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## A SKETCH ON THE GOVERNANCE CONTEXT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY-MAKING

*Abstract:* The paper aims at offering a brief outline of the governance context of educational policy-making. It starts with an overview on the major sources of an integrated approach to effective educational governance: the “good governance” theory, the affective public management literature, the meta-evaluation findings on effective educational policies and the effective public policy-making literature. After sorting out the criteria of effective governance with structural implication an integrated model of governance is suggested that is based on empowerment, performance management and professional support. The paper outlines those characteristics of mainstream governance systems that allow for building the proposed educational governance model and looks at the effect of effective governance on the extent to which educational policy-making is open, evidence-based and results in implementable policies

*Key words:* education, governance, educational policy

This outline on the complex relationship between governance of education and educational policy-making is in fact a preliminary draft. The aim of this paper is to provide a structured, comprehensive but concise overview of the most important matters in relation to the interplay between the two distinct, but overlapping government functions. Thus, this draft will be followed up with much more in depth analysis and elaboration.

It is important to keep in mind, that the distinction between *governance* and *policy-making* is rather ambiguous. There is no space here for sophisticated attempts to develop clear definitions. Therefore, undertaking the risk of rude simplifications, on the following pages governance will mean all institutionalized activities aiming at operating the education system, policy-making will mean problem solving oriented intervention into the way, how the system is operating. Even this separation between operating and change may cause certain uncertainties but for the purposes of this analysis hopefully it may temporarily serve us well.

Being this paper a draft outline of a very complex matter, it is deliberately overloaded with figures. These figures are not simply illustrations serving the better understanding of text by visualization. Their function here is structuring, so sometimes certain sections of the text of the paper are supporting the understanding of the figures, and not vice versa.

## 1. AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE GOVERNANCE OF EDUCATION

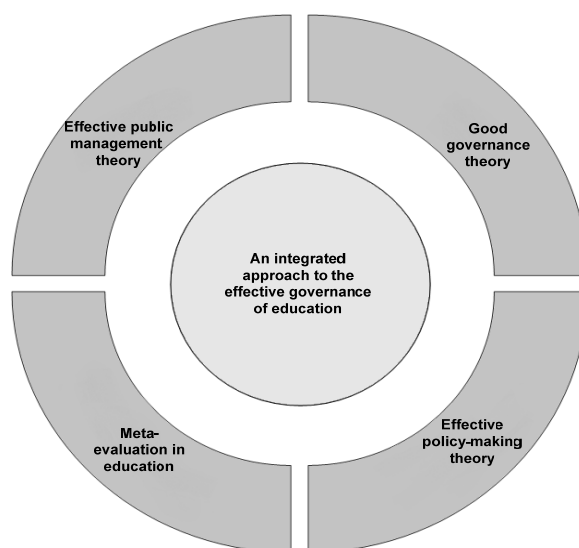
Being good governance is the most important asset of all countries, effective governance of education is one of the main concerns of academic studies, policy-makers and international development agencies. The problem that we are facing therefore is not the lack of literature, quite the opposite. However, governance of education is studied and analyzed from many different angles, very often not even using the term of “governance”, discussing the institutional conditions of “policy” or “management” instead. There are approaches and studies that are rather general addressing governance and management related matters irrespectively from the specific public service sectors, and there are others that build on the accumulated knowledge about the institutional-structural characteristics of effective education systems. In very general terms, the challenge is the creation of an integrated approach to effective educational governance on the basis of the findings of management, public policy and education sciences.

### 1.1 THE SOURCES OF AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

In my view, when considering the sources of a comprehensive approach to educational governance, four major pools of studies deserve special attention: (1) the “good governance” literature, (2) the effective public management literature, (3) the meta-evaluation findings of education sciences on effective educational policy and (4) the literature on effective public policy-making and implementation.

Integrating all these very diverse academic or practical approaches into one single framework for governance of education has its limits and serious difficulties, that starts with the harmonization of the vocabularies of the various fields of study. This would require a great deal of systematic effort that is far beyond of the scope of this paper. However, certain brief signals about the underlying logic of such efforts can be shared.

