

Performance Of Community Schools In Nepal: A Macro Level Analysis

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Abstract: Though Nepal has long history of education, formal and community accessed school was started after the establishment of the democracy in 1951 AD. Out of the total budget almost 17% is invested in the educational sector and more than 85% in community schools. But the educational performance of the community schools is very less in comparison to the private schools where only 15% of the students studying. After thorough review of secondary literature, analysis through macro perspective under the influence of critical pedagogy we found lack of physical and infrastructures, textbooks, centralized curriculum, monolingual instructional, lack of constructive and critical pedagogical strategies, poverty and social exclusion are the major factors contributing for the poor performance in community schools.

Keywords: Community Schools, Macro Perspective, Critical Pedagogy

1 INTRODUCTION

Education means raising knowledge or brings internal potentialities and abilities of learners. In other words, Education means the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, intelligence, conscience, wisdom and so forth (Rana, 2007). Many people think education is the process that takes place in school, but it is not confined to schooling. People can acquire education everywhere, in every moment of life without the bound of age. They can get education from every source such as schools, parents, society, colleagues, mass media, events, nature and so forth. More specifically, there are three types of education formal, informal and non formal education (ibid.). However, we are only concerned with the formal education provided by the schools. Formal education is most planned form of education which is divided in general grades tied up with the age level and teaching learning activities held with the help of predetermined curriculum. Schools are the medium which transfers knowledge to the pupils in a formalized manner. Schools are the miniature society, where child learn the process of socialization (Rana, 2007) which follows some policy, regulations and rules prepared by the state for the welfare of the students and nation as a whole.

1.1 Educational History of Nepal

Traditionally, education system of Nepal was guided by Hindu culture. In its very beginning it was home system. Slowly it was transferred to Gurukul seminary, where learned persons called as Guru were responsible for teaching and they decide themselves what to teach and how to teach. Education was formally established in Nepal after the establishment of first school in 1853 AD (Thapa, 2011).

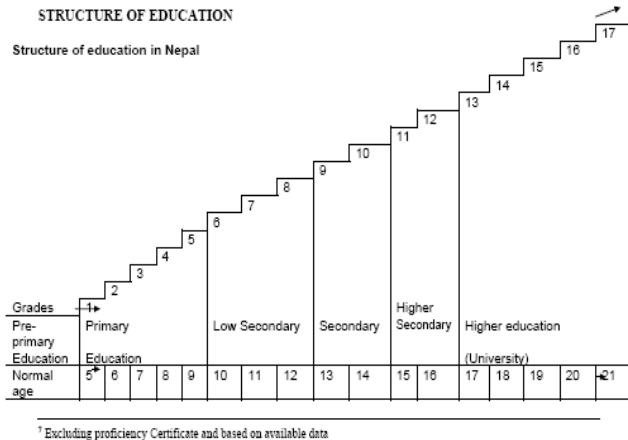
Main objective of that school was to impart the education to the children of elite and advantaged groups of people. General public and community people have no access to education at that time. School was formally opened for public after the establishment of democracy in Nepal in 1951 AD (2007 BS). In 1951-52, the adult literacy rate (age above 15+) of the country was just 5 per cent with about 10,000 students in just 300 schools and two colleges (CBS, 2003). After the introduction of a complete Education Plan in 1971, the education sector began to enlarge. The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) of 1971, financed by USAID, attempted to create a single unified system of public education in order to empower district education offices to run schools (Thapa, 2011). Same plan formed the Education Act in Nepal, which still exists in the country with various amendments. After the people's movement of 1990 established a multiparty system in the country, after that system, education development was realized more successfully and more rapidly as the Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) for primary students in 1980 was just around 16 percent, but by 2003 it had risen to 83.5 percent (MOES, 2005a, as cited in Thapa, 2011). Though the enrollment of the students in the school was increased rapidly but the quality was not satisfactory, thus the demand of private schools were widespread especially from well off families. By 1998, there was a significant growth in the private sector due to the prevailing school liberalization policy (Carney & Bista, 2009, as cited in Thapa, 2011). Since that time the quality of public school was further deteriorated and private sectors hold the strong power in the school system especially through excellent results in School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination.

