The International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2016, pp. 35-55
http://openjournals.library.usyd.edu.au/inex.php/IEJ/index

Decentralized school governance policy: A comparative study of general public schools and community-managed schools in Nepal

Mukunda Mani Khanal
Ministry of Education and Kathmandu University, Nepal
mukundamkhanal@hotmail.com

The literature reviewed for this study revealed that the movement toward decentralizing responsibility of school governance to communities has become a global policy in the contemporary world. With the aim of enhancing greater community participation and retaining students in public schools, the Government of Nepal introduced two different policies: the General Public School (GPS)Policy and the Community-Managed School (CMS) Policy; both guided by the Decentralized School Governance Policy. Since then, there has been a debate about whether centrally controlled but locally managed GPSs or community owned-locally governed CMSs are better. Policy documents in Nepal repeatedly claim that the CMS Policy achieves better results than the GPS Policy. The research reported on in this paper gathered evidence for examining claims concerning the performance of the policies. The research used mixed methods. Results indicate that there is no significant difference in the respective policy implementation performance between the two types of schools.

Keywords: School governance policy; community-managed schools; general public schools

INTRODUCTION

Historically, public schools in Nepal were established and managed by local communities (Ministry of Education, 1997). However, these schools were few in number and only catered to communities from the highest socio-economic groups. With the introduction of the *New Education System Plan* in Nepal in 1971, the government made a strong commitment towards expansion of public schools for mass education (Ministry of Education, 1999). The government took over the management and governance of schools by providing more direct support (financial as well as regulatory support) to all public schools. Sharma (1986) argues that such nationalization lowered community contributions to schools, which resulted in the gradual disconnect of the community with public school functions (Ministry of Education, 1997). In most cases, public schools became completely dependent on government resources (see, e.g., Ministry of Education, 2009).

With the aim of regaining community engagement in the functioning of schools, empowering communities and retaining students in public schools, the government instituted two policies [see, e.g., the report of the National Education Commission, 1992 (National Education Commission, 1992); the Ninth Five-year Plan, 1997-2002

(National Planning Commission, 1997) and Education for All: Core Document (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2003)] that explicitly emphasized the need for promoting community ownership (Ministry of Education, 1999): General Public School (GPS) Policy and Community-Managed School (CMS) Policy in 2002. Both policies are guided by the Decentralized School Governance Policy introduced in 2002 (Ministry of Education, 2009). This policy provides options for schools to remain as a GPS, which entitles the school to receive full government support for operation and management functions, or be transferred to a CMS, which provides for more control by the local community of the school. CMSs are entitled to receive a one-time motivational grant from the government but the Government of Nepal is committed to maintaining present budgetary allocations to both types of schools on an equal footing.

The main objective of decentralization in education is to enable local communities to participate in decision making concerning their schools (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2003). This has been institutionalized through the adoption of an additional directive for the enforcement of the CMS policy. The directive provides School Management Committees (SMCs) of CMSs with extended authority to appoint Head Teachers (HTs) and review HTs' administrative performance based on the school improvement plan (Ministry of Education, 2009). SMCs have also been made responsible for the recruitment of teachers, using school resources, and reviewing the performance of teachers.

Notwithstanding the policy intention, decision-making power has virtually remained at the central government level (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2003), apparently caused by low preparedness and inadequate capacity at local levels (as discussed below). As highlighted by a number of researchers, the intention of the government to foster decentralization is not sufficient to actually cause implementation of decentralization (see, e.g., Anderson, 1994; Dye, 1995).Changes can only be expected to take place when the intended policy is practiced as envisioned (Fullan, 2001).

In 2009, the Government of Nepal initiated the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) to strengthen community support and ownership of school governance through the decentralization process. This reform program envisioned that the CMS Policy would continue (Ministry of Education, 2009, p. 13). However, the Policy continues to be difficult to implement. As the Ministry of Education notes: "management of education continues to be highly centralized although efforts have been made towards decentralization" (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2003, p. 16).

Professional teachers' organizations have strong reservations concerning the CMS policy and see it as a threat to their professional career and job security because the policy permits SMCs to hire and fire teachers (Carney, Bista, & Agergaard, 2007). To a large extent, schools operating under the GPS policy also are losing their credibility because of fewer control mechanism.

In the 15 years since the initiation of the decentralization policy, only about 23 percent of public schools have been transferred to communities (Department of Education, 2016). This means that, if the rollout was to be continued at the current pace, the government would need another 20 years to complete the policy intention to transfer all the GPSs to CMSs, calling into question the viability of the CMS Policy.

In essence, the introduction of the CMS Policy has created two types of public schools in Nepal. Now the justification for operating such a dual system of government public schools has become a focus of policy debate. Several studies (e.g., Centre for Policy Research and Consultancy, 2008; Full Bright Consultancy Private Limited, 2011) have concluded that CMSs are, overall, the better performing schools in Nepal. The main question in this study is to what extent CMSs are better off than their GPS counterparts and how this responds to the question of the viability of the CMS Policy.

The main objective of this study is to reveal the initial implementation outputs of CMSs and GPSs. Relevant literature was, therefore, reviewed to find the intentions behind the formulation of the Policies, and policy experts were interviewed. To ensure the study included implementation level perspectives, HTs and Chair Persons of SMCs were questioned concerning implementation performance and the reasons why they accept or reject the CMS Policy. A core issue in the research is to find whether there has been a departure in policy implementation (Bardach, 1977). Smith and Larimer (2009) emphasize that understanding why intended outcomes have or have not been achieved is critical "if policy success is to be replicated or policy failure to be avoided" (p. 157).

The following three research questions, therefore, underpin this research:

1. To what extent have the CMSs been successful in increasing community participation for school improvement and school effectiveness in terms of student attraction compared to their GPS counterparts?
2. What are the factors associated with the implementation performance of the decentralized school governance policy?
3. Does the CMS Policy function and perform as a viable instrument in the decentralization process of the school governance systems in Nepal?

