Decentralization of Educational Management in Vietnam

Master’s Thesis in Political Science

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the state of educational decentralization in Vietnam with the purpose to analyze how education has been decentralized in Vietnam; and if it has been in accordance with the purpose of the international development institution present in Vietnam. The thesis presents a theoretical framework over public decentralization and educational decentralization. The theoretical framework builds the base for the case study and the final discussion. The case study is undertaken as interviews with four different Departments of Education and Training in four different provinces and three different development organizations included in the process of educational decentralization in Vietnam. The results from the case study show that a decentralization of education has been undertaken in Vietnam. However, the decentralization has only been in the form of spatial decentralization, transferring responsibility and authority to lower levels of government, and has not decentralized decision-making authority to the Departments of Education and Training. The political sphere has not matched the decentralization of education with financial decentralization and has not increased the capacity within the Department of Education and Training. This lack of financial decentralization and capacity-building has provided a situation where the political sphere still keeps the decision-making authority over education. The development organizations on the other hand are pretty satisfied that decentralization of education has taken place in Vietnam. However, it has not met the purposes of the development organizations.
Denna uppsats analyserar det aktuella tillståndet av utbildningsdecentralisering i Vietnam. Syftet är att analysera hur utbildning har blivit decentraliserat i Vietnam och hur denna decentralisering överensstämmer med det uttalade syftet av de internationella utvecklingsinstitutionerna.

Uppsatsen presenterar en grundläggande teoretisk ram som behandlar offentlig administrativ decentralisering samt utbildningsdecentralisering. Denna teoretiska ram ligger till grund för uppsatsens fallstudie och dess avslutande diskussion.


Detta har lett till att en officiell decentralisering har ägt rum av utbildning i Vietnam. Dock har denna decentralisering inte främjat syftet uttalat av decentraliseringssteorin eller de internationella utvecklingsinstitutionerna.
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1 Introduction

There is no question that decentralization, to move authority and responsibility to lower levels of hierarchy, has been very popular the last decades. This promotion of decentralization can be seen both in the private and the public sector. In the private sector decentralization has been undertaken in order to increase profits, by a decrease of information bias and an increase of control and personal incentives. In the public sector decentralization has in many ways been considered a “miracle recipe” for both democratization and public administration efficiency.

There are no doubts that the popularity of decentralization in the public sector to a large extent is based on the victory of the liberal political thought in the late 20th century. In a world, divided by the Cold War, the liberal political ideology with its concept of democracy and market allocation shown its superiority over the collective communist ideology. By the fall of the Iron Curtain, the world political landscape was reshaped; no longer could support be found for centralistic policies. Only liberal or social-liberal societies had since the end of the Second World War shown that they were able to generate an ever ending increase of wealth.

The success of the liberal political theory trickled down through the political system and reached the development institutions and the aid organizations. Why should not the political ideology that had won the Cold War, and shown both its democratic ideals and economic efficiency be promoted in the developing world; so desperate in need of economic growth and democratic prosperity?

Today, Vietnam is under a rapid economic and political reformation process. Since the introduction of Doi Moi in 1986, the Vietnamese economy and political environment have been reformed toward a system of increased local participation. This process has to a large extent involved the international organizations present in Vietnam. Today, Vietnam is reforming its educational system in accordance with the World Millennium Development Goals (WMDG) set up by the United Nation. Vietnam has been very successful to reach the goals set up for education in the WMDG and is today seen as an excellent example of educational improvements among developing countries. The document that is the leading guide-line for the reformation of the educational sector is the Education for All (EFA) Plan, which has been worked out by the government of Vietnam together with a number of development organizations. The EFA-plan acknowledges the importance of decentralization reforms in order for a successful development of education in Vietnam. However, the EFA-plan falls short to explain how decentralization shall be executed and to illuminate the state of decentralization in education in Vietnam today. The purpose of this thesis is to analyze the state of decentralization in four selected provinces with poor educational performance in Vietnam. The research question is if the development organizations’ models of decentralization can be related to the “real world” of education in the provinces. There is a risk that the popularity of decentralization in development has resulted in that decentralization is seen as an end in itself; falling short to focus on the purpose of decentralization.
The National EFA plan\(^1\) clearly recognizes decentralization of educational management as one key factor in reaching the goals of the plan to 2015. The decentralization of educational management is aimed at increasing the effectiveness of educational administration by decentralizing the authority of decision making to lower levels of government. With the transfer of decision making authority, the lower levels of government are given new responsibilities that require new competence of the administrators. The EFA plan recognizes that the competence of management needs to be strengthening in order to increase the effectiveness of educational management. By focusing on under-performing provinces and their level of human competence this thesis will hopefully provide some increased understanding of what kind of competence the provinces lack, what can be done to require this competence, and if this lack of competence will have serious implications for the effectiveness of the decentralization process of the educational sector that are set out to be accomplished by 2015 in Vietnam.

A number of sources give additional justification to the importance of this research topic. The PAR Master Programme\(^2\) identifies “research to develop proposals for decentralization” as important; where educational management is one of the research sectors. Scheerens\(^3\) gives as a suggestion for further research “the bad internal functioning of public sector organizations deduced from public-choice theory might be used as guidelines in studying unusually ineffective schools”, in my study bad internal functioning will be focused on human competence and the focus will not be on unusually ineffective schools, rather on unusually ineffective provinces in educational outcomes. The World Bank’s Decentralization Briefing Note\(^4\) identifies “one of the most important tasks in planning decentralization is to identify and account for the differing skill levels of local governments. Variation in the ability to plan and execute projects, for example, can lead to differing implementation rates and ability to use revenue, which in turn can exacerbate inequalities.” The World Bank’s Decentralization Briefing Notes also introduces the second justification of this study. The national government of Vietnam is concerned about reducing inequalities in wealth between different regions\(^5\). If lack of administrative competence has negative impact on educational performance, then the lack of competence risks creating cumulative effects.

This thesis is divided in two parts. The first part provides the theoretical framework of decentralization while the second presents the case study. The first part of the thesis is divided in to sections in which the first provides a theoretical background to public decentralization in general. The second section introduces the concept of decentralization in education, followed by a section analyzing causes and effects of ineffective educational management.

The second part, presenting the case study is introduced by a theoretical analysis of decentralization in Vietnam and a background for the interviews conducted, followed by the interviews.

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\(^1\) EFA-plan, 2003  
\(^2\) Hoa, 2000  
\(^3\) Scheerens, 2000  
\(^4\) World Bank, 1999  
\(^5\) The EFA-plan, 2003
2 Decentralization –a Theoretical Framework

The last decades the term decentralization has become more and more fashionable. Development organizations use the word frequently in order to exemplify how democratization and economic growth shall prosper. However, decentralization is not only a term used in the public sector; also the private sector has the last decades focused on to move responsibility closer to the producers in order to enhance profit-oriented thinking among all employees. Even though decentralization is a process which has been implemented in both the private and the public sector; the focus of this thesis is public decentralization.

2.1 Public Decentralization

Even though the word decentralization has become more and more common in the political and economic language, a common definition of how decentralization is executed does not exist.6 However, in both the private and the public sector the word decentralization implies a shift of responsibility and authority to lower levels of the hierarchal structure. The World Bank defines decentralization in the public sector as “the transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from the central government to subordinated or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector”.7 The UNDP focuses on the same shift of responsibility and authority to lower levels of government “[d]ecentralization, or decentralizing government, refers to the restructuring or reorganization of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between institutions of governance at the central, regional and local levels according the principle of subsidiary”.8

Even though the general concept of decentralization is pretty unified in the private and the public sector the concept is more complicated in the public sector from the point of evaluation. Evaluation of decentralization in the private sector is pretty straight forward; if decentralization helps to improve the chances of long-run survival of the company, it has been successful. However, evaluation is much more complicated in the public sector, how is a decentralization reform of the service-oriented public sector evaluated? Decentralization of the public sector imbeds many objectives as efficiency increase, democratization, individualization and public participation. One often expressed hope is that the decentralization process shall transfer responsibility from the overloaded central government to the local governmental bodies. It is also thought that decentralization increases the responsiveness of the public administration which increases the quantity and quality of services provided. Even though the democratization and ideological arguments for decentralization are strong; the major communicated advantage of decentralization is the possibility to manage the national economy more effectively and efficiently. However, in the developing world, efficiency gains are seldom accounted on forehand, and strive for decentralization is often undertaken in order to provide an alternative to the failed centralized governmental system.

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6 UNDP Government of Germany, 1999
7 World Bank, 1999
8 UNDP, 1997
2.1.1 The Objectives of Public Decentralization

The objectives of decentralization are many; however, the literature highlights that decentralization can not be seen as an end in itself.\(^9\) Rondinelli points to the fact that decentralization has seldom lived up to expectations, especially not in developing countries.\(^10\) One reason for this is that public sector decentralization is a complicated process with a broad scope of verities of how the decentralization is executed, which results in that the objectives of the decentralization reform are easily misunderstood.\(^11\) The literature focuses on four types of decentralization of the public sector; political, administrative, market, and fiscal.\(^12\)

2.1.1.1 Political Decentralization

Political decentralization refers to the decentralization of the political sphere and is often focused on democratization and public participation. The political decentralization process moves political authority and responsibility to lower levels of government, which is seen as promoting the civil society, local participation and pluralistic democracy. The advocates of political decentralization claim that political decisions taken closer to the citizens increase the legitimacy of the political outcomes, which increases the possibility of a successful execution. Political decentralization often requires a change of law in order to increase to political importance of the lower levels of government. The core concept of political decentralization is a promotion of pluralistic democracy and a vital civil society, which in turn will increase the efficiency of the political decision making which is seen as increasing the effective resource allocation in the society.\(^13\)

2.1.1.2 Administrative Decentralization

Administrative decentralization is focused on the public services rather than on political structure. The administrative decentralization seeks to redistribute the responsibility and administrative power to different levels of government. It focuses on who should hold responsibility and authority over services produced and/or controlled by the public sector; such as health care, education, water supply etc. Administrative decentralization changes the way the governmental bodies work by moving responsibility for planning, financing and management away from higher levels of government. The idea is that the lower levels of government in general hold more perfect information about the needs and wants in the community in order to allocate resources in the most efficient way. By moving administrative authority closer to the citizens, which in theory is done by moving authority down in the governmental administrative hierarchy, the citizens will increase their control and influence over the public administration. This increased transparency is seen as increasing the incentives for the public administration to do an efficient job and reduce the hegemonic tendency in the administration. Administrative decentralization is in the first instance focused on increased efficiency and in the second instance on democratization. This is the opposite of political decentralization which puts democratization at its core while efficiency improvements are more seen as “spill-overs” of the democratization process.\(^14\)

The administrative decentralization can take place in very different forms, with totally different affects on the public administration organization.

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\(^10\) Rondinelli, 1984
\(^11\) UNDP Government of Germany, 1999
\(^12\) Cohen & Peterson, 1999
\(^13\) World Bank, 1999, UNDP, 2002
\(^14\) World Bank, 1999
2.1.1.2.1 Deconcentration

Deconcentration as a form of administrative decentralization moves the same public administrative organizational structure to a geographical location closer to the citizens. This form of decentralization, which remains the same form of organization but in a new geographical area, is considered to be the weakest form of administrative administration. In successful cases, in which the deconcentration has been a sincere effort to move decision-making closer to the citizens, it has given field agents more authority and responsibility to plan and implement programs and projects. However, deconcentration has in many countries been undertaken as “soft” decentralization; the country can claim that a decentralization reform is executed; though, no more authority or responsibilities are transferred outside the control of the central government.

2.1.1.2.2 Delegation

The second form of administrative decentralization is delegation; this is a more extensive form of decentralization. This decentralization process moves authority to lower levels of semi-autonomic organizations; however, sovereign authority remains by the central government. These organizations do not need to be governmental bodies; authority and responsibility can, as an example, be given development agencies or semiautonomous project implementation units. This form of administrative decentralization often moves authority and responsibility to organizations with more “business-like” structures. In many countries services that are possible to charge money for have been subjects of delegation. This has been a way to remain public control over services that could be supplied on the free market. The delegation process is only a partial decentralization of the public administration, leaving some field of the public administration subjected to decentralization, but the overall organization unaffected of the decentralization reform.

2.1.1.2.3 Devolution

Devolution is often seen as the most serious form of administrative decentralization, since it moves authority and responsibility away from direct control of the central government. Devolution provides the lower levels of government with absolute and direct authority stated by law. The legal status makes the lower levels of government separate from the central government, which reduces the role of the central government to only execute indirect supervision of the lower levels. In order to make devolution effective it is important that the lower levels of government can raise their own revenues. If authority is transferred to lower levels while tax revenues are still controlled by the central government, the effect of the devolution will be very limited since the lower levels of government will still be under financial control of the central government. Devolution is closely connected to the subsidiary-principle, which states that decision-making shall be executed at the lowest possible level of government. The subsidiary-principle shall enhance participation and control over decision making, resulting in more efficient resource allocation. A successful devolution shall provide the citizens with more access to decision making; increasing the control but also the incentives for personal commitments and responsibility-taking within the society.

Relatively few developing countries have undergone decentralization reforms that led to devolution. The devolution process, to transfer authority to autonomous governmental units, is a potential threat to authoritarian central governments. Devolution that is executed in accordance to the definition will decrease the power and the control of the central government, which can explain

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15 Rondinelli, 1984
16 World Bank, 1999; Rondinelli, 1984
the relative low extent of this form of decentralization in the developing world. However, if successful, devolution will promote both administrative efficiency and democratization since the smaller administrative autonomous units will be able to allocate resources more in accordance to the demand of the citizens. This will be possible since the distance between input, the political decision-making and the output will be decreased; increasing the amount of information and reducing the risk of corruption.\textsuperscript{17}

\subsection*{2.1.1.3 Market Decentralization}

The third form of decentralization that has been defined extensively in the literature is Market decentralization. This form of decentralization is from the government’s point of view the most complete. Market decentralization moves responsibility from the governmentally controlled public sector to the private sector. It transfers functions that have been exclusively within the capacity of the public sphere to the private sector. Market decentralization has the market mechanism at its core, claiming that demand-driven allocation of resources increases the efficiency of the services. However, market decentralization does not need to be, in the first place, profit-oriented. The public administration and its services can be decentralized to community groups, private voluntary associations, and nongovernmental organizations. The core of the market decentralization is to promote the demand-driven allocation of services, claiming that allocation in accordance to the consumers’ demand results in the most efficient service provision. Seen from an economic perspective, the risk of the market decentralization is that the external benefits, resulting in a higher public utility than private utility, are not accounted for, which results in a supply of services lower than the social optimal level. The major benefits of the market decentralization is that the allocation of resources becomes a more direct process between the demanders and the suppliers, which has two major positive effects, the reduction of information bias, and the possibility of the demander for direct evaluation of the service.\textsuperscript{18}

Market decentralization is closely connected to the liberal political theory, viewing the minimal state as preferable. Market decentralization is a form of “debureaucratization” transferring authority from the political organization to the civil society and the profit-oriented market.\textsuperscript{19} An implementation of market decentralization is a sincere effort of the government to limit its own power; this process can possibly meet internal resistance since it requires the governmental bodies to take decisions to decrease their own power and to downsize their organizations.

\subsection*{2.1.1.4 Fiscal Decentralization}

The fourth form of defined decentralization is fiscal decentralization, which is a core component of decentralization. Given the importance of finance, all previous defined decentralization methods require some form of fiscal decentralization in order to be efficient. If some governmental bodies are to be given increased responsibility and authority it has to be matched with control of adequate fiscal revenues. These revenues can be raised locally or transferred from the central government. Important is that the lower levels of government hold full autonomy over the revenues in order to claim that authority and responsibility have been transferred to lower levels of government. The problem in many developing countries has been that rising of revenues has been decentralized to lower levels; however, these revenues have been too small to provide the local governmental bodies with fiscal autonomy; leaving them with a continues dependence on

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{17} Ibid.
\bibitem{18} Ibid.
\bibitem{19} Ralston, Anderson, and Colson, 1981
\end{thebibliography}
the central government. Fiscal decentralization is justified on the basis of efficient resource allocation; however, one of the main benefits is that it increases the control over own revenues to the community, and provides a more visible connection between government revenues and public services. This connection between paid taxes and governmental services is claimed to increase the feeling of ownership over public goods, which in theory should enhance participation and motivation to pay taxes.

As discussed earlier in this thesis, the theory of fiscal decentralization is based on the liberal political ideology, which emphasis individualism and a minimal state. In many developing countries, with a political tradition of communism or socialism, fiscal decentralization implies a major change of the political structure in the country. Important to remember is that money often is equal to power. Fiscal decentralization does often shift more “real” power than any other form of decentralization. There are many examples of political and administrative decentralization which have not been matched with fiscal decentralization; resulting in a very limited transfer of “real” authority and responsibility in the political and administrative hierarchy.

Even though political, administrative, market, and fiscal decentralization are very different in size and scope; they have a few things in common. If successful, they all transfer power from the central government to lower levels of government and/or the civil society and the market place. Some advocates of decentralization claim that decentralization may create “more creative, innovative, and responsive programs, by allowing local experimentation.” It is also, by some development organizations, believed to increase political stability and national unity. However; that is a question that has been debated.

2.1.2 Political Objectives of Decentralization

The different forms of decentralization are often justified by potential efficiency increases. However, Rondinelli claims that decentralization often is undertaken in order to serve political objectives. This results in that which form of decentralization that should be undertaken is not assessed by efficiency and effectiveness rather by how well it serves political objectives. With focus on the political objectives of decentralization, central and local governments often tolerate low efficiency of the decentralization reforms if the political objectives are fulfilled; and as long as the quality of public services is not significant decreased the society will not complain. Here decentralization runs into a conflict, the purpose of decentralization is to increase the efficiency of the public services, to promote local participation and to make local democracy and the civil society stronger; however, the different governmental bodies are claimed to put political objectives first. This results in a potential conflict between the governmental bodies, which can undertake decentralization in order to ensure their own future power, and the public, which are assumed to be interested in the efficiency and effectiveness of the public services. The result can be that the decentralization process, which has been claimed to change the governmental organization to a more “citizen-focused” approach, leads to a stronger political power of the different levels of government and their administrations. Especially in developing countries, which often have authoritarian regimes or are very young democracies, the development institutions and multinational organizations often promote decentralization for the sake of strengthening democracy, local participation and to enhance economic development. However, the result can be that the

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20 World Bank, 1999; UN, 2000
21 The UN, 2000
22 Ibid. p. 5
23 Rondinelli, 1984
24 UNCDP, 2002
decentralization efforts from the development institutions and multinational organizations strengthen the present political organization which often is the root of underdevelopment. This potential conflict comes back to one of the major difficulties in public administration; how are public services evaluated? In a democratic system the voters can, if they are not satisfied with the public services provided, change the governmental representation on different levels of government. The major evaluation problem arises in undemocratic countries, which do not have competition of political representation as the allocation process of political power. In these countries decentralization has to be assessed by other methods than democratic elections.

Rondenelli, Nellis, and Cheema propose that decentralization can be assessed by;

- To what extent decentralization contributes to “achieving broad political objectives”, these are defined as stability, economic development, and the promotion of a pluralistic, heterogeneous, society.

- How much more effective the public administration is after the decentralization process, the public administration is defined as all levels of government and all administrative bodies of government.

- The cost-effectiveness of the decentralization; have the quality and quantity of public services increased to constant cost?

- The degree of increased government responsiveness to different needs and wants within the society.

- If the decentralization process has helped to contribute to “self-determination and self-reliance” of lower levels of government.

- The “appropriateness” of the means that have been used to carry out the objectives of the decentralization, however they are defined.25

The assessment of decentralization is a difficult process since many different stakeholders, with different interests, have to be taken into account. The major question is how these objectives shall be reached, and how the results of the decentralization process are communicated to the stakeholders in the society. Development organizations and academics, who have evaluated decentralization from their perspectives, have often found that decentralization has often fallen short in developing countries to achieve these objectives.

25 Cheema, Nellis, and Rondenelli, 1984
2.1.3 Success Factors of Public Decentralization

As discussed earlier the effectiveness and efficiency objectives have often been set aside in favour of political objectives that are more focused on political power. But how can decentralization be carried out in order to serve the citizens? The World Bank suggests that the core of success in decentralization is the involvement of local governments. The local government must, in the decentralization framework, be given financial authority and advocate funds so the politicians can “deliver on their promises and bear the costs of their decisions.”

The role of information sharing is highlighted as a factor of success by the World Bank, the local government and also the citizens must be informed about the costs of different services in order for an effective resource allocation and an increased responsibility in the community over the budget process of the public sector. Important is also that the decentralization process imbeds a system of accountability between local politicians and the community. This is seen as providing credible incentives for community participation since a system that assures that the politicians execute the outcomes of community participation is in place. As always, accountability requires transparency, the community must be assured the right to access the political process. Successful decentralization requires that the governmental bodies can be monitored. Important is also that the whole public system, as a multiorganizational structure, is designed to achieve the objectives of decentralization. Successful decentralization can only be carried out as a multiorganizational task in which all legs of the governmental bodies cooperate in order to decrease the organizational friction.

The UNDP has also proposed success factors of decentralization, focusing to a large extent on the same element as the World Bank. The basic requirement of successful decentralization is that all stakeholders understand that the decentralization is a long-term process which includes both opportunities and threats to the society. Decentralization is a complex process involving the whole government structure, but can also change the community organization. This complexity requires, if decentralization takes place as a planned reform which is not always the case, a sincere analysis and planning in order to be successful. It is Important that the top executives in central and local government are committed to this planning, without their commitments to decentralization the process loses its authority-incentive, i.e.; that the multiorganizational structure in the government has an incentive to execute the process in accordance to the decentralization plan in order to please higher authorities. However, important to point out is that decentralization is not always executed from the higher hierarchal structure, it can rather be seen as bottom-up-fed, where the demands of the community force the government organization to decentralize.

One of the risks with decentralization is that the process runs the risk to be evaluated from the expectations that people hold, which result in that potentially the process has been an absolute success but a relative failure given the expectations on forehand. In order to decrease this risk, it is important to communicate the problems and risks of decentralization; decentralization in itself can not achieve major changes but in the long run it can help to provide possibilities for the community to develop. Decentralization must take into consideration differences in different communities; decentralization can not be centralized. In developing countries different regions experience totally different spatial circumstances, and levels of development. To design decentralization process that is assumed to be “one-size-fits-all” is not only an oxymoron; it does also reduce the chance of success. Decentralization has to take in consideration the different circumstances for participation; just because it is successful in one region does not make it a success in

26 World Bank, 1999
27 The World Bank, 1999
another region. Since the different regions often have different circumstances for success, the decentralization process has to be designed as a learning-process in which the risk-taking and innovations have to be enhanced in order to advance the process. There is no fixed formula for how successful decentralization is executed; this requires the process to be open, transparent and adoptive in order to find the best practise. However, decentralization has a larger chance of success if the environment is able to change to the new “rules of the game” that are given by decentralization. In enabling environments the decentralization process can take less concern to the existing environment and be more focused on the objectives.28

As the World Bank, the UNDP highlights the importance to identify decentralization as a multiorganizational task for success. When authority and responsibility are transferred to lower levels of government the whole government structure has to be involved. Decentralization can not be seen as a simple process in which authority is transferred from one level of government to another. The complexity of the process and the need of multiorganizational cooperation have to be highlighted and given priority. The interference with multiorganizational structure that is significant for public governance requires that decentralization is only one part of a restructuring of the society. In order for the decentralization to be feasible it has to be paced and linked to other reforms in the society, which serve the same end. One part of the multiorganizational cooperation is that decentralization is matched with local fiscal capacity; only if the political, administrative and fiscal decentralization are matched together, “real” transfer of power can take place. Here the ministry of finance at the central level has to work together with the ministry of the concerned political objective, the department of finance and the department of the concerned political objective in order to create a system that matches increased authority with autonomy over fiscal resources. Administrative bodies that are given more political authority and responsibility without the access to adequate fiscal resources run the risk of becoming less effective.29

2.1.3.1 The Importance of Local Capacity

One of the most important factors of success is the capacity of the local governments which will be given new authority and responsibility by decentralization. In the developing world where the average human capital is relative low, local governments and local administrations often hold adequate skills for the tasks they have been given, but have limited capacity to take on new tasks given by decentralization. The role of local government capacity is one of the most extensive covered topics in the decentralization literature.

