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A review on the service delivery and administrative services in local governance

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Abstract

In the field of public administration and public policy, service delivery and administrative services are very closely interrelated. By their nature and function, both have the same or equal way of functioning. The aim of any administrative mechanism is to provide services to the people. In this matter, providing service to the people is a core and practical part of administrative service delivery. The thematic review of published literature is the main way to interpret the data. From this paper, every step of government in every nation is to provide service to meet the demands of the general people, and to provide administrative satisfaction is core. The services provided by the government are impartial, and the people are satisfied with the service delivery by the system. Service delivery and people's satisfaction are considered administrative service delivery for the sake of good governance. The provision of services is one part, and how these services have been provided is another part that determines the performance of governments in every step. It is expected as well as normative that the administrative services should be provided in an impartial and satisfactory manner.

Key Words: Service Delivery, Governments, Administrative, Thematic, Satisfaction

Introduction

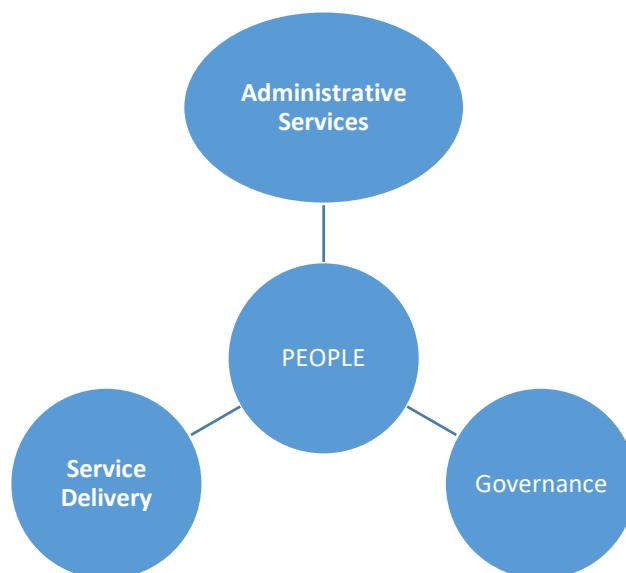
Administrative delivery at the local level is the prime condition for people's satisfaction through service delivery. The first purpose is the executive aim of providing products and

services; the other purpose includes representing and involving. Local representative government is a process that spans and connects representation and administration at local levels within local government structures.

As local governance practices are enhanced through institutional networks, interactions, collaborations, and collective action, it is inevitable that institutional networks, interactions, collaborations, and collective action are involved (Kharel, 2018). All together, there are 735 local governments, including metropolitan, sub-metropolitan, municipality, and rural municipality (Election Commission Nepal, 2017). The legislative power has been vested in the Village Assembly and Municipal Assembly provisioned in Schedule 8 of the Constitution (Kharel & Tharu, 2019).

Nepal's approaches to local governance have historically emphasized local participation and empowerment rather than creating institutions for democratic service delivery (2018). The Constitution of Nepal 2072 BS defines Nepal as a decentralized democratic self-rule regularized into 3 tiers of government: federal, state, and local. Henceforth, the state is divided into 7 provinces, and the local is divided into 77 districts, and 753 local units are known as the local level in Nepal. A total of 6,743 wards are formed under these 753 local levels (Local Government in Nepal, 2022, and Democracy Resource Center Nepal, 2020). The constitution had entrusted the local government to act independent and autonomous way. The Constitution of Nepal 2075 (Schedule 8) gives the 22 powers to these local levels.