The first research question examines the status of community participation and students' inflow between GPSs and CMSs by comparing their policy implementation performances. The second question identifies critical factors associated with the performance of policy implementation. This question further explains how well these factors have contributed to predicting policy implementation performance. The third question searches the extent to which the CMS Policy is a viable instrument for achieving desired results. It also helps to identify factors that contribute to widening gaps between intended and attained policy goals, which would determine the validity of the Policy.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE POLICY

As already noted, public schools in Nepal were "originally created and governed" and also financed by the community (Ministry of Education, 1997, p. 147). The current movement for decentralized school governance policy in Nepal is an attempt to regain that past community ownership of education (National Planning Commission, 2002, Ministry of Education, 2009). The *Seventh Amendment of Education Act, 2001,* brought a new provision for the formation of the SMCs and required the SMC chair to be either elected or selected from among the students' parents (Law Book Management Committee, 2001). The policy underpinning the change in the law has been a milestone along the way towards encouraging stakeholders to take responsibility for governing

schools (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, 2009; Ministry of Education and Sports, 2004, p. 26, 28). The *Seventh Amendment of the Education Act* further ensured stakeholders' right to participate in school affairs in line with the provisions of the *Local Self Governance Act*, 1999, (*LSGA*) (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2003).

The Government of Nepal has recently amended the *Education Act* to further engage and accommodate stakeholders from various fields in school governance and management. As opposed to the previous provision of direct election of the chair of the SMC from parents/guardians of students that are enrolled in the school, the 8th amendment of the *Education Act* has introduced the provision that four members, being two males and two females, will be elected from candidates who are students' parents/guardians, along with two members that do not have to be parents/guardians of students and have been presented as SMC candidate based on their contribution to the schools' development (Law Book Management Committee, 2016). The locally elected member for the school location ward of the local village development committee or municipality also qualifies as an officiating member of the SMC. These seven members will then either elect or select the SMC chair (Law Book Management Committee, 2016). In addition, the committee will have a teacher representative member and the HT, the latter serving as the member-secretary of the SMC. The HT and teacher representative are not allowed to participate in the process of selecting or electing the SMC chair.

Although the Government of Nepal has made the necessary legal arrangements for enabling CMSs to operate, several obstacles have been encountered in the implementation of the decentralized schools governance policy, especially the CMS Policy (Carney, Bista, & Agergaard, 2007; Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2009). For example, professional teacher organizations believe this policy threatens their professional careers and job security because the policy gives SMCs the right to hire and fire teachers (Carney et al., 2007, p. 618; Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, 2008, p. 94). Similarly, communities have indicated concern with regard to the financial sustainability of the schools at the local level (Research Centre for Educational Innovation & Development, 2009, p. 29-30). As a result, some public schools which had already become CMSs have asked for their status to be removed. The reasons, as Edwards (2011, p. 67) notes, could be that the CMS Policy did not sufficiently clarify on the role of community and engage the real stakeholders in school governance.

At a global level, school governance policies have been changing rapidly. A reason may be the increasing level of dependency of developing countries, such as Nepal, on foreign aid and the requirement of donors for increased decentralization. Thus, Rappleye (2011) questions the extent to which the focus on the CMS Policy in the *Seventh Amendment of Education Act* in Nepal is a donor-driven one. Anderson (1994) notes that interest groups play a major role in policy formulation and the increased interdependence on external support and, thereby, development partners' (donors') contributions to the education sectors, has influenced the focus of school governance policies, particularly in developing countries (Gunnarsson, Orazem, Sanchez, & Verdisco, 2004; Mok, 2005).

The trend towards decentralized school governance models began in the 1990s (Frederickson &Smith, 2003). The basic argument of the decentralization model follows the ideas of the Westminster Model, which is based on the concept of minimal state control and clearly demarcates the roles and responsibilities of the government (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). The concept also promotes the role of government as facilitator and empowerer of other stakeholders (Ansell, 2000), and the concept assumes that such a relationship between government and community can create better synergies within a society than can be achieved through centralized government control (see, e.g., Zhao, 2007). Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that centralized school governance systems, such as those in France and Japan, and decentralized school governance systems, such as those in The Netherlands and New Zealand, have both delivered good results in terms of school education quality and performance (Eskeland & Filmer, 2007). However, the decentralized school governance policy model, following the positive endorsement of Osborne and Gaebler's (1992) with regards to the concept of decentralized governments, has become more popular worldwide (Egal & Sobel, 2009). It is in line with this global trend, that the Government of Nepal introduced, with significant involvement of education sector development partners, including UN agencies and the World Bank, the plans for managing public schools: the Basic and Primary Education Project (1992-1997) and Basic and Primary Education Program (1999-2004) (Bhatta, 2011).

The government of Nepal has continued to scale up the transfer of public schools to communities in line with the CMS Policy. Some studies have found that the performance of CMSs, compared to GPS, is better (Centre for Policy Research and Consultancy, 2008; Full Bright Consultancy Private Limited, 2011). Despite such noticeable achievements, teachers and their unions continue to protest against the roll-out of the CMS Policy (Carney et al., 2007; Edwards, 2011).Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975, p. 482) warn that implementation may not produce expected outcomes if there are conflicts between policy makers and implementers. The question of interest in this research, therefore, is whether the level of teacher commitment has influenced the performance of the GPS and the CMS Policy in Nepal. Research into the effectiveness of education decentralization policies provide possible answers to this question.

Positive results from GPS/CMS implementation in other countries have encouraged the government in Nepal to continue with the policies. For example, Ho (2006) reports success of the policy in Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea, where school-based management had become well established within school governance. Barankay and Lockwood (2007) report similar experiences in Switzerland. However, not all reports on the policies have been positive. For example, Zhao (2007) states that education in the US is moving toward centralization of school education governance in order to produce more competent students, and Ainley and McKenzie (2000) found that academic achievements of students in locally-managed schools in the US, the UK and Australia are not exemplary. Zhao (2007), and Mukundan and Bray (2004) claim that the Asian region has continued to move towards decentralized governance systems and increasing the level of autonomy to schools in terms of governance despite there being no significant benefits achieved from this decentralization.

Decentralization of the education sector (Steiner-Khamsi & Stolpe, 2004) demands a high level of accountability and obligation from schools to demonstrate good performance, but it also creates unwanted side effects and issues, such as an increase in

disparities and inequalities in education (Mok, 2005). Experiences in Taiwan and South Korea show that, at a micro level, decentralization policies emphasize the fitness of the local settings (Fullan, 2001; Lo & Gu, 2008) to foster effective implementation of so-called "change in practice" (Lo & Gu, 2008, p. 25). For example, school-based management in Hong Kong has been gaining momentum simply because school principals and teachers are convinced of the soundness of this policy (Cheng, 2009). Consistent with Cheng's (2009) finding, Brever and Deleon (1983) developed a model proposing that effective policy action depends on the implementer's clear understanding of policy intention.