Figure 1. The sources of an integrated approach to educational governance

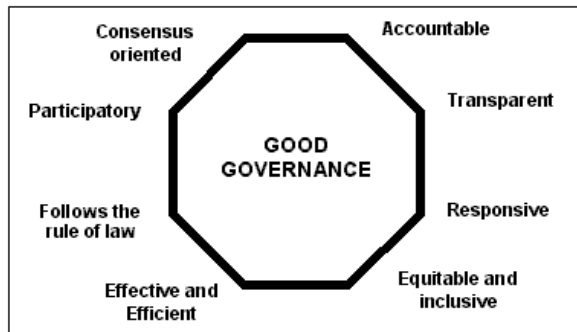


#### GOOD GOVERNANCE LITERATURE.

The studies on “good governance” grew out from the practical needs of the international development “industry” in the eighties and are based on the recognition that the effectiveness of development programs is largely determined by the maturity of institutions. (Van Doeveren, 2011.) In a sense, the growing interest in good governance is fed by failures; the need to avoid the negative impact of bad governance, such as corruption, the “resources curse”, failures of combating poverty, etc. The growing interest in the political, policy and institutional context of development led to two mutually enriching investments: the systematic accumulation and analysis of the experience of international donor agencies in developing countries and a growing number of academic studies on the matter based on comparative analysis. (The World Bank played an outstanding role in directing the interest of both types of activities in the course of revising its strategy at the end of the eighties. Ever since, the actual views of the Word Bank are dominant in the discourse on good governance.)

All these efforts led to gradually fine-tuned lists of the normative criteria of “good governance” that are aiming at informing international donor programs that directly or indirectly target the institutional context of any kind of developments. The following figure contains a widely shared list of characteristics of good governance.

Figure 2. The characteristics of “good governance”



Source: UN-ESCAP<sup>1</sup>

#### EFFECTIVE PUBLIC MANAGEMENT LITERATURE.

The perceived crisis of the welfare states in the eighties, especially the more and more extensive experience of the various failures of the “long route of accountability” (i.e. the failure of governments and self-governments to ensure that public service providers respond to the needs of citizens) led to an emerging new approach called New Public Management (NPM) that became the mainstream management school very fast. (World Bank, 2004., Radó, 2010.) NPM is based on the assumption that strengthening “consumer” influence and expanding choice will lead to greater efficiency and accountability. By placing ever greater responsibility to the service provider institutions, in education it created momentum to decentralization by increased school autonomy. The New Public Service school (NPS) emerged at the beginning of the nineties partly in reaction to the increasingly influential NPM school. In contrast to the strong focus of NPM on individual interests, NPS emphasized collective interests, so the studies of this approach concentrate on the reinforcement of the responsiveness and openness of governments and self-governments by the empowerment of citizens. (Denhardt, 2001.) The literature of both schools greatly contributed to the evolution of educational governance and management systems.

#### EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL POLICY LITERATURE.

Ever since the international student achievement assessment programs allow for comparative meta-evaluation, unfolding the characteristics of schools

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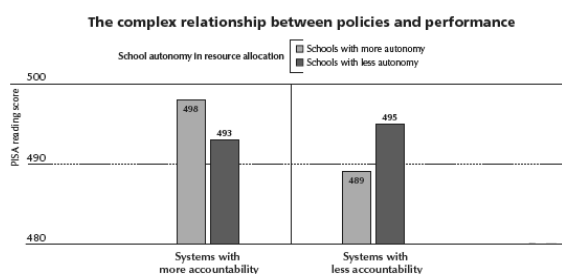
<sup>1</sup> UN ESCAP: What is good governance? <http://www.unescap.org/pdd/prs/ProjectActivities/Ongoing/gg/governance.asp>

that are able produce high student performance has been one of the Holy Grails of education science. The list of such characteristics become more and more sophisticated over the time and provided educational policy and development with extremely valuable insight. (Scheerens et alia, 2003.) The PISA survey of OECD having more and more countries participating increased the level of meta-evaluation and drove the attention to educational policies at the systemic scale that have the potential to result in high average student performance. Interestingly enough, the findings of the rather new types of studies are much more governance than policy related in its narrow sense of the later.

One of the latest distillations of this type of analysis is a leaflet published by OECD itself summarizing the connection among performance, accountability and school autonomy. (OECD, 2011.) The two major conclusions of the analysis are:

- In educational systems with bigger professional school autonomy the overall performance of students is unambiguously higher.
- Greater school autonomy in terms of the use of all sorts of resources leads to higher average student performance if there is any kind of professional accountability system in place. (See: Figure 3.)

Figure 3. Autonomous use of resources, accountability and student performance



Source: OECD 2011.

#### EFFECTIVE PUBLIC POLICY-MAKING LITERATURE.

In spite of the prevailing incremental approach to public policy-making, the number of studies on the relationship between governance and policy is tremendous. (Here we are often wrestling with the ambiguity of the applied terms, again.) If we attempt to identify those characteristic of high quality policy-making that have major implications for governance, three normative criteria are emerge: (Radó, 2010.)

