

SOCIALISM IN EDUCATION: PROPAGANDA OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN NEPAL

Tika Raj Kaini

Lecturer of Anthropology, Tri-Chandra Multiple Campus

Nabaraj Dhakal

Lecturer of Sociology, Bhairabha Multiple Campus

Corresponding email: tikakaini75@gmail.com

Abstract

Mainstream political Parties have officially adopted the notion of socialism, also recognized in the constitution of Nepal, 2072. However, the commitment towards socialism is not in tandem with the practical considerations because of their attachment and penetration with neo-liberal policy. This paper aims to explore why state and political parties unlike their declared commitment towards state-sponsored education system tend to privatization and the role of political parties in this regard. The study is purely qualitative and it employs content analysis as the tool of collecting data. The finding of the study is that adaptation of neo-liberal policy in education system in Nepal contributes in supporting the privatization of educational institutions, creating two different layer of education.

Keywords: *Political parties, education, socialism, neo-liberalism, privatization*

Introduction

Mainstream political parties in Nepal have officially embraced the notion of socialism which is also recognized in the latest version of constitution of Nepal, promulgated in 2015 by the constituent assembly that states that Nepal is socialism oriented country. These parties basically are divided into different factions of communist parties and Nepali congress party. However, The parties in question includes Nepali congress, CPN(UML) and CPN(Maoists). The political parties are leaning to different states of scholarship

Communist parties hold the theoretical line of Marxist socialism. There is a rich tradition that scholars have defined socialism from numerous lenses even from Marxist frame concomitant with the change of time and structural transformation of society. For example, classical Marxism contradicts with the assumptions of Lenin and Mao to some degree with the commonality on the emphasis on state-sponsored education system. It is so hard to plainly indicate the statement of Marx on education. His projection of

'education for future' for Glenn Rikowski (2004) includes three elements: realms of freedom, critique and addressing human needs. Marx emphasized that education would be anti-capitalist. Therefore, education is an instrument of social revolution in classical Marxist tradition. The remarkable note of Marx is the need to connect labor and education. His argument about the role of state in managing education in socialism is worthy for discussion. Mike Cole (2007) argues that Marxist tradition of education has two goals: to understand the reproduction of education in capitalism and to undermine it. The function of education is to explore the exploitive nature of capitalism and prepare the working class for socialist revolution by invoking self-awareness within them. He further notes that labor and education should be joined in such that it succeeds to make people aware about the false education of bourgeoisie system.

Soviet Socialism adopted the true Marxist agenda of socialism in the early years. Education act of 18 October of 1918 largely emphasized on the full autonomy of the schools (Lauglo, 1988) . All the stakeholders were assigned the responsibility of forming curriculum collectively, which consisted the joint attempt of teachers, pupils and concerned local authorities. They gave secondary importance to textbook, made the curriculum on the spot and avoided corporal punishment to the students. Government restricted itself to the only general control over education. Lenin valued precedence the link between the theoretical and practical education.

Soviet socialism could not consistently stick to the value commitment and participation of all stakeholders in school management which was reflected in the education act of 2023 developed coterminous with the new economic policy. The education policy explicitly made a break way with the introduction of first five year plan of 1928 that focused on indoctrinating the youth towards the imperative to economic development and centralized control in education. The policy targeted the development of educated man power to work as the vehicles to safeguard the socialism and made the successful journey to communism. Soviet socialism, therefore, imposed bureaucratic control over education to produce soviet loyal citizens as the part of revolution.

Chinese model of education initiated by Mao Tse-Tung right after capturing the state machineries through revolution concentrated on rehabilitating educational sectors ravished by the former government. The most significant point here is that educational programs in China cannot be comprehended in one shot analysis, rather it requires the investigation in historical series beginning from first five -year plan, 1953-57; the Great Leap Farward, 1958-59 ; the Cultural Revolution, 1966-69; and post-cultural Revolution period, 1970-76 (Herschede, 1980). The first five-year plan inspired from Soviet model of economy focused on concerted efforts to invest in technologist orientation with the aim of the road of industrialization at the expense of agricultural farm. Great Leap Farward

concentrated on producing skill labor for the acceleration of industrialization and capital formation in parity with socialist ideology. During the Cultural Revolution, education policies reversed, concomitant with economy. Previously framed technologist programs shifted the pace of industrialization which, Mao doubted, would reinstate capitalism in China. Therefore, he began to focus on local needs- agricultural production. Prior education policies limited to empower few middle schools and colleges for technical manpower to comply with the objectives of high production had been substituted with educating primary school's children and expanding middle schools. In the 1970s, primary education was universal and made mandatory to the workers of industries. The centralizing bureaucratic schooling system had been replaced with decentralized system that revolutionary committee consisted of teachers, students, and peasants and workers began to manage school system.

