

## CHAPTER XI: CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE SCHOOLS\*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

A case study of high performing “effective schools” and low performing “ineffective schools” was carried out under the SLC Study to describe and explain the real life of individual case schools. One of the objectives of the study was to identify recurring patterns of behaviors that constitute ‘best practices’ or ‘causes and effects’ of school performance with reference to SLC examination results.

Altogether twenty eight schools (14 effective and 14 ineffective) were covered in the case studies. Case schools were identified and selected based on School Efficiency Measures (SEM) that utilized the following criteria:

- number of student appearing in the SLC examinations
- pass percentage , and
- percentage of students passing in the first, second, and third divisions.

Those with the highest SEM were treated as ‘effective’ and those with the lowest SEM as ‘ineffective’ schools. Three years of SEM values were considered for reasons of consistency in school performance.

For details on he objectives and methodology, please refer to ‘Case Study of Effective and Ineffective Schools’.

### 2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Undertaking the cases of 14 ‘effective’ and 14 ‘ineffective’ schools in their contexts, the case study analyzed various aspects of school effectiveness influencing student performance in the SLC examinations. Within the framework of the study, eight clusters of issues with the corresponding primary research questions were addressed using multiple sources of qualitative data. The eight clusters that reflected the emerging trends of school effectiveness study were- physical facilities and school environment; leadership; quality and adequacy of teaching force; student motivation to learn and succeed; teaching learning environment; school culture and climate; external support; supervision and patronage; and claims, concerns and issues about student performance in the SLC examination.

Analysis and interpretation of the data focused on a number of questions. Why is it that some schools are performing reasonably well while many others are not only performing poorly but are also struggling to justify their own existence and survival? What are the factors that influence the results? What are the factors that inhibit or facilitate school effectiveness in terms of the SLC

---

\* This chapter is based on the report ‘Case Study of Effective and Ineffective Schools’ prepared by Dr. Bhawani Shankar Subedi for the SLC Study team.

examination results? What actually happens in the classrooms? Is teaching geared towards student learning and performance? Does this process follow any findings from research on effective teaching? How do students participate? Do they contribute to overall learning and their own achievement? Are the teachers committed and enthusiastic? How are 'corporate identities' and 'school cultures' established or maintained? How is the school leadership influencing effective teaching and learning? Do teachers make self assessment based on students' learning and subsequent achievement? How do students perceive their own success or failure? Are parents concerned about the extent of success or failure? How do school management committee members react to the situation? Are they doing enough for improving the results? What are the factors that discriminate good and bad performance in terms of results? Is good performance rewarded? Is bad performance punished? What are the evidences or instances that support or discard the realities of the schools?

The issue of the high rate of failure in the SLC examinations has definitely posed a tremendous loss of opportunities in human resources development in Nepal. Additionally, the ongoing conflict in most parts of the country has further increased frustrations and doubts among the youth population. The condition of most of the proposed secondary schools has been found miserable. Permissions to run secondary level classes were given without adequate preparations. Absence of subject teachers; secondary schools without a single qualified teacher; teacher absenteeism; inavailability of labvisuals, textbooks, and courses never completed were some of the findings for the incredibly high rate of failure in the SLC examinations.

These case studies identified factors leading to 'high' as well as 'low' performance of schools and their results in the SLC examinations. Analyses of statements, narratives, and other field data have been utilized to arrive at findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Recommendations include strategies to enhance school effectiveness by promoting those factors that lead to higher rates of success in the SLC examinations. Likewise, conditions and factors that lead to higher rate of failure have also been identified and strategies have been recommended for eliminating or at least reducing the effect of such inhibiting factors.

The summary of findings and discussions has been clustered according to the study themes and key research questions. This section of the report presents a synthesis of the findings from the study of 28 case schools. Most of the data included in this synthesis are selfexplanatory about the causes and effects of high or low performance of the schools in terms of results. Stakeholders' perspectives about both the effective and ineffective schools present a manifestation of grounded realities of the case schools in particular, and the secondary schools of Nepal in general.

## **2.1 Physical Facilities and Environment of the School**

Physical comfort and environmental conditions are often considered as essential elements for students' learning and subsequent performance. However, there is no conclusive evidence even in the related international literature on the relationship between school resources and student performance despite a multitude of studies on the determinants of student performance. This study attempts to examine 'How conducive is the physical and environmental condition of the school to learning and performance.' This aspect is found relatively inadequate in both the effective and ineffective schools in the context of Nepal. Even schools producing 100 percent pass rates in SLC do not have adequate physical facilities. The following illustrative quotes, observations, and statements of students and their teachers reinforce the finding:

*"We have only one toilet. We are as many as boys. Many boys can go at a time. But we have to queue up."*

A girl student of class 9, age 16 in an interview

*"We do most of the practical experiments on the blackboard. Only some experiments on magnet and the structure of plant and animal cells observation in microscope are done in the lab."*

A science teacher with class 10 students in a classroom

*"We have only one toilet. We are as many as boys. Many boys can go at a time. But we have to queue up."*

A girl student of class 9, age 16 in an interview

*"We do most of the practical experiments on the blackboard. Only some experiments on magnet and the structure of plant and animal cells observation in microscope are done in the lab."*

A science teacher with class 10 students in a classroom

*"As far as the school could do, it has rendered the commitment and service to us. Keeping 100 students in one section and teaching is the worst aspect of this school. The class is like a crowd of people in the jatra."*

A Grade 10 student (male), age 17 in an interview

*"We have the need as well as the interest to split them into small sections, but we do not have the needed rooms and teachers. A small class is easy to teach, feasible to observe the activities, and manageable to control".*

Teachers in a focus group discussion

In some effective schools, despite their excellent results in the SLC examinations, physical facilities are not found conducive to learning and student performance. Science lab and library facilities either do not exist or are not in put to use. The access denied to students is another problem. The following observations reflect this reality:

*The school has a library in its newly constructed room. There are few books. Only teachers get access to the library and computers. The school does not have budget to keep a librarian.*

Researcher's observation notes

*There were a number of science instruments kept unutilized. Students said that they make use of it. The science teacher often takes them to the laboratory for practical classes.*

Researcher's remarks from an observation

Likewise, low performing school environment exhibits a lack of physical and environmental factors conducive to learning and performance. The most of the cases, schools do not have adequate resources to support teaching and learning whereas many others have not been doing enough to maintain and use the facilities available in their premises. The following observations, for example, support this finding:

*People and livestock move freely through the school compound during the school hours. Outsiders watch from windows during class hours. Students rush to the jungle for toilet during the tiffin time.*  
Researcher's observation note

*One wooden cupboard containing some textbooks, guidebooks, story books, and Hindu religious books were lying in a corner of the office room. Only teachers had access to it. Students are not allowed to use the library facility.*  
Researcher's observation note

*Majority of the students were in sandals and some of the students especially of lower classes were bare-footed.*  
Researcher's observation note

In some other cases, stakeholders such as students, school management committees, and teachers expressed their frustration about the poor physical facilities of the school. Instead of taking initiatives they exhibit a tendency to blame others, especially the Government, for not providing them with adequate resources. The proposed schools in worse condition. All this indicates lack of ownership and commitment of the stakeholders in improving the school environment. The following statements support this finding:

*"The school looks like a shed for the goats; The environment for learning does not exist in the school."*  
Grade 10 students of a proposed secondary school in a focus group discussion

*"The school looks like a shed for the goats; The environment for learning does not exist in the school."*  
Grade 10 students of a proposed secondary school in a focus group discussion

*"The Government should take care of the school. It is surprise to have poor results in such a school run solely by the villagers."*  
Chairperson of the VDC in an interview

*"We have no resources to purchase the materials needed for the school proposed, and the Government does not provide the materials for the lab".*  
A science teacher of a proposed secondary school

In the absence of minimum physical facilities and resources, schools cannot operate effectively. However, findings from this study also suggest that the abundance of physical facilities and high performance of the school are not directly proportional. The findings from previous research works and literature related to school effectiveness studies both support this finding of the current study in the context of Nepal, too. Quite frequently schools with minimum physical facilities and infrastructures have been found producing excellent results in the SLC examinations.

