



Enhancing Educational Quality: Insights from Permanent Teachers in Nepalese Public Secondary Schools

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Abstract

This article explores various approaches to enhancing the quality of education in Nepalese public schools, aiming at maximizing the educational access and success for all. Using an interpretive paradigm followed by narrative research design, the article investigates the perspectives of eight permanently employed secondary-level teachers who, despite working in public schools, chose private schools for their children's education. Open-ended interviews were conducted to investigate their perspectives on improving public school education in Nepal. Triangulation, member checking, and thick description were used to ensure the credibility and authenticity of information collected from the samples. Study findings revealed that dynamic leadership, infrastructure enhancement, institutionalizing school as a zone of peace, regular monitoring, community involvement in schools' activities, intensive teacher training for continuous professional development, and home-school collaboration for effective learning play crucial role in determining educational quality in public schools in Nepal. Thus, this article provides a valuable insight into various factors that need to be addressed to improve overall quality of public education in Nepal.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental human right enshrined by the Constitution of Nepal (Nepal Law Commission, 2018) and internationally agreed goals and policies (Asia South Pacific Association, 2018; Action Aid, 2017). Considering the legal provisions, government of Nepal has made significant efforts to provide free and compulsory basic education

and free secondary education (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2019). Nepal has 11,492 secondary schools, with 7,216 being community schools and 4,276 being institutional schools. Currently, 17,71,555 students are enrolled in secondary education. Community schools have a higher enrollment of girls (52.2%) compared to institutional schools (42.5%). This suggests

a parental preference for girls in community schools and boys in institutional schools (Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, 2024). Though the number of students attending secondary schools is increasing, hidden costs such as stationery, uniforms, and private tutoring can hinder equitable access (Bhattacharya, 2012) to school education. Though public sector has been dominating the education landscape, various challenges have been persisting due to number of reasons. A high chunk of the education budget is invested in administrative expenses, particularly teacher salaries, leaving limited funds for infrastructure development, curriculum improvement (Dolma Development Fund, 2014), and monitoring in one hand, and right to education also provides the freedom to choose different educational models, including private, alternative, or homeschooling (Brinkmann, 2013) on the other. Therefore, underlying issues such as inadequate funding, teacher training, infrastructure development, etc. of public school must be addressed to improve the quality of public education.

Although the financial factor should not be the reason for quality services in public education, the significant cost difference between public and private education in Nepal, as highlighted by the Living Standards Survey-2011, exacerbates educational inequality (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Private schooling is significantly more expensive and inaccessible to most of the low-income families (Asia South Pacific Association, 2018). This disparity in education has been leading to gender inequality. Generally, boys from wealthier families are disproportionately attending private schools (Asia South Pacific Association, 2018; Nepal National Teachers Association, 2016). This trend perpetuates existing inequalities and marginalizes vulnerable groups, particularly those come

from poor, (Action Aid, 2017) marginalized, disadvantaged, and disability backgrounds. Despite the significant investment in private education, exceeding NRs. 120 billion annually (Nepal National Teachers Association, 2016), there is not adequate evidence to support the notion that private education is good in quality as compared to public education (Green, 2005). The hunches towards private schools are largely influenced by the perceived shortcomings – low quality, inadequate resources, ineffective teaching for example – of public schools (Action Aid, 2017). This notion is particularly rooted among wealthier families since over half of private school students coming from the top 20% richest families (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). To address these issues and promote equitable access to quality school education, it is crucial to strengthen public schools by improving teacher training, infrastructure, curriculum development, and monitoring mechanism.

Education expenditure in Nepal constitutes only 12.9% of the national budget and 4.1% of GDP (UNESCO, 2015), which is lower than international standards (Asia South Pacific Association, 2018; European Union, 2015). Underinvestment in public education leads to a decline in the quality of school education and compels many families to opt for private schools (Shrestha, 2014). Despite still having dominance of public schools in market share mainly at the basic level (Dolma Development Fund, 2014), private schools have gained significant attentions of consumers by offering improved infrastructure and facilities (Yaacob et al., 2015). However, research findings suggest that public schools usually provide better opportunities to students for developing essential soft skills (Action Aid, 2017) as compared to private education. It signals that public myth towards privatization

needs to be dispelled by giving a proven alternative through public education.