Independent of which form of decentralization is undertaken, and which objectives it does serve; the local government will get new tasks as a result of the decentralization. These tasks require existing knowledge or the ability to learn how to perform the new tasks efficiently. However, the role of capacity is not only changed at the local level alongside with decentralization, the tasks of the central government are also changed requiring new capacity at this level. The local governments will be given new authority and responsibilities while the central government’s role will change from “execution-focused” to “control-focused.”

If decentralization is a planned process, the cumulative capacity within the public administration has to be assessed on forehand. The required cumulative capacity needed for successful decentralization may exist but is concentrated to the capital, requiring a spatial decentralization of capacity. However, this spatial decentralization requires that high-skilled people are relocated from

28 The UNDP, 1999
29 Ibid.
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the capital to more remote areas. As the World Bank highlights, this can be difficult when relocation often meets resistant from the personal within the public administration. In order to be successful, decentralization needs to be matched with a human resource plan, which assesses how all levels of government shall gain required capacity.  

In developing countries where local capacity is often limited, decentralization has to be matched with training programs of civil servants in order to increase the capacity at the local level. This training system has to be designed in relation to the lacking capacity of the local governments. This lack of capacity can be very different at different local governments. More urban regions, with access to modern technology and higher education institutions, often have a more limited lack of capacity than more remote areas. These differences in capacity have to be addressed in the training programs but also in the hiring system of civil servants. The capacity issue of decentralization is more likely to be successful if the local governments are given autonomy to set wages and compensation packages to attract skilled workers. However, the problem is that the regions with low capacity often have more limited own revenues to pay higher wages from. In order for this system to be successful, the central government must give extended transfers to regions with low capacity to pay higher wages and compensation packages. Major differences in local capacity can justify a centralized hiring system, which assures that civil servants are located in accordance to local demand of increased capacity.

Capacity is often equal to power. A decentralized system which increases the capacity at the local levels will reduce the dependence of the local governments on the central government, automatically shifting power down in the hierarchy. This can be a potential threat to capacity building at the local levels if the central government does not hold a sincere desire to increase the capacity of lower levels of government. The potential outcome of this is that the organizational structure has been decentralized, while the capacity remains within the central political and administrative domains; resulting in a decentralized structure on the paper while no “real” authority and responsibilities are transferred.

If differences in capacity are not carefully addressed, decentralization risks increasing inequalities between different regions. When decentralization shifts responsibilities to lower levels of government, local capacity is acknowledged to be a determinate of how adaptive the local governments are to decentralization. Huge differences in local capacity risk resulting in increased inequalities between different regions, since the regions with the required capacity for successful decentralization will advance faster than other regions. When decentralization of public services is part of an overall restructuring of the society towards a more market oriented approach, the risk of “brain drain” is significant in the public administration. When private companies are allowed to set wages in accordance to the demand and supply structure on the labour market, high skilled workers are often able to find good paying jobs in the private sector. If the public administration is not able to match these increases in wages, it risks losing its most competent administrators.

Romeo claims that capacity of local government has to be divided in two sorts; “internal” and “interactive”. Internal capacity refers to the capacity needed for the local governments to carry out their core activities; resource allocation and expenditure management. Interactive capacity is a more complex form and refers to the capacity the local governments hold to align themselves

30 The World Bank, 1999
31 Ibid.
32 UN, 2000
with the “new model” of government that is introduced by decentralization. Decentralization often requires the local governments to increased cooperation with the community, interactive capacity refers to how fast the local government is able to successfully adapt to these new requirements of cooperation with other non-government actors. These two forms of capacity are linked to each other and difficult to separate. “The internal capacity for administrative performance is essential to promote participation and partnership, as the capacity of interaction with multiple actors is essential to improve the performance of the local public sector.”

There is a complexity of local capacity that is often misunderstood from central government. Romeo claims that capacity is affected by influences on three different levels; “the individual, the institutional and the systemic.” At the individual level capacity is influenced by the culture, norms and level of training the civil servants hold. At the institutional level, capacity is defined as the structures, the forms of organizations, procedures and rules of operation of the local government and how these affects the capacity of the civil servants. At the systematic level, capacity is affected by the framework that is given by policy and law for the local governments’ operations, and the rules and practises of cooperation between different levels of governments and the community. Too often capacity to decentralize is only focused on personal capacity in form of educational level, in-service training and etc. of the civil servants falling short to identify the capacity of local governments to understand their position in a multiorganizational structure, which is likely to change with decentralization.

Decentralization is often claimed to be impossible from central governments because of lack of capacity at the local levels of government. The question is how much capacity is needed to introduce a decentralization process with a potential of success, and how much is learned in the process? The traditional approach has been to build capacity at local levels first and then transferring authority and responsibility. This traditional approach has rapidly changed the last decades to a form that promotes decentralization in order to enhance capacity building at the local level. The “modern” view is that “management is a performance art” better learned by doing than learned by training. It is important to find the right level of decentralization in relation to capacity, too little transfer of authority and responsibility will decrease the incentives of capacity building at the local levels while too much transferring of authority and responsibility risks to make decentralization a failure to its objectives. Important to highlight is that the role of capacity and capacity building can not be underestimated in decentralization. However, it is important that capacity is assessed from the multiorganizational perspective rather than on measurable variables of capacity as schooling years.

33 UNCDF, 2002
34 UNCDF, 2002
35 Ibid.
36 World Bank, 1999
2.1.3.2 Decentralization as a Multiorganizational Process

Applying multiorganizational theory; must decentralization be undertaken in a special form, designed after the pluralistic democratic system in the Western World? As the UNDP highlights, decentralization can not be seen as a centralized process. A special organizational structure, designed after western democracy, can not be seen as an end in itself. Decentralization can only be justified if it serves its purpose to increase efficiency and effectiveness by increased local participation and transparency; it results in that decentralization can only be the mean to reach the objectives. However, there is a significant risk that decentralization is seen as an end in it self, as long as the paper model of the government meets the requirements of a decentralized structure; decentralization has been successful.

Hjern illuminates the same potential problem in the democratization process in Eastern Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The analysts who helped form a democratic organizational structure implemented a plain democratic organizational structure, which should enhance legitimacy, without taking special notice to the democratic problems this structured had resulted in the western democracies. Hjern’s point is that western political analysts, who help to form government organizational structures around the world, neglected the complexity of local participation; the organizational structure established in the Western World does not automatically result in increased local participation and increased efficiency and effectiveness. The organizational structure is not a single structure, which, if it even is preferable, can be easily transferred. Public organization is a complex, multiorganizational, structure, which has to be flexible in order to be successful to meet its objectives of legitimacy. Here the decentralization theory runs into problems, based on the success of the western liberal political thoughts after the Second World War, it is a danger that the development organizations try to impose an organizational structure that fulfils the requirements of a decentralized structure on the paper, but does not help to fulfil the objectives of the decentralization process. The risk is that the design of the organizational structure serves as an end in itself. Decentralization can only be successful if focus is kept on the objectives and not on the structure.

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37 UNDP, 1999
38 Rondinelli, 1984
39 Hjern, 1991
2.2 Decentralization of Education

Public decentralization can be undertaken in many different departments of the public sector, each sector requiring special consideration in the decentralization process. This thesis is focused on decentralization of education. This section provides a background to decentralization of education, which will be used as a theoretical framework in the case study.

Decentralization of education has been a worldwide phenomenon the last decades. Countries on every continent have started to decentralize their educational systems. This decentralization process has been promoted by international development organizations and Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The reasons for decentralization vary in different countries; to save money by improving the efficiency of management, to transfer power to the most capable level of government, to get increased funding, to adopt to more general national administrative reforms, and to give users more control over education. However, the reasons for decentralization can be summarized in three broad categories: educational finance, efficiency and effectiveness, and redistribution of power. These different categories can have interconnections; for example the redistribution of power can be aimed at increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the education, or the redistribution of power can be aimed at changing the financing of the educational sector.

Financial argumentations for decentralization have become more and more apparent the last decades. Especially in developing countries in which the enrolment in primary schools has increased sufficiently the last decades, the central governments have become more and more interested in moving financing of education to lower levels of government. This process is often aimed at releasing some burden on the national budget and to find new resources to increase the quantity and quality of education. There are examples that decentralization of educational finance has been introduced together with decentralization of political power over education, yet this has not always been the case.

Efficiency arguments are often based on the high unit costs of education that centralized educational systems experience. By moving responsibility of education to the lower levels of government; the local differences of different communities will better be addressed and result in lower unit costs. Another reason is that a centralized system can be very time-consuming, when even the simplest decision must be taken on the central level; a lot of time will be spent filling out forms to get permission by the central government. This time-consuming process is avoided if the authority to make decisions is moved to lower levels of government.

The effectiveness arguments see the increased inclusion of parents and community groups as an important factor to increase the effectiveness of education; when the parents and the community are able to participate in the decision process, they will be more involved in education and willing to contribute with resources, such as money and labour, to the running of the schools. Parents that have been involved in the decision process may also hold more positive attitudes to educa-

40 Winkler, 1989
41 Cooper & Florestal, 1997
42 Winkler, 1989
43 Ibid.
tion, which can result in that they provide a more favourable attitude towards education to their children.44

The redistribution of power has often been seen as a way to include marginalized groups in the society. By moving power to the lower levels of government, marginalized groups shall be given better possibilities to influence education in order to address their requirements.45

2.2.1 Centralized Education

Decentralization of education can be undertaken for a number of reasons; it can also be done in a number of ways. In order to discuss the different decentralization processes of education it is important to have an understanding of what kind of features a centralized system have, or what the decentralization process tries to reform.

The earliest educational systems were created as a learning-by-doing system, in which the teacher often taught the student his occupation. With the creation of the strong nation state in the 19th and 20th centuries, education became more centralized in its structure. The governments tried to standardize education in order to increase the efficiency and to strengthen the national identity. The strong nation state took over the authority of education in order to provide a national standard, and to raise educated and loyal citizens. The centralization of the educational system went alongside with major social and economical reformatations in the society. The industrialization and the urbanization made it possible to increase the size of the schools, in which more subjects could be taught. At the same time, the large progresses in printing technology made it possible to standardize the textbooks, and to offer a more unified curriculum. When the government took over the authority of education, they also took over the largest share of its funding.46

The standardization process, with its requirements of what should be taught, how it should be taught, who should teach, where it should be taught, and how it should be financed, resulted in increased quality and lower unit costs, which made it possible to enrol more children in primary education. In order to control that these regulations were followed, the central government relayed on inspectors to control that the rules were implemented. This standardization process of the 19th and the 20th centuries was a major success. In countries were education became standardized, both the quality of education and the enrolment rates increased significantly.47

With the standardization reforms, education became a subject of science. Researchers measured the most effective teaching methods; alongside with the standardization process in the industry, the teaching techniques became more standardized in order to increase the efficiency. Standardization was seen as more successful if the decision power was moved up to the highest level of decision-making authority, in the case of the nation; to the central government. In many countries, the decision-making power over education was granted the central government alone. The central government was often organized as a bureaucracy, in which the decision-process became standardized in order to increase the efficiency of the government.

The standardization process of education forced education to get structures familiar to the industrial sector, in which standardization generated low unit-costs of products. This system of industrial organization has made the centralized education system to be based on the decisions of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education controls all aspects of education, they both

44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 McGinn & Welsh, 1999
47 Ibid.
monitoring and manage the education; they set teachers salary and regulates the requirements for graduation of students. Local government can be given responsibilities of education, but these are limited to day-to-day activities without any authority connected to them. Often the Ministry of Education has administrative representatives outside the capital, but they are given a control function rather than authority to make decisions. 48

The standardization of education that took place during the 19th and 20th century was a major success, it increased the enrolment rates, it increased the quality and it decreased the inequalities, and it lowered the cost of education; so why has decentralization of education become such a popular reformation process the last decades worldwide?

2.2.2 The Emerge of the Decentralization Thought in Education

McGinn and Welsh claim that the need for decentralization in education comes from the new economic and technological conditions in the world. Firstly, the political debate of the 1970s and the 1980s moved economic policy from Keynesian inspired economic thoughts towards a market-oriented economic policy. The market-oriented economy was seen as the best way to allocate resources in the society; it was the market, not the central government that should decide how resources should be allocated. This market-oriented approach also influenced education; it was no longer obvious that the centralized educational system was the most efficient; perhaps could an educational system that allocated its resources based on market principles be more effective than the centralized system. The fall of the communistic block in Eastern Europe, which had been based on a centralized governmental system, also promoted the organizational reforms toward a more market-oriented governmental organization. 49

Secondly, the economic and financial globalization has weakened the central government, the increased connections between different communities rather than between different national governments have strengthened local groups to gain more influence in the society.

With the increase of enrolment rates, the centralized educational systems became huge in size; today, education is often the largest expenditure post in the national budget. 50 This increase of education has in many cases resulted in that the economy of scale, that increased numbers of students within the organization lowers the unit costs, in education has started to be questioned. Many governments found themselves running the huge educational sector with very low organizational effectiveness, which resulted in demands for smaller organizations responsible for education. 51

The new information and communication technologies have also changed the way that the central government can impose control over local levels of government. In the new era of fast and cheap information, it is possible for the central government to control the local governments on a daily bases to a limited cost. This results in that the central government can decentralize the management of education to local bodies but still keep the control over goals and quality of education. This process has also led to a system where the outputs of the organization have become more important than how these outputs are achieved. With the new information technologies it has been possible for the central government to set goals for education, but at the same time give freedom to the local governments to decide how to reach these goals. It is then the responsibility

48 Cooper & Florestal, 1997, Winkler, 1989
49 McGinn & Welsh, 1999
50 Sack & Saidi, 1997
51 McGinn & Welsh, 1999
of the central government to control that these goals are reached. This system of goal-setting and controlling has been possible to do effectively with the new information technologies.  

2.2.3 Political Environment and Educational Decentralization

Decentralization of education can take place in different political environments, which have consequences for the decentralization process of education. It can be part of wider political reforms, as been the case in East Europe, or it can take place in stable political systems. Many different political environments that decentralization of education can take place under exist, in which each have different impacts on the decentralization process of education. Cooper and Florestal have summarized three broad categories and their impact on decentralization of education. When decentralization of education is part of a complete reform of the governmental system in a country it often exist “room for effective geographic and functional decentralization.” If the country is willing to address its need for decentralization, it is possible to get recognition in laws for the decentralization process of education.

In some countries the governmental organization already experiences decentralized structures, in these cases the organizational “infrastructure” for a decentralization of education already exist. If this organizational “infrastructure” exists, it will be easier to go along with the decentralization of education since no new structures need to be built, or at least a model that the new structures can be built upon exists. However, problems can arise if the local government does not have enough experience in education to carry out its new responsibilities.

Sometimes the educational sector is a test sector for a wider decentralization of the governmental organization. In these cases more attention will be given the educational decentralization, although the process can be influenced by stakeholders that have incitements for the educational decentralization to be a success or a failure.

2.2.4 Different Kinds of Educational Decentralization

As earlier discussed in this thesis, different kinds of public decentralization exist; this is also the case in educational decentralization.

Deconcentration of education is when the Ministry of Education moves some responsibilities and administrative tasks from the centre of the organization to lower levels of the Ministry of Education. In deconcentration, the Ministry of Education still has the authority and responsibility of education, but they have moved some administrative tasks and authority to satellites of the Ministry of Education. “In other words, decision-making authority is transferred within the same legal entity.” Deconcentration does not put more power into the hands of the people that are the user of the educational service; in the best case it makes it easier for the people on the school-level to contact the responsible person for education at the local administrative body of the Ministry of Education. The administrative personnel that have got increased authority with the deconcentration process are still responsible direct to the Ministry of Education. This process have in many countries resulted in that the Ministry of Education has established regional directorates, which have been responsible of supervision and planning for the region.

52 Ibid.
53 Cooper & Florestal, 1997, p. 7
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid. p. 2
57 Cooper & Florestal, 1997, Winkler, 1989
The two other forms of educational decentralization covered in the theory are delegation and devolution, in both cases the authority over education is transferred to bodies legally separated from the Ministry of Education. In the case of delegation the authority and responsibility over education is moved to autonomous organizations such as public corporations and regional development agencies. Often these organizations receive public funding and are accountable to the central government. This type of decentralization has not been widely used around the world in primary education; it is more common in higher levels of education.\textsuperscript{58}

The most used decentralization method within education is devolution; this process aims at giving the local governments power to regulate the provision of education. With devolution the major responsibility over the management of education is often moved to the local government, this process changes the function of both the Ministry of Education and the local governments. The devolution can also result in a strong central control from the Ministry of Education of community-financed and managed schools, yet this is not common.\textsuperscript{59} The devolution process is characterized by a number of features; the first one is that the body that exercises responsibility is legally separated from the central government; the local government has been given legal authority over education. The second is that the local government can act on its own in areas where they have legal recognition without hierarchical supervision of the Ministry of Education. In devolution, the local government is only allowed to exercise the power it is given by law, if the law does not assign full responsibility of education to the local government it is then restricted by law to only fulfil the responsibilities it has been assigned. The local government is also only allowed to have responsibilities for education in the geographic area it has been sat to govern. In devolution the local government is fully responsible for the responsibilities it has been sat to govern, the Ministry of Education does not have further responsibilities over these tasks than to control that the local government fulfil the requirements that are instituted by law.\textsuperscript{60}

The devolution of education provides the local government with new responsibilities it has to carry out. If the devolution process shall provide the local government with independency from the central government, the financing of the responsibilities needs to be defined. If the local government is given new responsibilities over education but still have to rely on the central government’s willingness to provide funding, it still does not have the authority to decide over how the responsibilities shall be carried out. If the funding is insufficient, the local government ends up with responsibilities for education that economic constrains make it impossible to fulfil. It is also Important is that the local government has capacity to fulfil its new responsibilities for education. Only if the administrative bodies, which shall carry out the new responsibilities, have sufficient administrative capacity to carry out their new tasks, the devolution process can be efficient. If the local government lacks the capacity to effectively fulfil the new responsibilities, the devolution process can experience sincere lags between when the authority is moved to the local government until it has the capacity to fulfil the new responsibilities effectively; if it will ever get the capacity to do it effectively.\textsuperscript{61}

The educational systems in the world are often combined systems of centralized, deconcentrated, delegated, and devolutioned organizations. Different educational systems can take different degrees of these four sorts of decentralization. These four sorts of decentralization show that no simple and straight forward way to decentralize education exists. The different sorts of decen-

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Winkler, 1989
\textsuperscript{60} Cooper & Florestal, 1997
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
Decentralization can lead to misunderstanding between different stakeholders and different levels of government on how education should be decentralized. These different ways to decentralize education do also explain why evaluations of decentralization policies in education have generated very different results. \(^{62}\)

The different ways to decentralize can also differ with respect to different schools, in some countries different types of school, with different authority, within the same educational system exist. That several different types of schools within the same educational system exist is often related to the inability of the public sector to generate enough funding to provide qualitative education to all children. In these cases, the government has been forced to rely on private or community-based schools to supply education. In order for these schools to provide education; they have been given different regulations over authority, management, and responsibility than public schools. \(^{63}\)

### 2.2.5 Differences in Educational Decentralization around the World

Almost every educational system in the world is based on shared responsibilities between different levels of government. Often the local government is given authority over education but the central government sets minimum requirements for education that need to be fulfilled in order for the local government to keep its authority over education. These minimum requirements limit the decision-making power over education for the local government and force them to be accountable to the central government for its actions. The funding of the school system is often an important issue in the decentralization process, which I will return to later. The real amount of authority for the local government over education is often given by if the local government is allowed to set its own budget and raise its own resources. \(^{64}\)

McGinn and Welsh have illuminated how decentralized different educational systems are in different countries. They found that the central government had some sort of authority over education in all ten, both developed and developing countries, researched. No country had a totally centralized system, in which only the central government had authority over education. How much authority that was allocated to the different levels of government, differed substantially between the ten different countries. Yet, in all countries the central government had totally or shared responsibility over language policy; also when it comes to governance of education, as policy, planning, and implementation, the central government, in the vast majority of the countries, has shared authority. \(^{65}\) This research shows that decentralization of education can not be defined as a single process. Education can be decentralized in a number of ways; however, the decentralization of education seems to correspond to the general political environment in the country. In the United States of America, with their political tradition of limited central governmental power, the central government has only shared responsibility for education in six per cent of all decisions related to education. To be compared with France, which has a political tradition of a strong central authority, where 59 per cent of all decisions related to education involved the central government. \(^{66}\) But which level of government is best suited to have authority over education?

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\(^{63}\) Winkler, 1989  
\(^{64}\) Cooper & Florestal, 1997  
\(^{65}\) McGinn & Welsh, 1999  
\(^{66}\) Ibid.
2.2.6 Proposals for Decentralization of Education

The different proposals for decentralization, and who should have power over education have by McGinn and Welsh been categorized in three types. Respectively decentralization-proposal is aimed at: political legitimacy, professional expertise, or market efficiency. The major difference between these categories is who should be holding authority over education, and why that body is best suited to hold authority over education. These three categories are to a large extent based on political ideology rather than isolated technical decisions.

2.2.6.1 Political Legitimacy

Political legitimacy is aimed at moving political responsibility over educations to persons that have been selected through a political process to hold authority. The authority-holders do not need to be experts of education or governance to be given authority. The political legitimacy process is often linked with a general democratization of the whole society, in which education is only one part. In a decentralized educational system, aimed at political legitimacy, community members often have the finally authority over decisions about all aspects of education. When the educational system is formed by political legitimacy, the legitimacy principle to hold authority is given by the political process; the persons that have been given authority to decide over education have been given their authoritative power by political legitimacy. The move towards a decentralized system aimed at political legitimacy is often a move away from a system that has been given authority to professional expertise. It is often disappointment of the professional experts’ ability to fulfil their requirements rather than the proven success of a decentralized system aimed at political legitimacy that justifies the call for decentralization aimed at increased political legitimacy.67

Decentralization of education aimed at political legitimacy often establishes an elected council that controls education. This council can be given variable autonomy in relation to authority over education; some authority can be shared with the central or the intermediate level of government. The council very seldom controls the raising of funds for education; it often has to rely on funding from higher levels of government. The national government often keeps the authority to inspect and intervene if the performance of the local educational sector does not fulfil the national requirements.

The success of a political legitimacy, decentralized educational system is to a large extent dependent on the ability of the persons with authority to involve the community in the decision-making process. If the system fails to involve the community in decision-making; one of the major justifications of a political legitimacy system is violated, when the control over education does not shift closer to the citizens.

