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Governance Exploration: Municipal Control in Nepalese School Education

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Abstract

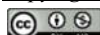
The implementation of the National Education Policy 2018 in Nepal has shifted school governance to municipal authorities including Ward Chair into School Management Committees. In this context, the study examines the impact of the changed education policy using a convergent parallel mixed-method research. The study used "management and leadership theories" connecting to school governance theories and their implication. The information was collected through interviews with principals and teachers, and surveys from 130 teachers including head teachers across 26 schools. The information sought from interviews and survey method have been interpreted and analysed thematically and statistically. The study revealed that while resource allocation improves, the significant dissatisfaction exists in governance. The municipal representatives lack the educational management expertise necessary for effective school leadership, resulting in strategic and operational gaps. The study recommends for training on leadership and management for the collaborative and effective school governance and to improve educational outcomes.

Keywords: Municipal control, school governance, management, leadership

Introduction

The implementation of the National Education Policy (2018) following the promulgation of the Constitution of the Republic of Nepal (2015) has introduced a governance model for school education by placing it under the control of municipal authorities. This policy has included representatives from local government, especially ward chairperson, into the heart of school management committees. While this governance practice aims to decentralize educational administration and enhance local accountability, it has also sparked considerable tension and debate within Nepal's educational community (Hamal, 2020).

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One of the most controversial outcomes of this shift has been the integration of ward chairperson into school management committees, in some cases assuming the position of chairpersons. Many teachers and headteachers express dissatisfaction and skepticism towards the municipal control of their schools. Their primary concerns revolve around the qualifications and educational governance capacities of municipal representatives, who often lack required knowledge in educational management (Neupane, 2023). The core of the tension lies in the perceived and actual competencies of ward chairmen in managing school affairs.

In this context, the implementation of municipal control in Nepali school education necessitates a critical examination. It is essential to explore whether this governance practice can be effectively integrated into the existing educational framework (Adhikari, 2022) and what measures can be taken to address the emerging challenges. Understanding the perspectives of stakeholders—teachers, head teachers is crucial in assessing the impact of this policy. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the policy's alignment with the broader goals of educational quality improvement.

As Nepal navigates this transitional phase, several critical questions emerge: How can the qualifications and governance capacities of municipal representatives affect school development? How can the voices of teachers and headteachers be incorporated into the governance framework to foster a collaborative and effective educational environment?

Addressing these questions requires a multi-faceted approach that includes policy refinement, capacity-building initiatives, and robust mechanisms for stakeholder engagement. By examining the experiences and outcomes of this governance shift, policymakers and educational leaders can identify best practices and potential pitfalls, paving the way for a more effective educational system in Nepal.

With the backdrop, the study utilized a governance framework, focusing on the dimensions of leadership and management within educational settings. Additionally, it established a connection to school governance. A comparative analysis of international mayoral control practices in school education is incorporated as a foundational literature link, providing a global perspective on governance models in education.

Literature Review

The following section presents the literature reviews of study that are presented thematically.

Governance Theories: Integrating Management and Leadership

The World Bank (2007) defines governance in terms of "the process of selecting those capable of making authoritative political decisions ... to effectively manage its resources and implement sound policies; and the respect that citizens and governments have for the institutions governing their interactions" (Ansell & Torfing, 2016, p. 3). Governance concerns "the rules of collective decision-making in settings where there is a plurality of actors or organizations and where no formal control system can dictate the terms of the relationship between these actors and organizations" (Chhotray &

Stoker, 2009, p. 3). It could also be understood as "the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions may be implemented" (Abdullah & Valentine, 2009, p. 89).

