

Governance and Education for All: an Analysis of the Contribution  
of Community-managed Schools to Reaching Education for All in  
Nepal

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GOVERNANCE AND EDUCATION FOR ALL: AN ANALYSIS  
OF THE CONTRIBUTION OF COMMUNITY-MANAGED  
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## ABSTRACT

Decentralization is so vague that without a particular ideal concept, many "school-based management" models have existed around the world. However, desirable outcomes depend on the nature of decentralization and its implementation. The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of and reason for education decentralization and schools' adjustment in Nepal. It also examines the perception of stakeholders to the impact of decentralization on educational quality, equity and relevance. Therefore, two schools (one was from a rural area, i.e., Dhading district, and another from an urban area, i.e., Kathmandu district) were studied by applying the comparative qualitative case study approach.

The primary qualitative data were collected through the use of semi-structured interviews where 19 participants took part. The study sample comprised of Ministry of Education officials, international non-government organizations, politicians, school resource persons, teachers and School Management Committee (SMC) from two schools. Along with the interview, general observation and minutes of the school management committee was also recorded. Furthermore, official policy documents and reports were also included as important secondary data sources. The data collected was analyzed inductively.

The findings of the study showed, the exact form of decentralization (i.e., deconcentration, delegation and devolution) is difficult to claim at the level of implementation. Imposition of foreign donors to attain the goal of education for all in order to increase the sense of ownership to local people were thought as the main reason to decentralize the education system in Nepal. Furthermore, Schools are supposed to enjoy education decentralization through School Management Committee (SMC) but the role and capacity of SMC are questionable. Both of the schools were autonomous on allocation of the resources, but school from a rural area was able to identify the resources more in comparison to the school that of from an urban area. Similarly, school from a rural area seemed to be able to increase the sense of ownership and people's participation more comparability to school from an urban area. However, it was seemed to be no significant changes in quality of education, students' achievement rate were found higher in school from a rural area. The policy of both schools was seemed to contribute welcoming the children, regardless of their religion, caste, minority

and class in the school. Community people at the local level thought to be complicated designing local curriculum to make the education more relevant to the students.

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## **ABBREVIATION**

AAMN	Alliance for Aid Monitor Nepal
AAMN	Alliance for Aid Monitor Nepal
ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Project
CA	Constitution Assembly
CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
CMS	Community Managed School
COPE	Community-Owned Primary Education Program
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Accord
CSS	Community School Support
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDCs	District Development Committees
DEC	District Education Committee
DEO	District Education Office
DOE	Depart of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for all
EU	European Union
FHD	Foundation for Human Development
FHD	Foundation for Human Development
FINIDA	Finnish International Development Agency

IEES	Improving the Efficiency of Educational Systems
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
LBs	Local Bodies
LNBCDC	Local Need Based Curriculum Development Committee
LSGA	Local Self Governance Act
MEP	Municipality Education Plan
MLJPA	Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Nepal
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NEC	National Education Commission
NEP	Nepal
NESP	National Education System Plan
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
RIDA	Research Input and Development Action
SMC	School Management Committee
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
TSR	Teacher Service Commission
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

VDCs Village Development Committees

VEP the Village Education Plan



# **Chapter 1: The Introduction**

## **1.1 Background Information**

Educational decentralization is an old concept that has existed with its complexities. However, it is one of the recent and current processes of democratic transformation around the world. The importance of it is accounted more on implementation and its impact on quality of education. More to the point, the implementation of education decentralization being a crucial part is affected by various factors, for example, country settings, political systems and philosophical values about education. However, being those factors as one of the important aspects, lessons learnt equally varies significantly from one country to another (Winkler, 1993; Kalsen, 2000). Since all the countries are different in terms of political structure, economic situation, cultural context and philosophical values of education, the nature of education decentralization varies country to country. Similarly, the reasons or motivations are also different depending on the necessity of adopting the decentralization policy. Questions can be asked: Why decentralization? What exactly does it mean? What kind of it? What are its fundamental implications? And what are its results in education? Though, there is no clear-cut answers for these questions, countries have framed out the policy of decentralization influencing by their philosophical consideration. As a result, it had different issues and perceived differently in various countries.

Like many countries, Nepal also introduced education decentralization in 2003 moving from centralized education governance to a decentralized system of governance. Although, Nepal has experienced various degrees of decentralization at different times, it has now been formally experiencing education decentralization. This thesis studies “*Governance and Education for All: an analysis of the contribution of community-managed schools in reaching Education for All in Nepal*”.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Nepal’s National Education Policy highlights a number of benefits regarding education decentralization. However, the stage of its implementation reflects serious problems that are unlikely to desirable outcomes of its philosophy. The effective functional mechanism of local government at local level is local bodies (LB) that play a greater role when implementing the policy. Local body is assumed to be closer to the local values and realities, learners,

problems and issues (EFA Global Monitoring Report [GMR], 2009). Therefore, it can take the responsibilities of preparing evidence-based with periodic plans to provide all school-age children with basic and secondary education through formal and alternative modalities (MOE, 2008). In this way, the policy document has clearly mentioned that school management functions will remain with the school management committee (SMC) at the school level. Whatever the central level prepares the plan, ultimate stakeholders are LBs and SMCs through which the policy is implemented. In fact, the effective implementation of education decentralization heavily depends on the capacity of the functional mechanism of LBs and SMC.

In order to provide quality education, participation of community people plays a crucial role. Therefore, the devolution of school governance is argued by assuming that it promotes community participation in school governance (Early & Coleman, 2005; UNESCO, 2009; and Cooper & Florestal, 1997). Along with this assumption, research has revealed that devolution of school governance improves school governance and management by reducing the gap between the affluent households and the poor households (UNESCO, 2009; Wallance & Poulson, 2003). In contrast, UNESCO (2009) argues that if some of the community members and the parents lack intellectual bargaining power in decision making processes of school governance related to policy development and the content of the curriculum, devolution of school governance may increase the gap between the rich and the poor people.

Nepal like many other developing countries seems to have faced many challenges related to leadership and management, educational governance and curriculum to achieve the desired goals of education decentralization.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Research and Research Questions**

The objective of this study is to explore the nature of and reason to education decentralization, schools' adjustment in the new situation, and the perception of stakeholders to the impact of decentralization on educational quality, equity and relevance in Nepal.

The key research questions of the study are as follows:

1. What is the nature of decentralization in Nepal? And what has been driving the policy of decentralizing education management?
2. How have the schools adjusted to the new situation?
3. How do stakeholders perceive of the implications of education decentralization to education quality, equity and relevance?

#### **1.4 Limitation and Delimitation of the Study**

The word “decentralization” is a broad term having different paradigms. It can be studied under the various conceptual frameworks. As it is a small project and it is trying to limit and delimit some of the areas of education decentralization in this study.

The following limitations and delimitations to the investigation are noted as:

1. This study investigates policy formulation at central level and implementation at the grass - root level when exploring the nature of education decentralization.
2. It is particularly focused only on the area of primary or basic education in Nepal.
3. The implication of decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education, only the perception of participants is judged. This study does not go into deep analysis of quality, equity and relevance of education.

#### **1.5 Rational of the Study**

The studies indicate that participation of community people in school governance improves educational output as Wallance & Poulson (2003) suggest on the following ways:

Devolution of responsibility and wider participation in decision making would ensure that schools are places where people are prepared for, and participate in, making decisions as part of the democratic process. In addition, school-based management, through greater local control over the use of resources and setting of educational policy, would produce more efficient educational output (p. 66).

This view implies that community people or stakeholders who participate in school governance and make decisions on the democratic way can produce desirable outcomes of education.

Since the Nepal has experienced implementing education decentralization for more than 11 years, many issues and problems related to it have been pointed out by the people. The

important is that how well the government had implemented the education decentralization and what changes had it brought in education after it was implemented. After the government transferred the management of government controlled schools to community people, there were very few significant changes in education outcomes as experienced by the people.

My personal experience being as a part of my community and from the interaction with the stakeholders and educationist of the community makes me to think that grass-root people do not have sufficient knowledge of governing the schools. Furthermore, schools have become a playground for the politicians, and they always interfere in the matter of school affairs, for example, teacher recruitment, and the formation of School Management Committee (SMC). In addition, when observing the policy of the government, it aims at promoting the local people participation, Nevertheless, it seems that people from the elite group are controlling over it and somewhere there is a confrontation among teachers and SMC. In some places around my district, community managed schools are as similar as government controlled schools. Therefore, those factors encouraged me to conduct the study to explore the nature and reason to decentralization, the adjustment of the schools in the new situation, and perception of the stakeholders on quality, equity and relevance of education.

## **1.6 Structure of the Thesis**

Overall, this thesis is divided into six chapters. The first introduces the background information in general. The chapter presents the problem statement, objectives of the study following by research questions. In addition, it includes the limitation and delimitation and the rational of the study.

Chapter two presents the literature review and conceptual framework for the study. Based on the concept of education decentralization along with meaning, scope, and the reason to education centralization, implementation of education decentralization through school base management as a mechanism is discussed. In addition, the perception of the stakeholders on implication of education decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education are also discussed. On the basis of the literature review, the study design in terms of the conceptual framework is outlined. In this chapter, the conceptual framework defines the key concepts relating to each other within the context of the study design.

Chapter three discusses about the methodology used in this project. This chapter primarily outlines with justification of the rationale for data collection, data procedures and analysis process. Furthermore, it provides the information with the explanation of the research setting, for instance, the choice of target population, the sample size and sampling technique employed. Apart from this, it further explains highlighting the data processing, data quality strategy and ethical consideration.

Chapter four is devoted to providing an overview of Nepalese context. It gives a brief outline of historical, political and cultural context in Nepal. More to the point, the purpose of this chapter is to discuss the history and the education system including the types of school in Nepal.

Chapter five discusses the main findings based on the collected data from the fieldwork and document analysis. This chapter is divided into two parts: the data analysis and discussion of findings. When analyzing the data, it compares the two schools respectively under the themes identified in Interview Guide.

Chapter six is the last but not the least presents the conclusions and recommendations. The recommendations are in twofold: implication for policy and implication for further research.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework**

This chapter attempts to define and discuss the concepts, rationale and implementation of education decentralization in detail. Furthermore, perception of stakeholders on the implication of education decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education is discussed. On the basis of discussion of literature related to the issues, a conceptual framework that underpins the findings of this study will be considered in this chapter.

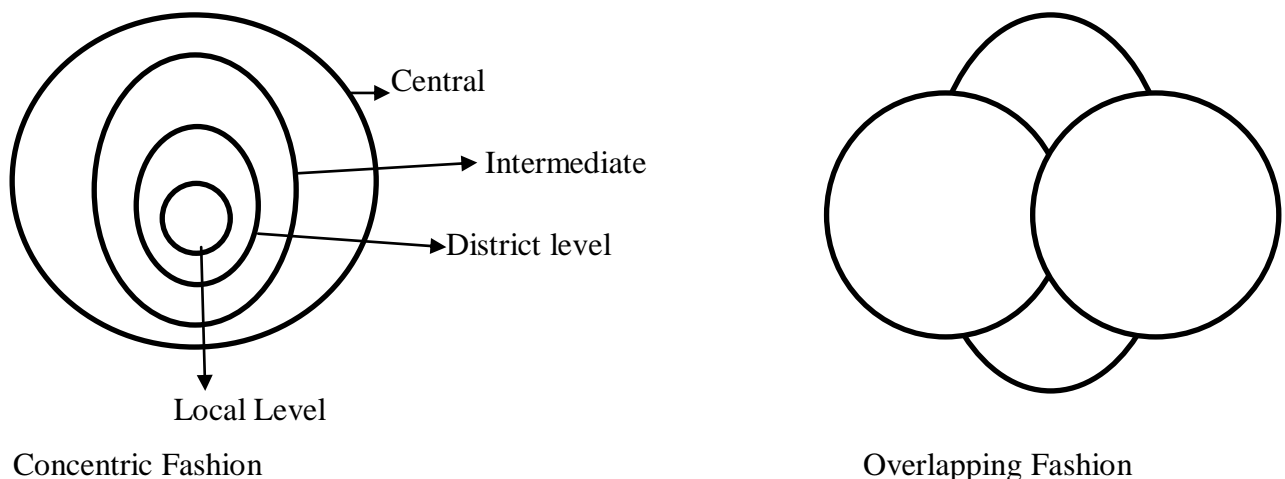
### **2.1 Decentralization: Meaning & Scope**

Decentralization doesn't have a clear-cut and single definition. Welsh & McGinn (1999) suggest that decentralization is an ambiguous concept having commonly used, yet defined and interpreted variously. Similarly feeling expressed by Gershberg (1998), "the concept of decentralisation is slippery" (p.405). When analysing the word "Decentralization" logically, it is seen as a process – a '-isation' – rather than as a static situation. It means when it is a process, then at some point it is necessary to be stopped once the desirable outcome is achieved. After all, what is the meaning of decentralization?

Though, the major problem is with both advocacy and implementation of decentralization policies (Chapman, 2002; Bray, 2003a). Hanson (1998) defines it as "the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility, and tasks from higher to lower organizational levels or between organizations" (p.112). More particularly, when transferring the power to a lower level, which is supposed to be a powerless level within the organization; Lauglo (1995) claims, "transferring authority to geographically dispersed public institutions". When analysing the definition given by Hanson (1998), what kind of power, authority, responsibility, and task are supposed to be transferred from a higher level to a lower level? Dyer & Rose (2005) have tried it to cover holistically to some extent by defining, "decentralization is concerned with the transfer of 'political authority and power, resources, administrative responsibilities and functions' from those in one level of decision making to those in another level" (P.105).

However, the decentralization is about shifting power from one location or level of those who govern to those in another level within educational organization when talking about the education decentralization. Welsh & McGinn(1999) have claimed four possible located authorities “ the central government; provincial, state or regional governing bodies; municipal, country or district government; and the schools” (p. 17). When transferring an authority from one location to another, Welsh and McGinn (1999) have shown two images of decentralization with entirely different characteristics i.e., concentric fashion and overlapping fashion as shown in the following figure:

**Figure 1: Images of Decentralization**



Source: (Welsh & McGinn, 1999, p. 20)

Welsh & McGinn (1999) say, “decision is made at the central level in a concentric fashion; whereas in the overlapping fashion, states and the district make most decisions” (p.20). They further clarify the hierarchical structure of public and private organization on the following ways:

In both private and public sector, mostly the organizations are hierarchical in structure that is lead by the leader having multiple layers of authority. The same apply in the educational organization as well. The minister is at the top that is attached downward with more directors-general, each of whom is connected downward with more directors, and directors who supervise more education officers (p.20).

It practically seems that decisions made at the top layer affect more people and those at the bottom affect comparatively few people.

If the above-mentioned structure is the functional structure of education system practiced around the world, the question can be asked what degrees of autonomy and elements of the system to be decentralized when transferring the power? Although there is a considerable variation in actual practices, decentralization takes mainly three forms or in similar word, the three levels of transfer of authority: deconcentration, delegation, and devolution, (Welsh & McGinn, 1999). Deconcentration reforms shift authority for implementation of rules by establishing branch offices with their officers, but only tasks and responsibilities without having the authority for making decisions. A relatively higher degree of decentralization is delegation that suggests more substantial degree of decision-making at the local level, but powers and authority remains in the centre. Devolution is the strongest of these three forms which imply that something is given back to the organization from which it has been taken. It is the most extreme of these three forms of decentralization in the sense that the power is transferred to more local units of government, for example, provinces and municipalities. Under the devolution form of education decentralization, local units are autonomous in making decision, and they do not need to seek the approval from higher-level. Nevertheless, the role of central authorities is to supervise to local units.

## **2.2 The Rational for Decentralization**

As we already discussed about the education decentralization where municipalities, village development committee (VDC) or and, in some places, schools are given greater educational autonomy in decision-making. This process may create a curiosity that why the centralized education system is decentralized and what is the reason behind it?

Welsh & McGinn (1999) argue the motives of educational decentralization precisely on the following ways:

- (a) political motives- in most of the world there is a groundswell of enthusiasm for increased participation in public decision-making by groups that have or claim to have been excluded earlier; and (b) level of funding incentives- central governments do not or cannot provide the finance to meet demand for schooling; (c) efficiency purposes- prompted by an argument that more local decision-making will reduce the cost of producing a unit of output (p.29).



Despite the ground of theoretical differences among them, these typologies are interrelated to each other at least at the level of policy rhetoric (Hanson, 1997; Rondinelli, 1999).

When analyzing those views, the rational behind the decentralization is the way to shift the financial burden to local people by transferring the decision-making process to the local community in the name of participation of local people. Along with the same line, Fiske (1996) also considered the decentralization as “useful tools in shifting the financial responsibility away from the central government to the regional and local bodies followed by an increase in total spending” (p. 24-26).

Daun (2007) discussed extending more reasons of decentralization categorizing them on the following topics:

- (a) Economic decline generally and or inability of governments to finance the education system, high or increasing educational costs; (b) cultural factors; (c) weakening legitimacy of the state or public sector; (d) state overload and or (e) declining performance of the education system; and (f) global and international pressure (p.28).

His claims was on the basis of the reasons found by the researchers and purposes stated by policy makers for educational decentralization. Similarly, Winkler (1993) has categorized the rational of educational decentralization relating to “a wide variety of factors into four broad categories: educational finance, efficiency, accountability and effectiveness, and redistribution of political power” (p.102).

*Educational finance:* Inability of governments to finance the education system as argued by Welsh & McGinn (1999), “political-economic paradigm which advocates included roles for privatization and the encouragement of non-governmental organizations in order to share financial matters on education” (p.27). Liya (2006) argued it as a notion of “finance-driven” decentralization policy.

*Efficiency:* When the doubled and tripled enrolments of students and teachers strained the capacity of centralized bureaucracies to maintain the quality, the pressure of increasing public dissatisfaction resulted to shift decision-making to local groups ((Welsh & McGinn, 1999).

*Accountability and effectiveness:* Centralized systems reduce the accountability of schools to their consumer, i.e., community people. The argument is that the participation of local

community people would encourage the government to be more accountable. On the other hand, when transferring the power to a local people, it could create a forum to legitimate collective local decision-making process by hearing the weak and strong voices of the community. Along with the participation of community people, they would contribute directly to the cost of education so that they are likely to demand a quality service ensuring the efficient service delivery.