- *Openness of policy-making*. In relation to the process of policy-making (i.e. identification of problems that call for public intervention, planning and decision-making) openness is a major effectiveness concern. It is the

involvement of all possible stakeholders that ensures the understanding of the causal relationships behind the problem and enables policy makers to consider the effects or side-effects of various policy instruments. Being policy makers are most typically governance actors, open policy-making is best ensured in open government systems with formal and institutionalized consultation mechanisms.

- *Evidence-based policy-making*. Although policy making has its own sources of information (most importantly: policy and program evaluation), the large majority of policy relevant information is produced by governance and management mechanisms on a regular basis, such as regular testing of the achievement of students, inspection, management information systems, financial audits, etc.
- *Implementability of policies*. One of the most important conditions of effective policy-making is the capacity of governments to actually implement the policies. (Policies are designed with having in mind the available instruments for implementation.) As it is obvious from the growing policy implementation literature, the best institutional environment for successful implementation is provided by those educational systems, in which schools are not simply execute policy expectations that were showered on them, but has the space for interpretation and reflection within the framework of school autonomy.

## 1.2 AN INTEGRATED MODEL OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL GOVERNANCE

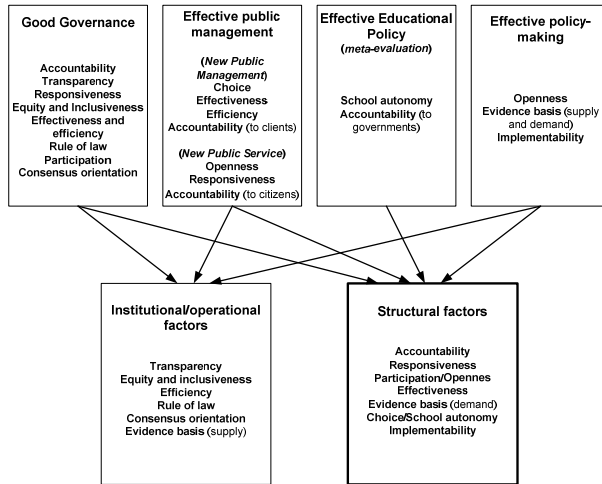
If we extract from these four sources those criteria of effective educational governance that they emphasize, we see many common or overlapping ones. For the purposes of this paper it is worth to do some selection: we need to sort out those ones that entail implications for the structural features of educational governance and should set apart those having rather institutional or operational implications.

The question that now emerges, how are the structural factors of good educational governance translate to the desirable way, how governance is organized? It is important to bear in mind, that these criteria have implications for the way how schools are operated and for the actual governance instruments applied to ensure that these requirements prevail. The major implications of the individual structural factors are the following:

- *Accountability*. As far as accountability is concerned, there are three relationships that are equally important: school should be hold accountable by the governments, by their owners and by their “clients” (parents, stu-

dents). It calls for a complete performance management regime in education that is open to all of these external expectations.

Figure 4. Selection of structural and institutional/operational characteristics from the four sources of the integrated approach



- *Responsiveness.* When it refers to the responsiveness of the government to the very diverse needs of the citizens, its structural implication is local ownership of schools. When we consider the responsiveness of schools to the needs of their clients, we need to ensure that schools operate those organizational procedures that reveal these expectations and incorporate them into their operation.
- *Participation/openness.* These criteria also apply for both the way how schools operate and to the framework that allows for stakeholder participation in decision-making with the same implications as in the case of responsiveness.
- *Effectiveness.* In education effectiveness refers to the actual balance between the amount of inputs and educational outcomes. The primary implication of this is a system with very strong learning outcomes focus. It should be supplemented with mechanisms that ensure the efficient use of all financial and human resources in order to maximize learning outcomes.
- *Evidence basis.* In spite of the widely shared simplification of this criterion it does not refer to “more research”. Instead, its key implication is the importance of all sorts of governance and management activities that generate demand for information and knowledge. At the level of service

providing institutions it is often summarized as the need to make the schools learning organizations.

- *Choice/school autonomy*. School autonomy has three equally important dimensions: fiscal autonomy in the use of budgets, organizational autonomy and professional autonomy. At a systemic scale the most important implication of choice and school autonomy is the contemporary pattern of governing by expected learning outcomes (i.e. not by detailed regulation of the teaching-learning process).
- *Implementability*. The implementability of educational policies largely depends on the capacity of schools to initiate and manage changes. This capacity depends on their internal institutional-professional preparedness. In addition to that, change always generates a great demand for external professional support that the network of educational support services should satisfy.