Yaacob et al. (2015) revealed that school's reputation and exam results are key influencing factors that determine parental school choice. In addition, education level of parents also plays decisive role in shaping decisions to enroll children in private schools. Socioeconomic factors such as parental education, family income, etc. are significant predictors of children's academic success (Hampden-Thompson et al., 2008). Positive inter-household relationships – parental involvement in school activities and communication with school personnel for example – and strong intra-household relationships – relationship between parents and children for example – positively impact educational attainment (Hampden-Thompson et al., 2008) of children. While both family and public education play crucial roles in a child's development (Ecarius, 2012), many community schools are struggling to retain students from the local community. Many of their students are children of migrant families who move from one place to another (Shrestha, 2014) to find better job opportunities. Consequently, a number of children cannot continue their school education in the same institution. Furthermore, public schools across the nation face disparities in resource allocation, some public schools are receiving fewer resources than others (Cox et al., 2013) due to their exams' results, number of students, political access, and attitude of community towards the school. Therefore, such issues should also be addressed on time to enhance the quality of public education in Nepal.

The growth of privatization in education has weakened the public sector. Aware and educated families send their children in

private schools and do not pay proper attention towards public education. In other words, most advantaged parents are motivated to enroll their children in private schools (Nepal National Teachers Association, 2016). Even those who attend public schools often receive additional private tutoring. Nearly, 38% of public-school students and 68% of grade-ten students engage in private tutoring (Bray & Lykins, 2012). This trend contributes to perceived shortcomings of public education in Nepal. When students face difficulty in learning, teachers often place the blame on them rather than the services provided in public schools (Niure, 2021). This situation increases the reliance of students on private tutoring in spite of attending public schools. Families continuously invest in private tutoring despite its limited effectiveness (Bray & Lykins, 2012) with the hope of their children's bright future. This situation divides a society into different strata (poor and rich, have and have not for example) since children of rich parents have a chance to receive more quality education compared to the children from poor socio-economic background. Consequently, children from poor, marginalized, and disadvantaged backgrounds have high chance of being deprived of quality education.

This study emphasizes on improving quality of public education in Nepal. Most of the students attending secondary level could not receive quality education unless public schools are improved. In this regard, the study underscores on the value of equitable access to quality education for all, including those from marginalized, disadvantaged, and disability backgrounds. It is almost impossible to translate the constitutional rights of receiving quality education for children into reality without improving public education in Nepal. The Government of Nepal can only ensure that all children have

the opportunity to receive quality education and reduce educational disparities to promote social equity by improving public schools. Therefore, this article intends to identify plausible ways of improving the quality of public-school education in Nepal to optimize the access to and the success in education for all. To achieve this objective, this article answers a question “what are the secondary-level-permanent-teachers’ perspectives for improving the quality of public-school education in Nepal to ensure equitable access and improved learning outcomes for all students?”

Methodology

This study was guided by the interpretive paradigm followed by narrative research design. Narrative might be the phenomenon being studied (Creswell & Poth, 2018), narrative of secondary-level-permanent teachers about the quality of public education in this study. A narrative is understood either a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected (Czarniawska, 2004; cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). All secondary level permanent teachers working in public schools within Kathmandu valley were taken as the population of this study. Five female teachers and three male teachers, holding Master’s Degree in Education, were chosen as the sample of this study. Altogether, eight secondary-level teachers who, despite employed in public schools, had enrolled their children in private schools for their education were purposively selected to identify their perspectives for improving public school education in Nepal. It was intended that secondary-level teachers, as the insiders of public education system, could provide more credible and authentic information to achieve the objective of this study.

