

Around Contemporary Educational Issues: The Opinion of School Teachers of Nepal

Submitted to
Danish Support to Secondary Education
Kathmandu, Nepal

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Study Team

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Preface

In the recent years, many issues are identified in the field of education. These issues have adverse effect on the quality education. But systematic study on how the teachers perceive these issues has not been conducted so far. Furthermore, there is no practice of considering teacher's viewpoints and ideas in decision-making process. Since teachers' ideas and experiences are hardly been included in the decisions, they render less cooperation. In this context this study was conducted with the intention of exploring teachers ideas and views about major issues in education. This study is beneficial to both the policy people and implementators. For those who work at policy level can incorporate the options that are identified to address the educational issues. Similarly, for those who are working at implementation level can use the study findings and options to orient themselves about the current issues.

During this study many people helped at different stages. We would like to thank those teachers who fully cooperated with the researchers and allowed them to observe their classes, and those who enthusiastically participated in the focus group discussions and in interviews. School administrations and District Education Officers who facilitated the researchers in their field works also deserve our appreciation.

Finally we would like to thank the Danish Support to Secondary Education, Consultancy team for providing financial and technical inputs to conduct this study.

Study Team

Context

Educational issues are the bi-product of the larger social system. The interplay of the social system with the national education system generates more issues at the school level. These issues directly or indirectly impact the teaching learning system. It is then linked to the teachers at individual and the organizational level. This is where this study tried to identify major issues, explore teacher's perception towards these issues and come up with different options to resolve the issues. In this study, both the private and the public schools were consulted because they have different types of operating modalities. The nature of the issues and the options to resolve those issues were also different to some extent.

Methodology

Three researchers were fielded for data collection. One was fielded in the mountain district Rasuwa. The second was sent to Kathmandu valley. And the third researcher was fielded in Kailali district, the southern plain. In consultation with District Education Officer (DEO), they identified the best and the worst schools to be observed in the district. Two public and two private schools were figured out from among the best and the worst schools. The researchers visited the school, observed the classroom, did in-school focus group discussion with the teachers, and conducted in-depth interview as per when they felt it necessary.

Each researcher had a list of the issues that are frequently discussed in local and national forums. The list was prepared by going through some newspapers, magazines and research reports. The purpose of preparing the list was to help the field researchers by supplying them a guideline to initiate discussion with the teachers. The information thus collected was thematically analyzed and issues were generated accordingly. After the field visit, all the researchers gathered in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. They discussed with the consultants. This meeting helped outline the report. At the same time, it was helpful to develop options to resolve the issues that were raised in the field.

Each researcher visited field for two weeks. In the third week, they came to Kathmandu for field reflection. Prior to go to the field, the researchers were involved in developing the checklist, reflecting their biases, and coming to a consensus for data collection approach. The consultants facilitated the deliberation process. Prior to go for data collection, a focus group discussion was organized in one of the schools of Kathmandu valley. Both the consultants were there to understand the field situation, guide the researchers in conducting focus group discussion, and ensure common understanding among the researchers. A research assistant supported the field activity in Kathmandu.

The post data analysis session was organized in Kathmandu. The international consultant along with the local consultants, researchers, and research assistant participated in the session. This session helped to shape the reporting format. At the same time, it gave opportunity to be more reflective.

Going through the above process, researchers gathered teachers' opinion about the education issues. The issues thus identified are grouped into different themes. In each theme, there are options to resolve issues that were identified during the course of study. They are categorically discussed mentioned below.

Contemporary issues and possible options

Issue 1: Teacher Management

The incompatibility of the teachers' orientation with the systemic expectation created problems in the field of teacher management. Even the decisions made at the macro level generate and or perpetuate issues in education. The teacher management includes varieties of activities such as teacher's hiring and firing, teacher incentives, and teacher education. In this study also these issues were discussed. The findings of the discussions were as follows.

Two distinct approaches are apprehended in the hiring and firing of the teachers. In the public system, the teachers are hired by public advertisement. There are also temporary teachers who are hired by the recommendation of school management committee (SMC), DEO, and village development committee (VDC). The temporary teachers can be fired by the hiring agency. But the permanent teachers are rarely fired. But when there is a need for firing, the Ministry of Education and Sports takes move. On the contrary, the private school has its own system. The principal along with the management committee hires and fires the teacher. Because of the differences in the hiring and the firing system, there have been different types of issues. However, the common issues in hiring and firing the teachers are (a) subjective decision (b) favoritism and nepotism (c) appointment of under qualified teachers (d) presence of fake certificate holders.

Differences are apprehended in the hiring and firing system of the teachers in private and the public schools. For example, the private schools give assignment to the teachers without appointment. In these schools there was no roles of the DEO in teacher appointment. S/he does not interfere either. There is a high turn over of the teachers. The teachers are hired and fired with SMC's one-sided decision. Teachers have no place to go against this hiring and firing decisions. There is no provision for the promotion of teachers. The public school system has its own problem in hiring and firing. There is a gap between hiring, firing, and promotion systems. The gaps, as identified by the researchers, had different sources. Some of the gaps were the bi-product of the system. For example, more teachers are hired than the actual payroll. These teachers are basically clustered in the city centers and the road corridors creating the problem of redeployment. The other types of gaps were the result of the administrative incompetence. For example, there was no advertisement for teaching position for the last five years. Because of this situation the temporary teachers, who were waiting to be permanent, inculcated

frustration or prepared for quitting the job. Thus the schools were left with the unmotivated teachers.

Why these things occur? Is this the structural problem or the cultural problem? Is this the "regime of truth"? Is this a political culture? In order to explore the answer of these questions, the researchers did focus group study. This study figured out that there have been structural and cultural problems. The frequent change in the rules and regulations made the structure fluid. This fluidness gave platform for the political leaders and the cadres to manipulate the system. This is very true in the case of public school. Regarding the private school, the researchers identified the cultural problems, but they were apprehended at the micro levels. For example, in most cases, the SMCs of the private schools appointed their "afnomanchhe" (relatives/ acquaintances). They fire the teachers on the basis of their subjective judgment.

The discussion above helped to conclude (a) macro level decisions have direct effect on the hiring, firing and promotion of the public school teachers. The private schoolteachers on the other hand are affected by the micro level decisions (b) politicians exercise their power in the teacher management of the public school. In other words there is a highly politicized hiring, firing and promotion system in the public school (c) school system is compelled to compromise with the quality of the teachers due to the structural, cultural, and political trends.

Options ahead

The conclusion led to propose the following options for better teacher management system:

- The present teacher's service commission requires readjustment. This readjustment demands the representation of the public service commission for the selection of the teachers. This commission will provide license to the selected teachers.
- There is a need of objective criteria for the selection of the teachers. The criteria would include research skill to analyze the classroom situation and the school catchments area. The analysis requires the skills to examine the education from socio-economic, cultural, ethnic/caste, and gender perspectives.
- The newly hired teachers will work for a year under the probationary period. During this period, s/he will show their ability both in teaching and research. This internship design trains the teachers in the practical situation.
- At the end of probation period, the teacher will give a seminar on what s/he gathered from the research project and internship. The participants of such seminar consist of SMC, VDC/municipality, teachers, community elites, parents, and teachers from the neighboring schools.

Issue 2: Supervision

Nepal initiated supervision system in an inspectorial design. It did not meet the purpose of education development. Slowly the time demanded departure from inspectorial design to the adaptation of supervisory design with the increased number of schools. Currently, Nepal has been practicing both the inspectorial and the supervisory design. Under this design, a supervisor does both the inspectorial and supervisory jobs. The pedagogical as well as non-pedagogical inputs are expected from the supervisors. In order to meet these expectations, there are two types of supervisors, Resource Person for primary level and School Supervisor for secondary and higher secondary level.

There are resource centers (RCs) to ensure close supervision of the public primary schools. RPs are assigned to supervise the school within his/her resource center cluster. Similarly, public School Supervisors are assigned for the specific areas of the district. In this structure, the researchers explored the current supervisory practices and the issues associated with them. As they found, there have two explicit dimensions of supervisory function. One, it is paralyzed and two there are arguments around the practices. Those who found the supervisory system paralyzed did not see systemic control over supervisors. They did not see the connection of the supervision neither with the school nor the system. In other words, the schoolteachers did not consider the suggestions given by the supervisors. Similarly, the DEO does not respond to the suggestions provided by the supervisors. Thus, this side of the teachers' opinion about the supervisory practices echoes critical perspective. These critical thinkers came up with the idea that these paralyzed supervisors "should rather be deputed as schoolteachers".

Those who made arguments against the supervision system highlighted the dysfunctionality of the supervisory practices. This argument brought the point that the supervisory practice confined to crisis management rather than the quality improvement. The supervisors were irregular. Neither the schoolteachers nor the SMCs show the interest in the supervisor's work. In the words of the teachers, "the supervisors lack adequate knowledge and skills, they are weaker than the school teachers." Moreover, the teachers argued that those supervisors, who have direct access to power, were less responsive to their jobs. They rather were considered as threat to the teachers.