## 2.2 School Leadership

The role of effective leadership in schools' effectiveness is clearly a complex concept. Previous studies have maintained that head teacher leadership to be the most critical success factor that alone can make or ruin the school. This study equally counts on the role of the school management committee (SMC), especially of the chairperson of the committee. Whilst effective leadership includes direct effects on students through a head teacher's own teaching role or involvement with students, teachers, and parents directly, it is important to remember that truly effective leadership involves maximizing the indirect influences of others in the drive to achieve high performance. Head teacher leadership involves micropolitical skills, coalitionbuilding, psychotherapeutic interventions in school cultures to remove any 'sick' relationship patterns, and manipulation of performance standards or success factors, all devices used by effective head teachers as school leaders.

*"Since the Headmaster is solely responsible for demonstrating good performance of the students and teachers, he should not be under SMC's pressure. We have never persuaded him to recruit our supporters".*

SMC Chairperson of an effective public school in an interview

*"The headmaster and teachers have taken the school matters very well. They understand our spirit. They are self disciplined."*

Father of a graduate who passed SLC with distinction last year

*"Our Head knows well enough how to exercise administration".*

Teachers of an effective school in a focus group discussion

'How effectively is the school leadership contributing to students' learning and success?' This was one of the important research questions included in this study. Head teachers of effective schools are found relatively more stable, firm, confident, and result-oriented. All their time, effort, and energy is geared towards student achievement and positive social image of the school. Such head teachers of high performing schools have won the trust and confidence of other stakeholders, too. The following statements directly quoted from some other stakeholders support the findings about the critical role of the head teacher. For example:

*"I seldom face any pressure in my work in School."*

A head teacher's remark in an interview

*"The teachers are loyal to their jobs and we have more trust on the headmaster."*

Mother of a class 9 student talking to the researcher in a tea shop near the school

*"If the pillar (miyo) is good, other things become good themselves. If the ploughman is efficient, ploughing becomes effective. The headmaster is able to do so".*

Teachers describing the headmaster in a focus group

*"Let the headmaster supervise the school. Why do we supervise?"*

Chairperson of the school management committee (SMC) in an interview

*"Head Sir has done a wonderful contribution to bring this school at this stage".  
"The headmaster and teachers have taken the school matters very well. They understand our spirit. They are self disciplined."*

Father of a graduate who passed SLC with distinction last year

*"Our Head knows well enough how to exercise administration".*

Teachers of an effective school in a focus group discussion

On the contrary, head teachers and school management committees (SMCs) of other type of schools are found behaving in a very different way. Lack of trust and confidence, accountability, and discipline and unclear intents are likely to have made those schools literally 'ineffective'. Blaming each other for nonperformance and poor performance have been traced as a recurring patterns of behavior.

*"He can not give right decision on right time. He changes his decision immediately after somebody presses him. Without any information he sometime goes out and comes late from the Tarai and Simikot in the name office of work".*

SMC chairperson expressing his frustrations about the head teacher

*Maoists punished the former head teacher on charges of sex abuse, biased ness, misuse of school budget, and conspiracy.*

Teachers and students accepted the first three as true (researcher's note)

Head teachers of some of those schools, on the other hand, do not seem to accept the fact that their leadership can be an inspiration to students and teachers. Preconceived notion that the head teacher cannot influence to get much done is prevalent. For example:

*"Active leadership alone is not sufficient for good results. There are so many causes behind school performance". "Head teacher alone cannot do much."*

Head teacher of a low performing school

Refuting the head teacher's claim that SMC chairperson and its members are politically motivated and are not concerned about school improvement, the chairperson defends:

*"Had they not been active, it would still remain a primary school."*

SMC Chairperson talking about SMC members.

Frustrated head teacher with a clear lack of commitment and accountability characterized some of the low performing schools. Frequent transfers from one school to another, low motivation

to perform high, lack of credibility among teachers and the community are identified as some of the prominent factors that contributed to lack of firm and stable head teacher leadership in the case of ineffective schools. Thus, findings indicate that the initial proposition about the theme on school leadership as stated in the design of this study ('a firm and stable school leadership is a precondition for students' learning and success in the examination') holds true.

### 2.3 Quality and Adequacy of Teachers

How committed are the teachers to their profession and to the achievement of learners? This fundamental question prompted the search for answers from the perspectives of the actors in their own contexts. Findings pertaining to this study theme undoubtedly revealed major differences between effective and ineffective schools. What happens in high performing schools? How do teachers work or are made to work? Here is what happens in the case of effective schools.

*"It is not the headmaster or school administration who is to get credit for success. Teachers' whole hearted support and positive working attitude were behind the success of the school".*

Teachers in a focus group discussion brainstorming about their own 'commitment and collegiality'

*"Since they (teachers) are qualified and recruited by DEO through certain procedures, there is no reason to suspect them. It is the school setting that makes a teacher good or bad".*

Head teacher's confidence and logic about his trust

*"Teachers do not involve themselves in politics in this school"*

A headmaster and assistant headmaster talking about teachers in a wrap-up meeting with the researcher

*"The mathematics teacher is a bit harder.*

We must listen to her very well. She also asks questions if she finds us less attentive." Class nine students in a focus group

Teaching and learning geared towards students' performance has been found a typical characteristic of effective schools. Findings from previous research on effective teaching recognize 'teachers' as the most powerful factor influencing student achievement. This study also identified and explored 'quality and adequacy of the teaching force' as one of the major themes. This included not only the number of teachers but also their qualification in the subject and commitment to teaching. Interestingly, incredible discrepancies were traced between effective and ineffective schools in terms of the quality and quantity of teachers placed in the schools by the Government, and by the local communities in the case of proposed secondary schools. High performing schools do, in fact, expect high and they achieve what they expect from teachers as well as from the students and parents. Statements below capture most of the reality of effective the schools in this regard.

*"If you want to be a good teacher, you should lead. If you go ahead, others will follow you"*

A head teacher's expectation of other teachers in a public school

*“My hands are for giving awards, I am fortunate enough that I do not have to punish the teachers from my hands”.*

A teacher quoting the SMC chairperson what she heard in last year’s schools annual day

*“Generally at the time of appointment itself, we are very keen about the performance of that person’s commitment to teaching. We give orientation as well, therefore, after observation for a week we let the person continue in most cases.”*

Principal of a high performing private boarding school talking about their practice of teacher selection for recruitment.

*There is no point that teachers should stay from 10 to 4 in school. You can come in your time, teach well, and go. It is a tradition in our school. We have not informed it to DEO formally but the SMC and the community know it very well”.*

Head teacher

*“Two years after I started teaching in this school, I had passed the Public Service Commission examination for the post of a bank accountant. Many people persuaded me to leave teaching but I could not. I find myself addicted to teaching and the school.”*

A head teacher’s reminiscing the past, in the course of answering a probing question about his own commitment in an interview

Low performing schools exhibit some common traits. The stakeholders of these schools share different views reflecting their way of living and thinking, and their perception of the teachers, students, and the school as a whole. This, in fact, constitutes the public image of the school.