1.2 School System in Nepal

Within the education system of Nepal, there are two types of system imparting the formal type of education all over the country. They are public (government schools) and private schools. Or in other words Ministry of Education of Nepal categorizes public schools into two types: i) Aided community (public) schools, which receive regular government grant for teacher's salary and for other administrative purposes; ii) Unaided community schools, which do not receive a regular government grants, but are financed with support from community, donations from other sources and school's own resources (Thapa, 2011). That means public schools are run through the budget allocated by the government while private schools they have to arrange money by themselves for the school opening and running. The structure of the present education system constitutes six sections as shown in the figure below: Pre-primary (below Grade 1); Primary (Grade 1

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to 5); Lower Secondary (Grade 6 to 8); Secondary (Grade 9 and 10); Higher Secondary (Grade 11 and 12); and Higher Education (University level) (MOE, 2010). At present, there are 31,655 primary schools, 11,341 lower secondary schools, 6,928 secondary schools, and 2,512 higher secondary schools in the country (MOE, 2010).



Adopted from: www.ibe.unesco.org/.../Nepal/Nepal.htm

1.3 Problems

It has already been more than half decade that public schools started imparting the education in the country. Public schools are criticized for not being able to provide quality education (Timsina, 2008). Though in percentage terms, public schools constitute around 80 percent of these schools and private schools only 20 percent (Thapa, 2011) but the quality or the performance of the public schools are still unsatisfactory. Many strategies, policies, plans have been changed for many times still the public schools are considered to be ineffective schools. Government is investing about 17% of total budget in education system (MOE, 2010) at present but the output is not good as enough as compared to the private schools. As compared to the private school, the public school could not produce desired results in academic achievement (The World bank, 2001 as cited in Timsina, 2008). Along with government, other Non Government organization, community, parents, donor agencies and so forth have invested both money and efforts for the betterment of the public schools. However, public schools have not given the quality according to the investment done by various sectors. Is it not necessary to find out the factors that are responsible for the poor performance of public schools? As the gap between the pass rates in SLC between public and private is widening where private have the majority contribution. Recent SLC results of 2013 shows 72% of students from community schools failed in SLC around 65 billion NRS got lost while in comparison 86% students from private schools passed their SLC (Kantipur Daily, June 13, 2013).

2. Objectives and Methods

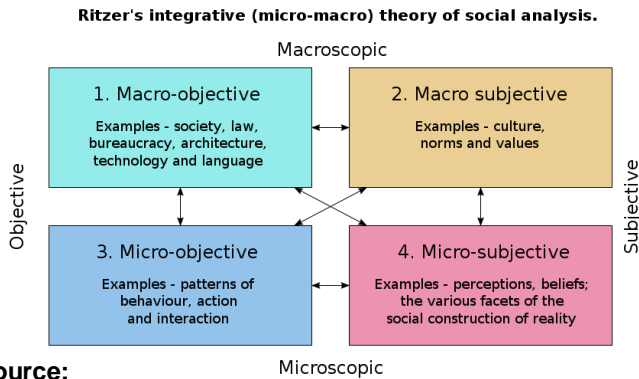
The major objective of this paper is to explore different factors that are responsible for poor performance by public (community) schools in Nepal. This paper tried to find out the different factors which contributed for the failure of the community schools by analyzing the secondary literatures, personal analysis followed by the macro theory of sociology. Moreover this paper tried to blend the analysis and interpretation with the critical pedagogy as put forward by Paulo Freire and Pierre Bourdieu. We tried to relate the quality issues of community schools with the critical pedagogy. We tried to see if the quality of community school increased if we adopt the perspective as shown by critical pedagogy. Quality is measured by different people in different ways for instance government take exams to check whether their curriculum worked or not, parents see whether their children get good marks in exam and so forth. But in this paper we have limited ourselves only to the performance of students through community schools.