Effective governance in any context necessitates the integration of management and leadership. These two components are essential for ensuring that an organization operates efficiently and ethically, and in alignment with its goals. Here's a detailed elaboration on each:

Management in Governance

According to Sadiki (2003), "Governance and management are interwoven elements in a process that is aimed at enabling schools to provide effective and efficient education" (p. 38). Edwards et al. (2012) elaborate that "Governance is concerned with how societies, governments, and organizations are managed and led. Importantly, this includes how they structure and otherwise order their affairs, make decisions and exercise powers, and manage their relationships and accountabilities" (p. 9). Atzori (2015) discusses the shift in management patterns, describing it as "governance without government". The concept of governance suggests that a structure or order emerges from the interaction among various governing and mutually influencing actors, rather than being externally imposed. In terms of managing day-to-day activities, MohdNorazmi et al. (2021), as cited in Boon et al. (2021), emphasize that "management needs to be prudent in placing where an employee should be, the types of tasks that are appropriate for the employee and the needs that need to be met" (p. 5234).

Under Management in Governance, this study focuses on three qualities of management: organizing goals; efficiency optimization; and monitoring for evaluation.

Organizing goals. The management aspect of governance emphasizes the pursuit of goals, as outlined in UNDP's comparison of governance and management. The mission of any objective encompasses the reasons and methods for its completion, as Edwards et al. (2012) state, "Governance is concerned with how and why systems of all kinds are constituted and operated" (p. 11). Ostrom (2005), as cited in Holahan and Lubell (2016), explains that "Governance is a multi-level process that creates monitoring mechanisms, punishes defections, rewards cooperation, provides information, fosters trust-based reciprocity, and otherwise attempts to create the conditions that make collective action likely to occur" (p. 21), which is crucial in goal pursuit. In organizations where leadership and management are distinct, leadership sets the vision and goals while management pursues them. However, in governance, literature often shows that both goal setting and goal pursuing involve significant governance participation.

Efficiency optimization. Efficiency optimization is a crucial managerial task within governance processes, aimed at enhancing effectiveness. Pillay (2019) contends that "good governance is 'more (the) effect than cause' of development" (p. 61). Governance endeavors to govern effectively in developmental processes, recognizing that "besides structural material factors, ideas and cognitive factors are also important determinants of governance outcomes" (Geeraert, 2022, p. 26).

Effective governance involves collective problem-solving rather than individual actions, as noted by Holahan and Lubell (2016), who argue that "solving collective dilemmas requires governance arrangements that alter individual payoffs and result in a joint outcome benefiting at least one individual without harming others" (p. 21). The concept of governance emerged to enhance effectiveness and efficiency in developmental endeavors, recognizing that sole governmental oversight may not meet citizen expectations. Efficiency is achieved through the optimal use of resources, ideas, and cognitive capacities within governance structures.

Monitoring for evaluation. Monitoring plans and programs is an integral part of governance. Everatt (2019b) notes that "governance and monitoring and evaluation (often linked but distinct activities) both involve a multi-level focus" (p. 32). Government agencies typically pursue authoritative governance, while public and private entities often engage in democratic governance alongside governmental efforts.

Collaborative monitoring efforts can potentially enhance effectiveness and efficiency. Latib (2019) describes governance as "the stewardship of formal and informal political rules of the game" (p. 45), emphasizing fair rules and equitable processes as essential to effective governance (Everatt, 2019a). Governance can also be seen as entities responsible for establishing the rules and laws that govern decision-making within a system (UN, 2008, as cited in Covarrubias and Llamas Covarrubias, 2021). The literature suggests that the concept of governance emerged to fulfill the monitoring tasks of government development efforts.

Leadership in Governance

Leadership vision and mission play a crucial role in governance processes. Leadership skills are essential for managing networks, as noted by Chhotray and Stoker (2009), who argue that "managers and particularly politicians need to acquire new leadership skills" (p. 29). Asaduzzaman and Virtanen (2016) add that governance encompasses diverse meanings and serves as an alternative counterpart to "public sector management" and "public sector leadership".

New approaches to leadership emphasize delegating tasks for timely and effective work completion. Chhotray and Stoker (2009) argue that "if network theories suggest that effectively managing networks is key to governance, then delegation theories propose that the key to effective governance lies in structuring delegation correctly" (p. 32). Edwards et al. (2012) emphasizes that effective governance includes strong leadership, organizational culture, and communication.

Under Leadership in Governance, this study is based on three qualities of leadership: vision to make decision; collaboration for building consensus; and adaptability for social responsibility.

