Decentralized School Management in Government Schoolsin Nepal: Policy for Quality Improvement

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Abstract

This research article gives a holistic view of the status of school management committee in our country.Education is one of the basic needs of human beings which has brought changes all over the world. Today, we are around the formal schooling system for which school level is the first step. We are also in the hold of globalization of education and social structure for which we have to compete globally for employment. In such situation, the system and management of education should be of global standard.School management has been a kind of burning issue at the present situation in education system. The state has to followthe trends of decentralization of education. But in Nepal, there is fully centralized education system. Due to this reason, it is thought that the state is the only responsible body for overall education sector. The SMC members are not fully authentic bodies in Nepalese schools. They have no more interest about the problems related to school. They are mostly politically related and also there is absence of true guardianship of SMC members. Most of the SMC members' children do not study in public schools but they are selected with political sources. As a whole school management committee has not supported for the improvement of teaching learning activities. They have no any plan to raise funds and support the school. Most of the children in public schools are also from lower class people. The guardians also cannot support their children by providing necessary things. As a consequence, the SLC result of public schools is very poor except some rare cases. SMC members are not found capable of taking management responsibility of schools. The state also has not fixed any criteria to become SMC members. This research study has found clear obstacle in education system of the politicalized group in management sector. Political interference should not be given emphasis and priority in education sector. Moreover, politics in education sector should be strongly discouraged to make public sector responsibletowards school management in public schools in Nepal. This research study tries to reply the research question "What type of management at schools should be developed to improve the quality of education?" The general objective of this study is to analyse the overall status of the school management committee (SMC) in public schools in Nepal.

Keywords : School ManagementCommittee, School Based Management, Global Trends in School Management, Decentralization in Education,

Introduction

In the past, for a long time, education remained in the periphery of informal education. In the informal system of education, the children would take education by gathering around a teacher. The teacher alone would be the full source of knowledge and education. Such type of education would be in local level, in every village or community. About ancient education system, (Sharma, 1986) has stated, "Since ancient time, in Nepal, the education

system was related to family based on social value system." The education system was related to religion, character, culture, ideal life, philosophy and belief. Such type of education would be transferred from one generation to another. At that time, father's tradition would be followed by sons and mother's tradition would be transferred to daughters. It was known as traditional system of education which was also professional.Education is the basic need to human beings which provides necessary skills to form social structure and develop social behavior.

In Hindu community there was Vedic system of education. In Buddhist community the education would be managed in monastery and Muslim children would take education in Madarsha. They were not institutionalized like that of today's schools and colleges. They had developed their own collective management system. But the learners would be in good discipline. Ancient rishis and saints were highly skillful teachers of ancient time. Today we have formal education system for which there is school management committee in schools. It is expected that school management committee should play a key role in providing quality education and strengthening relationship between the school and local communities.

It has been necessary to play a pivotal role in maximizing physical and human resource through strong linkages with parents, teachers, students and other stakeholders. School Management Committee (SMC) should be involved to bring positive changes in schools through commitment and consensus. School academic environment is influenced by the poor economic status of the parents, low retention of teachers and unfavourable school environment. SMC members have to work as change agents and contribute in the school governance, building strong linkages with institutions, parental involvement, monitoring of teachers and school finances to lead the schools ahead for improvements.

History of Nepalese Education

Wikipedia, The free Encyclopedia has stated, "Education in Nepal was long based on home schooling and Gurukuls.In the history of Nepalese education, it dates bac first formal school was established in 1853 but was intended to the elites. The birth of the Nepalese democracy in 1951 opened the classrooms to a more diverse population"from Lichhavi period. There was development of art, culture and education. At that time they used Sanskrit language. About the education during the time of Lichhavi period (Bista, 2001) wrote, "During Lichhavi period, Kathmandu valley society clearly had a substantial body of highly skilled and professional labourors including engineers and architects. Their skills were demonstrated not only within Nepal, but also in Tibet." At that time institution of higher education sector were Buddhist and people used to go for education in Nalanda and Vikramshila Universities, in India. In the past, educational institutions were locally managed. But it started to be religious clash which brought instability in education institutions(Bista, (2001) has mentioned, "Buddhist institutions were attacked and the products of their work destroyed, with widespread book burnings."