What adds up from all these requirements is the “ideal” structural framework of contemporary mainstream educational governance. On the one hand it is based on creating autonomous schools that are perpetually adjust to external expectations, on the other hand these schools should be surrounded with five sets of instruments: (Radó, 2010)

1. A system of setting goals and targets for education that schools are easily interpret and incorporate into their own goals and targets (school program or curriculum). The more and more widely used instrument for this purpose is setting performance standards that are built into the curricula (i.e. standard-based curriculum) or issued as separate outcome regulation documents (e.g. examination requirements).
2. Empowerment that means two things: those mandatory activities and procedures deployed to schools that make the schools able for reflection and to adjust to diverse expectations (i.e. school-based program, self-evaluation based school improvement or quality management, broadly determined school management authorities) and the development of all sorts of organizational and professional competencies that these activities require.
3. A quality evaluation system that is based on external school evaluation (contemporary inspection), that is supported by regularly produced external student performance assessment data and that feeds quality evaluation information back to all interested actors: governments, the owners of schools, the parents and to the schools themselves.
4. A rich and easily accessible, demand driven professional support system for schools, individual teachers, students and their parents.
5. In case of poor school performance (“school failure”) a targeted and development-oriented intervention mechanism. (Setting goals, the eva-



luation of quality and effectiveness and intervention in failing schools – if carefully connected – add up to a complete public service performance management system.)

*Figure 5.* The construct of the “mainstream” educational governance model



## 2. THE BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION

The next question that we should ask is the following: what determines the ability of an educational governance system to apply those instruments that were briefly outlined in the previous section? There are four problems that are essential in understanding the space for creating an educational governance system that is able to live up to all these expectations: (1) the nature of the relationship between politics and policy-making, (2) the extent of decentralization, (3) the maturity of the instruments of governance and (4) the acculturation of management by planning.

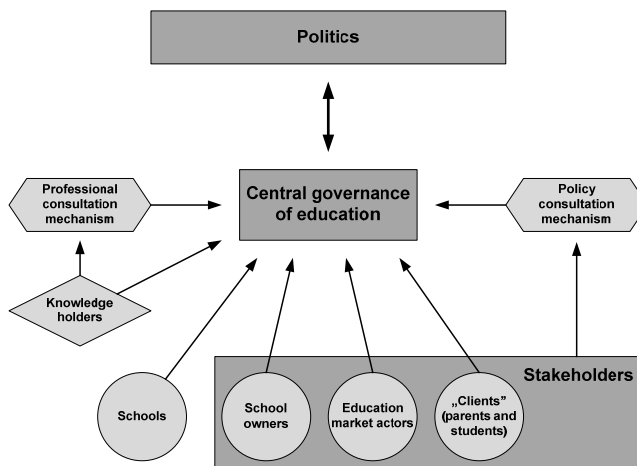
### 2.1 POLITICS AND POLICY-MAKING

It is obvious, but too often ignored, that the political “superstructure” largely determines the extent, to which governance can be regarded as a relatively autonomous system. The problem of the interplay between politics and governance is typically a marginal matter for political science. Also, manage-

ment studies incline to consider the impact of politics as a “polluting factor” that too often messes up clear governance and management regimes. However, even a superficial first look at the problems indicates that the dynamics of politics and governance calls for serious scrutiny. For example, the reason why the departments serving the president of the United States are called “administration” is the fact that most central (federal and state level) policy decisions in the US are per definition political decisions made by legislative bodies through a regulated, transparent and open process.

What is much closer to our concern is the European continental model in which governments are in the focus of policy-making and policy decisions are to a large extent government decisions. (Of course, these decisions are made on the basis of political mandate, the authority of governments is based on laws and the available resources are determined by legislation.) In this model – among normal circumstances – the relationship between politics and governance is a rather balanced one. The reason for this is the fact that since the central role is played by governments and ministries, the mechanisms of stakeholder and professional consultation operated by governments, the sources of the necessary information and the required knowledge basis are also tied up to the governments. In addition, the institutions that are critical for policy implementation are controlled by governments. This is the reason why policy decisions requiring legislative action are typically prepared by governments that increases the weight of government agencies. Thus, in spite of all formal and informal intermixes, governance operates as a system relatively distinct from politics.