Since the government supervisors are not mandated to supervise private schools, the teachers from these schools had different experiences. These schools adapted in-house supervision mechanism where usually headteachers supervise teachers' activities. But the government supervisors appear in times of crisis. They usually come on call from the school administration. In the school, according to a teacher, "they supervise those teachers whom the school administration would like to get rid off".

The concerns of the teachers about the supervision system yielded some conclusions. They are (a) the heavy investment in supervision system has been able to promote quality (b) the private schools showed an option that the head teachers can serve as close supervisors (c) the issue of appropriateness of external supervision emerged (d) the supervisory support is essential but the modality has to be reconsidered.

Options ahead

The analysis of the issues that are around supervision system and the conclusions derived from it helped generate some options for the improvement. They are as follows:

- In order to provide technical support to the teachers, secondary education development unit (SEDU) and RC can be developed as community teacher resource center by equipping with the current information.
- The supervision report can be shared with the teachers and SMC members to promote collegiality among the teachers and to update the SMC members about teacher/school performance
- There is an option to initiate inter-school supervision in SEDU and RC systems under their recurrent teacher training programs.
- Para-collegial supervision system can be developed in schools by grooming those teachers who have supervisory skills.
- Voluntary supervisory team consisting of academics, educationists, community service providers (CSPs) can be prepared to help teachers both individually and in-group.

Issue 3: Curriculum and Textbook

Curriculum and textbooks were interchangeably used in Nepal for long. It was in the 1970s that the idea of curriculum was introduced. But all the teachers are yet to be oriented about the differences between the curriculum and textbooks. Amidst this situation, the teachers were consulted to identify the curricular issues. As they identified, there were many issues that were associated with curriculum. One, the present curriculum is urban-biased. Because of these biases, the rural students were not getting their life related contents and hence the education was taking the students out of the lived context. Two, the curriculum was not bringing the local issues by linking these issues with the national context and exploring their relationship with the international context. In the words of the teachers, "our students learn both the national and the international contents in isolation: they do not match them up". Besides, some of the teachers were of the opinion that there have been no efforts to develop local curriculum, or contextualize the national and international contents to the local situation. Three, there was an issue of general curriculum with vocational slant and vocational curriculum with a ladder to general subjects. The teachers who saw the direct relationship between curriculum and employment formed the opinion

that the curriculum did not prepare children for work-world. But the teachers, who did not like to equate curricular learning with the work world, preferred quality education in the general subjects. Four, the frequent change of the curriculum and the textbooks made the teachers confused. This confusion, in the words of a teacher brought operational issue.

Can curriculum alone help teacher to translate its objective into action? Almost all of the teachers said "no". In this "no" they figured out the relationship between the textbooks and the curriculum. As they found, the intent of the curriculum has not been translated into the textbooks. "There are teachers' guide, but they are out of the access of the teacher" argued a public school teacher. She further remarked, "The pedagogical process does not match with the curricular intent." Her observation gave birth to many issues that were related to the curriculum and the textbooks. The issues were (a) how to prepare teachers to examine the existing curriculum vertically and horizontally at the local level? (b) How to develop local contents to bridge the gaps? (c) How to involve teachers in the preparation of textbooks? (d) How to address the curricular and textual issues through the pedagogical processes? (e) How to ensure that all teachers are able to analyze the curriculum and the textbooks critically and make them applicable at the local level? (f) How to finish the course with the changed educational session? (g) How to balance the content load in each subject? (h) how to make foreign curriculum and textbooks corresponding to each other? (i) how to produce and use educational materials at the local level?

Don't we need English as a compulsory subject in public school? Do we need practical exam in English subject for the school-leaving certificate at the end of grade ten? Where can we get educational materials that are required by the textbooks and the curriculum? How to make link local culture with the national culture and the national with the international culture? The teachers frequently raised these questions. In the first question, the teachers brought the utilitarian perspective. They saw the widely use of English and visualized that a child should be immersed or submersed in the English language from the very first day of his/her school. In the second question, the teachers brought the practical problem to handle the exam. In fact, the study schools had no language lab and there were no teachers who were knowledgeable to the practical side of language teaching. Apart from the issues, the teachers figured out conceptual and editorial mistakes in some of the textbooks.

The analysis of the curricular issues generated some conclusions. They are: (a) There is a gap between the lived life of the children and the pro-urban elitist's curricular expectations (b) there is a need of blended curriculum that gives a taste of both the general and vocational curricula (c) teachers require curriculum and textbooks analyzing skills both vertically and horizontally (d) teachers need pedagogical skills to link the textual knowledge with the everyday life of the children (e) teachers expect the linkage of private schools' curricular materials with the general schools and make them corresponding to each other.

Options ahead

The reflection of teachers gave some options to improve the current curricular and textual materials. These options are mentioned hereunder:

- The schoolteachers, SMC members, community elites of each school or the schools of a geographical/cultural location can put their heads together. This interaction session helps generate the frame of local curricula and textual materials. This frame can be developed to produce local curriculum and local textbooks. These materials can address the everyday life of the children and also be helpful to bridge the gap between the urban biased curricula and the local needs of the people.
- The pedagogical change can take students to vocational world. For example, the teacher can ask the students to bring their experience in the classroom, encourage the children to value each others vocation, and think more for the betterment of each vocation. The project work to the students can take students to the vocational world. The local exhibition/discussion forums on people's knowledge/skills ensure vocationalization of the general curricula and textbooks.
- The in-school curricular and textbook analysis sessions with the teachers help develop analyzing skills. With the help of these skills, each teacher will be barefoot analyzer of the curricular and textual materials at the local level. The same analysis session may help teachers to examine the connection of the curricular and textual materials of the private schools with the general schools.
- Through the extensive consultation process, the teachers of each community can be made a part of the curricular and textual material producers. The district Education Officer can be instrumental to organize such consultation forums in each RC/SEDU or the convenient locations.
- The policy change in producing textual materials minimizes their urban bias. In order to do so, there should be policy to allow teachers and the community elites write the textual materials and/or select the textual materials that are available from the market. This "open door policy" in producing and using textual material eliminates the current monopoly of the material-producing agency.
- Curriculum and textual material producing cadres from among the teachers can be developed. These cadres require short-term orientation and encouragement.
- A national/local/regional regulatory frame can be developed to ensure the inclusion of patriotic contents in the curricula and the textual materials of the private schools.
- The local level material production competition program can help produce materials at the community level. The participants of the competition program can be drawn from students, teachers, parents, community elites, and people of other walks of life. Each year such competition program can yield many educational materials. Once the educational materials are ready, the teachers can go for in-house training for their appropriate use.

Issue 4: Teacher training

About half century ago, Nepal introduced teacher-training program. But the design of the course left some unanswered questions. The exemplary questions are: Do we need theoretical contents for teacher training? Do we need academic equivalency of the training? Do we confine our teacher training to classroom teaching only? Amidst these unsolved questions, there have been researches to assess the performance of the trained teachers. These research reports revealed that there have been differences in the performances of the trained and the untrained teachers. But the differences were not significant. However, MOES is putting money to train teachers. But the policies/strategies are changed time and again. For example, the NESP (1970-75) advocated compulsory training to be a permanent teacher. After a decade, teacher-training program was relaxed to respond the demands of the teachers' organization. Then a move came to promote package training. This "diluted" package training program was considered as one of the contributing force for the ill performance of the teachers. The reason was that even a teacher with one package training was considered as trained. This consideration devalued the teacher training. Besides, the training could not respond the instructional problem of the school system. In this context, the teachers were asked to figure out the issues related to the teacher training. The following were the identified issues:

Content, pedagogy, application, and policy decisions of the training gave birth to many issues. Whether the teachers need content specific knowledge to be taught? Whether they need pedagogical know how to translate their content knowledge into classroom situation? Whether the teachers need support and the skills to translate the learning into real life situation? Whether there should be a firm teacher training policy for a decade or so? Analyzing the concerns of the teachers in relation to the training, the researchers came up with the above questions.

Exploring the practicality of the training, the researchers identified another sets of issues. "The FOE's practice teaching program is a dust in eye: It has no practical use. In fact it is a ritual" remarked a teacher. His remark showed the institutional weakness of the teacher-training program. The weakness that he perceived was the bi-product of many things. However, he ended up by saying that the FOE training is a "khichadi" (potpourri) of teacher education and teacher training. In the training part, the potential and the in-service teachers could not get chance to situate themselves in the real life situation. In other words, the training became theoretical. Even the practice teaching and the practicum became ritual. Amidst this situation, the respondents of this study helped generate the question, can this "ritualized training" ensure the practical use of training? The answer is definitely "no". In this "no" answer, the respondents identified the shortcomings of the FOE program. At the same time, they indicated that there is room for the improvement of FOE program.