Nepali Congress party always advocates democratic socialist education system in their manifestos and party's document passed by convention in different time. However, it is evidently clear that they have missed out implementing socialist democratic programs while in government. Social democracy unlike Marxist tradition that focuses on the instrumental role of the state in preparing manpower for further revolutionary action, aims to strengthen the state role in producing quality manpower in education involving concerned parties democratically in policy making without restricting the contribution of private sectors. Democratic socialist stance on governance in education takes democracy as its starting point (Hopkins, 2019). He states that stake holder accountability is a must in education. It aims to educate the youth with the spirits of democracy. Providing equal educational opportunities regardless of gender, social class and geographical background has been a fundamental idea in the Nordic education policies during the major part of the twentieth century. Later such politics were extended to include religion, ethnicity and special needs. "Access to education refers not only to education as a good that is free for everyone, but also to the possibility of taking advantage of it, and to experience personal benefits, that is, acquisition of knowledge of high quality and belonging to a social community (Arnesen and Lundhal, 2006, p-8)". In democratic socialist tradition, private education is not generally restricted, though state plays the major role.

Neo-liberal market economy in contrast takes the different turn to commercialize education for the sake of profit. Since the world market system takes the stronghold in contemporary world targeting the expansion of capitalism through surplus appropriation.

The capitalistic mode of production largely tends to marketize education system to meet the goals of capital accumulation. Latest version of neo-liberal economy has crippled the education system to the extent that aspirations of the people surrender to the marketization. Education has been developed in conformity with the needs of capitalist

expansion targeted to accumulate endless cycle of capital. Introduction of market friendly education system has resulted into the loss of socialist values. Universities today have been marketized. Therefore, knowledge production has surrendered to the feet of profit in capitalism. Denial Bell (1976) asserts that universities are placed at the center of production. Michael Burraway argues, “The University recognizes itself as a corporation that maximizes profit not only through increasing revenues, but also cheapening and degrading manpower by reducing tenured faculties, increasing the employment of low-paid adjunct faculties and outsourcing services” (Burraway, 2017). He further states that the privatization of education has led to distortion of knowledge through commodification.

Up to this this, I have brought the different authors to discuss the education system advocated by Karl Marx and his successors, mainly soviet socialism and Chinese revolution in brief. Marx emphasized education as form of consciousness to develop to critique on the existing exploitative nature of capitalism and prepare the roadmap for socialist revolution, Soviet Socialism placed the instrument role of education to comply with the planned centralized economic and administrative apparatus. Chinese socialism had different phases in education system. We can conclude from Marxist stance that state plays the key role in education and private sectors are heavily undermined. Similarly social democracy also emphasizes on the instrumental role of the state in managing education on its own, However, private sectors are not segregated. State sponsored education system has seen efficiently working in social democratic nations. However, time has changed with different ebb and flow. The state socialism they had exercised then doesn't exist any longer in Nepal. Constitutionally, state's responsibilities are acknowledged. Nonetheless, political parties are lured to the privatization of education. My contention is not to explore why they failed but to examine why the education system today even in socialism oriented countries, for example Nepal crushed aside with the market intervention and it is largely commoditized as argued by Burraway.

Objectives

The intension of this paper is to explore the reasons that state and political parties unlike their self-declared commitment to socialist programs, is highly tempted to adopt neo-liberal policies in education, resulting into the dominating role of market and undermining the role of the state. Moreover, this study also analyses the internal and external factor for privatization of education in Nepal after adopting neoliberal policies after 1990s. In addition, it examines the role of political parties in privatizing the education sectors and maximizing the number of private schools.

Research methods

This research entails the explanation about the socialist agenda in education. Political parties claim that they are socialist, but in practice, they are heavily influenced by the market. Therefore, they emphasize on commodifying the education to meet their vested interests. They pretend to stick to socialist agenda for election purpose because it earns public support. In this research, the causes of neoliberal market policies' dominance in education are sought to explore, unlike parties 'declared state-sponsored education system. Thus, the research is purely qualitative based on content analysis. This research is based on the review of secondary literature. State-market debate is the main debating issue to this reference. I reviewed the classical Marxist texts to discuss about the socialist stance communist parties represent. The texts are drawn from Marx, then soviet system of education and finally Chinese system of education initiated and advanced by Mao Tse Tung. After that, to discuss the socialist democratic stance followed by socialist democratic parties, Hopkin's (2019) and Arnesen and Lundhal's (2006) perspectives are invited in this study. Marxist and democratic socialist texts are brought to discussion because Nepali congress party since its inception has adopted democratic socialist programs and communist parties of Nepal in question has followed Marxist frame of education policies, however, both the parties do not seem to stick to their declared policies and surrendered to neoliberal policies- privatization of education sectors. To discuss this dimension, I have brought the arguments of Michael Burroway (2017) and Daniel Bell (1976) who argue how neoliberal policies have commoditized education for the sake of handful of capitalists.