*Globalization and or international pressure:* International imposition along with globalization also a reason that influences the policy of education system. According to Dye (2001), “in top-down policy-making, behind the scene activities of funding agencies, policy planning organizations, think tanks, political campaign contributors, special-interest groups, lobbyists, influence-peddlers and national news media are more powerful than the people’s concerns and voices” (as cited in Khanal, 2013, p.65). More precisely, the donor agencies, for example, bilateral, multilateral and World Bank are powerful and strong imposer on the decision of the education policies of underdeveloped countries (Brock-Utne, 2000). In addition to the donors, they are the global policy advisor as a think tank for the national government (Steiner-Khamsi, 2012).

*Redistribution of political power (democratization):* Democratization by etymologically is a process that advocates regarding the distribution of power among the groups in the society. The redistribution of political power here means that decentralization of power. Welsh & McGinn (1999) argued the distribution of power to local people as a reason to decentralization as follows:

Centralized bureaucracy has proven unable to tackle issues of local level, and then decentralization as a democratic process appeared to be the solution of faster identification of problems by searching the most appropriate responses. Therefore, the decentralization is the result of the process of political democratization in which they want to be consulted and involved in the decision-making process that concerns them directly (P. 9).

### **2.3 Implementation of Education Decentralization**

The policy of education policy is crucial to see how the government implements it in the practice. Desirable outcomes of education decentralization depend on how well the policy is made and implemented in the practice. Undeniably, the decentralization is concerned with the transferring of the decision-making process but the question could be asked how it is

transferred. Practically, after reviewing the literature related to education decentralization, the idea of school-based management (SBM) is thought as a holistic approach to education decentralization.

### **2.3.1 School Based Management (SBM) as a Mechanism for Educational Decentralization**

With the aim of improving the quality of service delivery of education to people, many governments have transferred power of decision-making to local people in order to increase the participation of parents and community people. As a result, it increases the satisfaction of local people; only one way to implement education decentralization is known popularly as school-based management (SBM).

Considerably, SBM is the decentralization of authority of the central government to the school level (Caldwell, 2005 as cited in Patrinos & Fasih, 2009). According to Malen et al. (1990) view the concept of school-based management on the following way:

School-based management can be viewed conceptually as a formal alteration of governance structures. It is a form of decentralization that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of development and relies on the redistribution of decision-making power. Whereas, the primary means through which improvement might be stimulated and sustained, (P.290).

In addition, Abu-Duhou (1999, as cited in Rajbhandari, 2007) pointed out that mainly western countries were implementing school-based management in the structure of educational governance. Similarly, Caldwell & Spinks (1992, as cited in Rajbhandari, 2007) explained “SBM self-managing school as one “that has significant and consistent decentralization of school level of authority to make decisions that are related to allocation of resources” (p.6).

Undoubtedly, the SBM approach is adopted to devolve the power of the central government to the school level (Haug, 2009; Hanson, 1990). When transferring the power to school level, Patrinos & Fasih (2009) have discussed on the basis of two dimensions, i.e., the devolve of the degree of autonomy (what) and the authoritative stakeholders (who). In addition, Patrinos & Fasih (2009) have typified four model as another crucial dimension included in SBM reforms:

(a) administrative-control SBM—in which, the power is devolved to the school principal, (b) professional-control SBM—in which, teachers hold the central decision-making authority so as to use their knowledge of the school and its students, (c) community-control SBM—in which, parents have the main authority of decision-making, (d) balanced-control SBM—in which an authority of decision-making is shared by parents and teachers (p.5).

However, it is estimated that there are more than 800 SBM models in the United States alone, and globally SBM reforms vary even more widely (Rowan et al., 2004 cited in Patrinos and Fasih, 2009). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has classified the decision-making under four:

(a) organization of instruction, including authoritative bodies (bodies that determine the school attended), school policy, time length, textbooks, grouping students, student assistance, teaching methods, and evaluating pupils, (b) planning of education and the establishment of the structures level, including managing schools, curriculum, subject choice, course content, qualifying exams, and credentialing, (c) personnel management level, including hiring and firing employees, and salaries for staff; and, (d) resource allocation and use level, including itemized costs, resource use, and maintaining and operating costs (OECD, 1995, p. 6).

## **2.4 Perception of the Stakeholders on Implication of Education**

### **Decentralization to Quality, Equity and Relevance**

The impact and the effect to enhancing education quality making it relevant to local people increasing their access to quality education gives added weight to the question, “can education decentralization enhance quality, equity, and relevance? Decentralization in most of the developing countries is interpreted in three complementary ways: “asking elected local authorities to take charge of education in their area, strengthening the role of regional and district education offices and increasing school autonomy in resource management” (IIEP, 2004, p. 1). According to Winkler & Boon-Ling (2007), “whether elected school committees reflect their communities or are dominated by political elites; whether newly empowered decentralized units have the ability to carry out their new functions; and whether central education ministries provide the technical and information support necessary for good governance and accountability” ( p.2).

However, if the policy of education decentralization is formulated and implemented successfully, it has the potential capacity to improve service delivery. On the other hand, it may have some positive and negative impact on education. More to the point, the implication of any form of education decentralization is measured on how successfully it improves the quality with best suits to the pupil's needs more precisely reflecting the desire of the community and increase the access to education (Winkler & Boon-Ling, 2007). In this section, more importantly, the perceptions of the stakeholders and researchers on implication of decentralized education reform on quality, equity and relevance of education is going to be discussed.

Hannaway & Carnoy (1993, as cited in Carnoy, 1999) has argued that if the local educational authorities take the responsibility for educational service delivery, the reason given by the reformers is that educational quality will improve. Similarly, CERID (2004) claimed,

Transfer of school management was to empower the local community by enabling them to participate in local schools. The participation of local people would create the feelings of ownership creating accountability that would improve the quality in education by improving access and achieve the goal of EFA. In addition, transfer of school management was to create government-community partnership in the matters of local education (p.4-5).

The claim is based on the fact that sense of ownership of local people in school management could improve the quality of education. Along with this assumption, what we can say that local authorities can deserve to identify and mobilize their local resources which best suit their needs. In addition, the decentralized education reform is assumed to enhance the quality of education making the local education more relevant. On the question of how this reform has the impact in education, Carnoy (1999) has explained it in the more practical ways:

This reform increase the control over curriculum and teaching methods of local communities and the teacher and principals of the schools themselves-this on the assumption that it increases flexibility and control allows for a better fit between educational methods and the clientele served, as well as greater accountability for educational results (p.38).

Education decentralization reform increases the possibilities for local schools to design programs and activities better adapted to the needs of the local community. In addition, the reforms may also lead to an increase in local variations, both regarding the schools' economy and funding as well as educational quality (Opheim, 2004).

The education decentralization requires equal participation of all people within the society disregarding sex, classes, groups and religion that relates to the equity in education. Carnoy (1999) considers it an 'equity-driven reform' which attempts to develop the important political role of education as a source of social equalization and social mobility. Similarly, Bray & Mukundan (2003) consider this reform a mantra as a means for the better management and governance of education in order to improve efficiency and enhance the relevance. Their claim is on the basis of that it allows the schools greater autonomy in "curriculum, deployment of teachers, admissions of pupils, medium of instruction, and structure of the school year" (p.5). Along with the same statement, Dakar Forum (EFA,2000) identified several elements as necessary for quality in education as stated in UNESCO (2009):

Among them: well-nourished, motivated students; well-trained teachers using active learning techniques; adequate facilities and materials; a relevant, local language curriculum that builds on teachers' and learners' knowledge and experience; a welcoming, gender-sensitive, healthy, safe environment that encourages learning; and a clear definition and accurate assessment of learning outcomes (p.108).

Furthermore, "communities themselves take over the running of schools and recruitment of teachers, and they initiate a curriculum for indigenous language teaching" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 154). The reason behind is that locally hired teachers are more likely to "be familiar with the cultural context in which they are working, with potential benefits for the quality and relevance of their teaching" (UNESCO, 2009: p 189). Similarly, Patrinos & Fasih (2009) has supported with the same line as "most countries whose students perform well in international student achievement tests give their local authorities and schools substantial autonomy over adapting and implementing educational content, allocating and managing resources, or both" (p. 6).

Contrary to the above statements, "in low-income countries facing tight budget constraints and with significant deficits in classroom availability, efficiency is one of the most critical

requirements for expanded access to education and enhanced equity” (UNESCO, 2009, p. 138). However, “decentralization has an inbuilt commitment to equity through financing formulas that link resources to levels of poverty and deprivation in education” (UNESCO, 2009, p 4). The Report further identifies deep and persistent disparities based on income, gender, location, ethnicity and other markers for disadvantage as a major barrier to progress in education (UNESCO, 2009, p 6). Along with this statement, Popic & Patel (2011) say, “capture of benefits by local elites, increased ethnic, religious or cultural rivalries, lack of local capacity to administer, loss of economies of scale, excessive duplication of functions, and increases sub-national disparities from greater reliance on local generation of resources” (p.5). Besides the hazardous feelings of outcomes of SBM, however, (Popic & Patel, 2011) claims that reform has improved learning achievements and increased equity.

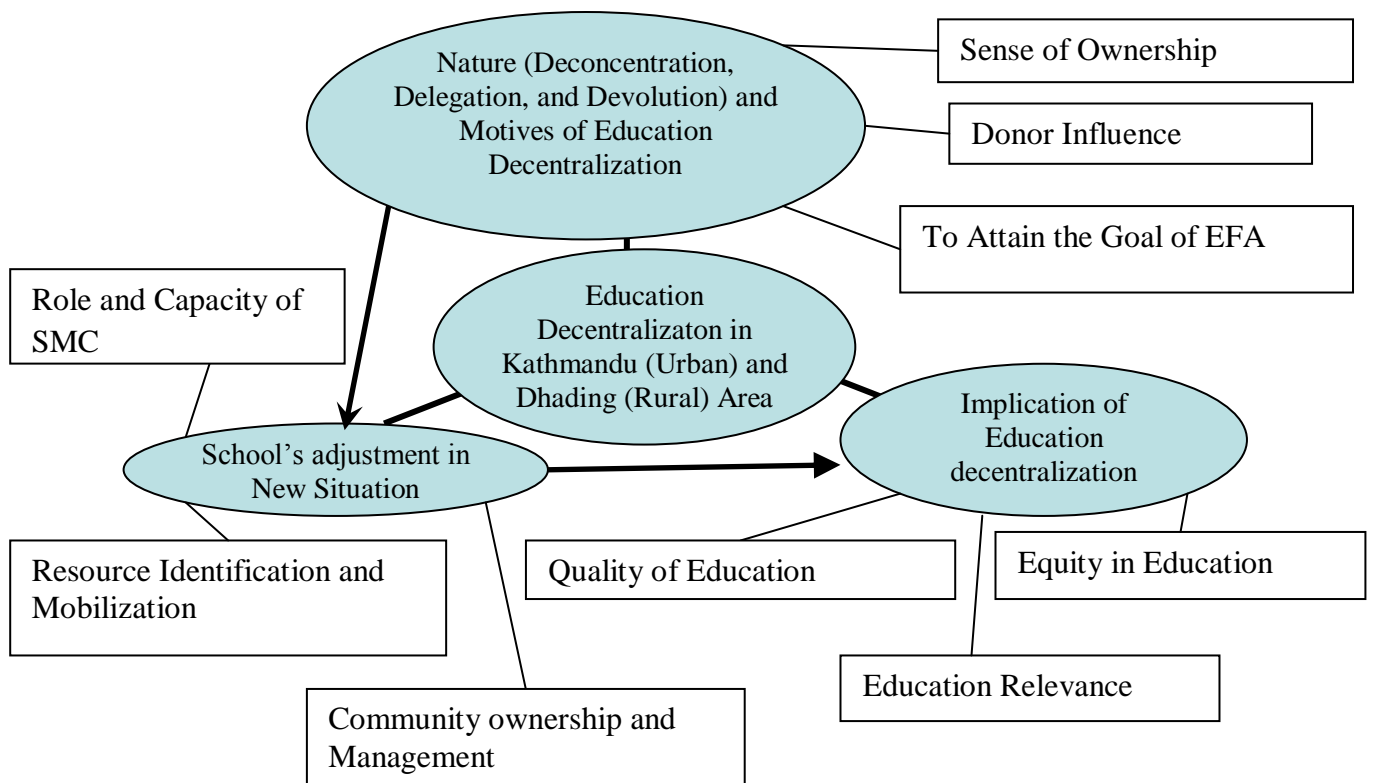
## **2.5 Conceptual Framework**

Review of the literature establishes the conceptual or theoretical framework that outlines the concepts of the study for analysis by connecting to the key research questions. The conceptual framework is an analytical tool through which the researcher explains, predicts, and understands a particular social phenomenon. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) view that it is to challenge or build on the existing knowledge within the context of what is termed as critical bounding assumptions (p.223). On the basis of underpinning theory, it discusses decentralization in the education sector.

When establishing the conceptual framework with the conclusion drawn from the reviewed literature, then we come to the theoretical basis in the following way. Well, there are three forms of decentralization, i.e. deconcentration, delegation, and devolution. The application of any form of decentralization in any countries has many reasons. Out of them, efficiency, accountability and effectiveness, globalization and or international pressure, and redistribution of political power (democratization) are thought to be the main factors that encouraged to devolve the power to community people. Notably, education decentralization seems to have focused more on schools based management. Practical implementation of education decentralization strengthens the influential role of school management committee (CMS) at school and local government at local level. As a result, CMS and local government enjoy its greater degree by identifying and mobilizing the resources, increasing the sense of ownership at local people in order to deliver quality education. Furthermore, decentralization

enhances the relevance of education and increases the equal access and equity in education that can be figured out on the following ways:

**Figure: 2 Conceptual Framework**



Source: Author

The figure above gives the conceptual framework for this study. Strictly speaking, there are three forms of decentralization, i.e., deconcentration, delegation, and devolution existed around the world. Application of any form of decentralization has the driving factors, for example, to increase the sense of ownership to local community people, imposed by the donors, and to attain the goal of EFA. Community managed schools enjoy a greater degree of education decentralization through SMC. In addition, decentralization increases the participation of local people involving them in decision making. When community people are autonomous on resource identification and mobilization, it increases the sense of ownership to the local people. Ultimately, the successful implementation of education decentralization



results in the desirable outcomes, for example, equitable access to quality education making the education more relevant to the local people.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter presents an overview of research methods that were used when carrying out the study. This chapter mainly discusses the particular use of methods, data collection and analysis, including all the procedures applied during the course of study.

### **3.1 Qualitative Research Strategy**

Social scientists are always carrying out the philosophical debate about what constitutes the knowledge and the methodology for generating facts. Kvale & Brinkmann (2008) have claimed that the method helps to know and understand reality better through the application of scientific methods. When choosing the methods, Nelson, Treichler & Grossberg (1992) have argued, “it depends on the assumption that in which context the questions are asked” (p.2).

Bryman (2008) explains “qualitative research tends to be concerned with words rather than numbers: as an inductive view of the relationship between theory and as interpretivist that stress is on the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” (p.365). Moreover, qualitative research strategy is thought to be appropriate in the study involving diverse groups of people with diverse backgrounds (Bryman, 2008). When analyzing this view, this study follows the qualitative epistemological position which indicates the significance of locating qualitative research within a particular social, cultural, and historical context. More to the point, the qualitative data collection methods were employed, namely Semi-structured Interviews (SSI) and analysis of official documents for the study.

#### **3.1.1 Case Study Design: Comparative Dimension**

A case study of this research mainly deals with a comparative dimension of two schools. In qualitative research, case studies are an important approach that forms the fundamental study of the aspects of the research work. The fundamental of the case study shows the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman, 2008). On the other hand, “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its

real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18).

Similarly, in this study, the findings of two comparable cases were compared with the same research questions. Since the government of Nepal commissioned a high-level working committee of education in 2001, which led to transfer the management responsibility to the community in the name of community managed schools. After the government schools were transferred to community, then impact on quality, equity and relevance of education could be seen in different geographical regions. Besides this, the study compares the case of two schools of different districts: one was from the well-developed urban area, and another was from less-developed rural area. At the same time, two cases were taken into consideration: present situation of the community managed schools was compared with their previous condition (during government controlled school). The reason for considering a comparative approach to this study was to find out whether or not there were comparable differences and similarities between two schools and within the same schools of each enjoyed education decentralization to contributing to the quality, equity and relevance of education.

### **3.2. Location & Rationale for the Choice of the Research Sites**

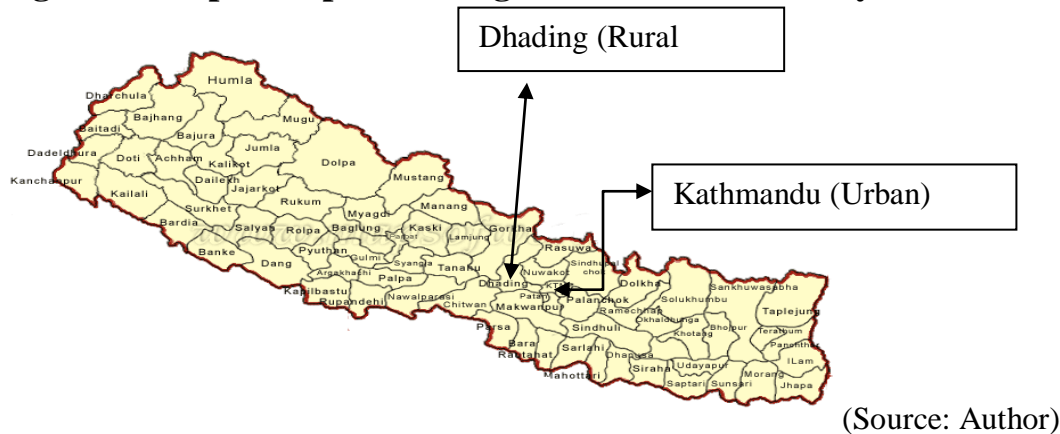
The choice of the Location of the study sites is crucial, especially for qualitative research. Generally, in qualitative research, “purposeful sampling strategy is used in which particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the relevant information they can provide that cannot be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 235).