Indifference to self and blaming others for low performance or non-performance are overtly expressed by the stakeholders. Teacher absenteeism, low morale, students’ irregularity, lack of discipline, indifference about school performance, and lack of accountability are some of the features that characterize these schools. The following observations and statements expressed by the actors reflect the misery about the quality and adequacy of teachers in their schools.

*There is only one secondary level teacher appointed as head teacher recently. Primary and lower secondary teachers teach at the secondary level.*

Researcher’s observation notes

*“Teachers are irregular in the school and as a result, courses are not completed. All students are promoted to higher classes without considering their ability.”*

Grade 10 students in a focus group discussion about the performance of the school in last year’s SLC examination

*“The main problem is that students are absent most of the time due to their work at home. The course is never finished on time. Students are compelled to face the exam from the selected topics we taught.”*

Mathematics teacher of a secondary school in Karnali zone.

*“The head teacher (not anyone else) should manage if a teacher is unfit”.*

Mother of a class 10 student, in an informal talk.

Likewise, students and some parents have terrible stories about the teachers and the school. Non-performance by local teachers has been found as one of the reasons for the low performance of schools. This questions the provision of appointing and placing teachers in their home village or town (gharpayak) as a contributing factor to make schools ineffective. The following remarks speak of the gravity of the problems that the ineffective schools are entangled with.

*The school has a library in its newly constructed room. There are few books. Only teachers get access to the library and computers. The school does not have budget to keep a librarian.*

Researcher's observation notes

*"Most teachers are local. Teachers remain absent without informing the head teacher. Many others come late. Nothing happens to the latecomer."*

A local shopkeeper whose two sons are in the school, talking to the researcher during one breakfast during field work

*"Teachers come to school drunk. They do not teach but spread terror in the class by talking nonsense and beating students. The school management committee decided to take action against those drunker during school time."*

Minutes of SMC meeting Bhadra 30, 2060 (a public school in the eastern region)

*"Mentally disordered teacher is also involved in teaching in this school. How can we expect good performance of the student from such teacher?"*

Father of a school graduate who failed the SLC last year and the year before as well

*"The math teacher sometimes made mistakes while teaching in the class. When we pointed out his mistakes, he scolded us as "are you the teacher or is it me?" rather than realizing his mistakes."*

School graduates in an informal talk in a tea shop

Teachers express their resentment and anger about Government apathy to supervision and monitoring of school activities. One actor especially refuted the provision of expensive training without post-training support system in place.

*"I oppose the Government's investment of millions of rupees in the name of teachers' training without monitoring how much is possible to apply".*

A Secondary school English language teacher in the Far West.

Some teachers have unrealistic expectations expressed in the form of ignorance or blurred hope or false assurance.

*"We (primary and lower secondary teachers) are teaching in the secondary level, with a hope to be employed (by the Government) as secondary teachers."*

Teachers with less than required qualifications.

The quality and adequacy of the teaching force is a key determinant of students' learning achievement and success in examination. The findings of this study support the argument that a reputed school with a strong team of teachers and corporate culture always produces students with higher learning and performance in the examination.

## 2.4 Students' Motivation to Learn and Succeed

Students' motivation to learn and succeed has been identified as one of the critical determinants of school performance in terms of results. Good examples and role models created by graduates of the previous batches influence the succeeding batches. High ambitions lead to high achievement. Previous studies on school effectiveness, including a nationwide comprehensive survey of schools and achievement of their students conducted by SLC study team, identified 'expectation for the highest degree of education by students' and 'role model at home or in the neighborhood' as determinants significantly influencing school effectiveness.

Taking 'students' motivation to learn and succeed' as one of the themes, this study explored answers to questions as to what happens in effective schools? How is the same behavior interpreted in the case of ineffective schools? Findings reinforced the fact that 'higher the motivation higher the level of achievement.'

Some high performing schools attempt to psychologically create motivation to learn and succeed. The following prayer recited by all students every morning in chorus exhibits this behavior:

*Merciful God, please connect my path and mistakes, help me improve my handwriting, attention, and understanding; bless upon my efforts to be a very good student.'*

Morning prayer by students of a successful school, from researcher's notes

Students of high performing schools, who occasionally fail in the examinations, do not usually blame their teachers for their failure. On the contrary, they count on their own weakness and accept the consequences. The following observation and student statement illustrate this type of behavior:

*Students give credit of their achievement to the teachers. But they do not blame them for their bad results.*

Researcher's observation notes

*"I did not like to study, on the one hand, and, on the other, I did not remember in the examination what I had studied. Teachers made all possible efforts to help me, though".*

Student who was failed in Grade nine

The trails of the low performing schools are different. There is high drop-out rate and low achievement in the examinations, indicating a low level of motivation to learn and succeed and equally a low rate of system effectiveness, causing the school to be ineffective.

*Cohort analysis shows that out of the total 33 students enrolled in Grade 6 in 2056, only 39 percent (13 persons) reached 10<sup>th</sup> Grade in 2060 and all of them failed in the SLC. Sixty-one percent of the total enrolled students dropped out before reaching the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade.*

Situation of a school in the eastern region, from document study and researcher's note

*"Because students need to work in their houses before as well as after the school, they do not get enough time for their studies."*

SMC chairperson in response to 'Why all failed the SLC?'

However, not all the students of low performing schools are de-motivated. Some are extremely willing to learn and succeed, but they do not get adequate guidance and support.

*"Most of the classes remain off. There is not a single week in a year when all teachers are present and all classes are run. There is always someone absent."*

Students expressing their frustrations about their off task behavior in the school

This is also a clear indication of the lack of opportunity to learn and their deprivation from conditions to achieve a higher rate of success:

*Some students are eager and interested towards their education. They come to give exam after carrying manure to their fields and finishing all their daily heavy household chores.*

Notes from a school's SWOT analysis

*"A student of class nine was reading his note copy while carrying manure to the field from his home and finished his course and gave exam in the afternoon. She passed the exam without any grace mark and came third in the class."*

Teacher's remarks in response to a probing about students' motivation to learn and succeed, in an interview

High expectations and high level of motivation have been found influencing the extent of higher level of learning and success. However, the assumption or the general notion that 'students coming from elite and higher class families exhibit a higher level of motivation to learn and perform better than the poor and low caste students in the examination' is not supported by this study.

## 2.5 Teaching Learning Environment

Students' motivation to learn and succeed yields high achievement results only when the opportunity to learn and succeed is provided. Teaching and learning involve people that bring along a whole lot of human factors into the scene. This study focused on exploring 'What actually happens in the classroom?' Who learns and who does not, and why? How is the classroom politics? How do teachers behave with the students? All the efforts creating a conducive environment make for effective teaching and learning?