Policy implementation is particularly concerned with the process of interactions between intentions or goals of the policy and the actions taken to achieving them (see, e.g., Pressman & Wildavsky, 1979; Smith & Larimer, 2009; Birkland, 2011). Thus, research on implementation should consider the different stages of implementation (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). This study, therefore, considers the initial outputs of the implementation of the decentralized school governance policy, specifically focusing on community participation and attracting students to public schools.

Younis and Davidson (1990) identify three common approaches with regards to policy implementation; "the top-down approach", "the bottom-up approach" and "the policy–action continuum" (p. 5-12). The theory of policy implementation identifies six different variables, leading to either the success or failure of the implementation of the policy and its perceived performance (Van Meter &Van Horn, 1975). For example, a gap between the policy and its proper implementation can emerge if the policy objectives are not clear enough and the resources are not made available to the implementers.

Advocates of the bottom-up approach (e.g., Younis & Davidson, 1990) view local bureaucrats as the main actors in policy delivery. The top-down approach seeks to provide prescriptive models on why a certain policy is adopted and how it is going to be implemented (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) propose a model where policies and programs are guided by state control but recognise the crucial roles of the implementers. One of the strengths of this model is that it attempts to marry the "top-down" and "bottom-up" perspectives on implementation by incorporating some "bottom-up" concerns into a "top-down" model (Ryan, 1996, p. 35). This study uses the model developed by Mazmanian and Sabatier (1983) and includes the wider range of variables the model identifies as involved in the policy implementation process. The inclusion of these variables in this study is supported by the work of other researchers and documents, as explained further below.

Cheng and Cheung (1995) claim that availability of the "human resources and monetary resources" is the prime factor for successful implementation of a policy (p. 17). Edwards (2011, p. 74) supports this claim, stating that monetary resource is a principal factor. Availability of a budget is, therefore, included as an independent variable in this study.

Of the total schools transferred to communities under the CMS Policy, the vast majority (85%) are primary schools (Department of Education, 2012, 2015; Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, 2008). The reason for such an uptake among primary schools could be their smaller size, which enables them to make faster

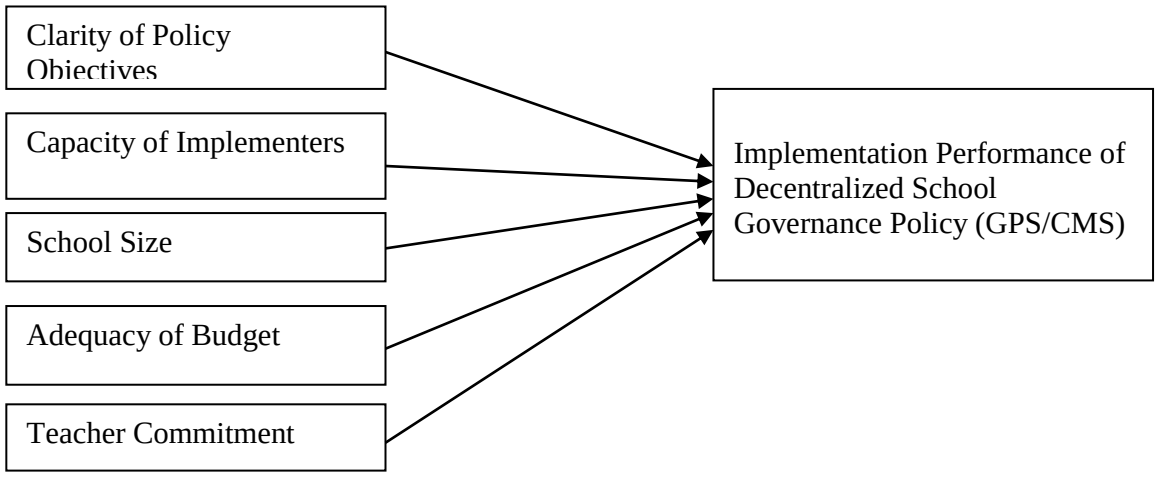
decisions (Blau, 1962) compared to larger secondary schools. School size, therefore, appears to be another critical variable to include in this study to assess strength of policy implementation.

The research of Van Meter and Van Horn (1975, p. 464), Brever and Deleon (1983, p. 66) and Pick, Xocolotzin and Ruesga (2007, p. 158) show that there is a positive relationship between policy clarity and its implementation success; thus policy clarity is included as a variable in this study. Gropello and Marshall (2011) found that failure of policy implementation may also be due to the limited capacity of implementers (p. 164). Capacity of implementers is, thus, also included as an independent variable in this study.

Following Mazmanian and Sabatier's (1983, p. 22) model, policy output of the implementing agency is taken as the dependent variable for this study. The term policy output refers to "the extent to which programmatic goals have been satisfied" (Gossin, Bowman, Lester, & O'Toole, 1990, p. 34).The use of output as the dependent variable enables the results of this study to be compared with those of the Centre for Policy Research and Consultancy (2008) and the Full Bright Consultancy Private Limited (2011), which found that community participation and students' attraction have increased in CMSs.

In summary, the proposition of this study is that clarity on policy objectives, capacity of implementers, school size, adequacy of budget, and commitment of teachers has a significant impact on policy implementation performance, as illustrated in Figure 1, and summarised in the Model 1 and Model 2 equations.

Figure 1 Research model developed for this study



Model 1: $IPDGPS=ß_0+ß_1CLAOPO+ß_2CAPAOI+ß_3SCHOLS+ß_4ADEBUG+ß_5TCOMIT+e_0$

Model 2: $IPDCMS=ß_6+ß_7CLAOPO+ß_8CAPAOI+ß_9SCHOLS+ß_{10}ADEBUG+ß_{11}TCOMIT+e_1$

Where,

IPDGPS=Implementation Performance of Decentralized School Governance Policy through GPS Policy (Model 1)

IPDCMS=Implementation Performance of Decentralized School Governance Policy through CMS Policy (Model 2)
CLAOPO=Clarity on Policy Objectives
CAPAOI=Capacity of Implementers
SCHOLS=School Size
ADEBUG=Adequacy of Budget
TCOMIT=Teachers' Commitment

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a mixed methods research design, based on the mounting popularity of such designs in social science research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Babbie (2013) makes a compelling case for the use of mixed methods in research design, explaining that there is strength in using both qualitative and quantitative methods in a study: qualitative methods are useful to explain causal relations, and quantitative methods helps confirm or disconfirm the predicted relationships (Bacharach, 1989; Bergman, 2011, p. 274).