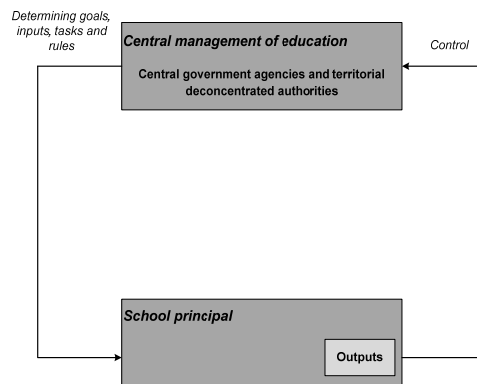
Figure 6. The balanced relationship between politics and educational governance



## 2.2 THE EXTENT OF DECENTRALIZATION

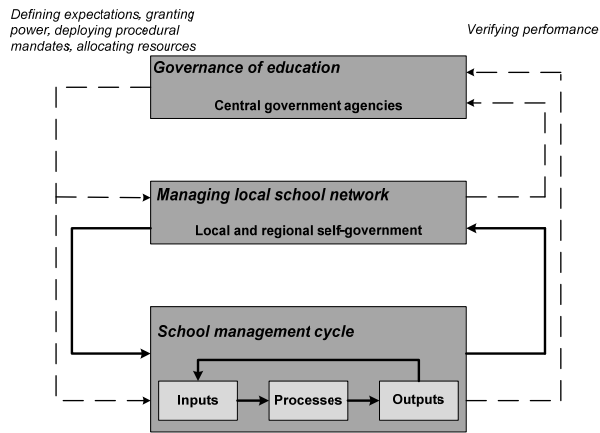
When looking at the characteristics of educational governance systems their most important feature is the extent, to which they are centralized or decentralized. In highly centralized public administration systems the prevailing pattern of governance is administrative management through a single management cycle. (Territorial deconcentrated authorities or agencies are in fact part of the central machinery that simply strengthen its outreach.) In other words: in centralized systems the distinction between governance and management is meaningless; the large amount of administrative decisions made in a ministry of education on a daily basis do not leave room for any other means of governance than extremely detailed regulations. Also, in such systems the actors of “governance” are exclusively administrative ones.

*Figure 7.* The single circle administrative management of education in centralized systems



At the other end of the centralization-decentralization spectrum management decisions are not made in ministries of education almost at all. They are either made by the management of the schools within the primary cycle of management inside of the schools (i.e. decentralization to schools), or made by the owners of schools, most typically by the councils or mayors of self-governments within the secondary cycle of management (i.e. public administration decentralization). An additional impact of decentralization is that most management decisions are made by non-administrative actors: politically elected layman in a self-government council, school directors, the conference of teachers, etc. The tertiary cycle is basically reserved for governance with the overall mission of ensuring the smooth operation of the primary and secondary management cycles. As a consequence, in terms of its actors, functions and instruments, governance become fundamentally distinct from management.

Figure 8. Governance and management circles in decentralized education systems



### 2.3 THE MATURITY OF THE FUNCTIONAL SUB-SYSTEMS OF GOVERNANCE

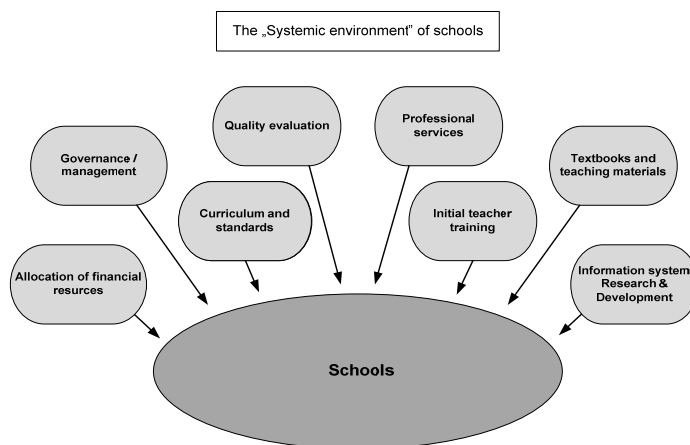
There are two major impacts of decentralization that change the nature of governance: (1) the functional differentiation of governance and, as a consequence, (2) the emerging line between schools and their “systemic environment”.

The liberation of governance from administrative management functions generates need to regain the “lost control” that inevitably results in investments into the means of indirect governance. This speeds up the functional differentiation within the governance system. Various functional governance instruments, such as quality evaluation, financing, “content regulation” (i.e. curriculum and standards), etc. are seceding from the originally unitary central management machinery and becoming distinct sub-systems of governance. (Still, management, that is, the allocation of decision-making competencies among various levels and actors remains to be the “critical path” of governance, to which all other sub-systems are adjusted.) Nevertheless, all other functional governance instruments generate demand for the rise of new professional competencies (in certain cases even new professions), develop their own institutions and procedural rules, as well as their own ethical codes. Paradoxically, when all administrative management activities are deployed to lower level, the size and scope of governance start growing and the real art of governing education systems turns into being able to maintain consistency within the governance system.