If a political legitimacy system of decentralized education shall be effective, then it is required that the non-professionals that have authority over education have the capacity to govern education effectively. In countries that have decentralized education aimed at increasing the political legitimacy, reforms have been carried out gradually as the local community has proven its capacity to govern education. In line with this gradual shift of authority; the political legitimacy process to decentralize education has often started by transferring authority and responsibility over buildings to non-professional councils. The second step is to move authority to exercise budgets, followed by the authority to make budgets. The final level is to get authority to set curriculum. Curriculum has in the countries that have implemented a decentralized system of political legitimacy met re-

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67 Ibid.
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The central government often resists moving authority of curricula to non-professionals because they claim that education is a science that should be based on decisions by professional expertise rather than on decisions by persons that only can claim political legitimacy to make decisions. The central power over curricula is often claimed to promote a unity in the country when education is unified.

Effective decentralization aimed at increased political legitimacy is most likely to be carried out in stable states, in which the transfer of power to lower levels is not likely to destabilize the central government. Such a society is not marked by conflicts between different community groups. More developed societies that tolerate different community groups often stand a larger chance to succeed with decentralization of education aimed at political legitimacy. The long-term object of decentralization of education aimed at political legitimacy is to strengthen the legitimacy of the educational system, which hopefully will increase the participation in education from the community.68

2.2.6.2 Local Professional Expertise

The second proposal for decentralization of education is to increase the authority of local professional expertise. This proposal is based upon moving more power to professionals that have been trained to hold professional knowledge about education on the lower levels of government. Knowledge is seen to be positive and certain; there is one best way to achieve a certain goal. The professional expertise is of course, even in a decentralized system aimed at increasing the power of local professional expertise, ultimately under the supervision and control of politicians. Yet, in many countries the professional expertise is considerable autonomous from political influence. This view on decentralization of education is one of the most common in the world. In almost all countries education is seen as an area best managed by professionals, who hold sufficient knowledge to take effective decisions over education. The process to decentralize education in order to increase the influence over education of local professional expertise is to decrease the political authority over decisions. This proposal sees politicians as not suited to manage education; politicians should set the general goals and principles of education, but leave the management of education to experts.69

The decentralization process to transfer more authority to local professional expertise has taken different forms in different countries. In many countries the initial stage of reformation has been to move authority from professionals at the central level to experts at the regional level. The final level that should hold the authority in a decentralized, professional expertise system varies between different countries. Some countries have moved authority of professional expertise down to the school-level but some countries have only moved the authority to the provincial level.

If decision-making authority is transferred to lower levels of professional expertise, it is Important to remain a system of accountability. The professional expertise at the lower levels needs to be held accountable for its actions. It is important that the national level remains capacity to evaluate the performance of different regions in order to assess how well the regions perform in education.70

The process to move authority to lower levels of professional expertise does not need to exclude parents or community members. Parents and community members can by training be given suffi-

68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
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cient knowledge to be involved in the decision-making process of education. In most countries where decentralization of education has been aimed at increasing the authority of professional expertise the importance to include parents and the community in education has been highlighted. Yet, this inclusion of parents and the community is often only stretched to support of the schools rather than inclusion in the decision-making process. If the professional expertise on the local level has the ability to actively include parents and the community, and to increase their capacity in educational issues, then the decentralized system of political expertise can increase the inclusion of the community and in longer-term move to a decentralized system with features of both the professional expertise model and the political legitimacy model. Some examples of this process have been seen in successful community development programs in developing countries.71

Decentralization of professional expertise put more emphasis than any other proposal for decentralization on the importance of local knowledge and capacity. Decentralization can only make sense if the local levels of government have sufficient professional expertise to carry out their new tasks. It is important to remember that the literature claims that it is possible to combine community participation and the model of decentralized professional expertise if the community is trained to get professional knowledge of education. If this process of capacity-improvement takes place in the community, it will be possible to integrate the proposal for decentralization of political expertise with the proposal for decentralization aimed at political legitimacy. If the community is able to get sufficient knowledge in education, then decisions over education can be taken by the community without decreasing the power of professional expertise, which combines both models of decentralization.72

2.2.6.3 Market Efficiency

The third proposal of decentralization is market efficiency. Market efficiency is aimed at distinguishing between governance and production, in education this proposal can be seen as the government should set the goals for education but the market should take responsibility for the production of education. The fundamental idea of decentralization towards a market-oriented educational system is that politicians or professional expertise never can have sufficient knowledge to make choices for the consumer (students and parents) of education. The individual is the best judge to know what he or she wants; no person that claims legitimacy by either political decision or in its position of expert can better identify the individual’s needs and wants than the individual herself. Rules set by politicians or professional expertise are restricting the individual and impose a form of administrative tyranny in which someone else tells the individual what is best for him or her. The market efficiency proposal is very critical against the political processes to claim legitimacy in the society. According to the market efficiency proposal for decentralization, democracy with its majority rule is not a sufficient principle to allocate resources in the society.

The market efficiency proposal for decentralization of education sees the market as the best way to use information about what people want in order to satisfy them. The market mechanism is based on the principle of demand and supply, in the case of education; students and parents should be the consumers and schools would be the suppliers. The consumers would be free to choose the school they thought was best for them, given their individual preferences. In the market mechanism bad schools would lose their students and would be forced to close. That bad schools are forced to shut down is claimed to increase innovation, improvement and quality in

71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
education, in line with the assumption of the “survival of the fittest”. The efficiency of the market in education is dependent on the assumption that parents have the best information over what kind of school their child needs in order to gain maximum from education. It also assumes that each parent is better suited than any expert to know when instruction methods and curriculum fail to provide its child sufficient knowledge. The market efficiency proposal also assumes that the consumer of education does not need to be an expert to know what product that is the best.73

The arguments for marketization of education do not necessarily imply privatization of education. If schools are given autonomy and the parents are free to choose any school, then the schools can remain public and the funding can be public and still meet the requirement of the market-mechanism as the allocation principle of students to different schools. In fact, the market efficiency proposal of education can be met if “there is a variety in the quality and content of education provided, consumers are informed about options, and consumers are able to chose among options.”74 To have a choice as a consumer implies that schools must be within a reasonable distance and the alternative schools must be affordable for a majority of the consumers.

The market mechanism can be decentralized to different levels, the lowest level is of course the parents, but also the community or the provinces can be seen as the consumers of education. Education can remain public but introduce market-oriented features if the public sector moves from both being the consumer and producer of education to only be the consumer. If autonomous schools are allowed to supply education on the market then the provinces or the communities can decide who the best supplier of education is. This process to implement a market-mechanism that has choice at its core within the public educational system has been introduced in a number of countries. The most common system is to introduce vouchers, which are equivalent to the annual expenditure of education of one student. The parents are free to spend the voucher in any school they find best suited for their child. This system of market-oriented decentralization experience scale-problems, the market-mechanism only works when the consumers have a choice. In rural areas where the distance between different schools is huge, the consumers in theory have a choice, but in reality they can not move their child to another school without moving to another village. The market-mechanism, to allocate resources in accordance with supply and demand, works best where a large amount of consumers and suppliers are pooled together, as in urban areas.75

In order to increase the market-mechanism in education many countries have introduced a system of charter schools, these are schools that are run by private interests but funded by public means. These schools are often forced to implement curriculum set by the central level of government and are also under control of the central government but are free to control their budgets. This system is set to increase competition between different schools, since the budget allocation is based on enrolment rates. When different schools are charted by private interest, different suppliers of education compete on the market to attract students, which in turn increases revenue. A system close to this has been introduced by NGO:s in a number of developing countries, although the schools have been financed by the NGO:s. In these countries a NGO has together with the community set up a school in order to provide the citizen an alternative to the public

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73 Ibid.
74 Ibid. p. 44
75 Ibid.
schools. This kind of schools does not fulfill the conditions of a free market, but it increases the opportunity to choose, which a step is closer to a free market.\textsuperscript{76}

In a decentralized system of education that promotes the efficiency of the market, the responsibility of educational management is different compared to a public run educational system. In the market-oriented educational system, the school managers’ first priority is to supply education that the consumers demand to the lowest possible cost; it is not to meet requirements or goals set by the central government. If the school’s budget is based on the enrolment rate in the school, then the school’s first priority is to supply education that the parents are willing to consume. What kind of education that is best is primarily defined by what kind of education that the consumers demand. When the consumers are believed to have the ability to decide what kind of education their child needs, the responsibility of educational managers shifts to become a marketing function, where they have to research the demands on the market and inform on the product they are supplying. Most decentralization reforms that are aimed at increasing the market-mechanism in education have changed the responsibility of management. If schools shall be able to segment the market in order to attract one type of consumers they need to be given autonomy over management of personnel and teaching techniques. Often the inclusion of parents in decision-making is decreased in this kind of system. In the market-oriented approach to education, consumers should influence the decision-process by moving their children to the school they find best. The market mechanism works best when the consumers inform themselves about the different alternatives and then make choices over what product to buy based on that information. The choices that the consumers make are considered to force schools that can not attract students to shut down or to change the product they supply. In this kind of system, parents do not need to be included in the decision-making process of education, since they are able to make individual decisions over education, they do not need to be included in a collective decision-process.\textsuperscript{77}

One sort of decentralization of education aimed at promoting the market efficiency is to privatize education. McGinn and Welsh identify three major forms of private school governance, which have taken place in the decentralization process in different countries. The spectrum of how much autonomy each type of governance has varies. One sort of private schools, the ones with least autonomy, are subsidized by public funding, are owned and managed by private interest, and are set to follow guidelines from the central government and are not allowed to charge fees. Another form is schools that are funded by public subsidies but are given more autonomy since they are allowed to charge fees in order to increase the available funding for education. The last form of private schools, are schools that are totally autonomous from the central government. They are privately financed and are not under public control.\textsuperscript{78}

Today, more or less all countries have private schools, yet the second and third forms of private schools are very uncommon. The first form of private schools has become more and more popular in different educational systems around the world. The first form of privatization increases the competition in the educational sector and provides opportunities for parents to choose school after individual preferences, at the same time as it does not restrain parents to make choices because of financial constrains. It also guarantees unity in education since the central government sets and controls that goals for the learning outcomes are achieved.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
Especially in developing countries, which have an excess demand for education, the government can allocate increased public funding to private managed schools rather than to public schools in order to increase the competition and the opportunity of choice in education. This is a tendency that for example has been seen in the object of this thesis’ case study; Vietnam.79

The decentralization process to increase the market-mechanism is a way to increase the number of choice in education. Yet, choice can come in two different forms; private or public. Public choice is to give the communities more power to choose what kind of education their children should receive. Public choice put the community at its core, it is the community, through common decisions, that should decide who should be the supplier of education. Public choice can be combined with political legitimacy if the opportunity to choose for the community also brings them increased power in the decision-process in education. Private choice is to increase the freedom of the individuals to make individual decisions about education. Yet, this process seldom increases the capacity of the community for collective-decisions. It also assumes that parents have perfect information about their children’s need of different types of education. An increased role of the market in the educational sector changes the responsibility for costs and revenues to lower levels of management. In market-oriented education, managers’ first priority is to provide cost-effective education that attracts consumers rather than to provide high-quality education for the future needs of the society.80

McGinn and Welsh show that authority over education can be granted many levels of management dependent on the kind of proposal for decentralization of education that is being implemented. Yet, Winkler claims that which level of management that gets authority over education is an important factor to evaluate how serious the decentralization efforts of education are. He claims that “decentralization to the regional level is most frequently undertaken for reasons of administrative convenience […] or of appease subnational cultures.”81 It has not been possible to verify this point of view with other sources, but it has not either been possible to neglect this view. Verified or not, it is a serious critique against decentralization that is aimed at transferring authority over education to the provincial level of government. Winkler does not see decentralization of authority to the provincial level of government as a sincere effort to move decision-making closer to the consumers of education. This is serious critique, the main reason for decentralization, independent of which proposal for decentralization of education that is implemented, is to move decisions over education closer to the consumers. Winkler sees decentralization of authority to the local level as a more serious approach to democratisation, and as a mean to increase the funding of the community in education.82

2.2.7 Financial Decentralization of Education

A number of scholars83 have highlighted the economic incentives for decentralization of education as very important. In developing countries where the enrolments rates in primary education have raised the last decades many national governments have seen decentralization of education as a method to rise new funding to education, and to lower the burden of the national budget. As

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 Winkler, 1989
82 Ibid.
discussed earlier, education is often the largest expenditure post in the national budget, which makes economic reforms of education a target of many stakeholders in the society.\textsuperscript{84}

In a highly centralized educational system, the national government finance all expenditures of education, without any direct contribution of the communities. This often shifts when education is decentralized. In a decentralized educational system, the community finance education either directly, through fees, or indirectly, through taxes. There also exist mixed systems, in which the central level of government is responsible for some expenditures and the community is responsible for the rest. In general, decentralized financing of education is more common in developing countries than in developed countries. This can be seen as a verification that developing countries, which often lacks sufficient funding for education, try to decentralize education in order to increase the financial responsibility of education to the community and to the parents.\textsuperscript{85}

Communities would often like the central level of government to carry the financial burden of education, although the community often sees it self forced to fill in when the funding from the central level is not enough. Yet, the financial contribution is not always forced upon the community, in cultural dynamic societies; minority groups have in some cases raised funds to start their own schools. In these cases the minority groups have often gained a greater independence from national regulation since they have been able to take over the financial burden of education for the children enrolled in the school from the national budget.\textsuperscript{86}

Decentralization of education often results in that the community gets more involved in the funding of education; especially in developing countries. The community participation to raise funds to education can take many different forms, and goes way beyond direct money contribution. Examples of community contribution can be community built schools, supply of food to teachers, rallies and ceremonies to raise money etc.\textsuperscript{87}

The experience from around the world of decentralized financing of education has shown that it is easier to raise voluntary funds to capital investments than to recurrent expenditures, such as teachers’ salaries. Where the funding from the government has been insufficient to pay qualitative teachers enough salary to attract them to teach, the community has often raised necessary revenues through compulsory school fees.\textsuperscript{88}

Financial decentralization of education has in many countries led to an increased community participation, better resource allocation, and increased total funding of education. Yet, the decentralized financing of education has also brought new problems in to the society.

Community financing often results in increased inequality between different social groups. When the financial burden of education is shifted down to a more local level; inequalities between different communities become more apparent. Rich communities often have a larger capacity to provide money to education than poor communities, which fast can lead to large regional variations in education if the equity issue is not addressed. The problem for the decentralized educational system is to adjust for those inequalities and still remain a decentralized organizational structure. Communities that are dependent on transfers from the central government in order to meet quality requirements of education tend to be less autonomous than communities that are

\textsuperscript{84} Sack & Saidi, 1997
\textsuperscript{85} Winkler, 1989
\textsuperscript{86} Bray, 1996
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
not dependent on transfers from the central government. Expenditures on education often have a direct relationship to the learning outcomes in education. Glewwe has, as an example, shown that expenditure per pupil on education is a significant variable having a positive relationship with entrance rates, completion rates and quality of education in Vietnam. In order to avoid large inequalities between different regions, some national governments have introduced ceilings on how much own revenues the regions are allowed to raise. The introduction of ceilings is often problematic, when it can create an informal economy, without control from higher authorities.

Many communities often introduce voluntary fees in education in order to raise money, often these fees are not really voluntary, social pressure results in that the fees in reality are paid by all families, independent of economic capacity. This can result in that families with poor economic capacity are not able to enrol their children in school; which further increases the inequality in the society. In cases where fees actually are truly voluntary, the educational system often suffers from “free riding” problems; where people can gain from not paying as long as other people continue to pay.

Decentralized financing of education can result in that the supply of teachers to different regions varies, poor, remote areas that have problems to attract teachers might experience a shortage of teachers which forces them to increase the salaries, which can result in that they can not afford the needed number of teachers.

Decentralization of educational financing is often undertaken to increase the participation of the community in educational funding, with this process the users (the community) also becomes responsible to raise money for education. This process limits the incentives for overspending on education, and makes the community more interested in effective resource allocation in the educational budgets. Even though decentralization of educational financing often increases the cost-responsibility among the users, the communities tend to exclude the external benefits from education in their investments in education, which result in under-spending on education relatively the social optimal level. Externalities refer to the division between those who pay for education and those who gain from education. Almost the whole society gains from a well-educated, literate population, the problem arises when the financing of education is decentralized to the lower levels of government or even based on school fees. In some communities many youngsters leave the community after graduating from school, these communities receive very few of the external benefits from education. Instead communities, to which the educated youngsters move, gain from education paid by another community. If these external effects from education are not solved by transfers of money between different communities, communities which receive few direct external benefits from education will tend to spend too little. This is another example of the complex duality in decentralization of education, when education it decentralized; education experiences a number of positive attributes, although the decentralized organizational structure also implies new problems for the society.

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89 Winkler, 1989
90 Glewee, 2004
91 Winkler, 1989
92 Ibid.
93 Ibid.
94 Ibid.
2.2.8 Conclusion

The literature about decentralization of education shows that the decentralization process in education changes the governmental organization, provides some bodies with new, increased, responsibilities, and leaves other bodies with fewer responsibilities; the decentralization process also creates new issues in education. Decentralization of education can only take place if the organizational structure of education is changed, yet this change also changes the responsibilities of different levels of government and by doing so requires the different levels of government to have capacity to fulfil the new requirements and to be able to address the new issues in the decentralized educational organization.

The effectiveness and the success of a decentralization reform of education is in various degree related to the political support for decentralization, the political environment the decentralization process shall take place in, and the available capacity of the local bodies that are given new responsibilities or if they do not have the sufficient capacity; the ability to get the required capacity.95

Education is Important in the society, and influences almost all citizens. A decentralization process of education will often affect many large groups in the society. It is important, for the decentralization process to be successful, that the proposed decentralization gains political support. It is also Important that the personnel that are going to implement the decentralization process are positive in their attitudes toward decentralization. Three interest groups are especially important to get positive toward decentralization; teachers, ministry officials, and local officials. These groups are directly concerned about the redistribution of power that takes place with decentralization; some of the groups will get increased power while others will get less power. These groups are also the ones which are going to implement the decentralization process. Failure to include these groups in the decentralization process risks dooming the whole process. The ministry officials are the ones, who are going to get less authority in the new decentralized structure; resistance from the ministry officials toward decentralization can have serious impacts on the implementation of decentralization. It is important that the ministry officials are given incentives to see the decentralization reform succeed; otherwise the implementation process risks being ineffective.96

Decentralization of education is more likely to be effectively implemented in a stabile political environment. Experience from around the world shows that political instability often weakens the decentralization reforms and destroys local organizational structures for governance. In political instability the central government is often not willing to transfer authority to lower levels since that would risk increasing the political instability in the country.97

Political culture also has an influence over the decentralization process of education. In political systems that have a tradition of community participation in political decisions is it often easier to transfer authority over education to lower levels of government, since established structures for governance already exist. As discussed earlier, countries in the developed world seem to decentralize education in relation to their general political environment. The importance of political culture shall not be underestimated in decentralization of education.98

96 Winkler, 1989, McGinn & Welsh, 1999
97 Winkler, 1989
98 Ibid.
The success of the decentralization process is also related to who has asked for a decentralization of education. If the pressure has originated from the community, more expectations for participation exist, which results in stronger pressure for a transfer of authority over education to lower levels of government. If the decentralization process is instead top-bottom fed, the lower levels of government that will get increased authority might not be interested to implement the decentralization process, which results in a slow reformation process and a limited enthusiasm for the decentralization process. 99

With decentralization of education, the organizational structure in education will transfer responsibilities and authority to lower levels of the organization. Those new responsibilities and authority change the way the different segments of the organization work, which requires new capacity to perform the new tasks efficient.

The importance of sufficient capacity on the lower levels of government, which will get increased authority with the decentralization process, can not be underestimated.

“Two kinds of conditions must be met for implementation of any reform, including decentralization: there must be political support for the proposed changes; and those involved in the reform must be capable of carrying it out.” 100

“Administrative capacity at each level of government — central, regional, local — can also serve as an important constraint on decentralization.” 101

“[U]nless there is local capacity for management, there is no advantage to making decisions where action takes place.” 102

Lack of capacity is especially common in developing countries with a low average human capital. The local governments have often gained sufficient knowledge to carry out their original tasks in education, but with the decentralization process they get new responsibilities they often do not have sufficient knowledge to carry out effectively. If the capacity issue is not addressed carefully, the whole decentralization process can fail in its major purpose; to increase the quality and effectiveness of education.

If the local bodies, which shall get increased responsibilities and authority, are identified as not having the sufficient knowledge to carry out their new tasks; training programs for capacity-strengthening at the local levels need to be included in the decentralization proposal. This capacity-strengthening shall, in order for the decentralization process to be maximally effective, be focused on the special needs each local government has. In the new decentralized organizational structure each local government will face different problems and opportunities, given the local economic, political, and social environment; only if each governmental body has capacity to deal with the unique circumstances in the region, decentralization can be carried out with maximal efficiency. The new decentralized organization changes the operational tasks for local educational managers. In the centralized educational system, the local managers were required, and trained for, to have capacity to carry out orders from above. With decentralization of education, the local managers are now required to make their own decisions based on local information, this is a ma-

99 Ibid.
100 McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 76
101 Winkler, 1989, p. 15
102 McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 66
jor change in the operational tasks of the local educational managers; tasks that requires new ca-
pacity. ¹⁰³

Lack of capacity needs to be identified and time must be given for the local bodies to gain capac-
ity before they get too much responsibilities and authority. To make local governments self-
managing can take several of years but will not happen without investments in capacity build-
ing.¹⁰⁴ The transfer of capacity needs to be related to the level of capacity each region has and
gains. In order for the capacity-strengthen process to effective; different regions must be allowed
to have different levels of authority over education in the initial stage of the decentralization
process.

Lack of capacity at local levels is often a common argument from the central government to not
decentralize education.¹⁰⁵ This argument can be accurate, but if no responsibilities are transferred
to lower levels of government, the incentives to get new capacity do not increase and the learn-
ing-by-doing process will not take place. The discussion about what is required first; capacity to
do new tasks effectively, or new tasks to get capacity is one of the fundamental issues in decen-
tralization. Dependent on what is believed to be required first; the proposals for decentralization
of education will be fundamentally different.

¹⁰³ Ibid.
¹⁰⁴ Bray, 1996
¹⁰⁵ Ibid.
2.3 Ineffective Organization of Educational Management

This section reviews the literature of educational administration, with focus on causes of ineffective educational organizations.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and its local departments are often, as in Vietnam, the largest expenditure post in the state budget. With its large-scale organization the MoE runs the risk of ineffective organization, where the organization is characterized by a diffuse division of responsibilities and accountability. Because of its large part of the state budget, the MoE is attractive target for administration reforms targeted at increasing the efficiency of the MoE and its organization. Sack and Saidi claim that the temptation for administrative reforms is all the greater when the MoE are characterized by: “(i) outmoded managerial methods performed by staff recruited largely from the rank of teachers who are unprepared and poorly trained for managerial tasks; and (ii) insufficient flows of information needed for efficient and modern managerial practices.”

The MoE is under pressure to provide high quality education that is able to meet the requirements of the developing society, at the same time it is required to increase its efficiency. This task is not easy and requires competent and motivated administrators within the MoE and its local departments.

The MoE is dependent on its employees to perform effectively. The administrative reforms that are target at the MoE to increase its efficiency often threaten the existing organizational structure, which can be met by the employees with suspiciousness and unwillingness of co-operation. Therefore, it is important that the administrative reforms clearly define and inform about their objectives.

The MoE and its departments basically consist of two types of personnel; teachers, and non-teachers. This thesis is focused on the non-teachers; the personnel of the MoE that carry out the administrative tasks of the organization. These persons are; “school directors, inspectors, office staff, MoE directors, policy-makers, planners, statisticians, etc.”