The practical side of teacher selection for training was another source of issue. "Whoever comes to the DEO office choose "aphnu manchhe." This embodied nature of teacher selection process ignored meritocracy, eligibility, and any other explicit criteria. What it

promoted is the chakari and bhansun culture, the servitude culture and the culture of source and force. Because of these built in nature of the selection criteria, the training did not reach to the eligible person.

The absence of pre-service teacher training program yielded another sets of issues. A person without the attitude to be a teacher got entry into the teaching profession. Besides, there were no in-house training programs to orient public school teachers. The case was not true to the private school teachers. They had in-house training sessions organized by the school itself. "How can a teacher perform better" asked a public school teacher. His question breed some issues that could be resolved by introducing pre-service training program to the teachers.

"Training opportunity as an incentive to the teacher is given to the followers or the aphnu manchhe" remarked a public school teacher. His remark questioned the input to the teacher-training program. In the process of training, another teacher said, "I was there in the training program for a month during my one year's course work and still I got pass mark." This expression of the teacher gave a clue about the intensity of the knowledge that he held. In other words, there are issues in the selection of the trainees, in the regularity of the trainees in the classroom. Then how can there be a quality training?

"Trainer, facilitator, preacher, and note-giver have been the characteristics of the teacher" argued a private school teacher. Her classification of the teacher educators challenges the quality of the trainers. She found four types of teacher educators in FOE. Type one-teacher educators were good trainers. These trainers could bring the local context and link the context with FOE course requirements. Type two teacher educators were good facilitators. These facilitating teacher educators were helpful in promoting the learners' potentialities. Type three teacher educators were preachers. Their teaching and action never complied with each other. Type four teacher educators were the note-givers. They used to give notes to the students. And in response, they used to expect that the students write the same note in the exam. In the observation of the responding teacher, FOE has a huge number of preacher and note-giver teacher educators. This observation helped generate issues in the selection and orientation of the teacher educators. At the same time, it brought issues that were related to the level of expertise of the teacher educators.

"There have been no regulatory framework for private school, they are in their own" a head teacher raised his concern. His concern showed anarchy of the private school. This anarchical situation yielded three types of issues. One, private school is a rivalry institution of the public system. Two, its potentialities are unused for the benefit of the public school. Three, the private school remained as anarchical institution. In all these issues, there was a differential treatment of the government to the private and the public school teachers. Even in the teacher training, the teachers of the private schools were excluded. But SEDU is exception to it in a sense that it provides certain quota for private schools and/or arrange on request training to private school teachers. In both the arrangements, SEDU does not provide other facilities such as tea and daily allowance.

The deliberations above helped derive some conclusions. They were (a) favoritism/nepotism in the selection of teachers contributed to low quality input in teacher training (b) teacher training is confused with teacher education (c) training is inadequately applied in the classroom situation (d) compulsory pre-service teacher training is urgently needed (e) partnership of the government with private school for their teacher training is an avenue.

Options ahead

On the basis of the above conclusion, the following options are proposed to resolve the issues in teacher training.

- Two-pronged approach to teacher training can be initiated. In one pronged, compulsory pre-service teacher training program can be enforced. In the second pronged, in-school teacher training program can be introduced compulsorily. For pre-service training, there is a need of open schools for teacher training. Project approach can be the training modality; individual presentation with the group of experts can be the evaluation system; and open text exam can be modality of the final exam.
- Teacher education and teacher training can be separated right from the intent to evaluation. Teacher training on the other hand can include only the practical problems of the teachers. Sociological as well as pedagogical approach to address the problem can be introduced in the teacher-training program.
- The urban teachers can be supported with the expert services through telephone, letter writing, occasional visit, joint teacher research projects, and audio videocassettes programs. This teacher service program can be organized at both the individual and the group levels.
- Exchange visit and the post visit sharing sessions can resolve the issues that are associated with teacher training program. This can be done at the RC/SEDU/school levels.
- On pay training to the teachers of the private school is an option to ensure training for them. At the same time there is an option to develop collaborative training program. The collaborator of the proposed program would be the teachers' organizations of the private school and the government. Partnership program can be developed at the national level, district level and the local level. DEO unit at the district level can coordinate these training activities.

Issue 5: Incentives to the teachers

Affirmation and negation are the two modes of incentives. In the affirmative incentive, a person is encouraged or motivated to ensure the best use of his/her potentialities. The negative incentive on the other hand restricts to use his/her evil actions. But the education act, education rules and regulations, and the codes of conduct of the teachers provide knowledge that they are the sets of negative incentives. In other words, there are many words and sentences that restrict teachers. Amidst this heap of "negative incentives" teachers were asked to express their concerns.

Who gets affirmative and or negative incentives? What have been the issues that are associated with teachers' incentive programs? The respondents of this study figured out the following issues.

"We don't know who gets affirmative incentive and why s/he gets it?" said a teacher. His words were powerful enough to raise the transparency issue of teacher incentive programs. "Yes, there are eligible criteria but those who ignores these criteria are considered as powerful person," remarked a public school teacher. Her voice gave a perspective to understand the nature of "transparent criteria" in the field of teacher incentive program.

"I don't know why I was awarded last year?" asked a question with the researcher. His question itself was a proof that a person cannot assess his/her work and claim for appropriate incentive. This situation was itself an issue in the field of teacher incentive program.

Who gets the affirmative/negative incentives? In response to this question, almost all of the respondents unanimously said "those who gets political favor/torturer". The most favored teachers win affirmative incentives and the tortured teachers get negative incentive. These arguments of the public school teachers provided knowledge that politicization has been the issue in the field of teacher incentive program.

"The flexible criteria for the teacher incentive programs created issue" told a teacher. His observation was supplying the information that the criteria were manipulative. Each political and or bureaucratic leader could manipulate the same criteria for the benefits of his/her apphnu manchhe. And in the words of a teacher "the leaders have been using this manipulative power for years and they will be doing for years, because they have no honesty."

Promotion of the teacher is another issue. For years, the public school teachers were not promoted. Some years back, there has been a system to promote teachers. But the ratio of the promotees is 1:10 and 1:7. In other words, there is one first class teacher out of ten-second class teachers, and 1-second class teacher out of seven third class teachers. This promotion ratio of the teacher and the delayed system of teacher promotion were reported as the issues in teacher incentives.

"Virtually there are no opportunities for professional updating. A teacher is old wood for ever." This observation of a public school teacher did not comply with the observation of the private school teacher. In the words of a private school teacher, "he is forced to be a green wood to remain in the profession all by himself/herself". Here the issue is how can we update the teachers?

"For our government, we are the offspring of the step mother; and for the principal, we are "moramori" (a demeaning expression) assessed a teacher of the private school about

his context to get incentive program. Here the issue is how can we find the workable incentive system for the private school?

The issues that were reported to be associated with teacher incentive program can be concluded as (a) politicization derailed the teacher incentive program from its objective (b) professionalism could not emerge among the teachers (c) teacher management is jeopardized because of the favoritism/nepotism (d) private schools teachers are ignored by the incentive system.

Options ahead

What could be done to resolve the above issues? Researchers discussed with the teachers, reflected the study findings and came to the conclusion that there are some options that can ensure teacher management in general and teacher incentive program in particular. They are:

- Transparency of the teacher incentive criteria and advocacy of the provision are the first options for the effective implementation of both the affirmative/negative incentive programs. The government circular and the recurrent training programs can be the mechanism to carry out the transparency and the advocacy messages to the teachers.
- Incentive programs can be designed at the local/cluster/district/national levels. In each level, the eligibility criteria for incentive programs can be discussed and finalized. The concerned agencies can match the resources and create incentive fund. This fund can be used for providing incentives to the teachers of private and the public schools. The best use of affirmative incentive program helps reduce the use of negative incentive program/punishment system.
- Professional updating of the teachers is itself an incentive system. In order to ensure this opportunity for all teachers, there can be different programs such as (a) creative art exhibition program at the local/cluster/district/national levels (b) literary competition program (c) research sharing sessions at the local levels (d) open learning system for further learning (e) termination of the RC/SEDU as a clearing house of the information (f) initiation of teachers' publication (g) creation of educational museums at the community/school/RC/cluster (h) movement for the identification of the best teacher/school of the year/month.

Issue 6: School management committee

The buzzwords such as partnership, cooperation, and community support have been used over the years. Half century ago, there was school management committee in each school. The same case is true for today. But there have been differences in its composition, responsibilities, and accountabilities. These differences were the results of SMC models. The analysis of education codes and the rules and regulations explicitly shows that there was political model in the 1950s. In the 1970s, it was changed into bureaucratic model. In the 1990s, the technical model was introduced. And recently, the

quasi politico-bureaucratic model is in operation. In each change of the SMC system, there have been some issues. But the respondents of both the private and public systems of education identified only the current issues. As they figured out, the following issues were most apparent.

