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Role of SMC in Public School Governance: Decision Making and Implementation

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Article Info

Abstract
This study aims to discuss the School Management Committee's (SMC) role in public school governance. It raises the question of whether SMC plays a critical role in making decisions on school governance and putting them into action as envisioned by decentralization policy or if it is more concerned with minor issues in school management than with school governance. Although the government has implemented a decentralization policy to give SMC full authority to govern schools, this paper argues that SMC makes only a few decisions on extracurricular activities and financial management, based on in-depth interviews with the head teacher and members of SMC. The majority of school governance rules and regulations are still directed by district education and ministry, as they were in the past. The majority of school governance rules and regulations are still obligatory through district education and ministry, as they were in the top-down style of school government.

1. Introduction

From the dawn of human existence, informal education has been a part of Nepalese education. People used to obtain their education from their daily activities, observations, and experiences. This type of informal education or learning centered on how people could manage their lives more quickly. Education was later formalized through various social, cultural, and government institutions. In the modern world, schools are the instruments of formal education. Institutions of legal Education can also be divided into many categories.

On the other hand, traditional schools are divided into private and public schools based on ownership and administration. Because the state or government administers public schools, they are referred to as such. Similarly, private schools are run by private companies with private funds. Although the government has established specific standards to govern public and private schools, the management approach, practice, and structure vary. The fundamental differences between private and public education - voluntarism and government control - are discussed, and their implications for authority, consensus, and school dedication (Salganik & Karweit, 1982) [13]. They say that private and public schools rely on distinct types of agreement and management: in the private school, value consensus and traditional authority are used, whereas, in the public school, political consensus and legal/rational authority are used.

The structure and processes that provide accountability, transparency, responsiveness, the rule of law, stability, equity and inclusiveness, empowerment, participation, and a value system are referred to as governance. Good governance relates to policies and practices that are responsible and accountable for attaining objectives. School governance refers to the collection of roles, training, and processes utilized by a school to offer strategic direction and guarantee that resources are handled appropriately and with accountability. As a result, this article aims to look into the practices of public school governance in terms of establishing norms and procedures for responsibility and accountability. One of the most prevalent, if unconsidered, opinions in debates on public school governance is: Get the schools out of politics (Allison, 1995) [1].

Teachers, academics, textbook authors, superintendents, custodians, and other school personnel. Without question, school governance should contribute to the quality of education given and should strive to serve the best interests of students, parents, and teachers in a democratic, transparent, and efficient manner (Lennon & White, 1997) [7]. Best practice necessitates a consensus-based governance strategy that includes all stakeholders.

On the other hand, a rigid bureaucratic model could stifle efficiency and adaptability. Public funding and transparent democratic decision-making are inextricably linked. This argument is especially significant in urban areas like Kathmandu Metropolitan City, where many public schools compete with many private schools.

Objectives

At a theoretical level, it's critical to consider how public schools are managed in shifting policy: bottom-up rather than top-down, and decentralized rather than centralized. As a result, this research aims to assess public school governance policies and practices, with a particular focus on the role of SMC in controlling and managing public school governance in Kathmandu Valley's periphery schools.

Methods

The research is qualitative. Qualitative research is an independent branch of study. The word qualitative research is surrounded by a complicated web of ideas, concepts, and assumptions. The many methodologies and approaches that belong under the genre of qualitative research, such as case study, politics and ethics, participatory inquiry, interviewing, participant observation, visual methods, and interpretive analysis, each have their own distinct and rich literature (Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln Y.S., 2005:2) [3]. Case studies, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, cultural texts and productions, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts are examples of qualitative research materials that reflect ordinary and difficult moments and meanings in humans. Case studies, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, cultural texts and productions, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts are all examples of qualitative research materials that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in people's lives ((Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln Y.S., 2005:3) [3]. The evaluation of existing policies and practices in school governance is done in two methods in this study. The policy papers, including the Education Act, were evaluated to analyze the policies on school governance. Through an in-depth interview with the head teacher and a member of the SMC, the perception and practices of school governance were investigated based on the policy review.