As all organizations the MoE risks to be ineffective because of lack of responsiveness to changes in the reality it works in. It is Important that the educational administrators are able to respond to changes in the conditions of the environment. This is especially important in developing societies where the social, political, and economic conditions change rapidly. In order to respond to the changing environment, the MoE needs highly skilled administrators that have the competence to adopt to new requirements of the organization, and who are able to change their administrative tasks.

The MoE is required to budget and evaluate its organization. These tasks can only be effectively done if the MoE has the sufficient capital and human capacity to do it.

106 Sack & Saidi, 1997
107 Ibid. p.18
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
110 Ibid. p. 50
111 Ibid.
112 Ibid.
Sack and Saidi point to lack of competence to carry out its designed tasks as one major cause of ineffective management within the MoE.

Under-qualification of staff or incongruence between skills and administrative tasks are often the result of:

- Staffs are recruited with less training than needed for the challenges and demands of the work
- Staffs are transferred into posts for which they have little to no training or experience
- Technologies and methodologies change without concomitant staff training or modifications in recruitment norms
- Recruitment and promotions are characterized by rigidities that give priority to considerations not directly related to the skill requirements of the job

These causes of under-qualification of staffs are a potential danger for the efficiency of the MoE. It is important that the MoE has the ability to identify if it is under-qualified, and if it is; what the causes of under-qualification are.

Today, competence in higher administration is connected with the ability to understand and produce high-quality information. Without the ability to understand information, the different administrative units are unable to understand, and respond to the changing environment. The competence to understand information is directly related to the level of staff training. Statistical information, as one example, can have a very informative content, but the information is only useful to the reader if he or she has knowledge to understand it. The administrative units also require the competence to carry out research, which results in high-quality information in order to be able to evaluate the organization. Yet, it is important to notice that an organization can suffer from information indigestion, when the administrators produce more information than the organization needs.

Administrative reforms targeted at increasing the efficiency of the MoE are more likely to be unsuccessful if the administrators do not have the sufficient competence to carry out their new responsibilities. With the major importance of education for the future of a country, the competence of the MoE is a major social and economic issue for a nation.

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113 Ibid.
114 Ibid.
115 Ibid.


3 Decentralization of Educational Management in Vietnam

The main part of this study is undertaken as a case study, in which four Departments of Education and Training in four chosen case provinces and three different international development organizations have been interviewed in order to analyze the actual state of decentralization of education in Vietnam. The first section presents the methodology used and the importance of the study. The second section gives a theoretical background to the political structure in Vietnam and some background information to the chosen case provinces. The third and the fourth sections provide the interviews with the Departments of Education and Training and the international development organizations.

3.1 Methodology

This thesis has been written as a Minor Field Study (MFS), sponsored by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). The requirements set by Sida for a MFS-thesis are that the thesis has to be written in a developing country in cooperation with a local organization.

The research environment in developing countries is always different from the research environment in the developed world. The different research environment requires the chosen methodology to carefully take in consideration constrains that the new research environment imposes. However, this is a fine line, since the chosen methodology is still required to keep academic quality. The research environment that this thesis has been undertaken in, i.e., the communist one-party state of Vietnam, has imposed difficult constrains for the methodology used for this thesis. The methodology has been balancing on this fine line between political constrains on the academic freedom and the requirements of academic quality; this has been a difficult balance and has imposed serious problems for the methodology used.

As all research, this thesis is to a large extent based on secondary sources. The theoretical part, that is not country-specific, has been based on a number of sources written by academics and presented as papers or reports at international academic institutions or from international development organizations. The quality of these sources has to be seen as reliable, and the combination of different sources assures that more than one view of the current subject is presented. The methodological problem has been to find country-specific secondary sources that hold academic quality. The main part of secondary sources presented on Public Administrative Reforms (PAR) in Vietnam has been published by Vietnamese academics under supervision of the communist party of Vietnam. These secondary sources have often been written in poor English, which further decreases the academic quality. I have as far as possible tried to avoid these secondary sources; however, it has not always been possible. The section that illuminates the public administrative reforms in Vietnam has to a large part been based upon the PAR-evolution that was done under the initiative of the communist party of Vietnam, with help of international organizations. Even though, the academic quality of these reports is relatively low I have chosen to present them since they represent the official view of the administrative reforms. This view is of special interest since it is this view that is communicated from the central government to the provinces and the districts. In order to increase the academic quality of this section, and in order to validate its findings, secondary sources on this section written by more reliable sources, as far as they have been available, have been used. The validation done by interviews has also focused on the public administrative reforms in order to illuminate if the content of the secondary sources presented by the communist party of Vietnam responds to the view of the international organizations present in Vietnam. The conclusion from these interviews is that the PAR-
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The evolution to a large extent corresponds to the view on the public administrative reforms of the international organizations interviewed.

What shall be mentioned is that the language barrier imposes academic problems since I have only been able to use secondary sources that are written in Swedish or English. Since the host country of my study has been Vietnam, this has excluded a number of potential secondary sources. However, this problem has not been possible to solve, given the time and budget constraints of this thesis.

This thesis is done as a case study, as Stake points out; case studies always run the risk of becoming biased. This is especially true in Vietnam where the academic freedom is very limited. The selection of case objectives has in this thesis been done as a two step selection. The first step was to identify provinces with poor educational outcomes. This was done in order to select cases that were rich of information. Wiklund points to the importance to choose cases that are information-rich and from which more important conclusions of the research question can be made than an average case. The methodology used to identify provinces with poor educational outcomes, described in the next section, ensures that this requirement is met. The second step of the selection was to choose provinces that were accessible. In the selection process I was totally dependent on the help of my host-organization, i.e., Save the Children Sweden. The political situation, together with the poor infrastructure made some interesting provinces inaccessible. Together with Save the Children Sweden four provinces were identified which met the requirements of accessibility and information richness. The provinces chosen are spread geographically within Vietnam, and also represent a mix between rural and urban areas. This selection increases the probability of conclusions that can be drawn which are more information-rich than from a randomly selection of provinces. The sample-size of four cases is relative small. Vietnam has 61 provinces, which results in that the sample-size represents 6.5 per cent of the provinces in Vietnam. This sample-size is relatively small, however, given the time-constraints it has not been possible to increase the sample-size. The relatively small sample-size results in that the conclusions can not be seen as representative for the whole country. However, the selection methodology used increases the importance of the study, and hopefully provides important information about decentralization of education in Vietnam.

I was required to send my interview questions in advance, translated into Vietnamese, to the Ministry of Education and Training in Hanoi (MoET). The questions were approved by the MoET and sent to the Departments of Education and Training (DoET) where my interviews took place. This process decreases the academic quality of the answers given, since the MoET has been able to give directives how the questions should be answered. In order to decrease this bias, I always tried to make the interviews semi-structured. This semi-structured design leads to that all respondents answer the same type of questions, but at the same time it gives space to a free discussion in which the respondents have a chance to address their own opinions about the topic. The semi-structured format helped to get the interviews more personal and focused, however, the tight political control, and the awareness of what information that could be presented were always present in the interviews.

Mikkelsen claims that all development studies are connected with expectations of later interventions, which can create reasons for the interviewees to present incorrect answers. It was obvi-

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116 Stake, 1995
117 Wiklund, 2001
118 Ibid.
119 Mikkelsen, 1995
ous for all participants from the beginning that my research was not connected with any development program, and could not result in any money transfers or development projects in the province. This can hypothetically been an advantage for me, seen from the perspective of academic quality, since no interviewees had an economic incentive to present incorrect answers. However, the political incentive to present incorrect answers was still present; this was especially obvious in Ho Chi Minh City where my interview was observed by a person from the Department of Foreign Affairs who spoke both English and Vietnamese. Given the requirement of academic freedom, this is unacceptable. However; without this person present, I would not been given permission to do my interview. This is the most obvious case in my study where the requirement of academic freedom has been weighted against accessibility. In the case of HCMC, I chose to go ahead with the interview; however, less importance for the conclusion has been given the interview in HCMC.

To conduct studies in a country, in which you do not speak the native language, always impose a problem. Most preferable is to learn the native language\footnote{Mikkelsen, 1995}; however, given the short time-period (two months) of the case study, this has been impossible. In order to conduct my interviews I was forced to use an interpreter. To work with an interpreter always increases the risk of information-bias, since the message has to be decoded. During my studies I used two interpreters, preferable had been to only use one since the risk of bias in the interpretation would have been reduced. However, this was not possible. The interviews done as validation with the international development organizations were done in English.

Given the methodological constrains; the framework of academic freedom during the interviews can be questioned. In order to try to solve this problem this thesis presents three interviews with international development organizations and institutions in order to validate the findings of the case studies. The validation interviews did not solve all the bias problems of the case studies, but reduced this problem.

The methodology used in this case study has been a balance between academic quality and accessibility. By providing an extensive theoretical background and to conduct validation interviews, efforts have been made in order to increase the academic quality.
3.2 Political Structure in Vietnam

In order to present a background to the political structure in Vietnam this section provides a review of the literature about political organization in Vietnam.

Vietnam has had five constitutions, the latest adopted in 2001. Since the introduction of Doi Moi in 1986 Vietnam has undergone significant administrative changes, with the most significant change adopted in the 1992 constitution. The 1992 constitution dropped the revolutionary ideals and instead focused on the building of a socialistic market-oriented society. The 1992 constitution did no longer require the government to be responsible for the implementation of the socialistic ideology; the government was also given specific management functions led by a prime minister with defined powers.121

The political system and the political structure is complex in its nature.122 The political system is based on a Marxist-Leninist ideology that assigns great power to the Communist Party of Vietnam, which also is the only political party in Vietnam. The actually role of the Party in state management is not outlined, yet some indicators claim that the Party’s direct authority over everyday politics has decreased. The Party Congress is held every five years, in which local delegates from all the local Party offices meet to set the long-run development strategies for the society and to outline the five years plan for the Vietnamese society.123

The 1992 constitution defined the National Assembly as the highest organ of state power. The National Assembly is chosen every five years through election, yet this election is tightly controlled by the Communistic Party. It is not a requirement to be a party member in order to be elected to the National Assembly, though only ten per cent of the members are non-party members.124 Since the early 1990s the National Assembly’s role in Vietnamese politics has significantly increased. Today, the National Assembly is active in reviewing government plans, budget and implementation performance.125

How much power and autonomy from the Party the National Assembly has is difficult to say, yet the role of the National Assembly as an independent arena for criticisms of state policies has increased the last years.126 The, in 2002, elected National Assembly consists of over 70 per cent new members, which all are relative well-educated, with 93 per cent claiming to have a tertiary educational degree or higher.127 This new role of the National Assembly in combination with its new members, with fairly high levels of education, has the potential to increase the power of the National Assembly in Vietnam.

The political system in Vietnam is influenced by a top-management “troika” that consists of the party secretary, the president and the prime minister. The president has the power to recommend the National Assembly, to dismiss the prime minister, and the president is also the Commander-in-Chief over the armed forces. The prime minister has the largest amount of authority in the troika, with the 1992 constitution the political power of the prime minister was increased, the prime minister holds authority to appoint deputy prime ministers, and ministers and leaders of

121 The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2003
122 Van Arkadie & Mallon, 2003
123 Ibid.
124 The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2003
125 Van Arkadie & Mallon, 2003
126 Ibid.
127 The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2003
The political organizational structure in Vietnam consists of four levels of government: central level, provinces, districts and communes. Each governmental body is organized in the same way; with the People’s Committee as the executive arm, and the People’s Council as the legislative arm. Even though the executive and the legislative power are separated in each level of government, overlapping memberships are common. The People’s Committee has authority to mandate law and order within the district it holds authority over; it is also responsible to review and approve plans for socioeconomic development, and to execute the budget. The People’s Committees on the lower levels of government are responsible to execute the directives that are provided from higher levels of government.129 The political organization on every level of government is structured in order to find consensus, this consensus-seeking principle results in that many actors are involved prior to decision making. The consensus-seeking principle has been viewed as promoting political stability and continuity, yet the political efficiency is often low at the different levels of government.130

The introduction of Doi Moi has changed the relationship between the different levels of government. Prior to Doi Moi, the Vietnamese governments tried to implement policies based upon central planning. Yet, the mechanisms of central planning were never properly established in Vietnam; even after reunification in 1975 the provinces, districts and the communes kept some political autonomy.131 From reunification in 1975 to the very end of the 1970s the Vietnamese government tried to implement an orthodox Soviet-styled central planning economy, yet this movement was a major failure for the Vietnamese economy and society. In the late 1970s when Vietnam experienced economic difficulties the first movement away from central planning can be seen in Vietnam. Already in 1979 authority over some socioeconomic targets were transferred to lower levels of government in order to increase the local incentives for increased production.132

With Doi Moi, the Communist Party acknowledged the failure of the central planning system; in order to reform the political system regional diversity and local initiative were identified as important in the political organizational structure. The Vietnamese political structure of different levels of government is claimed to be more decentralized than the formal documents suggest. The provinces often hold more authority than they are formally assigned, yet the autonomy of different provinces differs. As in all political systems, the level of autonomy of different bodies depends on the capacity and the seniority of the members of the different bodies. In many provinces the political leaders have Party ranks over the leaders at the national level. The political leaders at the local levels of government are formally vertically responsible to the higher levels of government, yet the high level of autonomy of the provinces makes the local leaders foremost accountable to the provincial People’s Committee, and not the national level of government. The different departments at the local and the provincial level have shared accountability to both the local People’s Committee and the local People’s Assembly, and to the central ministries in charge of the field of service. The autonomy of the departments at local and provincial level differs in

128 Van Arkadie & Mallon, 2003
129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
respect to the importance and the capacity of the province. Large urban centres often hold more authority and autonomy than small rural provinces.\textsuperscript{133} 

The decentralization process of the public administration that has been implemented with an increasing pace in Vietnam moves more authority to the local levels of government. Van Arkadie and Mallon claim that not all districts and provinces have been happy about this process. These provinces often experience a lack of capacity in order to undertake the required reforms, and therefore would prefer more assistance from the central level of government. Van Arkadie and Mallon also highlight the problems that international donors, often promoting decentralization, have strengthened the power of the central government since all international developing programs have to be approved by the responsible ministry on the central level in Hanoi.\textsuperscript{134} 

The introduction of Doi Moi has changed the political organizational structure in Vietnam, in line with Doi Moi, the public administration has been decentralized. Even though this political reorganization is claimed to promote the economic success of Vietnam since the beginning of the 1990s serious inefficiencies and examples of bad government still remain. These weaknesses are mostly connected to the often low capacity at the local level of government. Personnel within the local government have often posts that do not correspond to their educational degree or their professional experience. The political structure is not outlined properly and not well understood, even among the bureaucrats within the political system.\textsuperscript{135} 

The reformation from a central political structure to a more decentralized structured has been aimed from the Vietnamese government to be implemented pragmatic and gradual, in which more authority and autonomy are given to local levels of government when they got the required capacity for the new responsibilities, and when the society is ready for the transformation of authority; a policy that has shown to be pretty successful.\textsuperscript{136} 

The political organizational structure has, since the introduction of Doi Moi, assigned more responsibilities, both to the People’s Committee at the commune, district and provincial level as well to the different departments at these three levels of government. Today, the political system in Vietnam has a more decentralized structure than in the years before Doi Moi, although Vietnam still remains a one-party communistic country with centralized political features. However, what shall be remembered is that Vietnam’s experience with orthodox central planning was relative short in time and proved to be a painful experience for the country.

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid.
3.2.1 Public Administrative Reforms in Vietnam

Vietnam has since the introduction of Doi Moi in 1986 undergone a number of public administrative reforms. This section reviews the evaluation of PAR that was done by the Government’ Steering Committee for Public Administration Reform with support of the UNDP. Its focus is on the PAR-report’s conclusions about strengths and weaknesses in decentralization, in line with the topic of this thesis.

In the late 1980s the Vietnamese government acknowledged that the country needed to shift from a planned economy into a multi-sector economy, which had the market as its guiding mechanism for allocation of resources; yet subject to the monitoring of the state. In 1986 the Vietnamese state introduced its renovation program “Doi Moi”, which was launched to increase the efficiency of the economy in Vietnam. One part of the renovation program was a reformation of the public administration, which was supposed to reform the public organization in order to increase its efficiency.137

With its sixth party congress the Communist Party of Vietnam identified the main cause of the country’s severe crisis as its organizational structure. To respond to this crisis the Vietnamese government introduced administrative reforms aimed at strengthening the governmental organization from top to grass-root level. The reform addressed the need to reform the separation of tasks and powers between different levels of government.

With the seventh party congress in 1992 the Communist Party of Vietnam formed a platform for administrative changes towards the year 2000 of the government in order to promote, and to meet the requirements of the new market-oriented economy in Vietnam. The seventh party congress stated that the focus of the reforms should be on “the administrative apparatus with the main content aiming at developing an administrative and management system, which is consistent, competent, capable and effective.”138 After the seventh party congress in 1992, the government made sincere efforts to increase its administrative efficiency.139 In 1995, the term Public Administration Reform (PAR) was for the first time mentioned in official documents. The implementation of the PAR was seen as a necessity if the government was to succeed with its goal to increase its efficiency and meet the new administrative requirements of the new market-oriented society. The objective of the PAR was to develop “a competent, transparent public administration which properly uses its power and gradually moves towards modernization, to effectively and efficiently manage the State affairs, promote the healthy development of society in the right direction, better serve the people and develop working habits and lifestyles conforming to the rule-of-law life in the whole society.”140 The PAR consists of three major components; institutional reform, organizational structure, and adjustment and development of civil servant.

The PAR directly became one of the top priorities in the strategy for socio-economic development in Vietnam. It is important to remember that even though the PAR was implemented to increase the quality and the efficiency of the governmental organization it was also aimed at implementing socialist democracy focused around the Communist Party of Vietnam. It is also important to remember that the PAR is only launched at the administrative system in Vietnam. It

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137 Hoa, 2000
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
140 Ibid. p.11
does not touch upon the whole structure of politics in Vietnam, and is not viewed as a reform that the whole society or the whole political system needs to undertake.\textsuperscript{141}

One of the instruments in the PAR launched to increase the efficiency of administration is to decentralize the state administration in order to move power closer to where the policies are implemented. Yet, the PAR-report finds the task to decentralize as not clearly defined or not implemented with determination. There has not been enough cooperation between different levels of government, where disputes on authority have been common. The central government has not been willing to decentralize its power. Some ministers have also lacked the understanding of the theory supporting decentralization, which has led to difficulties to implement the decentralization reformation process. Too much concentration of power still rests on the central level of government; there have been indications of closed doors between different levels of government, which has lowered the efficiency of the decentralization process.\textsuperscript{142}

In order to improve the competence in public administration, the PAR has set up rules for how recruitment to the public administration should take place; the PAR has also set up a system for training of civil-servants. Today, almost all employees in the public administration are undertaking examinations prior to employment. The examination procedure is set up to ensure that civil servants meet required standards of qualifications.\textsuperscript{143}

Most of the staff working in public administration in Vietnam has been trained in the era of centrally planned economy; PAR identifies these persons as not having sufficient knowledge to carry out their tasks in the new market-oriented economy and society.\textsuperscript{144} In order to strengthen the competence of the public administration the government has set up in-training schools. In 2000 there existed, apart from the National Institute of Public Administration and National Political Academy, Ho Chi Minh, 62 provincial training schools, nearly 30 ministerial in-service training schools and 600 training centres at the district level, which is a substantial increase from 1998.\textsuperscript{145} According to the evaluation, the quality of the curriculum has been improved, and includes basic knowledge needed for civil servants. This basic knowledge includes state administrative tasks, economic management focused on the emerging market-economy, human resource management, computer skills, and foreign language.\textsuperscript{146} The training procedure has according to the PAR-evaluation started to become more pro-active focused on specific knowledge needed by the training group.\textsuperscript{147}

The number of public servants that undertook training was significantly increased between 1998 and 1999; in 1998 about 15 per cent of civil servants from the central government and 10 per cent of civil servants from the local administrations attended training. In 1999 the number was increased to 20, respectively 15 per cent.\textsuperscript{148}

A legal framework that regulated civil servants did not exist until 1993. In 1993 standards for position, grades and salary were implemented. This can be seen as an institutionalization of human management in the public administration, which sets out the basic principle on how civil

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{142} Hoa, 2000, Ben, 2000
\textsuperscript{143} Hoa, 2000
\textsuperscript{144} Thang, 2000
\textsuperscript{145} Hoa, 2000
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
servants shall increase their efficiency and meet the standards of a modern public administra-

The PAR evaluation acknowledge that progress has been made to increase the competence of the civil servants by in-training schools, yet the quality of the in-training schools does not fulfil all quality requirements. The evaluation criticises the in-training schools to use learning methods that are focused on passive learning instead of using inter-active learning. The lessons are not focused on the particular skills that the civil servants are lacking, they rather emphasise general knowledge than specific professional knowledge. The quality of the teachers at the in-training schools is still low; a majority of the teachers does not hold a master degree or equivalent.

The reasons for the lack of quality in the in-training schools have been identified by the PAR evaluation; it claims that there is no strong consensus on the role of training for civil-servants which has led to that the no master plan for in-training of civil servants exists.

Important is that the incentive for civil servants to undertake training is still low. The evaluation claims that the civil servants, in many cases, do not undertake training because of a sincere desire to increase the quality of their jobs; rather training is undertaken in order to meet the requirements on formal qualification. This is a seriously critic against the in-training system, when it questions the personal incentives to undertake training. The evaluation report also shows that the participants of training courses have not been in line with the purpose of the training. In many cases the civil servants that were competent enough to take some courses did not have time to take the course because their skills were required at the administration. Instead under-qualified persons, who had time, were sent. The evaluation also found that a lot of administrative bodies used money allocated for training of personnel to other purposes. Interesting for this thesis is that the PAR evaluation criticizes the in-training system, because of decentralization of management responsibilities; as not being synchronized and consistent between different levels of government. In conclusion, the PAR evaluation provides a positive view on the in-training system that has been set up in Vietnam. The number of civil servants undertaking training is increased, and the quality of the training has become better, yet the in-training system still lacks a clear division of responsibilities for the in-training schools and their curricula, and the personal incentive for undertaking training needs to be increased.

The PAR evaluation identifies a need to increase the quality and quantity of the in-training of civil servants. The evaluation requires the local administration to set up education and training plans for their employees, focused on those who do not meet the competence requirements for the job title they hold. The education and training plans should also identify the need for training in the administration and identify which bodies that are in most acute need of training to perform efficiently.