"The composition of SMC is itself an issue" said a public school teacher. He was indicating that the mixed model of forming SMC couldn't act properly. Again the new provision of elected chairperson may promote politicization in the composition of SMC.

People generate power from different abilities. But many of the members of the SMC in the rural areas are ill qualified in comparison with the teachers. Since the qualification of the SMC members is low, the teachers regarded it as an issue.

"In the case of private school, the SMC's role is nominal and the principal is all in all". And yet, the management of the private school is better than the management of the public school said some teachers of the private school. Their words were enough to figure out the issues that are associated with SMC of private schools. And the issue is how to make SMC active in private school. And the next issue is how to promote communication between SMC members of both the public and private schools.

Communication flows at the same level or with the lower level at least in the traditional monological culture. Both the teachers and the SMC members were the victims of this "cultural asset". It is where; the teachers of both the private and the public schools figured out the issue of communication and relationship with SMC members.

Human and financial resource collection has been the SMC related issue. In the case of human resources, the teachers figured out the bias attitude of the SMC members towards some of the teachers. Regarding the financial resources, they figured out the hard pressed condition of the SMC members. In the words of a teacher, "SMC is nominal, in the case of private school, it is head teacher dominated institution.

Who to hire and who to fire is the issue for the SMC members. Because of this situation, SMC of the public school system is relaxed and the SMC of the private school is termed as "obey child of the head teacher". How can this relaxed SMC of the public system be made functional? And how can the "obey child" of the private school be a driving force of the education system? These questions generated issues in relation to SMC.

The discussion about the issues yielded some conclusions. They were (a) composition of the SMC model requires national consensus (b) certification and non-certification power demand collaboration at one level (c) a well functioned SMC is a need of the day (d) a private school is more than powerful and the public school is powerless.

Options ahead

On the basis of the above conclusions, the researchers developed some options. These options are mentioned in the following points:

- Eligibility criteria of the SMC members can be set at the local, district and central levels. The stakeholders of education can decide it. However, locally set eligibility criteria could be more practical from decentralization and practicality purposes.
- Two situations helped propose VDC/municipality SMC and cluster SMC as options. One, implementation of decentralization act, and two, problem in forming SMC in each school.
- Dialogue and discourse among the SMC members is a must to make the SMC members active. These dialogue and discourse sessions help SMC members update their information, provide opportunities to learn from each other, and assure cooperation to resolve the critical issues at the local level.
- Depoliticization is another option to address the current issues that are associated with SMC. In order to depoliticize the context, the dialogue and discourse sessions can be the forums. To use these forums for depoliticization of the context, the contents for discussion can be taken from the educational issues. For example, what could be the appropriate curriculum for the local context? What could be the language policy for the classroom teaching? How can we use all the stakeholders of education in educational research? What could be the exam policy? How can we develop local curriculum and the textbook to complement the existing curricula and the textbooks? How can we organize in house teacher training? What could be our parameters of quality education? How can we ensure quality education in school? How can we tune our students for manual work? What could be our pedagogical process to promote vocational know how in school?
- A consultant body at the local level can be the next options to resolve the SMC related issues. Some members of the SMC can work as consultative members to the school. In the next scenario, the SMC itself can appoint people as a member of advisory group. In the third scenario, the SMC can be converted as advisory body and VDC/Municipality work as SMC.

Issue 7: Decentralization

Tension arises around the terminologies such as centralization, decentralization, deconcentration, and delegation of authorities. The culture and the social structure perpetuated centralization; the politicians discussed about decentralization; the bureaucrats exercised deconcentration and delegation of authority in their daily work. The local government looked forward for power axis at the center; the center always used its power. Amidst this socio-cultural reality of the country, the concept of decentralization was introduced in the early 1970s. But the Nepali socio-politico-cultural setting rejected this idea. And it was only after mid 1990s, the concept of

decentralization was re-instituted. NGOs/INGOs at the movement level, UN agencies at the program level, and ministry of local development at the political level are pushing the concept of decentralization. And yet, the picture of decentralization in education is to be drawn. At this point, the teachers were asked to find out the issues that are linked to decentralization. As they figured out, the following have been the issues in relation to decentralization.

The bureaucratic and technocratic culture of the country practiced centralization at the macro and the micro level for years. Currently, the bureaucrats are compelled to follow decentralization process through the government laws and bi-laws. But the authorities at the grassroots level are inadequately trained. Because of this situation, there have been authority-sharing issues at the power delegating and power receiving ends. The power delegating authorities are reluctant to give up their traditionally hold power while the school authorities are not ready to shoulder the newly transferred responsibility.

"We don't have documents that tell us about decentralization act and code" said a head teacher of a public school. As the researchers found, it was the representative sentence. In other words, there was a lack of documents to let teachers know about policy decisions, implementation mechanism, and preparatory designs about decentralization in education. This lacking was itself an issue.

"What is the notion of decentralization in education?" asked a private school teacher. Her question indicated the inadequately versioned decentralization act to regulate the educational institutions. It is where; the researchers identified the issues that are related to decentralization in education.

"One political party advocates decentralization and the next proposes for the centralized system in decision-making. The teachers are also divided in line with the political parties" synthesized a researcher. His synthesis gave a clue that national consensus is a must to decide the form of decentralization in education. Here the issue is how to ensure definite interpretation of the term decentralization at the national/regional/local levels.

The discussions above help to conclude that (a) the concept of decentralization and the culture of centralization did not get marriage point (b) the stakeholders of education are inadequately groomed about the concept of decentralization (c) educational bureaucrats, technocrats, and local architects of education (head teachers, teachers, SMC members) do not have the same understanding about the concept of decentralization.

Options ahead

The careful analysis of the issues and the rereading of the conclusions, the following options are proposed:

- Where to initiate the notion of decentralization in education? How to begin with this idea at the school level? These questions require knowledge on institutional capacity of the individual school to put the concept of decentralization in

- education. On the basis of this knowledge, the process of decentralization can be introduced in the form of delegation, deconcentration, and decentralization.
- Conflict arises to derive consensus in the form of decentralization. In order to resolve the conflict, the stakeholders of education at the grassroots level require conflict management skills.
 - Constant dialogue helps bridge the cultural and the institutional gaps. The frequent discussion between the bureaucrats and grassroots technocrats can be the best approach to bridge the gaps and use unanimously accepted understanding of decentralized management.

Issue 8: Evaluation system

Oral, written, and practical tests have been practiced through out the history of education in Nepal. But written test remained as dominant practice of evaluation. In this practice, the teachers basically asked cognitive questions. Students memorized the contents and "vomited" them in the exam paper. Both subjective and the objective questions were introduced but the subjective question became a paradigm of Nepali evaluation system. In this system, there have been internal and external exams. There are external exams at the end of grade five, grade eight, and in grade ten, grade eleven and grade twelve. Recently, districtwise grade five exam is relaxed for some bureaucratic and technocratic reasons (version of the MOES spokesperson). Besides these exams, the teachers take internal exams. However, both the internal and external exams are based on non-standardized teacher made tests. Research shows that there has been no positive correlation between the external and the internal scores. In this background, the teachers were asked to identify evaluation related issues. Analyzing the available responses of the teachers, some issues were identified in the field of evaluation system.

"Student want to cheat, parents help them to cheat, teachers facilitate the cheating profession, police legalize the cheating system" remarked a head teacher of a public school. His words were more than enough to claim that the external exams are unfair. This individual, institutional, and structural nature of perpetuating unfair means to exam was identified as an issue in the field of evaluation.

Recently, Nepal introduced CAS in primary education. But the experience, as a teacher of the public school remarked, "it has been a ritual, the actual CAS is out of the practice". This situation brings ethical question. Who is accountable for this unethical happening? This unsolved question is itself an issue in the field of evaluation.

"Traditionally we learnt to evaluate students" said a teacher. Her saying was a proof that Nepali teachers are not trained in student assessment. Because of this situation, there are no question banks at the school/RC/SEDU levels; there are no parallel test batteries, and there are no balanced questions that assess knowledge, aptitude, and practice (KAP) of an individual. Here the issue is how to reach at the teachers with student assessment training program.

"Government has prescribed a set of books in public school, all written in Nepali except English as a subject. The private school is reverse, it has prescribed all the books in English, except Nepali as a subject" said many teachers. The analysis of these quotes gave a clue that there are natural differences in the evaluation system. For example, public school does summative exam in the form of unit test and final exam. But the private school evaluates students continuously. In a public school all the questions are given in Nepali, except for English. The case is different in private school; the question papers are in English and students are supposed to answer them in English as well. This "natural differences" signifies that the internal exams are not compatible to each other. Besides, there is an irony that the students of both the public and private schools undergo with the same external exam. At this point, the issue is how to ensure the same standard in both the public and the private schools.

"We don't have objective criteria to evaluate the exam paper; so the score differs from examiner to examiner" said a teacher. Many teachers of both the public and private schools reiterated his statement. At this point, the issue is how to train teachers in developing objective criteria for the evaluation of the exam paper.