This study has traced some strange perceptions and behaviors of stakeholders that influence students' performance. Not all the patterns of behaviors and efforts were found supporting the ultimate goal of achieving student performance through teaching and learning practices. The following statements of events illustrate this situation:

*Most students fail in Math, Science, and English.*  
Records from document study

*"New students come to this school when they fail in other schools."*  
Teachers in a focus group

*"Math and English teachers give the problems in class, but we have to go to their homes for tuition for solution."*  
Class 10 students in a focus group discussion

*Primary level teachers are taking class at the lower secondary levels and lower secondary teachers are taking class at the secondary level where there are few secondary teachers, all in a temporary position.*  
Researcher's school observation notes

Worse events were observed and recorded during the observation and in-depth interviews with the actors of those schools. Not only the students but also the researchers were confused as to what was actually happening and why:

*While making a forty-five degree angle, as requested by the students, the teacher crossed the intersect point over the blackboard on the wall.*  
*Confusion of the researcher while observing a Mathematics class of class ten*

Likewise, the lack of teaching aids in the low performing schools adversely affected teaching learning, and subsequently, students' performance in the examinations:

*No equipment and materials are available for Science practical. Teaching of English is based on translation.*  
Researcher's notes from class observation

*The teacher himself became puzzled in course of explanation because he did not have any material to demonstrate what he was describing.*  
Researcher's observation of a Science class

Why did most of the students they actually taught for so many years fail to pass the SLC examination? Here is what a teacher has to say. This poses another type of problem:

*“When students have to walk four hours a day to and from the school, and do all the household chores daily, how can we expect them to get good results?”*

A secondary school teacher of English

Other types of schools exhibited a different set of practice. Some of those recurring patterns of behaviors were captured during this study. When students were encouraged to comment on their teachers and the school they were studying, they expressed some trust in teachers as well as confidence in themselves and said:

*“The reason we liked this school is the good teachers; we understand their classes”.*

Class 10 students in a focus group discussion

*“Most teachers in this school have high qualifications and abilities. They teach in colleges and private schools as well. They teach us in a good way.”*

Students of class 9 and 10, reaching consensus in a focus group of 12 students, 6 from each class

*“The teachers remind us in our class to do equally well in all subjects. They say if you are weak in one subject, you won’t be able to pass successfully”.*

A class nine girl student, roll no 5, age 14

The graduates of these schools who recently passed SLC achieving pretty high scores have to say the following about the school and their teachers. These remarks could certainly encourage those teachers:

*“The main reason why we did so well was the ‘teachers’. They were highly capable of teaching and always insisted on doing better in examinations”.*

*“The teachers used to insist that we should do equally well in all subjects. They engaged us in practicing question papers from different schools and for different years”.*

Students who recently passed SLC in a discussion with the researcher

Public schools are not always producing poor results. Some are really high performing despite their limitations. Students who studied such public schools and passed the SLC feel no less competent than those who passed it from the private boarding schools. Their confidence was obvious as the following shows.

*“When I was in the class as a student from a Government school, the teachers as well as students coming from the private schools looked down on me. Later on, I secured top marks in most of the subjects. Everybody respects me now in my college”.*

A graduate of a public school now studying in a college

*“We have no hesitation to say we’re from a Government school. We’re no difficulty in understanding lessons in English medium. We’re proud of the school”.*

Two students met on the road

Why do some schools perform so well and some others are actually sinking while trying to survive? When further researched, it was found out that ‘task-oriented leadership’ of the school created and maintained the following recurring practice that emerged in most of those schools achieving good results in the SLC examination:

*One of the arguments made by the students was compulsory coaching with high fee. Everyone was compelled to pay the fee whether s/he wanted to join the coaching class or not.*  
Researcher’s observation note

Previous studies on effective teaching maintained that ‘the rate of success in the examination depends on the effectiveness of teaching that uses scientific methods and appropriate audiovisual aids’. This study on school effectiveness and students’ performance in the context of Nepal identified ‘relationship among high expectations, teacher commitment, and students’ confidence’ added to the above recurring practices as features of effective schools.

## 2.6 School Culture and Climate

School effectiveness studies conducted in other parts of the world (including those in Asia Pacific and South America) have concluded that ‘an effective school has a good public image of having strong values and norms that lead to higher rate of students’ learning and success in the examinations’. Though ‘school culture’ and ‘school climate’ are two features often treated differently, these two have been considered as similar but not the same concepts in these case studies of effective and ineffective schools in Nepal.

What type of school culture and climate could influence school effectiveness? What happens in the case of ‘effective’ and ‘ineffective schools’? School culture and climate consist of a wide range of practices as well as rituals that make the life of the school over a considerable period of time. These practices include celebrations, social functions, anniversaries, norms and values, institutional practices, relationships, expectations, and beliefs strongly held by different actors as ‘acceptable’ or ‘unacceptable’ patterns of behaviors. This study maintains that these recurring patterns of behaviors eventually create school culture and climate that identify the school entity with its public or social image. Some of such practices exhibited by actors in the case of effective schools are as follows:

*The founders have developed a school charter including conditions rules and regulations for school operation.*  
Researcher’s observation note

*“We try hard to inculcate study habits in student, but we alone cannot do it without parents’ support. When a student comes for admission, we interview the student and the guardians besides taking the entrance test.”*  
Head teacher of a successful school, in an interview

*Teachers keep an eye on students’ dress code. Those who do not follow are called up and warned.*  
Researcher’s observation notes

Students, teachers, head teachers, and parents of those schools generally accept the practices or comply with the norms and values created by the school culture. For example:

*"If teachers are not convinced with the absence letter furnished by the student, then they call the guardians over the phone or invite them to school".*

A class 9 girl student (age 15) who joined school after two days' absence (in an interview with the researcher)

*"We review what is going on, discuss problem, but do not write minutes unless any serious issue arises."*

Principal, talking about teachers' monthly meeting

*"We have a different culture here. Generally, schools observe parents' day, but we observe students' week".*

Principal of a successful school, explaining her conviction

Similarly, the school management committees and parents have equally high expectations and a strong faith in these schools and the teachers working there. The following remarks of the actors illustrate this pattern of living and thinking:

*"We've conveyed our intention to the teachers very clearly. They have followed it with a good spirit." "We do not limit the teachers only to teaching. They have to look after the school as a whole; the playground, buildings, toilets, water supply, and all other facilities. This is how things work in this school".*

SMC chairperson

*"We provided every support in the school's initial years. Some of us provided furniture and others provided labour and donation".*

A member of 'parentteacher association (PTA)' of a high performing school

Most low performing schools are characterized by certain features that can be called wrong behaviours. Some undesirable practices that are repeatedly shown by some actors and not corrected on time eventually damage the school's performance and public image. Such undesirable practices, once deeply rooted in the minds, as beliefs and perceptions, of the stakeholders, are found difficult to change later. Given below are some of such terrible behaviours exhibited by some key stakeholders of such schools. For example:

*"Cheating in the examinations is common. Students complain that teachers are less strict with their favorite students than with those who are not their favorites."*

From SWOT analysis of a school

*"Sometimes they (teachers) quarrel in the office while we keep waiting for them to come to class."*

Class 9 students in a focus group discussion

*"Both teachers and student take Khaini (tobacco) together. One teacher married his student whom he was tutoring."*

Graduates of a low performing school in the eastern region

Other alarming features that characterize ineffective schools' relate to students attendance requirements, adverse effects of conflict on the operation of schools, and parents' perceptions about student learning and success. Some of these cultures are created by the school itself, and some imposed by the circumstances.

*"Students' attendance depends on seasons. It is not a new thing about this school. Absenteeism is very high."*

Head teacher of a school (only 2 students have passed SLC from the school within 5 years) in an interview

*"Students themselves should pay due attention to their study rather than teachers or parents. They do not pay attention, especially, due to their intention to become a labour (recruited in foreign labour)."*

Teacher of Economics describing students' belief about their own education

*School operates according to two parallel calendars and two national anthems in the mornings: one of the Government and another of the Maoist rebels.*

Researcher's observation

*"Parents are not always concerned about their children's education. When the exam approaches, they come to request teachers to promote them (students) to the upper Grade."*

Social Study teacher of a secondary school, in an interview

Even aware and educated parents express their frustration about the poor performance of the student and the school but share their helplessness as follows.