A case study approach was selected as the main qualitative method for this study. In addition, and based on recommendations made by Peek and Fothergill (2009, p. 33) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994), this study used a combination of case studies (four schools, with equal representation of GPSs and CMSs), literature review, individual interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. Results from these qualitative methods were triangulated and findings further validated using quantitative methods. This study was largely based on primary data; however secondary information was also reviewed as supplementary information. Extensive data was collected at the organizational level for analysis with the purpose of comparing outputs between the two school policies (Yin, 2003; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

Sample

The target population of this study comprised all HTs, and SMC chairs of GPSs and CMSs in Nepal. A purposive sampling approach was adopted to ensure optimal capture of information (Patton, 1990; Best & Kahn, 1999) with seven districts selected, representing the three ecological regions of the country.

The quantitative data was collected following Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007, p. 123) technique with regards to calculating sample size, that is, $N \geq 50 + 8m$ (where m is the number of independent variables). Since this study has five independent variables, the sample size needed, if the Tabachnic and Fidell formula is followed, is n=90. Bartlett, Kotrlik, and Higgins (2001), however, recommend a sample size of n=cases to achieve an alpha level of .05. This study, therefore, obtained n=123 for CMSs and n=132 for GPSs. The combined data set contained 255 cases. The schools and informants were selected using a stratified random sampling technique: all schools in the sample districts were divided into two strata, these are: (1) GPSs, and (2) CMSs. The needed numbers of schools were selected randomly from each stratum to ensure a proportional representation of schools.

Instruments

For gathering qualitative information, this study focused on case studies describing real life contexts (Yin, 2003) and explaining the present status (Best & Kahn, 1999). However, case studies were substantially supplemented by a literature review, individual interviews, observations and focus group discussions. Documents, such as education commission reports, periodic plans of the Government of Nepal, the *School Sector Reform Plan—Core Document*, and research documents were analysed to determine the intentions of the GPS and CMS Policies. A semi-structured, open-ended interview technique was adopted to assess the perspectives of the policy makers and perceptions of the implementers from practical perspectives. Similarly, observation checklists and focus group discussion guidelines were developed to record the information in a sequential order.

Construct validity was established by convergent and discriminative techniques (Cohen et al., 2007). For example, convergent validity was ensured by using different data sources and checking the correlation of responses from each source (Patton, 1990), and discriminant validity was confirmed when noting a low inter-correlation of responses (Cohen et al., 2007). In addition, the researcher actively observed participants in discussions and incorporated observation data in the analysis, thus increasing the degree of overall validity (Miles & Huberman, 1994); and the researcher consulted experts to confirm content validity (Patton, 1990). Following Cohen et al.'s (2007) suggestion, an audiotape recorder was used during interviews and focus group discussions, and the recorded discussions transcribed to ensure descriptive validity. Interpretations of discussions were fed back to the research participants to check for correctness, thus guaranteeing interpretive validity. Finally, theoretical validity was confirmed by triangulating data to help establish facts (Maxwell, 2011). The research attempted to ensure "thick description" full of richness and holism of data (Rudestam & Newton, 2001, p. 98; Holliday, 2002, p. 78-79) to ensure a deep understanding of information provided by the participants, thereby ensuring the reliability of the qualitative data.

To ensure a comprehensive method and to provide the possibility for in-depth analysis (Love, 2004), a quantitative approach was employed to support the qualitative approach, not only to confirm or otherwise research predictions (Bacharach, 1989; Newman & Hitchcock, 2011) but also to strengthen the legitimacy of the research (Best & Kahn, 1999). A questionnaire (survey instrument) was administered to HTs, teachers' in-charge of schools, and SMC chairs of the sampled schools. The survey instrument consisted of three sections. The first section captured general demographic information of the informants, such as gender, position, experience, school location and school type. The second section contained instructions and the statements of latent variables developed for this study and used a seven-point Likert-type scale: "Strongly Agree" (7), "Agree" (6), "Somewhat Agree" (5), "Neither Agree nor Disagree" (4), "Somewhat Disagree" (3), "Disagree" (2) and "Strongly Disagree" (1), to examine how strongly subjects agreed or disagreed with statements developed to measure the implementation performance of the respective policies.

Pallant (2011) recommended the use of a number of tests to test data adequacy. The basic assumption of normality (skewness and kurtosis) was confirmed, yielding values of less than ±1 (i.e., tending to 0). Coefficients indicating inter-correlations among items ranged from .303 to .625; the multicollinearity problem was settled by confirming

the values of tolerance (.752 – .950) and VIF (1.052-1.446), which satisfied the assumptions of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) (Pallant, 2011). Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p<.000$) and the values of the KMO measuring sample adequacy (.742 - .911) were greater than the recommended value of ≥ .6 for ensuring goodness of data to fit for the use of the bivariate and multiple regression analyses.

Cronbach's Alpha was used for checking the reliability of items. The Alpha values (.700 – .886) of the scales of this study showed highly acceptable values against the cut-off score of ≥ .7 and thus confirmed and established the internal consistency of the scales. Following Pallant's (2002) and Tabachnick and Fidell's (2007) recommendations, construct validity was ensured through an analysis of factor loadings. Factor loadings values (see Table 1) ranged from .503 to .827, showing acceptable values against the cut-off value of ≥ 0.5, and also helped reduce the number of factors. After conducting the factor analysis, only one component of the scale was produced in which all ten questions were retained with due consideration to the acceptable cut-off value for factor loadings, that is, ≥ 0.5 (Pallant, 2002).

Table 1: Factor analyses of the dependent variable

Observed Variables	GPS		CMS	
	Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alpha	Factor Loadings	Cronbach Alpha
There are wide discussions among stakeholders while taking the decisions on school affairs.	.553	.860	.743	.862
Implementers have sufficient room to manage the school in line with our own plan.	.555	.865	.671	.867
Both interest and participation of community into school affairs have increased.	.526	.867	.649	.868
School-community relationships have strengthened.	.503	.863	.717	.863
Community people frequently visit the school.	.547	.866	.689	.866
The parent-teacher association is active in our school.	.603	.885	.767	.860
The school is successfully moving forward to achieve the intended goals.	.539	.873	.569	.876
The students' attraction has increased.	.504	.872	.563	.874
Competition among schools has increased.	.608	.856	.786	.857
Students' flow from private schools to community has increased.	.589	.858	.767	.860

For GPS: KMO =.909, Variance explained =48.15%, $p<0.000$; Correlation matrices among variables range from .312 to .629

For CMS: KMO =.911, Variance explained =48.49%, $p<0.000$; Correlation matrices among variables range from .303 to .609

As noted above, the implementation performance of decentralized school governance policy was set as the dependent variable for this study. This policy was measured by two-sets of indicators for both types of schools: (1) a six-item scale in which HTs, teachers, and the SMC chairs of both schools reported their perceptions on community participation in school development; and (2) a four-item scale in which HTs, teachers, and the SMC chairs of both schools reported their perceptions on students' attraction to

the school. In order to measure the dependent variable, both perceptions were combined and added.