"There are bully examinees, silent teachers, and lethargic administrators" claimed a public school teacher. In his claim, one could see the issue associated with all these personnel. The issues are how can we minimize the bullying nature of the examinees; how can we ensure the communicative teachers to control bullying in school; and how can we make the administrators active.

The exam system does not value the practical experience of a student; rather it expects readymade answer from the book that has urban biases. Here the issue is how to make the exam system able to assess both the theoretical and practical aspect of it.

On the basis of the above deliberations, some conclusions can be drawn. They are (a) external exams are unfair (b) parents, teacher, students, and administrators are the ventilators of the unfair exam system (c) teachers require training to set questions and develop objective criteria for their assessment (d) there is a need of question bank at the grassroots level.

Options ahead

The evaluation related issues that were identified by the researchers demanded some options to be resolved. The options are mentioned here under:

- Open text exam, take home exam, practical exam, and oral exam by the group of experts can be the options to ensure the fairness of the exam system. The teachers can be trained to take such exams at different levels. The parents and the students can be groomed in line with the proposed options.
- A competition program to develop questions in different subjects can be organized at the school/RC/SEDU/district levels. The best questions of these programs can be collected and stored in a bank. The competition program itself

can serve as training to the teachers in the field of evaluation no matter they work in public or in private schools.

- Like question development competition program, the teachers can be trained to develop objective criteria for the assessment of the exam paper. School/RC/SEDU/district organized workshop on assessment of the exam papers of different subjects can serve this purpose.
- Different approaches can be adopted to prepare standardized questions. Built-in research, training to find out the difficulty levels of the question items, parallel questions to the students are some of the ways to change the teacher made question into standardized question.
- The decentralized SLC exam system can be consolidated. Each development region of the country will maintain its standard.
- Multi-board exam system can be initiated in the country. And the schools will be given freedom to choose any of the boards for their affiliation in exam.

Issue 9: Teacher's performance

Performance is assessed by knowledge, activity, and aptitude tests. The first test deals with the accumulation of information including theoretical understanding. The second test explores the application capability of the person to put the learning into action. The third test helps understand the inclination of a person to a specific area. But the practice shows that the researchers focus more on the knowledge part, supervisors take care of application part, and there is none to assess the aptitude of a teacher. Here the question arises, do we have researchers' and observers' joint mission to explore teacher's knowledge and the skills to apply the knowledge in actual life? The answer is "no". The second question is that are there professional organizations to assess teacher's performance? Again the answer is "no". Do we have teacher's portfolio to show the performance of a teacher? The answer is again "no". In this situation, the researchers of this study were asked to explore the issues that are related to teacher's performance. The following paragraphs present these issues.

"Pedagogically, teacher training became ritual and professionally it turned to be a means for extra allowances" commented a private school teacher. Moreover, the entry of fake certificate holders and the low performing persons in the teaching profession helped deteriorate the performance of the teachers. Here the issue is how to stop the entry of "garbage teachers" and how to update those who already got entry into the teaching profession.

"The researchers and the politicians are highlighting teacher's performance by using X theory. But they are ignoring Y and the Z theories to bring the field reality". The observation of the field researchers gave a clue that the good things of the public school system are put into shadow. In this situation, the issue is how to apply Y and Z theory in educational research to highlight the best performance of a teacher.

"We lack criterion based reward and punishment system." This realization of a teacher helps understand that teacher's performance cannot be ensured only with the punishment, they need self-regulatory reward system. But the issue is how to retune education act, periodical circulars, and rules as well as regulations to replace the faultfinding business by self-regulatory incentive system.

Accountability and responsibility are two terms that were frequently used by the respondents of both the private and public schools. But the issue is how to ensure the accountability of the responsible teacher to show their better performances.

"We are professionally insecure in the private school" told a teacher. He had invested his five years' lifetime in the private school. Still he feels insecure. The feeling of insecurity to be temporary cadre is the bi-product of the cultural and financial orientation of the teacher. In this situation, the issue is how to ensure professional security of the teacher.

"Teachers are over loaded and the over loaded teacher cannot perform better." The experience of a teacher tells different story, the story that the teachers do not get sufficient time for their preparation and in return they yield low performance. Here the issue is how to help teacher reduce their workload and enable them for better performance.

Going through the above issues, some conclusions can be drawn. They can be mentioned as (a) professionally inclined and motivated teachers can show better performance (b) the use of Y and Z theory for teacher incentive can ensure better performance (c) only the collaborative undertaking can make teachers accountable (d) the enforcement of teacher licensing program can screen better potentialities to be employed as teachers (e) professional dialogue and discourse promote communication and thereby better teacher performance (f) practical training to the motivated teachers ensures better performance.

Options ahead

In order to resolve the above issues, some options were identified in course of the study. The following are the options ahead:

- Compulsory pre-service training to the potential teachers can be imposed to ensure better performance of the teachers
- Both individual and institution regulated teacher licensing program can be enforced for the better performance of the teacher. Self-regulated licensing program helps teachers update all by themselves. The institution regulated licensing program provides opportunities to the teachers for updating their knowledge and skills.
- A built in support system helps monitor the performance of the teacher. As a follow up to the monitoring report, a teacher needs access to updated information, no matter they be in print or non-print form.

- Commercialization promoted competition and discouraged culturally learnt cooperation. At this point, the option would be the replacement of commercialization in education by reinstating cooperative activities.
- Right selection, right training, right placement, right monitoring, and right evaluation of the teacher ensures better performance of the teacher. It is where transparency is needed.

Issue 10: Student's performance

Culturally, a Nepali child is immersed into rote memorization to accumulate facts and information. And the same child learns practical skills at work. But there are no efforts to make the classroom learning compatible to the given culture and/or there is no practice to change the learning culture in school. Usually the students are assessed through paper and pencil tests; there is no student's profile to show his/her performance. However, there are societal parameters to assess the performance of the students at the receiving end. And there are written exam reports at the giving end. Between these ends, the researchers asked questions to the teachers about the issues that are related to the performance of the students. They figured out the following issues in the field of student's performance.

Public schools are literally free, but this "free recipe" is flatly distributed to all students. In other words, the egalitarian approach to promote students' performance is missing. In this situation, the issue is how to implement egalitarian principle and ensure better performance of the students.

Students in the public and private school go through different curricula and textbooks. For example, there are two types of public schools with respect to the use of curriculum and textbooks. Type one schools respond to the government curricula and textbooks. Type two schools use the same curriculum but they put additional textbooks that resembles to the textbooks of the private schools. The same case applies to the private schools. But there are different types of curricular and textual management. For instance, there are private schools that are using foreign curriculum and textbooks. These schools prepare students for foreign exam board and/ or take their foreign affiliated exam in Nepal. On the other hand, there are other schools that use both the national and the foreign curriculum and textbooks. These schools teach students through English medium. In many cases, they have extra books, but follow the government textbooks and curriculum especially in grades 8, 9 and 10. The reason is that the students of grade 8 have to sit in the zonal level exam. And the students of grade 10 are supposed to appear in the national exam called SLC. Because of the input differences in the field of curriculum and textbooks, the quality of the students naturally differs. In this context, the issue is how to ensure the same or similar types of core curriculum in both types of schools and additional curriculum to the private schools.

"Exam is ritual and the teachers are priests" said a public school teacher. His expression gave an impression that the exam is weak in discriminating best with the worst students. Here the issue is how to promote best exam system that produces quality students.

"We have irregular students but they are left with no support" remarked a public school teacher. Her word was looking for an open school or the tutorial support to these students. In this connection, the issue is how to develop open learning and or tutorial support center in each school to the needy children.

"Tharu students of Kailali and Tamang students of Rasuwa had difficulty in understanding the classroom discourse" reflected the researchers in the discussion session. Even the research reports (Khaniya and et. al, 1994 and 1997) supply the statistics that they are the low scorers. Besides, Nepali constitution provides rights to the students to learn in their mother tongue teaching. In this context, the issues are (a) how to ensure mother tongue teaching in the early age (b) how to prepare teachers in language transfer approach to teaching (c) how to promote multi-lingual teaching in school setting.

Reading through the above issues, some conclusions can be derived. They are (a) egalitarian approach to treat students can ensure better performance (b) inclusion of core and additional curricula/textbooks in both the public and the private school systems can bridge the gap between their products (c) teacher initiated exam reform system in each school can help develop discriminatory evaluation system (d) language transfer approach for mainstreaming the children, and language immersion and submersion approach for language preservation can ensure better performance of the students.

