



Current Challenges, Future Opportunities and Potential Impact of Expanded Administrative Decentralization in Lebanon

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Article Details

Article Type: Review Article

Received date: 18th July, 2023

Accepted date: 07th October, 2023

Published date: 09th October, 2023

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Citation: Kachar, S., (2023). Current Challenges, Future Opportunities and Potential Impact of Expanded Administrative Decentralization in Lebanon. *J Poli Sci Publi Opin*, 1(1): 106. doi: <https://doi.org/10.33790/jpspo1100106>.

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Abstract

This paper examines policies and their implementation in the context of Expanded Administrative Decentralization in Lebanon through different approaches and perspectives.

First, it inspects the available and currently implemented policies of decentralization in different countries and from different reviews such as emerging concepts, the rationale for decentralization, the rise of decentralization, experiences in weak states, poverty alleviation effect, accountability, municipal innovation, good governance, and democratization, and economic national, and balanced development. Then it discusses the results of the research and forms a discussion to analyze the findings. Then, based on the research and findings through the study, it presents the implications from different perspectives regarding infrastructure, demographic, political, economic, and financial. The role of the ombudsman in a decentralized system is also discussed. Finally, it answers the two fundamental research questions: How can expanded administrative decentralization work in Lebanon? Does Lebanon need expanded administrative decentralization and why? In conclusion, it is found that decentralization, under different forms or types, is not an easy concept to implement. Although Lebanon is in urgent need of decentralization, there are different basic pillar conditions that need to be implemented, such as the political will and the conviction that decentralization is a national and developmental demand, before proceeding with the undertaking. Many parties, stakeholders, officials, and even people are still ambivalent as to whether Lebanon needs deconcentration as a first step or should it directly adopt expanded administrative decentralization. Although there is a large public voice asking for decentralization, the reality is that there is a huge lack of awareness on all levels, and most importantly, goodwill is not a common thread.

Introduction

"Decentralization aims at creating a better balance of power on the whole territory and brings the decision-making process closer to the citizens."

Most of the political parties, public activists, and the public concerned with Lebanese public life have insisted that expanded administrative decentralization should be implemented without even

knowing the reason for it, and without bothering themselves to do any kind of research or comparative studies in order to approach the topic in an academic, scientific or even simple and pragmatic way.

Lebanon gained independence in 1943, and inherited a very rigid central administrative system where everything was based in the Lebanese capital Beirut, to the extent that people, for example, spent sometimes more than a week to apply for their identity card. Lebanon as a system, is based on a power-sharing arrangement, meaning that it is built not only on mutual concessions but also on a balance of power and negotiation, as in any pluralistic system [1].

Expanded administrative decentralization is a critical issue for the success of the balanced development in Lebanon, where balanced development means that the "center" – the center being the state and its services, will reach the peripheries or the remote areas of the country, and this was done in Lebanon the late 50th of the last century during the mandate of President Fouad Chehab when he commissioned IRFED mission to work on the needs of social and economic balanced development of Lebanon [2].

Overview

Decentralization is remarkably simple word to read and see in books and papers, but until now most of the people concerned with it (municipalities, mayors, policymakers, and even Ministers), do not know that decentralization is of different types (administrative, political, fiscal, and market), and administrative decentralization has three different forms (deconcentration, delegation, and devolution).

Emerging Concepts – Rise – Rationale of Decentralization

"Decentralization is not a new phenomenon. In many countries, colonial regimes left a legacy of highly government institutions but these co-existed with the extensive of significant regional elites that competed for power and influence" [3].

According to Rondinelli and Cheema [4], the emerging concepts of decentralization and governance have known two waves, the first took place after World War II, and the second wave of decentralization took place in the mid-1980s when the concept was broadened to include political power sharing, democratization, and market liberalization, expanding the scope for private sector decision making. Rondinelli

and Cheema [4] also mentioned that during the 1990s, decentralization was seen as a way of opening governance to wider public participation through the organization of civil society.

In their opening chapter “From Government Decentralization to Decentralized Governance”, Rondinelli and Cheema [4] said that “decentralization was defined as the transfer of authority, responsibility, and resources through deconcentration, delegation, and devolution from the center to lower level of administration.”