In Nepal, there was no any system of formal education for a long time. During the time of Shah Kings, Ranas came to power and became Prime Minster who were not much more

interested in education. But also, during the time of Junga Bahadur Rana, formal school education seems to have begun in Nepal. Junga Bahadur Rana went to visit Britain in 1850, to increase his relationship closer to the English people. He was highly impressed by the development of Britain and the life style and skills of British people. Regarding this situation (Sharma, 1986) has mentioned "When Junga Bahadur Rana returned back to Nepal from Britain, he started English education for Rana children, at Thapathali, in 1853". But there was no access to general public in this school, except the Rana children. And afterwards it was opened to the general public and developed by the name of Durbar High Schools(Bista, 2001) has written, "The palace school was accessible only to Rana children."

Changes in Management Sector

In 1951, the Rana reign came to an end and there was development of democratic system of government. After this situation changes came in education sector. Regarding this situation (Sharma, 2003) has written. "After the political changes of 2050, government allowed to open schools in public sector and private and community/public schools started to be established. There would be school management committee and it would manage teachers, finance, school buildings as well as overall development of the school.

In every school there would be separate SMC members and they could hire and fire the teachers as well as fix the salary so that every teaching staff would be responsible for quality education. This situation continued till 1971, before the National Education System plan (NESP) 1971, was applied. But National Education System Plan (NESP) snatched all the rights of people and School Management Committee (SMC) members and centralized the education system of Nepal. Education Act, 1971 has started, "The goal of NESP was to strengthen national unity and intellectual tradition by bringing together different old and new educational systems." (As cited in Sharma, 2003). But whatever educational goals may be, SMC became meaningless and it was dissolved.

The centralized education system could not monitor the schools and education system became weak. It was felt that the school graduates previously were stronger academicallythan the new ones after the change in education management system before 1971.

After the change of 1950, country came to a new face in education. Regarding this situation, (Bista, 2001) has mentioned as follows:

There was no real education policy and the functions of educational administration were dispersed and uncoordinated. Enrollment at existing schools and colleges began to swell beyond their capacities causing more such institutions to come into being. But there was still no widespread sense of the general importance of education for the country as a whole, and there was only a very primitive kind of education policy. People did not look for any benefit from education apart from the assurance of white color jobs, which they expected to be provided in unlimited numbers.

At that time people believed in fatalism which showed differences between Nepal and other advanced counties. People of marginal group, started to think about the change in education to develop manpower. There was demand of strong technical education. As a result the model of education was changed and it was National Education System Plan (NESP) 1971 which centralized education system with same text books and planned exam but SMC was dissolved which seems to be problematic to monitor overall school activities and provide quality education.

Regarding the problem of quality education (Sharma, 2003) has mentioned "The investment made in community school does not seem more fruitful. There is increase in investment but decrease in quality. Everybody wants to get his or her child admitted in private schools because of their quality education and satisfactory result:" SMC members are expected to stand for the quality of the education in the schools in which they are not effective in the delivery of quality education due to weak monitoring system. So, changing management from public to state has brought weak management and school monitoring system in Nepalese Schools.

Importance of SMC in Schools

Today we are living in the era of globalization. Our activities and life styles are affected and controlled by globalization. Today there is globalization of education and our school education system should also be of global standard. For overall development of school, school environment plays vital role. School environment becomes better if management is efficient. It is to be noted that school environment and education system in school depend on the activity of school management committee. The SMC should take overall responsibility of the management of the school and monitor the activities of teachers and other staff. The SMC members should be capable to observe the classroom activities of teachers and students.

It has been necessary to face the challenges of globalization of education. This situation has enforced us to reform and manage education system in the global standard. To maintain quality of education, school environment should be better for which strong management is needed. For this, the role of SMC is vital. In such context, this research study becomes beneficial for education policy planners. This research study has academic, policy, social and management implication. Moreover, this research study gives knowledge about how to improve the quality, management and capacity of the stakeholders in schools to face the global challenges in education sector.

handover the responsibility of management of school to SMC is the sense of decentralization of education. Regarding this situation, Paudel (2009:18) has stated, "The central government's failure to control and regulate all the administrative activities due to the over population and the proliferation of the mass media has called forth the notion of decentralization." It is tried to show that to give the responsibility of schools to SMC is also a step of following decentralization.

Decentralization gives priority to the local level. About this situation, His Majesty's Government (HMG, 2002) has mentioned, "The tenth plan will be oriented towards assigning the responsibility of school management to the local level as it has been necessary to make education more competitive."(Banjade, 2006) found, "Community managed schools were in better position, as compared to their coordination prior to handover of, management (P.105). In community managed schools, the school management committee was strong. The teachers were responsible towards the improvement of quality of education.

