

THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN NEPAL

Hari Prasad Adhikari¹

Moh. Kurdi²

¹Faculty of Management T.U. Kathmandu, Nepal

²Management Department, Wiraraja University, Madura

mkurdi@wiraraja.ac.id

ABSTRACT

The capacity of local governments in Nepal is the main emphasis of this study. Using a descriptive research approach, the study analyzed data obtained from 150 respondents who completed questionnaires. The performance of local governments' capacity is at a moderate level, according to the data analysis. The report provides valuable insights into how local governments are currently handling their duties and obligations. Policymakers may find the results useful in creating more effective strategies and regulations to raise the efficiency of local governance in Nepal. The findings of this study can help with initiatives to fortify and enhance local governments' future capabilities.

Keywords : *Empowering Local People, Administrative Structure, Local Governments, Federalism, Budget, Management, Trained Human Resources, And Political Structure*

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As emerging nations like Nepal strive for total development, governance has become a crucial concern. The problems of development in the twenty-first century still center on sustainable management and excellent governance for the nation's overall progress. To guarantee social fairness and make development inclusive, local governments must practice good governance. It promotes marginalized people's access to and involvement in governmental development initiatives. Government levels, private sector organizations, social groups, communities, and the civil society as a whole are all involved in the process of good governance, which is people-oriented and participatory. According to Adhikari (2016), effective governance fosters local leadership, federalism of power at the grassroots level, and the development of local capacities. Nepali politics were touched by the third wave of democracy, which had an impact on

many nations worldwide. Along with liberal democracy, this wave reinforced fundamental democratic principles like federalism and local government.

Issue and Objective

Enhancing a group's or organization's capability to solve issues and accomplish its objectives is the primary goal of capacity building. Effective governance and conflict resolution are supported by capacity building, which is largely dependent on meeting basic human needs. Building management capacity ultimately aims to advance economic, social, and institutional growth at all scales.

The question of whether federalism laws should be put into effect sooner rather than later when local capacity is sufficiently robust is frequently up for debate. However, the discussion frequently falls short in addressing the issue of who are the local governance actors and, therefore, whose capacities ought to be strengthened (Kauzya, n.d.). Some contend that local residents

shouldn't be given more authority or resources because they might not be able to run their governments. Although some developing nations may share this viewpoint, it does not exclude the development of indigenous capacities through appropriate initiatives. Sometimes colonial views are reflected in such discussions.

Since development is a capacity-building process, a nation cannot afford to wait for local governance ability to grow. Development is the process of going from incapacity to capacity and from inability to ability in a slow and meaningful manner.

In light of this, the research question at the center of this study is:

To what extent do local institutions possess the managerial capacity necessary for efficient local governance? In Nepal, answering this issue is especially difficult. Examining the existing status of management capacity building for efficient local governance is the specific aim of this study.

Rationale of the Study

While a lot of research has been done on managerial capacity, very little has looked at the relationship between managerial capability and local governance. Effective local government is directly impacted by management capacity, although this relationship has not been sufficiently explored in the literature to yet. The goal of this study is to close that gap by examining both factors simultaneously. From the standpoint of public administration, development requires effective governance, but from the standpoint of management, establishing robust managerial capabilities is just as crucial to guaranteeing efficient and long-lasting local governance.

Literature review

Over the last ten and a half years, Nepal has encountered many difficulties. Political instability and a feeble, inefficient framework for administration and service delivery have resulted from frequent changes of government. Promoting social fairness and economic prosperity requires an efficient local government structure. Starting from a weaker position and progressively building greater local government competence is normal. However, without the establishment of governance institutions backed by explicit policies intended for capacity development, local governments cannot be strengthened. If local government systems are left unaltered, local capacity cannot be developed (Kauzya, n. d).

Finding and evaluating the important individuals and stakeholders in the neighborhood is the first stage in tackling capacity-building concerns. Effectively addressing these concerns requires an understanding of their areas of need and current capacities. Since both Rwanda and Nepal confront similar issues as developing countries, Kauzya (n.d.) has described how local capacity building was accomplished in Rwanda and how similar tactics might be used in Nepal.