In-depth interviews were employed to garner information regarding the strategies need to be followed to improve public education in Nepal. Each interview was lasted approximately 30 minutes followed by various probing questions. Researcher himself visited to individual teachers and took consent from school leadership to access to them. Then confidentiality was developed within each teacher by clarifying the purpose of this study. Each interview was recorded in a voice recorder then transcribed manually. The transcribed information was classified, categorized and thematized into nine core themes. A significant number of verbatim was used to analyze the information under the generated themes to insights regarding the phenomenon being studied. To ensure the credibility and authenticity of the findings, triangulation, thick description, and member checking were employed. Triangulation involved cross-checking information from different informants, while thick description utilized direct quotes of informants to provide rich context (Flick, 2018; Creswell, 2015). Moreover, member checking (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) was used to verify the accuracy of the collected and analyzed information with the informants. Pseudonyms were also used to maintain confidentiality and adhere to ethical standards of a qualitative research.

Results

Study results indicate that improvement of educational quality of public schools in Nepal requires a multi-faceted approach to strengthen education policy, curriculum development, monitoring, home-school collaboration, teacher’s professional development, and physical infrastructure for quality learning. Intensive training programs for teachers is necessary to equip them with updated knowledge and modern pedagogical

skills. Continuous professional development opportunities, regular participation in workshops and seminars help teachers be updated with the latest educational trends and evidence-based practices. Designing labor-market-driven school curriculum to meet the needs and aspirations of contemporary society is also crucial for quality education. Collaboration between subject experts and stakeholders can lead to a more relevant curriculum responsible for addressing diverse needs of students and prepares them for future challenges.

Dynamic leadership: Findings of the study reveal that school leadership plays an imperative role for strengthening the quality of education in a school by fostering a conducive and supportive learning environment among students and teachers. Dynamic leaders establish mutual relation with admin staff, teachers, students, and outer community through a culture of collaboration and mutual support. They have clear vision and mission to be achieved by school family for academic quality, and regularly work for professional development of teachers by increasing their access to updated resources, educational technology and methodologies. Dynamic leaderships also improve school facilities to provide favorable learning environment by generating funds and required resources from different sectors. They also provide an inclusive learning environment for all students come from diverse learning backgrounds. Thus, dynamic leaders can ensure academic excellence and motivate both staff and students to achieve their full potential by setting high expectations and providing required resources and supports. *Good leadership of school can inspire and motivate admin staff, teachers and students to achieve the results to a higher extent possible...*, Teacher-F shared. The verbatim

shared by key informants below also depict so.

Efficient leadership of a school always understand constantly changing needs and aspirations of society....and know the role of school facilities for improving quality of education through active engagement of learners..., therefore, they always work to create a safe and conducive learning environment... [Teacher-F].

Collaboration with family, community, and other stakeholders is required to receive external support for ensuring quality of public education...Dynamic school leaders build partnership with parents, local representatives, intellectuals, social organizations, and even with local government to arrange additional resources and opportunities for students... [Teacher-I].

Study results also depict that dynamic leaders adapt themselves to changing circumstances and address challenges proactively in collaborative way. They always identify evidence-based strategies to improve the practices for better results and make informed decisions for quality services. *Good school leadership join hand together with school staff to solve problems faced by them and always encourage them to translate intentions of institutions into practice...*, Teacher-B indicated. Dynamic leaders always take risk to move forward, provide equal opportunities to all for their professional development, work collaboratively, and encourage all to mobilize available resources to a maximum extent possible to offer better results. They always play crucial role in improving the culture of their institution through clear vision, inclusion, collaboration,

and democratic value to elevate the overall quality of education and ensuring that every student has ample opportunities to succeed.