“Decentralization in local administration, the topic most debated and investigated, has been seen as a real relief of deficiencies such as inefficiency of public service provision, overloaded public services, and lack of public resources to finance public services. Decentralization was developed in the late 19th century by decentralists because it improves the citizens' participation in public affairs, and as a process, it aims at redesigning the governmental system in such an effective and efficient way to deliver public services to citizens. Decentralization has increasingly become a globalized policy: Developed and developing countries have adopted this policy around the world” [5].

Decentralization is a remarkably simple word to read and written in books and papers, but until now most of the people concerned with it (municipalities, mayors, policymakers, and even Ministers), do not know that decentralization has different types (administrative, political, fiscal, and market), and administrative decentralization has three different forms (deconcentration, delegation, and devolution). Let us first provide a conceptual definition or meaning for each of the three forms of decentralization.

The World Bank [6] in a document called “Decentralization & Subnational Regional Economies” defined the three major forms of decentralization each with different characteristics. It is important for anyone studying or researching the field to know about those forms:

Deconcentration: is often considered to be the weakest form of decentralization and is used frequently in unitary states. It is about the redistribution of decision-making authority and financial and management responsibilities among different levels of the central government [6]. In other words, deconcentration is making services and procedures easier and closer to citizens through local administrations.

Delegation: is a more extensive part of administrative decentralization where governments transfer responsibility for decision-making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the central government, but ultimately accountable to it [6]. In other words, it is the delegation of several prerogatives and public services to regional and local units (municipalities, provinces...)

Devolution: is a third type of administrative decentralization. Devolution usually transfers responsibilities for services to municipalities that elect their mayors and councils, raise their own revenues, and have independent authority to make investment decisions. This form of decentralization is the one that underlies most political decentralization [6]. In other words, it is the devolution of several central authority powers to regional/local elected authorities enjoying autonomy in development planning, project selection and implementation, and management of own financial resources.

It is very important to differentiate between administrative decentralization and expanded administrative decentralization in terms of the degree of decentralization, this is where most of the concerned persons do not have even a minimal idea about the difference. For example, in Lebanon, most of the concerned persons mention the term expanded administrative decentralization just because they heard the term from someone or because it was motioned in the amended constitution. “Delegation” is the degree/form of administrative decentralization, whereas “Transfer” is the degree/

form of expanded administrative decentralization. “Expanded administrative decentralization” is the “transfer” of some of the central authority powers to local and regional units (municipalities, provinces...) [6].

According to Paul Salem [7], decentralization started globally at the beginning of the 1970s when several governments throughout America, Europe, and Asia, noticed that resource management and service providing were expanding more and more in a way that the central government alone is no longer sufficient to take care of it. Salem [7] also said that the debate between central governments and decentralized governments is completely different and has nothing to do with prioritizing a federal or central state. He also mentioned that a strong decentralized state does not mean a weak central state. [7].

Many governments and public officials claim to find decentralization easy to implement. It is a misconception to claim that policies leading to decentralization are easy to implement. This is not true, because the implementation differs between developing and developed countries, in addition to the political system. It is not as easy as generally assumed.

According to Rondinelli and Cheema [4], experience in developing countries suggests that successful decentralization always requires the right ingredients, appropriate timing, and some degree of experimentation. “The ingredients are very well known and related to politics. Decentralization cannot be enacted or sustained without strong and committed political leadership at both national and local levels.” Government officials must be willing and able to share power, authority, and financial resources, in addition to many other basics for an excellent and successful implementation of decentralization” [7].

Mokherjee and Bardhan [8] in their book “Decentralization and Local Governance in Developing Countries” stated that “the argument in favor of decentralization of government is that local government officials are likely to be better informed about preferences of local citizens and thus exhibit greater responsiveness to heterogeneous needs.”

