

CULTURAL FACTORS CAUSING DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper presents introduction of school and college level culture in educational systems in Nepal as well as other factors that have been the cause in creating differences in the quality of education in the schools and colleges in Nepal. It explores the points like different types of schools and colleges, regional diversity, environment, teacher's qualification, physical facilities, class management, conventional feeling, and conclusion. The analysis and interpretation is made according to some existing literature and our own experience in the field of teaching for a long time.

Key Words: culture, quality education, teacher, student

1. Introduction

Nepal is a developing country. The culture of educational system in Nepal is still in developing process. The development of educational system depends on the administrative function of the country, which depends on the culture of political direction and movement. Nepal has undergone many stages of changes since the ancient times and this situation has changed the culture of education. The culture of education dates back in Nepal. Nepal was a source of skill-oriented activities long ago. According to Bista (1991: 66) "During the time of Lichchhavi period Nepal was a source of engineering, metallurgy and architectural skills". There was

no culture of formal schooling system, at that time. The culture of learning system at that time was known as *Gurukul* system. Afterwards some educational institutions had been established during the Rana Regime. The culture of formal schooling system seems to have started after the establishment of Durbar High School, in Kathmandu, Nepal.

During the time of Shah Regime, many colleges and schools had been established which developed western culture of education. In a broad sense, there are two different types of colleges and schools in Nepal; government and private. A big difference is found in the quality of education between these two types of colleges and schools where trend and culture play major roles. Cambridge International Dictionary of English (1997: 334) defines 'culture' as, "the way of life, esp. general customs and beliefs of a particular group of people at a particular time". Culture is as the totality of socially transmitted behavior, patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought as well as the total of inherited ideas, beliefs, values and knowledge which constitute the shared bases of social action. In a sense, culture is related to the development of the mentality, which people follow during their life in their activities. Culture is also known as following of a kind of system in the race of life. So we have religious culture, educational culture, musical culture, social culture, past culture, modern culture etc. Culture denotes values, beliefs, attitudes and behavior of social group of humanity. In this way we can say that quality of education also results on the culture of existing educational system and accessibility. So while approaching these terms, there appear differences. We have to see the past also while walking at present. If people forget their past culture, they are already dead at present. So, anyway culture affects our way of dealing and making differences. Some of the factors causing differences in educational quality are as follows:

2. Regional Diversity

Nepal is a country where there is wide regional diversity causing diversity in culture and behavior of social group. According to Department of Education [DOE] (2004:3), “The topography of the country divides it into four ecological zones: the mountain with 16, the hills with 36, the valley with 3 and the terai with 20 districts respectively”. In these regions, the growth of population is high but there are low economic growth rates, which also plays major role in cultural diversity of people living there, and other places. In many places, people are living below absolute poverty line. DOE (2004: 4) has mentioned, “The economic survey (2003/4:4) records 90 percentage of the poor population is living in the rural areas of the country”. The poor population cannot afford to the education of their children. The quality of education is found different from the places nearer to headquarters to the remote areas. People’s expenditure capacity decreases more to the rural areas than the urban areas, which is one of the causes of being differences in the quality of education. People living in town and village will have developed different culture, which affects their quality in education.

3. Environment

The quality of education depends on the educational environment. The educational environment is related to the culture of family, society, village and town. In the past, the culture of family and society did not allow girls to take education, as they had to work at home and be busy in domestic activities. According to the traditional culture of people of the past women were as a factory of producing human beings, in the form of children. Environment is the factor, which creates differences in the quality of education. If

the background of family culture is good, the children will get proper learning environment and the schools and colleges of such children can impart quality education but on the other hand, the schools and colleges, where the children come from the poor and backward family culture with no learning environment, cannot provide quality education. The children cannot grasp the educational quality in the society of traditional people because modern schooling is of no more importance in such places for those people. In the areas where the learning environment is poor, only a few students will be promoted to higher classes. In towns, the quality of education is found better than that of the villages, which is the cause of better learning environment of the children. The parents in the towns are more conscious towards their children's education than the parents in the village area. So, environment causes difference in the quality of education .The availability of learning materials also determines the learning environment. The students of town area know more than the students of village side due to different facilities like- television, computer, internet and many other means of modern technology.

4. Teacher and Teaching Profession

The central point of the quality education is the relationship between a teacher and his/ her teaching profession. Until and unless a teacher with teaching profession is strong, quality education is not possible. A teacher's motivation towards teaching profession creates learning environment at schools and colleges. A well-trained teacher can trace the weakness and problems of the children to whom he/ she is assigned to teach. A well-trained teacher does not give punishment to the students but tries to be familiar with his/ her environment of learning at home. The people who want to develop their career in schools or colleges need certain

professional development activities. However, the teaching culture in Nepal is still in asleep mode due to unlimited political institutions, which prevent their workers from hardships and labour. It is true that teachers' qualification, working process and responsibility towards teaching profession affects the quality of education in schools and colleges.

The students should also be enthusiastic to learn what they need. The teaching profession is affected by the quality of teachers and students, the management factor, the environment and the curriculum. These points direct us to introduce government schools and colleges with private schools and colleges. These days, people believe that teaching in private schools and colleges is better than in government schools and colleges. The reason behind this is the management factor, teachers' motivation and the autonomous of the institutions. The students in an institution need to have individual care. Moreover, in private schools and colleges, the teachers are found to have been more qualified and labourious. About teaching in public schools, Sinha, (2005 : 296) has stated as- irregularity in teaching, irregularity of teachers, teachers present but no full time for teaching, uninteresting teaching methods, no friendly behavior of teachers to students, no management of toilets, no monitoring of teachers by headmaster, no more participation of school management committee and no favourable classrooms for teaching learning activities. These days, in Nepal, the teachers of public schools and colleges are involved in political activities more often rather than to give time in teaching profession.