In Nepal, there are 14 zones under which 75 districts are divided and out of which, two districts Dhading and Kathmandu were selected as a research site. Where One community managed school in Dhading district from the rural area and, another one in Kathmandu District from an urban area were selected.

Dhading district, a rural district, has located in mid-hilly region spreading with 1926 km<sup>2</sup> and represents a sparsely distribution at 1.46% of the total national population with an annual growth rate estimated at 1.97% and agriculture is the main economic source of the district. There is no urban area in Dhading district. On the other hand, Kathmandu, an urban district and capital city of Nepal, has also situated in mid-hilly region covering the area of 395

square km with is a densely populated area represents the total national population of 4.67 % with the annual population growth of 4.71 %. 65.88 % of the total population of the district live in an urban area (Nepal Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2012).

**Figure 3: Map of Nepal showing the Sites for the Study**



The main reason to chose those two districts had many reasons. One important reason was that one school should have been chosen from the rural area and another from the urban area. Both districts were in the same region, i.e. Bagmati region, and they were neighboring districts. Therefore, easily accessible sites which best suit the budget and time schedule of the researcher was also the main reason. Secondly, one district that was from rural area, i.e. Dhading district did not have more urban population and on the other hand, another district which was from urban area i.e. Kathmandu had a very high level of urban population. One identical aspect was that the management of both schools were managed by the community, but monitored by the central government which was located in the capital city, Kathmandu. Thirdly, as an international student from Nepal, it was important to fulfill the requirement that any international students had to conduct research in their home country.

### 3.2.1 Access to and Process of the Fieldwork

“ Qualitative research aims to produce factual descriptions based on face-to-face knowledge of individuals and social groups in their natural settings. Qualitative research is useful for obtaining insight into situations and problems concerning which one may have little knowledge” (Mulenga, 2012, p.196). This knowledge and insights (I would like to say raw materials for the analysis) can be achieved by the actual interaction and observation which take place in the research field. Getting access to the field and to informants is critical, complex and a challenge that most of the researchers have been experienced; and I am not an exception in

collecting the data looms large to the qualitative researcher, with its challenges of obtaining permission (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). As a researcher, I also faced many difficulties but by a rigorous effort to make a contact with the key persons helped me to get access to the information.

### 3.2.2 Sampling Procedure

Sampling is a process of selecting a segment, for example, of people, and organizations from a population which is the group of interest to the researcher, to whom researcher may like to, generalize the results of the study (Fink, 2000; Franekel & Wallen, 2008). Since the study was following a qualitative research, a purposeful sampling was undertaken in order to allow the researcher gain knowledge about the sources selected for the study. How many respondents are supposed to be interviewed from the targeted population is guided by the research questions. The informants for the study were selected from the three different level of respondent groups (national, district and schools).

**Table No. 1. A Number of Informants Selected and Interviewed for each Category**

S/No.	Informant	Male	Female	Total
1	Ministry of Education Officials	2	0	2
2	District Education Officers:			
	DEO from Urban School	1	0	1
	DEO from Rural School	1	0	1
3	School Supervisors	1	0	1
4	Resource Person	1	0	1
5	Education Officer of International Non-government Organization (INGOs):			
	Asian Development Bank (ADB)	1	0	1
	UNESCO	1	0	1
6	Politicians	1	0	1

7	Head Teachers, Teachers and SMC			
	Chairpersons			
	From Urban School	3	2	5
	From Rural School	2	3	5
	Total	14	5	19

Source: Field visit report, 2012

### 3.2.2.1 Selection of Schools

Before I embarked on the selection of the informants, it was important to note here that the two schools condemned A from the rural area and B from the urban area were purposefully selected for this study. School A (managed by the community) was located in a rural area in Dhading District, which was geographically linked with Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. On the other hand, School B (community managed school from an urban area) was located in the central part of the capital city, Kathmandu. I chose those schools on the basis that management of those two schools was transferred to community i.e. community managed schools. Secondly, I chose the schools based on the fact that the schools were managed by community people for more than four years.

### 3.2.2.2 National Level Informants

Education policy is made at the central level and implemented at the grassroots level through district education offices in Nepal. Since the study aimed to analyse the gap between the formulation of policy and implementation at local level in Nepal, it was very important to take the views of the central level officers who were directly or indirectly associated with policy making.

The informants in this category comprised of the Director General of the Department of Education (DOE) and the educational policy makers who were directly or indirectly associated with the formation of policy making. The criteria for the selection of these officials was based on the importance that (a) they were a key and senior Ministry officials, (b) who were experienced in the field of leadership, school management and governance. Initially, the plan was made to interview male and female at the ministry level, but it seemed impossible as there were lacking female leaders at the level of policy-making at the Ministry level. It showed that there was still lacking the female officials at the policy formation level.

Therefore, two males were interviewed in this category at the central level. Additionally, education officers from donor agencies were also included in the process of interview. Therefore, in total, four participants at the central level were interviewed. Along with them, one of the politicians was also selected to record the political views on education decentralization.

### **3.2.2.3 District Level Informants**

Since the Ministry of Education implements the policy through district education offices located in each district headquarters, district education offices are closer to the local people or schools. District education offices are supposed to address important issues related to education decentralization, and they are considered as well familiar with the local issues within their area. Therefore, DEOs were the primary sources by virtue of the fact that they were the principal implementers of the policy at local level. This group primarily comprised district education officers (DEO), school supervisors and resource persons. Hence, four informants were interviewed in this category.

### **3.2.2.4 School Level Informants**

Ultimately, education policy is implemented at the local level, i.e. school levels. The criterion for the selection of this category of informants was also based on the fact that they were (a) certified teachers, (b) were experienced teachers with more than four years and were teaching in the school basically teaching at the time when the management of the school was not transferred to community (government controlled). Therefore, they could have the comparative knowledge of before and after the school was transferred to community. Besides these, chairman of the school management committee (SMC) who had completed his or her duration of assigned time was also selected. The reason to choose them was that he or she had experienced and faced different issues and difficulties when he or she had a responsibility as a chairperson. On this assumption, Patton (2002) argues that it is important to get people with experience, knowledge and who know the social contexts of the phenomenon in the study. In addition, there were no particular criteria applied in the selection of the head teachers and the deputy head teachers as it was automatic since a school had only one head teacher and one deputy head teacher. I ended up interviewing ten people who were five female teachers, three male teachers and two chairpersons of the school management committee (SMC) from two schools respectively in this study.

### **3.3. My Role as a Researcher**

The role of a researcher in the field of research based on the myths described by Hammersley & Atkinson(2007) as an insider or an outsider: an insider is someone who comes from the locality and is familiar with the social context and on the other hand, an outsider is someone who is unfamiliar and is new to the social setting. Analyzing this view, my role as a researcher during the process of this study were both. This not only entailed being aware of my role as an outside researcher, but also of my presence as an insider, in the sense of being a Nepali and carrying out research within my country. Since I was not entirely familiar with informants and the setting where I conducted my research, though my role as a partially insider, but I could claim that my position as an outsider.

As I moved around asking questions, conducting interviews, interacting with my Informants on the field particularly in two schools, making observations of the daily events in the school communities was similar to an observer-as-participation as argued by (Bryman, 2008).

### **3.4 Data Collection Methods**

As discussed earlier, the data collection methods used were in relation to my study as no single method was enough in data collection. Silverman (2000) argues that it is important to use more methods in the collection of data for the purpose of triangulation. “The main techniques used in case study methodology are observations (both participants and non-participants, depending on the case), semi-structured interviews, and document analysis” (Burns, 1994, p. 313). Therefore, the methods I used were: (a) a face- to- face interviews with participants, (b) general observation, (c) the review of policy documents, and relevant documents like minutes of school management committee’s meetings. Below is a detailed account of how each method was applied.

#### **3.4.1 Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI)**

The in-depth semi-structured interview is useful in order to collect primary data by conducting personal interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide a flexible structure for the interview process. At the same time, it allows the researcher and the interviewees to explore themes when they come up by providing some space for the researcher to



accommodate new issues and concerns regarding the research topic. Therefore, the interview process is flexible where interviewee can also raise the questions or issues to be discussed in interview session as well. Along with the flexibility to ask questions by the informants, questions were adjusted depending on the respondent's knowledge and experience with the educational decentralization policy in Nepal. In the study, flexibility worked well in accommodating a significant theme that appeared during the fieldwork. Though it had not been anticipated in the interview guide previously, transferring the management system of school from the government controlled to community managed schools was newly introduced.

On the field, I conducted face to face individual interviews with my informants, which lasted between 35-60 minutes per an informant. As we already discussed about the interviews as two separate sets of interview questions with slightly changing in each set to adjust the question to each level of interviewee to elicit views and experiences that were appropriate for the different respondent categories. Besides these, the questions did not only solicit the respondents views and feelings, but also sought to establish a positive experience which gave me a space for the interpretation of respondent's expressions and words that were linked and related to non-observable meanings.

Most of the individual interviews were primarily conducted at participant's offices. Interviews were voiced-recorded by a recording instrument so that it would minimize the degree of distraction on my discussion part in an interview session. Furthermore, when returning home after conducting interviews, I immediately wrote down my impression and reflections related to fieldwork. So that, it would result in the reconstruction of what were going on during the fieldwork in the form of a descriptive narrative.

### **3.4.2 Observation**

Observation, particularly the participant observation, which uses various subject areas as a tool for accumulating data about people, processes, and cultures in qualitative inquiry. Marshall & Rossman (1989) define observation as "the systematic description of events, behaviours and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (p.79). Similarly, in order to understand and interpret cultural behavior, the unstructured observation is useful (Booth et al, 2001).

In the research, observation is employed as a research method in two distinct ways – structured and unstructured (Pretzlik 1994). Undoubtedly, as my research questions determined me to choose qualitative research based on the interpretivism/constructivism paradigm, I conducted unstructured observation.

While conducting unstructured observation, two selected schools were observed. Furthermore, I observed the minutes of meetings, teachers' and students' attendance registers, classroom observation, settings of the classes. The objectives of those were to explore the role of SMC in decision making, teachers or students absence and presence, students' progress so that data would answer my research questions.

### **3.4.3 Analysis of Official Documents**

The document constitutes a various set of sources of data, for example, personal documents, official documents from both the government and private sources, and the mass media.

Document analysis is a systematic routine for reviewing or evaluating materials, both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material that requires the examination and interpretation of data in order to develop empirical knowledge (Corbin & Strauss, 2008 as cited in Bowen, 2009).

As long as this study was going to examine the implementation and impact of education decentralization at the local level, I reviewed the documents and literatures that were related to my field of study. I overviewed and analysed the following documents; key policy documents (policies and strategies, 2008), the Education Act from 1971 to 2004, Local-self governance Act 1999, Nepal teacher act, School Governance by Ministry of Education, Nepal. Furthermore, minutes of meetings conducted by the school management committee (SMC) and reports from different research project related education decentralization were also analyzed.

### **3.5 Transcribing, Coding, Categorizing and Analysis**

After the collection of all the raw data, the next primary task for qualitative researchers is to process into 'thematic narratives' for comprehensive analysis and discussion to make the findings and conclusion.

Transcription entails a translation (Slembrouck, 2007; ten Have, 2007) or transformation of sound/image from recordings to text (Duranti, 2007). As long as I had interviewed 19 participants, and each record was around one hour (60 minutes) long. It means, I had the total of 19 hours long recorded interview. Bernard & Ryan (2010) pointed out "If you have 40 hours of recorded interviews, plan on working 8 hours a day, and every day for 30 days to convert them into text files. But the real time may be several months [.....] And if you have 100 hours of recorded interviews..... you can imagine the problem" (p.49). Another challenge that I faced with the translation was that all the interviews and SMC minutes were in Nepali language, and that were to be translated into English. The challenging when transcribing was that it was very difficult to bring exactly the same word in another language. While transcribing the recorded interview, I had to listen several times to make notes. When talking about the duration of time to come up with a complete transcription by maintaining authenticity, it took almost around four months. Along with the transcribing word by word, I jotted out the verbal and non-verbal cues and gestures because those might have a sense. At the same time, I had to spend more time to translate minutes of the school management committee (SMC) of both schools word by word.

Thereafter, labeling and coding took place. In the process, I underlined the sentences or paragraph that gave the particular meanings. Bryman (2008) defines the concept as a process of labeling and coding. After coding had been finished, I manipulated the identical concepts, leaving the repeated ideas called selection and gradation of concepts to make a related concept. Then, I categorized the concepts as per three themes in accordance to three main research questions. Each interview transcript was done one by one separately. As it seemed difficult to categorize the ideas under the single themes, themes and sub-themes were created to categorize the concepts. In the end, the findings were presented and analyzed under the themes followed by sub-themes.

## **3.6 Data Quality Strategy**

The researcher uses multiple and different sources, methods, and evidences to form the themes or categories and to corroborate findings while conducting research. In order to build up the confidence about data which leads to the construction of framework to act as checks of their quality, two terms which are synonymous (synonymous in the sense that both of them judge the quality of data) with making judgments about the quality of data are reliability and validity. The reason behind it is to produce a research of a good quality which is always “sound, well-grounded, justifiable, strong and convincing” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p 246). Therefore, this chapter is going to discuss the constructing validity and reliability of the data.

### **3.6.1 Validity**

Validity tells us in general, whether an item measures or describes what it is supposed to measure or describe. According to Bryman (2008), “validity is concerned more with the integrity of the conclusions that are generated from a piece of research” (p.32). Therefore, validity is an overarching key to effective research (Cohen et al., 2007). In qualitative data validity might be addressed through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved (Winter, 2000 cited in Cohen et.al., 2007). In other word, validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than a dogmatic state, rather researchers should strive to minimize invalidity and maximize validity (Grondlund, 1981 cited in Cohen et al., 2007).

Though, whatever is said by whomever, the researcher must maintain the criteria of validity by answering the questions like how believable are the findings? Do the findings apply to other contexts? And has the investigator allowed his or her values to intrude to a high degree? Maintaining the above views and questions in order to maintain validity while in the field work, I used different techniques of data collection that gave me an opportunity to triangulate different pieces of information, for example, recording of informal dialogue with my informants, observations, analysis of policy documents, and reports related to the study in the field work. Besides the recording, I took notes summarizing the interviewees’ opinions and remarks in order to make their views more valid and clear. When conducting interviews, I noticed their gesture to validate their views. Thereafter, those were transcribed and translated into the English word by word to avoid falsification and distortion of the views

presented by the informants and documents in this study. As long as I conducted my fieldwork alone, that helped me to maintain a degree of honesty and transparency.

### **3.6.2 Reliability**

Reliability concerns with the extent to which a test would give consistent results if it applied more than once to the same people under standard conditions. On the other word, it is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is supposed to measure.

In qualitative research, the role of different data collection techniques such as interviews, direct observation, study notes and documents are proposed to improve the reliability of research findings (Holmarsdottir, 2005). Similarly, there are many techniques for increasing reliability, but a common practice among qualitative researchers is the compilation of materials used such as field notes, official documents and other narratives of the data collection and analysis process (Kirk & Miller, 1986). By considering those statements, in order to increase the reliability, I transcribed the recorded interviews word by word. In addition, the views of the informants were presented accurately without bias and or prejudice from my personal views. Furthermore, in order to strengthen reliability, I also analyzed documents in relation to the phenomena in the study, for example, the policy documents and other related literature in relation to the study. Apart from this, usage of various methods and techniques like semi-structured interview, observation in the process of data collection, made the research more consistency and trustworthiness.

### **3.7 Ethical Considerations**

Increase awareness of ethical considerations when conducting research is an important part of the research as researchers should be conscious about it. Ethical considerations are related to the behaviour and activities of the researcher towards the research participants especially interviewees. More to the point, Method, procedure, or perspective are followed for deciding how to act and for analysing complex problems and issues on the field.

*Privacy:* Before the interview was started, I requested for the permission from the participants to record electronically as the interview was in oral form because most of the participants were professional and working under the organization. Thus, the identities of the interviewees and the recordings should be maintained confidential (Bryman, 2008). I promised not to disclose their name, so that I only mentioned their positions and the organization they

represented. When coding the remarks of the participants, I only mentioned their age instead of their names.

*Informed consent:* I also made them aware that they could participate voluntarily and withdraw as they pleased at any time after I gave them the information about the purpose of the study and the importance of their contribution verbally.

Furthermore, because of the political sensitivity surrounding the implementation of the educational decentralization policy in Nepal, I tried to maintain confidentiality and anonymity at all levels by not recording introductory remarks such as names and leaving out those comments that were off the record or strictly personal. It was my duty and responsibility to maintain the degree of anonymity and confidentiality from the study design up to the final report of the study as per the ethical guidelines and principles as a part of my role as a researcher.

## **Chapter 4: The Nepalese Context**

This chapter entails the short overview of the geographic, demographic and administrative including the economic, cultural and political context of Nepal. Being the education in Nepal an important aspect of the study, it further discusses the history and types of school and education system in Nepal.

### **4.1 Geographic, Demographic and Administrative**

Nepal is a landlocked country that borders China in the North and India in the East, South and West, occupying approximately an area of 147,181sq. km. It has a unique geographical and social diversities consisting of four layers of distinct zones: “1) the Himalayas, the highest mountain range with snow-covered peaks, 2) the Mahabharat range, which has lush high hills and valleys, 3) Siwalik, low conglomerate hills and shifting valleys, and 4) the Terai, plains and fertile land which is the source of agricultural product” (MOE, 2003, p.1). Ecologically, it is divided into three regions: Mountain (covers 17 percent of the total area with the population of 6.73 percent), Hill (covers 42 percent of the total geographic area with 43.01 percent of the population) and Terai (plain land of the South covers 23 percent of the total land land with 50.27 percent of the population). All these geographic belts of Nepal run from east to west. The country has a total population of 26.6 million and the growth rate is 1.6 percent per annum with slightly higher percent of females, i.e. 51.50 percent (CBS, 2012).