Generally, local government serves a two-fold purpose. Bureaucracy as selected government in local-level governments serves both as the system and driver to render public services (Niroula & Bhatt, 2021). In past days citizen services were directly guided by the center, but after the reform of the new constitution of Nepal in 2072, citizen services were fully handed over by the central government to the local government. In recent times we have 753 local bodies and 7 provinces that are guided or controlled by the one central government. Citizens of any country expect the state and public administration to always be backed by service motives, their problems to be solved easily, their needs to be easily accessible, and punctual service from the government level, whether it is central, provincial, or local. The following picture can clearly define



From the above picture, the connection between service delivery and administrative services is bridged by the concept of governance. Every step is important and meaningful for administrative service delivery. There are multiple stakeholders engaged with principles and practices for service delivery. Every stakeholder in the society bears equal responsibility for balancing progress and quality of life (Gautam & Thapa, 2023).

There are many causes that directly affect and manipulate the service delivery system in local governance. Nepal's administrative system is directly and indirectly affected by socio-political background. Politicians and administrators, by nature, are self-interested and self-centered. Such motives persuade them to be involved in illegal, unethical, and unaccepted social norms (Philp & David, 2015). So, to provide easy, accessible, punctual public service to the citizen, the constitution has provided the full authority to work for the local government/bodies. In the present day, with utilizing the authority provided by the Constitution of Nepal 2072 and the Local Governance Operation Act 2074, they have the authority to provide the services to the citizens directly. The local government extended so many services to the citizens, among them recommendations, building codes, social security allowances, birth certificates, death certificates, marriage certificates, land revenue collection, etc. Providing services to the citizen is not only their responsibility; making the citizen satisfied is also their duty. So, to make satisfaction with that of services to the citizen, the services should be effective.

The service providers have to serve the general people as in the process of responding to the critical mass. However, citizens are required to be well informed about their rights and organizational regulations. Therefore, citizens are to be made informed so that they demand institutional arrangements for the services to demand from the public agencies, and the civil servants get compelled to be accountable. The demand side of public service delivery thus focuses on the voice, regulation, financial management, and transparency and accountability dimensions of governance (Briner, 2007). In this reform, citizens need to have a voice, and government provide avenues so that they can express it effectively. In the decentralization, capacity building of the public agencies is in central focus. In the approach of involvement of non-state actors, some ways to engage non-state actors are made. The formation of local democracy, consultation, etc., are some approaches. On the demand side of public service delivery, service seekers are a critical mass and can create demand for the aspects of the quality, quantity, and time of services provided. They can raise the questions against unaccountable mismanagement in public service delivery. In a liberalized economic regime, public corruption should decline on its own, theoretically speaking (Panday, 2001).

Methods

The connotation of service delivery is more linked with social obligation and morality towards society by the governmental houses. Published data related to service delivery is taken as secondary data for the research. An extensive desk study is conducted for the collection of relevant secondary information. Secondary sources are also major sources for this research. Secondary data is also known as a secondhand source of information.

Importance of impartiality in service delivery

The basic meaning of impartiality is functioning without fear or favor towards any party. It is one of the fundamental values of service delivery. Administrative service delivery is subject to discipline and object with its aim, because 'every object is the subject of debate' (Gautam, 2023). In the current situation, service delivery is like 'hot discourse' to reform administrative processes. The impartial treatment of citizens and when civil servants can behave and make decisions without the influence of any political party is the state of impartiality in public service. Similarly, Rothstein and Teorell define impartiality

as “implementing laws and policies; government officials shall not take into consideration anything about the citizen/case that is not beforehand stipulated in the policy or the law.” We argue that government impartiality enhances public service quality both from the recipients' (i.e., citizens) and the supply side of public services (i.e., civil servants). High impartiality means that civil servants have strong norms to follow impartial or impersonal rules rather than partial or personal ones in handling individual administrative cases (Faguet, 2012). Decisions about individual cases are subject to written rules and regulations stipulated in policy or law rather than to personal likes and dislikes and personal relationships (Elnemr, 2017). From the citizens' side, impartiality in the administrative process means that rules and expectations for public services are transparent and equally applicable to everyone in a way that is stipulated in laws and regulations. The major importance of impartiality in public service delivery is

Maintaining constitutional values: To uphold constitutionalism and the rule of law, public servant impartiality plays the vital role. It also prevents tendencies of cronyism, nepotism, and factionalism, by which the productive use of limited resources is ensured.