- Government's will and commitment to people's empowerment: Through the local governments, the Nepalese government has enabled local communities to actively participate in political, social, and economic development, demonstrating its dedication to federalism. The resolve and dedication of the government to empowering local communities through federalism is crucial. Along with urging development partners to promote and facilitate federalism and efficient local governance, this

commitment is essential for mobilizing the entire nation. Since it is essential to empowering local communities to actively engage in their own development, local capacity building greatly depends on this willingness to federalism.

- An administrative and political structure: In Nepal, the Local Government Operating Act 2074 gives local governments the power to oversee its administrative operations. Through the involvement of locals, it has empowered the President and Administrative Officer to make decisions on the rural development committee. This also entails giving locals the ability to take part in decision-making procedures with the help of non-governmental organizations and community-based groups. These current structures will not only be strengthened but also benefited by the successful implementation of federalism. However, without strong, devoted political leadership at the local and national levels, local governance and federalism cannot be implemented or maintained successfully. Political leaders must welcome the participation of organizations in planning and administration that are not directly within the jurisdiction of the national government or the major political parties (Cheema, 2014). Building capacity and guaranteeing the success of these projects are critical functions of the government's political system, which consists of three tiers of governance.
- Human resources: Through suitable training and capacity building methods, the current central government and local governments at all three levels can be evaluated and

reoriented to successfully support the federalism policy's implementation and guarantee the sustainability of local governance. Employees can be trained in important areas including management, human resources development, accounting, budgeting, and finance, as well as administrative techniques and procedures, which will help them perform their jobs more effectively.

- Tools and facilities: Even though local facilities and equipment like buildings, cars, and communication systems are insufficient, they can offer a starting point to help Nepal's federalism process.
- Funding: Due to insufficient government revenue, financial restrictions pose a serious problem. Nonetheless, a starting point is provided by the current policy of giving local governments a share of the budget for administrative duties.
- Networks: A recurring lesson from the experience in developing countries is that successful federalism depends on strong local capacity, which entails enhancing the ability of institutions, organizations, groups, and individuals to carry out their roles effectively and sustainably. Networks among various actors, such as NGOs, donors, government agencies, and local authorities, already exist and are essential for facilitating and supporting federalism and effective governance (Cheema & Rondinelli, 2007).

Three levels—individual, institutional, and systematic—can be used to understand the capability of local government (UNDP, 1998). The skills, values, and attitudes of local government administration and elected officials are all part of the individual level capacity. In

order to create horizontal and vertical links both inside and outside of government departments for efficient coordination in the creation, execution, and oversight of policies and programs, the institutional linkages include the structures, protocols, and operational guidelines of local government. The legal and policy framework that local governments function within, as well as their interactions with other actors, are covered at the systemic level (Joseph, 2009).

Methodology

A descriptive research design and an empirical method based on surveys were used in this study. According to Wolff and Pant (2005), descriptive research is intended to evaluate the beliefs, actions, or traits of a certain community.

2023 saw the implementation of an interview schedule to examine "The Capacity of Local Governments in Nepal." Two districts were the focus of the study: Kaski and Kathmandu. Purposive sampling was used to choose the population, which included municipal employees, academics, government officials, local leaders, NGO/CBO members, and local citizens. Local participants in Kathmandu included leaders who attended the Ilaka Bhela at Tokha Ilaka as well as those who

process. Participants at Kaski included leaders who attended the Ilaka Bhela at Dhampus Ilaka as well as those who were part of the local planning process.

Purposive quota sampling was used to select 150 individuals from an unknown or infinite population. The researcher's convenience and the size of the population were taken into consideration when setting the quotas. The variance of the stakeholder group was used to quantify the capacity variation.

Analysis and Interpretation of Issues of Capacity of local governments

In emerging societies, capacity building is the process of enhancing the knowledge, skills, and talents of both individuals and communities. Enhancing stakeholders' capacity to resolve issues and accomplish their goals is its main objective. Effective governance and conflict resolution depend on capacity building, which is based on fundamental human needs. Building management ability ultimately seeks to advance economic, community, and institutional development at all scales (Kauzya, n.d.). The respondents' opinion regarding Issues of Capacity of local governments is given in Table 01.