Regarding the administrative structure, the country is divided into 75 districts with 5 regions. Each district has a District Development Committee (DDC) under which Village Development Committees (VDCs) and municipalities are divided. DDCs, VDCs and municipalities represent as a local government having the elected political representatives. Regarding the education administrative body, the Ministry of Education (MOE) which forms and sets the programme and policy at the central level under which the Department of Education (DOE) implements developing the norms and the standards to ensure a working framework for regions, districts and schools. Each district has a District Education Committee (DEC) and it has an education committee at VDCs and municipalities as the legal

provision in order to deal with the issues of education. In addition, under the Village Education Development Committee, School Management Committee (SMC) at local School level handles the overall management of the school. Further, the district has District Education Office (DEO), headed by District Education Officer, as an administrative body under the MOE for the overall educational management at the district level. Furthermore, each district has District Education Office (DEO) headed by District Education Officer represents the part of the administrative body of MOE to control overall educational management and program at the district level.

## **4.2 The Economic, Cultural and Political Context of Nepal**

Nepal is one of the underdeveloped countries in the world. According to the human development report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2013) shows that out of 186 countries in the world, Nepal is ranked at 157 positions under the lowest human development category. In addition, (UNDP, 2013) further reports that the proportion of the population living in multidimensional poverty in Nepal is 44 percent and the intensity of deprivation is 49 percent, which is the lowest of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) <sup>1</sup>. The average economic growth of the country was 3.35 percent in 2011, (MOF, 2012). (MOF, 2013) reports that 23.8 percent of the total population is below the poverty. (MOF, 2013) Further shows that though the agriculture is the major source of the economy where about 76 percent of households are agricultural, there is a decreasing trend of the contribution of agriculture and industry and services sector are increasing. Besides these, remittance is another source of national income (CBS, 2011)

The country is coloured by all kinds of cultural, language and religious diversities. The census of 2011 has recorded that there are 125 ethnic, caste groups and sub-groups; 126 living languages with 44.6 percent of native speakers. The majority of the people belongs to Hindu religion (i.e. 81.3 percent of the population) and other religions like 9 percent of Buddhist and among others, are Christian and Muslim, etc. (CBS, 2012).

The discrimination and marginalization in terms of caste, ethnicity, religion, gender, geographic location and socio-political aspects of the historical development of the country is

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<sup>1</sup> SAARC is an organization of South Asian nations was established in 1985 by Nepal, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, and Afghanistan as the member states.



one of the big problems. Dalits<sup>2</sup>, indigenous minorities, women, and Madheshi<sup>3</sup> are mostly marginalized in each respect, i.e. they have limited access to public institutions, governance, education and economic opportunities. Out of them, Dalits are still discriminated by so called upper cast treating as so-called lower caste or 'untouchable' in public places like temples and water taps. Similarly, the domination of Nepali language as a medium of instruction at school has excluded to the indigenous minorities. It has become a barrier to the indigenous minorities because of the difficulties in understanding the Nepali language at the basic level of education. As Nepalese society is hereditarily dominated by male over females. As a result, females do not have any crucial role in the family.

When talking about the political context, Nepalese political movement began in 1950 after the end of the Rana Regime<sup>4</sup>. Thereafter, the king Mahendra Bir Bikram Shah introduced a single party system called 'Panchayat.' King Mahendra was the first who centralized education system to maintain the uniformity standard of education system throughout the country and education act was made in his ruling period. Again in 1990, democracy was restored with the constitutional monarchy, but it always lacked political stability. The Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) started an insurgency against the government in around 1996 and ended up with the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) in 2006. The lives of many people were demised during that rebellion period. Ultimately, CPA became the milestone to form the Constitution Assembly (CA) in 2007 that demised the monarchy system having the history of around 230 years. CA finally declared Nepal a federal democratic republic. Unfortunately, CA was not able to draft a new constitution for the country and dissolved on 26 April, 2012 that had people's mandates. Again in November, 2013, the election of CA held and it is still going on the way to draft a new constitution for the nation. Due to the insurgency of Maoist war and frequent changes in government, there was not held any local election since 2002. Hence, the local bodies have been run by the bureaucrats without having the locally elected bodies.

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<sup>2</sup> Dalit, in Nepal are a historically state victimised disadvantaged community and designation for a group of people traditionally regarded as untouchable who have been compelled to lag at the bottom of the social structure and excluded from national development mainstream due to the caste system and extreme Hinduism for centuries. The caste system was introduced in Nepal by King Jayasthiti Malla (1360-95) about 700 years ago. The National Civil Code, 1854, (Muluki Ain) legalized the caste system and established it as the basis of social mobility.

<sup>3</sup> Madheshis are community people living especially in the Terai belt.

<sup>4</sup> Rana regime Rana regime is autocratic regime that ruled the country from 1846 to 1951. The role of king as statue and Rana prime ministers were powerful and power and leadership would be transferred on the basis heredity from generation to generation. basis was the . The prime ministers were more powerful than the king and the leadership was passed on the basis of heredity

### 4.3 Education in Nepal

This section will discuss in brief about the history and types of schools, education system in Nepal.

#### 4.3.1 History and Types of School in Nepal

If we go back to its history, schools were established from the active participation of communities and were used to be approved by the government. That's why, Nepal has a long history of the community's support and involvement in the delivery of education. Education has always been perceived as a symbol of prestige for a village or a community, as such; communities have placed high value on education and endeavoured to establish a school in their own village. As such and before the National Education System Plan (NESP) in 1971, teachers were paid by local community with the contribution of land, cash, materials and labour. "All public schools were named as community schools, though the real concept of community schools is yet to be elaborated" (the Foundation for Human Development [FHD] & Research Inputs and Development Action [RIDA], 2009, p. 6).

Currently, in the context of Nepal, schools are broadly categorized into four types by DOE, (2009)

Community-aided (schools, which are fully supported by the government for teachers' salary and other expenses), community-managed (schools, which are fully supported by the government for teachers salary and other funds but their management responsibility lies with the community), community-unaided (schools, which are either getting partial support or no support from the government) and the institutional schools (supported by parents and trustees) . In addition to these broad categories, there are some schools running as the religious schools such as Madarasa<sup>5</sup>, Gumba/Vihar<sup>6</sup> and Ashram/Gurukul<sup>7</sup> that have received support from the government when they have been mainstreamed into the formal education system by registering with the DEO and following the Education Act and Regulation (p.6).

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<sup>5</sup> Islamic schools

<sup>6</sup> Buddhist schools

<sup>7</sup> Hinduism schools

According to the flash I report recorded by MOE (2011)<sup>8</sup>, “the numbers of community schools (all community types) are 33,160. Out of the four types of community-based schools, there are few community-managed schools in Nepal. The government encourages all government controlled schools to be transferred to community managed schools” (p.4).

Flash I report recorded by MOE (2011) shows:

Out of the total 33,160 schools 32,684 are primary, 11,939 are lower secondary, 32,685 are basic, 7,266 are secondary, 2,564 are higher secondary and 7,559 are secondary (Grades 9-12) level. The total number of community-based and school-based ECD/PPCs is 31,089 of which 4,316 pre-primary classes are running in institutional schools and the rest, i.e., 26,773 are running in the community schools and as a community based ECDs. Similarly, Out of the total 33,160 schools, 766 are religious schools (Madarasa, Gumba/Vihar and Ashram/Gurukul). On average, the school student ratios are 1:152 at primary, 1:142 at lower secondary, 1:202 at basic (Grades 1-8), 1:112 at secondary, 1:124 at higher secondary and 1:150 at secondary (Grades 9-12) levels (p.5).

### **4.3.2 Education System in Nepal**

The school system in Nepal consists of the four levels i.e. primary (grade 1-5), lower secondary (grade 7-8), secondary (grade 9-10) and higher secondary education (grade 11-12). Besides it, the pre-school learning consists of kindergarten, Montessori or any other form of pre-school education. Primarily, pre-schools have come into existence and popular in urban that includes simple day-care, nursery and kindergarten in response to the demand particularly among the educated and the working parents.

Since the government of Nepal implemented a School Sector Reform Program (SSRP, 2009-15) effective from 2009 aiming to restructure school education by integrating grade level i.e. basic education (grades 1-8) and secondary education (grades 9-12) in order to increase retention rates and overall enrolments. Apart from this, the government has introduced a one-year bridge course (from grade 9) to enable students on a vocational track to enter tertiary

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<sup>8</sup> Flash reports is published to provide overall statistics about schools by DOE under MOE. Flash I is the beginning of school year census and flash II is the end of school year census. Flash reports of all schools is sent to the DOE and it publishes national flash report based on the data provided by schools. Hence, data on equity, quality, efficiency and access indicators of contemporary sectoral program are obtained from flash report.

education. In addition, pre-primary education/early childhood development has also been introduced. Pupils at the age of 4, 5 and 13, start their pre-primary education, basic education and secondary education respectively. In general, they are supposed to finish their school education at the age of 16.

## **Chapter 5: Data Analysis and Findings**

This chapter presents the main findings of the study guided by three themes: nature and reason to education decentralization, schools' reaction/adjustment to the new situation, and perception of the participants on implications of education decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education. The data analysis goes into detail by examining the results under each sub-theme in relation to research questions mentioned in chapter one. Similarly, the chapter ends up with the discussion of the results.

I have divided the chapter into three sections on the basis of three themes that answer the three research questions stated in chapter one. In section one, I present the main findings on the nature of decentralization and its motives. Section two presents the main results on schools' adjustment. While in section three, I present the findings of the perception of participants on the implication of decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education. Furthermore, along with those themes, sub-themes are discussed under each theme.

### **5.1 The nature of Education Decentralization in Nepal and its Motives**

This section discusses main questions followed by sub-theme. I reviewed a number of issues related to the nature of decentralization and its reasons as discussed from the national level to the school level as described below.

#### **5.1.1 History of Education Decentralization of Education in Nepal**

In the context of Nepal, if we go back to the history of decentralizing the education system, it has a long history. Sometimes education system has been centralized and decentralized depending on the situation at different times. Khanal (2013) claimed the period 1951 to 1971 "a period of quantitative growth of schools through the greater community engagement with greater autonomy and community control and very limited government involvement and control; hence the schools were enjoying a high level of decentralization" (p.57).

Ultimately, the government considered the reform to maintain the uniformity in education. As a result, "the government introduced the National Education Sector Plan in 1971 to make a single standard and a unified system of public education with a centralized vision for the sector by empowering to administer the schools" (Carney & Bista, 2009, P. 195).. However,

“the reform aimed at two political goals—to strengthen ‘national integration’ by focusing on unity around a common language (Nepali) and a common religion and culture (Hinduism), and to instill a faith in the Crown through politics, media and curriculum” (Shah, 1993; Onta, 1996 as cited in Khanal, 2010, p.60). Since the centralized rural development initiatives had failed, the government decided to implement decentralized state services. Act of 1982 and its bylaws from 1984 were tried to apply deconcentration form of decentralization where local communities did not have any autonomy in making decisions at local level (Paudyal, 1994).

In 1990, the restoration of democracy in Nepal and the government approached new policy such as ‘decentralization’, ‘community empowerment’, and ‘inclusive democracy’ (Khanal, 2011, p. 771). As a result, the newly elected Nepali Congress Government constituted the National Education Commission in 1992 to flourish the democratic ideology. In 1999, the government introduced the Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) with the aim of devolving centrally controlled authority to locally elected governments. Hence, the decentralization in the education system in Nepal was started to realize since 1990.

### **5.1.2 Implementation of Education decentralization in Nepal**

In 2001, under the spirit of (LSGA, 1999), parliament amended the Education Act (seventh amendment, 2001) with greater reforms in school education. The seventh amendment in education act documented the education decentralization formally as stated by Khanal (2011):

It explicitly introduced the education decentralization by including the provision entitled ‘School management responsibility can be taken’ with the clarification that School Management Committees (SMCs) can take on the management responsibility of state schools by signing a formal agreement with the district education offices (p. 771).

Ultimately, in 2003, the government acted faster by increasing the pace of transferring school management to local communities by introducing the Community School Support (CSS) aiming to encourage SMCs to take over school management on a voluntary basis (Khanal, 2011). Governments provided incentives to motivate local people for taking the responsibilities of school management. The government continued that project with the financial and technical assistance of the World Bank and other aid donors until it made the

significant improvement till 2008. In order to address the agenda of Education for All and Millennium Development Goals in education, the government introduced a major reform programme entitled “School Sector Reform Programme” (SSRP, 2009-2015) under which the transfer of school management to local communities is underway.

### **5.1.3 School Governance and Management**

Since the public schools were transferred to community managed schools, local units were given more responsibilities of school governance and management. Responsible assigned local government for education governance at local level were Village Development Committee (VDC) and Municipality. Similarly, the School Management Committee (SMC) as a school management functional organization that took the responsibilities of school management. (MOE, 2008) has reported “governing bodies set policy directions and clarify the strategic intentions where managing bodies interpret strategic intentions by setting programme objectives and targets, and by developing and executing implementation plans” (p. 21). However, the MOES at central level sets the national policy goals and strategic objectives, local bodies are considered as the focal point for program implementation as MOE (2008) stated below:

The local government will prepare evidence-based, periodic plans for providing all school age children with basic and secondary education through formal and alternative modalities. The local government will also identify potential barriers that may inhibit children from attending school. Strategies for formulating such plans include school mapping, situational analysis, and information from other sources. School establishment, upgrading, merging and relocation will be planned based on the evidence, and the plan will be implemented in a phased manner. One strategy for providing support to local governments is to use the existing technical structures at the district level (such as Technical Schools, and Education Training Centers, and other professional forums) for the planning and delivery of educational services.

The local government will take the initiative for the establishment of new schools. In view of the fundamental differences in objectives between basic and secondary education, schools will be encouraged to operate as separate entities for basic and secondary education. To maintain focus and direction at the institutional level, the tertiary education programs will not be encouraged or sharing school's facilities and resources.

The local government will be responsible for both alternative and vocational education and training. Alternative education programs could be based on: (i) settlement patterns (seasonal migration, small hamlets, etc.); (ii) language and religion of the community; and (iii) demand for alternative forms of schooling.

Short-term vocational training could be offered by either public or private providers. Local governments could encourage private providers to deliver such services through subsidies, scholarships, or any other appropriate measures.

Options for decentralized governance and management of the schools include: (i) entrusting the VDC/municipality with the responsibility for basic education (ii) entrusting only those VDCs that have adequate capacity and readiness to manage basic education. In the second case, the government will work towards developing VDC capacity, meanwhile entrusting the DDC with these tasks.

(As cited in CERID, 2009, p. 17)

#### **5.1.4 Perception of the Participants on the Nature of Decentralization and implementation in Nepal**

In response to the question on the nature of decentralization in Nepal, over 90% of the 19 respondents from national to school level had almost the same general view on the poor implementation of decentralized education system in practice. The participants' common view was that they were not experiencing any differences at the grass-root level of devolving power to community people. In contrast, 10% of the total participants who were policy makers claimed that education decentralization had been implemented successfully to some extent at the grass - root level. The fundamental basis of their claims was that the government of Nepal adopted the decentralized education management system in the form of “transfer” of schools to local community stakeholders in 2003. Though MOE had made plans to implement the devolution model of decentralized education management system, there was a gap in implementation at the grass-root level.

All the participants except two policy makers could not find any significance differences working in a new environment. The interesting thing was that nobody had experienced the



implementation of any model of decentralization. A teacher from the rural area, 40) responded the following ways:

*We have not felt any differences and difficulties after the school was transferred to the community managed school. We are running our schools as the same way as it used to be run before 5 or many years ago. In the new school management system, though the SMC has a vital role in hiring and firing the teachers, but SMC is not able to take any action that harms the teachers and school. Even on the best of my knowledge, no SMC has fired any teachers yet, then where is the implementation of the decentralized education management system in Nepal?*

One of the respondents from urban school (48) stated vehemently focusing more on the confusion created by the poor implementation of the policy document at grass-root level:

*Since this policy has not been implemented in practice, teachers have not become obedient and responsible to their job and have neglected to the school and SMC. In this case, neither DEO can take action nor SMC can do so. Therefore, teachers have become uncontrolled and irresponsible on their duty. I would like to say that everything is limited only on the policy documents.*

Similarly, one of the education officers (61) of International Non-government Organization reported with the impressive views “there has not been decentralized in terms of resources as much as it is expected. Only the responsibilities have been transferred to schools. In this matter, schools have not been empowered as expected”.

All of the participants viewed on the poor implementation of policy. When there was a problem on implementing the policy, it had created a kind of confusion at school levels. Though the government had adopted the education decentralization education system in the policy, participants reported that there were no any significant changes in administering the schools. School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009-2015) has explicitly stated that in accordance with the spirit of decentralization and as specified in the LSGA, SSR intends to delegate education planning and management responsibility to the local body and communities (MOE, 2009). The reform further explained further explains on the following ways:

Plan has also explicitly stated that the Governance and management are delineated as having two separate functions and as such two different institutions are usually responsible. According to it, governance functions are described as having to do with the planning and allocation of resources, and making decisions such as the location of schools, providing choice over formal and alternative schooling, setting up quality standards and ensuring access to quality basic education to all school going age children. Management function, on the other hand, tends to be more at the operational level that translates policy decisions into program and implementation strategies. (MOE, 2008, p. 89 ).

It means LBs are responsible for educational planning, decentralization, provision of head-teacher and funding mechanism as well. But the participants were responding that these were not being done at the local level.

In contrast, policy makers have different views on the implementation. They supported the implementation of policy positively. Nevertheless, they agreed with the fact that the spirit of objective of the policy had been derailed partially on the practice. However, their views contradicted each other as one of the policy makers (45), (MOE) reported the following ways:

*We are implementing both delegation and devolution of decentralization model. Education administration body is following delegation form of decentralization, on the other hand, devolution model at the local level where local government is responsible for education governance and SMC for school management. As SMCs have become more powerful in decision making, in practice they are misusing their power.*

On the other hand, another respondent who was also a policy maker (51) viewed differently,

*We have introduced a devolution type of decentralization in policy document, but in practice delegation of a type of decentralization is implementing. For example, in some places devolution form of decentralization has been implemented where the community people are capable of taking the management responsibilities of schools. On the other hand, the delegation form of decentralization has been implemented where community is not capable enough.*

When analyzing their views, MOE is practising the education administrative structure following the delegation form of decentralization in the practice. It means powers and authority remain in the central government. On the other hand, implementing both delegation and devolution form of decentralization seemed more confused at the practice level. Second respondent further reported that education policy seeking more decentralized comparing to Local Self-governance Act (LSGA, 199).