Parallel to this, central government owned professional service institutions more and more fail to catch up to the growing diversity of the support needs of schools. In many countries it results in the appearance of market (or quasi mar-

ket) services that schools consume, such as the markets of textbook publishing, in-service training, counseling, coaching, etc. The consequence of this development is that the control over this vital resources moves from governments to the schools as clients of such services and the role of governments narrows to financing and quality control. The combined impact of the functional differentiation of governance and the new consumer role of schools on different markets of services radically alter the space (i.e. the systemic environment) within which schools manage their core educational activities and increases the weight of their organizational activities. This is the underlying process that makes the “whole school approach” prevailing in contemporary governance regimes and educational policies.

Figure 9. The “systemic environment” of schools in decentralized education systems



## 2.4 MULTILEVEL SYSTEM OF MANDATORY MID-TERM PLANNING

Although mid-term planning may appear to be a simple technical issue, in fact this is the instrument that imposes the greatest impact on the culture of educational management and that has the potential to properly connect the earlier mentioned three cycles of governance/management. Therefore, in spite of the fact that mandatory mid-term planning is an institutional/operational matter it should be mentioned among the structural characteristics.

In systems that are based on centrally performed administrative management, strategic steering of the flow of resources, students, capacities and information is very weak, therefore, annual operational planning prevails as a basis for administrative reporting. In such systems mandatory mid-term planning – if exist – serves as a mere symbolic communication instrument that short-term me-

asures and interests easily and regularly overwrite. Contrarily, in decentralized systems connected multilevel mid-term planning is the most important activity for bringing consistency into the very diverse actions of many different actors working at many different levels, as well as into the operations of various functional governance instruments. Shortly speaking: top-down and bottom-up planning is the cement of the whole governance building. In these systems the function of annual planning is different, too: it serves the operationalization of mid-term plans.

### 3. THE IMPACT OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOVERNANCE ON POLICY-MAKING

Policy-making is intervention for solving problems that occurs in a specific systemic context. When outlining the characteristics of good educational governance, our contemporary understanding of the systemic conditions of high quality policy-making were dealt with as one of the multiple sources for identifying the structural factors that may make the governance of education effective. Now we make the tour to the opposite direction and look at the potential impact of the above described pattern of governance on the quality of educational policy-making. As it was mentioned earlier, high quality policy-making is open, evidence-based and produces policies that are implemented.

#### 3.1 IMPACT ON THE OPENNESS OF POLICY-MAKING

As it was mentioned in section 2.2, in a decentralized education system central government agencies are not the only actors who are in charge for solving problems; self-governments managing local school networks and managers of individual schools are also policy-makers within the scope of their decision-making authority. It is not only the dramatically increased number of policy-makers that makes policy much more open. Also, all of these policy-makers have their own stakeholders to be involved and consulted: local employer associations, NGOs, parents in the school boards, trade union branches in schools, local educational service providers, etc. As a consequence, decentralization increases the outreach of policy-making, too. However, as at the national level, stakeholder involvement does not occur automatically. In addition to that, the lower is the level, where serious problems are to be addressed the bigger might be the probability that certain groups with weaker voices will not be heard.

### 3.2. IMPACT ON THE INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SUPPLY OF POLICY-MAKING

#### THE INCREASED DEMAND FOR INFORMATION

In centralized systems the information and knowledge needs of policy makers is very limited and typically satisfied by aggregated statistical data reported by the schools annually and by the huge administrative reporting burden that such systems impose on school directors. The reason for the very low demand for information lies in the very simple administrative and regulative operations of ministries. Too much information would be even counter-productive, because by revealing the complexity and diversity of local and institutional contexts it would question the validity of the illusionary façade of unity that extreme standardization creates. In addition to this, the political “spoil systems” (i.e. the direct political control over policy-making that is not balanced in centralized systems) reduces the time for nurturing and planning to a short segment of a government term that further reduces the capacity of policy makers to absorb information.

The already briefly described systemic transformation radically changes this. When governance is liberated from administrative management duties and develops its capacity for strategic steering of the flow of students, all sorts of recourses and information, its information and knowledge needs increase to a large extent. In addition to that the integrity of the policy-making space created by the more balanced relationship between politics and policy increases the capacity of policy makers to listen more carefully to evidence. The already mentioned functional differentiation of governance further increases the demand for information, but also it increases its supply. For example, a full fledge quality evaluation system operates regular mechanisms that produces vital policy relevant information.

It is not only central governance that generates demand for information. If actors at regional, local and institutional levels take the responsibility to make decisions and to solve problems by their own, their information needs becoming much larger, too. Especially, mid-term planning based on situation analysis has its large need for information that can't be fully satisfied with centrally provided data sets. Also, the increasing scope of school autonomy and accountability turns the schools information producers for their own needs. For example, self-evaluation typically contains surveying the satisfaction of parents on a regular basis on collecting information about the further career of their graduates.