Limitation

This study focuses solely on SMC duties at the school level, with a focus on decision-making and execution. This case study of a single public school in the Kathmandu valley's outskirts. Two interviews were conducted with the head teacher and a member of the SMC to obtain the information needed to complete the study's goal. Because this study only looked at one public school, the results cannot be applied to other Nepalese schools or public school governance.

Review Part
School Governance: Theories

The organization and control of public schools is the subject of school governance. The relationship between school administrators, school boards, and the general public is addressed by school governance (Rada, 1988) [11]. According to him, three perspectives on school governance have dominated the field: continuous competition theory, decision output theory, and dissatisfaction theory. Rada goes into each of these three theories in depth (1988) [1]. Ideas are explained as follows, as Rada's publications (1988) [11] mentioned. The continuous competition theory concerns citizen participation in school governance and citizen control over it. The congruence between the delivery of public services and the public's aspirations is the subject of the decision output theory. The link between critical events in school governance is the subject of the discontent theory. Mueller (1979, p. 1) describes the public choice theory as "...the economic study of nonmarket decision making, or simply the application of economics to political science," as cited in Rada (1988) [11]. "The issues of [public choice] are those of classic political theory and political science, such as voting, political parties, constitutions, the just society, power, bargaining, and coalition formation," according to Abrams (1980, p. 1). (Rada, 1988) [11]. As a result, various ideas exist to explain school governance in multiple ways. The difference in theoretical positions or agency perspectives leads to real-life practices in terms of school governance.

Policy provisions on the issues
Historical development of School Governance in Nepal

The creation of the Gurukul educational system in Nepal marked the beginning of the country's history of school governance. Initially, Hindu holy writings governed and controlled the educational system. This governance structure has come a long way and is now firmly established as a reliable instrument for regulating educational practices. The historical development of school governance can be examined in the following five periods, according to the CERID 2008 report.

The Early Period

Concerns about religion played a significant impact on the social and institutional sectors. Religious, philanthropic concern and voluntary philanthropy were all crucial factors in the administration of Gurukuls, Gumba, and Bihar at the time. Religious codes ruled and controlled all schools and educational institutions.

The Rana Period (1846-1950)

The Ranas were the only ones who had access to schooling at first. Ranas' core ideals were captured and drove the entire teaching process. There was no legal provision for establishing a school from the community's perspective. The first tangible example of state-level school governance was the establishment of the Department of Education in 1857. (Sharma 19986). Most importantly, Tri-Chandra College was founded in 1918 AD, providing a unique opportunity for ordinary people to obtain an education. The Rana ruler issued an educational Estihar in 1939 for the management of education in the kingdom, which included school management committees, school inspections, public participation in school

matters, school fees, and so on.

Awakening era (1951-1971 AD)
Following the emergence of democracy, educational development accelerated. Several educational commissions, plans, and laws shaped the school governance structure. Those policies, planning commissions, and Acts chained and guided rampant academic development.

Centralized Period (1971-1990 AD)
After 1960, the Shah family administered the country, known as the Ranas, and instituted the Panchayat system of governance, devoid of political parties. The critical tool for controlling national education was the introduction of the National Education System Plan in 1971. This proposal brought the governing and education systems under one umbrella. As part of NESP's support for systematic school governance, new educational Acts and supporting regulations were enacted.

Reformative Era (1990 AD - present)
Following the restoration of democracy in 1910, the first elected governmental body, the National Education Commission, was established with the participation of various educational specialists to propose educational policies. Aside from free education up to elementary school, an essential primary education program and a primary education development project were carried out to increase access to primary school. Local bodies such as the DDC, VDC, and Municipality were established under the Local Self-Government Act of 1998. The educational system then increased the scope and engagement of people in school management. Similarly, a PTA was shown in schools to encourage parents to become more involved in their children's education. Local stakeholders set school goals, strategies, and administrative processing through DEP, VEP, and SMC. By September 10, 2008, local stakeholders had taken over the management of approximately 7000 schools. This demonstrates that the school's governing system included communities running their school with their participation. As a result, this period is known as the liberal democratic governance doctrine.