Vision to Make Decision. Governance focuses on the practice of collective decision-making, which aligns with the "vision to make decision" as effective governance requires a clear vision to guide the process. Aktan (2008) defines

governance as reducing the discretionary power of central bureaucratic leaders by strengthening interactions among affected parties within decision areas, underscoring the importance of a shared vision that encourages collaboration and reduces centralized control. Karatas (2020) insists governance involves traditions and institutional mechanisms that shape power and authority exercise within countries, where a coherent vision is essential to ensure effective and appropriate power exercise.

"Community governance aims to foster collective identity within local authorities" (Halsall, 2012, p. 2), which requires a shared vision that resonates with community members. A clear vision is vital in guiding these interactions and ensuring that all voices are heard. Governance strives to facilitate consensus-building in collective decision-making processes (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009), aligning with the goal of understanding how collective decisions are constructed (Fiertag, 2022). A shared vision is essential to achieving consensus and making effective collective decisions.

Collaboration for Building Consensus. Participation is identified as one of the six principles of good governance, according to Addink (2019). The United Nations and WHO "advocate for a wide range of participation in governance processes, emphasizing the involvement of diverse actors beyond state institutions in policy-making processes" (Andree et al., 2019, p. 5). Everatt (2019b) asserts that "Governance in this highly political context can be used as a tool to question the global inequalities inherited from the past – a past of racism, slavery, and colonialism" (p. 29), underlining governance's role in ensuring inclusive participation and consensus-building.

This underscores the importance of collaboration in policy-making and implementation. Smit (2016), cited by Abrahams (2019), outlines forms of governance, detailing the actors and concerns influencing each, focusing on stakeholder participation due to their direct impact from policies.

Adaptability for Social Responsibility. Katzenbach and Ulbricht (2019) stress that governance "becomes more inclusive, responsive, and allows for more social diversity" (p. 2), underscoring its role in accommodating diverse societal voices. Pillay (2019) contends that "good governance promotes freedom from violence, fear and crime, and peaceful and secure societies that provide stability needed for development investments to be sustained" (p. 58), highlighting governance's function in fostering societal stability and development.

Howlett et al. (2021) argue against "historically inaccurate dichotomies," advocating instead for new governance arrangements that effectively respond to state-societal changes (p. 204). Geeraert (2022) suggests that stable governance practices may foster "a culture of mutual trust and cooperation through social interaction" (p. 25), highlighting governance's potential to enhance social cohesion.

Integrating management and leadership in governance theories provides a comprehensive approach to effective governance. Management ensures that resources are used efficiently and goals are met; leadership inspires and unites stakeholders towards common objectives; and legal knowledge ensures that governance practices

are ethical, accountable, and equitable. By combining these elements, governance can be both effective and just, driving sustainable and inclusive progress.

School Governance: Managing and Leading Schools

In the complex landscape of governance, the integration of management and leadership is critical for ensuring that schools operate efficiently. Drawing on governance theories and their application in educational contexts, this discussion explores how these elements contribute to effective school governance.

Planning and Organizing

Effective school governance begins with strategic planning and organizing resources to achieve educational objectives for which the governing members "must continually increase their knowledge on education sector and good governance practices, and further develop their skills on ethical leaders ... and strategic thinkers" (Ontario Public School Boards' Association, 2018 – 2022, p. 56). This includes developing long-term plans, setting academic goals, and creating detailed action plans for curriculum implementation, student assessment, and staff development. Organizing resources efficiently ensures that schools can deliver quality education and support student learning.

Resource Allocation and Optimization

School administrators must "put in place and control mechanism for the allocation and distribution of power and resources" (Keller-Flight, 2005 and Ranson, 2008 in Galway and Weins, 2013, p. 4) to meet the diverse needs of students and staff. This involves budgeting, financial planning, and ensuring that resources such as funding, teaching materials, and facilities are used effectively. Efficient resource allocation is crucial for maximizing educational outcomes and supporting the sustainability of school programs.