To sum it all up: the governance pattern that was outlined in the previous sections almost automatically increases the need for information, and also it in-

creases the capacity of the system to produce information. It has a tremendous impact on policy-making: it occurs in an information rich environment.

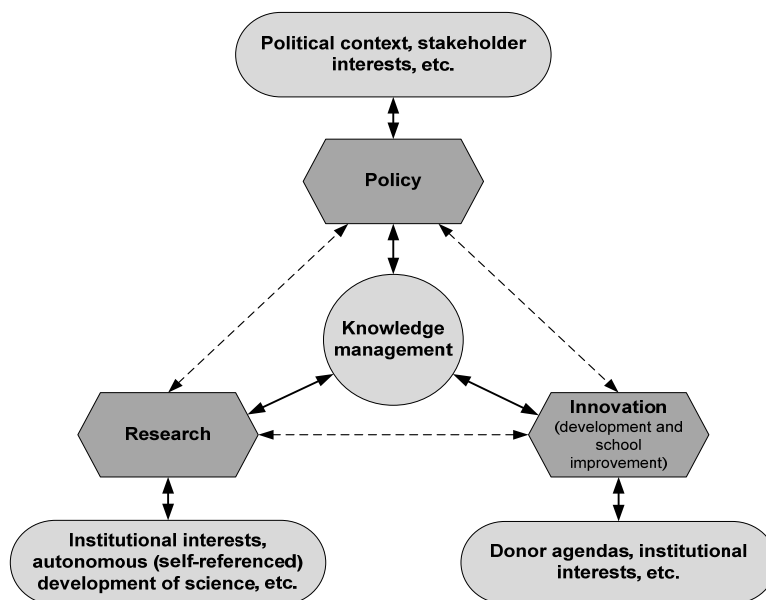
#### KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT: THE RESEARCH-POLICY-PRACTICE TRIANGLE

As we have seen, in the course of systemic transformation a large and growing proportion of the information needs of policy-making is supplied by the governance system on a regular basis. However, the kind of information that governance instrument provide are far from being enough for properly informing policy planning, because indicators may provide essential signals about problems, but do not necessarily allow for understanding the underlying complex causal relationships. Therefore, research remains very important, as more problems becoming visible, it may become even more important. Not even mentioning that in a decentralized system even schools and practitioners outside of the school becoming “consumers” of research provided knowledge.

However, the relationship among educational policy-making, research and practice is always difficult and imperfect because the references that determine the alignment, goals and content of the three types of activities are very much different. Research is a self-referenced activity that – to a great extent – develops its own agenda through an autonomous and organic evolution of the efforts to accumulate scientific knowledge and authenticated by peer researchers. In optimal circumstances, policy-making builds on the evidences provided by research and other information/knowledge producing activities. However, policy-making is never driven completely by evidence; it also incorporates the competing views and interests of various stakeholder groups and that of political forces. (The later can't be regarded as the “pollution” of policy-making, it is its built-in characteristic.) Educational practice and innovation, that is, development in education is an extremely knowledge-intensive activity, too. However, it is very practical at the same time, so the actors of development rarely have the capacity to “consume” research results directly. In addition to all these, research, policy-making and development all have their distinct and rather different institutional settings that create divergent organizational and individual interests. Therefore, what typically happens is not only a greater need for information and knowledge, but also an emerging need for the mediation of knowledge by knowledge management agencies and activities that provide it according to the very specific needs of policy makers and practitioners, and also generates demand for further research.



Figure 10. Intensifying the flow of knowledge within the research-policy-practice triangle



### 3.3. THE IMPACT ON THE IMPLEMENTABILITY OF POLICIES

#### THE REDUCED INTERVENTION PRESSURE ON NATIONAL POLICY-MAKING

If the central government is responsible for everything in education, all problems that effects only a couple of schools fall on the ministries of education imposing a huge pressure for intervention. Obviously, if responsibility is shared with the owners of the schools and with the schools themselves, this pressure is much weaker that allows for selection among problems, for the careful design of policies and for their systematic implementation. Therefore, the effectiveness of policies (i.e. the extent to which they are really implemented) largely depends on the capacity of autonomous actors at lower levels to identify, understand and solve problems on their own. Among these circumstances the alignment of policies is changing, too; instead of addressing the problems directly, policy makers may intervene in order to strengthen the problem solving capacity of self-governments and schools in relation even to very specific target groups or problems without recalling the responsibilities that flow from the actual division of labor.