Current policy provision
Nepal's current school governance is constrained by several policies, statutes, rules, regulations, and customs. Here are some of the provisions specified in various plans and commissions:

Provisions in education Act 2028 and Education Rules 2059, with the latest amendments
- The establishment of a District Education Committee with clearly defined the functions, responsibilities, and powers. The Village Education Committee in each VDC is responsible for supervising and managing the school and establishing coordination among the numerous schools within the VDC (Education Act 2028, Article 11). (Article 11K of the Act of 2028)
- A school's management may be delegated to local governments or communities. (Article 11Q of Act 2028)
- Provision for forming a school management committee, including procedures, roles, responsibilities, and powers. (Article 12 of Act 2028)
- The Teacher Service Commission (TSC) Provisions

appoint a teacher to a vacant position in community schools.
- The Nepalese government recognizes the places and proposes promoting such teachers as established in such posts (Act 2028, Article 11B).
- Provisions relating to examination operation and control (Primary, lower secondary, and secondary education certificate examination with the process of forming board and their duties and rights.) (Chapter 8, Article 39-46) Education Rules 2059.

The Education Act of 2028 and the Education Rules of 2059 are the critical legislation that has correctly bounded the governing system in Nepal, particularly at the school level. Both the Act and the Rule clearly define the roles, responsibilities, functions, and rights of relevant stakeholders, from local to central. Various councils, departments, planning commissions, coordination committees, and other entities are managed methodically for the appropriate allocation of power, resulting in a more successful school governance process. There is no misunderstanding regarding the functions of various government agencies from the local level to the national level because of the fixed tasks and rights outlined in the education act and rule?

Provisions mentioned in SSRP (2066-2072)
- Parliament governs at the national level, while line ministries carry out the mandate. Similar linkages between governance and management entities are anticipated to emerge at the subnational level when municipal governments emerge.
- The primary responsibilities of the controlling bodies are to interpret the strategic intent by establishing program objectives and targets. It also develops and implements an implementation plan.
- The local government will be the governance body at the school, while the SMC will be the management body.
- The ECD program will be expanded in both schools and communities in conjunction with community-based NGOs.

A regulatory framework will specify the governance, managerial quality, and financial functions of an institutional (private) school. As a result, mechanisms will be implemented to improve collaboration between private and public schools. I discovered that the central body or government targets local communities for enhanced management and good governance of the school while observing numerous provisions specified in the SSRP. For successful administration, management bodies such as the Regional Education Directory, the Department of Education, and the District Education Office are more interested in collaborating with local communities and local INGOs. The true goal is to include local stakeholders in successful school governance procedures. SMC was given a prominent position in this plan for systematic management, and it was recognized as a more powerful body.

Provisions in National Curriculum Framework 2063
- The NCF has prioritized the decentralization of governing authority. Education governance will be a shared responsibility of the federal and state governments, it said.
- SMC will continue to be in charge of school management. The focus will be on school-based leadership that is

accountable to parents and students. The school's community management program will be promoted.

Central Governance
- The Ministry of Education will continue to charge for policy development, coordination, planning, budgeting, and monitoring. The Department of Education will be in charge of managing and administering school education.
- Technical institutions such as the CDC, Review Office, NECD, HSEB, and Examination Board shall carry out the curricular provisions standard-setting and teacher development and examination functions.

Local Governance
- We are developing plans such as school mapping, situation analysis, school establishment, and upgrading, among other things.
- I am instructing the VDC/ Municipality in charge of primary education.