Performance Measurement and Evaluation

To ensure that governance is effective, schools must have mechanisms for measuring and evaluating performance. Dervarics and O'Brien (2019) say "boards in high-achieving [schools] are more likely to engage in goal setting and monitoring their progress" (p. 1). This includes setting performance indicators, monitoring student progress, and conducting evaluations of teaching effectiveness. Continuous assessment and feedback help identify areas for improvement and drive educational excellence.

Vision and Inspiration

Leadership in school governance involves crafting and communicating a clear and compelling vision for the future. It makes and acts on "decisions related to the organization's mission, plan policies and monitor their implementation, establish decision-making process, put in place and control mechanism for the allocation and distribution of power and resources" (Keller-Flight, 2005 and Ranson, 2008 in Galway and Weins, 2013, p. 4). Leaders inspire and motivate teachers, students, and parents

to work towards common educational goals. A strong vision fosters a sense of purpose and direction, creating a positive school culture that supports student achievement.

Building Consensus and Collaboration

Effective school leaders build consensus among stakeholders, facilitating collaboration and teamwork since "a governance structure defines the roles, relationships and behavioural pattern" (Ontario Public School Boards' Association, 2018, p. 34). This involves listening to different perspectives, mediating conflicts, and ensuring that all voices are heard and valued. By fostering a collaborative environment, leaders can harness the collective strengths of the school community to enhance educational outcomes.

Adaptability and Innovation

Leaders in school governance must be adaptable and open to innovation. USAID, UKAID (2016) state they involve "the community in school to build trust and supportive relationship and to support student learning" (p. 38). They should be able to respond to changing educational needs, embrace new teaching methods, and drive continuous improvement. Proactive leadership addresses challenges and seizes opportunities for growth, ensuring that schools remain dynamic and responsive to the needs of students.

Mayoral Control in School Education: An Equivalent Global Phenomenon

Avellaneda (2009) conducted a study in Colombian municipalities and concluded that mayoral qualifications are associated with increased school enrollment, after controlling for political, economic, and demographic factors. Davidson (2012) investigated mayoral control in New York and found that student achievement improved under this governance structure. He asserted, "Student achievement has increased in almost all mayorally controlled cities" (p. 318). Davidson also noted that mayoral control centralizes school governance, limiting involvement from other stakeholders such as parents. He highlighted, "Empirical evidence frequently cites a decrease or lack of opportunity for parent involvement under systems of mayoral control because the systems are highly centralized, with little opportunity for stakeholder participation, especially for minority stakeholders" (p. 320).

Castillo (2013) emphasized in their study that despite challenges and differing perspectives, public participation can enhance governance under mayoral control. Effective public involvement, though challenging, offers valuable benefits when citizens and administrators collaborate within social and institutional constraints. Gold et al. (2011) examined Philadelphia's case and concluded that community-based groups influenced the mayoral control debate significantly by advocating for checks and balances, transparency, and public engagement. Mobilizing parents and community members, the campaign challenged mayoral agendas and achieved legislative concessions, enhancing grassroots coalition capabilities for future educational policy advocacy.

Aaoki (2022) studied Japan's context and noted a growing expectation for mayors, rather than superintendents, to lead educational policy efforts. However, citizen satisfaction with Japanese mayoral control lags behind that of American systems. Carl (2009) analyzed Chicago's history of mayoral control and found that political interests often overshadowed educational improvements. Mayors used schools to build political alliances and reward supporters, with limited focus on educational quality. Recent reforms aimed at addressing educational inequalities but underscored the inadequacy of mayoral control alone in urban school improvements.

Hirsch (2007) discussed Los Angeles' educational reforms, emphasizing decentralization and mayoral control, which faced opposition from teachers' unions, hindering their impact on student outcomes. The study highlighted the complexity and uncertainties in large-scale educational reforms. Halloway (2004) debated the efficacy, equity, and societal implications of centralized governance (municipal control) in public education, drawing on studies from Chicago and Cleveland.

