

Effectiveness of Community Schools of Kathmandu Valley

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Abstract

The overall improvement of the quality of community schools has always been a thirst of the Government of Nepal (DoE 2011). However, the effectiveness of most of the community schools situated especially in urban areas are in decreasing trend order and some schools have been merging to other schools (Thapalia 2011). In this context to explore the ground reality of the entire issues we (a group of PhD scholars) from KUSOED made a small attempt to study the entire situation of the three community schools of the Kathmandu valley as a case study. Three community schools of the Kathmandu valley were selected using purposive and criteria based selection process. These three schools were: Shree Nepal Rastriya Nirman Higher secondary School, Mulpani from Kathmandu, Shree Shanti Vidyashram Higher Secondary School from Lalitpur and Adarsha Higher Secondary School, Sanothimi from Bhaktapur respectively for the study. The main objective of this study was to appraise the existing situation of the community school in terms of management of the human resource for the effective learning environment and government nurturing practices. The study also aimed to analyze the effectiveness of the school through the enrolment trends of the students, supervision and management and SLC results. To investigate the real problems of the school, we adopted case study method. For this purpose, three community schools from three districts of Kathmandu valley were chosen for the study using purposive and criterion based sampling technique. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using interview and observation tools. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics whereas qualitative data were analyzed with process of coding, transcribing, themetizing and interpreting.

Introduction

School is regarded as a holy place; where the child starts his/her formal education. In other words, the child begins his/ her future career through school (Hada, 2008). So, schools should pay much attention to build the career of the children. Proper environment of the school helps to create child friendly environment in schools. School helps children develop their educational foundation. So, there should be proper learning environment for them. In the context of Nepal, there are two types of schools: community and institutional. Community schools receive regular government grants whereas institutional schools are funded by school's own or other non-governmental sources. Institutional schools are organized either as a non-profit trust or as a company (MOE, 2002).

The government invests a large part of its resources for the community schools. The children have been getting free education up to secondary level to a certain extent. There is the provision of free textbooks for all of them and some needy and the students from Disadvantaged Groups (DAG) have been receiving scholarships to support for the study though the amount is not enough. Teachers of the community schools get involved in different professional development training packages, which have been strengthening their

the capacity to provide quality education for students. However, the status of the community schools is not satisfactory in most of the cases. The community schools have been losing their confidence from the guardians. In most of the schools, especially in the urban area, there is decreasing trend of student's enrolment and community has been blaming the administration, teachers and the entire school system for this.

They are raising question of quality education in community schools. Some schools have been merged because of very low number of students and this is a bitter truth for the community as well as for the government and for the entire school family. The SLC results of the community schools are also not satisfactory though there are many limitations and circumstances for this. The government has been trying to improve the entire school system but the anticipated result is not obtained. In this scenario, a small attempt has been made to study the entire situation of the three community schools of the Kathmandu valley as a case study. Three community schools of the Kathmandu valley were selected using purposive and criteria based selection process. These three schools are: Shree Nepal Rastriya Nirman Higher secondary School, Mulpani from Kathmandu, Shree Shanti Vidyashram Higher Secondary School from Lalitpur and Adarsha Higher Secondary School, Sanothimi from Bhaktapur respectively for the study.

It has long been a matter of interest to educationists as to why some schools are more effective than others (Scheerens, 2004 as cited in Thapalia 2011). 'What works' in schools or what makes a school more effective than others has still remained an important question. As a result of the intellectual curiosity and practical usefulness, a significant number of studies have been carried out internationally exploring different dimensions of school effectiveness. The increased interest in this area inspired people getting organized and work together in professional forums.

Today many issues have been raised with regards to the quality of community schools in Nepal. Issues like quality education, low investment from the government, poor supervision practices, decreasing trust and problem of ownership of the community towards community schools are some of the key issues. Similarly, the role of school administration; status of the teachers and their professional attitude and behaviours towards schools are also burning issues. Today, the SLC result is being taken as the key indicator of effective performance of schools. Community has been comparing the SLC results of community schools with that of the institutional schools and generalizing the effectiveness. In reality the effectiveness of most of the community schools located especially in urban areas is decreasing and some schools have been merging to other schools.

