

## BARRIERS TO DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT IN CLASSROOM: A CASE OF RURAL COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN NEPAL

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### ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to explore and analyse the barriers for diversity management in classroom of a rural community schools in Nepal. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural country. As the fabric of society, there is also diversity in the configuration of community schools in rural areas. It entails knowing that each student is unique and acknowledging their uniqueness in the classroom. These might be along the lines of color, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic position, age, physical ability, religious views, political convictions, or other ideologies. This paper is mainly based on primary and secondary data. Purposively, head teachers, teachers, and students were selected for interviews. Interviews, field visits, classroom observation, and focus group discussion with teachers and students were conducted, and the data were analyzed thematically based on interview codes. The data shows that they were ignorant of the concept of diversity and how to manage it in the classroom. It is mainly due to the deconstruction of teachers' attitudes regarding income, professionalism, community structure, physical infrastructure, and socioeconomic discrepancies. This paper suggests managing diversity in the classroom through both policies to integrate curricula and effective management practices in the classrooms. Thus, teachers need pedagogical skills to address the issues of diversity, marginality and oppress groups of the society and barrier of diversity management in the classroom.

**Keywords:** diversity situation - diversity management - respect of diversity - professionalism

### INTRODUCTION

Diversity is difference or variations that indicates the conditions of having different aspects especially the inclusion of different types of pupils

in the mainstream setting. It comprises different cast, culture, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender (Banks 2008). The word diversity has used the value of individual differences in a specific context. For example, in school there are diverse students and teachers based on their backgrounds, abilities, class, languages and skills (Sherpa 2020).

Diversity in education refers to a wide range of concepts and actions aimed at creating learning environments that are safe, inclusive, and egalitarian for as many identities as feasible. The fundamental goals of educational diversity are to recognize, promote, and create sensitivity to the needs of persons from many identification groups (Guo & Jamal 2007). A school culture that encourages variety in the classroom teaches pupils something more important: how to live and work in a world where each individual is unique. Diversity in the classroom is defined by the University of Rhode Island as a knowledge that each student brings unique experiences, abilities, and ideas to our classroom (Kenea 2010).

Diversity is the exploration and incorporation of these differences to enrich learning in our classroom. In this context the diversity management leaders need to support diversity in the classroom like to examine teaching materials, to know students, to address inequality, to connect parents and community, to meet diverse learning needs, to hire diversely, and to support professional development opportunities (Wrench 2005). The diversity in the classroom builds a better thinking environment. It improves academic outcomes by involving more students in teaching-learning activities. It boosts academic confidence and enhances critical thinking skills. It is, however, determined by a variety of criteria, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, ability, age, religious belief, and political conviction. As the fabric of society, there is also diversity in the form of community schools' configuration in rural, like ethnic, religious, cultural, caste, gender, disability, sexual orientation. Many studies have been conducted by foreign scholars on managing diversity to create an effective teaching-learning environment in the classrooms of rural community schools (Anderson 2001). However, (MoE 2016) shows that the educational system has not adequately met the learning needs of diverse learners due to the lack of school physical infrastructure, the teaching-

learning practices, lack of trained human resources and the lack of assistive device and learning materials.

All these facts make it a great challenge for teachers and students to manage these factors in the classroom for creating an effective teaching-learning environment in rural community schools in many developing countries including Nepal. But few scholars seem to have been involved in the study on this issue in Nepal. In Nepal, more than 330,000 children were still out of school boundary till now data are increasing in order, some are at risk, some are fighting with hand to mouth problems (MoE 2016). Due to the lack of transportation facilities in Nepal, many students are still out of reach of schools and some were becoming victims with the stigmatization of their parents. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2015, Ministry of Education 1997 in Basic and Primary Education Master-Plan (1997-2002), Ministry of Education 2016, School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2016), Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs of Nepal 2015 and the constitution of Nepal 2015 have worked out on the issues of access, equity for children with disabilities, discrimination against the religion, caste, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation. However, all these facets show some barriers to diversity management in the classroom.

In this context, intense activity is being taken to address diversity in order to improve the learning of diverse learners. However, teachers and policy makers assert that numerous barriers exist and have a detrimental effect in the management of diversity in the classroom. So the purpose of this research is to explore what sorts of diversity may be seen and how these barriers are adversely affecting classroom diversity.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyse the barriers of diversity management in rural community schools of Nepal.

### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This paper is based on qualitative research design as well as primary and secondary data sources. For this purpose, the purposive sampling method was applied to select head teachers, teachers, and students for interviews from Madi Rural Municipality Kaski district. Five teachers having at least 5 years of teaching experiences at the secondary level were selected for

gathering lived experiences in the diversity management practices (Miles *et.al.* 2013). Likewise, 3 head teachers were selected to obtain the details of the students' information.

Field visits, participatory classroom observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion with teachers and students were applied for data collection (Creswell 2009). Similarly, various journal articles, books, reports related to issues of the studies were thoroughly reviewed to obtain secondary data. The audio recorder device was used to record the interview with each respondent. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and code was produced (Sherpa & Baraily 2021). Themes were generated by organizing similar codes. The major focus of this paper was grouped around similar ideas. The identified themes were presented using field data and compared to previous studies.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This section has analyzed the ground information connecting with relevant literature about diversity management and ground information obtained from the participants. The major themes are discussed as below:

### **An overview of diversity situation in Nepalese education**

A multi-cultural society is one in which people from different ethnic and cultural origins can be found living together in one place. Nepal has a multi-cultural society. It has many different ethnic groups from many different localities, all living here, practicing their cultural heritage (Sherpa 2019). As the fabric of society, there is also diversity in the form of community schools configuration in rural area. Classroom management is essential to this kind of multiplicity. With so many different beliefs, there is a great risk of being misunderstood because cultural differences translate in different ways in the classroom. A classroom is a web of human relationships. It is about the students, their culture and lifestyles, daily patterns, their relationship with school and community. Diversity management in the classroom has become the central concern of almost all social, political, cultural and educational theorists (Tiedt & Tiedt 1995). In this context, this paper examines the diversify classroom environment in terms of student participation by culture, caste and ethnicity and gender in class 9 and 10 of Madi, Kaski district Nepal.

**Table 1.** Student participation by caste, ethnicity and gender

Caste & ethnicity	Grade 9			Grade 10		
	Male	Female	Total (in %)	Male	Female	Total (in %)
Janajati	21	13	34 (55.73%)	4	12	16 (39.02%)
Chhetri	5	2	7 (11.47%)	1	3	4 (9.75%)
Brahman	2	1	3 (4.91%)	2	2	4 (9.75%)
Dalit	10	6	16 (26.22%)	10	7	17 (41.46%)
Total	39	22	61 (100%)	17	24	41 (100%)

Source: Field Survey 2020.

Table 1 shows the student participation by caste, ethnicity and gender in grade 9 and 10. The classroom comprises by Janajati, Chhetri, Brahmins and Dalit students and it reflect a miniature of social fabric of the study area by socio-cultural and religious values and custom of the society. The result indicates that Janajati students in class 9 comprises the largest percentage both male and female 55.73%. It is followed by the Dalit in the second 26.22% in total male and female), second lasts are 11.47% from Chhetri and in the least 4.91% from the Brahman. Similarly, the classroom students in class 10 are as follows. Dalit students comprises the largest percentage both male and female 41.46%. It is followed by the Janajati in the second (39.02%, Brahmans and Chhrettri have equal prevalence 9.75%.

From the composition of Table 1 details classroom is reflected as the community flavor of multicast, multilingual, multiethnic. To address the diversity issues embodied in the classroom. The teachers are required to have knowledge about the dimensions of multicultural education in the Nepalese context (Bennett 2011).

### **Barrier to diversity management in the classroom**

The gap between student needs and teacher teaching strategies in the class room is regarded as diversity management barriers. The impediment occurring in the diversity management process adopted by the diversity teacher is also considered to the obstacles towards diversity within the class room. The differences also take place with administrative action in the school (Rangarjan & Black 2007). Regarding to the effective diversity management the teacher has to face many challenges that impedes

to the diversity management embodied in the classroom. The grounded data reveal some of remarkable barriers to diversity management are discussed as below:

### **Attitudinal barrier**

The negative thought and perception towards students and schools are considered to be attitudinal barrier. The excluded behavior such as underestimate, leveling to the marginalized community are also the supporting factor for the attitudinal problems. This is emergent challenges for diversity management. The mind set of teaching staff and administration have poor knowledge about the dimension of diversity and indicators of inclusion (Prislin & Crano 2008). In this prospect relation to attitudinal barrier, participant T1 asserted that:

“Most of the students in a class are from backward, disadvantage and poor economic status. The children from such community can’t achieve better knowledge due to their weak background. In this context the teacher never thinks about the respect of diversity and make sure for contributing in the formation equitable society. In fact, the teacher and administrator are not willing to transform the society and eradicate social evils.”

