

ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM THE PROPOSED SECONDARY EDUCATION DECENTRALIZATION IN MALAWI.

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Presentation Outline

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Introduction

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- Decentralization has been a top reform agenda in many countries to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of public sector institutions to support sustainable development.
- In the context of Malawi, the policy direction to decentralize secondary education system **is likely to be a complex process** resulting in major changes in the organizational structure to reflect the devolved functions to district administration level, the remaining functions at central level, and the corresponding human resources requirements.
- However, **when organizations are changed fundamentally, the existing balance of power changes as well.** Forces in and around the organization trying to maintain this balance can hinder changes while other forces can stimulate the change processes.

Introduction

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- This paper is based on a study that was part of a research project undertaken to establish the organization structure for the proposed decentralized secondary education system in Malawi.
- The study was initiated by education stakeholders to comprehend the dynamics of decentralization as a concept and its effect on education in general and management of secondary education in particular.
- Informed by the organization as **a political system metaphor, this paper examined the convergence and divergence** in the viewpoints of selected key actors in the secondary education decentralization.

Methodology

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- This study was undertaken primarily using qualitative research approach and utilized purposive sampling technique to select key informants for in-depth interviews. These informants included two officials from two purposively sampled Education Division Offices and two officials from two purposively sampled Councils – thus a sample size of four.
- These two offices were strategically selected for this paper because the diverse positions of the informants represented a unique form of an existing and changing platform of organizational power relations in the context of the proposed secondary education decentralization.
- For this paper, the in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim and subjected to critical discourse analysis to uncover implicit meanings in what was said through systematic review of the choice of words used by the four informants. This helped reveal the informants' motivations, whether consciously revealed or not.
- Specifically, thematic form of discourse analysis was adopted through identification of themes or categories that adequately reflected the body of textual data available.

Findings

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THEME	EDO INFORMANTS	COUNCIL INFORMANTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thoughts on plans to decentralize 	<p>Sceptical. Councils – no capacity Deconcentration</p>	<p>Confident Devolution</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office to handle decentralized functions 	<p>Long term – Councils Short term - Division</p>	<p>Councils except standards related functions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The future of Education Division Office 	<p>Maintained albeit in a slightly different form – e.g. Coordinating unit</p>	<p>Abolish Division Offices</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary education decentralization positives 	<p>Payment of salaries</p>	<p>Payment of salaries</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary education decentralization shortfalls 	<p>new entity not created</p>	<p>Process taking too long</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issues requiring action before secondary education decentralization 	<p>Capacity in councils</p>	<p>Capacity in Councils and Legal framework</p>

Findings – sample quotes

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- **DO-1** “It is a move in the right direction but the question is the capacity of the councils”
 - **DO-2** “I think it is a good idea to decentralize. But ..we do not have the capacity in the councils”
 - **CO-1** “Secondary school to me it’s not a big issue”
 - **CO-2** “Yes, it’s a move in the right direction very much”
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- **DO-2** “Eventually, the division office will get smaller to be a coordinating office on behalf of the Ministry”
 - **CO-2** “The division office will cease to exist”
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- **DO-2** “To me it is like recentralizing but to the Local Government instead of forming a new entity”
 - **CO-1** “It has taken us a long period of time”

Conclusion and Study Implications

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- Based on the findings, we can conclude that the actors' preferences were shaped by their perceptions regarding the effect of decentralization on their own power and influence. Hence, the actors' preferences were ultimately meant to preserve or enhance their self-interests. Nevertheless, each informant provided useful insights, unique perspectives and meanings regarding the decentralization of secondary education management in Malawi.
- Implications: For decentralization agenda to be successful and meaningfully support sustainable development goals, there is need for decision makers to be attentive to the interests and preferences of key actors so as to fully comprehend the way organizational politics hinder or push forward organizational change.
- Organizational politics is therefore an inalienable element of decentralization agenda at local government level because of the presence of multi actor network. Apparently, there could be possibilities and at the same time limitations that would demand collaboration, dialogue, and an appreciation of the diverse interests of all actors involved.

Selected References

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END OF PRESENTATION

THANK YOU