We have known through our experience that the private school teachers have more working loads than the public school teachers do. Public school teachers hardly had time for checking students' homework. So, to improve the

quality of education, working culture should also be maintained. Some private schools and colleges will also pay higher salary to the teachers and staff than in the public schools and colleges, but overall situation shows that the teachers of government schools have more facilities than those of private school teachers. However, educational record is opposite, which is also an important factor to impart quality education. Private schools and colleges enjoy autonomy, where teachers have no job guarantee, and due to this reason, they are more responsible towards their job. On the other hand, the teachers of public schools and colleges have nothing to fear of being dismissed from the job, so that they are not so more responsible towards their job. This very situation has created differences in the quality of education between private and public institutions in the context of Nepal. Therefore, culture in education affects the overall result. In public schools and colleges, there is politicalized culture, which is not in private institutions.

5. School Management

The school management system in schools and colleges brings differences in the quality of education. The school management system includes the points like school buildings and furniture, educational materials, teaching load management, teaching technique management and teacher management. However, the management of these things differs from one school or college to another. In many public schools and colleges, more than hundred students are kept in a class. In such situation, student motivation is not possible and as a result, education cannot be fruitful. In such situation, the culture of teaching and learning will be weak and useless. The government colleges are also in the same culture and trend to pass time. There is centralized management system, which is being unsuccessful. The concept of decentralized system is

limited on paper. Regarding this situation, Sinha (2005: 5) has stated, “Decentralized educational administration can address the existing educational problems on the context of being centralized education system unsuccessful”. It is believed that decentralized education system makes more people participated in the activities of schools and colleges.

6. Educational Materials

The use of educational materials is of great importance for a good academic atmosphere but in absence of these things, effective and quality education cannot be imparted. It also depends on the culture of teachers and teaching system. Moreover, we are living today in the era of globalization. Regarding globalization, Hernes (2006: 6) has stated

Globalization is the increasing flow across borders and boundaries-whether national, economic, cultural, technological or institutional- of people, goods, services, ideas, information, images and values. There is no choice; it is already here, as a defining worldwide force and consequence of the rapid and inexorable movement of technologies, markets, policies and destinies. Globalization is a mixed blessing, encompassing promises as well as threats. It can mean modernization, but also marginalization. It can raise standards of living, but also increase exploitation, threaten the environment and destroy communities. It has brought impressive gains in welfare, but also distressing increases in inequality.

Globalization has brought people from one place to another so that nothing is hidden. Today the world is using developed technology, it has changed political scenario, and people's attitude, Burbules and Torres (2000: 3) have mentioned, “Before the institution of public education, the education of the elite was carried out by tutors working

with their pupils in a highly personalized manner”. This situation makes it clear that students need personal care for their education. They should change their behaviour if they are to gain skill. Educational materials improve personal interest of the students towards education. Without the use of educational materials, the quality of education is very low today. But there are problems, too. Wagley (2005:4) has stated, “A developing country like Nepal has difficulties in providing adequate support to students. Moreover, the development of communication technology has challenged the quality of education. The use of media in education has played a great role in promoting quality education”. So, the culture of using teaching materials brings differences in the quality of education.

7. Conclusion

The classroom culture needs to be reformed in Nepal by making rules and regulations. If the teachers give more time to the students’ individual care, the students can learn more but if the teachers cannot give adequate time, the students learn less. In most of the schools and colleges in Nepal only the lecture method of teaching is used which is not sufficient today. This type of culture should be changed. Students expect more than that today. The teaching technique should be theoretical as well as practical. For effective learning, the students need demonstration, group discussion, role-play and problem solving methods. But for all of these techniques students should be well- cultured and motivated and the classes should be of small size.

Another factor also affects the quality of education. They are social, cultural and economic factors. In many places of Nepal, the guardians who take less interest about their children’s education have established schools and colleges. The guardians follow traditional way and show no more

interest about modern schooling system. Although children go to school, they will be busy in their traditional occupation at home which hampers their schooling. Many guardians have low purchasing capacity so that students do not get more reading and writing materials. These are some of the factors, which affect in the quality of education, in Nepal.

The quality of education in schools and colleges depends on the guardians, management and the students. To create proper learning environment, the schools and colleges should be well equipped with library, laboratory, furniture, clean drinking water, separate toilets for boys and girls with sufficient water in them, extra-curricular activities and healthy environment inside the institutions. The number of the students should be limited in a class so that they will not be overcrowded and noisy. Teacher management has equal role to part quality education. A trained teacher can teach the students effectively without making them frightened. The schools and colleges should not be centralized, but they should get autonomy to run effectively. They should be handed over to community and the management committee should take overall responsibility to run the schools and colleges with teacher management and financial responsibility. It has also been found that all the private schools and colleges are also not of good quality and all the public schools and colleges are thought of low quality. So, reformation of the quality of education is the main responsibility of the state. Overall, culture in education needs to be reformed from the side of the state to make education creative rather than making exams as cheat- oriented.

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