Options ahead

In order to resolve the above issues, the following options are proposed:

- There are both the weak and the better students in school. Both of these students need additional support to improve their performance. At this point, the option is to develop a regulatory frame for each other's help. The students of the higher grades, community volunteers, and the teacher volunteers can be used for the help of the needy children.
- Some of the public schools are using additional textbooks other than the prescription of the government. And all of the private schools are using their curriculum and textbooks. In this situation, we can give freedom for the schools to choose the curricula and the textbooks. This freedom of choice requires multi-sets of textbooks under a curriculum and parallel curriculum along with the government's core curriculum and the textbooks.
- Through the school based teacher training approach, all the teachers of the country can be prepared to go for mother tongue teaching in primary school and/or language transfer approach to teaching. Besides, language immersion and submersion approach can be initiated to develop literature in students' language.

- Cross sectional discussions with the teachers and the parents can help develop appropriate examination system for the local context. Ideally, the proposed exam can be taken through project work, open text exam, and interview by the experts.
- Learning styles of each of the children can be assessed. The report can be recorded by promoting portfolio assessment system. The teacher can use this profile as a base for the assessment of the progress.

Issue 11: Relationship between public and private school

Working with the structural functional paradigm, Nepal promoted welfare approach, the egalitarian approach remained a far cry in the field of education for centuries. The central administration system and the feudal culture did not promote both the private and the public system simultaneously. However, there have been community-supported schools like minban of 1990's China. These schools survived till 1970s. Then a move came to nationalize the schools. Because of this nationalization policy, the country did not have private school per se. There were religious schools funded by the private and/or the state donors. It was in the 1990s, the country adopted the policy of globalization and liberalization. Under this policy, the country promoted private sector in education. Currently, there are approximately 75000 teachers rendering their services to some 100,0000 students at the private level. On the basis of the composition, these schools can loosely be divided into three groups. They can be named as trustees' operated private school, company limited operated private school, and personal private school. Besides, there are privately funded grades in public school. In this complex composition, the teachers were asked to identify the relationship of the private school with the government added public school along with the issues attached to them. The paragraphs hereunder present the issues that are associated with the relationship between the private and the public school.

"Wealth, social status, and the conditioned state of being stigmatized the teachers of both the private and public schools" remarked a researcher. His observation helped understand the root of superiority and inferiority complex of the parents, teachers, and the students. The superiority of the teacher is that we teach in private school and the inferiority of the student is that we learn in public school. At this point, how to eliminate the superiority and inferiority complex of the teachers, students and parents is the issue.

"Communication between the teachers, parents, and the students of private and public school is stand still" identified a private school teacher in course of her observation. This observation gave knowledge that there is an issue to promote functional communication between the agents of these two institutions, the public and the private.

"Public schools are loosing the faith of the people" says a public school teacher. Even his children are admitted in the private school. At this point, the issue is how to develop people's faith in the public school system, and how to eliminate the class-consciousness of the parents.

Though tuned with the same culture, there are different pedagogical approaches in the private and the public schools. In this situation, the issue is how to link teachers of both the private and the public schools so that they learn from each other.

The above issues can be concluded (a) there is a gap between the public and the private school teachers, parents, students and SMC members (b) these gaps are manifested in the form of social stigma, social prestige, and output differences.

Options ahead

The above issues can be resolved by applying the following options.

- Socio-economic structure of the country contributes to create and perpetuate gaps. This gap can be bridged by transferring the socio-economic structure through political measures or by reorienting the socio-economic structure through educational measures. Since this report deals with educational measures, it is proposed to develop a regulatory framework to ensure continuous communication of the private and public school teachers, parents, students and SMC members. This framework can be developed at the school/RC/SEDU levels.
- There were some evidences that the teachers and the students of the public and the private schools were exchanged. In line with this exchange program, it is proposed to exchange materials, guest teachers, SMC members, and cultural groups.
- The performance of the private school is mystified in many ways while the good things of the general schools are put in shadow. In this situation, it is proposed to demystify the output of the boarding school and highlight the best performance of the public school. For example, there have been studies that give comparative picture of the achievement of the students of private and public school students. But these studies lack comparison of generic differences between these two types of schools; the differences in the income level, social status, educational levels, employment status, and visioning capability of the parents. In other words, without analyzing these performance-affecting variables, some researchers and the educationists conclude that the private schools perform better. On the other side of the coin, there are some public schools, which are equally better but they are put into shadow. Recently, a World Bank Report (unpublished draft) on effective school has prepared cases of some selected public schools, which are equally better in comparison with the private schools in many ways.
- A joint workshop and seminar of the stakeholders of public and private school can help develop functional communication. Moreover, such workshops and seminars depoliticize teachers by preparing them as professionals.

Issue 12: School funding system

Seven trends are apprehended in funding the school system. One, the public, private and the community fund schools. Two, primary education gets more than half of the educational budget and the share in higher education is decreasing each year. Three, the size of the budget is increasing. Four, private money is railed to the education sector. Five, government provides minimum fund for higher secondary school. Six, almost all of the vocational schools are funded by the international agencies/countries. Seven, Sanskrit education is heavily funded by the government. Statistically speaking, the government invests its 14% budget in education, which is 2.5 % of the GDP. But there are hard-core groups in education who are inadequately funded. Dalit (socially untouchable groups of people) and ethnic as well as religious minorities comprise this group. In this funding system, the researchers tried to explore issues that are associated with school funding system. The discussion and the interview with the teachers could identify the following issues.

"Government funding is inadequate to meet the expenditure of the public school" said a head teacher. The head teachers of other schools supported his statement. Some schools also were raising recurrent as well as capitation fees. In this situation, the notion of free education was defeated. Here the issue is how to involve community as a funding partner of the school system.

The funding pattern of the public school system showed that the government does not discriminate between the capable and non-capable schools. At this point, the issue is how to introduce discriminatory funding system in the public school. The basis for such discrimination would be the earning of the school and the community to be served by the school.

BPEP has made school construction as a part of its program but it is not the case with secondary school. In this situation, the issue is how to make school construction as a part of the total education program.

"Boarding school has monopoly in allocating fees" said a teacher-parent of a public school. His experience helped understand that there is a need of explicit criteria to allocate fee in private school. At this point, the issue is how to prepare parents to develop workable fee allocation criteria.

"We are compelled to pay 1.5% of our financial transaction to the government. It is unfair because it is not the net earning" commented a private school head teacher. But the practice, as identified by the researchers shows that the private schools are not transparent enough. In this context, the issue is how to make the private schools transparent about their financial transactions.

There were some NGO/INGO funded schools in the field. But these schools had no government assurance for regular funding. In this situation, the issue is how to regularize the funding for the NGO/INGO funded schools.

The discussion with the teachers helped understand that the community resources are inadequately mobilized for the benefit of school. In this context, the issues are how to figure out the local potentialities and how to mobilize them for the betterment of school.

Reading over the issues that are associated with school funding system, some conclusions are drawn. They are (a) discriminatory funding is a need of the present school system (b) built in infrastructure funding of the school system helps yield better performance (c) community resources are inadequately identified and used for the benefit of school (d) transparent and stakeholders' friendly fee allocation system helps for reasonable funding.

Options ahead

The discussion with the respondents and the researchers helped generate some options to resolve the above issues. These options are mentioned hereunder:

- The discriminatory formula funding system and the transparency of the financial transaction can be applied to do justice to the schools of the rich and the poor communities. In this discriminatory formula funding scheme, some categories can be developed. They could be (a) self supported public school get no funding (b) inadequately supported schools get regular grants in aid (c) each year the criteria will be revisited and updated. Similarly, the schools will be assessed annually.
- VDC/Municipality can establish school support fund. The donors of such fund will be the local community, outside agencies, parliamentarians, and individual donors. The fund thus collected can be used for the benefit of all the schools of the particular VDC/Municipality.
- Social auditing system can be practiced as a part of the financial transparency of the school.

Issue 13: Proposed changes in education act

Three decades ago, an education act was prolonged. It has six amendments already. The current seventh amendment bill is in the parliament for its consideration. Among other things, this amendment bill has proposed a regulatory framework for the operation of private schools, introduction of parent-elected school management committee, initiation of village education development fund, and community monitoring of the local schools. Around this amendment bill, there have been arguments and counter arguments at the street. Some of the stakeholders of education including educationists are suggesting for a new code than the amendment of the three-decade-old education act. In this situation,

the teachers were requested to share the concerns about the proposals of the amendment bill.

As this study found, there were different issues that were related to the proposed amendment bill. For example, there were contradictory saying about the classification of boarding school. The respondents of Kathmandu valley went in favor of classification, the rest of the respondents did not buy that proposal. In this situation, the issue is how to develop consensus about the classification of schools and allocate fee accordingly.

The respondents of the private schools were claiming that 1.5% taxation of the total transaction to their earning is unrealistic in two ways. One, tax is always imposed upon the saving. Two, it is a huge amount of money in comparison with the profit. At this point, the issue is how to enforce private school to pay tax and use that tax money for talent support programs among the children of the Dalit and the tribal communities.

"Elected SMC invites politicization of the students, teachers and the parents" said the respondents of both the public and private schools. Following their responses, two issues can be generated. One, how can SMC election be nonpolitical? Two, how can it be less bureaucratic, more technical, and nonpolitical simultaneously?

