

NETWORK GOVERNANCE IN EDUCATION: A CROSSOVER



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Abstract

Schooling without learning is a wasted of opportunity. More than that it is a great injustice. This is the reality of today's educational system. Despite some successes, most of, not all, the schools in Nepal continue to be criticized in their lacklustre performance, poor classroom delivery, doldrums, lax governance, poor oversight mechanisms, schools as loss-makers, budget-busters and sick public units. This reflects the bitter but today's reality. It is a crossover time to shift Schools from great loss-makers to ushering an era of making schools as centerpiece for learning wherein all Schools prioritize learning not just schooling. The obsolete and archaic mechanisms should be eschewed by a robust and vibrant network of state and non-state actors. It is on this backdrop, this paper travels on. This paper jostles for to generate the flagship idea that we have to learn to work efficiently in a vibrant network by extending mutual faith and good will and achieve excellence as a team. Finally, this paper concludes with the idea that in a globalized economy and knowledge-based society, success comes to those who can organize the vibrant network of multi-actors for multi-functions through multi-channels which helps to achieve education as a fundamental human right and fundamental means to ensure 5Ps of Post 2015 Development Goals - Planet, People, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership.

Context of the Paper

Today's world is volatile and turbulent-making the future difficult to predict. It is far more complex and less state-centric with a wide variety of actors and governance mechanisms. Rapidly proliferating non-state actors and complicating the efforts to create conducive environment for stability, peace, progress and prosperity (Karns, P. M., Karen, A. M., and Kendall W. S. 2016). Due to some emerging concepts of globalization such as: hyper-globalization, dematerialization, democratization, crisscrossing of rules, the rise of mega trader (China), proliferation of regional integration, decline of trade barriers (Subramanian, A. and Kessler, M. 2013) has formed a global community as a small village. There is a movement toward greater interaction, integration and interdependence-3Is, among people and organizations across national borders (Rondinelli, A. D. and Cheema, G. S. 2003, p. 2). Furthermore, the world is within our reach. We have easy access to services and products from all parts of the world. Scientific advances are being utilized rapidly. Knowledge is closer at our hand, but lasts a shorter time. The world has been reshaped, and new actors have appeared on the international scene. The above mentioned realities of the day have triggered to discover many forms of governance

mechanisms. Some of the recently used forms of governance in the global scene are presented below.

- ✓ Network governance
- ✓ E-governance
- ✓ Collaborative governance
- ✓ Stakeholders' engagement
- ✓ Hybrid governance
- ✓ Governance without governments
- ✓ Twilight institutions
- ✓ Real governance
- ✓ Negotiated statehood
- ✓ Governing by partnering
- ✓ Smaller but stronger
- ✓ Less government but more governance
- ✓ Borderlessness- borderless learning organization
- ✓ Joined up governments
- ✓ Smart governance

Source: (Meagher, K., Tom, D. H., Kristof, T. 2014)

The rise of new type of governance gives many names which refer virtually the same thing. They denote to a single deeper paradigm shift, that is boundaryless organization or government. Here, the term 'boundaryless organization/government' refers to permeable quality of organization or government- allowing greater fluidity of movement throughout the organization or government. The traditional notion of boundaries as fixed barriers became obsolete. They should be eschewed by organic or biological view of boundaries as permeable, flexible, movable like membranes in living organism (Ashkenas, R., Dave, U., Todd, J. and Steve, K. 2003). The reasons behind emerging such concepts are;

- ✓ Not only focusing on rule of law, but also role of law,
- ✓ Not only focusing on form of institutions, but also functions,
- ✓ Not only focusing on capacity building, but also power asymmetries,
- ✓ Shift from good governance to arrangements that work,
- ✓ Delaying or lessening hierarchy,
- ✓ Suboptimal hybrid arrangements are better than the total collapse of services.
- ✓ Post 2015 development agenda- 5Ps-People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership where education is both means and Ends.