Infrastructure enhancement: The physical resources of an educational institution play a crucial role for providing quality education by creating a conducive and supportive learning environment. Study results indicate that well equipped facilities, such as resourceful classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and adequate access to technology, help create favorable learning environment where students can engage actively in their learning. But, *the physical infrastructure of public school is so limited. Classrooms are too congested...Infrastructure should be restructured to ensure proper access to curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities*, Teacher-F answered. These facilities are useful to provide multiple learning experiences to students to develop the behavior expected by catering various learning styles of students and ensuring their active involvement in instructional process. Safe learning environment also works as a motivating factor of public education. *Public school should ensure that the children are cared safely in school and they have been receiving quality education to win trust at societal level*, Teacher-D proclaimed. Furthermore, research findings reveal that availability of sports and recreational materials in an educational institution not only motivate students but also help their overall development.

Though some public schools have been providing quality services to students by practicing English as a medium of instruction, we cannot send our children there due to the lack of school bus... Therefore, such school should arrange school bus, resources for extracurricular

activities, etc. to motivate more children from middle- and upper-class families (Teacher-B).

Furthermore, study depicts that the presence of adequate physical facilities such as clean drinking water, sanitation facilities, and proper ventilation significantly impacts students' health and attendance rates, which help teachers strengthen students' learning. But there are not sufficient facilities in many public schools. *...government should allocate enough budgets to public schools to provide quality services by arranging required physical infrastructure*, Teacher-B shared. Accessibility in digital resources also helps both students and teachers access to updated information, evidence-based instructional strategies, and findings of recent research. Technological infrastructure facilitates online learning, collaboration, and communication, making education more accessible and inclusive.

Regular monitoring: Study results unveil that regular monitoring of schools' activities can significantly improve the quality of education in public schools. It helps teachers and school leaderships be accountable for their routine activities to achieve educational standards. Through continuous monitoring, it is easy to identify problems such as teacher absenteeism, invalid instructional activities, inadequate feedback, gaps and mismanagement of resources, etc. Addressing such issues promptly helps students improve their learning. *Regular monitoring of classroom activities helps teachers identify the effectiveness of instructional techniques, learning materials, and environment to develop desired knowledge, skills and attitude*, Teacher-C informed. Regular monitoring of school activities helps identify the supports need to be provided to teachers

for targeted professional development programs, facilitating teachers to improve their instructional and assessment techniques. *Regular monitoring helps us identify underperforming schools, teachers, admin staff, and students early. This provides a baseline timely to conduct interventions for strengthening students' academic performance,* Teacher-E clarified. In addition, the verbatim below also reveal that there is positive relationship between regular monitoring and education quality.

Monitoring of school activities on a regular basis encourages teachers to adopt best practices in teaching. Observing classrooms of individual teachers and providing them with feedback can help improve their instructional process, practice innovative strategies, and encourage students' active involvement in the class [Teacher-A].

Regular monitoring ensures whether all academic and administrative activities including student performance and progress are in line. The information obtained from the monitoring also helps in understanding the effectiveness of curricula and instructional activities practiced in school... Schools can receive feedback to improve and change routine activities to foster better learning outcomes [Teacher-G].

Study results indicate that regular monitoring of teachers' activities helps in enhancing quality of education in public schools. It also encourages teachers to transfer their knowledge, values, and skills into real classroom situations that are supposed to be transferred. *Most of the public-school teachers do not transfer their training into real classroom situation... Continuous*

monitoring should be done to improve the condition, Teacher-D replied. Accountability among teaching and non-teaching staff can be strengthened by resolving absenteeism of staff, ineffective instructional practices, and resource mismanagement. Effectiveness of curricular contents, instructional techniques, learning materials, assessment activities, and the overall classroom environment can be identified through continuous monitoring that ultimately improve teaching and learning practices of each classroom. Regular monitoring also promotes evidence-based practices, students' engagement, and responsive behaviors of staff that are expected to be institutionalized for quality education.