*"We know a lot of care should be given to them. School as well as home environment is not good for learning."*

Mother of a class 10 student

These findings indicate that several wrong behaviors are generally accepted in the case of ineffective schools. Performance standards and school norms do not exist or are not communicated in many other cases. Such behaviors eventually constitute a culture creating an image associated with the school, as a 'bad school' or 'poor school' that we identified as 'ineffective schools' in these case studies.

## 2.7 External Support, Supervision and Patronage

The Findings from school effectiveness studies are consistent in that effective schools as academic institutions tend to demand operational and institutional autonomy. What type of autonomy, support, and services could increase school effectiveness in terms of results? This study attempted to find out what happens in the case of the effective as well as ineffective schools with reference to external support, supervision, and patronage.

The supervision of schools the district education offices all over Nepal has been found defunct. Effective schools practiced supervision of teaching learning activities by the head teacher and school management committees in some cases.

*"I supervise the school. SMC meets regularly and makes decisions about the school matters. SMC chairperson visits the school regularly. Supervision from the DEO is rare".*

Head teacher of a high performing public school located in Kathmandu.

*"I have no knowledge of the school supervisor coming to this school and providing suggestions.. The school supervisor came to us only once to observe our class last year for distributing the teacher's licence for us".*

A secondary school science teacher

The issue of handing over the school management to the local communities received mixed reactions. Conclusions could not be drawn on the basis of these limited data. Most public school teachers took it as a threat whereas some confident head teachers considered this issue as an opportunity.

*The majority of teachers do not want the school handed over to the community. They think there will be no job security as the authority to hire and fire teachers will go to the SMC.*

Teachers fear expressed in a focus group discussion.

*"Only those who are irresponsible feel insecure about their job".*

Head teacher (of a high performing public school in Kathmandu) commenting on teachers' fear

Effective schools also have a system in place to reward the teachers based on results. This has been found a great incentive for the teachers to keep up or do a better job in the future.

*"We award certificates to those teachers whose students demonstrate excellent results in the S.L.C. There is no financial incentive for teachers but a few words of appreciation for their work are more powerful than any monetary reward".*

SMC chairperson of an effective school, in an interview

Teachers (and head teachers) of those schools that could not produce good results generally blame the DEO and SMC for ignoring them and for leaving them alone. Observations from this study found out that they are in fact left alone, without timely support, and in the absence of any encouragement to perform better. This has pushed poorly performing schools toward further misery. Such grievances are reflected as resentments as follows:

*"They never come to this school except for meetings. They have never asked us about the progress of their children".*

A Social study teacher talking about SMC of the school

*"How can students get good results amidst the tensions of terror and abduction?" "They (SMC members) are very idle. They hardly talk about problems of the school."*

A local Lamahistorian and founder of that school showing his resentment about SMC

The findings of the study indicate that no one can think of an effective school without a confident and committed head teacher with all the necessary power and authority to function effectively, and working closely with a strong SMC that is credible and accepted by the community. In fact, handing over of schools to local communities would require certain preparations for winning the trust of the stakeholders so that the situation does not get worse. More autonomous schools produce better results, both in the public and the private school cases. School improvement plans cannot be successful also without establishing an effective system in place for regular monitoring and supervision of the school activities.

## 2.8 Claims, Concerns and Issues of Stakeholders

This study has attempted to explore and examine the types of claims, concerns, and issues raised by different stakeholders of both the effective and ineffective schools. It is found out that certain types of claims, concerns, and issues influence student performance and school effectiveness either positively or negatively. Amidst the blaming culture that was prevalent in most of the low performing schools, one actor usually blames others for poor performance. The initial proposition of the study was that ‘actors show their indifference toward the high rate of failure in the SLC examination because they are not serious about their claims, concerns, or issues.’

This study was designed to explore and understand what happens in the context of ‘effective’ or ‘ineffective’ schools? Who takes the credit? Who is accused for failure? What is accepted and what is rejected? How do the actors work together? How do different actors react to factors that influence student performance in the SLC examination?

Findings reveal the fact that low performing schools are inconsistent in their approach in dealing with several factors that influence school effectiveness. Some are external but most are internally generated factors in all such schools. In some schools, it was interesting to observe that all of the eight major aspects of school effectiveness included in this study were found negatively influencing school performance in terms of the results. Some of those alarming conditions are illustrated by the statements and observations below:

*From Grade three onwards, all the students are promoted whether they deserve ability or not.*  
Researcher’s note from school records

*“All the students are promoted due to the pressure of the parents.”*  
Head teacher of an ineffective school, in an interview

*“Confusion about fees still exist. We do not know whether we should pay or not”.*  
Father of a Grade 9 student

Likewise, some serious comments were found made about the performance of teachers by parents and SMC members:

*“Teachers only think about 'how to get salary?' and 'how to kill time?' If the evaluation of teacher is based on their performance, they will follow the right track.”*  
Parents of a proposed secondary school in the eastern region, in a meeting

*“There is no cooperation between teachers in the school due to political backing. Teachers are divided. They are loyal to one or the other political party, not to the school!”*

SMC member of a poorly performing school describing the teachers’ behavior, in an interview with the researcher

One member of SMC of a low performing school expressed his regret over the poor performance of the school in a more sentimental manner as follows:

*“Nakhauta Karnali bagdo, khauta mula sukdo, nalauta Indreni phul, lauta kapal dukhdo. Kirmule samundra thundo, machhamela khando, kukura nikala katdo, bagra dboka bundo.”*

SMC member of a school in Karnali zone. (Symbolic intent: I want to do a lot for the school, but there are challenges and limitations. I regret)

Parents have their own stories, no less alarming to share. These statements show not only resentment but also anger directed towards the Government’s apathy and ongoing conflict.

*“Students are afraid to go to the district headquarters to appear in the SLC examination.”*  
*“No one is secure.”*

Parents expressing their worries about their children and themselves, in a tea shop near the school

*“Government does not give us anything, does not care about this area. We are left in horror and terror.”*

A female member of PTA, in an interview

The claims, concerns, and issues raised by the students are equally appealing. The following two poems written by the students of a low performing school should be sensitive enough for those who claim to have provided equity and justice to all citizens.

*“Ghar bata bidhyalaya jana dherai tada parchha; padhne lekhe fursad chhaina; dherai bidnu parchha; Yek barsa ko mehanat hamro fail bhayema janchha, padhda fail bhayema buba amale najau padhna bhancha”.*

A 10<sup>th</sup> Grade girl student from a school in Rasuwa

*“Mabi star sammako hamilai nisulka padhai chahiyo, Ani matra skishit bhai bikash garna paiyo”.*

Gombo Tamang, a student of class nine

The stakeholders of schools that are producing relatively better results every year in the SLC examinations have a different set of claims, concerns, and issues about school performance and student achievement. Students, teachers, head teachers, parent, and SMC members of those

schools exhibit high expectations and high confidence. When they see their efforts yielding positive results, they become even more ambitious and encouraged to contribute more.