Kirst (2002) explored various cities where mayors played significant roles in managing public schools, balancing budgets, improving infrastructure, and allocating resources. However, the impact on instructional matters varied, with some mayors deeply involved in school management while others delegated to appointed superintendents, posing questions about state domination of school governance. Watson and Hill (2008) reported on challenges faced by elected and appointed boards in urban school districts under mayoral control. They emphasized the vulnerability of both governance models to shifting political dynamics and stressed the importance of sustained civic participation for lasting educational improvements.

Wong and Shen (2013) concluded that schools led by mayors showed improvements in student achievement, analyzing factors contributing to these outcomes. Wright and Tabrizi (2020) examined the Sunnydale Everest school district, predominantly serving Black and Latinx students, under mayoral control. The study highlighted educational challenges exacerbated by mayoral influence, including controversies over community input and leadership decisions impacting educators like Principal Bradley Smith, illustrating racial tensions and governance issues in urban educational settings.

The studies revealed that mayoral control practices globally yield mixed results of success and tension. Areas where mayors are actively engaged and prioritize educational development show improvement. Conversely, areas where mayors are less active and more focused on political influence face challenges.

Methods and Procedures

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-method research approach to investigate the impact of municipal control on school education in Nepal. Qualitative data were collected through in-depth interviews with two principals (community and institutional school) and two teachers (one from each type of school). Quantitative data were gathered via surveys from 130 teachers across 26 schools (14 community and 12 institutional), including head teachers. This combination of qualitative and

quantitative data provided a comprehensive understanding of the governance challenges and educational outcomes under the new policy.

For the quantitative data, a set of questionnaires based on seven themes and using a Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree was utilized. After collecting the questionnaires, the data was tabulated and analyzed using SPSS software. The statistical tools employed were mean and standard deviation. Additionally, qualitative data from four participants was collected through in-depth interviews, which were subsequently transcribed and translated to align with the thematic requirements and are presented as P1 to P4 while interpreting, analyzing and concluding.

Results and Discussion

The theoretical framework employed in this research integrates management and leadership qualities within governance theory. These theoretical outcomes of governance were subsequently applied to school governance theory. The concepts discussed in the management and leadership of school governance informed the development of a questionnaire centered on seven themes.

Table 1
Teachers’ Voice on Leadership and Governance Progress after Municipal Entry to the School Management Committee

N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	
The involvement of the municipality has positively impacted the leadership in our school	130	1	4	1.93	.958
Municipality control has led to better governance in our school	130	1	4	1.94	.978
I believe the municipality's involvement in management is beneficial	130	1	3	2.00	.778
Valid N (listwise)	130				

The first set of questionnaire was designed under the theme of leadership and governance progress following the municipal entry into the School Management Committee. The respondents largely disagreed that the involvement of the municipality in the SMC has positively impacted the leadership in their school. The mean values suggest that the majority of teachers and head teachers are dissatisfied with the leadership and governance progress after the municipal entry into the SMC. However, the standard deviation values ranging from 0.778 to 0.958 indicate some variation in the responses.

The data reveals significant dissatisfaction among teachers and head teachers with the leadership and governance progress after the municipal entry into the School Management Committee. The mean values of 1.93 and 1.94 for leadership and governance impact, respectively, indicate strong disagreement with the effectiveness of municipal involvement.

For the same theme, qualitative data was gathered through the question, "What impact does the school leadership have after the municipal control?" The responses highlighted a lack of knowledge in governance among municipal representatives. For example, P1 stated, *"Till now, it does not have a big impact. The governance model has changed, but not the outcome."* Similarly, P2 added when asked why, *"The municipal representative knows how to enter the SMC but does not know what actually to do there."* Both views underscore the lack of knowledge and experience among municipal representatives.

These findings suggest that the planning and organizational capabilities of municipal representatives are perceived as inadequate. Interview responses highlighted a lack of knowledge and experience in governance among municipal representatives, pointing to disconnect between the municipal authorities' strategic intentions and their practical execution.