Community involvement: Study results indicate that there is reciprocal relationship between education quality and community participation. Quality of education can be strengthened by fostering a supportive learning environment through which both students and schools are benefitted. When parents, social workers, local leaders, and local organizations actively involve in educational activities, they bring valuable resources and ideas into education, which contribute to improve school facilities, helps educators develop relevant and culturally responsive curricula, and provide students with additional support that finally improve the quality of public education. *Community involvement supports educational institutions in volunteer activities to advocate for better resources and policies,* Teacher-B opined. *An educational institution alone cannot make significant difference in the quality of education... Both school and community should join hands together to achieve common goal...'quality education'...* Teacher-F suggested.

School and teachers alone cannot provide quality services to a group of learners

come from diverse backgrounds... Society plays a role of watchdog to monitor the activities carried out in schools. Not only this, society also plays a decisive role in generating resources to strengthen physical and academic environment of schools [Teacher-B].

Furthermore, Teacher-H indicated, *when parents and community members are engaged, they are more likely to make schools accountable for students' learning by improving teaching practices and school management.* Thus, community involvement helps bridge the gap between the school and the home by reinforcing the value of education and creating a network for a continuum of supports that encourages student attendance, participation, motivation, and success. Schools and communities can address local challenges more effectively by working together, play supplementary role to address the needs of each other. Therefore, community involvement is very crucial not only to make education accessible but also tailor to the needs of all students through quality services.

Intensive training: Study findings also show that continuous opportunities for professional development of teachers also helps students to have quality learning through public education in Nepal. Engagement of students in learning can be strengthened by equipping school teachers with evidence-based pedagogical skills, updated knowledge, innovative teaching strategies, and different types of trainings. This, in turn, helps student for comprehension, increased classroom interaction, and improved academic performance. Trained teachers can successfully practice differentiated instruction to adapt diverse learning needs, use inclusive instructional techniques, and

integrate educational technology into their daily classrooms to optimize students' learning. *Many public-school teachers only receive superficial knowledge and skills from training provided by the government of Nepal,* Teacher-C proclaimed.

...Teachers from new generation, who just pass TSC exam, are very active. But the teachers in general from old generation are neither familiar with evidence-based approaches nor acquainted with modern technology. As a result, they cannot perform inside the classroom as an intended manner (Teacher-E).

Regular trainings help teachers bear their responsibilities effectively, which directly impacts on students' learning. *Well-trained teachers are more likely to use formative assessment, provide constructive feedback on a required basis, and create a conducive and supportive learning environment in school,* Teacher-H said. Professional development of teachers not only benefits students but also fosters a culture of lifelong learning among themselves. In education landscape, quality teachers play a crucial role for quality learning by encouraging students to receive knowledge, values, and skills that they need to get opportunities in a rapidly changing world.

Home-school collaboration: Family has phenomenal influence on their children's education since each child accumulates a range of experiences before getting entry into a formal educational institution. Generally, parents, guardians, caretakers, and extended family members play a crucial role in teaching various knowledge, values, and skills to their children to prepare them for adult life. School has also tremendous impact on children's learning. *When school and family*

work together then they can achieve more as compared to their solo attempt, Teacher-C clarified. Parents can be encouraged to involve in their children's learning through home-school collaboration. Then they give adequate time to their children at home to strengthen learning. *School-family collaboration plays vital role in improving students' learning*, Teacher-G informed. Study results reveal that some teachers have made a few attempts to collaborate parents of children to discuss their academic progress. But parents rarely attend the meeting organized by schools due to a number of reasons such as illiteracy, poor expectation from their children, swamped work schedule, etc. Some verbatim shared by key informants below depict the reality of home-school collaboration in sample schools.

School-home collaboration needs to be strengthened to improve the quality of public education in Nepal. Each child spends most of his/her time at the home usually with parents. Therefore, they should give sufficient time to their children at home to make them academically sound (Teacher-B).

Thus, when schools and families work together, they can centralize their efforts to reinforce learning both in school and at home. *Regular communication between teachers and parents helps parents be aware of the progress, challenges, and achievements of children*, Teacher-F indicated. Parents can provide wide range of information about their children and teachers can use such information to facilitate the learning of their students.