2.1 Theoretical Discussions

For finding out the factors that are contributing for low quality of community school we employed macro perspective or macro theories. Different features that are responsible for the low performance of the community schools can be best explored through macro perspective. As large scale qualitative study offers a good deal of insights by macro phenomena or theories such as social mobility, community organizations and political structure (Granovetter, 1973). It helps to analyses which forces are responsible for low performance of community school as one social institution. Macro-level study in Sociology is science of the whole society, its stability (static aspects) and change (dynamical aspects). It analyses which forces are responsible for stability and change: religion, economics, culture, institutions etc. Investigates the influences of the 'society' and culture, e.g. general system theory, sociology of culture (Schillo, Fischer & Klein, n.d). We have tried to analyze the school system as one static system and the performance of the school which is influenced by various factors like parents, school management committee, teachers, socio economic condition of community people, examination system, policy of the government and so forth. Hence we chose the macro perspective of sociological theory for finding out the low quality performance by community schools. Aligning with the similar statement (ibid.) further says that the aim of this macro-orientation on social life phenomena is to describe and explain processes of reproduction (static aspect) and social change (dynamic aspects) of societies under economical, social and cultural points of view. The society is to be considered as a reality of its own, which cannot be deduced from individual contexts (i.e. from acting and behavior). In this view the society does not comply with the sum of its parts. Moreover, Macro theories study school & institution as a social system and focuses upon social structures, processes, problems & their interrelationships. Capitalism & the economical reproduction of society (Marx), Functionalism (Parsons), System(s) Theory (Luhmann), Colonialism & Post colonialism, Structuralism, Conflict theories, Interpretative Sociology (Weber) are the major contributor in the field of macro theories in sociology. Following diagram shows the distinction of macro from micro.

3. Analysis, Discussion and Interpretation

Literature review relates a study to the larger ongoing dialogue in the literature about a topic, filling in gaps and



Source:

en.wikibooks.org/.../Sociological Theory extending prior studies (Cooper, 1984 as cited in Creswell, 2003). Different sources like journal articles, books, magazines, periodicals, reports, researches and policies were used for reviewing the literatures mainly covering three aspects. We reviewed general literatures that fostered me providing a back ground history and policy related with Nepalese education system, global and Nepalese issue with education, and lastly theoretical discussions on macro theories.

3.1 What has been done?

There were many strategies, plans and programs launched all over the country for the improvement of the status of the public schools to enhance the quality. However, not much improvement has been felt even by intervention of such programs. In the preceding section we have discussed some prominent programs launched and its effectiveness. In order to materialize the role of strong community involvement in school education, the government has initiated to transfer the management of government-owned schools to the community since 2001 AD. So that there will be the qualitative changes in community schools and strengthen the relationship between communities and schools. However, The teachers' community seems to be reluctant towards this policy since there is no guarantee in it regarding the terms and conditions of teaching service and it has created the situation of conflict between teachers and school management committees, since it has been implemented as a programme for creating barrier against the rights and welfare of teachers (SMAERC, 2008). In between government invested huge amount of money by conducting Teacher Education Project (TEP) Secondary Education Support Program (SESP), School Management Transfer and Incentive Program, Food for Education Program (FEP), Education for All (EFA) were implemented. EFA was implemented from 2004 to 2009 with the help of multiple international organizations and donor nations and with a total budget of US\$ 814.5 million to get the 100% literacy rate in the country however Education and literacy initiatives are required to promote the debate on what Freire called pedagogy of the oppressed, particularly on the critical aspect of pedagogical process that liberates not only the oppressed but also the oppressors themselves. Therefore the EFA campaign should have accompanied by the process of critical analysis of social context and power relations which exist in our country (Chitrakar, 2007). Recently government has introduced an

ambitious program called School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) for changing the whole structure of school education since 2009 with the help of the World Bank, ADB, Denmark and Norway. But it has already been criticized for not including the voice of local stakeholders that are within the periphery of schools. Besides all these programs and projects, there were time to time amendment in Education act and regulations to improve and strengthen the education system in Nepal. Free education up to secondary level, scholarships to lower caste, indigenous, girls, and differently able people were other provisions launched by ministry of education. But there is still a large gap in SLC performance of students in comparison to private schools. A large gap in pass rate in SLC is the key indicator of the failure of public schools which further deteriorated the community people's faith in public schools (The World bank, 2003 as cited in Timsina, 2008).

3.2 Investment in Education Sector

Government of Nepal has always given much priority to the education sector and have invested huge amount of money with the assistance of different donor organizations and government itself. Following table (MOE, 2010) suggests the investment in education sector, out of which almost 90% budgets is allocated to school education every year. A more recent paper by Ministry of Education by EFSG (2009) has stated that out of the total grants that a public school receives in an academic year, around 80 percent goes to teacher salary and construction support.