Results and discussion

Neoliberalism and privatization of education: Internal and external factor

Education was nationalized during Panchayat regime in Nepal. After the restoration of Multi-party democracy in 1990, neoliberal policies were incorporated by the government that gave the impetus to the growing number of private schools and campuses. The attention of the state and political parties then centered on opening up the schools for the profit and sustaining their political life. The government also adopted liberal policy to expand educational access and establish proper system of education during the period from 1951 to 1960 (Poudyal, 2017). However, it accelerated after 1990s. The government initiated liberalization and privatization by the influence of many national and international factors.

The national factor was end of Panchayat regime and establishment of multiparty state.

The changed multiparty system paved the way for the openness replacing the closed party less system. Nepal's adopting liberalization and privatization could not be confined within the national factor. It has international dimension too. The accelerated process of privatization in India in 1990s and the rise of Deng in China with the open market and liberalization influenced Nepal to adopt neoliberal policies. Tilak (2002) states, "The 1990s saw a major turn in the history of contemporary higher education in India. The decade was one of turmoil, with an important development being the sustained efforts toward privatization of higher education in India. The financial privatization of higher education, through reduction in public expenditures and the introduction of cost-recovery measures was accompanied by policy measures toward the "direct" privatization of higher education." Privatization of higher education in India in 1990s impacted abundantly in adopting the policies of privatizing education in Nepal. Similarly, China's adopting the liberalization policies became significant in the 1980s in course of breaking away from the legacies of Maoist era and building the institutions to flourish capitalist market economy with the spirit of neoliberalism (Wu, 2010). The reform path that China has undertaken since the late 1970s has aligned it with this broader neoliberal context (Zhang, Andrew, & Rudkin, 2012).

Apart from the influence of the bigger nations India and China, many international agencies played the vital role in shaping the education system in Nepal .Discussion of emergence and development of education system in Nepal is completely impossible without the reference of international factors (Caddell, 2007). He further states, "The educational policy of Nepal is also heavily influenced by the external vision and wider development aid agenda of the donor agencies such as the USAID (United States Agency for International Development), UNICEF (United Nations International Children Emergency Fund), The World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and JICA(Japan International Cooperation Agency)" (Caddell, 2005).

From the discussion above, it is argued that privatization of education penetrated into Nepalese government and political parties not only with their intent, external factors played the instrumental role. Being connected with world system more openly and broadly after democracy, the emerging changes in India and China correlated with the adaptation of neoliberalism in Nepal, thus privatizing education system and other sectors as well.

Government failures and increasing private institutions

The increasing rate of private institutions in Nepal is due to the failure of government to manage the government education institutions ensuring quality. Private institutions

have grown substantially, especially in lower income countries, due to perceptions of government failures and increased availability of private schools in many price ranges (Joshi, 2019). Nepal is not an exception. According to national living standard survey, 1995 and 2010, 95.1 percent of government schools were in Nepal whereas only 1.9 percent of private schools in 1995. The data shows the remarkable growth of private institutions in Nepal over fifteen years. But the percentage of government schools declined to 65.9 whereas private schools rose to 26.8 percent in 2010. It shows the skyrocketing rise in the private institutions in Nepal after 1990. This pattern of growth is due to government unwilling to improve the government education that caused public perception towards these institutions pessimistic. The weak performances of the government institutions led the public to attract towards private institutions. The public perception of public schools is so deteriorating that parents are filled with utmost happiness with the enrolment of their kids in private schools neglecting the free education rhetoric of government. People even with low income are interested to board their children to the private schools. The reasons of lack of interest in parents for enrolment of their kids in public schools are explained by Marine de Talance in 2017. Reviewing old literature that emphasizes on excess demand model dealing with the incapacity of public schools to meet the demand of certain households due to space and budget constraints and differential demand model dealing with the quality of education and certain language of instructions, he adds two others indicators. They are objective and subjective measures. The former deals with the objective condition in which private schools excel public schools in multiple ways and the latter deals with subjective measures in which parents perceive that private schools are better than public ones.