"The lease system of the public school is the orientation to privatization. It is also a way to withdraw government support from school" commented some teachers of the public schools. In their view, this lease system should be withdrawn. Here the issue is how to marry these two different realities, the defunct public school system and commercialized private school system.

All the respondents appreciated the concept of village education fund. But the teachers of the private school were more concerned about their 1.5% share in it. Here the issue is how to ensure the support of private school to that fund.

In the amendment bill, there is a provision of private schools that are registered under the company act. "Can education be a company business?" asked a teacher of a public school. His question has different connotations to different persons. At this point, the issue is how to decommercialize private schools, which are registered as profit making company.

What could be the conclusion of the above issues? A careful analysis of the issues gives some conclusion. They are (a) there is a need of massive consultation over the education amendment bill (b) the fast growing commercialized private schools and the staggering public schools need meeting point for their immediate reformation (c) village education fund is the need of the day but the proposed source of the fund is shaky.

Options ahead

The above issues required some options to be resolved. In light with this context, the following options are proposed:

- Since the amendment bill affects different areas of social life, there should be national debate over it. The debate sessions can be organized at the school, community, RC/SEDU/DEO levels. After amalgamating all the concerns of the stakeholders of education, a new act can be developed to replace this seventh amendment bill.
- Some of the public schools are well and good. In this context, it is worthwhile to provide royal charter to them than to put them on lease at the private sector. However, there is a room to bring private and public sectors together. A deliberate effort is required to do it. And the effort would be joint undertaking and joint sharing of the private and the public school systems.

Issue 14: Quality education

There have been four moves in the field of education. A century ago, the head of the government took a first move to import British India shaped English education system in Nepal. The second move helped confine this education into the courtyards for half a decade. The third move was the expansion of education in the country (1952 – 1990). In this move, different education plans were prepared and regulatory management was expanded to reach at the grassroots level. The fourth move (1991 – to date) confined to quality education. In each move, there were some concerns about the quality education. But the word quality education has been a domineering terminology during the 1990s. In this context, researchers asked about teachers' concern in quality education. As the researchers found, the following has been the issues in relation to quality education:

"One of the stakeholders of education is parent. But the parents of public education system are indifferent. In this context, how can we ensure quality education?" This question of a public school teacher brings parent related issue. In other words, the issue is how to bring parents closer to school and involve them in education support programs.

Some of the observed schools had poor physical facilities. And this facility was corresponding to the achievement levels of the students. In this situation, the issue is how to ensure minimum physical facilities in the school that facilitates quality education.

Formative evaluation and reflection over the achievement is a new concept to the study schools. This situation led researchers to conclude that evaluation practice is one of the aspects of quality education. At this point, the issue is how to promote reflective practice in the formative evaluation system?

Experienced high school teachers are quitting their jobs for RP. The ill experienced professionals fulfill this vacancy. At this time, the issue is how to invite experienced and qualified persons in the teaching profession.

As reported by the teachers, there is a high wastage in education. These wastage groups of people are the threats to quality education. In fact, they silently challenge the education system. At this point, the issue is how to ensure quality education to them even if they turn themselves into wastage.

"Unavailability of the additional reading materials is the quality associated issue" said a teacher of the private school. The teachers of the public schools supported her expression. This means, there is an issue of supplying reading materials in all of the secondary schools.

Pedantic pedagogy and creative students cannot comply with each other. In other words, they are different. In this situation, the issues are how to retune teachers for non-pedantic pedagogy and how to involve students in creative action.

"Party politics has reached to our kitchen" commented a public school teacher. His comment had many implications that were seen in the form of nepotism and favoritism; no matter they are associated with party politics, or blood relationship. In this situation, the issue is how to neutralize these forces that go against quality education.

The issues that are discussed above can be summed up as (a) parental support and students' involvement in creative activities may address quality education (b) minimum physical facility is a requirement for quality education (c) formative evaluation and reflective practice can cultivate students' creative brain (d) quality students, quality teachers, and quality materials are needed to promote quality education.

Options ahead

How to resolve quality related issues? There were different ideas that were gathered during the course of study. On the basis of these ideas, the following options are proposed:

- Consultation, workshop, and joint research are some of the options to involve parents in quality education. Any of the options can be applied in each school. A periodic discussion session/exhibition at RC/SEDU/DEO levels can monitor the progress made in this direction.
- The pedagogical reorientation, the initiation of joint research with students, and the project approach to teaching help ensure quality education.
- Physical facility can be developed in school as a part of school improvement program
- Three-pronged approach can be introduced to initiate any kinds of reform in school. In one pronged, there is student, in the second, there is teacher and in the third, there is parents. In other words, each program should have three components to deal with; the first with the teachers, the second with the students, and the third with the parents.

- Compulsory entrance test of the students, additional support system for the needy students, and further reading materials for the students and teachers are some of the programs to ensure quality education.

Issue 15: Academic session

For a half century, Nepal adopted stratified academic session. The bases of the strata were the climate and the agrarian life of the people. Following these strata, academic session began in mid March in Kathmandu valley and mountain region. But it was mid January in the rest of the country. Experience showed that both the sessions were not compatible to the academic session of the other countries especially of India where many Nepali students go for different levels of study. In many cases, the students who went abroad suffered a loss of a year or so. But how many go abroad for study is not well recorded (Joint secretary of MOES, Kantipur Daily, May 2001).

Gender sensitivity was another reason for the change of academic session. The annual exam used to occur during the harvest season. It was reported that since the girl students were heavily engaged in harvesting and plantation period they did not get adequate time to prepare for their exam and hence government made a change in the academic session to ensure a free time for the girl students.

Over the years, there have been two schedules for SLC exam. One schedule sometimes in May was developed for the Hilly region. The logic behind was that the climate of this region is very cold and students cannot sit in the exam because of the shivering cold. The rest of the country used to have the exam in February. Because of the two schedules, the administrators were facing difficulties. In order to respond to these difficulties, the academic session was changed. With the changed academic session, SLC exam is scheduled for once in a year.

With the above realizations, the academic year was changed in 1994. This change replaced the stratified academic session by a single date and it was mid June. This change affected the agrarian life of the people. So the teachers' organizations of the private school (2 currently there are three organizations) set their own academic year and it was mid April. For two years, there were two academic sessions one for the public school and the other for the private school. Ministry of Education did not like to continue the practice of private school. It made a change in the academic session this year; the newly changed academic session will start in mid May.

What are the consequences brought about by the changes made in the academic session? What have been the worries of such changes? In order to get the answer of these questions, researchers did focus group discussion with the teachers. These focus group discussions identified three issues that are mentioned hereunder.

Every change affects somewhere. The change of academic year also did the same. The first problem was apprehended with the unfinished course. The reason was that the changed academic year had many holidays and summer as well as winter vacations. Here the issue is how to finish the course within the timeframe.

The frequent changes in the academic year put parents, teachers, and students into chaotic situation. In some cases, it was a loss of time, and the prolonged date required additional school fees. At this point, the issue is how to get rid the grassroots' stakeholders of education from this chaotic situation.

"Parents as well as students felt difficulty in transferring their children from private to public and vice versa" told a teacher. Her observation gave knowledge that the frequent change in academic session was undesirable for the stakeholders of education. In this situation, the issue is when to begin academic session that suits with both the private and public schools.

The above issues yielded two conclusions. One, change in academic session adversely affected to the stakeholders. Two, a consistent academic session is urgently needed.

Options ahead

"Old traditions are not always to be changed; they are to be retained." All the respondents were agreed upon this statement. It is where they came up with a single option, i.e. go for the old tradition. In other words, the option is to begin academic session in the month of mid March in Kathmandu and in mountain region. And in other part of the country it should be mid January. However, the respondents left rooms for wider consultation before the introduction of any change in the academic session and visualization of the consequences brought by these changes.

Issue 16: Discipline

Legacy shapes people to use their reptilian brain. Ashramic/Biharic/Madrassa (religious) discipline is the legacy of educational history in Nepal. Following the legacy, Nepali teachers and parents expect strict discipline in school. This expectation was challenged in the beginning of 1990, the year of reinstallation of democracy in Nepal. People were conscious about their rights, the duty part is almost forgotten. In the words of a teacher of the public school, "no one is disciplined in school. Moreover, the violators of discipline are always awarded." His expression was supported by many of the respondents. Frequent involvement of teachers and the students in party politics, in-school students' unrest, and street demonstration and picketing, were some of the examples of violating the discipline. In this context, the teachers were asked to identify the issues that are related to the maintenance of discipline in school. In course of this study, the researchers could figure out two issues that are mentioned below:

"Everywhere we see disciplinary problem" said a teacher of the public school. He was referring to the disciplinary problems that were associated with supervisors/RPs, teachers, students, politicians, and bureaucrats. Here the issue is how can we minimize the outside effect to maintain discipline in school.