Key Findings

The study has led us to draw the following key findings:

1. Good configuration of teachers' in terms of academic qualification for instruction and administration was found. Academically the schools are full of qualified teachers and schools need not to worry about the academic qualifications of the teachers in specific subject area.
2. About one third of the teachers were found to have more than 20 years of teaching experience and another a little less than one third teachers were less than five years of experience in teaching. Most of the teachers in the later group were found temporary in status.

3. About 50% teachers were found permanent in three schools and 30% were engaged in temporary basis. There were sufficient numbers of teachers deployed by the schools their own source. The availability of teachers in terms of their status is satisfactory though some grievances were found due to some of them were engaged as temporary for more than two decades.
4. The teacher student ratio is found 1:28, 1:19 and 1:32 in school 1, school 2 and school 3 respectively. The ratio is found good as per the education act and regulation.
5. It is found that there was 17-21 period per week for secondary teachers and 18-28 periods per week for lower secondary teachers. The workload for the teachers in primary level seems managed in comparison to lower secondary and secondary level. In primary level one teachers tasks minimum 18 to maximum 24 periods per weeks.
6. SLC results of the selected three schools were found normally above the national average. Mathematics is found as the most difficult subject for the students. English and science are found in second and third rank in terms of difficulty level. Serious planning and intervening programmes are not found to improve the worse situation of the subjects like mathematics, English and Science though there were normal additional practices like coaching classes for these subjects.
7. Almost 90% budget has been spent for the teachers' salary and the development budget is found very low. The very low amount of budget is found for the improvement of the teaching learning situation.
8. Supervisory practice of the selected school is not found satisfactory. Teacher support supervision is found null. The comparatively high number of school per Resource Center is as found the major problem for effective supervision.
9. The student enrolment trend in the community school is not found as satisfactory as the number is found almost constant during the period of five years.

Future Direction

It is necessary to pay much attention to improve the condition of community schools. The most crucial things are the positive attitude, professional ethics and accountability of the entire school team including School Management Committee and Parent Teachers' Association. On the basis of above conclusion, some key way forwards for the further improvement are presented below.

1. Teachers should be managed properly. There is the continual problem of temporary teachers. The temporary posts of the teachers should be fulfilled permanently by using appropriate procedures. Similarly, new energetic human resource from the market should be introduced in teaching field by substituting the previous teachers using prestigious schemes like golden handshake for them. The government should provide appropriate budget for schools besides teachers' salary improve the teaching learning activities by developing appropriate physical facilities, using modern teaching media and teaching aids in schools. To maintain quality education 30% of the total school budget should be utilized in instructional and play materials, extra and co-curricular activities and repair and maintenance purpose. The implementation of yearly operation calendar with strict supervision and follow up program should be made an obligation to resource person by District Education Office to improve the school supervision practices. The provision of class supervision by the head teachers and other subject experts should be planned and implemented.

2. Intense analysis of SLC result should be conducted by schools. The school should plan effective teaching strategies for difficult subjects like mathematics, English and Science and other subjects as well. There should be annual and periodic plan and programme for the improvement of the SLC results. The parents and the students should be motivated towards community schools by strengthening their learning environment, utilizing the modern technique of teaching and promoting English language as the medium of teaching. The culture of de-politicization and the culture of professionalism should be encouraged and the culture of impunity should be discouraged in the community school.

Conclusion

Education is the back-bone of progressing nation and teacher is the pivot education system of education. It is obvious that the progress of a school depends upon the qualities of its teachers. But, in Nepal today, the teacher suffers from several problems within and out of schools and in this scenario, financially they are poor and socially their status is low. By virtue, still today teaching is an unattractive profession, which many people take up as a last resort. On the other hand, education and more specially teaching and learning process may neglect or may have marginalized from the side of teachers due to these factors. In these circumstances, we have conducted this case study among three community schools to analyze the effectiveness of schools. Together with the observations during school visit, interview with head teachers, teachers and school administrations, this study sought to analyze the academic, governance and administrative status of the schools along with the quality indicators and support provided by the government. As information gathered from the selected schools, the gender parity seems very strong since there was better representation of female teachers in each level. But the female teachers were better represented in primary and pre primary levels than secondary and lower secondary levels.

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