Present Scenario in Education

Nepal is politically, economically, environmentally, and educationally fragile country. Every sector of the country is plagued by mismanagement or under management of resource-natural resource curse (paradox of plenty), lax government, poor oversight mechanisms and irksome behaviors of bureaucracy. However, this paper grapples with the education sector only. Today, we see the deterioration in the quality of education. Despite some successes, most of, not all, the schools have become loss-makers, budget-busters and sick public units-draining scarce resources from public treasure and low performing. They continue to be criticized in their lacklustre performance and poor classroom delivery. There is perennial learning crisis or quality learning deficit or skills gap (World Education Forum Final Report 2015 and British Council: An

introduction to Core skills 2015). Learning is not happening. Schooling without learning is a terrible waste of precious resources and of human potential. It is injustice. Learning crisis is moral crisis. Without learning students will be locked into lives of poverty and exclusion. Most importantly, the children whom schools fail to provide education are the ones who are in need of a good education to succeed in life. This means learning crisis hurts much to the disadvantaged, marginalized, and weaker sections of the society (World Development Flagship Report 2018). When we put our critical lens in the practice of today's educational system, what we see is there are sundry factors that are onus for quality learning deficit. In the past, we used to blame to the teachers saying that teachers are not teaching. They do not have professional proficiency to handle classroom situations. They lack flexibility and adaptability. But recent researches have revealed that poor learning outcomes- low levels, high inequality and sluggish progress, are of the reasons not only from teachers' side but also from other stakeholders. World Development Flagship Report (2018, p. xi) states that the learning problems are driven not only by service delivery failings in schools but also by deeper systematic problems. Osborne, D. and Gaebler, T. (1992) state that:

people who work in government are not the problem rather the system in which they work is the problem. People selected and appointed are responsible, talented, dedicated, innovative, accountable but they are trapped in archaic systems that frustrate their creativity and sap their energy. Systems can be changed to liberate energy and heighten the ability to serve (p. 5).

There is system failure. It is pervasive and largely chronic. It is still doldrums. It has become stumbling block, gridlock, deadlock because of stakeholders' engagement in the rat race. Within the system level, there are many actors. Some of the important are given below. They include:

- ✓ Learners
- ✓ Teachers
- ✓ School administrators/managers
- ✓ School inputs
- ✓ Politicians
- ✓ Civil Society organizations
- ✓ Communities
- ✓ Private sectors
- ✓ Bureaucrats
- ✓ Judiciary
- ✓ International actors
- ✓ Other actors

(Source: World Development Flagship Report, 2018)

Low level of educational performance continued due to 'business-as-usual scenario' for a long time. The flagship reasons behind this are: power of outdated ideas-the difficulty lies not to discover new idea but to escape from old irksome habits- and obsolete and archaic system (Goel, S.L. 2009 and Osborne, D. Gaebler, T. 1992).

Paradigm Shift in Education

The context of today is far different than yesterday. Today, every society is knowledge-based society. The source of knowledge is varied. The way of learning has changed. The way of teaching has changed. In this context, our schools have to be centerpiece for learning. For this goal, the following 7Rs have to be incorporated into our school system.

Rethinking and re-shaping school

- ✓ Stakeholders' engagement
- ✓ New governance arrangements
- ✓ Strengthening plan capacity

Repositioning schools and manage change

- ✓ Change management- Deep learning vs. Surface learning- Sources of knowledge and teacher as Scuba diver.

Redesigning and improving quality

- ✓ Assess learning to make a serious goal
- ✓ Act on evidence to make schools work for learning.
- ✓ Align actors to make the entire system work for learning.

Reframing performance measures and accountability

- ✓ Use of public accountability tools.
- ✓ Maintain organizational and professional ethics and values.