It is very important to know that much of the decentralization that has taken place in the past decade has been motivated by political concerns [6]. “Decentralization has been an outcome of long civil wars and in the extreme, decentralization represents a desperate attempt to keep the country together in the face of these pressures by granting more autonomy to all localities or by forging asymmetrical federations” [6]. The rationale for decentralization is that it appears to be motivated by the need to improve service delivery to large populations and the recognition of the limitations of the central administration [6].

According to Grindle [9], “Over a span of two and a half decades of decentralization, local levels of governments in many countries acquired new responsibilities and more resources for carrying them out.” Grindle further states, “The rhetoric and theory of decentralization promise better governance and deeper democracy as public officials are held accountable in a direct way for their actions and as citizens become more engaged in local affairs” [9].

Decentralization is not a new concept as most people may think. According to Akoma [10], “the idea of decentralization originated in the private sector, but was immediately adopted by the public sector.” “The idea of decentralization has its roots in large American corporations such as Ford, General Motors and General Electric in addition to many oil and steel companies” [10]. “Decentralization in government was first extensively used during World War II, especially in the armed services” [10].

“Numerous factors over the recent history have driven the processes of decentralization, including the need to shore up the legitimacy of the state during economic crises, the desire to streamline the state and the hope for improving democracy” [3].

Experiences in Weak States

“International assistance organizations often try to enhance limited capacity in weak states by leveraging governments’ resources with private sector and civil society organizations, thereby creating deconcentrated governance” [4].

“Governments in most weak states, and especially those in post-conflict era, differ significantly in their needs and the conditions under which they must perform their functions.” “Two decades of recent experience with recovery and reconstruction leave little doubt that government in postconflict and weak states find it difficult if not impossible to meet immediate and crucial challenges without effective public institutions” [4].

“Experience in developing countries with outsourcing, public-private partnerships, and publiccivil society organizations arrangements for service delivery suggests that for these parallel channels to work effectively central and local governments officials must be able to decide among competing developments objectives; to define objectives for service provision; to set standard, criteria, and output targets; and finally, to safeguard citizens welfare” [4].

Rondinelli [4] under the same context, argued that “deconcentrated governance and decentralized development administration are likely to be effective only if donors backing decentralization will also assist civil society organizations and private enterprises in developing their administrative, technical, and financial capacity to partner with or supplement government in the provision of infrastructure and social services” [4].

If we take the example of local government reform in Pakistan which is considered to be a weak state and a country in the post-conflict era, we can look at “The New Devolution of Power Plan” by General Musharraf, which is an overview of the decentralization reform introduced in Pakistan in the beginning of the year 2000 [8]. Several aspects of the reform in Pakistan are worth highlighting to have an idea of an experience in a weak state:

First, in addition to developing administrative and expenditure responsibilities to local governments, the decentralization involved, to different degrees, changes in the administrative level of decision-making, the accountability of the decision-making authority, and the nature and number of fiscal resources available [8].

Second, the decentralization process in Pakistan was not uniform across all functions, with significant heterogeneity in its extent not only across administrative departments but also across services within a department [8].

Finally, the reforms took place rapidly and under military rule and at a time when no provincial and federal elected governments were in power [8].

Poverty Reduction & Alleviation

When poverty arises from disparities between regions or localities, democratic decentralization tends to play a creative role. Many decentralized systems have arrangements for providing poorer areas with better-than-average resources. They also give elected officials from poorer areas more equitable representation in the wider political system, a thing that might help them seek a more equitable distribution of resources. As a result, decentralization has enhanced efforts to address poverty; but this is not the case in most countries [11].

“The record of decentralization in alleviating poverty does not bear out the belief that political decentralization brings out a reduction of poverty. For example, an OECD study advises donor who wants to promote decentralization to distinguish between countries that satisfy basic criteria in terms of their background and the ability to implement policies, and countries that lack such characteristics. It is recommended that to generate “pro-poor effects”, weak states should support deconcentration as a first step toward decentralization” [4].

“Decentralization is unlikely to challenge local elites who are

uninterested in pro-poor policies and who act in concert with national elites to retain the latter’s power bases in the countryside.” “Even in cases where decentralization has been hailed as a success, the linkage with poverty alleviation may be difficult to make.” “If decentralization was pro-poor then we would expect to see a distinct diminution in the incidence of poverty over this time” [4].

