Cultural Nexus Between School and Community

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Abstract

Culture and education are inseparable as they are simply two sides of the same coin. In this context, this study focuses to explain how does culture work in schooling of Nepal. In so doing, interpretive research design has been used to determine the relationship between schooling and culture, with the experiences of secondary level teacher. Purposive sampling technique has used to select sample population and schooling inventory practice and culture inventory of a society were supervised to the school teacher through the pen-ended interview. This research found positive and significant relationships between schooling and culture. Culture of society can be used by the educators to select the content of school curriculum, learning materials, and methods for communication to student and education as a supportive role to conservation and reformation of culture to a society. The school education mainly dominated by universal culture what Banks called "popular culture". Further, the exiting schooling limited to the superficial culture of a society rather than the assumption of critical and social action approach of Banks. Therefore, such kinds of schooling can provide general information about the society but does not empower pupils about why do they are behaving different way to the different group of people. This study suggested that the decision making process concerning to school education should be managed in a way, whereas the school teacher, local people, and local expert can easily participate to take initiative or making school curriculum, learning resources and selecting methods of teaching.

Keywords: curriculum, instructional practice, culture, learning theory, secondary education

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Introduction

Education is an essential process associated with social life. Human being becomes matured through education by developing the skills in social behavior, cultured, and conscious to the social responsibility ((Turan & Bektas, 2013). Hence, adequate educational environments in need of the students can be created in educational institutions like school or college. "Culture is a consequence of a group behavior that is transmitted from one generation to the next one through education" (Pathak, 2009). The main responsibility of school is to make the students' behaviors in line with the cultural heritage. If the method of acculturation is imperfect, then the social life becomes misdirected. As a result, the social life of next generation come into a crisis (Adhikari, 2020). Thus, the relationship between school, society, and culture are the interrelated and interdependent for the preservation of their separate identity respectively.

According to Hensline (1997), education is always linked with the human society from the beginning of the human civilization. School is recognized as a kind of socio-cultural institution of social structure (Adhikari, 2020). In the same way, Durkheim proposed that educational reforms reflect the general cultural perspective and clarify how the school responds to emerging needs that are not yet institutionalized in the overall political society (Pathak, 2009). He also states the major function of the education as transmission of society's norms and values. However, the society can survive only if there exists a sufficient degree of uniformity among its members. Education can preserve and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child (Banks & Banks, 2010).

Nepal is geographically, socially and culturally a diverse country. These diversities are the unique features of the country. Furthermore, collective life style, simplicity, friendliness, kindness, mutual understanding, tolerance and taking pride in one's own culture are the ideals of Nepalese society (CDC, 2007). In this context, multicultural education is the contemporarily discoursed phenomenon in the history of education. The preamble of the constitution of Nepal has stated to protect and promote social and cultural solidarity, and unity in diversity by recognizing the multiethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural situations by the use of inclusive principle for making the government policy (Government of Nepal, 2015). Since the Civil Right Movement of the1960s, educators have been trying, in various ways, to better integrate the content of ethic in school curriculum with multicultural context. In this context, Nepal has been formally beginning to introduce the multicultural curriculum through Nepal Nation Education Commissions (NNEC) 2011. In this line, the National Education

Commission, 2049 B.S. and Higher Education Commission, 2055 B.S. has also integrated content of multicultural education into the mainstream curriculum. Furthermore, the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP), School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), and New Education Policy, 2076 B.S. looks more advanced than the previous education plans and polices of Nepal because, it focuses on not only content but also pedagogy and assessment system to be included in to the multicultural curriculum.

Lev Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of development assumed that the language, social relations and cultures are the major influencing factors on a child's developing mind (Dennington, 2011). Further, it stated that culture along with social interaction, cognitive development and language all directly influenced one another. In the same way, Alexkozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, and Miller (2003) have clearly stated that social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. It is also said that human learning is a social process and the inauguration of human intelligence in society or culture. In this theory, children use cognitive tools to understand their surroundings and the world. These cognitive tools are created in one's culture. According to the sociocultural theory, learning occurs within a social situation, and is first between the teacher and the learner, and then is inside the child. Active participation, another component of this theory, in activity creates a framework for dialogue to occur, and ideas are exchanged which leads to advanced development (Gajdamaschko, 2006). However, the cultural diversity responsive curriculum and instructional activities is an essential requirement for the connection between school and society. Some ideological and political confrontation can be seen in Nepalese society. Curriculum Development Center (2064 B.S.) and Curriculum Development Center (2067 B.S.) pointed out several problems like lack of institutional capacity, integrity of local bodies and their commitment. Moreover, lack of human resources, interest, centralized tendency and lack of trained teachers to teach based on local needs, lack of training on curriculum development and skill, development and growing love for the English language are other problems. Likely, the textbooks are still the main sources for teaching especially the subject of social studies, reading, and language in the context of Nepal (NEPC, 2011).