Data analysis procedures

Policies promoting centralization or decentralization in education appears, disappears, and reappears in many countries with change of governments and governance systems (Kuiper, van den Akker, Hooghoff, & Letschert, 2006). To capture qualitative information, a summary of policy intentions found in policy and plan documents since 1950 was listed then summarized in a descriptive form. The summary helped to formulate the potential variables related to policy implementation.

Information collected through interviews with policy makers, policy experts, HTs and SMC chairs, and the focus group discussions conducted with HTs and SMC chairs were analysed separately. Perceptions noted from individual interviews and the same perceptions noted in focus groups were combined for analysis purposes. A cross-case analysis was then carried out which compared and contrasted the information gained from four different schools, interviews, focus group discussions and the researchers' own observations. In other words, three interrelated parts: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification techniques were used for analysis of the qualitative data, as recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994).

The quantitative data was analysed using SPSS Version-20 to administer univariate, bivariate and multiple regression analyses. Bivariate analysis was run to assess the degree of relationship between the dependent variable and one independent variable, and standard multiple regressions were run to observe the association between the dependent variable and several independent variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). This process enabled an assessment of implementation. Sample t-statistics were used to determine the implementation performance scores for the GPS and CMS Policies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of documents showed that the fundamental aim of the CMS policy is to promote community participation in and ownership of school development, and to increase the attractiveness of public schools to students through increased efficiency and accountability of schools (also see National Council for Economic and Development Research, 2008).Empirical results of this study provide evidence that HTs are in favour of the GPS policy (revealed in case studies and interviews) and there is no significant difference between the implementation performance of the GPS and CMS Policies (t-statistics showed no difference). Interviews and case studies showed that HTs, especially, prefer the GPS policy because it gave them better job security and no control by the local community. This result is consistent with the findings of Mukundan &Bray (2004) in India and cases in the US, the UK and Australia (Ainley & McKenzie, 2000).

Some schools purposefully transferred to CMS policy merely to receive motivational grants and retain the power of appointing teachers locally. Edwards (2011, p. 74) notes that block grants and scholarship schemes have motivated schools to become CMSs. The cross-case findings of this study clearly show that the resource dependence problem has increased in both types of schools because of poor community participation. Failure to clarify the policy intentions to the real implementers, particularly professional teacher

organizations, and to develop proper implementation guidelines significantly contributed to varied implementation performance between the two types of schools. This study's results also highlighted that social distance between policy makers and end users contributes to the gap between intended and perceived policy. The informants from CMSs emphasized that the teacher community needs to be taken into account when introducing innovations because the intended policy can only be translated into action upon the acceptance of end users (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1979).

Past studies (see, e.g., Centre for Policy Research and Consultancy, 2008; Full Bright Consultancy Private Limited, 2011) found that CMS schools had increased community participation and were more attractive to students. However, this finding is not supported by the results of this study; as noted, the insignificance of the t-statistic [t (253) =-.285; p>.776>.05] showed that there is no statistically significant difference between implementation performance of the GPS Policy and CMS Policy. Information derived from the qualitative component of this study provides two possible reasons for the lack of difference. One, the government cannot differentiate between the two types of schools and consider both to be public schools and entitled to the same rights for receiving grants from the government. Two, there was no real intention for schools that transferred to a CMS status to abide by the CMS Policy; the motivation for the transfer was merely to receive the motivational grants worth NRs. 300,000 (Approximately 3,700 USD) from the government. This finding is similar to that of Burde (2004). The cross-case findings of this study also highlighted the importance of leadership, clarity on policy objectives, adequacy of budget, school culture (institutionalized school culture, such as: supportiveness of teaching and non-teaching staff, operationalization of the school's code of conduct and time-on-task), and classes running in English medium. These factors were found to be important in both the well-performing GPSs and CMSs.

In this study, Type I and Type III (see Table 2) schools were found to be better-run schools, even though they had adopted two different policies. Type II and Type IV schools also adopted different policies but were found to be equally weak in terms of materializing policy outputs when compared to Type I and Type II schools. Policy experts consulted in this study pointed out that previous research showing that a difference exists between GPS and CMS schools arrived at false conclusions because of bias sampling. The results of this study, therefore, questions whether the dual policies should be continued.

Table 2: Matrix for categorizing the implementation performance of policy outputs

School Type	Community Participation and School Effectiveness	
	High	Low
GPS	Type I School	Type II School
CMS	Type III School	Type IV School

In summary, the results from the qualitative study point to three main reasons that explain low policy implementation performance in either type of school (the reasons are similar to those found by Cheng (2009)). First, a leadership crisis in schools has caused a number of quality issues in both types of schools. Second, the poor commitment of teachers is an acute problem in attempts to translate intended policy into actual action. Third, ambiguous policy objectives, inadequate budgets, poor school culture (for example, irregular meeting with staff members, poor team work), and inadequate

capacity at the school level (for example, poor skills for developing school improvement plans) have largely resulted in an poor implementation performance in schools regardless of type of school.

The quantitative results of this study support the results of qualitative analysis. The results of this study, therefore, show that the CMS Policy has not been more effective than its GPS Policy in terms of producing better intended implementation performance. The findings for Model 1, representing the GPS policy are:

$$IPDGPS = ß_0 + ß_1 CLAOPO + ß_2 CAPAOI + ß_3 SCHOLS + ß_4 ADEBUG + ß_5 TCOMIT + e_0$$
$$= 1.710 + .280\ CLAOPO + .253\ CAPAOI + (-.041)\ SCHOLS + .187\ ADEBUG + .023\ TCOMIT + .700$$

The model result shows that, of the five anticipated predictors of implementation performance, only three are statistically positively significant at F (5,126) =11.394, p<.000, R^2=.311. Clarity on policy objectives (Beta=.280) had the highest significant impact on implementation performance of decentralized school governance policy, followed by capacity of implementers (Beta=.253), and adequacy of budget (Beta=.187).