Table 1. Ranking of the Issues of Capacity of local governments

Issues of local governments capacity	Level of Success					Weighted Mean Score (Range=1 to 5)	Rank
	VH	H	N	L	VL		
Willingness and commitment of government for empowering local people;	20	72	52	5	1	3.71	1
Sufficiency of the administrative structure of local governments;	5	21	104	20	-	3.07	2
Appropriateness of the network of the actors of federalism;	4	36	83	22	5	3.06	3
Sufficiency of physical facilities for the implementation of Federalism;	1	26	103	16	4	3.02	4
Sufficiency of fund for budget management.	1	14	110	25	-	2.94	5
Sufficiency of the trained human resources;	-	4	52	88	6	2.34	6
Sufficiency of the political structure of local bodies;	1	10	35	62	42	2.12	7

were involved in the local planning

Number of respondents = 150

Table 1 lists the elements influencing Nepal's ability for local administration and displays the opinions and experiences of different respondent groups. The results show that local governments have a fair amount of capacity in several areas. The adequacy of local bodies' administrative structures, the suitability of the network of federalism players, the government's readiness and commitment to empower local people, and the availability of enough physical facilities to carry out federalism are some examples. These factors all had weighted mean scores above the median of 3.0, with corresponding weighted mean values of 3.71, 3.07, 3.06, and 3.02. On the other hand, other elements were found to be inadequate, indicating significant deficiencies in the local government's capabilities.

These factors include having enough money to handle the budget, having enough skilled human resources, and having enough local government political framework. These problems had weighted mean scores of 2.94, 2.34, and 2.12, respectively, which were below the median of 3.0. These results highlight important issues with workforce development, political infrastructure, and resource allocation.

Summary and Conclusion

According to the study, several of the local governments' capabilities for local governance were comparatively effective. Strong points were found to include the government's readiness and dedication to empowering locals, the appropriateness of the network of decentralization actors, the sufficiency of local bodies' administrative structures, and the suitability of the physical infrastructure for decentralization

implementation. The weighted mean scores for these characteristics were 3.71, 3.07, 3.06, and 3.02, respectively, all of which were higher than the median of 3.0.

However, problems including the availability of skilled human resources, the suitability of local organizations' political structures, and the amount of money needed for budget management were less successful. They performed worse in these areas, as seen by their mean scores of 2.94, 2.34, and 2.12, respectively, which were below the median of 3.0.

Overall, the study's findings suggest that local governments' ability to function effectively is influenced in part by their capacity. While there were positive outcomes in terms of the government's willingness and commitment to empower local people, the administrative structure of local bodies, the appropriateness of the network of federalism's actors, and the availability of physical facilities for the implementation of federalism, the level of success in terms of having enough money for budget management, having enough trained human resources, and having a sufficient political structure of local governments was found to be weak and appeared to limit their full potential. In summary, local governments appeared to have a modest degree of overall capacity, with potential for improvement in a few critical areas.

Limitations and Direction for the Further Study

Although this study offers insightful information about Nepal's local governments' capabilities, it is crucial to recognize several limitations that could affect how the results are interpreted and point out areas that require more research to fully develop the findings. The ability

of Nepali local governments is the sole subject of this study. The researcher's convenience in choosing the study locations may have limited the findings' applicability in a national setting. Furthermore, differing respondents' comprehension levels might have introduced biases in their responses, which were not taken into consideration in this study, even though efforts were made to inform respondents about the capabilities of local governments and local governance.

As Nepal transitioned from a unitary to a federal style of government, the study was carried out during this time. Therefore, this time of transition may have affected respondents' perspectives, which could have affected the outcomes. According to the study's findings, local governments seemed to have a modest level of managerial ability. Although the results provide information about the administrative capacity of local governments, they do not investigate the causal relationship between local government capacity and governance performance. Future studies should examine the causal relationships between local governance outcomes and local government capability in order to have a deeper understanding of this relationship. Such research would offer a more thorough comprehension of the direct relationship between increasing managerial capability and governance efficacy.

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