In 1998, the Vietnamese government promulgated the Ordinance on Cadres and Civil Servants, aimed at setting standards for management of civil servants. The main target is to increase the competence of the civil servants in order to increase the efficiency of the public administration. According to the PAR evaluation, the public administration in Vietnam still experiences major weaknesses in human resources and in human resource management. Civil servants often hold some kind of degree, but the degree they hold is not related to the job they are doing. Yet, the

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149 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
civil servants do not hold the sufficient competence to meet the requirements of the new market-oriented, modern society that is emerging in Vietnam. The civil servants often lack “modern” skills as computer knowledge and knowledge in foreign languages.\(^{153}\)

The evaluation also criticizes the human resource management to lack a uniformed policy. The policy on human resource management is often overlapping and unfocused. There is no clear division of responsibilities of human resources between the state and the party, and between different levels of government. In general, human resource management in the public administration experiences ambiguous rules for how different grades in the administration are obtained and what kind of examinations that is required. This has resulted in a complicated system of responsibilities and rules that has decreased the incentives for the civil servants to do a good job and to participate in training and to undertake examinations.\(^{154}\)

With the acknowledgment that the public administration needed to undergo reformation, the salary system for civil servants was reformed. The salary system is designed to pay in relation to the grade that is held by the employee and the level of education. This system is aimed at increasing the incentives for training among the civil servants, and should be allowed to adjust for changes in supply and demand in the public administration. The system should also allow for differences in salary to keep skilled, hard-working personnel in the public service.\(^{155}\) Even though the salary system for the public administration has been reformed the last decades, several weaknesses still remain. For many civil servants, the salary paid for their job at the public administration is not enough to survive. This has led to that salary is no longer a motivation to work in the public administration, especially talented and skilled persons that are able to get a job in the private, high-paying sector, are very hard to attract to the public administration. The low salary is also seen as a disincentive for productive work among the civil servants. The very low salary in the public administration has also led to a system of widespread corruption, where the civil servants increase their total income by accepting bribes.\(^{156}\) The PAR evaluation acknowledges that a system of alternative payments for civil servants that is not under the control of the central government exists. This system includes free lunches, housing, home telephone and other benefits.

The PAR report provides recommendation on how the salary system for civil servants should be improved. The salary system most provide the civil servants with enough money to survive on in order to decrease the incentives for corruption and to make it possible for the civil servants to only work one job. The salary system must be designed as a tool to push productivity in the public administration. Civil servants must be paid in relation to what other branches, in the now deregulated economy. The salary system must also make it possible to retain skilled workers and to attract new, skilled, workers to public service. The salary system must also give motivation for civil servants to work in difficult and remote areas, to which it has been difficult to attract administrators.\(^{157}\)

The PAR evaluation provides a picture of a public administration that lacks competence for the new economic and social conditions in Vietnam. The public administration in Vietnam has not been able to develop a salary system that attracts talented persons to the public administration. The PAR that was introduced in 1995 has tried to address the weaknesses of the public organization in Vietnam, according to the PAR evaluation; the PAR has been able to increase the effec-

\(^{153}\) Ibid.
\(^{154}\) Ibid.
\(^{155}\) Ibid.
\(^{156}\) Ibid.
\(^{157}\) Ibid.
tiveness in the public administration, yet public organization in Vietnam experiences sincere weaknesses to adapt to the new market-oriented society.
3.3 Decentralization of Education in Vietnam

The decentralization process of the educational sector is not an entirely new process, yet with the EFA plan that Vietnam adopted at the World Educational Conference in Dakar 2000; decentralization of education has become an important tool to meet the goals of the EFA plan. The overall goal of the international EFA process is to ensure universal primary education by 2015 in the world. Vietnam, as one of the poorest countries in the world, has so far succeeded remarkable well to ensure primary education to its citizens. This section provides a background to the state of decentralization of education in Vietnam.

The EFA plan has been prepared by the MoET in cooperation with UNESCO, the World Bank and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The EFA plan in Vietnam is aimed at “maintaining high growth through continued transition to a market economy, applying an equitable, socially inclusive and sustainable pattern of growth, putting in place a modern public administration and governance system, and strengthening the integration of the country with the world economy and the international community.” These prodigious goals are set to be carried out by 2015. The government acknowledges that in order to reach the goals of the EFA plan the educational organization needs to be reformed, in line with the reformation process of public administration in Vietnam. The reformation process is aimed at changing the responsibility of educational management and planning from the central level down to the provinces. By giving the provinces responsibility for educational management and planning, the government expects that the efficiency of the educational sector will be increased. The decentralization process is aimed at both institutional decentralization, to move political responsibility to lower levels of government, and fiscal decentralization, to move the budget responsibility to lower levels of government. The provinces shall be given freedom to make the resource allocation more effective by allocating resources in line with the special needs of the province.

Vietnam is a cultural and economical diversified country, which also has led to significant differences in primary school enrolments rates, the purpose of the decentralization process is that the need of the provinces that have low enrolment rates shall better be addressed. The unique social, cultural and economical circumstances of each province shall be better acknowledged in a decentralized educational organization.

The strategic goals that the provinces will be responsible for are impressing, and are Important in order to fulfil the EFA plan and to build a pool of human capital in Vietnam for the future. The provinces will be responsible for “moving from quantity to quality, completing universal primary and universal lower secondary education, mobilizing full community participation […] and ensuring effective management and ever better resource utilization.”

These new responsibilities are a challenge for the provinces to carry out effectively. The EFA plan acknowledges that in order for the decentralization process to be successful, and for an implementation of the EFA-goals, the management system and capacity need to be strengthening at the provincial level. Yet, the decentralization process is not unproblematic in itself. The EFA plan sees the decentralization process as a dynamic process that brings major changes to the pattern of responsibility-authority-accountability across all levels of educational management. This

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158 Ibid, p. i
159 Ibid.
160 Ibid.
161 Ibid. p. xxix
process requires that the different levels of government hold sufficient knowledge to carry out their new responsibilities.\textsuperscript{162}

The educational system in Vietnam is planned to be reformed in the coming ten years, which requires even more capacity at the provincial level for educational management and planning. The educational reforms will change the educational system from being divided into primary and secondary school to become a universal continuous nine-year cycle of basic education. The educational system in Vietnam is also facing new circumstances followed by the sharp decrease in the birth rate the last ten years, which will result in decreased demand for education the coming years. These responsibilities are impressive, and are important to be carried out effectively in order to supply qualitative education in Vietnam. These new responsibilities for the provinces require “intensive review and revision of management functions and mechanisms and their adaptation to the changing needs of provincial level planning and implementation.”\textsuperscript{163} With the decentralization of education in Vietnam, the responsibility of the national MoET will change. Instead of being both the policy-maker and responsible for implementation, the MoET will take on new tasks as quality control, setting national standards for school performance, and monitoring and evaluation, leaving policy implementation to the provinces.\textsuperscript{164}

The EFA plan highlights the importance of competent management in the educational sector in order for Vietnam to reach the goals set out in the EFA plan; “the other Action Programs cannot succeed if they are not specifically supported by such [competent] management.”\textsuperscript{165} Competent educational management will be ensured by strengthening the capacity at the provincial and district level. The capacity building should ensure that the provinces and the districts have capacity for planning, effective resource utilization, and information-based decision-making.\textsuperscript{166} Especially in the start of the EFA plan implementation (2003-2005) intensive programs for provincial capacity building need to be set up.\textsuperscript{167} This strengthening of capacity is planned to be achieved through management training and support of managers at provincial, district, and commune levels.\textsuperscript{168} This training will take place in training facilities that will be set up along with the implementation of the decentralization process in Vietnam. These training facilities will be set up in a decentralized way, in which each training facility shall address the special needs each province or district have. The effectiveness of the decentralized management system shall be monitored and evaluated at regular bases, in order to be able to help the levels of government that needs extra help to fulfill their responsibilities in the new decentralized educational organization.\textsuperscript{169}

The EFA plan acknowledges that the goals of the plan can only be implemented if the provinces make sincere efforts to address the goals of the EFA-plan. The provinces will be the main institution responsible for the implementation of the EFA-plan. To be successful, the EFA-plan needs to be rolled out in the provincial educational plans. The provincial educational plans will be the main document that regulates educational policy in Vietnam; the national EFA-plan will serve as guidance for local priorities. The regional EFA-plans will be worked out by the People’s Committees, the Provincial Departments of Education (DoE) and the Provincial Departments of Finance (DoF). The provincial EFA-plans are required to identify the education activities foreseen and

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{163} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{167} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. \\
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\end{flushright}
then plan for the resources available, financing of education, and the support of management that is needed to meet the requirements in the national EFA-plan.\textsuperscript{170}

In order to ensure the quality of the provincial EFA-plans, the National EFA Committee will set up a technical support group, which objective is to give technical assistance to the central and provincial educational managers.

The funding of the EFA-plan is not sufficient; there exists a gap of USD 300 million to USD 120 Million every year until 2015 between expenditures and sources. The EFA-plan trusts that more effective educational management institutionalized in a modern decentralized way should make it possible to reach the goals of the EFA-plan by 2015.\textsuperscript{171}

The EFA-plan gives a lot of emphasis to the strengthening of management at the provinces and the districts in order to increase the efficiency of education in Vietnam. Today, the competence of the DoE:s is not enough to carry out the decentralization process effectively. The DoE:s need to strengthen their capacity in order to meet the new institutional requirements that have been introduced by decentralization of the public administration and the EFA-plan. What provides Vietnam with possible opportunities and problems is that the EFA-plan is carried out alongside with the major decentralization process that Vietnam is undertaking. The implementation of the EFA-plan will provide knowledge on how well suited the provincial and district institutions are to handle the increased responsibility they are given in the new decentralized public administration.\textsuperscript{172}

\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
3.4 The chosen Case Provinces

This section provides a brief economic background to the chosen provinces of this thesis’ case study. The chosen provinces are Ca Mau on the south tip of Vietnam, Son La in the North West on the boarder to Lao, TP Ho Chi Minh; the largest city in Vietnam located in the southern part of the country, and Thua Thien-Hue at the north central coast.

The size of the chosen provinces varies TP Ho Chi Minh is the largest province with 5.6 million citizens in 2003, followed by Ca Mau with 1.2 million citizens, Thua Thien- Hue with 1.1 million citizens, and Son La with 0.9 million citizens.\(^{173}\)

The size of the educational system also varies TP Ho Chi Minh had in 2003 880,000 persons enrolled in 774 grade schools, and taught by 33,227 teachers. Ca Mau had 240,000 persons enrolled in 376 grade schools and 11,358 teachers. The numbers for Thua Thien-Hue were 270,000 persons enrolled in 352 grade schools, and taught by 10,139 teachers. Son La had in 2003 240,000 persons enrolled in 426 grade schools who were taught by 12,181 teachers.\(^{174}\) It is possible to see a pattern where the more remote provinces, Son La and Ca Mau, are forced to have more schools and more teachers employed than the urban provinces; Thua Thien-Hue and TP Ho Chi Minh, this pattern is in line with increasing economics of scale, where urban centres can run larger schools with fewer teachers employed.

From the Vietnam Living Standard Survey, conducted in 1998, poverty rates have been calculated for every province. The mean poverty rate (per cent of the population living on less than one U.S. dollar a day) in Vietnam 1998 was 37.4 per cent.

The chosen provinces for this thesis’ case study are spread all over the poverty ranking in Vietnam. Son La is the third poorest province in Vietnam with a poverty rate of 73 per cent on average in the province, with a poverty rate of 81 per cent in rural areas and 14 per cent in urban areas. Thua Thien-Hue is the 15\(^{th}\) poorest province out of 61 in Vietnam, with an average poverty rate of 47 per cent, with 58 per cent being defined as poor in rural areas and 20 per cent being defined poor in the urban areas. Ca Mau is the 43\(^{rd}\) poorest province. The average poverty rate is 34 per cent, 38 per cent in rural areas and 17 per cent in urban areas. TP Ho Chi Minh is the least poor province in Vietnam, with an average poverty rate of only five percent, the poverty rate in the rural areas is eight per cent and five per cent in the urban areas.\(^{175}\)

The different provinces are located in clusters of provinces with similar poverty rates. Son La, located in the North West corner of Vietnam is surrounded by poor or very poor provinces, while TP Ho Chi Minh is surrounded by “rich” provinces. Both Thua Thien-Hue and Ca Mau are surrounded by provinces off similar poverty characteristics.\(^{176}\) These kinds of cluster effects show that the geographical position of the province seems to be related with the poverty rate in the province.

The average monthly income for employees in the local state sector, as administrators and teachers does not seem to be related to the poverty ranking. The highest income has local state employees in TP Ho Chi Minh with a monthly average income of 1.34 million Dong ($85) in 2003,

\(^{173}\) General Statistics Office, 2003
\(^{174}\) Ibid.
\(^{175}\) Baulch; Epprecht & Minot, 2003
\(^{176}\) Ibid.
followed by Son La with 1.17 million Dong ($74) per month, Thua Thien- Hue with 0.97 million Dong ($61) per month, and Ca Mau with 0.80 million Dong ($50) per month. 

The different provinces chosen for this thesis’ case study are very diverse given geographical position, demographics and economical circumstances, yet they have one thing in common; their educational outcomes in primary school are lower than average in Vietnam, which makes them interesting objects for this thesis’ case study.

177 General Statistics Office, 2003
4 Results from the Case Provinces

This section provides a summary of the interview undertaken in the four case provinces. The summaries of the interviews also include some reflections to the decentralization theory, the purpose of decentralization in Vietnam and the EFA plan.

4.1 Son La

The respondents at the DoET in Son La, the deputy general of education, one administrator, and the head of the finance department, all claimed that the responsibility of the DoET had increased the last years. This increase in responsibility had brought more specific commitments which made it easier to evaluate the performance of the DoET. Today the DoET has some responsibility in budget allocation and in the appointment of personal within the organization. However, these new responsibilities were not given in a deliberative process between the MoET and the DoET; rather the new responsibilities were given from the MoET without discussions with the DoET. The respondents’ point of view was that they were not allowed to ask for more responsibility when they found the organization mature to handle it, rather the MoET would provide the DoET in Son La with more responsibility when it so whished. This tendency of the MoET to carry out the decentralization without involvement from the DoET must be questioned from the point of view of participatory decentralization. If the MoET gives the DoET more responsibility without knowing the DoET’s opinion of the ability to handle these new responsibilities, the decentralization reform takes a centralized form.

The Vietnamese society is changing rapidly, in order to reform the administrative organization a number of administrative reforms have been executed; these reforms were also carried out by the DoET in Son La. However, the DoET had a very limited possibility to influence these reforms. In the area of administrative reforms it is not the MoET that has the most competence; it is the PC in the province that holds most authority over administrative reforms. The interviewees provided a picture where the DoET was involved in a complicate system of shared responsibility between the MoET, the PC and the DoET, in which the DoET holds the smallest amount of authority.

Even though the DoET had not been able to deliberate over the new responsibilities given by the MoET, the interviewees claimed that they had been able to get the required skills needed to handle these new responsibilities; all though it had taken time and some capacity building had been required among the staffs. This view provides some support that an organization often is able to get new capacity when it is given new responsibility. However, this process had been long and difficult, and a lot of capacity for effective administration was still missing in Son La.

In Son La all employees at the DoET are former teachers, this is a requirement for employment at the DoET. Since all employees are former teachers the DoET claimed that it does not need to interview the employees or have entrance exams prior to employment. This process violates the requirements of the PAR in Vietnam, which requires the employees to undertake entrance exams to administrative positions. That all employees at the DoET are required to be teachers might increase the understanding of teaching at the DoET, but the problem arises for areas of special competence, as finance and budgeting. If all employees have been educated as teachers, no one is possessing special competence in areas outside pedagogical skills, instead these skills have to be given by in-service training or university training. That all employees at the DoET are former teacher might explain the weak position of the DoET in questions outside pedagogic.
Although education is claimed to be decentralized in Vietnam the DoET did not hold authorization to decide upon the number of employees in the organization, it was instead regulated by the MoET. Here the question arises; when the MoET claims that education is decentralized but the number of employees is still not a matter of local competence, the level of decentralization has to be challenged. If the DoET can not decide upon how many employees, given the budget, that are optimum for the organizational efficiency an information bias problem arises. Seen from an organizational perspective, how can the MoET hold more information and capacity to decide upon the number of employees at the DoET than the DoET itself?

In order to increase the capacity of the DoET, a number of employees were sent to the universities in order to obtain a master degree. After obtaining their master degrees the employees returned to the same position they held before, yet with some increased salary. The DoET can not decide who are sent to the universities for training or who are sent for in-service training, instead the MoET provides a list of personal which shall be given training. Once again the level of decentralization has to be questioned in Son La, if the DoET can not decide who are sent to training the purpose of decentralization, to give more authority to lower levels of government that hold more perfect information, must be seen as violated. The interviewees also showed some disappointment over the missing competence to choose who should undertake training. They claimed that it would be better if the employees were sent to in-service training that was focused on the missing capacity of the DoET in Son La and not to some general courses given by the MoET.

Even though the decentralization of education in Son La still keeps a lot of competence of education at the MoET, which in a lot of cases violate the theory behind decentralization; it has brought an increase in the contacts between the DoET and the MoET, which can be seen as positive. Today, the DoET has much more contact with the MoET than five years ago. The MoET listens more seriously to the information given by the DoET. Also the communication between the DoET and the districts has increased since decentralization. Today, the communication between the DoET and the districts is more of a two-way communication where information is exchanged rather than only provided. The quality of the information from the districts to the DoET has increased; however, the districts still lack major competence to provide the DoET with high-quality information.

The picture of educational decentralization in Son La provided in the interview is that the decentralization reforms to some extent have given the DoET more authority and responsibility. However, the decentralization has not been undertaken in a deliberative way, in which the DoET has been involved in how the decentralization reforms should be executed. It is the MoET that decides upon the decentralization reforms, in a centralized way.

In Son La the DoET still lacks a lot of competence in order to gain major increases in authority and responsibility. However, since the capacity building is controlled by the MoET, the MoET holds a position in which it can claim that the DoET lacks capacity for further decentralization at the same time as the MoET are not providing more capacity building for the DoET. On the positive side of the decentralization reforms is the increased information exchange between the districts and the DoET and between the DoET and the MoET. This is a very positive tendency for decentralization of education since at the end of the day; decentralization is to a large extent about to decrease information bias in the organization. However the interview did not provide any indication that decentralization of education in Son La would have increased the public participation or the transparency of the administration which to a large extent is the purpose from
the development organizations in Vietnam, and is also one of the major purposes of decentralization, given the decentralization theory.

The interviewees also provided some thoughts about further decentralization in Vietnam, as a poor province Son La has seen how the decentralization reform has increased the inequality between the provinces. Today, the poor provinces have difficulties to attract skilled personnel and to get the equipment needed for efficient administration. However, they claimed that if the DoET was given more responsibility and authority they were convinced that the DoET should be able to get capacity to handle these responsibilities efficiently.

### 4.2 Hue

The interview in Hue with the deputy of finance and the head of the personnel department showed that the conditions for decentralization are totally different in Hue than in Son La. Hue, as a major city and a university city, holds much more capacity at all departments of provincial administration than the rural Son La.

Between 1990 and 2000 the province of Hue had a different organizational structure than today. During these years the DoET was given full authorization by the provincial PC to manage education in the province. The DoET was given its own provincial legislation for management. During this organizational structure the DoET handled more or less all aspects of education, with the districts as the executives of the DoET. The districts were not given authority over education; they only carried out what was decided by the DoET. The DoET was of course required to follow the national educational laws, but it was allowed to manage education without involvement from the central level. This kind of organizational structure made it easier for the DoET to handle education. Especially in finance the DoET could better allocate resources in accordance to the different needs in the province. This financial freedom made it possible for the DoET to identify and target especially weak districts each year, which was more effective than the equal share of resources that is provided today.

After 2000, the PC changed the organizational structure of education in Hue. The new organizational structure in Hue in 2000 was implemented in order to adapt to the national decentralization reform of public administration. The decentralization of education changed the organizational structure in Hue. With decentralization a lot of authority over education was transferred to the districts. The responsibility of the DoET is since 2000 to provide the overall plan for education in the province; the districts are then given authority to implement this plan with relative large freedom.

The interviewees did not emphasize the power of the MoET in the interview; rather they claimed that the provincial PC held most authority over education. In Hue the MoET only supervises that education is executed in accordance with law. At the DoET in Hue the MoET has a totally different function than in Son La. The MoET only comes with directives but it has a very limited function in the day-to-day work at the DoET. The interviewees were very critical to the directives worked out by the MoET. They claimed that these directives were worked out in Hanoi without any connection to the real conditions of education in Hue. One example of this was that the central government in Hanoi sets the directives for salary. This has resulted in that the employees at the DoET earned more as teachers as employed at the DoET, Even though employment at the DoET is considered a higher position. This salary system, which does not provide an increase in salary for increased responsibility, constitutes a potential risk for decentralization of education in Vietnam. If the salary is lower for the administrators at the DoET than it was as teacher, while
the employees got increased authority and responsibility as administrators, the incentives for a system of bribing is dramatically increased.

The DoET saw itself as a consultant for the provincial PC in education. This situation, in which the DoET in education sees itself as a consultant for the provincial PC, has much in common with deconcentration, rather than any other form of administrative decentralization. Education has to some part been decentralized to the DoET and to the districts but at the same time they have not been given much more freedom of decisions, since they are still strict controlled by the provincial or district PC:s. One example of this deconcentration is that authority over the number of employees at the DoET has been decentralized to the Department of Internal Affairs on the provincial level; however, the DoET still does not hold authority to independently decide the optimal number of employees given the budget.

The public administrative reforms in Hue were controlled by the provincial PC. The administrative reforms that the DoET had undertaken have not been the results of a deliberative process between the PC and the DoET. The DoET can give suggestions about reforms; however, finally authority is held by the PC. A number of successful administrative reforms had been executed in Hue according to the interviewees; one of the most successful was the reformation of the procedure how teachers were transferred. Today, the teachers who would like to be transferred submit their CV:s to an information databank, when a position is available the DoET chooses who should fill the vacancy from this pool of CV:s. This process has increased the efficiency and created an open process that has eliminated bribes, which were common in the old system.

Also at the DoET in Hue the vast majority of the employees have been teachers prior to employment. Even if this has positive effects for the understanding of education, it must be pointed out that in an organization that shall be decentralized to handle its own financial responsibility and budgeting, special knowledge, targeted at these function, has to be acquired. If all personnel are trained as teachers, in-service training or further academic studies are required in order to get the capacity needed. However, this is something that is happening in Hue. A lot of the employees at the DoET have, after getting employed at the DoET, acquired a master or a PhD degree. In comparison to Son La, this in-service training system seems to work much more efficiently. According to the interviewees the DoET has been able, through in-service training, to get the capacity needed to hold increased authority. This can to a large extent be connected to Hue’s more central position in the country, its better economic wealth, but foremost its tradition as an academic city.

The connections between the DoET and the MoET was claimed to not have changed significantly since decentralization of education. However, the connection between the DoET and the districts had increased substantially. Today, the DoET deals with the districts on a daily basis. In Hue a lot of authority has been transferred to the districts, which leaves the province with supervising authority. However, this decentralization to the district level has given the district PC:s more power over education. The increase of authority for the DoET:s at the district level has been limited, showing further evidence for the deconcentration-decentralization of education in Vietnam.

In conclusion, decentralization of education in Hue is more in accordance with the decentralization theory and the outspoken purpose of decentralization in Vietnam than in Son La. However, the interview showed that decentralization of education in Hue has taken place as deconcentration process, in which the same administrative organization has been transferred one to two steps down in the political hierarchy. The interviewees were very unsatisfied with the administrative
organization that gives the PC and the DoF so much power in education. In order to increase the efficiency of the educational administration the interviewees claimed that the DoET should be given authority and responsibility over all fields of competence that concern education, which can be seen as a wish for decentralization reforms with more attributes of devolution.

The interview did not provide any evidence for an increased public participation in education. Even with decentralization, the power over education still lies in the hands of the political system, without involvement from the public.

In comparison with Son La, Hue showed a more positive attitude to decentralization and also a more independent relation to the MoET. Probably Hue’s level of capacity and its financial strength as a major city give it more independency from the MoET. However, even if the capacity of the DoET in Hue is relative high, the respondents wished for increased capacity-building in order to increase the efficiency of the administration.