It seemed that the introduction of Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA,1999) was a turning point in the history of decentralized governance in Nepal. It has provided the LBs with a legal framework for the sectoral devolution, financial responsibilities and resource mobilization. Whereas the legal framework for devolving the central decision-making powers and implementation authority of local level development issues to the LBs, has been set. Unfortunately, the elections of local bodies have not been held in the last 16 years, and LBs are now without Chairman<sup>9</sup> (MOE, 2003b). More importantly, LSGA (1999) and education decentralization seek prominent role of LBs for the implementation of policy. MOE (2003b) states the role of the local stakeholders on the following ways:

Municipalities and VDCs will be made responsible for the field-based execution of the CPE policy. Each Village Education Committee (VEC) will prepare a comprehensive Village Education Plan (VEP), for its VDC and the municipalities will prepare municipality level education plan to address the issues of non-enrolment, non-attendance and non-completion of basic education (p. 26).

On the other hand, all of the participants revealed that there were no Village Education Plan (VEP) and Municipality Education Plan (MEP) made by LBs and the power given to the local people was being misused for different purposes rather than school development.

### **5.1.2 Reason to the education decentralization in Nepal**

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<sup>9</sup> After the reinstatement of democracy and formation of LSGA in early 1990, only two periodic fair and free local elections have been held for only two times so far in Nepal, the first was in 1993 and the second in 1997. The five year term of elected representatives through second local election ended in the mid-2002. Due to the internal political instability especially Maoist war against the state that most of the rural and remote parts of country was held by the agitating group. Furthermore, with dissolved house in May 2002 and state of emergency made the situation more unfavourable to conduct local elections. Although, the direct rule of the kind attempted to organize the local election for municipalities, it went utmost failure because of no support of peoples and political parties.

The reason to education decentralization in the context of Nepal in accordance with the theory is to improve the service delivery by promoting participation of the community people in the decision-making process to improve the quality of education. MOE (2003b) has focused on the reason to education decentralization in the following ways:

The main objective of decentralization is to create an environment where the local people would be able to participate and take decisions in the educational process in order to make it more meaningful for them. It relates to the requirement of developing a process whereby the parents would be able to create demand for quality educational services. The government is committed to responding positively to the needs of local people through VEPs, MEPs and DEPs prepared in consultation with stakeholders (p. 34)

In answering the question about what is the reason to decentralize education management system in Nepal, the opinion of the participants is categorized into three sub-themes on the following way.

### **5.1.2.1 To Increase the Sense of Ownership to the Community People**

All of the participants from the central level to school made their common view that the reason to decentralize the education management system was to increase the sense of ownership to the community people. Four of the participants opined the views impressively on following ways:

Teacher (48) from urban School:

*The main motivation and reason to be decentralized the management system of school is to enhance the quality of education and increase the participation of the children in the school in such a way that everyone has access to education. Furthermore, to increase the sense of ownership of the community to the school education and school management.*

Similar kind of idea was reflected by another teacher (40) from rural area:

*It is better to decentralize the education system to give the ownership to the local community so that they could utilize their capacity and skills to make the schools more efficient by using their power in the right place.*

According to them, the reason to decentralize the education management system of Nepal was to make the local people more responsible for education development by increasing the sense of ownership to community people. So that community people would use their skills for the betterment of the school development by increasing their participation.

Similarly, one of the policy makers of (MOE), 45, stated that

*Before the education management system was decentralized, schools could not make any emotional attachment to the community. Teachers also could not become responsible to the community people as everything was given by the government. Community people did not look after the school. Later the government realized that the government could not do anything without the active participation of the community people*

Another policy maker (MOE), 51, opined the reason to increase the sense of ownership to local people was that:

*Local level people were supposed to give more power on the basis of the spirit of democracy. Similarly, the management of education was also decentralized to promote the sense of ownership of the community level people.*

When concluding the remarks revealed by the above participants, the reason to decentralize education was to increase the sense of ownership to local people by promoting their participation making school emotionally attached to the community people.

The participants' views on the fact that the active participation of the community people in school development was on the basis of the spirit of existing political ideology.

Similarly, Amendment of the Education act and regulation 2002 (7<sup>th</sup> Amendment) have also focused on that the parents and communities accountable for school education by ensuring their ownership and participation in school management. Therefore, through the collective efforts of teachers, head teachers, parents and the communities, it would improve the access and quality of primary education. As a result, it would increase the teacher's responsibility to the community and would make the teaching and learning environment more effective.

#### **5.1.2.2 Donor influence**

All the participants central level to school level had a similar view that decentralized education management system was the imposition of donor agencies with a different ideology.

One of the policy makers (MOE), 51, opined “when the state government was weak, then foreign players played a dominant role. At the upper level, especially at policy-making level was hugely influenced by the international donors”. Analogously to the above finding, another policy maker (MOE), 45, also reported on that way:

*The contribution of foreign aids in our developmental sector is very high. They also wanted to have positive outcomes of their investment. But they did not see any security when investing money to centralized education system. Therefore, they saw their security in investing money in a decentralized education management system.*

Similar remark was also said by one of the education officers, 61, from INGO

*As we know that international donors contribute our 31% of the total budget for basic primary education. They are also saying that the government must have at least the bottom line planning, and local people should be made happy, empowered and included when making the policy.*

When concluding the remarks opined by the policy makers, Nepalese education governance and management system was decentralized because of the imposition of the foreign donors. It is true that Nepal’s developmental planning heavily depends on foreign grants. As long as the Nepal government does not have sufficient fund to invest in education, foreign aids and grants or loans are primary resources for the financial support. MOE (2011) reported that currently, 22.49 % of total foreign grants and loans (Grant 12484411000 Rs and Loan 521929 Rs) have contributed to fulfilling the economic gap.

### **5.1.2.3 To Attain the goal of Education for all in Nepal**

Since Nepal committed to the Jomtien and Dakar conferences, they also pushed Nepal to meet global targets set by those forums. Thus, in order to get external support, including financial assistance; it had to prepare National Plans of Action for EFA with strategies to achieve the EFA goals. The insights offered under this sub-theme, around 25% of total participants responded that the global movement for Education for All campaign was also

one of the motives of education decentralization in the Nepalese education system. The participants mostly reflected with mixed feelings arousing different issues related to EFA, for example, to improve the quality of education, ensure the right to education for all, and make the schools more resourceful.

One of the teachers (22) from a rural school opined focusing more on children's right to quality education saying, "I think the main purpose of the decentralization is to attain the goal of EFA as it has focused that education decentralization includes all the children of remote areas in the school education by ensuring their right to education".

## **5.2 Adjustment of the Schools in Decentralized Education Management System**

The measurement or indicator of how well the community managed schools are enjoying the decentralized education management system of education decentralization is especially difficult. Strictly speaking, as we already discussed in the chapter two, decentralization in education means the transferring the authority from a higher to a lower level of authority. Schools at grass-root level enjoys the education decentralization through school-based management as the policy document says, "within the nationally defined framework, schools will enjoy greater autonomy in pedagogic, personnel and financial management and decisions regarding local curriculum, performance targets, school calendar, classroom organization, and instructional methods will be made at the school level" (MOE, 2008, p. 26). However, "overall School-based management is continued through an SMC that reports to the parents about school performance and to the local government for compliance with regulatory requirements including social inclusion" (CERID, 2008, p. 17). Both the LSGA (1999) and the Education Act (1971, ammended) have focused more on the need for community involvement in education with high emphasis on ownership, accountability, local control over utilization of resources, and local resource mobilization.

Hence, this chapter discusses the participants' responses to the main research question how the schools have adopted education decentralization. The main research question is followed by three sub-themes: role and capacity of the school management committee for teacher management and development; local people participation, the sense of ownership, and their ability taking the responsibility of school management; and resource identification and mobilisation.

### **5.2.1 Role and Capacity of the School Management Committee for Teacher Management and Development**

It is crucial to note that teacher hiring and firing at the school level by SMC is one of the main functions that the SMC enjoys at local level. Almost all the participants questioned on the role and capacity of SMC hiring and firing the teachers.

However, SMC in the policy documents seems very autonomous regarding hiring and firing the teachers, monitoring teachers' performance targets. It is supposed to monitor all the teaching and learning aspect including learning outcomes, regularity, and time on task in consultation with the Head-teacher and teachers. As a result, "teachers' achieving those targets will be provided with incentives such as appreciation certificates with additional grade raises" (MOE, 2008, p. 34). In addition, the policy document has mentioned clearly about the deployment of teachers at local level:

Teacher selection and recruitment process will be devolved to the local government as per the guidelines provided by the central level. SMC will have a crucial role in teacher recruitment and management. Priority will be given to recruiting females, Dalits, and other disadvantaged groups when filling teacher positions (MOE, 2008, p. 34).

One of the policy makers (MOE), 45, opined in this way:

*Community-managed schools are not feeling community managed themselves. The government has not made any changes providing them financial support. SMCs at school level are not enjoying hiring and firing the teachers. I think SMCs of community-managed schools have not felt any differences than it is before. The teachers' union is in opposition because of their political interest.*

One of the teachers (48) from urban school pointed out about the interference of DEO on SMC when hiring and firing the teachers. He claims on the basis of the fact that DEO could hardly approve the proposal submitted by the SMC in the matter of teacher deployments such as teacher of promotion, teachers hiring and firing.

When analysing the minutes of the urban school for a year, there were no teachers that were hired and fired by the SMC. However, it was found only approving of the application of a permanent teacher who had been appointed by the Teacher Service Commission (TSC).



When concluding the opinion given by those teachers and the analysis of the minutes of SMC meetings for the last year and other participants, urban area community managed school was not seemed to be enjoying its authority of teacher deployment. Furthermore, the role of SMC was same as the schools were under government controlled, and SMC was not seemed to be feeling autonomous and powerful.

In addition, all the teachers and SMC person from the rural school claimed that SMC was capable of taking the responsibilities of teacher deployment. On the other hand, they viewed that the third parties mainly teachers' union always played a dominant role when hiring and firing the teachers. Along with this statement, the head teacher (48) from a rural area expressed his bitter experience on the way that SMC could not hire and fire the teacher because of the defense of the teachers' union. If the SMC tried to fire the teachers, teachers surrender to the teachers' union, and it defeated them from firing. All of the participants of rural area school revealed on the way that SMC was also dominated by other teachers' union organizations so that SMC was not able to work freely. If the SMC indicated any one of the weakness of the teachers, then teacher union organization always tried to defend the teachers. According to them, especially teachers' union that was influenced by any of the political ideologies had made the SMC disabled.

In addition, minutes of SMC's meeting of last year showed that SMC had appointed a non-teaching staff (peon) temporarily. Along with this decision, one of the permanent teachers was also promoted as a head teacher of lower secondary level. Nevertheless, no teacher was found hired and fired by the SMC.

Government of Nepal provides the quotas for the teachers to schools, and SMC is an authorized body to hire the qualified and trained teacher by following the rule and regulation stated in teacher act and regulation. The government bears all the expenses necessary for the teachers. "Education Act Eighth Amendment (EAEA, 2004) providing teacher management authority to the SMCs with some responsibilities, for example, monitoring and supervision of the teaching-learning activities including administration tasks related to the recruitment and firing of teachers and to build their career" (FHD & RIDA, 2009, p. 2). When analyzing the participants' views who were from the rural area, though the SMC was capable of hiring and firing the teachers, other parties like political leaders, teachers' union interfered the teacher development process. In addition, the distribution of power between SMCs and bureaucrats for the management and administrative authority seemed to be unclear. CERID (2007) claims

that the bureaucrats have retained power themselves, whereas the SMCs have only the supporting roles. Though the SMC has authority to hire and fire the teachers (only temporary teachers), it can not fire the permanent teachers appointed by government (TSC). As a result, “a parallel system of teacher management system exists at the present time in Nepal; centralized policy for the teachers appointed by the government in ‘permanent’ teaching positions, and decentralized policy for the locally selected teachers by SMC” (Khanal, 2011, p.770). In the case of permanent teachers selected by TSC, the government provides appointment letter and make decisions related to their jobs. However, in case of temporary teachers selected by the SMC, the SMC must inform the DEO when providing appointment letters to them. As long as the SMC does not have any authority to take action to TSC selected teachers, the role and power of SMC regarding teacher hiring and firing are questionable. In 2003, the government introduced salary grants to schools instead of supplying teachers, SMCs were allowed to hire the local teachers at school themselves. As a result, permanent teachers and temporary teachers are still working at the community managed schools.

### **5.2.2 Local People Participation, the Sense of Ownership, and their Ability Taking the Responsibility of School Management.**

In order to fulfill the desired outcomes of education decentralization, the importance of local people’s contribution for the school development is realized as one of the important aspects. The year 1990 of a world conference on education for all held in Jomtien, Thailand, was an epic endeavor to make the first move on Education for All by initiating the concept of decentralization in education.

The theory of education decentralization on the assumption that poor and disadvantaged communities could create, manage and finance a school system as stated in the theoretical framework of this research. Therefore, in the operation of education decentralization, the active participation of community people, parents, the local group and teachers and also the partnership in education have come up with the thought of requiring them in the school management (Rajbhandari, 2007). According to CERID (2004), “the effort from the bottom level and people’s ownership to consolidate development, strengthening norms and institutions is essential. It calls for capacity building of local leadership and enhancement of people’s participation in schools governance” (p.1). When school is monitored by community

people, it makes the teachers more accountable to students. One of the objectives of education decentralization policy is to increase teachers' attendance (World Bank, 1994 as cited in McGinn & Welsh 1999, p. 35).

The interview was focused more on community participation and a sense of ownership by including the access and ability of SMC, which results in teachers' accountability to students.

*The perception of the informants from urban school on community ownership and management:*

Most of the participants (almost 95% of total participants) from urban questioned the capacity of SMC including teachers' accountability to students.

One of the teachers (38) from urban school opined the views on the skeptic way:

*In the urban schools, most of the local people's children don't go to community schools and children from the rural area who have migrated to the urban area for living as temporary purpose go to community managed schools. Since the local children do not study at the community school, local people take the leadership in the community school only to practice the power. They don't care the school development and children instead. Therefore, there is no active participation of community people and parents. Community schools in the rural areas are doing better than urban areas*

Similarly, there was confusion between policy document and implementation of it on the grassroots level. The head teacher (48) regretted transferring the school to community people. He claimed that the school could not enjoy the decentralized education management system with full-fledged as stated in the policy paper. He revealed his sentiment saying, "If the spirit of the self - governance act is not transferred to the community, then only the written policy without practice doesn't work. Therefore, our 51 schools will re-transfer community led school to the government school (as they were before)"

Based on my observation, experiences, and formal and informal discussions with my informants from urban school confirmed that community people were not interested in community managed schools as they sent their children to private boarding schools. Only

migrated children from rural areas attended the community managed school. Hence, community people where the school existed were not participating actively. On the other hand, though Community people were able to take the responsibilities of the school management, DEO always interfered. Most of the teachers were saying that community managed schools from the rural area were enjoying decentralization more than those in urban areas. All of the participants like policy makers, district education officer and education officer of INGOs viewed the same.

One of the policy makers (45) (MOE) lamented on the following way:

*Since the local people are not able to take the responsibilities of school management, the participation of local people can not be expected. Similarly, those Schools that were transferred to the community-managed system are not considering community managed themselves.*

Similar kind of feeling was shared by one of the education officers (61) of INGO by expressing the following:

*If we analyse the local level, the capacity level is very low. When we talk about the Nepalese context, the School management Committee (SMC) and community people are not capable of handling the situation regarding teacher recruitment and taking all the responsibilities that they have been assigned. There is always conflict between school teachers and community people. On the other hand, community people are not capable of observing the classes as well*

When concluding the ideas shared by teachers from urban school, policy maker and education officer of INGOs, urban school were not enjoying decentralization in term of increasing the people's participation and management responsibilities. All of the participants viewed that the community-led school was not the best choice for local people at urban area where most of the local people were attracted by private boarding schools. Since the community people were not interested in community managed schools, their attention towards the CMS is questionable. On the other hand, no child of the chairperson of SMC was studying at the respective CMS. Therefore, the motives of SMC chairperson were also questioned on the matter of school development. It was important to note that most of the

children who were attending urban CMS were from very the poor families especially migrated families. Regarding the teachers' accountability to students, and students' enrollment, there were no any differences when the school was under the government control as stated by the participants.

*The perception of the informants from the rural school on community ownership and management:*

Teachers from the rural school seemed a little bit more optimistic comparable to those from urban school. Though, teachers were not confident enough to claim that their school was enjoying decentralization with the degree of considerable, but they were still little bit positive towards the positive impact of the education decentralized management system. All of the participants from rural schools agreed with the statement that their school had increased the people's participation and sense of ownership in the community people to some extent.

One of the teachers (48) from a rural school opined on the following by representing all the teachers' opinion regarding community people participation and a sense of ownership in local people:

*When the schools were transferred to community, the involvement of parents has increased, and they are helping to school teachers and so on. Parents have felt a kind of ownership and increasing their concern on their child's education. All the parents are uneducated, but they sometimes inquiry about their children's achievement and learning.*

DEO from the rural district also supported this idea that parents were motivated and actively participated in school development. School head teacher also echoed with the same spirit by saying that chairperson of SMC and guardians sometimes supervise and monitor the classes.

Similarly, chairman (43) of SMC at rural school also revealed his opinion regarding the teachers' accountability for students' learning at school, "If the parents, students, SMC and teachers have maintained the mutual understanding and cooperation then school can be run effectively. In my school, we have got a high success rate of the students. Teachers are regularly attending the school".

Head teacher of rural school also reported that the student dropout rate had decreased. Students had become more regular in the classroom and teachers had become more responsible compared to the previous situation when the school was under the controlled by government.

Furthermore, one of the policy maker and education officers of INGO also agreed with this opinion that teachers had become more devoted towards the school and students.