Model 2 also included five predictors of positive impact on implementation performance of decentralized school governance policy in the CMS policy. The statistical results captured from the standard regression analysis for the CMS policy are:

$$IPDCMS = ß_6 + ß_7 CLAOPO + ß_8 CAPAOI + ß_9 SCHOLS + ß_{10} ADEBUG + ß_{11} TCOMIT + e_1$$
$$= -.726 + .327\ CLAOPO + .172\ CAPAOI + .116\ SCHOLS + .457\ ADEBUG + .152\ TCOMIT + .390$$

Thus, Model 2 shows that all the predictors are statistically positively significant with F (5,117) = 49.217, p<.000, R^2=.678. Adequacy of budget (Beta=.457) has the highest impact on implementation performance of the decentralized school governance policy, followed by clarity of policy objectives (Beta=.327), capacity of implementers (Beta=.172), then teacher commitment (Beta=.152).Size of schools had the lowest measured significance (Beta= .116).

The results of the standard multiple regression analysis reinforced results captured by the Pearson correlation coefficient in both the cases of this study. Thus, the results of this study support Van Meter and Van Horn's (1975), and Mazmanian and Sabatier's (1983) models.

As already noted, an independent samples t-test confirms that there is no statistically significant difference between the scores of implementation performance of GPSs and CMSs when equal variance is assumed at a 95% confidence level [t (253) =-.285; p>.776>.05].When equal variances are not assumed, the result again show that there is no significant difference between the means. Thus, this study concludes that the mean difference of implementation performance of the GPS policy (Mean=4.5114, S.D. =1.07885, N=132) is not significantly different from that of the CMS policy (Mean=4.4724, S.D. =1.10382, N = 123) at a 95% confidence level [t (253) =-.285; p>.776].

Factors associated with implementation performance

The results from an analysis of the qualitative data identified that the factor with the most influence associated with an increase in community participation and student numbers is leadership. This factor was found to persist in both the well-run GPSs and CMSs (see Table 2). The results of the cross-case analysis are similar and reveal that a number of variables are responsible for creating the four types of schools identified in Table 2. These factors are: leadership of the HT, clarity of policy objectives, availability of school budget, school culture, capacity of implementers, and school environment. After leadership, informants from the GPSs placed more emphasis on the availability of budget and the capacity of implementers, whereas informants from the CMSs emphasized policy clarity and commitment of teachers.

The results obtained from the analysis of the qualitative data were largely supported by results from an analysis of the quantitative data. For example, clarity of policy objectives, adequacy of budget and capacity of implementers remained the most influencing predictors of implementation performance in both types of schools. This means that these three factors are good predictors of the dependent variable, implementation performance of decentralized school governance policy. But the impact of the factors differed between types of schools: clarity on policy objectives was the strongest predictor followed by the capacity of implementers and adequacy of budget in the case of the GPS policy; whereas adequacy of budget was the most influential factor followed by clarity on policy objectives and capacity of implementers for the CMS policy case.

Viability of CMS policy

The empirical results, particularly from the qualitative analysis in this study, show that leadership of the HT is the most significant factor for enhancing community participation, increasing student enrolments, mobilizing local resources and better utilizing resources. Due to the limitation of this study, leadership of HT was not included as a variable in the models developed for comparing the two policies. The results from analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data reveals that there is no notable evidence to show that CMSs have better implementation results that GPSs. Leadership and English medium classes running in schools were found as new factors associated with implementation performance. This evidence is sufficient to claim that better leaders always pay more than a better policy. Several good practices, for example: regularity of attendance by students and teachers, regular meetings of SMC and parents' visits, and interactions with teachers to schools, was observed to have a significant influence in both types of schools.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

A number of scholars state that adopting a good policy is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the implementation of policy (Balzarova, Bamber, McCambridge, & Sharp, 2004) and policy needs to be examined by the so-called "need and fit" (Fullan, 2001, p. 25) dimension. With this in mind, the intention of this study was to compare the implementation performance of the two types of public schools in Nepal: CMSs and GPSs. Empirical results derived from the use of qualitative and quantitative methods did not find significant differences between the two types of schools. This study,

therefore, concludes that there is no significant difference between the performance of centrally controlled-locally managed GPSs and community owned-locally governed CMSs. The results of this study are contrary to findings from research at both the international and domestic levels (e.g., Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, 2004; National Council for Economic and Development Research, 2008; Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development, 2009).

Although this study identified a number of predictors as critical determinants of implementation performance of decentralized school governance policy, leadership in the school exhibited primacy in determining implementation performance. The results of this study, therefore, helped derive a causal model comprising a strong set of predictors for producing better implementation performance of the decentralized school governance policy (see Figure 2). However, this model should be further tested.

Future research should also empirically examine the six predictors hypothesized in Figure 2 for the conformity of predicting implementation performance of decentralized school governance policy. Mixed methods might be an effective approach for conducting this research, as was carried out for this study. Field interviews with parents and surveys of teachers, which are often not included in contemporary research, need to be incorporated for assessing actual implementation performance of decentralized school governance policies.

As for the theoretical considerations, the findings of this study infer that there are some contextual limitations of the policy implementation models developed by various theorists (e.g., see Van Meter & Van Horn, 1975; and Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983). The new causal model derived inductively in this study would help to bridge the gaps that persist in the implementation of the decentralized school governance policy, particularly in the case of Nepal.

This study evaluated the initial outputs of ongoing decentralization initiatives in Nepal and compared the centrally-controlled GPSs with locally-managed CMSs using mixed methods. Results of the study provide additional inputs into the educational research field at the macro level. The causal determinants inductively identified by this study deserve consideration when implementing policies at the micro or school level. For example, the results of this study clearly spell out that a single policy option does not fit all school contexts because each school is unique. In conclusion, the results of this study demonstrate that providing more discretion and authority to HTs to run SMCs would increase implementation performance.