4.3 Ho Chi Minh City

The interview in HCMC was done with the deputy head of finance. His answers were very short and delivered with cautiousness; therefore the interview provided very limited information about decentralization of educational management

The interviewee claimed that decentralization of education had increased the responsibility and authority of the DoET. However, a lot of decisions in education are taken by the provincial PC and not by the DoET. The administrative reforms that had been executed in the DoET were in accordance with the general decentralization process in Vietnam. These reforms had been decided upon by the PC, without any major involvement of the DoET. As in the other provinces, this shows that administrative reform is an area of the provincial PC’s competence. The DoET does not have any possibility to participate in the planning of the administrative reforms.

In-service training is an area of competence that is split by the PC and the DoET in HCMC. The DoET gives suggestions which persons should be provided in-service training; it is then the PC that has final authority to decide upon the participants. That in-service training is an area of shared competence further provides evidence that decentralization of education in Vietnam has features of deconcentration rather than any other form of administrative decentralization.

Most of the employees at the DoET have prior to employment worked as teachers, however, different to the other DoET:s interviewed, some employees at the financial department only hold degrees in economics or finance without experience from teaching.

Decentralization of education in HCMC has increased the responsibility of the districts, however on the district level the DoET has shared competence over education with the district PCs and the district DoFs; providing a decentralized organization of education, although with a deconcentrated structure. It is obvious that the decentralization reforms of education in HCMC has transferred authority over education one to two steps down in the political hierarchy; however, the DoET has been given very limited individual responsibility. The day-to-day work of the DoET is not an individual process; the DoET always has to include the PC and the DoF in its daily work. This limited independent responsibility of the DoET has to be challenged form the theory of decentralization. The theory claims that efficient decentralization shall provide the administrative body that holds most information the authority of decision making. This administrative body shall then be controlled by the public institutions higher up in the political hierarchy; however, in HCMC the DoET is not given individual authority, it has to share its authority over education with both the PC and the DoF. A decision making system with many different admin-
Administrative bodies involved always risks to increase the information bias in the decision making process. Decentralization shall be undertaken, according to the EFA-plan, in order to increase the efficiency of the public administration; however, an administrative organization which requires a number of administrative bodies to be included in the day-to-day decision making process always runs a large risk to become inefficient.

In the interview it was possible to see a difference between the rich and urban HCMC and Son La. HCMC is much more independent from the central level of government and the MoET than the rural and poor Son La. However, as pointed out earlier, the decentralization might have transferred authority to the provincial level, however this new responsibility is shared between so many administrative bodies that it is difficult to talk about a major change of the position of the DoET in educational management in HCMC.

4.4 Ca Mau

The interview in the remote Ca Mau on the very south tip of Vietnam was conducted with the deputy head of the DoET, one human resource person and the deputy head of finance present.

In Ca Mau the decentralization of education is seen to be regulated by the MoET. The decentralization process works as the MoET provides guidelines for decentralization which it presents to the provincial PC. The PC then decides which directives that shall be followed in Ca Mau. The DoET has a very limited authority in the discussion about decentralization of education. The decentralization process is worked out over the heads of the DoET. As in the other case provinces, it is obvious that decentralization of education takes place as a top-bottom-fed process, in which the MoET together with the provincial PC decide upon decentralization. The DoET is then forced to follow these directives, and can in general not oppose an execution of the directives.

Even though the DoET has not been involved in the decentralization process of education; the decentralization process of education has given the DoET more responsibilities; in particular over financial issues. The DoET has slowly increased its ability to handle these new responsibilities efficiently. When the DoET has been given new guidelines for decentralization the staffs have been given training in order to get capacity to execute these.

As in the other case provinces the number of employees at the DoET is not regulated by the DoET itself. In Ca Mau the number of employees at the DoET is regulated by the provincial PC. However, the DoET can without permission decrease the number of staffs, but in order to increase the number it needs allowance from the PC.

During the last years the DoET has undergone a couple of administrative reforms, the purpose of these reforms has been to decrease the number of staffs and to increase the quality of the administration. It was obvious that the interviewees did not really agree with the purpose of these reforms and did not either consider the purpose to have been fulfilled. As in the other case provinces it seems like administrative reforms are decided upon without any deliberative process in which the DoET can present its ideas and needs. Administrative reforms inside the DoET has to be decided upon by the MoET and then approved by the PC, the DoET can not, officially, undergo administrative reforms without permission from these two political and administrative bodies. This has to be seen as a failure according to the purpose of decentralization of education in Vietnam. The purpose of decentralization of education in Vietnam is to increase the efficiency of educational management by moving responsibility to the DoET at provincial and district level. However, if the DoET is not allowed to officially implement administrative reforms without
permission from higher authority, the decentralization process can not be seen as optimal. The requirement that administrative reforms and proposals for decentralization have to come from above falls short to identify the core of decentralization; that the administrative bodies shall be given freedom to structure itself in a way that they believe provides most efficiency in their work. Given the theory of decentralization, the DoET holds most information on its administrative work and is therefore most suitable to decide upon in which kind of organizational structure the administrative tasks shall be executed. The MoET in Hanoi and the PC in Cau Mau must be considered to hold limited information about the DoET in Ca Mau, resulting in a potential risk for information bias or information shortage.

Also in the area of in-service training, the DoET does not posses any individual authority. The head of the DoET chooses which personnel that should be given training, given the directives of the MoET. These persons have to be approved by the PC before the personnel can be sent to in-service training.

As in the other case provinces, it is a requirement that the employees at the DoET in Ca Mau have worked as teachers prior to employment at the DoET. This can be seen as an obstacle to decentralization, since the purpose of decentralization of education is to move more responsibility over budgeting and finance to the DoET. If the DoET does not have employees with required skills, the PC and the DoF, which shall give away their authority, can see the lack of capacity as a reason to not transfer authority to the DoET. If authority of budgeting and finance is transferred to the DoET in a larger extent than today, then the DoET risks to not having capacity to execute these responsibilities efficiently; seriously hurting the purpose of decentralization.

Since all employees have been teachers prior to employment at the DoET, there is no formal recruitment process for new employees. No interviews or entrance exams are undertaken in order to gain employment at the DoET.

Since decentralization of education, the relationship between the DoET and the MoET has not, according to the interviewees, changed significantly. Today, as before, the MoET is only involved in the professional activities of the DoET. The DoET has, as it has always had, most contacts with the provincial PC, which regulated the daily work at the DoET. The DoET is required to report to the PC once a week, which gives it a limited freedom. The decentralization process has not as it was thought changed the role of the DoET to become the managers and the PC and the MoET to become the controllers of education. Also at the district level the interviewees provided a picture of a deconcentrated decentralization process, in which the DoET:s in the districts were under the supervision of the PC:s in the districts. The DoET:s role in its relationship with the districts is to control that the directives of the MoET are implemented in good order.

The interviewees were asked what kind of help they would like to get in order to increase the decentralization process; their answer was they needed to increase the management skills of the personnel in the DoET.

In conclusion, Ca Mau is another example of the decentralization process of education taking place as a top-bottom-fed process in which the authority and responsibility of education is transferred to lower levels of government without providing the DoET with more independency to structure itself and to allocate resources in accordance to its own view on how efficient administration is best achieved. The decentralization that has taken place in Ca Mau has been undertaken as a deconcentration of administrative authority, providing a very limited administrative independence of the DoET in education.
4.5 Conclusion

The interviews undertaken in the four case provinces provide a picture of decentralization in Vietnam as a deconcentration process. Decentralization has brought responsibility and authority over education one to two steps further down in the political hierarchy. However, the DoET:s at provincial, and also district level, have been given a very limited increase in responsibility and authority. However, most important is that the decentralization of education does not show any significant signs of that the independency of the DoET:s in their managerial work has increased. Still today, the DoET:s are strict controlled by the provincial PC:s and DoF:s. One of the reason for this can be that the DoET:s hold a very limited capacity in areas outside teaching. The requirement that almost all employees at the DoET:s must have been teachers prior to employment at the DoET:s gives the DoET:s a weak position to claim increased competence over areas outside pedagogic. However, the requirement that all employees have to have been teachers is set by the provincial PC:s, which by this requirement can control that the DoET:s do not get capacity within the organization in order to claim independency from the PC and the DoF.

The interviews show that the position of the MoET in the provinces differs substantially. In the remote and poor Son La with a low competence within the public administration in the province the MoET has a much more outspoken position than in the urban Hue and HCMC where the provincial PC is the most influential administrative body over education. Given the very limited sample of province it is not possible to make any general conclusion about the MoET’s position in decentralization of education; however, an indication that the MoET tries to hold authority over education in provinces with weaker public administration can be seen.

The results from the interviews show that the DoET:s still after decentralization hold a very limited authority and responsibility over education. The DoET:s are involved in a complicated web of multiorganizational administration in which it is given a very limited independency over management of education.
5 The International Development Organizations’ View on Decentralization

In order to verify the answers from the interviews in the provinces, and in order to make an analysis of the correlation between actual state of decentralization of education and the development organizations’ view, this section presents interviews with three development organizations in Vietnam. These three were chosen from their large influence over decentralization of education in Vietnam.

5.1 The UNDP

The UNDP representative considered the decentralization process in Vietnam as suffering from not having a clear purpose, right now the decentralization process has been widely influenced by deconcentration rather than any other form of decentralization. The deconcentration of political power moves the same organizational structure that exists on the central level down to the provincial and district level. This is also what my interviews have shown, in the provinces the DoET:s do not deal so much with the central level, but the contacts with the provincial and districts PC are intense. The view of the UNDP representative and the answers from my interviews correspond, it seems like the decentralization process has to some extent increased the power of the DoET:s but the administrative bodies that have gained most new powers from the decentralization process in education are the PC:s on different levels of local government.

To transfer the same organizational structure of decision-making from the central level down to the provincial and district level is not what the UNDP is aiming for in its promotion of decentralization in Vietnam. UNDP’s purpose of promoting decentralization in Vietnam is to transfer the decision-making power closer to the citizens; in order for the decision-making process to be more transparent. This transparency will, if it works effectively, increase the quality of government since the decision-makers will be directly accountable to the community they serve. My interviews did not show a clear tendency in decentralization of education to increase the transparency, and the inclusion of citizens in decision-making seems to be pretty limited, yet the decentralization of education, in form of deconcentration, has moved the decision-making power one or two levels of government closer to the citizens. This system of decentralization, to move the same organizational structure that existed on the central level down to the lower levels of government, provides more power to the PC:s on provincial and district level, this also increases the importance of competence at the different PC:s in order for a successful management of education. The UNDP is aware of the importance of capacity at the different PC:s in order for effective management in the new more decentralized governmental organization, yet as the PC:s are ran by the Communist Party alone, the UNDP sees problems to help the PC:s to increase their competence since it would promote the one-party structure in Vietnam. Yet, the capacity of the PC:s, and the PC:s’ relation to the central level have been shown in my interviews to be important factors for how much autonomy the provinces have in education.

The decentralization of education can, as the representative for the UNDP pointed out, not be seen as a single process. The complicated system with shared responsibilities of different departments at each level of government makes the educational system very dependent on the overall decentralization process of the public administration. The UNDP representative shared the view provided in my interviews that the DoET on provincial level is given relatively limited autonomy over education since they are dependent on so many other departments at the provincial level for
its day-to-day activities. One example that I discussed with the UNDP representative is the system, which my interviews shown, of a fixed number of employees, set by another department or the provincial PC. The UNDP representative agreed that this system of a fixed number of employees limits the actual freedom of management of the DoET.

The view on the quality of the in-service training courses of the UNDP representative is not in line with the general view of the respondents in my interviews at the DoET. According to the UNDP, the quality of the in-service courses is often low, and the courses’ connection to the tasks performed at the different departments is not always obvious. The UNDP representative confirmed my finding that the capacity-building process, aimed at giving the DoET capacity to handle its new responsibilities in the new decentralized organization, is actually centralized in its structure; it is the MoET that decides the curricula of the courses and also chooses who are eligible to take the course. This system makes it hard to target special weaknesses at the different departments, and to address differences in capacity between different provinces, which my interviews shown are very obvious.

The salary system, that employees at the DoET earn less as an administrator at the DoET than as a teacher is known by the UNDP, the UNDP tries to convince the Vietnamese government to change this salary system since it creates incentives for corruption and low-efficiency among the staff at the department. The UNDP, in order to increase the capacity of the public administration, pays for overseas courses for a number of employees at the central level of government, when these employees return to Vietnam they get the same position and the same salary as prior to overseas training, this has resulted in a lot of frustration among many of the persons who were provided overseas training. This is the same system as exists at the DoETs.

According to the UNDP the decentralization process in Vietnam is suffering from a problem of understaffing in the public administration rather than a overstaffing problem. The system of a fixed number of employees further increases the problem with understaffing, since the different department at the lower levels of government are not free to decide the most efficient numbers of employees given their budgets when they are provided with more responsibilities as the decentralization process goes along.

The UNDP representative shared the view of the respondents at the DoET:s, that decentralization risks to increase the differences between rich and poor provinces as well as between rich and poor people, yet a centralized system that does not provide any provinces new opportunities is not better. The decentralization of the public administration must continue, yet the provinces that lack capacity and economic ability to handle the new responsibilities must be provided effective help.

The purpose of the UNDP to promote decentralization of public administration in Vietnam is to increase the inclusion of citizens in decision-making, and to make the decision-making process more transparent. My interviews do not show that the decentralization of education, so far in Vietnam, has promoted either inclusion of citizens or increased transparency; it shows that so far has the different provinces researched for this thesis have not decentralized in accordance with the purpose of decentralization set out by the UNDP.
5.2 The CIDA

Education in Vietnam has always been relative decentralized according to the educational expert at the CIDA; the provinces have never been directly controlled by the central level. Yet, the educational managers at district and provincial level have never been given much authority. Education is controlled by a number of departments, as the DoF, the Department of Home Affairs (DoHA), and the Department of Investment and Planning (DoIP), and the local PC:s. When education has, as the last years, been further decentralized, the same organizational structure has been transferred down to lower levels of government which has resulted in that the political power is transferred to a lower level, but the authority of the DoET has just increased marginally. This view corresponds to the findings of my interviews that describe the DoET involved in a complicated web of shared responsibilities between different department and the PC on the provincial level and with different ministries at the central level. The educational expert at the CIDA pointed at the budget process as one example; in the budget process both the MoET and the DoET have very limited power. It is instead the MoF and the DoF together with the central PC and provincial PC that have most authority over the budget allocation process. That the DoET is involved in this complicated web of government relation makes it very important that the whole governmental structure is decentralized and that the public administrative reforms are worked out in every department; in order to increase the efficiency of decentralization of education in Vietnam.

The DoET has historically been seen as a weak department in Vietnamese politics. The DoET often holds direct authority over a very limited number of decisions concerning education, which makes it dependent on the other departments. The decentralization process of education has tried to increase the authority of the DoET, yet this has not been easy since the other departments have not been willing to give up their power. The new EFA-plan that the CIDA is responsible to implement on the provincial level has tried to provide the DoET with more authority over education. In the new provincial EFA plans the role of the DoET:s in the decision-making process in education is starting to be acknowledged.

The educational expert at the CIDA confirmed that employees at the DoET earn less than they did as teachers. This salary system has a very negative impact on educational management, since the employees at the DoET often are forced to run a business, or give extra classes as teachers, when they do not work for the DoET in order to survive. This often results in that employees at the DoET are more concentrated on their second job, since it earns them more money than their management job at the DoET. This salary system also increases the incentives for corruption among the personnel at the DoET. In a further decentralization, which assigns more authority to the DoET, this can lead to increased incentives for corruption. The CIDA is aware of these negative consequences given the salary system in the public administration. The CIDA has tried to push the Vietnamese government to change the salary system, but it has been proven to be an area off-limit for international donors and NGOs. The problem is that the DoET is not responsible for the salary system; it is the DoHA that sets the salary system, which further shows that the decentralization of education has not significantly increased the authority and autonomy of the DoET.

The quality of the in-service training of personnel at the DoET has been improved the last years; yet, it is still in no way perfect. Today, the in-service training is more hands-on, and the participants are often devoted to the training they are given. The educational expert at the CIDA confirmed that the in-service training system has not been decentralized, it is still the MoET that
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decides over which courses that should be given and who are eligible to take the courses. This centralized in-service training system is not up-to-date with the more decentralized educational system, since the different provinces differ so much in their capacity. The educational expert at the CIDA confirmed that an in-service training system that acknowledged the provincial differences in capacity should be more efficient.

The personnel that are trained in order to get a master or a Ph.D. degree often return after graduation to the same position with the same salary. As the salary system works right now, the level of education is not related to salary in many DoET:s; however, this system is starting to change. In some departments young, high-skilled, workers are paid more than their peers with much more seniority. That people are not paid in relation to educational degree, lowers the incentives for training among the personnel at the DoET.

The DoET:s, in general, are suffering from understaffing rather than overstaffing, the system of a fixed number of employees, set by another governmental body, also limits the autonomy of the DoET.

The educational expert at the CIDA confirmed that large differences in capacity between different DoET:s exist. Some DoET:s in remote and poor areas often have vary poor capacity. The staffs are always recruited from teachers, who are very poorly trained, and they have not been given much of in-service training. Provinces with poor capacity are often low-performing in their educational outcomes, and are not given much authority or autonomy, which shows the importance of capacity in the DoET in the decentralization reform process. These differences in capacity will properly continue to increase, if the issue is not addressed carefully by the central government and international donors and NGO:s. There is a relationship between the capacity of the DoET and the large cities, and the distance to the nearest university. Larger cities and provinces close to cities with a university often have good capacity in their DoET:s. Yet, some examples of provinces with good capacity at the DoET that are not located close to a university city exist. These examples show that it is possible, through in-service training and good management, to actually build DoET:s with high capacity also outside the major urban areas.

The educational expert at CIDA’s view on decentralization of education in Vietnam was in conclusion more positive than negative. The decentralization has increased the quality of education in Vietnam, and it has also highlighted the need of capacity-building at DoET:s. Yet, decentralization of education must assign more responsibilities to the DoET, and move closer to decentralization based on devolution rather than deconcentration.

5.3 The World Bank

Vietnam has always had a pretty decentralized educational system, following the political tradition of relative large autonomy of the provinces. Yet, the educational system has been further decentralized the last years; though, this decentralization has been in the form of continues deconcentration rather than any other form of decentralization. The decentralization of education in Vietnam has transferred more power to the provinces and the districts, yet the organizational structure has not been changed. Authority over education is still divided between the DoET, the DoF and the PC within the province, which has not increased the authority and the autonomy of the DoET significantly. The World Bank consultant acknowledged the importance of the PC in the political organization governing education. According to the consultant, the PC holds the final authority over education in the provinces; all major decisions concerning education must gain approval of the PC in order to be executed.
The political structure that divides responsibilities over education between the DoET, the DoF and the PC often results in a system in which personal connections between the different individuals working at the different bodies are very important for the organizational structure and the organizational efficiency. The World Bank consultant provided examples from the budget allocation process, in which the personal relationship between the staffs at the DoF and the DoET is important. In provinces where the staffs from the DoF and the DoET know each other the autonomy and the authority power is greater of the DoET.

The consultant claimed that the competence of the DoET:s in Vietnam is in general not sufficient, they often lack specific knowledge in order to generate and to use information. This lack is often more significant in poor and remote provinces, hower the competence in the major cities is not always sufficient. In order to strengthen the capacity of the DoET:s the MoET provides them with in-service training, the consultant claimed that the quality of this in-service training can be questioned. However, the quality has improved, and the MoET is sincere in its effort to improve the quality of the in-service training.

The DoET:s have been assigned more responsibilities for planning of education since decentralization, this has however not been unproblematic. Vietnam’s public administration history of five years planning has generated scepticism against planning in the administration. A couple of years ago it was obvious that the DoET:s did not provide education plans that were prepared in order to be implemented; yet this has changed and today the DoET:s try to provide education plans that can be implemented in reality.

The consultant claimed that the budget allocation process limits the degree of autonomy for the DoET, often the DoF deals directly with the provincial and the district PC:s, leaving the DoET only responsible for the educational planning, without any authority how the education plan shall be financed. This very limited authority over educational financing decreases the autonomy of the DoET, the DoET is always dependent on the decisions of budget allocation from the DoF and the PC. The consultant considered it possible that a change might happen in the future, but right now the DoFs often consider the DoET:s to not hold sufficient capacity in order to have authority over budget allocation in education.

The degree of freedom for the province in education from the MoET and the central level of government is often given by if the province is a net payer or a net receiver of money from the national tax system. Provinces that are net payers often hold more autonomy over, as an example, education, than provinces that are net receivers. Rich provinces, as HCMC, which collects unofficial school fees are given more autonomy from the central level since they have their own sources of revenue, which they can spend as they are pleased. This leaves these provinces with more autonomy from the central level than provinces that are dependent on transfers from the central level.

The consultant claimed that the decentralization of education works two ways; education has been decentralized to a lower level of government, giving the PC, the DoF and the DoET at the provincial level more authority of education, but at the same time the MoET, that historically has had a weak position in Vietnamese politics, tries to gain more authority. The MoET tries to gain authority over budget allocation and finance of education from the MoF and the DoF. This is a naturally tendency; when the capacity at the MoET has been strengthen they have also tried to increase their power over fields that it traditionally has not had authority over.
5.4 Conclusion

The interviews with the three different international development organizations provide a picture of a complicated decentralization of education in Vietnam, which has not been decentralized in accordance with the purpose of the international development organizations. These organizations had asked for a decentralization of education that assigned more autonomy of the DoET:s for management and an increased public participation and transparency. However, the decentralization of education seems to, according to the international development organizations, been deconcentrated rather than devolutionized. Here the organizations run into a problem, they promote decentralization of education in Vietnam, but the decentralization process has resulted in an administrative organization they can not support. The most telling example of this is the UNDP, which is aware that the decentralization-deconcentration of education in Vietnam has increased the importance of the provincial PC:s rather than the DoET:s in education. However, the UNDP is not able to support a capacity-strengthening of the PC:s, which would be needed to increase the efficiency of educational management at the provincial level.

The interviews also show the difference between the positions of different provinces in education, rich, urban provinces posses more autonomy from the central level in education than poor and remote areas. The World Bank consultant also pointed to the ongoing struggle of power over education between different levels of government and different administrative bodies at respective levels of government. As the different administrative bodies increase their capacities they all try to increase their authority over education, risking to result in a system where the amount of power of each administrative body is at the centre of attention instead of increasing the efficiency of education in Vietnam.

The international development organizations all agreed that decentralization of education has increased the importance of the provinces and the districts; however, this transfer of power has not increased public participation and administrative transparency as it was thought.
6 Conclusion

In Vietnam decentralization of education has with the World Millennium Development Goals been given high political priority. Both the national government and the international development organizations officially promote a decentralization of education. Decentralization is officially seen as a necessary political reformation of education in order to meet the requirement of universal primary education by 2015. In order to meet this requirement the national government has worked together with a number of international development organizations to develop the Education for All Plan, which outlines how Vietnam shall be able to provide universal, high quality, education in the future. The plan emphasizes decentralization of educational management as a necessary action in order to make the resource allocation more optimal and to address the special needs of provinces with poor educational performance. However, interesting is that the EFA plan falls short to identify how decentralization of education shall take place. The EFA plan describes the benefits of decentralization, and highlights the absolute need of decentralization. However, it does not identify which political bodies that shall be given more responsibility and authority in the new decentralized organization. The purpose of this thesis has been to analyze how decentralization of education so far has been undertaken and how this decentralization corresponds to the purposes of decentralization given by public administration theory and the international development organizations present in Vietnam.