S.no	Fiscal Year AD	Education Percentage out of total Budget (%)	Annual Growth Rate (%)
1	2000	13.17	-
2	2001	12.82	15.5
3	2002	14.1	19.8
4	2003	14.98	2.3
5	2004	15.25	8.4
6	2005	16.17	15.7
7	2006	16.75	17.7
8	2007	15.99	8.3
9	2008	16.8	23.4
10	2009	16.56	37.7
11	2010	16.30	19.3

Source: MOE (2010)

Though there are lots investments in school teacher's salary, the expansion of quality education in the public schools have been a huge challenge. The challenges are tying up teacher salary and teacher performance. The present system does not provide teacher salary and allowances based on their performance. This is the reason why despite continued increases in investment in education the quality of public education has not improved comparably (Thapa, 2011). World Bank (2006) figures indicates that Nepal have 15% of its students study in private education system and rest in public (Bhattarai, 2007). That means huge amount of money and effort have been invested in public education system for the majority of the students. But the credit of quality results of SLC

has been only taken by the private schools where only 15% of the students are studying. Thus this paper tried to find out the factors that are contributing the poor performance by community schools.

3.3 Major Issues

After going through various literatures, and our personal experiences and wearing the lense of macro perspective under the influence of critical pedagogy we found different factors contributing to the low quality of community schools in the context of Nepal, which can be basically divided into three broad categories under which there are other numerous components influencing the school system which can be listed as follows.

3.3.1 Physical and Structural Issues

Physical structures here mean the issues related with school infrastructure, textbooks and teaching materials, distance from school, lack of schools and so forth which are hindering the performance of the pupils which is further discussed in detail in the preceding section.

a) Poor School Building

Except few buildings which were constructed with the help of donor agencies, most of the community school building existing in our country is poor. Even in some places students are forced to study in the open field, or in the building where there is full with water during monsoon season, how teaching learning process will be effective in such type of schools. Student concentrations are diverted towards other activities, leading towards the poor performance in school. Out of the total grants that a public school receives in an academic year, around 80 percent goes to teacher salary and construction support, but construction budget is distributed all over the district at one academic session and can't fulfill the demand of all the school at one time (Thapa, 2011).

b) Textbooks

In community schools, government provides textbooks in free to all the students up to secondary level. However, all the schools don't get the textbook in time. Even some schools are not receiving the textbooks up to the six months after starting of the academic session. Due to corruption and conflict in printing of the books in the concerned authority textbook are always problems in the beginning of the academic session. News published in kantipur daily in 5th July 2011 shows that out of total budget of hundred million allocated for the printing and distribution of the textbooks, 73 million Nepalese rupees are lost within the administrative channel of Nepal's government. Lack of roads, remoteness of the schools and transportation system are also hindering the smooth distribution of the textbooks in the community schools.

c) Teaching Materials

Textbooks are only the guide for teachers to facilitate the teaching learning activities. Lack of different teaching materials in the schools due to fewer budgets allocated for the teaching materials are hindering the quality of the community schools. The recent study also points out that the expenditure on teaching learning materials, capacity development of teachers, library development and computer education are very small (SMAREC, 2008).

d) No School/Distance from school

Nepal is a mountainous country with diverse terrain. The difficult topography makes the task of providing services to people almost impossible in the mountains and hills. Communities are widely scattered, limiting their access to services including education. There is inequitable distribution of schools. In some communities, there are no schools at all, while in many others one can find more than one school. Distance to school usually matters for all children, especially for girls. At times, parents do not allow girls to attend schools located in places that are socially unacceptable. Having a school nearby can increase the enrollment of girls not only because of the short distances but also because parents feel more comfortable with a school in their own neighborhood due to security reasons.

3.3.2 Quality Issues

Quality issues are directly related with the performance of the school and can be expressed as the output of the school, which in turn is measured in terms of the average achievements of the pupil at the end of the period of formal schooling (Timsina, 2008). Furthermore, in the field of education, Nepal is confronted with two major problems- firstly a great number of youth are still out of school and secondly a great majority of those who are in school are not receiving quality education (Mathema, 2007). An effective school is the one in which student's progress more than might be expected on the basis of their intake characteristics (Sammons, 2006). Thus the quality of the school is directly dependent upon the teachers, curriculum, languages, evaluation techniques, teacher trainings and so forth which are discussed in the preceding section.