Work culture: The officers themselves enjoy high morale since they believe they will be rewarded for their merit and not for their political considerations. Which helps in the efficient implementation of programs through which the positive and conducive work culture is created.

Efficient handling of situations: In case of riots, communal violence, or any ethnic conflict, a civil servant with a neutral attitude will be able to take the right action, as she is free from any type of religious, political, or social prejudices and upholds impartiality. And to ensure optimal utilization of resources, it also helps to offer free and frank advice on policy matters using the powers of delegated legislation.

Controlling corruption: It will keep oneself free from nepotism, political-corporate nexus, and corruption.

Professionalism: Provides professionalism and permanence as opposed to reluctance to change.

Citizen Satisfaction and Service Delivery

Satisfaction can be termed as a post-consumption evaluation of the quality of services (Anderson & Sullivan, 1993). It is a mental state that arises after encountering a service

and contrasting that with previously held experiences (Oliver, R.L., 1980). According to James and Wilson (James & Wilson, 2010), the information about the excellent performance would increase citizen satisfaction, whereas satisfaction would decrease with the information of poor performance. The public administrator can effortlessly exploit desire through information to up great people's gratification with government services.

Satisfaction is positively related to perception about the performance. Along with the managerial measures, satisfaction is also used as a standard of service performance. Citizens' satisfaction with the public goods or services also gets the attention of public administrators or managers in the late 1990s or early 2000s, particularly for Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries (Bouckaert, Van De Walle, & Kampen, 2005). Citizen satisfaction plays a crucial role in realizing the requirements of common people.

Service Delivery System in Local Governance

The municipality is the authentic place to provide services to the people through various practices. The service delivery system in the municipality is guided by 'people first' practices. A municipality as a service provider can maximize the benefits of a service delivery system by improving customers' perceptions of service quality and delivering value that is recognized thereby (Lodorfos, Kostopoulos & Kaminakis, 2015). In Nepal, service delivery in municipalities and local governments has experienced numerous stages of transformation since its first election (Masiya, Davids & Mangal, 2019) in 2015 BS.

In the present discourse of power distribution for service delivery, the major concern is good governance. Recently, major reforms have been made to the delivery of public services, particularly at the local level (Martijn, Tjerk & Gradus, 2018). Through the use of performance management tools, local governments attempt to integrate strategic planning frameworks and improve service delivery (Schoeman & Chakwizira, 2023). Most of the administrative problems of developing countries are rooted in their cultural milieu. When these countries try to adopt successful administrative processes or institutions of the West, they very often have to encounter cultural hurdles (Basu, 2013). Literature addressing which factors influence public service delivery is scarce. Although

focusing on performance improvement, Boyne (2003) states that there exist only vague theories that identify variables believed to influence public service provision. In his rigorous review, he recognizes five broader categories (resources, regulation, market structure, organization, and management), of which, in the end, partially because of the limited number of studies, only resources and management appear to have a clear significant influence on service provision. However, single studies in the other three categories also sometimes show a significant influence on service delivery. Only when service delivery is analyzed together with other studies within the same category is the direction of influence offset, and thus, it remains unstable. Thus, the assumption that these variables still might influence service delivery cannot be fully rejected. To identify structural factors that influence public service delivery, we test the three most commonly theorized factors (size, resources, and economic level) and add a fourth dimension, culture, to the analysis. In the remainder of this chapter, we first present theoretical arguments and then subsequently propose one or more hypotheses for each of the four factors.