School Governance: Practices
All around the world, including in Nepal, school is the smallest unit of formal education at the community level. Because it is placed at the community level, residents are responsible for what the school accomplishes and its work under established standards. It is a decentralized kind of educational practice in this respect. Decentralization and community participation in the governance of school systems at the district level, as described by Gamage (1993) [4], is a notion that originated in the United States. Decentralization of Education to local groups and governance by local education authorities is a concept that originated in England and Wales. Although the British and American models have significantly influenced Australian education institutions, they have long resisted change. Several attempts to decentralize education to the local authority or regional levels, according to Gamage (1993) [4], have failed. However, from the mid-1970s, a new ethos in the Australian school system emerged: decentralization of education to regional levels, devising significant power and authority to the school level, and community engagement in school governance (Gamage, 1994) [4]. Nepalese local school education and government appear to be affected by worldwide practices, notably those of neighboring countries India and China. This decentralized approach to schooling encourages residents, parents, and teachers to participate in school management and governance.

Allison (1995) [1] emphasizes the control of American Education in the context of America. The subject of who governs the public schools is raised; as he puts it,

"Local, state, and federal governments all have control over public schools under our federal system. Although public schools are usually thought of as a state responsibility under the "reserve clause" of the thirteenth amendment to the constitution, most local school control has traditionally been done at the local level. "As a result, policies are formulated at one class at the center or the local level. These policies are implemented through different mechanisms of state apparatus. Essentially, the state's formal processes are used to enforce educational policies. Such a mechanism might exist at all levels, from the central to the local. According to Allison (1995) [1], local boards of education constitute the formal governance of schools. Still, power elites who are not necessarily part of the traditional governance structure of public schools wield a great deal of influence and authority

over educational policy in American communities. The primary consequence of adopting discretionary justice as a conceptual model for school governance, according to Manley-Casmir (1974) [9], is the explicit shift in perspective that it necessitates. It offers a unique yet systematic perspective on administration. It emphasizes the pervasiveness of discretion in administration and the difficulty that preference poses - the lack of transparency. Its concern for substantive and procedural fairness, as well as protection against injustice, is openly normative. It has significant implications for administrative practice, prospective school administrator training, and school administration research (Manley-Casimir, 1974) [9]. Opportunities to improve school administrators' abilities may aid in the emergence of discretionary justice.

Managing schools at the local level have become one of Nepal's decentralized practices. The government has given community members the capacity to organize local resources and appropriately run schools through several programs. About the literature on school development, Carney, Bista, and Agergaard (2007) [2] state that stakeholders, having not been fully participated in the initial discussion about the nature and shape of reform, bring an understandably wide variety of motives to community management. Many ambitious principals and School Management Committee (SMC) members have been motivated to replicate the private or 'boarding' school model, where their unique interests can be promoted. Those parents who have displayed a good attitude have done so because they care about their children. The community management discourse devalues the state's involvement in education, teachers' employment as state workers, and children's identities as citizens of the same collective national entity. Many educational studies imply that teachers are one of the most critical groups in every school reform effort. They must be involved and committed to the reform from the beginning, and, like any other interest group, they must understand the benefits of change in terms of their circumstances. The project in Nepal appears to be designed to undermine teachers' independence and autonomy, and data from other contexts suggests that such approaches are unlikely to result in significant increases in classroom learning. In a highly politicized country, this type of community administration may appeal to the impoverished, elite, and professional classes (Carney, Bista & Agergaard, 2007) [2]. With highly politicized educational practices, Nepal's current social and political situation is similarly in flux. These approaches may have detrimental consequences for Nepalese public school governance.

Analysis and Interpretation Part
Role of SMC in Public School Governance
A school management committee is a formal group that oversees many of the school's operations. The SMC has various rights and obligations under the Decentralized Education Act. SMC's functions in governing schools in terms of policy formation and implementation are discussed in this section.