“Usually, policies concerning decentralization have more to do with the interplay between the political interests of governments and the ideological preferences of donors for strong forms of participatory democracy as it has to do with poverty reduction” [4].

“Decentralization defined as the “transfer of political, financial, administrative and local governments,” plays an important role in changing power dynamics and in addressing local poverty reduction issues. Successful decentralization allows for increased participation of the poor in community planning, project, development and implementation, and problem solving, and prospects for sustainability and local ownership” [4].

“For decentralization to effectively assist the poor in getting themselves out of poverty, it must be accompanied by fundamental structural changes in those decision-making processes that maintain asymmetric power relations and by changes that bring government nearer to the people. Bringing government closer to the people can be achieved in many ways such as giving them voice and enhancing livelihood opportunities in pro-poor development projects” [4].

According to [12], “Traditionally, economic policies are concerned primarily with ensuring stable and balanced microeconomic conditions, with growth and poverty seen as derived outcomes. This implies placing emphasis on economic opportunities for the poor. Clearly, such policies are likely to succeed, or find a better hearing, where the enabling environment comprises both political commitment and democratic governance, including decentralization.”

Accountability

“Democratic decentralization tends strongly to foster more accountable governments. Elected decision-makers are closer to citizens who elect them, and often live locally. They worry about reelection in few years, and they receive more direct indications of discontent between elections.” Despite difficulties in creating and sustaining accountability mechanisms, systems can become more accountable under decentralization [11].

“Accountability is the most important principle underlying the framework of administrative decentralization because it promotes the efficient and effective mobilization and management of resources. One reason why administrative systems are so weak, and resource driven aid agency assistance strategies have not succeeded, is precisely because the accountability principle is weak or absent. Accountability manages discretion and discretion is the essence of administrative decentralization” [13].

In its democratic political aspect, decentralization as currently conceived and increasingly practiced in the international development community has two principal components: participation and accountability. “Participation is mainly concerned with increasing the role of citizens in choosing their local leaders and in telling them what to do, while accountability constitutes the other side of the process: it is the degree to which local governments have to explain or justify what they have done or failed to do” [6].

Municipal Innovation

In a research study done on some municipalities in the region of Mexico, Grindle [9], mentioned that “the municipal government initiated and implemented something new – a policy, a process, a program, a project – for the first time in the municipality. Most of the municipalities have introduced significant changes in how local responsibilities were carried out.” “There is a very important point to be recognized in this perspective, which is the political dynamics and relationships that suggest the opportunities for and limits of improved local governance in the aftermath of decentralization” [9].

“Municipal governments might be able to go further institutionalizing administrative and participatory reforms by paying more attention to the mechanisms by which rules and processes become formal. They need to be written down, but they also need to be reflected in the incentives that affect the performance of public officials, there need to be formal mechanisms to deal with those who ignore their responsibilities, organizational cultures need to be created and nurtured over long periods of time, and citizens need to have information on what to expect in their encounters with local authorities. Too often in the cases of municipal innovation, the process is based primarily on exhortation or the commitment of a person or small group, it is difficult to hold officials accountable for their correct functioning, a culture of service was limited by personnel changes every three years, and citizens did not have sufficient information to understand their rights and obligations. Alternatively, innovators considered the production of a formal rule, regulation, or law as the end goal of their activities, rather than attending also to the kinds of incentives and changes that transcend the gap between policy and its implementation” [9].

Good Governance – Democratization

“Decentralization is widely thought to improve democratic governance by bringing government closer to the people and thereby increasing states responsiveness and accountability. Actual decentralization processes have often produced mixed results for democratic governance as well as for equity” [3].

According to Oxhorn, Tulchin, Selee [3], “three factors appear to account for the variance in outcomes. First, there is often a significant gap between the rhetoric for decentralization and the actual policies implemented. The motivations of key actors in decentralization processes shed the light on the kinds of decentralization regimes that are negotiated and their consequences for democratic governance. Second, the kinds of institutional arrangements employed often limit the capacity and autonomy of sub-national governments to implement the functions that they are supposed to perform, which, in turn, undermine their relevance in democratic process” [3].