A discussion around decentralization of education is a complicated topic. The first question that arises is what shall be decentralized; can decentralization of production of goods be compared to decentralization of services? A public service, as education, is almost always executed as a face to face process between the supplier of the service and the consumer of the service. Focusing on only the service executed, it has to be challenged if a face to face interaction between the supplier and the consumer can be further decentralized. Which level in the supply chain can be characterized to be able to allocate resources more efficiently than this face to face interaction? The importance of education in the society has historically made the government and the society to create a framework for the face to face interaction in education. The educational laws instituted have been able to regulate the resource allocation, how education is evaluated, and the goals of education; creating a framework for the service provision. However, have they ever been able to touch upon the decentralized face to face interaction between the teacher and the student? This impossibility to touch upon the service provision of education raises the question; can education be decentralized if it has never been centralized? At the end of the day, decentralization of education does not touch upon the service provided; instead it concerns the resource allocation in education, and the framework that is set to control the service provision. As a result of this the theory of public decentralization and educational decentralization is concerned about the resource allocation process of education and the political framework of decentralization.

But does a given purpose of decentralization exist? A number of scholars highlight that decentralization does not have a value in itself. Decentralization has to serve its purposes in order to be justified. If decentralization can not be seen as the right administrative tool to achieve broad public objectives it can not either be seen as justified. Here the first problem of decentralization of education in Vietnam becomes obvious. The EFA plan emphasizes decentralization without providing a more precise purpose of it as to help to meet the requirement of universal education by 2015. However, it does not identify how decentralization shall help to reach universal education.

The interviews done with the DoET:s in the four provinces provide a picture of a decentralization process which is not focused on efficiency increase, they rather paint a picture of decentrali-
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Decentralization of education as a power struggle between different levels of government and different administrative bodies at each level. It is obvious that decentralization of education has changed the organizational structure of public administration in the area of education in Vietnam. However, the efficiency gains and the benefits of decentralization to provide universal education are not obvious.

The public devolution decentralization theory claims that decentralization shall transfer power and responsibility to levels of government which are located closer to where the public services are provided. This transfer of decision-making closer to the execution of the public services shall by a system of information, accountability, transparency and community participation result in a more effective public administration, which allocates resources and set up rules in the interest of the community it serves. The devolution decentralization shall give the responsible administrative body independency to take decisions of execution as long as they are to follow the general goals set by higher levels of government. My study shows that decentralization of education in Vietnam has not resulted, and is not likely to result, in such outcomes. Decentralization of education has given the local levels of government more authority and responsibility over education. Yet, it has given the DoET:s a very limited increase of freedom in decision-making. Decentralization of education has not taken place in accordance with the devolution theory of decentralization; instead decentralization has more characteristics of deconcentration. The interviews show that decentralization has taken place as a spatial decentralization, in which the focus has been which level of government that has authority in education rather than to decentralize power away from the political sphere to the administrators of education who hold better information on education.

The decentralization theory emphasises the importance of local capacity in decentralization. The interviews show a general low competence within the DoET:s. More or less all employees at the DoET:s come from the ranks of teachers, and do not in general hold any academic skills outside pedagogic. The devaluation decentralization theory’s requirement that the administrative body, which is officially responsible for education, shall be given independent decision-making power provides the administrative body with responsibility of all aspects of education, including jurisdictional issues and financing and budgeting. Today, the DoET:s are provided a very limited decision-making power in education. The interviews show that the decision-making power in education is divided by a number of departments and the provincial PC. This limited scope of authority and responsibility of the DoET:s in their day-to-day activities are a result of the traditional low capacity within the DoET:s. Traditionally, the capacity of the DoET:s has not been considered high enough to handle all aspects of education. The DoF has for example kept the competence over budgeting and financing of education, while the PC has had competence to decide the number of employees at the DoET. To some extent the decentralization theory justify this limited authority and responsibility of education of the DoET:s since they have not had capacity to handle these areas efficiently. However, since the MoET in Hanoi controls which courses that are given as in-service training, and the provincial PCs:s decides who are sent, these two political bodies can control how much competence the DoET:s hold. It is also the PC that has sat up the requirement that all employees must be teachers prior to employment at the DoET:s. With this requirement, and their control over the in-service training provision the political bodies, which are to lose power from a sincere decentralization of education, control that the DoET:s are not getting capacity in order to claim increased authority and responsibility.

This tendency of struggle over competence provides a difficult situation for the international development organizations. They would like to transfer more authority and responsibility to the DoET:s in order to gain a better resource allocation and an increased public participation. How-
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ever, a fast increase of the number of areas within the competence of the DoET:s would risk to result in a situation where the DoET:s were given authority and responsibility over issues they do not hold capacity for.

The interviews with the DoETs and the international development organizations provide a picture of a battle between the communistic party in Vietnam and the international development organizations over the purpose of decentralization, which has the capacity-issue as its battlefield. The international development organizations promote, and require a decentralization of education with the purpose to make the resource allocation more efficiently and to increase the public participation. The political sphere in Vietnam, on the other side, is not willing to transfer political power over education to administrative bodies, which are given independency over decision-making. Yet, the political sphere is not afraid to transfer authority from one level of government to another. By transferring authority and responsibility of education and at the same time strict control the capacity of the DoET:s the political sphere can claim that education has been decentralized in accordance with the requirements of the international donors. Yet, the DoET:s have not been given increased independency in decision-making since they do not hold the required capacity to do it efficiently.

This situation has resulted in that the international development organizations have been trapped in a difficult situation. Their requirement that education shall be decentralized has to some extent been fulfilled; however, the political control over education has not decreased. If pushing for further decentralization of education the international development organizations risk to provide the DoET:s with responsibilities they can not manage; resulting in worse educational outcomes. Since decentralization can only be justified if it serves its purposes to make the resource allocation more efficient and to increase public participation, the development organizations have problems to justify a further decentralization of education for the political sphere in Vietnam.

A further evidence of the limited devolution decentralization of education is that the educational decentralization has not been met by a financial decentralization. Today, the DoET:s are not able to raise own funds and are not given authority to allocate the budget as they wish. The interviews show that financing is an area in which the DoET:s have a very limited competence. That the decentralization of education has not been matched with financial decentralization is not in line with the theory and the purpose of the development organization. The theory of public decentralization emphasises that administrative decentralization, in order to be sincere, must be matched with an increased authority and independency over funds for the administrative bodies which are to be given increased authority by decentralization. Since money is power within public administration, the lack of financial decentralization further provides a picture of decentralization of education as not been giving increased independency for the DoET:s to allocate resources.

The interviews at the DoET:s and with the international development organizations provide a picture of a complicated multiorganizational structure of education, in which a number of levels of government and a number of administrative bodies are included in the daily work of educational management in Vietnam. As the EFA plan, to discuss decentralization of education as a single phenomena, which in itself will bring outstanding results to education, does not have any correlation with the actual state of decentralization of education in Vietnam. A sincere decentralization of education can, given the political tradition, and the limited capacity within the DoET:s, only take place as a multiorganizational process in which the whole governmental organization strives towards a reformation which increases the independency of each administrative body. This is a very complicated reformation process, which goes way beyond a requirement of decentralization of education in Vietnam in the EFA plan. The EFA plan’s requirement and acknowl-
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Decentralization of education in Vietnam will only provide a very limited increase of the independency of the DoET:s, and will definitely not increase the public participation or transparency as is one of the major purposes of decentralization of the development organizations.

Decentralization of education has taken place in Vietnam. However, it has not served the purposes of the international development organizations. It is important that these organizations do not become satisfied with the spatial decentralization of education. They have to continue to require a decentralization of education which provides the administrative body which holds most information over education with increased independency in decision-making, and increases the public participation and the transparency.

The results from this thesis show that decentralization which is in line with the development organizations' stated purposes requires that the authority and control over capacity building at the DoET is decentralized to the DoET itself. Only if the DoET:s are able to identify which capacity is missing, they will be able to handle new responsibilities. A decentralization of capacity building would also decrease the control of the political sphere over the decentralization process. The importance of authority over funds must be given priority by the development organizations, the results show that the DoET:s are given a very limited control over financing of education, providing a very narrow space of manoeuvre in educational management.

So far in decentralization of education, the political sphere has not helped to decentralize education in line with the theory and the purposes of the development organizations. The political sphere has been smart enough to decentralize education without transferring political power away from its own hands. As of today the development organizations have been satisfied that they can claim that decentralization of educations has taken place. The question must be; which purposes has it served?

The international development organizations should work for an increased role in the capacity building at the DoET:s and a sincere financial decentralization of education. Decentralization can only be justified if it serves its purposes.
References


Appendix

Interview Questions

These interview questions provide the framework for the semi-structured interviews that were conducted in the four chosen provinces. The questions are designed after the theoretical framework previously presented in the thesis.

1. What are the main responsibilities of the DoET?
2. Has the decentralization process of education provided the DoET with new responsibilities the last years?
3. Has the DoET been able to effectively carry out these new responsibilities from the start?
4. How many persons are employed at the DoE; is that enough to carry out the responsibilities the DoET has?
5. How many employees at the DoET hold a master or a Ph.D. degree?
6. Does the DoET have sufficient competence to carry out the new responsibilities they have been given?
7. Has the DoET undergone administrative reforms the last years; what has been the purpose of these reforms?
8. Are administrative reforms planned to take place in the future?
9. Is the DoET involved in the discussion about how the public administration should reform?
10. Does a plan for training of personnel exist, who is in charge of this plan?
   - How often are the administrative staffs retrained?
   - What is the purpose with this training?
   - Who are retrained?
   - Who chooses who are retrained?
   - Where are they trained?
   - For how long does this training go on?
   - Is this training relevant?
   - Who pays for this training?
   - Are the employees interested to undertake training?
   - Will this training be increased in the future?
11. Does the DoET have problems to retain skilled personnel in the administration, if they have; why?

12. Have they lost high-skilled personnel the last years, to whom?

13. Does the DoET have a problem to attract young high-skilled persons, just graduated from the universities, to the DoET?

14. Has the DoET experienced an increased competition from private firms to attract high-skilled people?

15. Does the DoET have the possibility to pay high-skilled, hard-working employees more in order to keep them employed?

16. How are personnel recruited to the DoET, do they undertake examination prior to employment?

17. Who is in charge for the recruitment process?

18. What are the formal requirements for employment at the DoET; is it possible to find persons that meet those requirements?

19. Who is in charge for appointment of school managers?

20. How has decentralization changed the relationship between the DoET and the MoET?

21. Does the DoET get more or less help from the central level today than five years ago?

22. What kind of help, that is not provided today, would the DoET like to get from the MoET?

23. What kind of information is the DoET required to present to the MoET?

24. How often does the DoET need to report to the MoET?

25. How has the decentralization of education changed the relationship between the DoET and the districts?

26. How good are the districts to fulfil their new responsibilities?

27. Is the DoE satisfied with the quality of information they get from the districts?

28. What kind of help does the DoET provide the district to help them to increase their capacity?

29. How do you think that the future decentralization of education in Vietnam will change the tasks of the DoET?

30. If the decentralization process provides the DoET with more responsibilities and authority; what kind of help would the DoET like to get from NGO:s and International donors to carryout these new responsibilities more effectively?
Son La

The interview took place at the DoET in Son La, with the deputy general of education at DoET, one administrator at the DoET and the head of the finance department at the DoET present at the same time. The deputy general was the person that answered the majority of my questions. The beginning of the interview was very structured, strict following the questions that I had sent them in advance. The answers to the first questions were all very formal, and I had a feeling that they represented the view that should be presented to me. Though after a couple of questions, the interview became more semi-structured; the respondent more in detail explained the answer, and provided me with more own experienced examples. I was also allowed to ask questions that had not been sent to the DoET and approved by the MoET in advance.

I received contradictory answers to a number of questions, my interpreter’s and mine feeling was that the answers given later in the interview, when the interview had become more semi-structured, are the answers that are providing a truer picture of educational administration in Son La.

The interview took nearly four hours, and was done 2004-08-20.

What are the main responsibilities of the DoET?
Management work assigned by the MoET, as laws, regulations, and rules within the province.

Has the decentralization process of education provided the DoET with new responsibilities the last years?
The responsibilities have continuously increased at the DoET in all areas of activities, such as curriculum, methodology, responsibility and authority. The decentralization of education has provided more specific responsibilities to the DoET, which makes it easier to fulfil the requirements. The society is changing and more responsibilities have been and will be given the DoET to meet those changes. In the past the DoET had no authority over appointing personnel, also in the budget process the DoET has more authority over allocation.

The aim of the decentralization is to establish a more effective administration. A tentative decentralization of the universities is taking place right now, will be implemented in all provinces later. The DoET is not allowed to require more responsibilities over education, they are only allowed to carry out the responsibilities assigned in law and given by the MoET.

Has the DoET been able to effectively carry out these new responsibilities from the start?
It has taken some time and capacity-building has been needed among the staff, yet the DoET has become more and more effective in carry out its new responsibilities.

How many persons are employed at the DoE; is that enough to carry out the responsibilities the DoET has?
53 staffs, that number is regulated by the MoET, which is enough to carry out the responsibilities now assigned to the DoET.
How many employees at the DoET hold a master or a Ph.D. degree?
At present, there is one person with a Ph.D. degree and six persons with master degrees within the DoET. Two more staffs are undertaking entrance exams to go to university to obtain a master degree. If the persons that hold master degrees obtain good results they can be asked by the MoET to be transferred to the MoET.

While undertaking university studies the staffs are paid full salary from the DoET, and are provided materials. The staffs are also provided with money to their dissertations. It is the MoET that decides who should be sent to university, and assigns which university the person shall study at. The persons that are paid university training by the DoET are required to return to the DoET. They often return to the same position they had before training, yet often with some increased salary. If these persons want to get another job, they have to ask the DoET management board for permission.

Does the DoET have sufficient competence to carry out the new responsibilities they have been given?
Yes, the DoET has enough competence to carry out its responsibilities.

Has the DoET undergone administrative reforms the last years; what has been the purpose of these reforms?
Yes, the DoET has undertaken a number of minor administrative reforms. The DoET follows the state requirements of administrative reforms. The DoET has actively carried out these reforms.

Are administrative reforms planned to take place in the future?
Yes, the purpose of the reforms is to adapt to the changes in the society. In Vietnam the society is changing rapidly, which requires the public administration to reform. The respondent pointed out that it was the societal changes that required administrative reforms.

Is the DoET involved in the discussion about how the public administration should reform?
The DoET is given the framework of the administrative reform. The DoET can propose changes to the MoET but they have to be approved by the MoET. Small changes in the administrative structured can be approved by the People’s Committee (PC) in the Province. The PC has its own rules for administrative reforms. The purpose is to help every sector, section and individual within the public administration to perform better.

The reform process works as the MoET assigns reform programs, which are implemented by the DoET, the DoET reports to the MoET. The MoET and the DoET can have discussion about how to change the administrative work. The DoET is both the executive and the consultant for the MoET.

What is the role of the PC in the administrative reforms?
The DoET discusses administrative changes with the PC and the MoET.
Who has most authority in these discussions?
The three bodies discuss equally but the MoET has most authority to make decisions. The PC and the DoET are executives of the MoET.

Does a plan for training of personnel exist, who is in charge of this plan?
- How often are the administrative staffs retrained?
- What is the purpose with this training?
- Who are retrained?
- Who chooses who are retrained?
- Where are they trained?
- For how long does this training go on?
- Is this training relevant?
- Who pays for this training?
- Are the employees interested to undertake training?
- Will this training be increased in the future?

Yes, a plan for training exists. This plan is updated continuously, the plan is provided by the MoET.

The staffs are not so often retrained. The MoET provides the in-service courses, the DoET sends eligible persons to these courses. Some of the administrative staffs are also send to the universities to get a master or a Ph.D. degree.

In-service training courses normally last for one or two weeks. In order to become a manager at the DoET, the person considered for the post needs to pass a course in “political theory”. One medium and one advanced degree in “political theory” exist.

Staffs are very interested to undertake training; this is a trend in Vietnam to value training and studies. If the MoET increases the number of courses; more people will be sent to in-service training. The quality of the courses provided of the MoET is not always the best, the DoET would be more efficient if the personnel were sent to courses that improved their competence for the responsibilities they have at the DoET.

Does the DoET have problems to retain skilled personnel in the administration, if they have; why?
The DoET has a good ability to control its employees, yet, the personnel can be appointed to the MoET if they have received good grades during their master studies. Two of the staffs at the DoET with master degrees were transferred to the MoET, at MoET’s request.

Have they lost high-skilled personnel the last years, to whom?
Only the two persons who started working for the MoET have ended their jobs at DoET the last years.

Does the DoET have a problem to attract young high-skilled persons, just graduated from the universities, to the DoET?
Between the lines it was possible to understand that the DoET was not able to attract young students from the university with a master degree. All persons working at the DoET, independent
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of university degree, need to have worked as teachers before getting a job at the DoET; this is not attractive for high-skilled young people. Son La’s remote geographical position also makes it very difficult to attract high-skilled people from other provinces. Nearly no one with at Ph.D or master degree from another province is willing to work in Son La.

Has the DoET experienced an increased competition from private firms to attract high-skilled people?
No, because the employees at the DoET are teachers, they do not have so many other job-opportunities.

Does the DoET have the possibility to pay high-skilled, hard-working employees more in order to keep them employed?
High-skilled persons from other provinces that chose to work in Son La can be provided a 70 per cent higher salary, accommodation and land to build a house.
The DoET does not pay extra regular salary for high-performing staff, yet every sixth month bonus is paid out to the section of the DoET that is considered to have performed best during the sixth last months. This bonus is considered to increase the incentives to work hard.

How are personnel recruited to the DoET, do they undertake examination prior to employment?
The number of 53 employees at the DoET is fixed, so when someone quits its job at the DoET, the DoET has to find a new employee. The process is that the DoET selects good teachers of interest for the position to be held. The DoET selects three of these and takes a closer look at their qualifications. The DoET chooses one person for the job. The recruitment process does not include interviews, since the DoET knows the teachers already. The person that gets the post does not need to undertake any examination prior to employment at the DoET.

Who is in charge for the recruitment process?
The director of the DoET, he does not need permission to employ a person from the MoET but he needs to report to the PC.

What are the formal requirements for employment at the DoET; is it possible to find persons that meet those requirements?
When employing new personnel to the DoET, the DoET considers:

- Qualifications
- The needs within the DoET
- Political ideas
- Family conditions
- Communication skills
- Health, because the person employed will travel in very bad conditions
- Knowledge of cultural traditions among the minority people

It is possible to find persons that meet these requirements.
**Who is in charge for appointment of school managers?**

In line with decentralization, the district is responsible for appointment of school managers for grade 0-9. Principals for secondary schools and for continues education are selected by the DoET, who reports to the PC. The final decision is taken by the PC. Deputy Principals are appointed by the DoET without the PC involved in the process.

To appoint the director of the DoET, the PC selects its candidate; this candidate has to be approved by the MoET.

**How has decentralization changed the relationship between the DoET and the MoET?**

Today, the DoET has a closer contact with the MoET than previously, the MoET listens more to information they get from the DoET.

**Does the DoET get more or less help from the central level today than five years ago?**

The amount of help and the contacts with the MoET have increased significantly the last five years. The DoET gets a lot of help from the MoET especially in the areas of finance, training and equipment.

**What kind of help, that is not provided today, would the DoET like to get from the MoET?**

The DoET would like to get increased help with their capacity-building for managers at the DoET and teachers.

**What kind of information is the DoET required to present to the MoET?**

The DoET has to report almost everything to the MoET, the MoET holds very strict control over the DoET.

**How often does the DoET need to report to the MoET?**

Reports are given every month, but the major reports are given every six month to the MoET.

**How good are the districts to fulfil their new responsibilities? Is the DoE satisfied with the quality of information they get from the districts?**

The DoET is not always satisfied with the quality of the information they get from the districts, yet the quality has improved. Staff at the district level has a better capacity to meet the requirements from the DoET than before. Yet, information often arrives late to the DoET because of the difficult geographical conditions.
Are school fees charged in the province?
Son La is only allowed to collect school fees from Kinh people (Vietnamese people) that lives in area 1 (urban areas), the majority of population in Son La is minority people and the largest share of population does not live in area 1, which leaves Son La with very limited extra resources for education.

The schools collect the fees and submit them to the district. The district opens an account at the treasury at the district. If the district wants to spend the money, they have to make a plan and send to the treasury. The provincial PC has pre-decided which items the districts are allowed to spend their extra resources on.

How do you think that the future decentralization of education in Vietnam will change the tasks of the DoET?
A further decentralization will result in increased responsibilities for the DoET. The DoET can take on more responsibilities, if they are provided with training to get the capacity needed. The DoET needs to improve their capacity if they get increased responsibility. Yet, the personnel among the DoET have the capacity to learn new tasks, and to adapt to a changing society and a changing organizational structure.

The amount of personnel will not be needed to be increased, yet the capital investments at the DoET need to be increased in order to increase the efficiency.

Will decentralization of education in Vietnam increase the inequalities between different provinces in education?
The decentralization process was seen to increase the inequalities between different provinces, since the capacity to rise own resources is very different between different provinces. In terms of quality, the differences between different regions are huge. Son La can meet most of the formal requirements on quantity, but the number of excellent and very excellent students is very low in Sun La. This has to a large extent to do with the poor economical conditions among the citizens, and the inability to rise own resources to education. The citizens also have a poor access to modern technologies as TV, newspapers and computers; as tools for self-teaching, which further makes education in Sun La more difficult.

If the decentralization process provides the DoET with more responsibilities and authority; what kind of help would the DoET like to get from NGO:s and International donors to carryout these new responsibilities more effectively?
The DoET would like to get help with their capacity building for managers at the DoET and teachers. If the DoET shall get help from NGOs and International donors they need to get permission from the international relations department of the MoET. NGOs and International donors can not in direct cooperation with the DoET target programs were they are most needed. The DoET would like to see capacity building courses in finance, planning, foreign language and IT. The staffs have been taken a number of computer courses, yet these courses have not been providing any real knowledge about using the available computers at the DoET. The head of the financial department said that he had a computer with financial software, but did not have sufficient knowledge to use it. He is doing his financial work by pen and paper instead.
Hue

The interview took place at the DoET in Hue, with the deputy head of finance at the DoET and the head of the personnel department at the DoET present at the same time. I had been required to send my questions in advance to the DoET. Even though the DoET had my questions in advance; the interview immediately became semi-structured in nature, and I was allowed to ask questions that were not sent in advance. The respondents provided me with a lot of own experiences, which covered material that was not included in the questions sent in advance. The respondents appeared to talk freely in the interviews without thinking about presenting the “formal correct answers”; the respondents’ answers included a lot of criticism of the central level of government.

The interview lasted for almost four hours and took place 2004-08-24.

Between 1990 and 2000 the province of Hue had a different organizational structure than today. During these years the DoET was given full authorization by the PC to manage education in the province. The DoET was given its own provincial legislation for management. During this organizational structure the DoET handled more or less all aspects of education, with the districts as the executives of the DoET. The districts were not given authority over education; they only carried out what was decided by the DoET. The DoET was of course required to follow the national educational laws, but they were allowed to manage education without involvement from the central level. This kind of organizational structure made it easier for the DoET to handle education, especially in finance the DoET could better allocate in accordance to the different needs in the province. This financial freedom made it possible for the DoET to identify and target especially weak districts each year, which was more effective than the equal share of resources that is provided today.