*“There are three actors who play a role to influence the education of students- they are teachers, parents, and students”.*

Founder teacher of a successful school

*“It’s we teachers who can decide who is to pass and who has to repeat; we decide on a case-by-case basis”.*

Secondary level teachers in a focus group

*“If the so- called good private boarding schools do this, why can’t we do this? We have to separate the spoiled potatoes in time to demonstrate better results in S.L.C.”. “Almost all of our students pass in first and second division, pass in third division is rare”.*

Assistant headmaster of a public school speaking about screening in send- up test before SLC

Similarly, the parents of students of high performing schools are found more positive towards the school and teachers. Instead of blaming, they express their commitment and in the mean time, their expectations from the teachers.

*“We can provide what the school expects from us. But they have to help our children. “What the Head sir is doing is very satisfactory and therefore we warn our children to be respectful to the teachers and the school”.*

Parents’ perspective of the teachers and the head teacher, in an interview

Students are found serious about their study and preparation for the examinations. Cheating is discouraged, even punished.

*“Examination over here is very strict. We have heard this from the examinees of the other schools. We had heard some students crying out while they were stopped from using loose papers in examination”.*

A class ten girl in FGD

The teachers of effective schools exhibit their positive image through teaching and subsequent high achievement of their students. However, they express their doubt about the fairness of the SLC examination.

*“Those teachers who have good command over the subject have no time to go for checking copy in the Controller of Examination's Office. Those who go there do not even know the answers well. How can it then be fair?”*

Mathematics teacher of a high performing public school in Lalitpur

*“S.L.C. examination is not fair. As far as I have heard, it is not fair. Even those who are unqualified have passed it”. “Able teachers should be appointed full time to examine the answerbooks of S.L.C.”*

Secondary school teachers in a focus group

Teachers also express their concern about the unfair competition between public and private schools. Putting them together and rating their performance is not justified, for example:

*“The Government does not allow the public schools to charge fees, and does not permit them extra books and teaching in the English medium. On the contrary, the private schools are left free in doing so. They are not monitored. The test paper for both the categories of schools is same. Thus, Government rewards the private schools and punishes the public ones by making them compete together. It seems that the public school has been made a container.”*

English language teacher of a high performing public secondary school

In response to the provision of handing over the school management to the local communities, the teachers of effective schools also have their reservation and grievances:

*“The policy is not without to suit the needs of the people and the community, but works as a mere ploy of the donors. It is threatening to the teachers.”*

Assistant head teacher talking about the policy of handing school management to local community

The parents as well as SMC members of the effective schools express their satisfaction and realize the limitations of the schools they are engaged with.

*“I agree that this school provides less extracurricular activities, but gives more attention to study.”*

Father of a successful graduate who passed SLC in 1<sup>st</sup> division

*“Head teacher's committed leadership, unity of teachers, parents positive attitude towards the school, students' regularity and discipline, and a feeling of competition with the neighboring schools are the factors that make our school effective on the SLC results.”*

SMC chairperson of a successful school in a hilly district, in an interview

Additionally, the following instances were sporadically observed or traced in the context of some of the ineffective schools during these case studies.

- ‘Students consistently avoiding classes and on the run due to fear of drunken teacher’,
- ‘Teacher with certificate level in Nepali teaching math and science in the secondary level’,
- ‘Only two students in class 10 repeatedly appearing and failing SLC for the past 3 years’,
- ‘Students not attending school for 7 days during every menstruation period’,
- ‘Class 10 students having seen the word “library” only in the dictionary of their brother/s’,
- ‘A girl student unable to find water to drink in her school during the whole day for the past 9 years’,
- ‘Schools being regularly used as cowsheds’ and so on.

In the same manner, despite several ‘best practices’ such as collective leadership, individual attention to students, involvement of parents and local community, firm and stable leadership, teacher collegiality, frequent assessments, developmental feedback, teacher and student regularity, reward and recognition for accomplishments, and teacher accountability some malpractices were also traced as infrequent patterns of behavior in the case of schools identified as ‘effective’. Instances of such practices include:

- ‘Stealing best students from other competing schools’,
- ‘Hiring best known teachers, possible question-setters and possible examiners as short- term experts or coaches’,
- ‘Expelling slow learners or compelling them to appear in the SLC privately or from another school’,
- ‘Asking students to compulsorily pay and join additional tuition classes throughout the year’,
- ‘Teachers giving problems in the class and asking students to come for home tuition with high rate of fees’ and so on.

However, the above sporadic practices have not been discussed as findings of the study due to insufficient evidences. More data are required to be ascertained if those features characterize recurring practices of those schools or only instances appearing intermittently (Further research is needed).

The findings from these multiple sources of data in the case studies illustrate problems and prospects along with the complex multiple realities of ‘effective’ and ‘ineffective’ schools. (A demographic profile of the case schools has been included in Annex VIII of this report). Policy makers, planners, educationists, Government authorities, curriculum designers, evaluators, school inspectors, political leaders as well as students, teachers, school managers, parents, financers, school governing bodies, donors, and the Government agencies are expected to benefit from the findings of the study.

Before arriving at conclusions and recommendations, some important findings not envisaged by the initial propositions of the study are mentioned here. Schools are not only ‘effective’ or ‘ineffective’. Some are ‘achieving schools’, some are ‘effective’, and some others are ‘sinking schools’ trying hard to survive. Schools with ‘task- oriented leadership’ are producing high pass rates in the SLC examinations. However, test scores cannot be the only determinant of school effectiveness. Schools are not doing any justice to students. All schools are ignoring joyful learning, creativity, problem solving, emotional intelligence, personality development, and socialization of students. Students are systematically being deprived of the childhood opportunities and the basics of human development. By exerting extreme pressure on students to do well in the examinations the education system of Nepal in general and schools in particular, are systematically curbing students’ latent potentials and their natural instinct for growth and development.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the case studies have been derived from the recurring patterns of behaviors as school ‘practices’ from the perspectives of different stakeholders of the case schools.

The characteristic features of such practices indicate ‘best practices’ (and some malpractices!) in the case of high performing or ‘effective’ schools. Likewise, the ‘causes and effects’ of low performing or ‘ineffective’ schools have been traced and unfolded as they exist to arrive at conclusions. The following conclusions drawn from the case studies have been grouped according to the study themes. A summary of school traits and practices of ‘effective’ as well as ‘ineffective’ schools has been included in Annex VII of this report.

### 3.1 Physical and Environmental Conditions

1. Physical comfort and environment influence teaching, learning, and performance. The teachers and students of schools in Nepal, both effective and ineffective, do not have access to adequate physical facilities and environment to expedite learning and performance. However, abundant physical facilities and high performance of the school are not directly proportional. Schools with minimum physical facilities and infrastructures have also been producing excellent results in the SLC examinations.
2. Most of the proposed secondary schools lack the minimum physical facilities and environmental conditions required for teaching, learning, and performance. No subject teachers, no classrooms, no labs or library, textbooks arriving late, primary and lower secondary teachers teaching secondary classes, and scarcity of funds to pay the teachers are the factors contributing to an incredibly low performance in the SLC examinations of those schools year after year. The policy of permitting lower secondary schools to run secondary classes without essential preparations eventually push such schools and the communities to misery, frustration, resentment, and withdrawal.
3. Schools' efforts to provide good education does not help much if parents do not help children by creating a learning environment at home and by giving them emotional support. The environment at home, inspiration from parents and family, parental involvement in the learning and achievement of students, and awareness are critical success factors.