Through this study, here, I am interested to uncover the existing cultural relationship between school and community regarding the content of curriculum, learning materials and instructional practices regarding existing system of education to Nepal.

Objective

The aim of this study was to determine relationship between education and culture of a society.

Research Method

This study has focused mainly the practices and barriers of cultural nexus between school and community. Thus, I collected the information from the real ground setting. In so doing, I employed qualitative design to carry out research activity on the basis of descriptive methods. This study employs the interpretive research design (Creswell, 2015) which typically focus on a live experience of a situation, gathering the information through the participants who are being involved at the school. The research problems of the study are closed to the cultural theme that is developed within policy provision regarding the multicultural education of a Nepal. The participants of the study were – T1, T2 and T3 – those who have long experienced about the teaching of subject of social study and have experience of in-charge of extracurricular activities of a school (the real name has been changed to protect their privacy). To all the participant of this research are belonging to the community school of government of Nepal. The schools were selected from Aadarsha Resources Center, Madhapur Thimi, Bhaktapur: Ward Number 2. They were selected by the use of purposive sampling.

The open-ended interview techniques were used as a tools to collect required information. During the periods of study, interview was conducted with three teachers of a community school of Bhaktapur. After completing generating the information, I carefully listened and transcribed the interview and coded the information then, I categorized the themes which emerged in the field experiences and construed meaning inductively.

Result and Discussion

Culture as a form can be described at diverse social levels like society, groups, or even individuals, thus any society has a culture (Matusov & Shane, 2017). Generally, culture is defined as a way of acting, behaving, knowing, and ways of communication within and other people of groups. Culture plays an important role in man's life. Awareness about the different culture can help an individual in adjusting to the natural and social environment, developing an individual's personality, socialization of the individual, and understanding other cultures. On the one hand, education acculturate an individual from diverse groups, on the other hand, it preserves, transmits and develops the

culture of a society. Thus, education and culture are mutually interdependent, in this context, I have attempted here, to describe how does the socio-cultural condition of a society influence on schooling process with thematic analysis by the information which is obtained from the field experiences.

Socio-cultural influences on content of school curriculum

Integration of content into curriculum concerning to culture means that what the school offers must be related to what the community requires. In this context, Offorma (2016) contends that the inclusion of the culturally relevant contents in the school curriculum to show the relationship between what is taught in school and what the learners experience in life or in their particular society. In this context, the education policy of Nepal has attempted to develop the curriculum with cultural relevance since the establishment of democracy. A report of national education planning commission, 1954 is the first formal education planning for the school education which says that the content of curriculum must be adjusted to the culture and needs of the diverse group of people those who live in different geographical locations (Sharma, 2059 B.S.). In this context, the results of the first interview (Teacher 1) revealed in a way:

> *Nepal is a culturally rich country. Such culture has been transmitted orally for upcoming generation through folksong, stories and history by our parent language and different cultural ceremonies such as Newar-Bisket Jatra, Limbut-Dhan Nach and Majhi - worship of perkirti [nature]. This cultural knowledge helps us to understand about the existing social behavior and structure of our society. If we encourage and sustaining our culture and language through school education curriculum that can enhance the child empowerment regarding the social culture and environment and to become a whole child.*

The constitution of Nepal (2072 B.S.), has said about culture in article (32), to all the people shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritage through education (Government of Nepal, 2015). Moreover, Offorma (2016) suggested that curriculum is viewed as the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes presented to the learners in order to change their behaviors to become functional members of their society. Socially accepted school curriculum must be reflected the culture of the people. The education which is based on race, language and religion, accepting other values and contribution, what Banks called multicultural education (Banks, & Banks, 2010). Therefore, the school curriculum can be reflected and covered the cultural universal, cultural specialties and cultural alternatives education

(Offorma, 2016). On the other hand, the culture is preserved and reformed through education, thus it must be integrated into the school curriculum planning (Banks & Banks, 2010). In this respect, the participant (Teacher 3) shares his experiences in following way:

> the daily socio-cultural behavior and economic activities of a people are guided by socio-culture value where we are being lived. For example, the living style of the groups or other people who live in is different from the people living in Himalayan belts. Therefore, the education should have focused on socio-cultural aspects of a particular group or community.

