

Chapter 12: Agency and Community Controls

The previous chapter concentrated on government controls. But controls by churches or other agencies, and by village-level communities, may be just as important.

Most large agencies employ Church Education Secretaries or similar officers. Their role is to supervise the development of their school systems, and to liaise with governments and other bodies. It is helpful if the Secretaries have teaching experience themselves. They need to be energetic people, prepared to travel and to be sympathetic to the viewpoints of others.

It was pointed out in Chapter 11 that the government can exercise two sorts of control: over the initial establishment of schools and over existing schools. The same applies to non-government personnel.

1. Controls over the Establishment of Schools

Agencies and communities should ask themselves exactly the same questions as governments, listed in the last chapter (pages 70–71). They must be quite clear why they want a new school, whether it is justified, and how it will be financed.

Sometimes neighbouring communities or churches want separate schools, even when they would threaten existing ones. The communities running the existing schools may not be able to prevent new schools being started, but they can do two things:

- * Ask themselves why the neighbouring communities are dissatisfied, whether it is their fault, and whether they can do anything about it. Sometimes a harmonious settlement can be found to keep all communities supporting an existing school.
- * Discuss the matter with government officers who are required to give approval to new schools.

 * **Divisive Rivalries in Kenya** *
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 * *In the late 1960s, the people of Kamsaki in Nyanza Province felt* *
 * *that their children were walking too far to school each day, and* *
 * *decided to build a school of their own. The Roman Catholics* *
 * *felt that it could also be used to teach catechism and to hold* *
 * *church meetings on Sundays. But the Salvation Army members* *
 * *would not agree. The result was that two schools were built,* *
 * *neither with enough children to fill it or to warrant the* *
 * *government paying the teachers and supplying the equipment.* *
 * *Sometimes, self-help can lead to divisions and waste.* *
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 * *Source: Bray, Dondo & Moemeka (1976), pp. 232-3.* *
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2. Controls over Existing Schools

(a) Appointment of the Board of Governors

A lot of agency and community control is exercised through their schools' Boards of Governors. The first two objectives, therefore, are to make sure that each Board has a good constitution, and then to appoint members who will work hard and who know what they are doing. Once members are appointed, they can only be terminated before the end of their period of office if they are failing to observe the constitution.

(b) Appointment of Teachers

In some systems teachers are appointed by individual Boards of Governors. In other systems the government posts teachers to the schools, but usually the schools can have some say in the matter.

When village communities make decisions on teachers, they should be aware that place of birth is not everything. Although their strong community links may give local people advantages, other candidates may also be good. Communities should think about the professional skills of teachers as well as where they come from. Their skills can partly be determined by their qualifications, but the best indicator is the way they are regarded by their existing and previous schools. If community representatives are unable actually to visit those schools, they can at least ask for references and testimonials. They can also interview the applicants. If there

are local applicants, they should also be interviewed. Even when the interviewers feel that they know the local candidates, it is much easier to compare people who have been interviewed at the same time.

Similar comments apply in Church schools to the religion of teachers. For example, the Methodist church may choose only to employ Methodists in its schools. However, there may be times when good candidates are not available, and when a flexible policy is required.

(c) Resources for the School

The financial and other resources available to a school clearly have a major impact on the quality of its facilities and its output. This means that fund-raising ventures discussed in Chapters 7 and 8 are very important. Agencies can provide incentives and exercise additional control through a system of grants.

It is also essential for money to be *managed* well — for it to be guarded carefully and spent wisely. Church Education Secretaries can play a supervisory and advisory role here too.

(d) Selection of Pupils

Obviously, community schools are set up to serve their own communities. But school authorities should guard their standards of admission, particularly at secondary level. For this they need clear, written criteria. The quality of a school's achievement depends partly on the quality of the pupils selected in the first place.

The main official criteria for admission to secondary schools are usually:

- (a) the normal residence of the applicant and her/his family — whether they live in the area served by the school,
- (b) the applicants' scores in the primary leaving examination, and
- (c) in the case of church schools, the religion of the applicants.

Communities may decide that they wish to give extra consideration to children of Board members and teachers, and to children of parents who have made large donations to the school. These can be

good policies, because they reward people who have supported the school. But communities should be aware that the policies may lead to admission of academically weak children, which will affect the quality of their school.

 * *An Assisting Agency's Experience* *
 * *The Aga Khan Foundation provides considerable help to Ismaili* *
 * *communities in Pakistan. To secure greater effort from the* *
 * *communities and at the same time maximise its own control, it* *
 * *makes sure that:* *
 * *
 * 1. *villagers are informed that the programme is competitive,* *
 * *that funds are limited, and that their chances of assistance* *
 * *are based on the accuracy and realism of their* *
 * *applications,* *
 * *
 * 2. *formal evaluation criteria for applications are used, and* *
 * *
 * 3. *final evaluations and decisions are made by a committee* *
 * *based in Karachi.* *
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 * *Source: Heneveld & Karim (1984), p. 3.* *
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