### 3.2 School Leadership

4. ‘School leadership’ is a fundamental determinant of school effectiveness. Schools with a firm and stable head teacher or principal are ‘effective’. The head teachers of effective schools receive essential support from the school management committees, especially of the chairperson of the committee.
5. The head teachers of low performing schools exhibit lack of commitment. They express frustrations and complaints about the SMC, local community, parents, teachers, and the Government for lack of support from them.
6. The head teachers of high performing schools do not agree that they face any threat or pressure from parents, SMC, DEO, or the community. They are respectful and they genuinely claim that they deserve it. They are committed to school performance.
7. A school becomes ‘ineffective’ primarily due to the lack of firm and stable leadership. The characteristics of ineffective public schools in Nepal include; headmaster without power and authority, complete absence of teacher accountability, teachers politically divided and indulged in conflict, indifference to students’ performance, reward despite poor performance and subsequent burnout and nonperformance.

8. All effective schools have 'active and stable' head teacher (Annex VII). This study is consistent in conclusion with the conclusions of previous studies on school leadership that 'a head teacher alone can make or ruin the school.'

### 3.3 Quality and adequacy of teachers

9. 'Teacher commitment and collegiality' determines the extent of effective teaching, learning, and performance. The teachers of effective schools work hard and cooperate with each other for students' learning and success in the examinations. The recurring patterns of behavior in the case of high performing schools exhibit this trait.
10. Ineffective schools exhibit the trait of 'teacher absenteeism and nonperformance.' This is the primary cause of low performance in the SLC examinations in the case of most of the ineffective public schools.
11. In most schools, courses remain incomplete by the end of every academic year primarily due to 'teacher absenteeism'.
12. Teachers (including head teachers) of remote rural schools have a tendency to avoid teaching. They look for training opportunities to escape work. Teacher training has enhanced teacher absenteeism rather than school effectiveness.
13. Most nonperforming teachers are arguably the local teachers. The provision of transferring teachers to their local districts or villages (*gharpayak*) and keeping them for ever there has consequently prompted nonperformance and their indulgence in local politics.
14. Activities of political parties (including Maoists) have effectively been contributing to damage the public image and performance of public schools throughout the country. Teachers as well as students are divided politically. They are found loyal to one or the other political party but not to the head teacher or school management.

### 3.4 Student Motivation to Learn and Succeed

15. Students of high performing schools are motivated and committed to learning and their own success. They are inspired and have role models to motivate them at school, home, and their environment.
16. Most students of the low performing schools lack good examples of success and high achievement in their environment. Only a few students have passed SLC before, and they too have remained unemployed or have not gone any further in higher education. This has created a lack of role model and inspiration for them.
17. 'The lack of opportunity to learn and succeed' has resulted in 'low motivation' among students of most of the ineffective schools. It is evident among students in the case of rural schools. This study concludes that lack of opportunity and role model created this situation. Those who passed SLC in the past ended up as workers in Indian cities (in the case of Western and Far Western regions) or remained unemployed.

### 3.5 Teaching and Learning Environment

18. Students in the schools of Nepal are systematically deprived of opportunities for human development. Extreme pressure by over-emphasis on examination results has taken away their natural instincts of childhood. Schools are not doing any justice to students. They are

ignoring joyful learning for creativity, emotional intelligence, personality development, and socialization of students.

19. Class room teaching is discriminatory. Teachers are not free from bias. Observation of teaching traced situations where teachers focused their time, effort, and energy on teaching 'good students' (generally sitting on the front rows) while the rest are ignored. Eye contact is unequal. Student participation is rare. There are also instances (though infrequent!) of students of low caste and Dalit families dropping out of the school because teachers did not answer their questions nor asked questions to them.
20. 'Lecture method' predominates and is often the only known method of teaching in 'effective' as well as 'ineffective' schools of Nepal.
21. Recurring patterns of behavior in the case of both effective and ineffective schools do not feature use of demonstration, practice activities (guided and independent), project and problem-based instruction, discovery learning, developmental feedback to student and use of visuals in teaching and learning.
22. Schools that are achieving good results in the SLC examinations recognize teachers based on student success in the examination. Their promotions and Grades are also based on results. Teacher of such schools meet regularly when academic matters are discussed and resolved.
23. Additional coaching and practice sessions (compulsory in many cases) for students, frequent testing and results being shared with the individual student and parents, and individual attention to students are some of the prominent features observed in the case of effective schools.
24. Likewise, tough and thorough screening of students in Grades nine and ten and in sendup tests to qualify for the SLC is also an obvious practice among the effective schools that are achieving high pass rates in the SLC examinations.

### **3.6 School Culture and Climate**

25. Schools that are doing well in the SLC examinations have a strict system in place to discipline students and the teachers, and to inform parents of their wards' progress in the school. This has created pressure on students to do better in the examination.
26. Effective schools have high expectations and they produce what they expect. They are effective because all stakeholders concentrate their efforts on producing good results. They share not only their doubts and fears but also their joys and sorrows.
27. When more and more students fail to pass the SLC examination in the case of low performing schools every year, teachers blame students for not studying hard, students identify teachers as the cause of the problem, parents blame teachers for not teaching well, SMC blames the Government for ignoring them, and the fed-up and frustrated head teacher eventually looks for transfer to another school. Such events and history keep repeating year after year. This 'blaming culture' characterizes most of the ineffective schools of Nepal.
28. Ineffective schools do not have a mechanism to distinguish 'good' performance from a 'bad' one. Bad performance is often rewarded or protected by external forces, including local or national politics. Such factors ultimately contribute to the lack of teacher accountability and management responsibility over student-related matters in the case of most of the public schools in the country.

29. The inability to maintain records of students attendants, inconsistent behavior of teachers and school management, conflict between head teacher and school management committee and teacher irregularity in classes are some distinct features (as observed) of the ineffective schools, both in urban and rural settings.
30. Extracurricular or co-curricular activities are infrequent events in the case of both effective and ineffective schools. Some schools that are producing extremely good results in SLC are only focusing on teaching, tutoring rote-learning and handwriting of students, factors that are likely to influence SLC examination results.

### **3.7 External Support, Supervision, and Patronage**

31. Effective school principals supervise their own teachers. Supervision from the DEO has been found a rare event in the case of both the effective and ineffective schools.
32. The teachers of public schools are against the provision of handing over school management and ownership to local communities. They feel the threat of uncertainty and job loss. Head teachers have mixed views about the provision.
33. The supervision of teaching, teachers' performance management, and monitoring of students' progress in their learning and achievement are the most neglected aspects characterizing most of the public schools of Nepal. These practices are nonexistent in most schools. There are schools that neither provide feedback to students nor produce students' marksheets of examination results. 'All are declared pass due to pressure' is familiar a excuse.
34. The urban schools are more autonomous than the rural ones in terms of resources and operational decisions. Low performing schools operating in rural settings are facing more complex problems and threats. This has made the head teacher weaker than before.
35. Community support for the proposed secondary schools was encouraging during the approval period. When these schools repeatedly came up with terribly low pass rates in the SLC examinations, stakeholders started to show their resentment and withdraw support and encouragement. Stakeholders' support to public schools is rapidly declining. This situation has further pushed such schools further into misery and helplessness.
36. The effects of the ongoing 'conflict' and 'poverty' have fuelled further deterioration of school performance in terms of results, especially in the rural and remote schools of the country. The results of schools which were doing well in the past have steadily declined due to the conflict. Teachers are displaced, students are on the run, and communities are under constant threat and pressure. Girl students drag themselves up to class 10 primarily to qualify for marriage. Boys, no matter they pass or fail, go to India for earning a livelihood or join the rebel forces (in the case of schools in the Western and Far Western regions) or remain unemployed (in the case of schools elsewhere).