It is important to understand that culture of society regarding to different ethnic worldview is different from the mainstream (culture of dominant groups) worldview. This means that children of ethnic communities may not perceive the things exactly the same way as their counterparts perceive. Therefore, the "one size fits all" does not work in education, especially for children of ethnic communities (Singh, 2013). In this line, the content knowledge about ethnic and cultural diversity was necessary for both minority and majority students to respond the negative discriminations and falsifications extended in conventional conceptions of knowledge and truth, in schooling and even, in society at large (Gay, 2013). From this view, the curriculum of a school education must be designed in a way that can enrich and preserve the culture of society as well as prepare the both (minority and dominant groups) individuals as a tools to become functional participants in society. Here, one research participant expresses his feelings about the link between schooling and culture in a way:

> the social behavior and discipline of a society is determined by its socio-cultural structure of a community. For example, in our society, where there is a source of water, idols of deities are erected. This temple creates a positive fear among the people in the society. Such fears also help to maintain the cleanness of the water's sources, conserving the forest and religion as well as preservation of various mother tongues. Therefore, if the various social and cultural values can be included into the curriculum, it will help in conversation of cultural skills, religion, and language.

The learning experiences of a schools are learner oriented, goal oriented and culture oriented (Plonska, 2013). Moreover, UNESCO (2016) adds that socio-cultural diversity includes race, class, ability, ethnicity, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other dimensions that make up the identity of the social as well as individual student and impact his or her learning experiences. In this context, the aim of education is to produce the whole-man, it means

who can use what s/he has learnt in school to solve life problems (Plonska, 2013). whereas curriculum can be defined as the document or blue print for instructional guidance which is used for teaching and learning to bring about positive and desirable learner behavior change (Offorma, 2014) alongside, NEPC (2011) also said that the curriculum must not encourage separateness. It should provide a chances for greater exchanges of culture as well as goods and services from local to global context (Sharma, 2059 B.S.). Similarly, The National Education Commission [NEC] (2049 B.S.) also said that the school level curriculum should be based on the principle of harmony and practical uses to the students with local surroundings. Further, it is said that the textbook of the primary education should encourage to prepare in various language in the interest of linguistic communities of Nepal. Integrating content in to the school education is to be more culturally relevant because it is crucial to move forward systematically. For that Banks & Banks (2004) has postulated five key dimensions of multiculturalism: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. Among these dimensions, the first dimension, content integration, suggested to us activities and content from different cultures and groups to represent into the school education or curriculum. In this process, the integration is to be carried out in a logical fashion, not make –believe. At that time a participant (teacher 2) put his view onward:

> *it is my 12 years' experiences; no content can contribute to multiculturalism so far. The courses mainly focused on dominant culture of a particular groups or popular culture from the selective cultural groups of a community. There are many people around us with diversities. We have to equally focus on their languages, cultural ceremonies and social customs (Teacher 2).*

On the one hand, the contemporary education policy of Nepal like School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) is committed towards the production of the multicultural curriculum, textbooks and other teaching and learning materials including in languages other than Nepali (MOEST, 2016). Similarly, National Curriculum Framework, NCF (2007) has postulated that the school level curriculum would be developed by the support to follow principle: principle of integration, contextual or localization, instruction through Multilanguage, and the inclusiveness in education are the most important function regarding to the development of multicultural education in Nepal (Curriculum Development Center, 2007). Moreover, National Education Policy (2076) has also given priority on making the curriculum, textbook, teaching-learning process, and assessment system more inclusive. On the other hand, the report of Secondary

Education Support Programs (2002) clearly stated that the curriculum does not address the diverse needs of caste and ethnic groups, many of whom have their own languages, cultures, traditions and local economic bases. Although efforts have been made to audit secondary textbooks from gender, ethnic and caste perspectives. The inclusion of gender perspective is narrowly conceived and a clear gap in conceptual understanding is seen in the textbooks (Government of Nepal, 2002). In this context, multicultural education curriculum is prerequisite in order to preserve and promote the different languages, cultures, cultural civilizations and heritages of a diverse group of people. In this respect, the National Education Commission (2049B.S.) has looked liberal towards the multicultural education. It clearly states in his report, if any school and community are interested to make and implement the separate curriculum in their locality, such curriculum should be made in line with national goals and objectives of education and ratify it, from the government of Nepal. In this line, Bank (2006) proposed the four approaches: contributions, ethnic additive, transformation, and social action approach about how to integrate ethnic contents into the curriculum. Among these approaches, the first two approaches believe that the ethnic content can include into the curriculum without changing its basic structure, goals and salient features of the central curriculum. However, Nepalese multicultural education policy and practice is also guided from the assumption of contribution and ethnic additive approach. Moreover, NEC (2049 B.S.) also encourage the children of the multilingual community to study the local mother tongue. In this context, a participant (Teacher 3) shares his experiences on *inclusion of different cultures into education and providing education to each cultural group.* The report of Higher Education Commission, 2055 B.S. has clearly stated that the primary education has to provide in mother tongue of the student (Sharma, 2059). In order to implement such policy, the central government have taken the policy as a supportive role to development of curriculum in mother tongues, teacher training, and textbooks. But such types of multicultural curriculum may not help transform in thinking and understanding social problems of peoples of diverse groups of society (Banks & Banks, 2004).