“As decentralization has produced uneven outcomes and capacity of sub-national governments, it has also produced uneven outcomes with regards to their ability to serve as loci for democratic innovation.” Decentralization processes cannot be viewed separately from the democratization of the sub-national governments [3]. We can understand here that democratization is an essential part of decentralization process.

“Democratization at a national level often leads to democratization at a sub-national level.” Tough, democratization with decentralization can lead to very innovative experiences at the local level [3].

According to Grindle [9], “the findings shed light on complex changes introduced by decentralization and democratization. Together, these two processes increased competition for electoral office in the research municipalities, which in turn provided greater opportunities for the circulation of political leadership.”

“Good governance is not simply a function of the structure of intergovernmental relationships. It is, rather, the consequence of new opportunities and resources, the impact of leadership motivation and choices, the influence of civic history, and the effect of institutions that constrain and facilitate innovation” [9].

Grindle [9] presented four hypotheses where it was proven that local government performance systematically is affected by competitive elections, entrepreneurship leadership, public sector modernization, and pressures from civil society.

“Empirical work also revealed how legacies of the past continued to characterize many aspects of local governance, even in the context of great change. In particular, the way in which public officials and citizens sought to resolve resource constraints echoed long-existing ways in which levels of government interacted with each other

and the forms through which the citizens interacted with the state. Centralization continued to affect the behavior of municipal official and citizens, while problem-solving mechanism continued to reflect a more authoritarian past. Yet, the promise of better governance also continued to be a real one and decentralized local government may yet prove to be a good school for democracy” [9].

Grindle [9] concluded that “decentralization can contribute to improve the performance of local government; it can provide new opportunities for responsiveness to local needs. One should pay attention that decentralization is not a linear or consistent process and it can suffer reverses as often as advances in terms of how local governments and citizens take up its challenges.”

Economic Development

We cannot speak about economic development without attaching the economy to globalization and how it interacts or fits within administrative decentralization. In the twenty-first century the driving forces of globalization, such as increasing international trade and investment, rapid progress in information, communications, and transportation technology, the increasing mobility of factors and production, the emergence of knowledge economies and electronic commerce, and the worldwide expansion of the market for goods and services, are creating new pressures on governments to decentralize. Globalization is deconcentrating economic activity among and within countries [4].

“The global deconcentration of economic activity has not only given localities new resources but has also brought new pressures on local governments to perform their administrative tasks more effectively” [4].

“Decentralization now encompasses not only the transfer of power, authority, and responsibility within governments, but also the sharing of authority and resources for shaping public policy within society.” In this expanding concept, decentralization can be categorized into the forms of political, fiscal, administrative and economic [4].

According to Rondinelli and Cheema [4], “some studies have found no direct links between fiscal decentralization and economic growth while other studies found that fiscal decentralization is associated with lower economic growth and greater fiscal imbalance.”

“Decentralization remains a core prescription of international development organizations for promoting economic adjustment and is seen by many of its advocates as a condition for achieving sustainable economic, political, and social development and for attaining the UN’s Millennium Development Goals” [4].

National Development – Balanced Development

A lot of research has been done on the subject of balanced development within administrative decentralization, and a lot of questions were raised in order to find an answer to it: what are the state’s duties ??? in the national and balanced development? What is the role of taxation within this kind of development? And what kind of geographical organization fits best within national and balanced development in decentralized states? [7].

Messarra [7] found that balanced development starts from a strong state which will play the role of reestablishing or restoring the balance. In balanced development, the priority should be for the poor localities, and because of differentiation between those, a unified plan of balanced development on the national level is required in order to succeed. Messarra [7] mentioned that there is a strong relationship between development and belonging, and because of that, a balanced development process is essential from the perspective of national consensus.

Although national and balanced development must be viewed from a national or patriotic perspective, Messarra [7] pointed out that there is a huge political interference in the balanced development process in a way that most of the political parties will finance and provide a huge amount of money on social and health issues from unknown

sources. This process will create a huge unbalance or distortion between different localities or regions because it will prioritize people based on their political affiliation [7]. In a diversified society where some of the sectors are keen on implementing their own views and targets, the central government cannot alone impose the full-scale national development [7]. The civil society organization has a significant role to play here, especially internally within the localities according to Messara [7].