a) Teachers

Teachers are the main agent for maintaining the quality of the school. Teacher effectiveness is a basic component and an important predictor of school effectiveness (Timsina, 2008). Moreover, Successful schools have strong and effective leaders. The principal has a pivotal role in developing the capacity of all school staff to work together for overall progress of school (Cook & Vanstone, 2001). However, in most of the schools there are some kind of conflicts going on between head teacher and other teachers. As head teacher is the one who is also responsible for the promotion of the teachers in their job, which create some kind of ego between two parties. Most of the community school's teachers are affiliated with the unions which are nearer to political parties' manifesto which politicize the school further and affect the teaching learning activities. Aligning with the similar statement, Timsina (2008) argues, "Highly politicized teaching forces and influences of political parties through teacher's union, teacher's absenteeism, and inefficiency are the main factors hindering the quality of the public schools" (p.33). Due to lack of monitoring, many community school teachers they appoint some person in school to look after their job (popularly known as Khetala Shikshak) and give them some amount of the salary and real teachers are involved in other jobs and their own business. This in turn affects the teaching learning activities in the school. Community school teacher have no fear of losing the job even he is involved in other activities. This kind of feeling leads towards low motivation and dedication towards teaching profession. When we compare the community school teachers with private school teachers,

who get even less than half salary, they are motivated towards effective teaching process because they will be fired if their students don't get good marks in exams. Moreover, lack of subject teacher is another severe problem with the community schools. One teacher teaches more than six different subjects at one time which create low efficiency in teaching learning activities. There was no actual teacher recruitment in community schools since a decade or more. Most of the teacher who are teaching in community schools are old and not upgraded their qualification and are not updated with contemporary global and national issues which made the distraction of the students from the learning activities and leading towards low quality. However critical pedagogies says teachers are scholars and models of rigorous thinking, capable of directing their own professional practice; they are researchers of their students and guides in students' exploration and critical analysis of the world. Moreover, critical pedagogue emphasizes that teaching as a sophisticated act, exemplified by the notion of praxis, or the process of action, reflection, and action, where theory and practice are in catalytic dialogue.

b) Curriculum

Curriculum developed in the country is not oriented towards the practical education. Many contemporary issues are not updated from time to time which also create the lower performance by the students. Local curriculum are not prepared and implemented in the schools even there is the provision of implementation of the local curriculum to include the issues of locally important issues and culture by the department of education. As Nepal is diverse with flora, fauna, culture, religion, caste, ethnicity and so forth, centralized curriculum cannot address the diversity of all the regions and people thus lack of demand and need based curriculum is also contributing to the lower performance by community schools. We can see in another way, does the school level curriculum make the student thinking? Does it allow the classroom to be interactive? Moreover curriculum of Nepal is meant to degrade the creativity of the student. As Paulo Freire (1993) suggest curriculum should include the technique which enhance problem-posing classrooms as ones where students have questioning skills, discussion, sharing their opinions, being creative. Due to lack of creativity and originality the student's performance are of low quality. Problem-posing education as discussed by Freire (1993) allows people to develop their human natures fully because it depends on dialogue (communication), recognizes the relationship between people and the world, encourages inquiry, and leads to transformation. Curriculum should make the Students active, so that they are empowered and able to criticize the world and change is possible.

c) Language:

There are different castes (more than 103), languages (more than 93), religions (more than 6) and traditions (CBS, 2001). There are more than 93 languages spoken all over the country. However an instructional strategy in almost all the schools of Nepal is Nepali language. Students don't understand the language easily and can't comprehend the contents taught to them and can't perform well in examination. This monolingual method of instruction has become one of the prominent problems causing the low quality of community schools. The children with mother tongues other than Nepali

cannot compete with Nepali speaking children who have acquired it as their mother tongue. Naturally, they feel inferior, isolated, or incompetent and are forced to remain as a disadvantaged group in our school situation (CDC, 2004:2-3).

d) Pedagogical strategy:

Ministry of education has declared that there are almost all teachers trained. Most of the teachers participated in different refresher training and curriculum, effective teaching strategies given by GOs, NGOs and INGOs. However these learned things are not transformed to the real classroom due to lack of teaching materials and teacher's motivation. Even we have seen many teachers who are in competition to go for the training if they get some allowances during training. Even till now teachers are using the traditional talk and chalk method and made the students to inculcate the things that have been shared in the class room. Exclusion and disparity based on gender and caste are culturally reproduced through traditional pedagogical approaches which further decrease the interaction between elite and disadvantaged groups of society. Thus purpose of education should be for the empowerment. Only empowerment of certain groups of people can lead to the transformation of the world as Freire (1993) explained like this, "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world". Freire try to link the importance of education to develop the world for the transformation of the society. Education plays the central role to make the citizens competent and skillful for the state or nation. Furthermore, as (ibid.) argues "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat" (p.53). Freire call this as "banking concept of education". In Nepalese classroom, students are made to memorize and write in exams, but who don't get time to memorize they will fail because creativity and own writing skills have already been lost.

3.3.3 Non-Educational Issues

Non educational issues means issues which are not related with teaching learning activities but are affecting the performance of the students. In the context of Nepal poverty and the exclusion in the society due to caste, gender and elitism are the important issue that should be look into for finding out the factors affecting the quality of education. Transformed pedagogical practices in the schools would essentially involve students in the critical analysis of the prevailing social context, e.g. the elitism and discrimination based on gender, caste and ethnicity, which is being reinforced and perpetuated through schooling (Chitrakar, 2007).

a) Poverty:

Poverty means lack of income or state of being poor, where people earn less and very difficult to manage even the basic needs. Nepal is the country where there are more than 40% people living in poverty (World Bank 2003, as cited in, Timsina, 2008). Children are not performing well in schools due to poverty. In Nepalese context, enrollment rate for class 1 is

94%, out of which 60% they pass class 8, 40% class 9 and only 20% pass SLC in public schools of Nepal (Department of Education, 2011, as cited in Annpurna Post, April 26, 2011). This statement can be linked with the poverty issue, during the childhood, student does not have to support the family for the livelihood issues, they come to schools thus have high enrollment and survival rate while pupil becomes young and reach to lower and secondary level he/she has to support the family members for the livelihood. However, the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen has different view on poverty. He says, Poverty must be viewed in terms of capability deprivation. According to Sen (1985), poverty is concerned only with the inadequacy of command over resources needed to generate socially determined basic capabilities. As poor students are deprived of their capabilities and thus low performance is obvious.

b) Social Exclusion:

In the context of Nepal, women, lower caste, indigenous people, are excluded from the education sector especially from school. Problems of the lack of equitable access to the education is rooted to the historical reality that the state had implemented the policy to discriminate the citizens based on caste and gender (Chitrakar, 2007). Because of the caste hierarchical system in the country that create the exclusionary practice in the education as well. Exclusion in education means disrespecting, and not responding or recognizing the educational needs, and values of all children with gender, ethnic groups, children with different abilities and disabilities and so forth. It means the values, rights and ability of those groups of children are undermined may be by law or through implementation or during practice. However, there is another school of thought by Bourdieu's cultural reproduction theory; he argues that the school reproduces the culture and values of the dominant group in the society which would later on works as a form of violence which is called as "symbolic violence". Furthermore he argues that a school reproduces such beliefs of the dominant groups which later on transfer to human, through social structure, influence the school reproduction. In the case of Dalit, and indigenous children in school as well, they have been dominating on the ground of caste status since long which is the cultural parts in Nepalese context. Consequently, it has been reproducing educational exclusion through the social structures (Bourdieu, 1977). In community schools socially excluded groups are more distracted towards exclusion related issues and can't perform well in schools.

4. Conclusion

Different plans, programs, projects and strategies have been implemented for the improvement of the quality of the public education in Nepal. But the desired results have not been achieved till now. Poor school building, lack of classrooms, unavailability of the textbooks in time, lack of school at proper place and so forth are physical factors contributing for the poor performance of the community schools. Likewise, centralized curriculum for the diverse population, monolingual method of instruction, lack of dedication from teacher's side, traditional pedagogical strategy in teaching learning, are some of the educational factors hindering the quality of the public schools. Moreover, poverty and deeply rooted exclusion of caste, gender and marginalized groups from the society are also contributing for poor performance. Unless and until this centralized mass education is not converted to localized individual education system by implementing the discussion,

problem posing, creative and thinking pedagogical strategies in the classroom, school would never be successful and qualitative. In other words, fixed treatment doesn't produce desired results: needs multiple treatments.

5. References

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