

# Education Governance in Nepal

Based on One Year of Real-Time Governance Monitoring

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Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal  
Centre for Social Change



## Introduction

*Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal (GMC Nepal)* is a research initiative launched by Kathmandu-based non-profit making social think-tank *Centre for Social Change* and funding partner *The Asia Foundation*.

GMC Nepal was created with the aim of building an enabling environment to foster state-society relationships in young federal Nepal through the transparent, fluid, and accessible transfer of accurate and up-to-date information between all stakeholders. It works to boost this engagement by shedding light on the Government's policies, laws, and execution programs within three key areas of governance – Health, Education, and Migration.

The pages enclosed in this document summarize GMC Nepal's key findings relevant to Education sectoral governance and their corresponding policy recommendations, thus also establishing the frontier for future research in the space.

## Background and Context

The 2015 Constitution declared equal access to education as one of the fundamental rights of all citizens and established free, compulsory basic education (Grades 0-9). Secondary public education (Grades 9-12) is also free.

According to Nepal's federal governance framework, public education falls under the jurisdiction of

*Photo above by Aaron Burden from Unsplash*

## Key Takeaways

- Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal's year-long monitoring of the educational sector has brought key pressing policy challenges and corresponding recommendations into light.
- Adoption into the federal governance framework, as introduced by the 2015 Constitution, continues to be a key area of policy failure, as friction between old and new stakeholders introduce governance challenges by undermining structural mechanisms and intended power-sharing pathways.
- Across all three tiers, lack of digital learning infrastructure, representative recordkeeping practices, and adequate investments in teacher trainings and curriculum updates emerge as critical sectoral challenges.
- Educational service delivery concerns introduced by the sharp increase in privatization of the urban education markets present unique governance challenges, and thus should be regularly monitored.

the local government tier. However, consistent power-sharing issues since 2015 have caused friction between old unitary and newly introduced federal stakeholders, which have also since become further exacerbated by educational disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Methodology

GMC Nepal conducted its first year of governance monitoring throughout 2021 in the sector of education with a mixed method approach using advanced qualitative research as well as quantitative statistical tools. Key methods included:

1. Desk Policy and Legal Review
2. Real-Time Governance Monitoring
3. Real-Time Media Monitoring
4. Data Scraping and Analysis
5. Expert Consultations

## Key Findings

The following policy challenges and observed frontiers for future research have been identified by the year-long study of Nepal's governance in the education sector:

1. The efficient adoption of Nepal's federal framework that established education governance within the jurisdiction of local government units continued to pose significant challenge to stakeholders in and outside the government. The findings outlined below are thus also enveloped within this challenge as friction between old and new actors have caused tensions and disruptions to Nepal's business-as-usual governance processes. Experts speculate that this dissonance was most clearly visible during the Covid-19 pandemic induced lockdowns, which were centrally announced without the consultation of provincial and local actors irrespective of territorial rates of infection within local jurisdictions.
2. The lack of infrastructure, investment, and capacity-building mechanisms aiming to strengthen Nepal's digital learning sphere stood out as a consistent governance challenge throughout 2021. The onset of the Covid-19 prevention measures such as school closures, lockdowns, and social distancing mandates exposed the country's inability to adapt to the changing educational service delivery landscape.
3. Recordkeeping and database management practices are crucial governance problems in the education sector, especially as they relate to the representation of disadvantaged social groups. Disparities in educational outcomes among different social groups defined by gender, ethnicity, caste, religion, disability, etc. are often found to favor existing social inequities. However, due to a lack of effective census-taking practices in schools and colleges, the extent of these differences is unknown, and thus difficult to address in policies.
4. Another commonly observed policy failure involved the inadequate design, enforcement, and monitoring of programs related to the regular training of teachers and updates on existing curricula. The federal delineation of the education sector under the local government tier was determined in part with the intention of promoting closer, hands-on teacher training and updating curricula to include education of local histories and languages. However, due to the aforementioned adaptation issues into the federal framework, this localization has not progressed at a satisfactory pace according to experts.
5. Over the last few decades, there has been a sharp increase in private-sector actors who have entered the school and college markets, especially in urban areas. Due to lack of adequate monitoring of this privatization, there is a risk of educational quality and curriculum requirements being compromised due to the promotion of rote-learning practices, overemphasis on competitive examinations, and lack of holistic development of students.

## Policy Recommendations

1. Local-level schools and educational governance capacity-building projects should be prioritized by central and provincial-level stakeholders for efficient federal adaptation.
2. Support and promotion of digital learning tools should be a matter of policy and investment priority.
3. Multi-dimensional recordkeeping practices should be endorsed and dispersed by national and local education policies so that governance actors have a clear vision of the constituents they serve and the unique service delivery challenges they face.
4. Technical knowhow and financial investment should be increased in teacher training and curriculum update program on regular basis to uphold the quality and timely content of public education.
5. The government must rethink its monitoring, anti-corruption policy enforcement, and quality assurance mechanisms as they relate to the rapidly privatizing urban education sector.

Since commencing its research on the Education sector in October 2020, GMC Nepal has produced over 30 publications reflecting its preliminary results, observations, and thematic findings, including:

- 4 Policy Briefs
- 10 Monthly Thematic Review Reports
- 10 Monthly Media Monitoring Infographics
- 3 Sectoral Findings Infographics
- 15 Opinion Articles on the GMC Blog

All publications can be accessed at [GMCNepal.org](http://GMCNepal.org)