According to the argument, the teacher observed all of the students through the same set of lenses. It is impossible to view differently through the same lenses. In this regard, diverse pupils must address their needs differently. In the same issue participant T2 stated that, Most of the parents have lack of knowledge about their children’s education. In such a case, the teacher refuses to manage diversity for the advantage of the students’ academic achievement.

This statement shows most of the students and parents from the rural communities are poor and back warded. To address the issues raised by the teacher, efficient professionalism, teacher’s commitment, parents’ awareness, family-school collaboration, teachers’ competencies are the major dimension for the diversity management (Lyon 2016). By following the same argument as above another respondent T4 expressed that teaching profession was dominated job and those who entered to school might skip in other job like civil service. In such condition of thought, how can teacher manage the diversity in the classroom for the sake of inclusion? The teacher’s perception is always stigmatized and he/she thinks that the students are back warded, genetically mismatched, oppressed caste and ethnicity, dirty fellow, slow minded, poor, girls are weak, disable pupil can’t

read and do. In context of students achievement school's data SEE result for the last three years was found to be decreasing in order. In relation to the school's result participant T3 stated that, Most of the students enrolled were from poor and back warded. Mainly they are from Dalit and Janajati. This statement shows that lack of awareness and back wardens is the main reasons for the poverty and poverty is the significant factor. In search of basic needs students can't continue the class (Polat 2017). They don't have environment of study at home due to household chores. They need to support their parents for the basic needs.

### **Institutional barrier**

The policies and practices applied by the institutions that affect the institutional advancement is considered institutional barriers. There is no specific plan and strategies to manage the diversity in classroom context. Regarding to the classroom management, participant T1 highlights "There is no well-equipped resource room, child-friendly furniture, book corner, library, teaching materials, smart board, TV, projector, and other assistive devices for handicapped children. There is a lack of physical infrastructure for coping with disabled children". In the context of Nepal, some of schools are still on the way of construction, class rooms are set up in trace. There is inadequate facility of white board despite smart board. In such context the teacher cannot manage the diversity in the class room without eliminating the institutional barrier. In the same issue next participant asserted that government has given the affiliation without monitoring physical infrastructure and human resources management as well. In most of teacher of community schools are not developing their potentiality with respect to professional development. The participant T2 expressed that:

"Teachers are recruited by the government, they think that it is permanent license for running life throughout the whole tenure. They keep their position at high rank in such a way that nobody can shack them. In our country, most of the teachers are preserved by politics. In such context, teachers sometimes forget the ethics of responsibility and create challenge to the structure of professionalism."

The expression shows that the teachers are not motivated and responsible towards teaching learning activities. The professional ethics and responsibility is significant. Supporting this arguments another participants T3 asserted as:

“Most teachers employ conventional techniques of instruction and are unwilling to adapt to current settings. He/she is unable to present as a diversity teacher in class since he/she is protected by the governing body. Most teachers deny utilizing lesson plans in their classrooms since they have taught the same topic for more than 20 years.”

The above verbatim shows that practicing new skills with preparation with a new update is not applied in the classroom for professional growth and enrichment. In the same issue another participant looks forward that the permanent teacher can do the action research only one in a year because it is mandatory for promotion in addition to these temporary teachers never do the action research due to fear of insecurity in job. The teacher never does the professional work such as writing article related to their subject, creative work, and project work and says school is not providing opportunity for this type of work. He/she never thinks that this is our duty. Such types of treat of professionalism is not favorable for the diversity management in the class for effective learning. In such scenario, the professionalism of teacher is completely degraded and deviated from the ethics.