Nevertheless, the majority of the teachers questioned to the role and capacity of the SMC to take the responsibilities of school management. One of the education officers (38) (DEO) seemed to be a little bit positive regarding the management role and capacity of SMC. According to him, “few of the communities in Nepal was able to take the responsibility of school management”.

### **5.2.3 Resource Identification and Mobilisation**

As stated in the theoretical framework and policy of the education decentralization, schools through SMC enjoy a greater degree of education decentralization having authority for the resource identification and mobilization. Schools have functional autonomy and have the power to mobilize resources, for example, human and material, financial and intangible resources available at the local level in order to materialize its vision. Besides these, communities provide their support in the form of land, labor, materials and cash contributions.

*The perception of the informants from urban school on resource identification and mobilization:*

Out of 5 participants from urban school, only 40 % (i.e. 2 of 5) echoed that the school was able to identify and mobilize resources. They were only school head teacher, and chairperson of SMC felt that the school was enjoying decentralized management system identifying and mobilizing local resources. On the contrary, 60% (i.e. 3 of 5) participants sounded their doubt on this regards.

According to the school head teacher (48), the donation provided by the capable community people, the municipality and NGO's or INGOs were the primary sources. Similarly, the chairperson (78) of SMC understood the identification of earning source was the school

rooms that were used as rent. According to him, the school had two rooms for the rent and one meeting hall for public with less charge.

Contrary to the above sentiments, one of the teachers of urban school plainly remarked:

*My school is not capable of identifying and mobilizing the resources. The government pays a salary to the teachers. Unless the SMC members' children do not study at our school, SMC members do not care about collecting funds and take any responsibility to identify and mobilize the resources.*

On the other hand, the rest of the teachers had the mixed feelings. One of the teachers (45) reported that school's financial aspect was managed by donation and funds provided by DEO, but the school had not identified any resources yet.

Besides the remarks expressed by the participants, when observing the minutes of SMC meetings, school seemed to enjoy the autonomy allocating the resources. In relation to the identification and mobilization of resources, school seemed to be a success to some extent of collecting donation from INGO to repair the school buildings, for example, maintenance of toilet and classrooms. Furthermore, urban school was using school rooms and a meeting hall as a rent to generate the source of money to some extent. However, most of the participants were saying that school was not enjoying decentralized education management system to identify and mobilize the resources.

*The perception of the informants from the rural school on resource identification and mobilization:*

Teachers and SMC chairman of rural school had a little bit different views than those of urban school teachers. 4 out of 5 participants (i.e. 80 %) claimed that their school was able to identify and mobilize resources. Only one participant stood in opposition of the rest participants. The interesting ideas the participants opined that the fund and support by any meant provided by, the NGO and INGOs were the principal resources. For instance, government provided salary for the teachers and sometimes it supported for maintenance of school buildings. However, no one could claim that the school was able to manage any provision of sustainable resources for income generation. One of the teachers (43) revealed "the NGO and INGO helped school in terms of constructing a building and library. The SMC

Chairperson and head teacher always initiated to collect the resources from a different organization”. Similarly, the head teacher (40) claimed that he encouraged to the teachers to make a good relation with NGOs and INGOs from their side. He further added that because of the relationship with NGOs and INGOs, his school was able to introduce computer education by preparing computer lab. He claimed that his school was the one that was teaching computer educations to the students. Along with this line, chairman (43) of SMC reported that his school did request to VDC to separate the money from the developmental budget for the school development. He further added that foreign organizations were helping with financial support for infrastructure and building.

Contrary to the above remarks, one of the teachers (33) questioned to the capacity of the school to identify and mobilize the resources. As he opined that School didn't have any earning generated resources, but the school charged the very little money as a support from the student at the time of admission was the permanent financial resource. He meant that the school collected money as a donation from the community people on a different occasion for different purposes, for example, building construction and maintenance.

*The perception of the informants from policy makers, DEOs, school supervisors, resource persons, education officers of INGOs and politicians school on resource mobilization:*

In addition to the sentiments extracted from the school teachers and the chairpersons of SMC, other stakeholders like policy makers, including district education officer and school supervisors, education officer of INGOs and politicians had the mixed opinion about the identification and mobilization of resources by the schools. Having analyzed the data and findings from the views reported from above mentioned participants, 3 out of 9 ( i.e. 33 % ) participants vehemently claimed that community managed schools were enjoying decentralized education system by using their autonomy on resource identification and mobilization.

One of the DEO (38) reported that:

*When the community people start to manage their school themselves, then they automatically try to find the resources to make their school more resourceful. The sense of ownership in local people encourages the local people finding resources. We can see the example that most of the community managed schools have raised funds from foreign agencies and donors.*



One of the policy makers (51) painted with the same line, “CMS were capable enough of identifying and mobilizing the resources with compare to government controlled schools. They were always aware of finding the resources and mobilizing them”.

Contrary to the above sentiments, 6 out of 9 (i.e. 66 %) of above mentioned participants claimed that very limited community managed schools were able to identify and mobilize the local resources. According to their view, few schools led by the right leader were able to make access to resources. Otherwise, most of the community managed schools were not able to do so. That view was supported by one of the policy makers (45) reporting that very few schools could identify and mobilize the resources. The identification and mobilization of resources depend on the capacity of leader of the community managed schools.

It means chairperson of SMC or head teacher play crucial role to identify and mobilize resources. The access to the resources heavily depends on how well the chairman of SMC and head teacher make an effective deal with donor agencies. Most of the school’s resources depend on the fund and grant provided by the NGOs and INGOs. One of the education officers (61) of INGO echoed:

*After the Dakar convention, many INGOs and NGOs are supporting financially to reach “Education for All” in Nepal and some of the schools can get money from them. Some of the resources that schools get from them, and other resources as a donation have not been recorded in the ministry of education. Mainly community, government and NGOs and INGOs are the source of funding.*

According to the participants, besides the fund and grant supplied by those agencies, community managed schools get some money from local sources like community forest and VDC.

When concluding the opinion expressed by the above participants, the primary resources of the community managed schools were NGOs, INGOs, and local resources like community forest, VDC and municipality. Government provides the salary to the teachers and NGOs and INGOs provide funding and grant to support the school financially. Sometimes, NGOs/INGOs help the schools supplying different means like furniture, books and teaching materials and constructing a library.

### **5.3 The Perception of the Participants on Implication of Decentralization to Quality, Equity and Relevance of Education in Nepal**

Underpinning the theory of education decentralization, when the community people take the responsibilities of the school management, it increases the quality of education. In addition, the provision of designing local curriculum at local level makes the education more relevant to the local people. Furthermore, the theory further says that the local government makes the Village Education Policy (VEP) that will increase the access of local children to education. Therefore, the government of Nepal seemed to be committed itself to “Education for All in its National Plan of Action drafting the core document (EFA 2004-2009 that outlined three main objectives: (a) ensuring access and equity in primary education, (b) enhancing quality and relevance of primary education, and (c) improving efficiency and institutional capacity of schools and institutions at all levels” (MOE, 2003a, p.6). In order to achieve these goals, the government has developed a series of strategies in its policy documents:

(a) expanding early childhood development through ECD (early childhood development) and PPC (pre-primary classes) programmes, (b) ensuring access to education for all children by providing free primary education and through incentive and scholarship schemes, (c) meeting the learning needs of all children, including indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities, by making primary schooling relevant to children of these groups, (d) reducing adult illiteracy through Non-Formal Education (NFE) programmes, (e) eliminating gender disparity through recruitment of female teachers, teacher trainings, sensitising the curriculum, and community mobilization campaigns, and (f) improving all aspects of quality education including teachers, instructional materials, learning environment, improvement of school facilities, and management and capacity building (MOE, 2003a, p. 6).

In this section, the main research question has been categorized under the three sub-themes; quality, equity and relevance of education. Views and opinion of the participants could be presented in the following ways:

#### **5.3.1 Quality of Education**

In order to understand the quality of education in the context of Nepal, the Strategy of EFA Nepal National Plan of Action (2001-2015) has adopted the UNESCO framework for understanding educational quality. EFA Nepal Plan of Action (2001-2015) has prepared the

comprehensive lists of indicators under four areas and four phases of the framework- system support, input, process and output/outcome in the following ways:

**Table 1: Quality Framework in Nepalese Context**

System Support Indicators	Areas of Input Indicators	Areas of Process Indicators	Output ad Outcome Indicators
National Policy Support	The school management system	The teaching and learning system	Higher national norm of student achievement.
Political Commitment	Teacher management system	Curriculum transaction and instruction system	Positive impact on social community life
Support of Civil Society	Physical facilities management system	The student achievement assessment system	Increase quality of social and economic life
Legal Provisions Change in Role			Higher rate of ability

Source: (MOE, 2003b, p. 68)

All the informants opined their views on the basis of the quality framework presented by the policy document.

*The perception of the informants from urban school on the implication of decentralization to quality of education:*

All of the informants revealed their views on the effect of decentralization to the quality of education that there was no significant change on the quality of education. Though the school had improved child-friendly classroom to some extent, but the student learning achievement was the same.

The school had only one child-friendly school, and it was not able to extend more classes as reported by one of the teachers (55) from urban school, “we have only one child-friendly classroom. We are not able to upgrade more child-friendly classes up to grade five”. Most of the teachers had raised the common issues related to the disadvantaged students. All of them said that the school could not have managed a ‘special needs education teacher’ to teach

those students effectively. Furthermore, regular teachers (ordinary teachers) were not well trained to teach them (disadvantaged children), thus disadvantaged students could not achieve anything in the regular classroom.

Similar kinds of issues were raised by the participants regarding the teaching materials and teacher training. All of them echoed that the school did not have adequate teaching materials for the classroom teaching. Apart from this, supervision and monitoring of schools by government was one of the serious problems. Teachers and SMC chairman did not seem to be satisfied with supervision and monitoring mechanism of government. One of the teachers (48) questioned to the supervision and monitoring mechanism of the government by saying in the following ways:

*Though the government has made a the policy how to enhance the quality of the education, it is not effective because of inadequate monitoring and supervision by the government. Government is not able to make an effective mechanism of monitoring and supervising the schools so that they are not able to punish the teachers who are not doing well and to reward the teachers who are doing well. That is why the quality of education is declining day by day.*

The reason of decreasing the quality in education was also the poor performance of the teachers in the classroom teaching. The participants (78) had this to say, “ teacher training is not problem oriented and practical in the classroom teaching.” He further added that teachers were not able to reflect their knowledge, what they were trained by the teacher training as well.

*The perception of the informants from the rural school on the implication of decentralization to quality of education:*

4 out of 5 participants claimed that the school was enjoying the education decentralization by improving the quality of education to some extent. All participants’ beliefs were based on the level of an achievement of the students. According to them, students had achieved more than when the school was controlled by the government. One of the teachers (43) shared her experience comparing the present situation of students’ performance with that of previous times when the school was controlled by the government. She had noticed some of the indicator that made her confident to report on the following ways:

*After the transformation of our school to community people, we are getting more teachers' training. When the school was under the government control, we used to impart the bookish knowledge to the students, for example, students of grade 1 and 2, only 7 or 8 students could hardly read and write the Nepali alphabet. Now all of the students expect 2 or 3 students can read and write easily. We have built child-friendly classroom up to grade 3, and we are going to upgrade it.*

All the participants claimed that the teachers had got more opportunity to participate on teacher trainings that helped them to enhance their teaching skills. Since the teacher trainings changed their pedagogic skills, teachers claimed that they were teaching in the classroom innovatively. As a result, most of the participants from the rural school were experiencing the high level of students' achievement. One of the teachers (40) from a rural area reported on the question of how the school was improving the quality in education responded on the following ways:

*We are using the same curriculum, but we are teaching differently. Student's achievement evaluation assessment has shown a better result now. We have made specific objectives that the students are supposed to learn at the particular level. If we find weaker students then we conduct remedial classes for them. We also consult with parents as well and suggest them to make able their children for better learning.*

He further extended that children were learning on the democratic way in a child-friendly environment. It meant since the school was autonomous to use the child-centered curriculum, school was enjoying education decentralization very well as he further shared:

*We have managed child-friendly classroom and designed to best suit the child's interest. Students are learning in a child-friendly environment. They make their schedule and choose team leader themselves. We put the boxes in the voting to choose for their leader so that they could learn about the election system. To make them punctual, they close the school gate themselves before their school starts.*

According to the informants, NGOs and INGOs contribution to construct child-friendly classroom played a significant role to enhance the quality in education as the one of the teachers (33) reported in this way:

*Since the community people felt a sense of ownership, they had established a good relationship with various organization. As a result, those organizations supported financially to improve the quality of buildings by constructing child-friendly classrooms and teaching materials like teachers' book, library, and sports materials*

Contrary to the above sentiments, one of the participants (22) of rural school expressed critical views on the achievement of the students with special needs education. She plainly remarked that the school did not have any provision of special needs education for exceptional children. Therefore, it was one of the challenges to achieving the goal of EFA as stated by her:

*There are diverse students who have their pace of learning. We are forced to teach with same teaching methodologies. We have one disabled student, who cannot hear, but we don't have a teacher for special needs education and other students have different characteristics. In this case, we are not able to impart quality education on the basis of students' needs. We can talk about the education for all, equal access to education and we can bring the children at the school, but we are not able to manage particular teacher for the students with disabilities. So that it is affecting the quality of education*

*The perception of the informants from policy maker and director general, DEOs, School supervisors, resource persons, education officer of donor agencies and politician on the implication of decentralization to quality of education:*

The improvement of the quality in education is one manifestation of the implementation of the educational decentralization policy in Nepal. Nearly 55% of the nine respondents reported that education decentralization had improved the quality of education compared to the past. The participants claimed on the basis of learning achievement of the children because of the creation of a child-friendly environment in the classrooms. Out of those respondents, director general and school supervisor claimed that rural schools were improving the quality of education. General Director (55) (MOE) disclosed that mainly rural community people had felt the sense of ownership and devoted to increasing the education quality, therefore, rural community managed schools were improving the quality of education compared to those urban schools.

One of the DEOs (38) shared the similar sentiments by focusing more on child-friendly environment by stating the following ways:

*You can see that there are more than 200 schools that are equipped with child-friendly schools. Schools are doing well to increase the quality, equity and relevance of education. For example, schools have made child-friendly classroom environment, increase the numbers of students, regardless religion, sex, marginalized, and minority. We made a plan that at least five schools from each resource centre as a model of child-friendly school. We have also made the decision that school supervisors and resource persons will help to make the school child-friendly. We are now working with the partnership of local NGOs and INGOs for child-friendly school.*

Most of the participants claimed that rural community-managed schools were increasing the number of child-friendly classrooms.

In contrast, 45% of 9 participants were skeptic to the improvement of quality education in the community-managed schools. They did not feel any differences in the quality of education after the schools were transferred to community people. The achievements of the children have not significantly changed. Along with that statement, a policy maker (45) (MOE) considered “though the schools could make child-friendly classroom by cooperating with NGOs, INGOs and government, but still there were no significant changes on the students’ achievements and community schools were still struggling to improve the quality of education”.

Similarly, one of the education officers (60) from INGOs had the doubt on the commitment and confidence of teachers and the teaching methods they used in the classroom teaching. Furthermore, he added that schools were teaching to all the students disregarding the exceptional children using single blanket approach.

It was interesting to note that none of the teachers had sent their children to the community-managed school where they were teaching currently. In this way, it seemed that even teachers were not confident and satisfied with the performance of their school.

### **5.3.2 Equity of Education**

The new reform of education policy called SSRP (2008) has realized the need of making the equitable access for marginalized and disadvantaged groups (such as women, Dalits, Madhesis, disabled and ethnic minorities) to basic education. Therefore, “in view of differential rates of participation and success in education for different social groups, the reform will focus on girls and women and children from educationally deprived groups so that they will participate equally and attain equitable results” (MOE, 2008, p.19). Similarly, “the Local Self-Governance Act (1999) and the Education Act Seventh Amendment (2001) declared free primary education (Grades 1-5) with free tuition, textbooks' support and limited scholarships for disadvantaged groups including minorities, Dalits, girls, and Janajatis<sup>10</sup>” (FHD & RIDA, 2009, p. X). The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) considered free education up to secondary level as a fundamental right. In addition, in order to ensure the right to education for children, “children denied basic education will have the right to seek legal remedy through a court or any appropriate judicial unit” (MOE, 2008, p. 39).

The insights offered by the participants under this sub-theme are rich and plentiful. Almost all respondents agreed that schools were collecting a very little amount of money on a different occasion like at the beginning of admission and examination time. The reason to charge the money was that the school had limited resources and did not have sufficient fund to manage the materials for conducting examination. Almost all of them confirmed that the policy of the school had contributed welcoming the children, regardless of their religion, caste, minority and class in the school. Therefore, school’s policy would not have become a barrier for excluding the children at school. Their shared views were on the basis that decentralization entailed strengthening equity in education.

One of the teachers (55) of urban school reported that the school was charging fee only to the students who were able to afford. She furthermore added that her school was increasing the participation of the children from each community, religion, and minority class and so on.

One of the teachers (33) from a rural school painted his image explicitly what was happening at the community level stating the following way:

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<sup>10</sup>Janajati, Nepal’s indigenous nationalities, popularly called “Janajati” live in almost each nook and corner of the country. Janajati is Nepali word for indigenous people. All through the Nepalese history the Janajatis have been excluded from the mainstream and as such most of these people are living in abject poverty. The report also describes linkage between poverty and janajatis.



*According to the decision made by Parents, school has started to charge small amount money as admission fees and examination fees because the school had appointed few teachers locally who do not get financial support from the government. Most of the parents are poor and are hardly surviving in the society, but they are thinking positively to invest the money for their children's education. Therefore, charging fees has not affected the attendance of the students. Few parents are not able to pay the fees on time, and it is still in pending but school doesn't force them to pay their due.*

His remarks have clearly pointed out how well the local poor people have the motivation towards their child's education. Collecting little money as an admission and exam fees were not affecting the parents sending their children to school. Though, the policy documents had mentioned free education, local parents at local level decided to collect some money to support the school themselves.