Form of School Governance
In Nepal, there are two types of schools. One is privately run, while the community runs the other. The society runs the school where I studied. The government, on the other hand, provides practically all financial assistance. The entire obligation falls on the District Education Officer, an official

government mechanism or authority in charge of school-level education under the Ministry of Education. However, at the community level, a school management committee (SMC) can be found.

Role of SMC in infrastructures Development

Various issues are at the center of Nepal's continuing discussion over public school governance. One of the most significant parts of such a debate is infrastructure. When schools are decentralized and given to the community, the premise is that better infrastructure can be created. The community is intended to govern the school, with SMC as its representation. On the other hand, the school is receiving funding for infrastructure development. In the case of the school under investigation, the head teacher's name was spelled:

> *The school has received further financial support from the government. The government of Nepal provides salaries to all teaching staff of the school. Ministry of Education also provides grants for block construction to avail infrastructure for classrooms and other provisions. However, some fund is managed through the community as well.*

As mentioned by the head teacher, the school infrastructure is built by the government and the community. It indicates that the government has played a significant role in public schools. However, public schools are now being managed through cooperation between the government and society. School Management Committee (SMC) is the representative of the community.

In this study, the role of the community in school infrastructure development is explored through one of the members of SMC. The SMC member described the infrastructure and educational performance of schools as:

> *SMC has its role in different spheres of school management. However, it plays an essential role in financial management. Students of our school are performing very well. The school focuses on study-teaching/learning, discipline, and health and hygiene. Due to this priority, our school has become number 1 in the ranking of the southern belt schools of Kathmandu valley and got the prize. SMC's role is essential in such achievement. SMC plays multiple roles in school management. As a member of SMC, I have played a role in many educational activities. Among them, I find myself proud of my contribution to the construction of school buildings.*

Thus public schools are run with the close participation of community members. However, the role of the community; SMC is limited to different activities confined to school rather than policy and practices. For instance, the school runs various activities, including extracurricular activities, in coordination with a community that is helping in achieving educational excellence. School Management System

Well managed school performs very well. This is the common perception of people in the context of Nepal. After the decentralization policy, public schools of Nepal are operated through joint coordination among teachers, parents, and students. The head teacher, management committee, and government representative comprise the joint initiative. In the case of public schools, this kind of governance can be observed. The head teacher of a public school shared his experiences as:

> *There are different agencies involved in school management as well as governance. Parent Teachers Association (PTA) is one of the active associations in school management and control. In addition, there is a school management committee (SMC) functioning based on the government education act.*

The head teacher government has formulated an act for school governance under which this PTA is formed. It has also been helpful for the active participation of the community in school management. However, the school has to rely on government mechanisms to run the school. The SMC member shared his experiences as:

> *As a member of SMC, I am usually invited to almost activities of the school. I have been a member of SMC for a very long-since 1990. In the past, I also participated in the committee as a teacher representative. I learned many things during this long-run practice. I participate in budget preparation and planning of educational activities, and so on.*

Thus, the public school is managed through community members' close and active participation. But activities are confined to minor activities which are almost regular rather than policy formulation and implementation. However, in a sense, the public schools are managed through combined efforts of the community, school family, and government.

Public School Governance: Policy and Practices

As we discussed in the review section, it has been observed that public school governance in Nepal has shifted from state to community. Through decentralization, the power to handle schools is handed over to the community from the state. SMC is the representative of the community, which plays a vital role in formulating and implementing schools policies and programs. Previously all policies were developed and implemented through the government and education ministry. Schools were directed to enforce the policies. But now, SMC can play its role in some aspects of policy formulation and implementation in governing schools. The head teacher of the school shared similar kind of experiences here:

> *Overall policies are formulated and implemented through the Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal. However, some internal policies required to govern schools are made at the school level. This process also considers the national policy frame while formulating such policies.*

However, head teacher mentions that some activity-related policies can be formed through SMC to run different activities and improve the quality of education. He said:

> *School is managed at the community level. Parents, teachers, and students are responsible for improving the school environment and quality of education. When these agencies become reliable, the school can be managed very well. This school should take its own responsibility.*

But regular monitoring should be done by the government. The role of monitoring and evaluation can also be given to SMC. The current provision of monitoring and evaluation is given to SMC. But it has not been effective till now. At the school level, teachers also play a role in decision-making. They are asked while making the critical decision on school governance.