About the importance of SMC, Research Centre for Education Innovation and Development (CERID, 2004) has written, "Nationalization of schools was considered a big mistake. Realizing the mistake, the seventh amendment of the education act provisioned the policy of developing school management responsibility to communities".(Paudel, 2009) conducted his M. Phil. research on management transferred and no management transferred schools and found that the school environment well and quality of education was better in management transferred school than the school with no management transferred.It is known that nationalization of education in 1971, completely dissolved, declined, and, reduced the involvement of community in schools. And again, the policy of transferring the management of school to community has begun since 2002.

In some countries handling over the management of schools to communities is known as self-managing schools. About self-management of schools(Soga, 2004) has mentioned, "The education system in South Africa has changed after 1994 and is now based on the worldwide trend towards self-managing schools. The trend implies moving away from centralized, bureaucratic control of education towards the self-management of schools." It is thought that schools run effectively and better if school communities are given control of their own affairs. Local people's participation is needed to run schools smoothly.

For the transformation of schools, teacher's role is most vital. To support this view, Taylor (Thompsan & Bogatch, 1998) have argued, "Transformation of schools from traditionally non democratic structure to modern democratic institutions presents a serious challenge to schools. It requires that teachers be empowered by increasing their decision making power at school level." (As cited in Khoza, 2004).

The SMC members should have played proper role to select the best teachers at schools. Regarding the importance of teachers, (Shrestha, 2004) has written, "The performance of the teaching staff is related on the performance of the students. So, educational experts believe that the satisfied and dedicated teaching personnel are pivotal for the production of qualified graduates."

About education (Bhattarai, 2006) has written, "People showed their dissatisfaction on existing education system. Although there is an expansion of public educational institutions and increased investment year by year in it; yet the quality of public education is deteriorating." (Gaynor, 1998) has stated as follows:

Education in Nepal is full of problems and challenges. Regarding such type of situation (World Bank, 2001) has stated," Educational development is potentially a key factor in

reducing the incidence of poverty, raising overall levels of labor productivity and economic growth and improving the quality of life through empowering the population to take informed decisions across a wide range of activities. In each of thesearea, Nepal is logging.

About the performances of the educational system (World Bank, 2001) has analyzed the points as follows:

1. Levels of literacy and educational attainment remain low.
2. While access to all levels of educational system has increased, participation remains unequal across income and social groups and the benefits of public subsidies are inequitably distributed.
3. The quality of education is low.
4. High repetition and dropout rates throughout the system are wasting valuable resources.
5. The system does not serve the labor market well.
6. The teaching force is highly politicized.
7. Changes in education rules and regulations are frequently made.
8. Former community schools, nationalized after 1971, are now largely viewed as Government owned schools over which communities have little control.
9. The education system is lacking in professionalism and education leadership
10. Management of the education system is highly centralized and lacksprofessional vision and leadership at most levels.
11. Poor teacher management is a major cause of poor quality education,
12. Weak implementation of policies has created confusion and gaps in the system.
13. Public resources for education are centralized and inappropriately distributed (Danida, 2001).

The financing of education is a major challenge in developing countries. Constraints on public resources seriously limit the ability of government to respond to the demand for education."About critical issues in secondary education (World Bank, 1994) has written as follows:

I) The quality of the educational process is inferior and its efficiency is very low.
II) The majority of the school buildings reflect the poverty of the communities they serve, lacking even the most basic amenities such as drinking water, sanitation and electricity.
III) Teacher effectiveness, another critical element in providing qualityeducation is low in Nepal.
IV) The distribution of educational opportunities for children from different background is highly inequitable.
V) The government has not invested enough in secondary education (World Bank, 2001).

SMC has to face all these cases and issues to function in an effective way.(Sharma, 2005) has quoted from the Report of National Education Commission, 1992, about educational management as follows:

There is less responsibility in educational management. School doesn't run up to the fixed time and attendance is less. The things are not well managed. Classrooms are dirty and there is not proper management of sitting in classrooms. Teaching material is not well managed. There is no proper evaluation of teachers' qualification and capacity. The District Education Offices (DEO) are functioning only for salary and transfer of teachers. The school supervisions have no any fixed programs. The concerned official also does not do any fixed work. The District Education Offices (DEO) and Regional Educational Offices (REO) are not independent in their work. The decentralized management has not been applied practically.