Size: The question of whether size influences municipalities' performance has a long tradition (Avellaneda & Gomes, 2015). Amalgamation reforms in many countries follow the argument that larger municipalities are more cost-efficient. They argue that economies of scale mean that a small municipality can benefit from merging into a bigger one. Boyne (1992) identifies three cost-saving mechanisms. Larger municipalities benefit from administrative synergies, greater purchasing power, and a greater scope when acquiring sophisticated technical equipment. However, Allan (2003) critically notes that many international researchers link larger municipalities with less economical spending. This circumstance could stem from coordination needs that arise within the municipalities. Nevertheless, size as a possible influencing factor should be further investigated. In the data set, municipal secretaries were asked about the extent to which they perceived that their municipalities had the capacity to provide certain public services. Our hypothesis is that, at least to a certain threshold, a municipality can profit from an economy of scale effect. Following this argument, larger municipalities should then encounter less difficulty when providing public services. In contrast, De Borger and

Kerstin (1996) link population density and efficiency, arguing that the less densely populated a region is, the less efficiently public services are provided.

Resources: Our hypothesis is that municipalities with greater relative administrative resources¹ face less difficulty in public service provision because they have more specialized and probably better trained staff. Additionally, executive resources² could also influence service provision. Many small municipalities do not have fully professional executives: they are so small that their executives are only paid part-time. We expect that municipalities with fewer executive resources will encounter more difficulty in public service provision because there is less leadership in such municipalities.

Economic level: Another possible influence on public service provision is the municipality's economic level. The argument is that wealthier municipalities are under less pressure to spend efficiently and that they provide more services than poorer municipalities. A number of researchers report that wealthier municipalities do indeed show less efficiency (Spann, 1997; De Borger & Kerstin's, 1996; Silkman & Young, 1982; Kitchen, 1976). In contrast, Gimenez and Prior (2003) found no significant difference between the efficiency levels of wealthier Spanish municipalities. Because there are considerable differences in the economic levels of Swiss municipalities, this could potentially influence public service delivery. We argue that wealthier municipalities have more resources to provide public services and should therefore encounter less difficulty, no matter how efficiently they provide the services.

Cultural Context: Because Switzerland has four official languages, it could be researched whether municipalities from the French- and Italian-speaking regions self-assess greater difficulty in providing public services than do German-speaking municipalities. Most studies in the field of public service provision focus on municipalities within the same cultural context. Researchers restrict their fields of study to one country or language region because in these cases, input and output factors are easily compiled and comparable. A good example of that is Belgium: Surprisingly, no studies on Belgium exist that explain differences in public service provision based on whether municipalities are located in the Flemish or Walloon regions of the country. De Borger et al. (1994) admit in their footnotes that in an earlier version of their work, regional factors were

included in the analysis. However, because they were unable to stringently explain the differences, they later dropped this factor due to the heated political discussion on regional issues. We will consider the cultural context factor in our analysis. We argue that German-speaking municipalities face fewer difficulties in providing public services because they have been more influenced by the New Public Management concepts from Anglo-Saxon countries and have therefore improved the steering and performance of their service provision. Additionally, direct democracy is common in the German-speaking municipalities, which encourages these administrations to adapt more directly to the needs of their citizens and to make service provision more efficient.

Bridge of the Research

Talking about local institutions as a center of service delivery, this study intends to fill the gap in understanding the tenets of service delivery necessary to bridge the gap. Previously, only the administrative organization's service delivery had been discussed in research studies. Despite the fact that service delivery isn't anything new in Nepalese organizations, it isn't mandatory to implement decentralization in the Nepalese context in order to improve service delivery. For making the public service effective and efficient Article 56 of the Nepal Constitution 2015 describes the structure of the state and mentions that the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal consists of three levels, namely the Federation, the State, and the Local level.

Conclusion

For wider practice and by the guideline of constitutional practice, administrative services are fundamental for all. While there are multiple sets of actors in the system and process. The governance framework provides information about the council, elected members, and administration; the relationships that exist; and how they work together to provide good governance. Local government (municipality) has work being closely with the people at the same moment central government is working for people. It is important to understand the practicality of the local entities towards the nation's rules and regulations. By thinking that it could be worthwhile to find out whether the services provided by the municipality were partial or impartial and whether the people are satisfied or not with the provided services provided. So, these issues are tried to dig out in this paper.

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