Revitalizing human resource capacity and organizational performance

- ✓ Professional capacity
- ✓ Organizational capacity
- ✓ Community capacity

Renewing management and school system

- ✓ Utilization of ICT
- ✓ Utilization of local and natural resources
- ✓ Financial management

Revisiting stakeholder relationship

- ✓ New partnering
- ✓ Co-venturing
- ✓ Co-creation
- ✓ Co-design - must-have capabilities

These are the new emerging concepts which are supposed to recover the huge educational loss. In Nepal, Ministry of Education has made some strides in making legislations to establish model schools-centerpiece for learning or playing leading role. It is recent concept in our context. There are some legal provisions about model schools in Nepal. Some of them are succinctly given below.

Policy Statements

- ✓ **The Constitution of Nepal (2072):** To prepare human resources that are competent, competitive, ethical and devoted to national interests while making education scientific, technical, vocational, empirical, employment and people- oriented.
- ✓ **Annual Development Program (2074):** Build Back Better Policy of GoN –Construct model schools.
- ✓ **School Sector Development Plan (2073-2080)-** Establishing 1000 model schools within 2080 B.S. and recover of huge educational loss.
- ✓ **Model School Management policy regulation (2074):** Making Community Schools as Centerpiece for Innovation-Leading role
- ✓ **Model School Concept Paper (2073):** Making Gov. schools reliable and first choice for all kinds of parents and students.
- ✓ **Policy and Program of GoN (2074/075):** Continuity to make community schools as model schools.

- ✓ **Fourteen Plan (2073/074-2075/076):** To increase the quality of school education develop and conduct Community schools as model schools.

These sundry legislations are the green signals for the progressive strides to be made to prioritize the learning not just for schooling. State and non-state actors have come together to design and implement mega project of Model schools in Nepal. However, the above mentioned sundry legislations may end up backfiring by diminishing their utility. Therefore, what I feel is mega policy and Sunset policy about Model schools should be formulated to reduce the backfiring effects of the policies.

A Call for Network Governance in Education

Nepal possesses abundance of natural resources. Many potentialities are left untapped. However, it confronts with the paradox of plenty. Historically, Nepal wholeheartedly depended on the donors to collect resources to launch any developmental and social welfare programs. This reality has greater relevance and wider scope in the present day world. It is believed that Government can be effective and efficient if it works in network with other non-state actors than working in isolation or alone. In Nepal, there are many donors, big and small, working to render decisive boost to Nepal's efforts to uplift from under development country to developing country. In this campaign, education is at the heart. Education is both ends and means for inclusive and sustainable development. It is the education that ensures other rights of Nepalese people.

Furthermore, education has a promise to fulfil the fuzzy principles, ambitious goals and sundry objectives of Sustainable Development Goals. For this effort, government alone can't achieve them. It is in this backdrop, our policy makers, planners, textbook writers, and other stakeholders should join with local and International actors. They have to come together and act responsibly and accountably. From the past partnering practice what we have learnt is there is severe accountability gap. There was big distance between financial donors and implementers. Implementers remained ornamental with tenuous links to the target populations but strong in liaison with the donors. This kind of practice made system corrupted and largely chronic. In this matter, we should be alert to maintain transparency, accountability and responsibility to the results. Nepal has shifted from unitary system to federal system. In the federal set up, network governance in education should be vibrant. Federal government should play the role of coordinator whereas provincial and local governments should be working with donors. Then, only the distance between donors and implementers will be bridged. If there is close nexus between donors and implementers, they can jointly work for better teaching, better learning and finally for better schools. If we can ensure such nexus between state and non-state actors, the following ideas can bring in true practice for making whole school system work for learning.

- ✓ Assess learning to make it a serious goal.
- ✓ Act on evidence to make schools work for learning.
- ✓ Align actors to make the entire system work for learning.

Therefore, network governance in education is need and call of the day for the school improvement and change. If we are in network, we can deliver complex classroom inputs with high efficiency, economy, effectiveness, ethical and excellency.

Conclusion

Finally, it can be concluded that in the present era of globalized economy and knowledge-based society, success comes to those who can organize vibrant and robust network of multi-actors for

multi-functions through multi-channels which can deliver complex classroom inputs with high efficiency and effectiveness. This way is the feasible resolution of quality learning deficit or skills gap between schooling and learning.

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