Table 2
Teachers' Voice on Resource Allocation after Municipal Entry to the School Management Committee

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Since the introduction of municipality control, the allocation of resources to our school has improved.	130	2	5	4.02	.956
Our school has received more funding under the municipality control system	130	1	4	3.16	.776
The municipality's control has ensured fair distribution of educational resources.	130	2	5	3.98	.889
Valid N (listwise)	130				

Table 2 measured the experience of teachers and head teachers regarding resource allocation after the municipal entry into the SMC. The respondents generally agree that resource allocation to their institutions has improved. However, the standard deviation values, ranging from 0.776 to 0.956, indicate some variation in responses.

The qualitative data from interviews also supports this perspective. In response to the question "How have you experienced resource allocation to your school after municipal control?" P1 said, *"I have experienced it positively. After municipal control, resources are more easily accessible."* P3 added, *"It is because the SMC representative from the local government has direct access to the municipal office. It is good."* These statements indicate that municipal control has facilitated better resource allocation due to the direct access SMC representatives have to municipal offices.

The responses to resource allocation were more positive. The mean values of 4.02 for resource allocation improvement and 3.98 for the fair distribution of educational resources indicate a general agreement that municipal control has enhanced resource management in schools. This aligns with governance theories that emphasize the importance of efficient resource allocation for effective school management. Interview data supports these findings, with respondents noting easier access to resources due to municipal control. This suggests that while strategic planning and

organizational leadership are lacking, the operational aspects of resource allocation have seen improvements.

Table 3
Teachers’ Voice on Teacher Autonomy after Municipal Entry to the School Management Committee

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Municipality control has enhanced my autonomy in the classroom	130	1	2	1.50	.502
The municipality involvement in education has broadened my professional independence.	130	1	3	1.62	.650
I feel that municipality control respects teachers' professional development.	130	1	3	1.55	.598
Valid N (listwise)	130				

The next set of questionnaires in table 3 focused on teachers’ professional independence. Respondents indicated they do not believe that municipal control has improved their autonomy in the classroom. The average standard deviation between 0.502 and 0.650 suggests these sentiments are consistently held without significant deviation.

To corroborate these quantitative findings, Participant 3 commented, "*They understand politics, but when it comes to classrooms, teaching, and professional development, they need to learn more.*" This suggests that political appointees in school governance may lack sufficient understanding. Participant 4 lamented, "*They lack awareness. Our school's head teacher should take the lead,*" highlighting a perceived deficiency in knowledge and skills among municipal representatives.

Regarding performance measurement and evaluation, the data suggests that municipal control has not positively impacted student outcomes. Mean values of 1.93, 1.95, and 1.99 for academic performance, student discipline, and overall educational quality, respectively, indicate disagreement with any significant improvement in these areas. The high standard deviation values highlight a diversity of opinions, suggesting that while some may see benefits, the majority do not. Interviews corroborate this, with respondents emphasizing the need for better-trained municipal representatives to impact student outcomes meaningfully. This points to a gap in performance evaluation mechanisms under municipal control, potentially due to a lack of expertise and strategic oversight.

Table 4
Teachers’ Voice on Students’ Outcomes after Municipal Entry to the School Management Committee

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
There has been an improvement in student academic performance since municipality control was implemented.	130	1	4	1.93	.974
Municipality control has positively affected student discipline and behavior.	130	1	4	1.95	.975
The overall quality of education has improved under municipal control.	130	1	3	1.99	.773
Valid N (listwise)	130				

Table 4 illustrates teachers' perspectives on the theme of student outcomes following the municipal entry into the SMC. The respondents do not believe that student academic performance has improved since the municipality took control. Despite these findings, the high standard deviation values, ranging from 0.773 to 0.974, indicate a diversity of opinions among the respondents.

Qualitative data supports these quantitative results. P2 remarked, "*I don't think there is direct impact. However, indirect impact also has not been experienced,*" suggesting that the municipal representatives in the SMC are not contributing to improvements in student academic and disciplinary outcomes. P4 added, "*I think they cannot go that depth. These are the part of teachers and head teachers. If the government wants this impact, they should highly be trained.*" Both opinions highlight the necessity for enhanced knowledge and training for SMC members to effect meaningful changes in student outcomes.