### **Socio-cultural barrier**

In school the students are from different cultural background and carrying out different cultural norm and values. When the cultural festival comes, most of the students from similar cultural background do not attend in school. In relation to this issue participant T3 states that:

“In some indigenous community in Nepal, early marriage practice is preferable in against of legal provision. Such type of practice may encourage to drop out the children from school and causes the failure. In overviewing such types of practices in the community the local government agencies is required to conduct the awareness program for the legal provision that minimizes the aforesaid practices.”

In our country, some of the people from specific community are back warded and marginalized due to the various reasons. Their economical profile is below the poverty line, so children from this background cannot continue their study and even engage for long time in the classroom (Polat & Olcum 2016). They are suffered from the inferiority complex. Participant T4 expressed that the children from back warded communities are demoralized and underestimated by the super structure of power. Due to the low economic status, the calorie intake of child is poor which severely affects to the physical, mental and emotion development.

### **Ecological barrier**

Ecological barrier refers to the obstacles created by ecological surroundings that covers rainfalls, storm and stress, flood, land slide. In this respect participant T5 reported that in rural area people are scattered in different places in a community as a result, the population density is very low. In such context government is falling short to establish school. In this way the students from this community are coming rare to school. Based on this information geographical barrier is one of the major problems to be faced for the effective diversity management in quality education. Similarly, participant T4 agreed with T3 and expressed that:

Most of the students are from rural areas. Children are required to walk 2-4 hours to reach school. In such long trip the students are affected by hunger and unable to engage in the class with the physical pain.

The fact shows that it is very much challenging to be faced by the government to establish school in every scattered community. This is exactly unfortunate for the child with respect to have child right. In case of disability there is no access of special/ inclusive school around their home besides the urban areas. In most of community school of Nepal there is no residential facilities and security for girl student (Berkovich, 2013).

### **The gap between policy and practice**

The lack of implementation in practices is considered to be gap between policy and practice. Nepal has a redefined a series of conventions and lines of declarations in the world. For the shake of fulfillment of targeted goals, our countries are required to restructure the educational environment. But the expected goals are deemed and lacking behind of the proper implementation. In this respect, participant T1 stated that:

In policy there are various agency to monitor and supervise the school for betterment of quality education. The monitoring policy is residing back to the actual practice. In order to supervise school the school inspector recruited by the government take the information by making telephone call from his chamber in education office.

Supporting this issue participant T2 stated that he had never seen any school supervisor in school and never had any suggestion and feedback. Likewise, participant T3 expressed that schools are unable to provide education in mother tongue and local curriculum which are addressed by the legal provision. From the participant's opinion it seems

that there were severe problems in implementation to manage the diversity in the classroom (Scrivener 2012). Our government is emphasizing that the effective diversity management can be achieved by running into the race of inclusive education but it is not happening in the practice (Dhungana 2070). Major indicators of inclusive deduction are becoming failure due to the ill practice in the school. In aforesaid issues emphasized that Social stigmas commonly related to culture, gender, race, intelligence and health are abstracting the participatory environment in a diversified classroom.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study found that Janajati, Dalit, Chhetri and Brahmin community were found in classroom where majority of students were from Janajati and Dalit backgrounds and Chhetri and Brahmins students were less in prevalent in the classroom. The tangible diversities such as gender, race, age, ethnicity and physical, abilities disabilities and learning capacities are major diversities leading in the classroom were found within them. Likewise, the intangible diversity such as political orientation, sexual orientation, socio economic mirror, religious lenses, regionalism, in classroom there are ill practices in the aspect of diversity management.

Attitudinal, institutional, socio-cultural, ecological and gap between policy and practice were the barriers in diversities management. In the classroom, there is a diversity of learning styles that, if not effectively enabled, irritates both learners and teachers. In our current practice, most classroom circumstances continue to be characterized by conventional methods to learning. Teaching as dominated and job and not properly facilitated by the government. The teacher attitude is guided by the low-profile job which is also excluded from the community and students as well. Poor physical in fractures, absent of child friendly environment, lack of self-content classrooms economic status of family, ecological challenges and lack of professional development are the emerging challenges for ensuring diversity.

Regarding to the essential skills for diversity management the teacher needs to have an understanding of marginality, oppression, bias, prejudice and discrimination to meet the needs of diverse learners. Contents integrated in the curriculum and textbook are embraced by the cultural flavor and identity.

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