The same situation as mentioned above still exists in Nepal(Sharma, 2005) has mentioned from the proposed concept paper of working rule and working plan about school education, 2001 has mentioned from the Concept Paper of Working Rule and Working Plan about School Education, 2001, as follows:

According to the seventh amendment of education act (2000) to manage the management construction by law there is management of an elected chairman from among the guardians of the public schools. There are also debates of politicalized situation if the process of election is applied. The process of election or the agreement of the majority of guardian will be the best process. In this way, the literature also shows that the SMC should be strong to run schools smoothly.

Implementing School- Based Management

School-based management (SBM) has become a very popular movement over the past decade. Despite the clear commitment of governments and international agencies to the education sector, efficient and equitable access is still proving to be elusive to many, especially for girls, indigenous peoples and other poor and marginalized groups.There are many international initiatives that are focusing on these access issues with great commitment, but, even where the vast majority of children do have access to education facilities, the quality of that education is often very poor. This has become increasingly apparent from the scores from international learning tests in which most students from developing countries fail to excel. Evidence has shown that merely increasing resource allocation – without also introducing institutional reforms – to the education sector will not increase equity or improve the quality of education. (Caldwell, 2005) has mentioned," School based management is the systematic decentralization to the school level authority and responsibility to make decisions on significant matter, related to school operations within a centrally determined framework of goals, policies curriculum, standards and accountability."

Governments around the world are introducing a range of strategies aimed at improving the financing and delivery of education services, and have recently added an emphasis on improving quality as well as increasing quantity (in terms of enrollment rates). The

decentralization of educational decision-making is one such strategy. Advocates of this strategy maintain that decentralizing decision-making encourages demand and ensures that schools reflect local priorities and values.

By giving a voice and decision-making power to local stakeholders who know more about the local education systems than central policymakers, decentralization can improve educational outcomes and increase client satisfaction. One way to decentralize decision- making power in education is popularly known as School-based Management (SBM). There are other definitions and names for this concept, but they all refer to the decentralization of authority from the central government to the school level. SBM emphasizes the individual school (as represented by any combination of principals, teachers, parents, students, and other members of the school community) as the primary unit for improving education and the redistribution of decision-making authority over school operations as the primary means by which this improvement can be stimulated and sustained.

Management should be effective. About the role of management Stoner, (Freemen and Gilbert, 2013) have written, "Management is the principle activity that makes difference in how well organization s serve people affects by them." If SMC Functions properly, the students, teachers, and the guardians will be satisfied by the quality oriented school results.

SBM has the potential to be a low cost way of making public spending on education more efficient by increasing the accountability of the agents involved and by empowering the clients to improve learning outcomes. And by putting power in the hands of the end users of the service (education), SBM eventually leads to better school management that is more cognizant of and responsive to the needs of those end users, thus in creating a better and more conducive learning environment for the students.

Parent and community participation in school management and school autonomy are the two key objectives of all of the laws passed for education. This did raise the issue as to whether principals were not themselves devolving sufficient SBM responsibilities to other staff such as deputy- principals and executive teachers, although in smaller schools such an opportunity does not arise. This has the added advantage of increasing the skill within the school and 'training' aspiring principals in resource management.

Increased opportunities for local decision-making The impact on local decision-making has been to significantly increase the speed of school based decision-making, ability to set school priorities, control over resources and the range of matters on which decisions are based.SBM will increase the opportunities for greater local community involvement to a significant extent.

Conclusion

It has been necessary to improve the low status of public schools today. Many reform initiatives are needed for this. The SMC members should be from educated group so that they can visit the school and monitor the activities of headmaster and teachers. The SMC members should be capable of observing classes of teachers. To be selected as SMC

members their own children should be studying at the school. They should strongly be rejected to be SMC members on the basis of political forces. Politics in schools should be completely eliminated and schools should be politically free zones. Government policies should be clear about the system of SMC and school improvement plans.

The state should provide enough funds to run schools. Qualified and politically free teachers should be employed at schools. Quality education should get priority from the state to compete globally. Active day to day monitoring is needed to improve the deteriorating condition of public schools. The school inspectors should also be true and perfect professionally. Their activities should also be monitored because, it is sometimes heard that they leave office for field work but they go to visit to other places on their own way. Such situations should be checked. So, there are many things to be followed to reform public school system in Nepal, today. As a whole, government policies should be fixed and strong having capacity of taking charge for the wrong activities.

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