what teachers do in the classroom if the link between the administrative reform and learning is to be established.
- There are, however, several reasons why practice might differ from the policies set. First, the process of reform takes time to implement. Second, schools may choose not to exercise their newfound authority, or they may lack the will or appropriate resources to do so. Third, stakeholders may diverge in their interpretation of how the reform applies to the school, perhaps a result of poor communication from the central authority and among agents in the school.
- Finally, although power-sharing among local stakeholders may be seen as an aspect of the reform, the influence asserted by local, provincial, and national education authorities makes it difficult to manage the sharing of

power or to delegate decision-making to the lower-echelon stakeholders of secondary schools.

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