Discussion

The government of Nepal is obligated to ensure the rights to free public quality education for all (Action Aid, 2017). School

leadership plays a crucial role in implementing government policies and programs. Publicly operated non-competitive schools could provide mass education with greater equity and efficiency (Gross, 2018). In this regard, research findings indicates that dynamic school leadership is essential for creating high-quality learning environments. This involves establishing clear visions, fostering student-centered pedagogies, and building strong partnerships with parents and communities. Green (2005) indicates that privatization can weaken the leadership of community schools, and poor leadership can jeopardize school quality. Additionally, the trend of public school permanent teachers enrolling their children in private schools undermines the credibility of public education. Study results reveal that implementing policies that require school staff to enroll their children in the schools where they work could be a step toward improving public school quality. Brinkmann (2013) also suggests that if dissatisfied parents, including teachers, have no alternative to private schools, community schools will have little incentive to improve. Thus, dynamic and visionary leadership is suggested as key approach to improve public school education quality.

Study results also emphasizes the role of facilities in fostering students' engagement in learning through curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities. For this, sufficient budget should be allocated to public education to make the necessary infrastructure and quality services available. The state should take the responsibility for providing quality education to all citizens (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2019) with sufficient funding since it is a public good. Limited financing in public education adversely impacts the quality of education (Asia South Pacific Association, 2018). Disadvantaged students

are disproportionately affected by low-quality public education compared to their wealthier counterparts (Hartell, 2011; Alfonso, 2008). To align with international standards, the education budget should constitute at least 6% of GDP and 20% of total public expenditure (Asia South Pacific Association, 2018; European Union, 2015). Research findings also indicate that a considerable number of secondary level permanent teachers choose private schools for their children's education due to the resource constraints within public schools. Private schools often boast lower student-teacher ratios compared to public schools (Brinkmann, 2013). David (2011) further highlights that public school teachers frequently face limitations in accessing diverse instructional materials to effectively elucidate curricular content. In this context, progressive taxation can be a viable strategy for generating funding for public education (Action Aid, 2017) to make provision of quality services to the children enrolled in public schools in Nepal. Thus, sufficient budget allocation is crucial for quality education services and it is the state's responsibility to provide quality education to all citizens by providing individual educational institution with required support.

Study results, furthermore, indicate that political interference in school affairs can lead to imbalances in staffing, misuse of resources, and a decline in the quality of education. The study also stresses the importance of separating education from politics to create a neutral and equitable learning environment. Political affiliations among teaching and non-teaching staff have hindered the effective implementation of educational reforms and adversely impacted the teaching and learning process. Supporting these findings, Shrestha (2014) warned that partisan politics among teachers could undermine the community school system. As a result, parents may feel

hesitant to send their children to public schools (Asia South Pacific Association, 2018) and think private schools as an alternative. Therefore, politically neutral working culture should be ensured to strengthen educational quality in Nepalese public schools.

The study also revealed the benefits of monitoring classroom activities, identifying areas for improvement, and providing targeted professional development support to teachers. Regular monitoring helps identify underperforming schools, teachers, and students early to provide timely interventions to enhance academic performance of students in public schools. Furthermore, the study findings suggest that knowledge and skills acquired by teachers through various training programs are often not effectively transferred into the classroom. The training received by many teachers is often superficial. The transfer of training into classroom practice remains a significant challenge in Nepal. Despite the government's substantial efforts to train community school teachers, traditional teaching approaches dominate the classroom (Department of Education, 2018). It means, inservice-training provided by the government does not contribute significantly to enhance and maintain the quality of public education. The poor quality of services in public schools compels parents to enroll their children in private schools, which can impose significant financial burdens (Bhattacharya, 2012) due to admission fees and tuition costs. Despite legal provisions for fee structures in private schools, they often charge higher fees for private education illegally (Nepal National Teachers Association, 2016). Therefore, rights to education for all can be translated into practice by strengthening public education through continuous professional development of teachers and institutionalizing monitoring and feedback mechanism.