The Status Quo in Lebanon (Since 1989)

The political stability and cultural, social, and economic prosperity that followed the establishment of the Republic of Lebanon in 1943 came to a halt in 1974 with the start of the civil war. This prosperity accelerated again in the beginning of the 1990s when the country experienced steady declaration of growth following a robust economic recovery, leading to stagnation and recession in 1999 – 2000.

When the ceasefire was declared in Lebanon as a result of the Taef Accord in 1989, the political powers and the concerned people started, recognizing and absorbing that they are in the process of nation-building, and they will have to work from within the constitutional institutions, mainly The Parliament and The Council of Ministers.

Local governance and decentralization have been a major part of the development agenda in Lebanon for the past two decades, but progress has been slow. The 2002 -2006 UNDAF (United Nations Development Assistance Framework) is highly partial to decentralization as a development strategy, stating that mainstreaming the subsidiarity principle will bring government closer to the people through decentralization and strengthening of local and regional governance systems for service delivery, policy formulation and resource management, and local and regional development. According to the Common Country Assessment of 2007, administrative reform including administrative decentralization has been a recurring theme of government policy statements, but, overall, improvements have been modest, incremental, and not in line with the size and importance of the problems. The Lebanese administration is, after all, the emanation of the political system which is until now below the average level.

Expanded administrative decentralization was declared very clearly in point number 4 of the Taef Accord, the Lebanese Government will work to ensure balanced development among all Lebanese regions. In line with this, many political parties and politicians have presented their projects, points of view, and studies done and prepared on this subject, as an introduction to their participation in the Lebanese daily political life, but no one was able to directly target the essential goal of the subject, regardless of their goodwill, and all the papers took the form of literature and comparative studies.

In 2001, the Council of Ministers approved a law proposed by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities granting municipalities more powers, including the authority to prioritize and allocate resources transferred by the central government to address local needs. This cover area related to infrastructure such as public work, water and sanitation, and roads, as well as issues related to sports and civic associations, social welfare, the supervision of public schools, etc...

This project was formulated with two major objectives: First, the establishment of an effective policy and regulatory framework for decentralization as well as enhanced capacities within the ministry for designing and implementing this framework. Second, to strengthen the capacity of municipalities to effectively implement community development projects in a participatory manner, linking different stakeholders at the local level. As a follow-up of the study, a draft law on decentralization was drafted in 2003, and later on in 2011, a national commission was formed to re-study and submit to the Parliament a draft law proposal on administrative decentralization.

Many benefits can be expected from implementing expanded

administrative decentralization in Lebanon, such as enhancing the public services; promoting cultural change and development; strengthening social cohesion; increasing the level of freedom; boosting democracy and liberty of speech; protection all the communities and sects; facilitating administrative formalities; helping in tax collection; focusing on investment incentives for localities; empowering civil society organizations; creating a double autonomy (one from the center, one from the local); substantiation of the balanced development; and increase people's involvement in public affairs and establish flexibility.

The Economic, Social, Political and Cultural Potential Impact

The economic, social, cultural, political, and scientific transformations that the world has experienced in the last three decades impose a pressure tool to strongly follow administrative decentralization under any form or type depending on the specificity of the country, and the democratic development in the world is nothing but a reason for the development of the local democracy.

There is no doubt that the debate about decentralization in Lebanon with all its conditions, makes the concerned persons very attentive due to the political system and distribution of powers taking place under a very rigid corrupted central system, which is the case of Lebanon, a country known by its cultural, sectarian, and religious divisions, where the implementation of expanded administrative decentralization will have a very positive impact on decreasing rigidity and intensity of such divisions. Decentralization itself will carry public policies aiming at containing or absorbing the inequality on all levels between different regions and political and social groups, the aspect that will play a major role in the stabilization of the system.