The data on teachers' professional independence presents a bleak picture, with mean scores of 1.50, 1.62, and 1.55 for autonomy in the classroom, professional independence, and respect for professional development, respectively. These low scores suggest that municipal control has not provided a compelling vision or inspirational leadership for teachers. Interview responses further highlight a perceived lack of understanding and experience among municipal representatives, underscoring the need for leaders who can inspire and effectively manage educational environments.

Table 5

Teachers' Voice on their Professional Development after Municipal entry to the School Management Committee

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Municipal control has provided more opportunities for teacher professional development.	130	1	5	4.08	.993
I have access to better training programs under the municipal control system.	130	1	5	4.08	.868
The municipal involvement has facilitated continuous professional growth for teachers.	130	1	5	4.00	1.049
Valid N (list wise)	130				

Table 5 presents teachers' perspectives on their professional development following the inclusion of municipal representatives in school management committees. Overall, teachers and head teachers appear satisfied with this aspect. However, the standard deviation values ranging from 0.868 to 1.049 suggest significant variation in responses.

The qualitative data from interviews reveal mixed experiences. P3 commented, "*Good experience. We are having many trainings and professional growth activities. However, their practicality is still a question,*" highlighting a discrepancy between the number of training programs and their practical applicability in classroom settings. In contrast, P4 expressed, "*I have not experienced any. I think those programs are for only community school teachers,*" indicating a perceived exclusion of institutional school teachers from these opportunities. This difference underscores the disparity

between community and institutional school teachers in accessing professional development resources.

Teachers' perceptions of accountability and transparency within the SMC also reflect poorly on municipal control. Mean scores of 1.50 for transparency improvement and 1.62 for increased accountability indicate dissatisfaction with the collaborative aspects of municipal governance. Interview responses suggest that all SMC members, not just municipal representatives, require training to improve governance. This aligns with the governance theory that emphasizes the importance of building consensus and collaboration among all stakeholders for effective school governance.

Table 6

Teachers' Voice on their Accountability and Transparency of the School Management Committee after Municipal Entry

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Municipal control has improved transparency in school management.	130	1	2	1.50	.502
There is a greater accountability for school performance under municipal control.	130	1	3	1.62	.650
The decision-making process is more transparent with the municipal involvement.	130	1	3	1.55	.598
Valid N (list wise)	130				

Table 6 presents the teachers' perspectives on the accountability and transparency of the School Management Committee after the municipal control of schools. The data indicates significant dissatisfaction among teachers and head teachers in this regard. The standard deviation values ranging from 0.502 to 0.650 show low variability in responses, reinforcing the consistency of these negative perceptions.

The qualitative data from interviews, however, reveal somewhat different experiences. P3 noted, "*It is as it was. In this matter, all the SMC members need training,*" suggesting that the responsibility for lack of transparency and accountability does not rest solely with the municipal representatives but with all SMC members. P4 added, "*Municipal representative and transparency are not the matters which come to us. Regarding accountability, they seem to be accountable in case of student quality improvement concern, but in other matters not.*" This view highlights dissatisfaction with the municipal control's impact on institutional schools and suggests a perceived lack of accountability in areas other than student quality improvement.

Table 7

Teachers' General Perception of the School Management Committee after Municipal Entry

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall, I am satisfied with the municipal control of our school.	130	1	2	1.50	.502
I support the continuation of municipality control in our school system.	130	1	3	1.61	.641
The transition to municipal control has been smooth and well-managed.	130	1	3	1.55	.598
Valid N (list wise)	130				

Table 7 presents the understanding of teachers' and head teachers' views on the general perception of the School Management Committee (SMC) after the municipal entry. The table reveals a predominantly negative perception. The average standard deviation scores, ranging from 0.502 to 0.641, indicate a strong consensus among respondents.