Similarly, how well the central government had made the policy and strategy to bring the children who were out of schools, one of the policy makers (53) had revealed in his words:

*In relation to equity of education, we are trying to do equitable distribution of resources to the schools. For example, in any part of the country where children do not go to school, we have provided more resources so that schools could be able to include children who are out of schools. We also provide scholarships and any support to the female children, Jana Jati (marginalized group of people), and Dalit (so called lower class children). But I think that we have to do more to increase the presence of the children at school. We lack some of the things in practice level.*

Contrary to the above sentiment, though policy is trying to include all the school age children to school, there are other serious factors that have become an obstacle for poor children. One of the politicians (39) argued on the following way:

*Our community at the local level is suffering from the economic crisis, and the main problem is that the school is not able to bring the children who are out of school. People can hardly manage their daily life. Parents at the local level do not care their schools. In Kathmandu, government schools are being merged because of the logic that they do not have sufficient students. On the other hand, there are still so many children who are out of the schools.*

He was skeptic to the economic background of the local people. From his sentiment, what we could easily understand that only the school management and policy was not sufficient. People's economic environment was also the main reason to exclude the children out of schools.

### **5.3.3 Relevance of Education**

When explaining the importance and relevance of education, people often refer to education as a means to improve their current lifestyle relating to daily life. In this regard, the importance of life skills and career skills are highly assumed for development of the poor communities (MOE, 2003a). The ideology behind it is that the education should be based on local needs by catering to the needs of local people. Therefore, MOE (2003b) claims that only the relevant curriculum can educate the children to become democratic citizens providing with elements of life skills fulfilling the individual, as well as the nation's requirements. In order to guarantee relevancy in education, MOE (2003b) has mentioned two significant steps taken by the government to address the local need as follows:

(a) Development of living reality-based spiral curriculum at the local level (b) pedagogical changes. Development of the community curriculum targeted to girls, Dalits, children of minority ethnic, as well as religious groups, and the disabled and reorientation of teachers are the major processes to be followed. Training for the development of local curriculum, development and collection of local materials in different locations and re-training of the teachers are the inputs needed for guaranteed relevancy in education (p.50).

The new primary school curriculum of 2003 has made the provision of preparing local curriculum by providing 20% weighted for the study of local contents in particular subjects like Social Studies, Creative and Expressive Arts, and Physical Education (MOE, 2005, p. 15). In addition, MOE (2003b) has stated the government's plan to use mother tongue as a medium of instruction at primary school level to achieve the universalized educational access to the linguistic and ethnic minorities. In this way, the national curriculum framework (NCF) has provided the basis for the core curriculum that guides the development of a local curriculum. Therefore, within the NCF guideline, the government has a plan to strengthen

local level capacity for the development of local curriculum, content and materials (MOE, 2008).

In order to implement the policy of local curriculum at local level, government has made the mechanism forming committee at different level as follows:

The District Level Curriculum Development Committee (DLCDC) at district level and the Local Need Based Curriculum Development Committee (LNBCDC) at Resource Center (RC) or Village Development Committee or school level respectively. Each committee includes a wider representation of different subject experts- educationists, stakeholders- women, ethnic groups, Dalits, and people with disability, students, parents, teachers and their professional organizations, and different right based groups- human rights, women's rights, and child rights (MOE, 2005, p. 36).

The research questions pertaining to the perception of the participants on the impact of education decentralization to relevance of education received more overwhelming responses than any other. Almost all respondents confirmed that implication of decentralization to relevance of education had no significant changes. All the participants pointed out the challenges facing by local people in designing the local curriculum. Both schools were teaching language courses as a local curriculum.

All of the participants from urban school reported that the school located in the Newari <sup>11</sup> community and introduced Newari language, but the majority of the students were from non-Newari community. One of the participants from urban school (38) reflected her views:

*We have designed a Newari language course as a local curriculum. Unfortunately, though the school has located in the Newari community, but students from the Newar community don't study in your school as they go to private boarding school. Non-Newari language students are being forced to study this language. Therefore, it is irrelevant to the students.*

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<sup>11</sup> The Newars, the indigenous inhabitants of Nepal's Kathmandu Valley, belongs to Mongolia and have settled in the Kathmandu Valley for over 2000 years. The majority of the Newars are Saivite Hindus, while some of them are Buddhists. They speak the Newari language which is commonly placed in the Tibeto- Burman family, and influenced by both Tibeto-Burman and Indo-European languages. Newar caste system assumed its present shape during the medieval Malla period.

Most of the participants concluded that though the Newari language course was relevant to the community, but it was irrelevant to the students.

On the other hand, community managed school from rural areas introduced an English language course (extra) as a local curriculum. All of the participants claimed that the English language was the most demanding courses by the community people. There was another reason to teach that course as revealed by the participants that they did not have any idea how to design the local curriculum.

Contrary to the above sentiments, one of the policy makers (53) said that designing local curriculum at local level should have been conditional as he opined, “community people do not advocate about the local curriculum development. Usually, the issue of local curriculum is generated if there is a complication of religion, culture and language which are related to the existence of that particular group of religion and culture”.

One of the education officers (62) had doubts whether community people were able to design the local curriculum. He also agreed that most of the community managed schools introduced an English language course as a local curriculum. He thought that developing local curriculum was a complicated task and could not be designed by local people. Therefore, he concluded that teaching English book was entirely different from that of developing local curriculum.

## **5.4 Major Differences and Similarities.**

This section discusses the similarities and differences of findings based the findings of the data on two schools.

### **A Comparative Summary of Main Findings**

#### **1. The nature of Decentralization and its Motives**

##### **1.1 Nature of Decentralization**

There were no significant differences in views among the participants.

- i. No visible changes in the education system when the school was controlled by the government.
- ii. Lacking the implementation of policy on the practice

- iii. LBs like village development committee (VDC) and Municipality were not functioning well because VDC and Municipality did not have any elected body since government of Nepal had introduced decentralized education management system in Nepal.
- iv. Only the school-based management had been transferred with limited authority to school level.

## **1.2. Reason to Education Decentralization**

All the participants' views were similar to the driving factors that the government of Nepal was forced to implement education decentralization.

### **a. To Increase of Sense of Ownership to Local People**

- i. The reason to decentralize the education system was to promote a sense of ownership to local people by making the schools emotionally attached to community people.
- ii. To make the teachers more responsible to the community and students
- iii. To increase the active participation of the community people for school development that was on the basis of the spirit of existing political ideology.

### **b. Donor Influence**

Introduction to decentralized education management system was the result of the imposition of foreign donors. Most of the prominent stakeholders like teachers and teachers' union were merely informed and included when introducing the policy. Therefore, teachers' union was still in opposition to the idea of education decentralization. Furthermore, the government did not realize the local realities before it accepted that approach

### **c. Attaining EFA Goals**

Since Nepal committed to the Jomtien and Dakar conferences in 1990 and 2000 respectively, it also pushed Nepal to achieve global targets. Thus, in order to get external support, including financial assistance; it had to prepare National Plans of Action for EFA with strategies to achieve the EFA goals.

## **2. Adjustment of the Schools to the New Situation.**

### **a. Role and Capacity of SMC to Teacher Deployment.**

SMC was not enjoying decentralized education management system for teacher deployment and management. SMC had neither appointed any teachers nor fired. SMC did not have authority to hire and fire permanent teachers.

### **b. Community Ownership and Management**

## **Similarities**

- i. SMC was not able to take the responsibilities of school management

### **Differences**

#### **School from Urban Area**

- i. Community people were not feeling a sense of ownership.
- ii. Less participation of community people on school development program.
- iii. Community people sent their children to private boarding schools. Even the children of SMC chairperson did not attend the community managed school.
- iv. On the other hand, though Community people were able to take the responsibilities of the school management, DEO always interfered.
- v. Community people were not attracted by the community managed school

#### **School from Rural Area**

- ii. Community people were feeling a sense of ownership
- iii. Active participation of local people on school development programs
- iv. Participation of community people had increased compared to the time when school was controlled by the government
- v. Most of the community people sent their children to community managed school.
- vi. Community people were attracted by the community-managed school.

### **c. Resource Identification and Mobilization**

### **Similarities**

- i. Teachers' salary provided by the central government, donation from affluent people of the community, financial support including materials from INGO's and NGOs.
- ii. Autonomous in allocating the resources

### **Differences**

#### **School from Urban Area**

The respondent from urban area school reported that school teachers were not motivated actions to make a mutual relationship with INGOs and other donors with considerable effort.

#### **School from Rural Area**

Participants from rural area school said that school head teacher always encouraged school teachers and community people to find the resources by making better relationship with NGOs and INGOs with their personal afford as well.

### 3. The Perception of the Participants on Implication of Education Decentralization to Quality, Equity and Relevance of Education

#### a. Quality

##### Differences:

##### School from Urban Area

- i. No significant changes in quality.
- ii. Inadequate of teaching materials, no provision of special education teacher for disadvantaged children.
- iii. Only one child-friendly classroom, but lacking child-friendly environment.
- iv. Fewer numbers of students compared to the rural community managed school.
- v. Lack of trained teachers. Teachers' training was not effective.

##### School from Rural Area

- i. Students' achievement rate was increased more compared to urban school.
- ii. Teachers were accountable to students and head teacher.
- iii. No provision of special education teacher for disadvantaged children.
- iv. Rural School had three child-friendly classrooms and more child-friendly environment than urban school.
- v. Numbers of children in each classroom were higher compared to urban schools.
- vi. Dropout rates had decreased. School administration encouraged teachers for teacher training

#### b. Equity

There were no significant differences in views among the participants.

- i. The policy of the school had contributed welcoming the children, regardless of their religion, caste, minority and class in the school.
- ii. School charged little amount of money at the time of admission and prior to the examination

#### c. Relevance

No significant changes in relevance. Local people faced serious challenges in designing the local curriculum. Both schools introduced a language course. The School from the urban area, Newari language was being taught at the school as a local curriculum. Though, the Newari language course was reflecting the culture of existing society, but it was not relevant to the students. On the other hand, Extra English language course was being taught at the school as a local curriculum at school from the rural area.

Note: For additional details of these results, please refer to the sections for data analysis and findings above.

## **5.5 Discussion of Findings**

The interpretation of the results is done by following the analysis. It is guided by the main research question through which the summary, conclusions and recommendations are drawn.

### **5.5.1 What is the Nature of Decentralization in Nepal? And What has been Driving the Policy of Decentralizing Education Management?**

Studies have also shown that where the state government is weak, the implementation of any policy can lead to failure. Due to the lack of clarity in policy, well functional mechanism, and its practical implementation, a desirable outcome of policy remains incomplete.

Understandably, application of a particular form of decentralization in education system (the theory showed three types of education decentralization: deconcentration, delegation and devolution as we already discussed in chapter four) could not be claimed.

While the education decentralisation policy in Nepal has been taking effect for around 12 years with the financial and technical assistance of the World Bank, the country has no elected body at the local level for more than 16 years. The government of Nepal has not experienced how the implementation of education decentralization would be in actual practice when with the functional mechanism i.e. elected representative at the local level. The government has devolved management and governance of primary education to the local bodies (MOE, 2003a). Under devolution form of decentralization, local units are autonomous and independent; central authorities exercise only indirect, supervisory control over sub-units (Abu-Duhou, 1999). The recent approach to devolution of power to SMCs or local government which are locally elected body aims to enhance local control 'effective popular control' (Mayo, 1960) of the people they are meant to govern. This approach focuses more on the active participation of local people through elected body. Since the bureaucrats are implementing the policy instead of locally elected representatives, the participation of local people is doubtful.

In addition, there is a visible gap existing between education policy via SSRP, 2008 and LSGA, 1999 in the practice level. The LSGA provides for the devolution of primary



education to the Village Development Committee (VDC) level while the SSRP has assigned this function mainly the school management to the community level. It was also realized by one of the policy makers (51) as he lamented:

*Local self-governance act has decentralized the power up to the local level, i.e. VDC and municipality, but education act has said that there are many communities under VDC and Municipality. Therefore, education should be devolved up to community level. Furthermore, these perspectives are defined differently by Ministry of Law. Hence, at the local level, people are getting confused with the decentralization of local self-governance and education act. Plainly speaking, we have made this devolution form of decentralization in our policy document, but in practice, we are not able to implement.*

As long as the education decentralization emerged out of the spirit of LSGA 1999, why are they contradicting each other? It is also creating confusion at the local level being a critical issue.

Moreover, the education policy, education act and local self- government act are contradicting each other. Due to the contemporary problem of the local realities, the education decentralization seems centrally sponsored decentralization policy. Education officers (62) from INGO supports the following way:

*When I worked as a District Education officer, we are supposed to make the district education plan. From the decentralized perspective, it looked beautiful because local entities were asked to plant themselves. When it came in the phase of implementation, then they would not care about it. That is why; I would like to say that it was centrally sponsored decentralization. So in the context of Nepal, we are decentralizing only on the paper to show others.*

While talking about the driving factors that lead the country to plan and implement the policy of education decentralization, different reasons with various paradigms can be taken into consideration.

According to the findings, undoubtedly, education decentralization in Nepal is also the impact of global changes around the world. Along with the global movement, the role of

international donors has played an influential role at the level of policy making of the developing countries. American aid agency in 1950s being the first donor agency in Nepal, Basic and Primary Education Program (1992-2004), Education for all (2004-2009), School Sector Reform Program (SSRP, 2010-15) and Sector Wide Approach Program (SWAP) funded by major donors like the World Bank, ADB, FINIDA, NORAD, JICA and DANIDA were the result of the active role of donors (Koirala and Acharya, 2011; Bhatta 2011). It is important to note the report given by Koirala and Acharya (2011) that the foreign aid contributes around one-sixth of total education expenditure of the country, it affects the total investment of the country in education. The weak capacity of the MOE, “especially in the areas of identifying, analysing and explaining overall development trends, and more importantly, a lack of carefully nurtured ‘success stories’ have contributed to donor influences” (Bhatta, 2011, p. 22). How the stakeholder are excluded being participated in the process of policy-making, Bhatta (2011) claimed in this way:

*When the deal has been limited between the aid agencies and high-level MOE officials, relevant stakeholders such as political parties, district education officials, teachers, parents and students are merely ‘informed’ of such policies. In this way, the bargaining of foreign donors and influence has led to a ‘transcendisation’ of educational policy-making; national educational policy-making has gone beyond the central MOE to a higher, aid agency Ministry level (p.22).*

Therefore, national policy should be obedient to the donor’s terms and conditions. To strengthen the argument on the imposition of international donors, all the participants who were the policy makers agreed with the statement that international donors always influenced the policy-makers at upper-level. They further revealed that international donor agencies saw their security in investing money in a decentralized education system.

Hence, the priorities of government seemed more on the interests of donor agencies than the local realities and interest of the nations. In other words, in the case of foreign donors, they are providing financial supports with money given by the taxpayers of their citizens and donors are always concerned with positive outcomes and security of the investment. Moreover, donors are believed to provide foreign aid with some hidden agendas or their own commercial, political or strategic interests (Koirala and Acharya, 2011). As a result,

developing countries like Nepal are forced to work keeping the donors' interest at the top level to secure the financial resources from the international donors.

The theory says that promoting active participation of local people in decision making at school affairs enhances the sense of ownership to the community people. Since the central government could not control public schools from the central level, central government's realization to hand over the school management responsibilities to the local people with the spirit of LSGA 1999. When increasing the sense of belongingness, community people could mobilize local resources in different means: for example, human resources like teacher hiring and firing at local level, financial contribution, materials for school buildings. In addition, it would make the monitoring and supervision more effective and fruitful.

### **5.5.2 How have the Schools Adjusted to the new Situation?**

According to the theory, community managed schools enjoy the devolved power of autonomy in decision making through the establishment of SMC and PTA. As we already discussed in chapter two that the involvement of community people as the part of the democratic exercise. It transfers powers of decision making to the community level where community people have a greater role in influencing decision-making processes related to policy and the curriculum. Coleman (1998, cited in Fullan, 2007) argues the following ways:

The community people will influence the governance and management of the school at the school level. As a result, they can mobilize resources for the development of the school. As a "power of the three" for example, parents, teachers and students collaborate in the management and governance of the school (p. 191).

The findings of this research showed that the influential role and function of the SMC in the school management were questionable. It seems to be doubtful that SMC is not enjoying its power for instance teachers' deployment issues related to hiring and firing the teachers. World Bank (2008) pointed out the lack of adequate training and preparation of community people who represented SMC and PTA in order to perform their duties for school governance and management in most of the developing countries. The data showed that the SMC and PTA did not seem to be adequately familiar with their authority and the standard to which schools were supposed to be accountable to school governing bodies, third parties, for example, political parties, teachers' union attempted to dominate unnecessarily especially when hiring and firing the teachers. Therefore, the implementation of the strong role and

capacity of SMC at practice level as stated in the policy documents in this study lacked as per the data. On the other hand, in the process of electing the SMC chairperson, it is doubtful whether the election for Chairperson was following the requirement<sup>12</sup> of the Education Act (1971).

The data showed that community people's participation and the sense of belongings seemed to be increased more in rural area school than that of urban area community managed school. The reason was that most of the children from rural areas went to community managed schools. As a result, community people in rural areas actively participated in the school development. On the other hand, most of the children from urban areas were found attending to private boarding schools then why should the community people look after the community managed schools? For instance, a reflection revealed by one of the policy makers (51):

*Real community managed schools are in the rural areas where community people are actively participating with the sense of belongingness. Their children go to community managed schools and community people are supporting schools very well. People from urban areas are not being attracted by community managed schools, but rural schools are attracting those people.*

In urban area, since the private boarding schools have fulfilled the requirement of the local community people, they do not need to exercise their brain for the development of community managed schools in the urban areas.

Regarding the resource identification and mobilization as the theory says that one of the objectives of the decentralized education management system is to encourage local stakeholders for the identification and mobilization of locally available resources for CMS. Primary sources of community managed school are the government's grant-aid (CERID, 2004). It means the government support the expenses the financially for maintenance, construction, teacher's salaries, stationery and administrative that are the main areas for the investment of the funds. Since the government has to do this by spending the public investment, and then why should community-managed schools struggle in identifying the resources? Besides the governments' resource as the main source, financial support of INGOs and NGOs are secondary sources. If the CMSs have heavily depended on the support of the INGOs and NGOs in addition to the government support, how could it be sustainable resources? One of the participants (48) revealed that the financial or any means of support

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<sup>12</sup> According to education act 1971, chair person of the SMC will be appointed from among the parents whose children are studying at the respected school.

from NGOs and INGOs was seasonal, and they might not have kept continuing their funding and might have lasted at any time. He questioned, “when they stopped supporting financially, then what would our situation be?”