The findings of Talance (2017) are coterminous with the case of Nepal to great extent. In Nepal, enrolment in public schools does not become the priority of parents as far as they can afford. Politicization of schools invites battlefield in which multiple power centers encounter to take schools authority under their control. Legal provision has curtailed political membership to the teachers. But the implementation is so bleak that political activities of teachers surpass their professional responsibilities resulting into daily news in newspaper about the fact that courses are not completed in time: teachers prefer to participate parties meeting rather than teaching in the classroom, books are not accessible to the remote students in time so on and so forth. Political parties' leaders without any hesitation come up with the statement that certain teachers are affiliated with them if some actions are initiated by education sectors authority. Teachers rally as the cadres of political parties in course of campaigning in election. Moreover, many teachers are appointed on the basis of their contribution in political activities. The failure of government in maintaining quality education in public schools making them free of political intervention has provided the ground of accelerating the private schools in Nepal.

One finding of Tolance that does not fit well in our case is that the parents are not interested in public school due to space and budget constraints. While compared with private schools, the investment in public schools is much heavier. However, schools to impart education free of cost as per the provision of constitution lacks the abundance of budget due to insufficient teachers' quotas in handful of schools who are performing better on one hand and some schools are either merged or closed due to the lack of the students on the other. 11 percent of total budget, government had committed to allocate at least 20 percent in national and international forum, has been allocated to education sectors much of which is generally spent in salary and infrastructure building lagging behind the teaching learning achievement. Private schools' teachers having less paid than the ones in public schools are contributing for the better results means the fact that public schools are responsible for the deteriorating achievement of education (Zhang, Andrew, & Rudkin, 2012).

I argue based on the aforementioned description that rise in private institutions at expense of government education resulted due to the lack of responsibility of government to improve state sponsored education. Constitutionally provisioned free and compulsory education up to secondary level became just the slogan to popularize political parties' image in front of people because of their reluctance to advance the quality.

Issue of privatization in the manifesto of political parties

The socialist dream of Nepal has been crippled by the penetration of neo-liberal policies adopted after the restoration of democracy in 1990. The long-standing socialist perspective of revolutionary parties took a opposite turn once they positioned themselves as ruling class in a new scenario. They chose neoliberal programs. The vitality of liberalization resulted into privatizing the public corporations. The state stepped back from its role and surrendered to the spirit of market. Pramod Bhatta and Tejendra Pherali (2017) have reviewed the manifestos of major political parties from the first general election after the restoration of multiparty party democracy till date. Nepali congress party has accepted the contribution of private education in educational development of the nation. Nepali Congress government formed after the general election of 1991 embraced liberal education policy coterminous with the assumption that Private schools are required to enhance quality education (Poudyal and Chherti, 2008 quoted in Poudyal, 2013). It has also mentioned that private institutions should contribute in social responsibilities, guaranteeing right to education to marginalized sections of the country. This party also advocates for lessening the disparities between private and public education. The collaboration of state and government in improving quality education has been emphasized. The manifestos of Nepali Congress over the years have remained relatively consistent regarding the provision of private and public education. Unlike socialist

values. It has forgotten that state plays the significant role in ensuring quality education. Public ownership of the means of production is the basis for socialism (Poudel, 2023). As a result, proliferation of market role takes place. In practice, it must be noted that many congress leaders have run the expensive private institutions poor people fail to afford. Therefore, socialism in the manifesto of congress proves to be an illusion.

Now let's turn to the analysis of the leftist parties of Nepal. CPN (United Marxist-Leninist) party has historically evolved refuting the commercialization of education sectors which is reflected in many parts of manifestos. It has also emphasized reducing the disparities of equality of opportunities, improving the education of public schools with the increased investment of education and regulating private education (Bhatta and Pherali, 2017). CPN (UML) policy towards education was that the part of education in which government cannot contribute should be left to the private sector (Poudyal, 2013). Therefore, the Marxist socialist agenda, CPN (United Marxist-Leninist) continuously claimed to adopt, the name of party itself reflects), that education including all the means of production should be nationalized to produce equal opportunities and prepare the manpower for socialist revolution disappears from the discussion inside and outside party, let alone its implementation.

Similarly, NCP (Maoist Center) changed its standpoint unexpectedly over the years after its comprehensive peace agreement with the government. The 40-point demand forwarded before staging people war in 1996 stated the need of elimination of private education and nationalizing them to free education up to 12 class. In the election of first constituent assembly, it had demanded the end of commercializing in education. In the Second CA election and afterwards, the voice of Maoists changed from the end of commercialization of education to the control and regulation of private investment (Bhatta, 2017). Moving far away from the classical Marxist stance, Communist parties of Nepal gradually shifted the focus from the nationalization of education to public-private partnership resulting into the degradation/ promotion? Of their previous thought to social democracy. The commodification of education tallying with the neoliberal market as argued by Burraway above forcibly converted the attention of political parties from the socialist dream to capitalist reality.