Cultural influences on classroom teaching and learning

Curriculum, textbooks and teaching methods are as a complementary of schooling. Only if the school education can work on the basis of cultural values while constructing and implementing with above these three things. Accordingly, the level of learning of all children from different groups can be increased. Teachers play a pivotal role in the process of schooling. They could

understand and facilitate learning in any areas of the curriculum. Thus, he must know not only what it is taught and being acquired but how it relates to what has already been learned (Vaccarino, 2009). The learning of culture, like the learning of language, begins with a child's first experiences with the family into which he is born, the community to which he belongs, and the environment in which he lives (Hollins, 2019). In this context, a research participant (Teacher 2) said, *"The effect of socio-cultural diversity does not seem only the choice of content but also a selection of teaching methods and learning resources. To arrange the classroom without neglecting the cultural aspect of a society, the objectives of education will remain incomplete."* Different child-rearing practices are preferred in different cultures, and these will have a significant effect on later learning because before beginning their formal education, they have already internalized the basic values and belief of their native culture, learned the rules of behavior which are appropriate to play role in their community (Saville-Troike, 1973, cited in Vaccarino, 2009).

Cultural responsive teaching is an important method of teaching in our society. The census of Nepal (2011) has said that there are 126 caste/ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken as a mother tongue of the Nepalese society (Government of Nepal,2011). The social identity of the Nepal is more complex and heterogeneous with language, culture and even racial trait. There are few social values and practices that are dominant among the other minority community of Nepal. A research participant adds, *"The methods of teaching and learning are tools for bridging between students and different learning experiences. Therefore, the teacher can select the appropriate learning resources and methods for diverse classroom teaching and learning.* More often research finds out that the accommodation of cultural differences is limited to holiday celebration or a multicultural fair. Even the study of multicultural content often fails to consider the different ways students learn. Thus, seriously to be considered about the culture and learning styles (Mantiri, 2013). The schooling process of Nepal has focused on not only ethnic content of education as well as the methods of teaching of ethnic content also be employed in classroom teaching. In this line, NEP (2076 B.S.) clearly states that Nepali language to be the medium of instruction at the basic level. In addition, the mother tongue also to be a medium of instruction to the concerned students or the particular groups of community. In the same way, other research participant (Teacher 2) share his experiences as:

> *I have been teaching for fifteen years. Every school administration expected from teacher to ensure that every teacher treats the students equally and*

keeps the students in strict discipline. If the teachers teach their students with regarding cultural and linguistically diverse, they will feel more enjoyable.

In this context, a research report of Vaccarino (2009) raises the question as an issue, whether an institution would need to modify its teaching ethos or attitudes to suit the students from diverse group or whether the student would need to adapt their learning styles to fit in with the intuition's philosophy, rule and regulation. With respecting this ideas, the Higher Education Commission (2055) stated that while appointing the teacher in a lower level knowledge of mother tongue will be provided from the respective community (Sharma, 2059 B.S.).

The concept of culture represents differing ranges of human behaviors or 'the art' or perhaps disclosing the uniquely identifiable behavior of 'cultured' individuals. Educators have generally recognized a broader scope of phenomena: evidence of 'culture' in a classroom teaching. To the anthropologist and ethnographer who perceive it as the life-ways of diverse groups of people, including all of the rules for appropriate behavior which are learned by people as a result of being members of the community (Saville-Troike, 1978) which must be understood, accepted and accounted for culture into the classroom teaching, in this context, a research participant (Teacher 1) observed:

In principle, I (teacher) know that students have different cultures and cultural backgrounds, but I am different culturally into the class. Unfortunately, as a teacher, I attempt or begin to impose own value judgment in terms of knowledge power, symbol that dominate other's culture.