Along with the support of NGOs and INGOs, VDC and municipalities were also supporting financially, but the government funded the source of VDC and municipality. On the other hand, support of NGOs and INGOs depends on how well the community managed school deal with them. One of the teachers (40) from the rural school claimed that the role of the head teacher and SMC chairperson played greater to collect the fund.

The data showed that teachers and community people from the rural area were motivated to make a personal relationship to get more funds from NGOs and INGOs than those from an urban area. When comparing both schools, they have invested more funds for building construction, teaching materials, library development in a rural community-managed school than that of urban school.

The autonomy of allocating the resources (government resources) by the community-managed school is also one of the important aspects of enjoying the decentralization of education management system. Both schools seemed to be autonomous of allocating the resources. Though the community managed schools seem not be able to find the sustainable resources, they seem independent on the allocation for the investment of the funds provided by the government.

### **5.5.3 How do Stakeholders Perceive of the Implications of Education Decentralization to Education Quality, Equity and Relevance?**

The theory says, “the objective of the reform of education decentralization is to improve the education delivery by increasing the amount and quality of inputs to schooling and matching programme content to local interests with the considerable enhancement of learning outcomes” (McGinn & Welsh, 1999, p. 28). Furthermore, it aims at reducing inequalities in access to quality education. Understanding of the quality education in the context of Nepal as stated in the policy document of EFA 2004-2009:

Quality of education relates to the overall holistic development and higher learning achievements of children for the realization of which the following five basics are indispensable: teachers, textbooks/instructional materials, learning environment, school improvement, management and capacity building (MOE,2003, p. 30)

Nevertheless, the data revealed that it appeared to be no significant changes in quality of education in urban school. Inadequate availabilities of teaching materials, provision of special need education teacher for disadvantaged students, including trained teachers were the main challenges for the improvement of the considerable quality in education. Besides these, the school was able to make the child-friendly classroom to some extent, but it lacked child-friendly environment. Most of the students in the urban community-managed school were from poor migrated families who were struggling for the livelihood more than they looked after the children's education. On the other hand, the rural community-managed school seemed improving the quality of education (compared to the previous time) based on the fact that students' achievement rate improved. The data further showed that teachers were more accountable to the students. Rural community school was able to create many more child-friendly classrooms with child-friendly environment than those of urban school. Furthermore, in the rural community-managed school, head teacher also encouraged school teachers to participate teacher training program. Though, the distribution of teaching materials and textbooks from the central government seemed to be improved as students had got the textbooks in time. Rural community-managed school was able to use child-centred teaching activities to some extent. For example, one of the teachers (40) reported the following ways:

*We support and allow our primary students make their schedule for self-study and other activities like record of forecast and so on. If any one of the teachers attends the school late in the morning, i.e. school time, then students close the school gate and they do not let the teachers without apologizing for late to the students. Furthermore, we actively encourage students to monitor their classes themselves by choosing one of the students in the classroom.*

The number of students in each class was found more in rural CMS compare to urban CMS. Therefore, it is likely that the rural community managed school can attract local people than urban CMS.

Similarly, the notion of relevance has always followed debates about the quality of education. Relevance in education in turn emphasizes the importance of curricula that as far as possible respond to the needs and priorities of the learners, their families, and communities (UNESCO, 2011, P. 31). Therefore, the MOE of Nepal has realized that a continuous process of curriculum development by making school curricula more practical and relevant to day-to-day life is a strategy for enhancing quality and relevance of education. As a result, 20% of

the curriculum in particular subjects will be based on local contexts, and appropriate support for teaching such contents will be provided to the teachers (MOE 2003).

The question is that whether the provision of 20% of local curriculum can ensure the relevance of education? The data revealed that the urban school was able to design local language course as a local curriculum, but it seemed to be irrelevant to the students as it was not the mother tongue of the majority of the students. Participants, therefore, argued that the SMC forced to school children to learn the local language i.e. Newari language. The critical issue is that whether the students should adopt the local curriculum or local curriculum should adopt the children. If the government cannot implement the provision of local curriculum in the efficient manner, it may create confusion at local level. The data showed that developing local curriculum at the local level was challenging being a technically complicated because it required more experienced and qualified manpower. One of the participants (40) from a rural school supported that developing a curriculum was not as fun as writing books. He further added that, designing local curriculum included all the activities related to teaching and learning process, but it was impossible to find someone who had the technical knowledge of developing curriculum at local level.

Therefore, both schools introduced language course, Newari language at urban school and extra English language course at rural school as a local curriculum.

On the implication of education decentralization to equity, the data showed that the school had the policy of welcoming the children, regardless of their religion, caste, minority and class in the school. A policy maker (48) claimed that there was no serious confrontation among different religion, caste, minority and class in the current situation and no religion intended to stop attending students from different groups and caste. If the increasing of the enrollment of children at school could be measurement of equity in education, then school has improved the access of the children to education. The main question here is whether the increasing of enrollment of the children in school is because of the school policy or awareness in the local people to children education? Well, the policy document has legitimized the right of the children to basic education. Children denied basic education will have the right to seek legal remedy through a court or any appropriate judicial unit (MOE, 2008). Practically, how could a child go to court to ensure his or her right to education? Similarly, it is the responsibilities of local government to make the policy by

stating the strategy of bringing the children who are out of schools. The main problem was that as we already discussed in this chapter that VDC and municipality were running without the elected body for many years. Most of the participants echoed that awareness of the parents towards the education motivated them to send their children to school rather by the school system. Though the government has considered free education up to secondary level as a fundamental right, but in practice, all of the participants from both schools accepted the statement that schools were charging a small amount of money at the time of admission and prior to the examination to the parents.

From that statement what we could find out that community managed schools have charged money to the parents. On the other hand, the main question is that whether the charging fees to parents from the schools is a barrier for the parents to send their children to school? However, most of the participants from both schools claimed that charging small amount of fees had not become an obstacle for the parents sending their children to the school.



## **Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter is splitted into three parts. The first chapter presents the overall conclusion on the nature and motives of decentralization, the adjustment of school in the new situation and the perception of the participants on the implication of education decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education in Nepal. When making a conclusion, it follows the data analysis and discussion of the main findings in chapter seven. The last part outlines the implication for policy and implication for further research.

### **6.1 Conclusion**

#### **Conclusion on the Nature of Education Decentralization and Driving Factors of the Policy of Decentralizing Education System in Nepal.**

It is crucial to note that since the government adopted the education decentralization, it has never got locally elected government at local level. Instead, bureaucrats implement the policy. In addition, contradiction between SSRP and education act 1971, implementation of a particular form of education decentralization seemed to be vague at the practice level.

Though the policy document of education has clearly stated the devolution form of decentralization, but it seemed that both schools were not enjoying in full fledged. Hence, education decentralization seems to be not able to enhance the considerable broader participation of stakeholders, especially in the urban school, that is the ultimate goal of educational decentralization in the context of Nepal.

While talking about the driving factors that led the country to make and implement the policy of decentralizing education, different reasons can be taken into consideration. Undoubtedly, education decentralization in Nepal was also the impact of global changes around the world. Along with the global movement, and primarily influential role of international donors in the formation of policy was considered in Nepal. For example, in order to execute the EFA national program, the GON shared 74.44 percent budget, whereas 24.56 percent was contributed by donor (Bhatta, 2006; MOE, 2003a). It seemed that external donor agencies invested less than the government, but they seemed influencing the entire policy making process in Nepal. As a result, the government of Nepal seemed to be forced to attain the goal

of EFA. The priorities of government seemed to be more on the interests of donor agencies than the local realities and interest of the nations. We already discussed in the chapter of 7.5.1 that the education decentralization policy was introduced with the financial and technical assistance of the World Bank. MOES and World Bank anticipated that local participation would bring about improvement in education by increasing a sense of ownership among and between local community, parents and teachers. Therefore, to increase the sense of ownership in the community people was thought to be a reason to decentralize education management system of Nepal.

### **Conclusion on Schools Adjustment to the New Situation**

According to the theory, community people through the formation of SMC and PTA enjoy the greater degree of exercising power for the development of school.

SMC was not seemed to be enjoying the power on teachers' deployment. Due to the lack of familiarity with their authority, SMC seemed to have a limited control over governance and management of the school. Hence, the third parties, for example, political parties, teachers' union attempted to dominate unnecessarily in the matter of hiring and firing the teachers. In the process of electing the chairperson of SMC, it was sometimes not following the criteria given by the education act 1971. Hence, the capacity and role of SMC in making a decision in teacher recruitment process seemed questionable.

However, community people's participation and the sense of belongings were seemed to have increased more in rural area school. On the other hand, that of urban area community managed school was doubtful.

The resource identification and mobilization, major financial support particularly for maintenance, construction, teacher's salaries, stationery and administrative expenses heavily depend on support supplied by the government. Besides the financial support in any means provided by NGOs and INGOs, community managed schools were not seemed to be able to generate any sustainable resources. However, both schools were seemed enjoying their autonomy allocating the resources.

## **Conclusion on the Perception of the Participants on Implication of Decentralization to Quality, Equity and Relevance of Education in Nepal**

Ideally, the desirable outcome of education decentralization accounted in the quality of education. The quality of education from the perspective of Nepal relates to “ the overall holistic development and higher learning achievements of children for the realization of which the following five basics are indispensable: teachers, textbooks/instructional materials, learning environment, school improvement, management and capacity building (MOE, 2003, p. 30). Rural community-managed school seemed to have increased the quality of education to some extent. A claim based on the fact that rural community managed school was able to manage child-friendly environment with the child-centred learning activities resulted the achievement level of student increased more in a rural community managed school. Similarly, teacher absent rate was found to have decreased compared to urban community managed school. As we already discussed in this chapter that rural community managed school were able to attract community people, whereas community people in urban areas were attracted by private boarding schools.

Developing a local curriculum (i.e. 20% of the mainstream curriculum) seemed to be complicated for the implementation at local level. Schools were teaching language course as a local curriculum, and it seemed that language course were not able to fulfill the needs of the students. The designing local curriculum at the local level was thought to be challenging because it required expert manpower at local level. Therefore, it seemed that schools did not have any option than teaching language course as a local curriculum. Similarly, schools appeared facing significant challenges implementing mother tongue of the student as a medium of instruction. Therefore, making the curriculum more relevant to the students is doubtful.

Regarding the implication of education decentralization to equity, the policy of the school seemed to be contributed welcoming the children, regardless of their religion, caste, minority and class in the school. However, some political parties raised the issues of religion, caste, minority and class, but these issues were not thought to become a barrier to the children attending at schools. A government scholarship program for Dalits, girls, and disadvantaged children and awareness program of education were seemed to have helped the poor parents sending their children to school. However, the government had the policy of free tuition,

textbooks' support and limited scholarships for disadvantaged groups including minorities, Dalits, girls, and Janajatis. On the hand, schools were charging occasional fees to the parents.

## **6.2 Implication for Policy**

The research was carried out solely for academic purpose. The findings of the study imply that the contradiction among decentralization of education of LSGA, the Education Act and SSRP need to be clearly defined. More to the point, policy makers need to be clear about what form of decentralization is applicable by considering the local realities of the nation rather than influence by the foreign donors. Similarly, the representation of the elected body of the local government is mandatory because power has to be devolved to the local elected body. SMC and PTA need to be strengthened with an adequate orientation programme to increase awareness related to their authority and responsibilities. Therefore, SMC and PTA will not be dominated by third parties and can handle the school governance and management voluntarily. Government should make the efficient mechanism of strong monitoring and supervision for the school. When transferring the responsibilities of school management to the local community, government should be well informed in advance about the capacity of the local community whether community people are capable of taking the responsibilities. Therefore, one blanket approach may not be practical to implement the policy.

## **6.3 Implication for Further Research**

We can conduct the micro-level research on education decentralization where in-depth study is necessary. Similar kinds of research can be done focusing mainly on various topics like local community ownership, quality, equity and relevance of education. Furthermore, there are sufficient rooms for conducting further research on the capacity of the local people of taking responsibilities of school management and its effect on the quality of education. Additionally, a similar kind of research can be done further by sampling many community managed schools from different regions of the country. In addition, when measuring the actual desirable outcomes of the decentralization, a comparative study can be conducted between community managed schools and public schools (controlled by the government) in a similar subject area.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix 2: Interview Guide

Name of the Interviewee:

Organization/Institution:

Current Position:

Telephone:

Email:

Past Experiences:

### I: National Level Interview Guide:

A. What is the nature of decentralization in Nepal? And what has been driving the policy of decentralizing education management?

1. Could you please explain in detail what kind of decentralization system has been applied in Nepal and how is going on now?
2. Could you tell me what are the reasons that decentralized the Nepalese education system? For example, imposed by foreign aids.
3. What motivation attracted Nepal to be decentralized?
4. Could you tell me what extent is it necessary to decentralize the school management system?

B. How have the schools adjusted to the new situation?

5. Could you tell me in brief how the schools are adapting with the decentralized management system?
6. Could you tell me how well schools are enjoying decentralized managed system?
7. Could you tell me whether SMC is capable enough to hire and fire the teachers? Are they capable of handling the situation?
8. Is school management committee able to recruit the appropriate teachers? Who plays a dominant role when recruiting the teachers?
9. Can you explain in brief that to what extends are schools able to identify and mobilize the resources?
10. Can you describe in brief about how the schools are managing their financial aspects?

C. What have become the implications of decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education?

### **Quality**

11. Can you explain if your school is able to enhance the quality of education? For example, building good infrastructure for child-friendly environment and so on.
12. Who does provide books? Are all students able to purchase English medium books?
13. Do the poor students buy those books or do school help them to buy them?
14. How the teachers are helping students for effective learning? What extent are the teachers using locally available teaching materials?
15. What strategies have the school made to receive financial support and enhancement of professionalisms of the teacher by the national government?

### **Equity**

16. What strategies have the central government made to increase the equity of education?
17. Do school charges fees to students? If yes, then is it affecting the children attending at the schools? If no then how are the schools managing funds for financial arrangements?
18. Are the attendances of all pupils from each community, religion, minority class increasing or decreasing in your school?

### **Relevance**

19. Are school management committee and your school able to develop a local curriculum as local community have the right to include some of the local curriculum in the national mainstream curriculum?
20. What is the role of central government controlling over the quality, equity and relevance of education?
21. What is the role of central government controlling over the quality, equity, and relevance of education?

## **II: School Level Interview Guide:**

1. Name & Age: Phone:
2. Organization/Institution: Email:

3. Position:
  4. Joined the Organization in:
  5. Came in this position in:
  6. Name of the position/s served before taking this position:
- A. What is the nature of decentralization in Nepal? And what has been driving the policy of decentralizing education management?
1. Could you please explain in detail what how do you feel working in new education management system with excessive authority than you had previous? And how secure you are feeling in your career?
  2. Could you tell me what are the reasons that decentralized the Nepalese education system? For example, imposed by foreign aids
  3. What motivation attracted Nepal to be decentralized?
  4. Could you tell me what extent is it necessary to decentralize the school management system?
- B. How have the schools adjusted to the new situation?
5. Could you tell me in brief how the schools are adapting with the decentralized management system?
  6. Could you tell me how well you and your schools are enjoying decentralized managed system?
  7. Could you tell me whether your school management committee is capable enough to hire and fire the teachers? Do you have experience since you have been working as a head teacher on firing the teacher and hiring a new teacher? Who plays dominant when recruiting the teachers?
  8. Can you explain in brief that to what extends is your school able to identify and mobilize the resources?
  9. Can you describe in brief about how your school is managing its financial aspects?
- C. What have become the implications of decentralization to quality, equity and relevance of education?

## **Quality**

10. Can you explain if your school is able to enhance the quality of education? For example, building good infrastructure for child-friendly environment and so on.
11. Who does provide books? Are all students able to purchase English medium books?
12. How do the poor students buy those books or does school help them to buy them?
13. How the teachers are helping students for effective learning? What extent are the teachers using locally available teaching materials?
14. How is the national government or district education office helping teachers to enhance their professionalism or teacher training?
15. What strategies has the school made to receive financial support and enhancement of professionalisms of the teacher by the national government?

### **Equity**

16. Do school charges fees to students? If yes, then is it affecting the children attending at the schools? If no then how are the schools managing funds for financial arrangements?
17. Is the attendance of all pupils from each community, religion, minority class increasing or decreasing in your school?

### **Relevance**

18. Are school management committee and your school able to develop a local curriculum as local community having the right to include some of the local curriculum in the national mainstream curriculum?
19. What is the role of central government controlling over the quality, equity and relevance of education?

### **Appendix 3: List of Interviewees**

<b>SN</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Ref. Name (By Age)</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Teacher 1</b>	<b>Rural School</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2.06.2012</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Teacher 2</b>	<b>Rural School</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>2.07.2012</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Teacher 3</b>	<b>Rural School</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>2.12.2012</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Teacher 4</b>	<b>Rural School</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>2.21.2012</b>



5	Teacher 5	Urban School	53	2.17.2012
6	Teacher 6	Urban School	38	2.16.2012
7	Teacher 7	Urban School	55	2.23.2012
8	Teacher 8	Urban School	48	2.23.2012
9	SMC Chair Person	Rural School	43	2.28.2012
10	SMC Chair Person	Urban School	78	2.23.2012
11	Resource Person	DOE	47	2.26.2012
12	School Supervisor	DOE	40	2.27.2012
13	District Education Officer (Rural)	DOE	38	2.26.2012
14	District Education Officer (Urban)	DOE	48	2.29.2012
15	Policy Maker (MOE)	MOE	45	2.25.2012
16	Policy Maker (MOE)	MOE	51	3.07.2012
17	Programme Officer	UNESCO	61	2.28.2012
18	Programme Coordinator	ADB Consultant	37	3.04.2012
19	Politician	Nepal Maoist party leader	40	3.15.2012