The adoption of expanded administrative decentralization in the Taef Accord is the recognition that the central system is not anymore for Lebanon and the central government is unable to play a positive and constructive role in local and balanced development.

The absence of balance between different economic sectors in Lebanon and their contribution in the GDP is playing a negative role in hindering regional development, where 75% of the national GDP comes from the general services and commerce in comparison with 6% coming from the agricultural sector.

The 2008 Lebanese Central Bank report states that the sector of commerce and general services had 41% of the total loans in comparison with the industrial sector which got 12% and the agricultural sector which got 1%.

The same report stated that the shares of Beirut as a central capital and its suburbs in comparison with other regions was 82.7%. On the other hand, the Lebanese North got 3.4%, the Lebanese South got 3.2%, and the Bekaa also with 3.2%.

The inequality within different sectors on the regional level is an indicator that the highest rate or proportion of deprivation is in the economic field fluctuating between 67% and 56% mostly in regions such as the North, the South and the Bekaa. On a lower level the same level of deprivation is applicable in the educational field, especially in the North and in Nabatiyyeh (Governorate in Southern Lebanon), where 60% of the population of these two regions has a minimum requirement of primary education.

In the field of public health, deprivation is equal between the North, South, and the Bekaa where the North and the Bekaa constitute around 50% of the families with a low level of health services versus only 2% in the Capital Beirut.

Based on the differentiation of percentages and numbers between the Lebanese regions and the Capital Beirut which is the result of a very rigid central system, it is very clear that expanded administrative decentralization, if implemented properly, technically, and step by step, can be a good solution for the establishment of sustainable balanced development among different Lebanese regions.

But there is a very important point that the Lebanese Government

or policymakers should take into high consideration. Although the deficiency and the shortage of the Lebanese central system in meeting all the local demands and playing a positive role in the local balanced development, it seems that the contradiction between admitting this deficiency and not taking any initiative to move toward a decentralized system, is still there. The non-launch of expanded administrative decentralization is hiding a political aspect that will result in additional central problems and predicaments and will increase the conflict between different political parties and groups aiming at the full control of the central political decision which is considered one of the tools of the current political tensions, especially that the conflict is directly related from one side in a contradictory concept of the Lebanese national consensus, and from the other part in the wish of certain political groups in considering a revision in the Taef Accord.

Implications

It is noticeably clear so far that decentralization, and under any type or form, is not an easy concept to implement, and there is no single user guide to follow to reach the intended goals that a government is looking for by applying decentralization.

This does not mean that any government shall be looking only internally; a minimum international perspective is required in order for the state to be able to have the basic pillars for launching decentralization, with a condition that these pillars have to be merged with the internal tailored fit national plans in order to give positive results.

The Lebanese Government or policy makers should be careful in planning decentralization. Before accepting different visions and points of view and presenting their own vision or policy proposal, they have to look at the international perspective and check if it fits with the national status quo.

They have to look at the national human development which is so far in a lower degree and see the right plans in order to ameliorate it. Also at country specificities, such as sectarian divisions, unbalanced development, political division, the public debt, in addition to many others, are but very important points that the government should work on their elaboration as a first step, for a successful implementation of the expanded administrative decentralization. Additionally, to public sector institutionalization, which means the administrative reforms of the public sector in a way of transforming it from a corrupted and paralyzed sector to an institutional and fruitful sector, because a strong decentralization requires a strong central administration. The Lebanese Government or policymakers should focus more and more on how to engage the private sector and civil society organizations in national programs. The private sector in Lebanon is far from any partnership with the public sector due to the lack of trust in the state apparatus. They also should focus on promoting a sustainability agenda in the governmental programs. The ministerial statement, which is the program of the government, should contain materials focusing on sustainability. Governance should have a specific framework and not be subject to political clashes.

General Implications

Powers and prerogatives of the local authorities should be mentioned clearly from the perspective of local interests, and to ensure financial and administrative independence of the elected local authorities. The political will of all political parties and groups is a primary condition for decentralization implementation (the thing which is missing).

Decentralization is related to freedom, and the political will is required to ensure regional public freedom by maybe including it in the national constitution. A strong economy is a condition for successful decentralization. Lebanese Government or policy makers should pay attention that Lebanon has a rent economy and limited economy based only on providing services and limited to its capital Beirut.