The school governance at the school level is thus not only managed through the community but also monitored itself. However, it was found ineffective. Still, school governance relies on government policies and programs. As mentioned by the head teacher:

SMC and teachers follow the law enforced by the government. These law is made transparent for all stakeholders. Community participation is possible whenever it is necessary. If authority is given to SMC, I think it would be better. SMC can regularly monitor the governance at the local level.

As explained by the head teacher, the decentralization policy does not fully allow teachers to formulate policies and programs. The school further seeks more authority to govern the school. However, SMC members realized that it has full power to manage the school. He narrates:

The school invites me to each event of schools. I, therefore, know many of the school's governing rules and regulations. SMC plays a vital role in teacher selection, including managing the budget. I am also continuing to take responsibility for everything assigned to me. In many decision-making processes of the school, SMC plays a vital role. However, SMC is practicing the back and forth a way of decision-making. SMC discusses the agendas at first and then takes them among teachers. After discussion among teachers, it comes to SMC, which makes final decisions. However, the monitoring and evaluation system of schools is fragile.

Thus, current school governance is focused on the role of teachers and SMC. In a sense, authority is delegated to the local community as per the values of decentralization. However, SMC does have the power to formulate a new education policy that autonomously runs a school. It is realized that the current practice at the local level is not so effective, monitoring and evaluation system, for example. As reported by the respondents, the basic infrastructures of the school are set up by the school itself. The school, incoordination, generates the support required to establish such infrastructures with SMC and parents. In addition, a significant portion of the asset is aided by the government. The governance system differs as the responsibility is given to different agencies. As reported by a head teachers and SMC member, public schools in Nepal are also managed by the community itself. As said, SMC plays an essential role in managing school. In other countries of the world, schools are organized in a different ways. As mentioned by Allison (1995) [1], the education system in America is also not unquestionable. He says that the governance of American Education controls the public schools. In our federal system, control over public schools is shared by local state and national governments. Although public schools are usually thought of as a state responsibility under the "reserve clause"

of the loath amendment to the constitution. Traditionally most of the control of local schools has taken place at the local level.

Conclusive Part
Conclusions
The policy documents reflect that SMC can play a vital role in school governance. However, in practice, the role of SMC is confined only to minor things related to regular activities of the school. The school's infrastructures are set up mainly by the schools receiving support from the government and local communities. In this context, public school governance in Nepal is controlled by government mechanisms in terms of policy formulation and implementation. However, in some cases, SMC and head teachers are jointly struggling to manage this challenge without degrading the quality of education. In Nepal, public school governance is gradually shifting from state to community as people's participation as explained by the continuous competition theory that school governance is concerned with the level of citizen participation in school governance and the number of control citizens have over school governance (Rada, 1988) [11]. However, the authority of public school governance is given to the community; the current practice of school governance shows that school governance is still top-down and state-controlled, with a minimum level of shared course among SMC, schools, and governments.

Implications
This research implicate that the power delegated to the community, SMC as a representative, is not entirely practiced in policymaking and its implementation. Therefore, the authority commissioned through the decentralization act and the local autonomy act, the right to formulate the necessary policy and implement it should be given to the community. Whatever policies are developed through actions are not practiced at the local level. This should be monitored and improved through a state mechanisms.

Areas for further research
While through this micro-level study, it is found that the decentralized policy is not well-practiced at the school level while governing the school. Therefore, further studies can be done on the participation of SMC members in school governance, the decision-making process, and implementation process, coordination between head teachers, teachers, SMC, students, and parents.

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