Since 2000, the PC has changed the organizational structure of education in Hue. The new organizational structure implemented in Hue in 2000 was implemented in order to adapt to the national decentralization reform of public administration. The decentralization of education changed the organizational structure in Hue. With decentralization a lot of authority over education was transferred to the districts. The responsibility of the DoET is since 2000 to provide the overall plan for education in the province; the districts are then given authority to implement this plan with relative large freedom.

What are the main responsibilities of the DoET?

The DoET works as a consultant for the provincial PC in Hue province. The DoET is authorized to manage college education and lower without the direct involvement of the PC. The DoET has shared authority over the teachers college in Hue. Before 2000 the DoET managed all schools from pre-school to secondary school directly, yet since 2000 the districts are given authority for management of lower secondary school and lower. Today, the DoET only has direct authority for management of secondary school.
Has the decentralization process of education provided the DoET with new responsibilities the last years? Has the DoET been able to effectively carry out these new responsibilities from the start?

Even though education in Hue has been decentralized the last years, the responsibilities of the DoET have increased. The responsibility to manage educational development in Hue has provided the DoET with more responsibilities, especially now when the society is changing so rapidly. Even though the districts are suppose to be fully responsible for finance, the DoET often receives complains from local citizens, which requires the DoET to take on responsibilities they are actually not given, these kinds of complains have to be reported to the MoET.

How many persons are employed at the DoET; is that enough to carry out the responsibilities the DoET has?

60 people are employed by the DoET, the number of employees is decided by the Department of Internal Affairs on the provincial level. The number of people employed has been stable around 60 the last five years. The DoET is organized in ten sections and one group. Each department has its own head and one to two deputy heads. Every department makes a plan for their organization, which has to be approved by the head of the DoET.

How many employees at the DoET hold a master or a Ph.D. degree?

In the DoET two employees have Ph.D. degrees and 14 hold master degrees. One employee at the DoET is taking a Ph.D. course and seven are doing master courses.

Does the DoET have sufficient competence to carry out the new responsibilities they have been given?

The personnel at the DoET are very capable, since almost all have been excellent teachers prior to employment at the DoET. The large organization that the DoET supervises creates a large pool of potential employees at the DoET, from which the DoET can choose who to employ. The respondent estimated that 80 per cent of the staff is very good to manage the position they hold right now. If the employee is not efficient to carry out his or her tasks; it is possible for the DoET to change the position hold by an employee after they have been appointed to the DoET. All employees at the DoET are not trained as teacher, though the vast majority is. The respondent pointed out that the teachers’ training is important to understand, and to be able to carry out the job at the DoET effectively. Yet, that the vast majority of the employees are teachers requires that the employees are capable to learn new tasks that they have not been given training for in teachers’ college.

Has the DoET undergone administrative reforms the last years; what has been the purpose of these reforms? Are administrative reforms planned to take place in the future? Is the DoET involved in the discussion about how the public administration should reform?

The DoET carries out the public administrative reforms that the PC reform committee proposes. The DoET can suggest changes to the PC reform committee, yet the PC has the formal authority. The MoET does not have any control over these administrative reforms; it only supervises that the DoET fulfil its responsibilities in accordance with law. One of the most effective reforms that have been implemented at the DoET was identified by the respondents to be the new
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transfer process of teachers. Before, transfer of teachers has been a closed process, in which the teacher that wanted to be transferred needed permission from four different levels of educational management. Today, teachers that want to transfer send their CV:s to the DoET, when there is a vacancy, the DoET chooses from this pool of CV:s. This process has increased the efficiency and created an open process that has eliminated bribes, which were common in the old system.

Does a plan for training of personnel exist, who is in charge of this plan?
- How often are the administrative staffs retrained?
- What is the purpose with this training?
- Who are retrained?
- Who chooses who are retrained?
- Where are they trained?
- For how long does this training go on?
- Is this training relevant?
- Who pays for this training?
- Are the employees interested to undertake training?
- Will this training be increased in the future?

In-service training is provided for all school managers and employees at the DoET. This training takes place in Hanoi or Hue. Principals of higher school levels are trained in Hanoi, and principals of lower levels of schools are trained in Hue. The fast changes in the society have required the textbooks and the methodology of teaching to be modified; in order for old teachers to provide qualitative education they have been provided in-service training. These training courses last for two or three months. Teachers are mainly provided in-service training in Hue.

In Hue 70 per cent of secondary school teachers hold a master degree. Many teachers pay their own master degree in order to be able to transfer to better schools. In Hue one of the three most famous secondary schools in Vietnam is located. This school is very attractive to work in; in order to have a chance to get employed the teachers need a master degree. This has served as an incentive for secondary school teachers to get a master degree, even if they have to pay themselves. In order to increase the incentives for teachers to get a master degree the DoET provides teachers that have finished a master degree with a bonus payment. The last two years in Hue, distance-learning courses are set up for teachers, the last years more than 500 teachers participated in these courses.

Does the DoET have problems to retain skilled personnel in the administration, if they have; why?
In Hue there does not exist a lot of opportunities for high-skilled people to get other jobs, because of that it has not been any problems to retain people at the DoET.

Have the DoET lost high-skilled personnel the last years, to whom?
The DoET has lost a couple of people the last years.
Does the DoET have a problem to attract young high-skilled persons, just graduated from the universities, to the DoET?
The DoET attracts young people with master degrees, yet not that many are offered employment since they often lack necessary experience from teaching.

Has the DoET experienced an increased competition from private firms to attract high-skilled people?
The DoET has noticed a small increase in the competition for high-skilled people from the private sector, yet this right now not a major problem.

How has decentralization changed the relationship between the DoET and the MoET?
The relationship between the MoET and the DoET has not changed significantly with decentralization. The responsibility of the MoET has been, and is still, to supervise over education. For horizontal organizational changes at the DoET, the DoET does not need authorization of the MoET, for horizontal changes the DoET needs authorization by the PC.

The respondents were very critical against the educational strategies set out by the MoET. Most of these strategies are not suitable at all for education in Hue. Often the MoET do their research in Hanoi and HCMC, and decides the national educational strategies from the experience in those two cities. The respondent provided salary as an example; people at the DoET are often trained, highly experienced teachers, yet in their job at the DoET they are paid at public administrators, who are paid less than teachers. The MoET as acknowledge to have improved the last years, yet the MoET lacks knowledge of educational circumstances in provinces different from Hanoi or HCMC.

What kind of information is the DoET required to present to the MoET? How often does the DoET need to report to the MoET?
The DoET has to report a lot of things to the MoET. The DoET is required to report three times a year to the MoET.

How has the decentralization of education changed the relationship between the DoET and the districts?
The relationship between the DoET and the districts has changed with decentralization. Today, the DoET only supervises over the districts, before they had authority of management of the districts. Today, the districts are given full authority over infrastructure, budget allocation and personnel.

How good are the districts to fulfil their new responsibilities? Is the DoE satisfied with the quality of information they get from the districts?
In general, the capacity at the district-level is good enough to carry out their responsibilities, yet it has taken time for the districts to get this capacity. In the beginning decentralization, the districts did not have sufficient capacity, yet the capacity of the districts has improved. In Hue an IT-system that connects the districts and the DoET exists, this system has made it possible to move information faster between the districts and the DoET.
What kind of help does the DoET provide the district to help them to increase their capacity?
At the moment a target project to increase the capacity of financial responsibility is being carried out in the districts. Earlier, when the MoET did not provide so many in-service courses, the DoET provided the districts with in-service courses. Today, this is not necessary.

Are school fees charged in the province?
Hue is allowed to collect school fees, but not in primary school, yet a fee is imposed in primary school for school lunch.

How do you think that the future decentralization of education in Vietnam will change the tasks of the DoET?
The respondents would like the DoET to have, as between 1990 and 2000, completely authority over budget and personnel. If the DoET would not be forced to include the DoF and the Department of Internal Affairs, it would more effectively be able to carry out its tasks. Today, the DoET has to ask for permission for every item they spend money on, they would like to be given authority to decide by them, which would increase the efficiency. The respondents were critical to the decentralization of education in Hue. They acknowledge the earlier system, the one between 1990 and 2000, as being more efficient. Decentralization should be carried out differently in different provinces, for small provinces as Hue; an organizational system that gives more authority over management of education to the DoET is more efficient. A small province is possible to manage from a central level, which the respondents claimed increases the efficiency.

Will decentralization of education in Vietnam increase the inequalities between different provinces in education?
There is a significant risk that the decentralization process increases the inequalities between different provinces, but also different districts within the province. The respondent was not overwhelmed by the decentralization process in Hue; he claimed that a centralized system that gives the DoET more power over budgets, without involving the DoF, the PC and the Department of Internal Affairs would be more efficient. Small provinces, like Hue can be managed from the provincial level without decreased financial responsibility and efficiency.

If the decentralization process provides the DoET with more responsibilities and authority; what kind of help would the DoET like to get from NGO:s and International donors to carryout these new responsibilities more effectively?
If the DoET would get increased help from international donors and NGO:s; it would like to get help with the capacity-building of personnel in the educational sector in the province.
Ho Chi Minh City

The interview took place at the DoET in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) with the deputy head of finance present. There was also a young man present who presented himself as educational expert, yet he did not answer one single question under the interview. This young man spoke English and took notes during the whole interview. My interpreter’s intuition was that he was sent from the Department of Foreign Affairs to control what was said during the interview.

The interview was done in an unfriendly environment; the deputy head of finance explained, as soon as I arrived to the interview, that he would only allow the interview to go on for maximum two hours. To a lot of questions; his answers were that he would send me the information so I could read for myself. It was obvious that the deputy head was afraid to provide me with information that could be considered as negative for the administration; at one time he also made a joke about this. The interview shifted between following strict the questions sent in advance and a semi-structured format, yet all answers to the questions were very short and no extra information, or examples was provided.

The interview took place 2004-08-25 and lasted for one and a half hour.

**What are the main responsibilities of the DoET?**
I was told to read the documents that should be sent to me later, which they were not.

**Has the decentralization process of education provided the DoET with new responsibilities the last years?**
More responsibilities have been given the DoET since decentralization; today the DoET has full authority over human resources.

**How many persons are employed at the DoET; is that enough to carry out the responsibilities the DoET has?**
I was told that the number of staffs would be sent to me by post, which it was not.

**How many employees at the DoET hold a master or a Ph.D. degree?**
The DoET has 20 employees with a master degree and two employees with Ph.D degrees. The DoET has increased its number of staffs the last years.

**Has the DoET undergone administrative reforms the last years; what has been the purpose of these reforms?**
The public administrative reforms that have been undertaken in the DoET go hand in hand with the decentralization process. The administrative reforms have led to a more effective DoET, with a more structured regulation than before. Public administrative reforms are decided by the PC.

**Does a plan for training of personnel exist, who is in charge of this plan?**
- How often are the administrative staffs retrained?
- What is the purpose with this training?
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- Who are retrained?
- Who chooses who are retrained?
- Where are they trained?
- For how long does this training go on?
- Is this training relevant?
- Who pays for this training?
- Are the employees interested to undertake training?
- Will this training be increased in the future?

Training is provided very often to all employees at the DoET. It is the DoET in coordination with the PC who decide over this training. No special group in the DoET has been targeted for extra in-service training. The leaders of the DoET must at least hold a master degree. HCMC has a large budget for in-service training of personnel. Personnel at the DoET that undertake master degree courses get paid by the DoET, the DoET also pays the school fee. Personnel that take a master degree return to the same position, with the same salary as before, yet the personnel can be transferred by the PC.

Does the DoET have problems to retain skilled personnel in the administration, if they have; why?
The DoET has no problem to retain personnel; salary has increased the last years, and other benefits like social insurance are attractive features of the DoET.

Have the DoET lost high-skilled personnel the last years, to whom?
No, no person from the DoET has been transferred to the MoET in Hanoi; persons in HCMC have no desire to move to Hanoi.

Does the DoET have a problem to attract young high-skilled persons, just graduated from the universities, to the DoET?
The DoET has no problems to attract high-skilled persons to the administration.

Does the DoET have the possibility to pay high-skilled, hard-working employees more in order to keep them employed?
Hard working, high-skilled personnel are not paid any bonus, yet they can be awarded a certificate; acknowledge them as a good employee.

What are the formal requirements for employment at the DoET; is it possible to find persons that meet those requirements?
Almost all employees at the DoET have a degree in education, and have worked as teachers prior to employment at the DoET. Yet, some personnel at the finance department of the DoET have only a degree from financial or economical universities.
Does the DoET get more or less help from the central level today than five years ago? What kind of information is the DoET required to present to the MoET? How often does the DoET need to report to the MoET?

The DoET has a very close contact with the MoET, every week someone from the MoET visits the DoET. The DoET has to report almost everything to the MoET, these reports have to be given every month.

How has the decentralization of education changed the relationship between the DoET and the districts?

Since decentralization, the DoET only supervises the districts. The districts are given full authority over implementation of decisions taken at higher level. Though, the DoET still has most power since they have authority over the educational plan that has to be implemented by the districts.

How good are the districts to fulfil their new responsibilities?

The districts hold a high level of capacity since the employees have been excellent teachers prior to employment at the district. The districts are able to fulfil the responsibilities they have been given, yet the quality of the work at the district level has improved a lot the three years the decentralized organizational structure has been in place.

Is the DoET satisfied with the quality of information they get from the districts?

What kind of help does the DoET provide the district to help them to increase their capacity?

In order to strengthen the capacity-building in the districts, the DoET provides them with money. The DoET often visits the districts in order to supervise them. An evolution system is in place in order to evaluate the performance of each district every year.

Are school fees charged in the province?

All schools collect school fees, these fees can be reduced in poor areas. The DoET tries to lower the school fee for disadvantage children.

If the decentralization process provides the DoET with more responsibilities and authority; what kind of help would the DoET like to get from NGO:s and International donors to carryout these new responsibilities more effectively?

If the DoET would be given more money to spend; they would be most efficient invested in infrastructure of schools. Right now there is a shortage of high-quality school facilities in the province.
Ca Mau

The interview took place at the DoET in Ca Mau, with the deputy head of finance, one person from the human resource department, the head of continues education and the deputy head of the DoET present at the same time.

When I arrived they gave me written answers to the questions I had sent in advance. In order to avoid this kind of structured interview, I asked the respondents to answer my questions orally. The interview was surprisingly semi-structured already from the beginning, and became even more semi-structured later on in the interview. My feeling was that the respondents answered the questions as honestly that they could. The interview was done in a friendly environment, in which I was allowed to ask questions that were not sent in advance to the DoET.

The interview took place 2004-08-26 and lasted for two and a half hour.

What are the main responsibilities of the DoET?
The responsibilities of the DoET are provided and regulated by the MoET.

Has the decentralization process of education provided the DoET with new responsibilities the last years?
Each province has been assigned different responsibilities in the decentralization process, yet the DoET follows and implements the decentralization reforms set out by the MoET. After decentralization the DoET has been given more responsibilities, today the DoET is given some responsibilities in money-issues that did not happen before. The decentralization process works as the MoET provides guidelines for how decentralization of education should be worked out, these guidelines are presented to the provincial PC, which takes the decision over implementation. The DoET has to follow the decisions made by the PC.

Has the DoET been able to effectively carry out these new responsibilities from the start?
The DoET has been pretty efficient already from the start to carry out the new responsibilities they have been given since decentralization. When the MoET provides new guidelines; the staffs are trained in order to gain professional skills to carry out these new responsibilities effectively. Though, surely it takes some time to become fully efficient.

How many persons are employed at the DoET; is that enough to carry out the responsibilities the DoET has?
The DoET has a staff of 53 persons. This number is regulated by the PC. The DoET is authorized to decrease the number of staffs, yet to increase it above 53 they need permission from the PC. With the responsibilities the DoET hold today, 53 is enough; yet if the DoET is given new responsibilities it needs to increase its staff.

How many employees at the DoET hold a master or a Ph.D. degree?
One person at the DoET holds a Ph.D Degree and one person holds a master degree. 38 persons have some kind of bachelor degree.
Does the DoET have sufficient competence to carry out the new responsibilities they have been given?
The DoET has sufficient knowledge to carry out its responsibilities.

Has the DoET undergone administrative reforms the last years; what has been the purpose of these reforms?
The DoET has undergone administrative reforms the last years, the purpose has been to decrease the number of staff and increase the quality. Between the lines, I understood that the purpose of the administrative reforms had not really been accomplished.

Are administrative reforms planned to take place in the future? Is the DoET involved in the discussion about how the public administration should reform?
New administrative reforms will take place if the DoET is asked by the MoET to carry out new administrative reforms. It is the MoET that has authority to require administrative reforms; the DoET can give feedback to these reforms, but are not allowed to implement reforms that have not been authorized by the MoET.

Does a plan for training of personnel exist, who is in charge of this plan?
- How often are the administrative staffs retrained?
- What is the purpose with this training?
- Who are retrained?
- Who chooses who are retrained?
- Where are they trained?
- For how long does this training go on?
- Is this training relevant?
- Who pays for this training?
- Are the employees interested to undertake training?
- Will this training be increased in the future?

A plan for training of personnel at the DoET exists; it is the director of the DoET that is responsible for this plan. This plan has to be submitted to the PC for approval. The regulations set by MoET on training of staffs and teachers need to be followed when the plan for in-service training is worked out. In the past Ca Mau had a shortage of teachers, which forced them to employ almost anyone that was able and willing to teach, this has created a need of training of teachers that do not meet the formal requirements of competence set out by the MoET.

The staffs are provided in-service training every third year, an urgent need of in-service training exists in order to adapt to the changing society in Vietnam. The districts hold authority to choose which teachers that should be provided in-service training. The DoET holds authority to decide which school leaders that should be give in-service training. The teachers are provided in-service training within the province; this training goes on for two summers, six months in total. The staffs of the DoET are often trained outside the province. If the in-service training is paid, and requested, by the MoET; the training takes place in Hanoi. Targeted in-service training aimed at increasing the capacity of special skills, often takes place in Ho Chi Minh City.
The training provided for the staffs is relevant; the number of staffs trained by the MoET has so far been limited by two to three staffs per year. Training assigned by the MoET is also paid for by the MoET, other training that is not provided by the MoET; the DoET needs to pay for. The staffs have been very interested in undertaking training, yet too few are given the opportunity. The training will probably be increased in the coming year, in order to adapt to the changing society. This year the DoET has provided a lot of training, which can result in that next year they are not going to be given so much training.

**Does the DoET have problems to retain skilled personnel in the administration, if they have; why?**

All of the MoET staffs consist of former excellent teachers, which do not provide them with so many other job-opportunities. The salary at DoET is lower than the salary for teachers, yet this does not result in that staffs at the DoET leave their positions.

**Have they lost high-skilled personnel the last years, to whom?**

The number of staffs has been stable, around 53, for the last years. No significant drop-out has occurred.

**Does the DoET have a problem to attract young high-skilled persons, just graduated from the universities, to the DoET?**

The DoET is not interested in young people directly graduated from the universities, since everyone working at the DoET needs to have a degree in education, and been working as teachers. The DoET does not have any problems to attract teachers to work for the DoET.

**Has the DoET experienced an increased competition from private firms to attract high-skilled people?**

There is no direct competition from private firms, yet, the last years, one person left the DoET and started to work for a private firm instead.

**Does the DoET have the possibility to pay high-skilled, hard-working employees more in order to keep them employed?**

The DoET does not have the possibility to pay high-skilled, hard working, personnel more to provide them economical incentives; since the salary is regulated by the government.

**How are personnel recruited to the DoET, do they undertake examination prior to employment?**

The DoET does not have a formal recruitment process, since all employees are chosen from excellent teachers within the province. No interview or entrance exam is required prior to employment at the DoET.

**Who is in charge for the recruitment process?**
The director of the DoET is in charge of the appointment of staffs to the DoET. The person chosen by the director of DoET needs to be approved by the PC, yet this is no problem as long as the number of employees at the DoET does not increase over the fixed limit.

What are the formal requirements for employment at the DoET; is it possible to find persons that meet those requirements?
There is no formal recruitment process to the DoET, yet so far all people employed at the DoET have been teachers prior to employment. Even though the salary of working for the DoET is lower than working as a teacher; the DoET has no problems to attract teachers to work for the DoET.

Who is in charge for appointment of school managers?
The authority to appoint school managers is hold by the director of the DoET, yet the districts and the PC on the district level is also involved in the decision-process.

How has decentralization changed the relationship between the DoET and the MoET?
In general the relation between the MoET and the DoET has not changed significantly since decentralization of education was introduced. Today the MoET is, as it also was before, only involved in the professional activities of the DoET. This has not changed much since decentralization.

What kind of help, that is not provided today, would the DoET like to get from the MoET?
If the DoET is given new responsibilities it needs to increase the number of staffs in order to guarantee the quality of education. The DoET would also like to have more help, as projects, to increase the quality of education in the province. The Belgian government has carried out a project to increase the capacity of teachers in Vietnam, yet only two teachers have participated from Ca Mau. The DoET would like to be able to send more teachers to capacity-building courses like that in the future. In order for teachers to be trained of the MoET in Hanoi, they need to pass an entrance exam, this exam includes a part that tests the English language skills, and this part has been problematic for teachers from Ca Mau to pass. In order to pass this part, teachers are forced to take evening classes, which they have to pay by themselves. The DoET would like to be able to pay for these evening courses.

What kind of information is the DoET required to present to the MoET?
The DoET is required to present statistics, information on how the DoET carries out the educational plan set by the MoET, and how the DoET deals with the special circumstances for education that exist in Ca Mau.

How often does the DoET need to report to the MoET?
The DoET is required to present main reports to the MoET three times per year. The DoET is required to report to the PC once a week.
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How has the decentralization of education changed the relationship between the DoET and the districts?
The districts are under the control of the PC:s on the district level, the DoET supervises the districts to see that they follow the regulations set out by the MoET.

How good are the districts to fulfil their new responsibilities?
The districts lack money in order to fulfil their new responsibilities effectively.

Is the DoE satisfied with the quality of information they get from the districts?
The DoET is pretty satisfied with the quality of the information they get from the DoET, yet sometimes the DoET needs to send back information in order to get the quality of the information improved.

What kind of help does the DoET provide the district to help them to increase their capacity?
The DoET has carried out some training for the districts; this training has been aimed at increasing special skills, as computer knowledge.

Are school fees charged in the province?
In primary school, some really poor areas do not collect school fees, yet in all other areas, and for all other levels of education; school fees are collected. All students are obliged to pay a construction fee of 50,000 Dong per year. These school fees are regulated by the DoET.

So far the DoET has not been provided extra money from NGO:s or International Donors, a few NGO:s work in Ca Mau, yet these work directly with the PC.

How do you think that the future decentralization of education in Vietnam will change the tasks of the DoET?
Future decentralization of education, if it occurs, will change the organizational structure of the DoET. The relationship between the MoET and the DoET as well as the relationship between the DoET and the districts will probably be changed.

Will decentralization of education in Vietnam increase the inequalities between different provinces in education?
Decentralization of funding of education will for sure increase the inequalities between rich and poor persons, as well as between rich and poor districts. In order to reduce the gap, the DoET tries to build new schools in rural areas, and to transfer good teachers to these areas. In order to provide teachers incentives to move to rural areas; the DoET provides teachers that move to these areas a salary increase of 140 per cent. Male teachers have to work for five years in rural areas before they can transfer back, and female teachers have to work for three years before they can transfer back.
If the decentralization process provides the DoET with more responsibilities and authority; what kind of help would the DoET like to get from NGO:s and International donors to carry out these new responsibilities more effectively?

The DoET would primary like to get help to train the staffs on management skills, secondary they would like to increase special professional skills. If they would be given more money to spend on education, then they would spend it on infrastructure; to improve school existing facilities, and to build new schools.