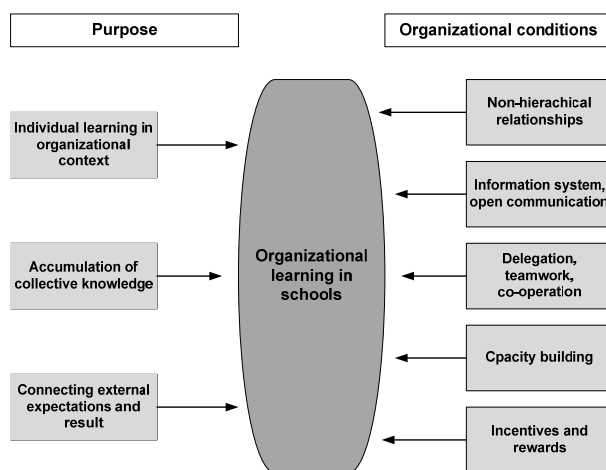
### THE ENRICHMENT OF THE TOOLKIT OF POLICY-MAKING

As governments develop the instruments that allow for governance by rather indirect means, policy-making follows this pattern, too. While in centralized systems national policies operating basically by regulation (i.e. deploying a mandate to the staff of the schools), in decentralized systems the weight of supplementary policy tools applied in order to strengthen the willingness and capacity to act according to the mandate is increasing. Persuasion, incentives, institutionalized support and capacity building may become essential policy instruments of implementation replacing the old fashioned “policy by force” practice through bureaucratic monitoring and control. Another impact of the new governance model on implementation is the advantages that the maturity of the functional governance instruments offer. When implementation programs are planned, the above mentioned policy tools are translated to governance instruments. (Radó, 2010.) A financial allocation system that allows for the system wide use of incentives, a management system that is able to intensify policy objectives by incorporating them into mid-term planning at all levels, an inspection service that runs thematic supplementary external evaluation on the basis of actual policy objectives or student achievement standards that incorporate the learning outcomes that a policy intends to promote are all might be powerful carriers of implementation. The maturity, demand driven operation and accessibility of a professional support service network with a rich offer is especially vital if “top-down” implementation is complemented with “bottom-up” implementation that is based on horizontal learning and the exchange of know-how.

### THE CAPACITY OF SCHOOLS TO ABSORB CHANGE INITIATIVES

As it might be obvious already, the capacity of schools to absorb policies is a critical aspect of implementation. The common experience of policy makers in centralized systems is that central change initiatives stop and stick outside the gate of schools. The main reasons for this are the extremely low capacity of schools to change and the lack of ownership that would make the staff of the schools willing to change. In a system however, in which the autonomy of schools is not designed to protect the interests of teachers, but to provide the necessary space for reflection and improvement, external policy expectations are much more easily incorporated into the common goals of the schools and turned into action. This kind of organizational operation is often referred to as “learning organization”. Schools are becoming learning organizations if they are learning for the sake of improving the learning of their students. Having no space here for an elaborated discussion on the conditions of organizational learning, the following figure summarizes its basic purposes and organizational conditions.

Figure 11. Organizational learning in schools



#### TEACHER CENTERED VERSUS SCHOOL CENTERED POLICIES

Finally, a very important aspect of implementability of policies is the way, how the frontline professionals of education are targeted. Policies in centralized systems tend to be very much teacher centered. This policy practice has its serious limits for many different reasons: it attempts to determine the capacity building objectives for teachers on the basis of remote standardized criteria that have very little to do with their actual work in the classrooms, it fails to enhance that intensity of pedagogical cooperation among subject teachers educating the same children that is automatically exist in the first grades, because there is only one classroom teacher who works with the children, it typically creates isolated innovation islands within the schools, it is not able to promote the development of those types of learning outcomes (competencies) that can't be designated to the teachers of one subject, etc. Contrarily, decentralized systems - on the basis of the already mentioned whole school approach - withdrawal from the internal operation of schools and leave human resource management and the arrangements for cooperation among teachers to the management of schools. In a system like this, it is not the individual teacher that should respond to external expectations (that would be obviously hopeless anyway), it is the school as an institution that is accountable for its results.

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## УПРАВЉАЧКИ КОНТЕКСТ У КРЕИРАЊУ ОБРАЗОВАНЕ ПОЛИТИКЕ

*Резиме:* У раду се укратко описује управљачки контекст у креирању образоване политике. Најпре се у раду даје уопштени приказ интегрисаног приступа успешном управљању у образовању, са нагласком на карактеристике државног управљања

*Кључне речи:* образовање, управљање, образовна политика