The knowledge of the child's culture and learning styles helps teachers examine their own instructional practices and become sensitive to providing diverse learning experiences (Miles, 2007), adds more, if the teacher improves their instructional methods and practices for certain students will result in improved teaching for all. Additionally, Gay (2013) adds culturally responsive teaching is using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students that help to make learning more relevant and effective for them. Fierro (1997) has carried out a research on whether there is a difference in learning style among cultures or not with the aim of cultural differences in children's learning styles, particular to African-American, Asian-American, Hispanic, and European-American cultures. This study found that it is difficult to agree with the fact that the children from different cultures have different learning styles but it is important to be aware of the different characteristics that certain culture

possesses. Therefore, teachers need to be a flexible and comfortable with presenting materials in the classroom in a variety of different ways in order to accommodate various learning styles of pupils from diverse classrooms.

Culturally relevant instructional practice always attempts to reduce the illogical and deficient perceptions of students and then the society of culturally marginalized gradually become more positive. Therefore, the dominant culture is a problem like in the Nepalese community. It would be better to address through education, not the only emphasis. Diversity in teaching techniques and resources is necessary to achieve educational equity and excellence (Irvine and York, 1995). For an effective instruction, teacher must know and accommodate both cultural values and individual learning styles of their students (Gay, 2013). Therefore, they are continually interested in learning about their students. A research carried out by the Mantiri (2013), found that accommodation of cultural differences is limited to a holiday celebration or a multicultural fair and even such multicultural content often fails to reflect the different ways of students' learning. One of the ideas that the research participant (Teacher 1) states here, "*Students are not giving freedom to choose their homework within previous experiences, which is based on the textbooks as suggested by the subject teacher*". To provide the opportunity for more culturally sensitive teaching, Irvine and York (1995) recognizes the values of learning styles perspective: the learning styles offers a value-neutral approach for understanding individual differences among ethnically different students. It reveals that everyone can learn, whereas teacher responds appropriately to individual learning needs. In the same way, Irvine and York (1995) add that all students are capable of learning, provided the learning environment be there to a variety of learning styles". Fierro (1997) also suggests that awareness about the culture of a student is very important. Being aware of the "whole" child is essential aspect of classroom teaching. Therefore, the assumption about culture's learning style preferences should be used only for an awareness, not as a guideline for a way specific culture should be taught. In the same way, the new education policy of Nepal has focused on multilingual teaching methods based on mother tongues will be encouraged in multilingual classrooms. For this purpose, the power has shifted from federal to local levels that enable them to construct and implement the special program concerning to multicultural education in terms of curriculum, textbooks and medium of instruction for classroom teaching methods based on the mother tongue of respective society (NEP, 2076). However, the education policy more or less concerned towards the culturally relevant teaching to be in school, it may not have significant influences in the field of multicultural education. In this line,

research participant (Teacher 1) shares his experiences as

"There is no training for teaching multilingual students'. The community-based cultural programs have been arranged in a school. Such programs have not been regular in school and even classrooms because the teacher has to take more classes than the approved weight by the education act, the assigned task will be complete within a given time framework, and examination programs will take in periodically.

But the teachers are aware of cultural differences among their students. However, they do not want to have a negative effect on their students' learning by imposing culturally insensitive or by offensive their existing educational and cultural beliefs (Vaccarino, 2009).

Conclusion

As presented information in my analysis, the cultural relation to the process of schooling is significantly corresponding formally. To introduce the formal education plan and policy of Nepal has been an attempt to connect between culture and education process through the school curriculum and instructional practice of a classroom. The analysis shows that the ethnic content mainly from the universal culture and little more specialist culture and there is no any concern to alternative activities of a society. The existing practice of including ethnic content into the education look like to be limited in Bank's first two approach of multicultural curriculum and this process does not cover the assumption of critical and social action approach. The other finding can be concluded that the selection process of ethnic content and its implementation, event now, has been decentralized. But, it can implement in a real ground only after approval from centrally designated expert teams. Hence, this kind of curriculum can provide information about the cultural difference of a society but does not empower pupils about why do they behave differently among the diverse groups of society.

As well as the learning content and materials concerning to the ethnic group should be based on culture, how this content is transferred to the classroom that is more important thing to the multicultural education. Therefore, our efforts should concern to match the personality between the teacher and the students for effective classroom teaching learning. Such act which is also provision by the High Level National Education Commission, 2055 B.S. and the new education system, 2076 B.S. However, this policy does not work equally to meet the needs of culturally diverse classroom. No available of local expert, train teacher, teacher, and multilingual learning

materials are still remaining as problems of multicultural education of Nepal. This study suggests that the decision making process regarding to the school education to be managed in a way whereas the school teacher, local people, and local expert can participate to take initiative for making school curriculum, learning resources and selection of methods of teaching.

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