"Students of the public school are not heavily engaged in learning, in other words, they have less work to perform" commented a teacher of the private school. His comment was pointing to the teaching and learning packages of our school system. Equally, he was indicating the non-practical aspect of our examination system. In this context, the issue is how to keep both the students and teachers busy in course work.

In conclusion, there are two issues. One, to keep student busy so that they will not go for unrest. Two, to stop if not minimize political influence in school.

Options ahead

In order to resolve the above issues, some options are proposed. They are:

- Pedagogical changes and the reorientation to the teachers can keep both the teachers and the students busy. For example, if we ask students to bring their experience in school and see the connection of their course work with their lived reality, they will be busy. The busy students will not violate discipline.
- Students' dialogue with the party leaders can help reduce political interference. The dialogue sessions can be organized around the election manifesto of different political parties. The themes of the dialogue session could be the curriculum and textbooks, pedagogical system, exam system, concept of discipline etc. These dialogue sessions will help reduce political interference in school. Eventually these activities will resolve disciplinary problem.
- Student formulated and regulated discipline is another way to maintain discipline in school. In order to follow this concept, students should be involved in defining the term discipline. Once they define the term, discipline, they should be asked to develop student regulated disciplinary action. This participatory approach to maintain discipline can ensure order in school. In this direction, student regulated reward and punishment system will be a supportive action.

Issue 17: Permanency of the private school

During the decade of 1990, many private schools came to the scene and some of them died out. The others are sold out to the business community. In other words, private school has been emerged as moneymaking enterprise by replacing the service motive of education. The situation was not visualized this way in the past. Amidst this context, researchers asked questions about the permanency of private school and the issues that are associated with their permanent status. As the researchers explored, the following issues were apprehended in relation to the permanency of the private school.

"People of different interests are involved in private schools. Even the foreigners are entering to replace Nepali entrepreneurs" said a private school teacher. His expression gave many clues to think. For example, there is a growing penetration of foreign investors in private education; the investors may spoil generations for decades by inculcating non-Nepali ideas in the heads of the students; the Nepali investors may step out of the field by promoting instability in the school system. In this situation, the issue is how to encourage national investors for community supported private schools.

"Private schools work as mother cats to her kittens: they move from one place to the other" commented a public school teacher. Her view was that the private schools do not have permanency in many ways. In this situation, the issue is how to ensure the permanency of these schools.

In conclusion, promotion of privately funded community school and permanency of Nepali funded private school are the major issues to be resolved.

Options ahead

What could be the options to resolve the above issues? The respondents and researchers came up with different options to resolve these issues. They are:

- The foreign investment can be encouraged in the field of private education but the investors should not be allowed to work as founding members.
- The management of the private school should not go in the hands of the foreign investors.
- Community supported private school ltd. can be started to promote national investors in the field of private education.
- In order to promote accountability of the private school to the community, a joint initiative is essential in the field of supervision, training, research, and social work. All these works help private school to be established in the community.

Issue 18: Teachers' responses to the community

Gurus are reverend persons in religious traditions. They were equated with the God in Hindu tradition. Even the teachers were treated that way in the past. But the situation is different in these days. Why is it so? Different persons might have different observations. But what has been the observation of the teachers about the community responses towards them? Has it changed over the years? Or are the teachers still regarded as Guru? If not what have been the issues? In order to answer these questions, the researchers inquired with the teachers. The inquiry could explore the following issues:

"Society judges people only from the monitory point of view" told a public school teacher. Her response was supported by many of the teachers who were included in the

study. They further told that since the teachers do not have enough money, they are socially unrecognized. At this point, the issue is how to establish teachers in the community as a recognized person.

"Teaching is considered as the last profession to come" said a public school teacher. He was bringing people's perspective towards teachers. This perspective helped understand that teachers are useless in the eye of the society. In this situation, the issue is how to change people's perspective towards teachers.

" Society claims that teachers are the agents of the political parties but we are not" told a public school teacher. His analysis of the society towards teachers gives an idea that the teachers are not perceived as a teacher; rather they are treated as political cadres. In this context, the issue is how to depoliticize teachers.

The above issues helped generate some conclusions such as (a) teachers are often looked down in the society (b) they are projected as political cadres (c) there is a need of change in people's perception towards teachers.

Options ahead

With a view to resolve the above issues, the following options are developed:

- Since recognition requires two-way respect, there is a need to make teachers accountable for each student's achievement. If the parents feel it by observing their children, they will begin to pay respect to the teachers.
- Dialogue, between parents and teachers, is another way to gain social recognition. In order to promote dialogue between these two actors of education, community workshop and seminars can be done. Contemporary issues can be picked up for seminar and workshop. Students can work as volunteers and/or observers, teachers can be organizers and parents can be participants or vice versa.
- Teachers can ensure social respect by raising their qualification, level of training, and classroom performance.
- Involvement of teachers in social work is another way of getting social respect. In order to involve teachers in community work, mini development project can be initiated. The teachers, students and parents can be the partners of the mini project. The exemplary project activity may be plantation, road/trail maintenance, and exhibition.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study deals with eighteen different issues in education. Each issue has its own sphere to influence the education system of Nepal. However, we have tried to conclude the findings of this study and come up with suggestions in the following points.

- People perceive educational issues differently. Because of this perceptual difference, each issue in education should be understood and resolved at both the national and the local levels.
- Usually our education system does not mobilize all the stakeholders of education simultaneously. Examination reform program can be taken as an example. There are no programs to get parental support who are also a part of “helping hand” in cheating. This situation helps conclude that each issue should be addressed by mobilizing all the stakeholders of education.
- The downward extension of the supervision system gave a structure but again this structure could not reach out to the school. This situation requires volunteer supervisors at the grassroots level, headteacher as a supervisor, and supervision through research and sharing.
- The national curriculum and textbooks could not respond local needs, local people did not develop curriculum and textbooks, and schoolteachers could not contextualize the national issues to the local setting. In this situation, two things can be done at the same time. One, preparation of the local elites and teachers for the development of local curriculum and textbooks. Two, training of teachers for pedagogical changes.
- Teachers encountered many problems even if they are trained. In order to address these problems, school based teacher training, performance sharing sessions, teacher licensing, and self-promotional training programs are urgently needed.
- Our teacher incentive program lack transparency and objective criteria at the operational level. This situation demands the use of Y and Z theory for the effective use of incentive system in education.
- Nepal tried different models in the composition of SMC. But the country could not figure out the workable SMC composition. At this point, the suggestion could be the development of national consensus for the composition of SMC.
- There is tension between centralized tradition and implementation of decentralized policy in education. One of the ways to release the tension is to empower local stakeholders of education through constant dialogue with them.
- Exam is unfair. Students go for cheating and teachers as well as parents go for helping to cheat in exam. This is basically true with public schools. Portfolio assessment, open text exam, local question bank, and periodical dialogue with local stakeholders of education could address exam issues.
- There are professional and politicized teachers. The former teachers did not get technical backup and the later were not penalized. This situation demanded two-pronged system. In one prong, the professional teachers should be abrested

technically. And in the second prong, there is a need of strong teacher licensing system to control the entry of politicized as well as low quality person as teacher.

- Our school system did not promote egalitarian approach in student performance. Even the private school could not ensure creative way out to institutionalize egalitarian principle in each school. The advisable thing is develop individual profile of the student, identify creative way out to ensure better performance of the individual student, and implement this program in all schools.
- Virtually, there exists no private public school relationship. The relationship represents polar end. An utilitarian closure can help bring these two ends together and ensure better public private school relationship.
- Nepal has two distinct funding systems. The government funds the public schools and the parents fund the private schools in the form of fee system. This funding system itself is a problem to mobilize community resources. It is where the funding systems need to be revisited and community-funding system should be promoted.
- Many teachers do not know about the proposed education bill. This situation calls for a prior consultation with the teachers. A dialogue on educational issues in different forums including school unit can be helpful in generating field knowledge and disseminating policy decisions.
- Our school system lack triangular interventions for ensured quality education. Parental support, student involvement, and teacher's perseverance are uncoordinated. Formative evaluation and reflective thinking are not put into practice. These situations demand triangular intervention and reflective sessions to ensure quality education in each school.
- Frequent change in academic session adversely affected student's learning and parental funding. This change required user-friendly academic session. National consensus to find out appropriate academic session can resolve this issue.
- Student unrest and political parties' penetration to ventilate the unrest created disciplinary problems in school. The way out to resolve the disciplinary problem is to keep students and teachers busy and engage political parties in educational dialogues/discourses.
- Private schools are commercialized in many ways. By promoting community-funded and state regulated schools we can stop the commercializing nature of the private school and ensure their permanency.
- Teachers expected Guru's respect from the community. But the reverse became true with teachers. Here the proposed program would be the perceptual change of both the teachers and the community. Reflection and reorientation are the measures to change the perception of the community towards teachers.