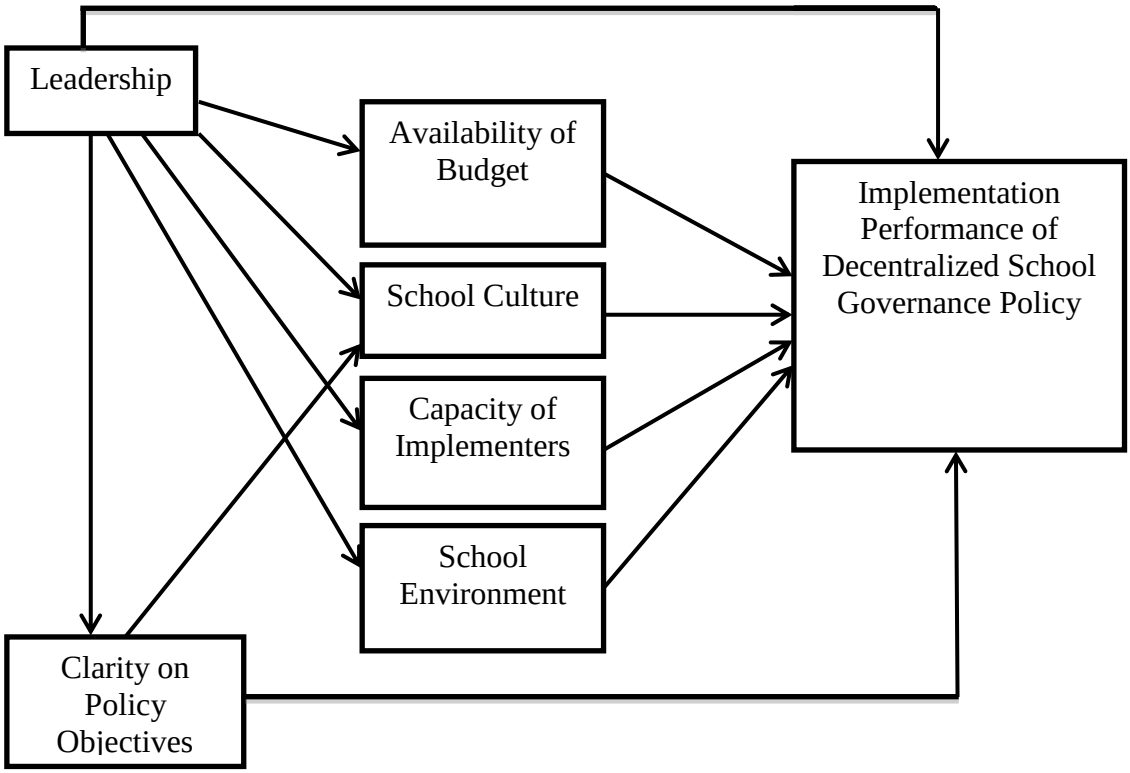


Figure 2 A causal model derived from the results of this study

.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This article is completely based on the author's PhD dissertation, submitted to National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, Thailand in 2013. The main version of the entire dissertation was published by the NIDA in 2013. The author is extremely delighted with and grateful to Professor Sombat Thamrongthanyawong, Ph.D. (President of NIDA) for his academic guidance throughout the research processes.

REFERENCES

Ainley, J. & MacKenzie, P. (2000). School governance: Research on educational and management issues. *International Education Journal, 1*(3), 139-145.

Anderson, J. E. (1994). *Public policymaking: An introduction* (2nd ed.). NY: Houghton Mifflin.

Ansell, C. (2000). The networked polity: Regional development in Western Europe. *International Journal of Policy and Administration, 13*(3), 303-333.

Babbie, E. (2013). *The practice of social research* (13th ed.). Sydney, Singapore, London: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.

Bacharach, S. B. (1989). Organizational theories: Some criteria for evaluation. *Academy of Management Review, 14*(4), 496-515.

Balzarova, M. A., Bamber, C. J., McCambridge, S., & Sharp, J. M. (2004). Key success factors in implementation of process-based management. *Business Process Management Journal, 10*(4), 387-399.

Barankay, I. & Lockwood, B. (2007). Decentralization and the productive efficiency of government: Evidence from Swiss cantons. *Journal of Public Economics, 91*, 1197-1218.

Bardach, E. (1977). *The implementation game: What happens after a bill becomes a law.* Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Bartlett, J. E., Kotrlik, J. W., & Higgins, C. C. (2001). Organizational research: Determining appropriate sample size in survey research. *Information Technology, Learning, and Performance Journal, 19*(1), 43-50.

Best, J. W. & Kahn, J. V. (1999). *Research in education* (7th ed.). New Delhi: Prentice Hall.

Bhatta, P. (2011). Aid agency influence in national education policy-making: A case from Nepal's 'Education for All' movement, *Globalization, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 11-26.

Bergman, M. M. (2011). The good, the bad and the ugly in mixed methods research and design. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research***,** *5*(4): 271-275.

Birkland, T. A. (2011).*An introduction to policy process: Theories, concepts and models of public policy making* (3rd ed.).NY: M. E. Sharpe.

Blau, P. (1972). Interdependence and hierarchy in organizations. *Social Science Research, 1,* 1-24.

Brever, G. D. & DeLong, P. (1983). *The foundation of policy analysis*. Homewood, Illinois: The Dorsey Press.

Burde, D. (2004). Weak state, strong community? Promoting community participation in post-conflict countries. *Current Issues in Comparative Education, 6*(2), 73-87.

Carney, S., Bista, M., & Agergaard, J. (2007). 'Empowering' the 'local' through education? Empowering community-managed schooling in Nepal. *Oxford Review of Education, 33*(5), 611–628.

Centre for Policy Research and Consultancy (2008). *Social mobilization for participation in the community-managed school in Nepal.* Kathmandu: Author.

Cheng, Y. C. (2009). Hong Kong educational reforms in the last decade: Reform syndrome and new developments. *International Journal of Educational Management, 23*(1), 65-86.

Cheng, Y. C. & Cheung, C. M. (1995). A framework for the analysis of educational policies. *International Journal of Educational Management, 9*(6), 10-21.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.). London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Entering the field of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-18). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Department of Education (2012). *Flash report, 2012*. Bhaktapur: Author.

Department of Education (2015). *Flash report, 2015*. Bhaktapur: Author.

Department of Education (2016). *Flash report, 2016*. Bhaktapur: Author.

Dye, T. R. (1995). *Understanding public policy* (8th ed.).Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Edwards, R. M. (2011). Disconnect and capture of education decentralization reforms in Nepal: Implications for community involvement in schooling, *Globalization, Societies and Education. 9*(1), 67-84.

Egal, Z. & Sobel, A. C. (2009). Challenges of globalization, immigration, social welfare, and global governance. In Andrew C. Sobel (Ed.), *Capital mobility and social welfare provisions in the late 1800s.* NY: Routledge.