During the interviews, participants were asked to explain their dissatisfaction. P1 expressed that *"a person who does not know about the school and school system cannot drive the school."* The interviewee emphasized those municipal representatives should either be fully educated and trained about the school system or step aside to prevent confusion and potential harm to student outcomes. Similarly, P2 added, *"The people who elected them in the election does not mean they are well-versed in the school system. Before entering the school, they should be fully aware of the school system. School is a very sensitive place."* Both interviewees highlighted concerns about the knowledge and skills of municipal representatives in the SMC, indicating a need for better preparation and understanding of school systems by those in governance roles.

The general perception of SMC under municipal control is predominantly negative, with mean scores of 1.50 for satisfaction and 1.61 for supporting continued municipal control. The transition to municipal control is perceived as poorly managed, with a lack of adaptability and innovation. Interviewees stressed the need for municipal representatives to be well-educated and trained about the school system, highlighting the critical role of knowledgeable and adaptable leaders in driving innovation and positive change in school governance.

The analysis indicates that while municipal control has improved certain operational aspects like resource allocation, it has largely failed to positively impact strategic leadership, planning, and performance evaluation. There is a clear need for better training and education for municipal representatives to align their capabilities with the requirements of effective school governance. Enhancing the vision, collaboration, and adaptability of school leaders is crucial for realizing the potential benefits of municipal control in Nepalese school education.

Based on the detailed analysis provided comparing with the reviewed literature, the findings underscore several critical insights into the implications of municipal control in Nepalese school governance, framed within the contexts of management and leadership theories in educational settings.

Management in School Governance under Municipal Control

The research findings reveal a mixed result regarding the management aspects of school governance under municipal control. While there is a general satisfaction with resource allocation (mean value of 4.02), indicating improved access and distribution of resources, challenges persist in other areas. For instance, respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the governance and leadership (mean values of 1.93 and 1.94, respectively), highlighting perceived shortcomings in strategic planning and organizational effectiveness. This discrepancy suggests that while operational efficiency

in resource management has improved, there remains a notable deficit in overarching management capabilities within the School Management Committee.

Qualitative insights further emphasize that municipal representatives often lack the necessary knowledge and experience in educational governance. Participants' comments, such as the observation that municipal representatives understand how to enter the SMC but lack understanding of its operational complexities (P2), underscore the gap in management expertise needed to effectively lead educational institutions. This indicates a crucial need for targeted training and development programs aimed at enhancing the managerial competencies of municipal representatives, thereby bridging the current gap between strategic intent and operational execution.

Leadership in School Governance under Municipal Control

In terms of leadership, the study reveals significant dissatisfaction among teachers and head teachers regarding the impact of municipal control on leadership effectiveness and governance progress. Mean scores ranging between 1.93 and 1.99 for statements related to leadership impact on student outcomes indicate a prevalent sentiment of disagreement. This suggests that municipal control has not effectively inspired or guided school leadership towards achieving improved academic performance, student discipline, or overall educational quality.

Qualitative data supports these findings, highlighting concerns about the lack of visionary leadership and strategic direction provided by municipal representatives within the SMC. Participants' remarks, such as the need for municipal representatives to understand and contribute meaningfully to classroom practices and professional development (P3), underscore the perceived disconnect between leadership intent and practical outcomes in educational settings. This underscores the critical importance of visionary leadership traits—such as adaptability, innovation, and consensus-building—in driving positive change and fostering collaborative governance structures within schools.

Conclusion

The municipal control in Nepalese school education has shown some improvements in resource allocation and the findings reveal significant gap in both management and leadership domains of school governance. The study emphasizes the urgent need for enhancing the managerial competencies of municipal representatives to ensure more effective planning, organization, and performance evaluation within the SMC. Moreover, it highlights the necessity for visionary leadership that inspires collaboration, innovation, and strategic visioning to realize the potential benefits of governance innovation in improving educational outcomes.

Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, including comprehensive training programs for municipal representatives and fostering a collaborative governance culture that empowers school leaders to drive meaningful change. By aligning management practices with educational leadership theories, policymakers can foster a more conducive environment for enhancing educational

quality and student outcomes under municipal control in Nepalese schools. Therefore, to make municipal control of school education fruitful, a continuous research is necessary for the required adjustments.

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