Conclusion

Nepal is officially recognized as the socialism oriented country. Similarly, mainstream political parties have verbally committed to the agenda of socialism. However, they have situated themselves very far from the practice of socialism. As far as the education is concerned, neoliberalism has crippled the assumption of free education rhetoric in Nepal and compelled the state to follow the pathway to privatization. It rooted deep in

education in Nepal due to the collaboration of internal and external factors. The state and political parties are highly responsible to accelerate the private schools against the consolidation of public schools in every aspects. The irony is the fact that their manifesto advocates socialist orientation in educational sectors. Therefore, the jargon, socialism has only been used for public consumption.

References

- Arnesen, A. L., & Lundahl, L. (2006). Still social and democratic? Inclusive education policies in the Nordic welfare states. *Scandinavian journal of educational research*, 50(3), 285-300.
- Arno, R. F. (1980). *Comparative Education and World-Systems Analysis*. *Comparative Education Review*, 24 (1), 48–62. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1187395>.
- Bell, D. (2000). The coming of post-industrial society. *The Urban Lawyer*, 6, 738.
- Bhatta, P. (2015). Privatization through affiliation: Trajectories of higher education expansion in post-1990 Nepal. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 20(2), 303-333.
- Bhatta, P. (2015). State and education privatization in Nepal. *Neoliberalism, Critical Pedagogy and Education*, 105.
- Burawoy, M. (2017). Social movements in the neoliberal age. In *Southern resistance in critical perspective* (pp. 21-35). Routledge.
- Caddell, M. (2007a). Education and change: A historical perspective on schooling, development and the Nepali nation-state. In K. Kumar & J. Oosterheld (Eds.), *Education and Social Change in South Asia* (pp. 251– 284). New Delhi, India: Orient Longman. Retrieved from <http://oro.open.ac.uk/2907/1/caddell-History.pdf>.
- Carney, S., & Bista, M. B. (2009). Community Schooling in Nepal: A Genealogy of Education Reform since 1990. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(2), 189–211. <https://doi.org/10.1086/597394>.
- Cole, M. (2007). *Marxism and educational theory: Origins and issues*. Routledge.
- De Talancé, M. (2020). Private and Public Education: Do Parents Care About School Quality? *Annals of Economics and Statistics*, 137, 117 <https://doi.org/10.15609/annaeconstat2009.137.0117>.
- GoN (2015). *Constitution of Nepal-2072*. Kanuni Pustakalaya, Kathmandu
- Herschede, F. (1980). Chinese Education and Economic Development: An Analysis of Mao Zedong's (Mao Tse-tung's) Contributions. *The Journal of Developing Areas*, 14(4), 447– 468. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4190810>.
- Joshi, P. (2019). The growth, roles and needs of the private education system: Private stakeholder perspectives from Nepal. *International Journal of Educational*

Development, 65, 57-67.

- Lauglo, J. (1988). Soviet Education Policy 1917-1935: From Ideology to Bureaucratic Control. *Oxford Review of Education*, 14(3), 285–299. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1050073>.
- Onta, P. (2000). Education: Finding a Ray of Hope. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(47), 4093–4096. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4409973>.
- Paudel, R. P. (2023). Experience and Expectation of Socialism: Principle versus Practice in Nepal. *Molung Educational Frontier*, 205-229.
- Poudyal, C. S. (2013). Neoliberalism, Privatization and Education in the Republic of Nepal. In *Re-imagining the Creative University for the 21st Century* (pp. 159-170). Brill.
- Regmi, K. D. (2021). Nepali Lifeworld and Its Higher Education System: A Critical Assessment of the Dis/Connection. In B. Hall & R. Tandon (Eds.), *Socially Responsible Higher Education: International Perspectives on Knowledge Democracy* (pp. 42–54). Brill. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctv1v7zbn5.10>.
- Rikowski, G. (2004). Marx and the Education of the Future. *Policy Futures in Education*, 2(3-4), 565-577.
- Rojek, C. (1984). Typologies of Education and the Capitalist World System. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 5(3), 213–225. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1392686>.
- Tilak J. B. G. (2014). Private Higher Education in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 49(40), 32–38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24480821>.
- Wu, F. (2010). How neoliberal is China's reform? The origins of change during transition. *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 51(5), 619-631.
- Zhang, Y., Andrew, J., & Rudkin, K. (2012). Accounting as an instrument of neoliberalisation? Exploring the adoption of fair value accounting in China. *Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal*, 25(8), 1266-1289.