Infrastructure and Demographic Implications

The Lebanese Government should define the geographical areas

once and for all and include them in the national constitution to ensure their permanency. An excellent organization of the localities' finances is required. The Parliament has a crucial role to play in the launching of the legislations and regulations related to localities.

Political and Economic Implications

It is in the necessity of having public policies in terms of national development as well as policies based on different sectors, and in the necessity of having a strong governmental consensus in parallel with a strong national economic vision. It aims at decentralizing the economic activities, where the Lebanese Government or policymakers should work on alleviating rural migration, and they should also provide an environment that attracts investments and at the same time give full and equal attention to the industrial and agricultural sectors.

Financial Implications

Public debt and the current financial situation are a threat to a successful decentralization. Hence, the Lebanese Government or policymakers should find a quick solution to the Lebanese public debt and financial situation.

The Ombudsman

Any form or type of decentralization cannot be planned or structured without including the concept of the "Ombudsmen." This authority, which will be represented by a person, should play the role of the mediator between the central government and the people represented by the local authorities, aiming at ensuring the public interest, and the proper functioning of decentralization.

To make expanded administrative decentralization work in Lebanon, the following should be implemented progressively:

- The full conviction of all Lebanese political parties in the Taef Accord as a - permanent part of the Lebanese Constitution.
- Politics-Administration dichotomy.
- Strong administrative Reform, especially starting from the center.
- Set a permanent law policy/law once and for all stating clearly the prerogatives, powers, and independence of the local authorities, and their new geographical distribution.
- Surpass the sectarian divisions.
- Financial/Banking sector reform, in a way that the economy will be equally distributed between all regions aiming at an equal or balanced development.
- Find a permanent solution for the public debt.
- Focus on empowering other sectors than the services sector, such as agricultural and industrial sectors.

If the above-mentioned steps are not taken into serious consideration and planning, if policymakers will not differentiate from the old ways of approaching a subject and dealing with it, and if field research will not be a tool to be used for drawing the path, the impact of expanded administrative decentralization tends to be negative.

Conclusion

The diversified path of development of administrative decentralization around the world and among different countries having different political systems or regimes did not stop or hinder states with strong and deep-rooted center systems, with different social, historical, and political factors, from adopting the concept of expanded administrative decentralization with the retention of legal and constitutional controls that will stop any prejudice related to the state unity.

Balanced and sustainable development are basic components of the concepts that the whole world witnessed at the beginning of the new millennium, and it became very clear that the development directly related to social, political, educational, health, and civil perspectives, are also related to the quality management of the public affairs in the countries. With the development of concepts at international and national levels, especially those in parallel with deconcentration and

decentralization, in addition to the increase of the concept of participation in public life through civil society organizations and others, it is possible for any country following any type of political system or regime to adopt decentralization as an administrative choice for many reasons, especially if those countries have to face developmental challenges that are usually imposed by a social, economic, and even technological entourage carrying a high level of distortions and hidden dangerous surprises.

If in Lebanon, the political will is available today to launch the expanded administrative decentralization, it is especially important for the policymakers to keep in mind that this project should be a part of a whole change that will include the entire administrative structure aiming at adopting a decentralized system at the departmental level (casa) and this should be included within the Lebanese Constitution and laws. On the other hand, the central government or the central state keeps for itself, the entire sovereign functions as a guarantee for its unity the simple reason that a strong decentralized system requires a strong central state. In addition, the central state should also enjoy the control, even if it is a post-control system through local court representation.

Finally, it is still debatable if Lebanon should go directly for the implementation of expanded administrative decentralization, or should adopt as a first step, administrative deconcentration which is available now, but should be supported with better elements. This is a very important dilemma that most of the general public, political parties, technocrats, and civil society organizations are still concerned with, and it is due to the lack of awareness and the misconception about decentralization. This a worthy starting point, where policy makers along with the Lebanese Government and concerned stakeholders can embark on the journey of one thousand miles.

Competing interests: The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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