### **3.8 Concerns, Claims and Issues of Stakeholders about School Effectiveness**

37. Although parents show some resentment, the students of successful schools do not generally blame their teachers for their failure in the examinations.
38. Due to the lack of exposure and opportunity to learn, the students of low performing schools are less ambitious. Expectations are low, which possibly has led to low performance.

This has resulted in the exclusion of certain a segment of population from the mainstream of national development, creating a situation of sociopolitical discrimination in society.

39. A few schools produce exceptionally good results in the SLC claim (and have shown it evidently) that shared leadership really works. This shared leadership is also known as 'collective leadership' (a team of good teachers and/or founder managers sharing leadership and management responsibilities), one of the best practices of effective schools. This practice could be tried out on an experimental basis, as an option for action to improve the effectiveness of public schools in the case of both the urban and rural schools that are steadily sinking in terms of school performance.

School is a sociopolitical entity. All the aspects of education imparted through school as a phenomenon involve human factors. The life of a school as an entity is manifested by the actors' perceptions, beliefs, actions, and reactions. Those perceptions, beliefs, sentiments, emotions, expectations, hopes, and resentments constitute the factors that, in fact, make the school 'effective' or 'ineffective'. Stakeholders' claims, concerns, and issues expressed in the form of joys and sorrows, hope and resentment, involvement and withdrawal, anger and excitement, initiation and indifference have been captured to a large extent and the study findings have been analyzed to arrive at the conclusions presented above.

#### 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

After look into a critical the problems and prospects, along with the complex multiple realities of the 'effective' and 'ineffective' schools, the following **recommendations** are offered to the stakeholders from the findings and conclusions of the case studies:

1. Most of the proposed secondary schools lack the absolute minimum physical facilities and environmental conditions required for teaching, learning, and performance. It is recommended that MOES create special funds and a mechanism to support these schools for acquiring and maintaining essential facilities in the school premises. A safe school environment and a minimum of physical facilities are required for any teaching learning activities to become effective.
2. One of the most consistent findings of this study is that the leadership exhibited by the head teacher or principal of the school is key school effectiveness factor. A firm and stable head teacher is required for any school to become effective. It is strongly recommended to MOES and all DEOs as well as SMCs that:
  - a. The head teacher of any school be appointed for a term of minimum 5 years, with defined goals to achieve and with a provision of two times extension of the term based on the efforts and performance assessed by all the primary stakeholders (students, teachers, parents, graduates, SMC, and DEO) using 'achievement' and 'image' criteria.
  - b. The head teacher has to be given all the essential authority, responsibility, and accountability to lead and manage the school. This should include the authority to select and recommend all the teaching and non-teaching staff of the school.
  - c. The teachers and staff should be employed in the school or transferred from or to the school only with the head teacher's prior written approval/formal request.

- d. The head teachers should be recognized and/or rewarded (using objective and transparent criteria) for the efforts exhibited to improve school performance
3. The mechanism to regulate teacher performance is obviously weak at present. It is recommended to MOES, all DEOs, and SMCs that:
    - a. Teachers must be rewarded based on students' performance in the subjects they teach and the required teaching hours/day should be defined and strictly followed,
    - b. Clearly and distinctly the 'individual teacher's annual Grade increments, promotion, salary, recognition' should be linked to 'students' academic achievement in the subject/s they teach', and
    - c. Policy reforms must be initiated in the existing rules and regulations to spell out the above provisions as the terms and conditions of employment, communicating them it loud, and clear, throughout the educational system of the nation.
  4. Teacher absenteeism and nonperformance are the primary causes of low performance in the SLC examinations. In most schools, courses remain incomplete by the end of every year. Since most nonperforming teachers are arguably the local teachers:
    - a. The provision of "*Gharpayak*" (appointing local teachers or transferring teachers to their local village or town) should be discouraged to prevent subsequent nonperformance of the teachers and their involvement in local politics.
    - b. For positive discrimination, application of the above provision of "gharpayak" should be limited to the case of unavoidable circumstances of female teachers only.
  5. 'Student motivation to learn and succeed' can be increased by regular feedback and fair evaluation of learning and performance. Grade promotion practices in schools throughout the country need urgent attention. There is no such system at present. There are schools that do not produce marksheets or progress reports of students' learning and achievement. Some schools promote students failing up to 5 subjects. Some others promote all those obtaining 10% of pass marks, too. Those who repeatedly fail in the same subject/s every year are also promoted. They are the ones who eventually fail in those subjects in the SLC examination. It is recommended to school management that:
    - a. At least four formative assessments should be taken continuously throughout the year in all the Grades and subjects by the subject teachers and a written feedback should be provided to individual students at least within one week of each assessment,
    - b. From Grade six onwards, students who fail in more than one subject should be warned in writing that their promotion to upper Grade is only provisional,
    - c. Students who fail in the same subject/s next time obtaining less than 50% of the pass marks should be required to repeat the course of the Grade, although provisionally promoted to next higher Grade.
    - d. A clear and transparent Grade promotion policy should be developed and followed strictly in all schools throughout the country.

6. To encourage students' motivation to learn and succeed, high performing students should be recognized publicly through scholarships, awards, appreciations, honors, and celebrations. Such recognitions should come from all levels— the school, SMC, NGOs, municipality/village, associations, and MOES/DEO.
7. Many lower secondary schools were permitted to run secondary classes without adequate infrastructure and preparations (with a few exceptions). That policy has yielded absolute misery in those schools: no subject teachers, no budget, decreasing support, declining results, deteriorating public image, and increasing frustration among the stakeholders. To avoid further misery and resentment, it is recommended to MOES and DEOs that:
  - a. The proposed secondary schools should be provided with subject teachers,
  - b. Instructions have to be circulated not to enroll students in secondary Grades without acquiring qualified subject teachers and the minimum physical facilities.
8. Public schools are recommended to replicate effective school practices to improve school effectiveness and student performance. Some of the lessons learned include: extra coaching (especially in Mathematics, Science, and English), frequent assessment of students' learning and achievement, feedback to students, assigning and checking homework, projects and group work, handwriting competitions, use of the best performing students to help other students in their class, and so on. All this would certainly improve school effectiveness and student performance in the SLC examinations.
9. Schools are recommended to create and maintain values and norms of the individual schools as appropriate. These values could include performance standards, expectations from students and teachers, rules and regulations, operating guidelines, discipline, recognition system, appreciation of the good work of teachers and students, and so on. These practices, if strictly followed, will eventually make up the school culture and climate conducive for teaching, learning, and performance. Therefore,
  - a. All schools should immediately start to inculcate study habits in the students through extra coaching, snap tests and class interactions, assignment of homework and check on them to ensure that the students are making good progress in learning and achievement.
10. The socio-political conflict in Nepal has jeopardized the stability of the educational environment. Students and teachers are facing a lack of creative and conducive environment for effective teaching and learning in schools. In such a situation, the involvement of the stakeholders to safeguard school environment becomes more crucial than ever before.
  - a. Local communities and SMCs should be encouraged to and recognized for taking special measures to keep the school environment away from causes and effects of conflict.
  - b. All the political parties and their leaders should educate their cadres that schools must not be used as political platforms by party for any political activity. They should also educate and be educated that the children below 18 years of age are not adults and do not have voting rights, too. It is time for them to learn and succeed. They need not and should not be involved in politics wasting their valuable time they must use in acquiring the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for living a meaningful life in the competitive age ahead.