Study results indicate that collaborative efforts between schools and communities are essential to enhance the quality of education. Students from educated families tend to perform higher than those from illiterate backgrounds (Ministry of Education, 2018; Hampden-Thompson et al., 2008). Children from wealthier families are more likely to attend school (Parker, 2008). Bourdieu further argues that a strong correlation exists between children's academic success and their family's social position (Megahed, 2008; Hampden-Thompson et al., 2008). Study findings also highlight the crucial role of families in advocating for improved resources and policies, monitoring school activities, and generating resources to strengthen both the physical and academic environment. Additionally, community engagement can hold schools accountable for student learning by fostering improved teaching practices and school management. Income level is another significant factor influencing school choice for children's education (Hampden-Thompson et al., 2008). The study further identifies that parents, including secondary-level permanent teachers, from middle and upper-class economic backgrounds often select private schools for their children's education. Thus, quality education necessitates mutual collaboration between schools and communities to receive required supports to strengthen the quality of education.

Moreover, the study also identified that public school teachers are generally more qualified than their private school counterparts. However, Brinkmann (2013) emphasizes that teacher qualifications do not necessarily correlate with effective teaching abilities. Private schools are often perceived to provide higher quality education compared to public schools. Parents, including secondary-level permanent teachers, choose private schools for their children due to the dedication of

the teaching staff (Yaacob et al., 2015). It is important to note that there is limited evidence to support the notion that larger school buildings and higher-degree teachers automatically lead to better quality education (Brinkmann, 2013). This implies that qualified teachers and well-equipped infrastructure alone are insufficient to guarantee quality education. True quality education therefore requires a holistic approach that prioritizes student learning by creating a conducive and supportive teaching and learning environment.

Students from wealthier schools tend to outperform those from poorer schools (Rooks, 2017). Study results suggest that public schools could consider implementing a fee-based model to fund additional facilities and services, while ensuring that basic education remains accessible to all students. The generated revenue could be used to improve school infrastructure, hire specialized staff, and offer a wider range of quality services. Families are aware that poor academic performance can lead to limited employment opportunities and lower standards of living (Brinkmann, 2013; Bray & Lykins, 2012). Consequently, they often prefer private schools for their children's education. A study by Bray and Lykins (2012) revealed that over half (53%) of public school students reported insufficient exercises, and 50% indicated difficulties in understanding classroom instruction. The Ministry of Education (2018) also highlights that teachers in schools with high student achievement often meticulously check students' homework, provide regular feedback, actively engage in reviewing exam answer-sheets, develop test items, and participate in various training programs. Availability of adequate resources is therefore considered another prerequisite for quality public education. Through these resources, schools can provide better infrastructure,

specialized staff, and a wider range of services.

Conclusions

Despite investing huge amount of money in public education in Nepal, the quality of services is not satisfactory as compared to private education. Improvement in the quality of public education in Nepal demands a multi-faceted approach that focuses on policy reform, curriculum development, teacher training, infrastructure enhancement, community engagement, monitoring and feedback. Comprehensive reforms need to be made by strengthening teacher training programs to develop evidence-based instructional skills, designing relevant curricula aligned with contemporary social needs, fostering dynamic leadership that prioritizes collaborative school culture, enhancing accountability for quality services, institutionalizing school area as zone of peace, strengthening home-school collaboration, and promoting effective monitoring and evaluation systems to improve the quality of public education in Nepal. Additionally, the government should prioritize increased funding considering international standard for ensuring equitable resource distribution to reduce reliance on private education. Schools and teachers alone cannot increase the quality of public schools to a desired level. All stakeholders therefore should join hands together to achieve common goal of providing quality public education to all. In this regard, the study helps all stakeholders improve the quality of public education by joining hands together to reduce parents' reliance on private education for their children.

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