Eskeland, G. S. & Filmer, D. (2007). Autonomy, participation and learning: Findings from Argentine schools, and implications for decentralization. *Education Economics, 15*(1), 103-127.

Frederickson, H. G. & Smith, K. B. (2003). *The public administration theory primer*. Colorado: Westview Press.

Full Bright Consultancy Private Limited (2011). *A study on effectiveness of community managed school.* Kathmandu: Department of Education.

Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change* (3rded.).NY: Teachers College Press.

Gossin, M. L., Bowman, A. O'M., Lester, J. P., & O'Toole, L. J. (1990). *Implementation theory and practice: Toward a third generation.* NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Gropello, E. D. & Marshall, J. H. (2011). Decentralization and educational performance: Evidence from the PROHECO community school program in rural Honduras. *Education Economics, 19*(2), 161-180.

Gunnarsson, V., Orazem, P. F. M., & Sanchezand Verdisco, A. (2004). *Does school decentralization raise student outcomes? Theory and evidence on the roles of school autonomy and community participation*. Washington DC: The World Bank.

Ho, E. S. (2006). Educational decentralization in three Asian societies: Japan, Korea and Hong Kong. *Journal of Educational Administration, 44*(6), 590-603.

Holliday, A. (2002). *Doing and writing qualitative research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Kuiper, W., van den Akker, J., Hooghoff, H. & Letschert, J. (2006).Curriculum policy and school practice in European comparative perspective. In J. Latschert (Ed.), *Curriculum development reinvented: Evolving challenges for SLO* (pp. 57-77). Enschede: Netherlands Institute for Curriculum Development-SLO.

Law Book Management Committee (2001). *Education Act, 1971* **(**7th ed.). Kathmandu: Author.

Law Book Management Committee (2016). *Education Act, 1971* **(**8th ed.). Kathmandu: Author.

Lo, W. Y. W. & Gu, J. O. (2008). Reforming school governance in Taiwan and South Korea: Empowerment and autonomization in school-based management. *International Journal of Educational Management, 22(*6), 506-526.

Love, A. (2004). Implementation evaluation. In J. S. Wholey, H. P. Hatry, & K. E. Newcomer (Eds.) (2nd ed.).*Handbook of practical program evaluation, 63-97*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *A realist approach for qualitative research*. Los Angeles: Sage.

Mazmanian, D. A. & Sabatier, P. A. (1983). *Implementation and public policy*. Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company.

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd ed.). California: Sage.

Ministry of Education (1997). *The basic and primary education master plan for 1997-2002*. Kathmandu: Author.

Ministry of Education (1999). *Programme implementation plan: Main report*. Kathmandu: Author.

Ministry of Education and Sports (2003). *Education for all, 2004-2009: Core document*. Kathmandu: Author.

Ministry of Education and Sports (2004). *Education for all, 2004-2009*. Kathmandu: Author.

Ministry of Education (2009). *School sector reform plan, 2009-2015*. Kathmandu: Author.

Mok, K. (2003).Decentralization and marketization of education in Singapore: A case of school excellence model**.** *Journal of Educational Administration, 41*(4), 348-366.

Mukundan, M-V. &Bray, M. (2004). The decentralization of education in Kerala State of India: Rhetoric and reality. *International Review of Education, 50,* 223-243.

National Council for Economic and Development Research (2008). *A study on effectiveness of government support to community school*. Kathmandu: Author.

National Education Commission (1992). *Report of the National Education Commission, 1992*. Kathmandu: Author.

National Planning Commission (2002). *Tenth Five-Year Plan*. Kathmandu: Author.

National Planning Commission (1997). *Nineteenth Five-Year Pla*n. Kathmandu: Author.

Newman, I. & Hitchcock, J. H. (2011). Underlying agreements between quantitative and qualitative research: The short and tall of it all. *Human Resource Development Review 10(4),* 381-398.

Osborne, D. & Gaebler, T. (1992). *Reinventing government: How the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*. NY: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.

Pallant, J. (2002). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS* (2nd ed.). NY: Open University Press.

Pallant, J. (2011). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS* (4th ed.). Sidney: Allen & Unwin.

Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (2nd ed.*).* California: Sage Publications.

Peek, L. & Fothergill, A. (2009). Using focus groups: Lessons from studying daycare centers, 9/11, and Hurricane Katrina, *Qualitative Research, 9*(1), 31–59.

Pick, S., Xocolotzin, U., & Ruesga, C. (2007). Capacity building for decentralization in Mexico: A psychosocial approach. *International Journal of Public Sector Management. 20*(2): 157-166.

Pressman, J. L. & Wildavsky, A. B. (1979). *Implementation: How great expectations in Washington are dashed in Oakland or why it's amazing that federal program works at all*: *The Oakland project* (2nd ed.).Berkeley: University of California Press.

Rappleye, J. (2011). Catalyzing educational development or institutionalizing external influence? Donors, civil society and educational policy formation in Nepal, *Globalization, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 27-49.

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (2004). *School effectiveness: Head-teachers' leadership*. Kathmandu: Author.

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (2008). *A study on school governance in Nepal.* Kathmandu: Author.

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (2009). *Community-managed school: An innovative approach to school management*. Kathmandu: Author.

Rudestam, K. E. &Newton, R. R. (2000). *Surviving your dissertation: A comprehensive guide to content and process* (2nd ed.). California: Sage Publications.

Ryan, N. (1996). A comparison of three approaches to programme implementation. *International Journal of Public Sector Management, 9*(4), 34-41.

Sharma, G. N. (1986). *Nepal ko Shaikshik Etihans (Education History of Nepal)*. Kathmandu: Lumbini Pustak Bhandar.

Smith, K. B. & Larimer, C. W. (2009). *The public policy theory primer*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Steiner-Khamsi, G. & Stolpe, I. (2004). Decentralization and recentralization reform in Mongolia: Tracing the swing. *The Comparative Education, 40*(1), 29-53.

Tabachnick, B. G. & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using multivariate statistics* (5th ed.). Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Teddlie, C. & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of mixed methods research: Integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches in the social and behavioral sciences*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.

Van Meter, D. S. &Van Horn, C. E. (1975). The policy implementation process: A conceptual framework. *Administration and Society, 6*(4), 445-448.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Younis, T. & Davidson, I. (1990). The study of implementation. In T. Younis (Ed.). *Implementation in public policy*, (pp. 3-14). Brookfield: Gower Publishing Company.

Zhao, Y. (2007). Education in the flat world: Implications of globalization on education. *Edge, 2*(4), 1-19.