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Immortality of prejudice in striving Ubuntu: Case studies of community managed schools in Nepal

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The immortality of prejudice after the school management transfer has not been judged. This makes communities to take responsibility for schools further by compelling the government to mandate amendments of Community Managed Schools (CMS) Directives. The purpose was to explore the CMS enduring Ubuntu against immorality of prejudice, through participation and involvement. Three community schools were selected. Interviews were conducted with school professional community. Data triangulation was done for validation. The results suggest that management transfer of public schools was mainly initiated in deprived rural areas. Most government teachers are appointed to urban areas, while the community members were mostly farmers and street vendors. The uneven distribution of government teachers has resulted in inequality. The School Management Committees are given the authority to appoint teachers by the CMS Directives, but the Educational Act guards against this. Teachers were appointed by SMCs despite the fact that the Act does not allow this.

Key words: Prejudice in educational settings, Ubuntu, community schools, school management, inequality and injustice in education, community action, social values, social marginalization, social stigma, Nepal.

INTRODUCTION

"So Ubuntu — for us it means that the world is too small, our wisdom too limited, our time here too short, to waste any more of it in winning fleeting victories at other people's expense. We have to now find a way to triumph together" Bill Clinton (2006).

Nepal is culturally diverse (UNESCO, 2011), but its economic inequalities have increased educational diversity by separating affluent families from the rest. This has been ongoing since the establishment of the first Nepalese school in 1853, which was meant for the children born into affluent families. Children in the general public were not given access to education (Ministry of Education, MoE, 2003; Rajbhandari, 2011).This continued for many years but after the inception of democracy in 1951 access to education was granted, since education was being discouraged and prohibited (Wood, 1959, p. 429). The Nepalese Ministry of Education (MoE) (2012) states that around 113 million children still have no access to school and 60 percent of these children are girls. Subsequently, the prejudice in education emerged and has remained unequal until now. The persistent

prejudice towards the community schools remains even after the transfer of public schools to communities which has not been addressed by the authorities; for example, autonomy is a pivotal issue and for this reason the appointment of teachers by School Management Committees (SMC) was also not clearly defined. This has agitated community members who are willing to take responsibility for schools, which has caused the government to mandate the amendment of Community Managed Schools (CMS) Directives several times. Although separate Directives are formulated for community schools, it conflicts and contradicts the Educational Act (CERID, 2004).

After the fall of the Rana regime ruling for 104 years (Amatya, 2004), communities were still taking it upon themselves to educate local children at temples, in Bihar or Ghumba popularly known as Pathsala. These initiatives were nationalized into a public school system (Rajbhandari, 2007). However, the government over-looked the development of these schools and has remained immune to infrastructure development, poorly managed classrooms, unqualified teachers, and the over enrolment of students (CERID, 2002). This resulted in teachers becoming political, leading to low pass rates and teachers' absenteeism (The World bank, 2003, 2001). Importantly, quality was not emphasized which also resulted in the emergence of private schools in Kathmandu. Over the time, private schools mushroomed, while public schools organized by the government already numbered 26 000 in the nation with 5.5 million students enrolled and approximately 150 000 teachers employed (MoE, 2003). The loss of faith in public schools encouraged most to send their children to private schools where paying high fees, in return for the quality of education was mandatory. This was the only way of obtaining access to functional school physical facilities, extracurricular activities, and modern teaching and learning methods.

Kafle et al. (2012) found that community schools in Nepal have a disturbing issue that led to poor and improper management of schools due to a variety of reasons. The major reasons being the politically related issues imposed on schools during the democratic elections of SMC chairpersons. Although SMCs were formed in some community schools, it was built upon relations which were not functional due to lack of knowledge in administrating educational settings. Some community school teachers reluctantly ignored the modern methods of teaching and learning. The SMCs also suffer from lack of financial resources.

CERID (2003) found that most schools attempt to escape the responsibility of school management. Even though Community Managed Schools manage the running of schools, they have not been able to convert into being fully independent schools. Nevertheless, most, if not all, community schools have been exercising

autonomy for planning, organizing, mobilizing resources and monitoring teachers. It was also found some schools proceeded to develop their own curriculum, which was the result of good cooperation and support from within the community and the SMC. Although provision for accountability is not explicitly mentioned in the current Act and Regulation, Community Managed Schools attempted to enhance accountability among themselves.

The World Bank (2014) found that government entities nominated as local bodies are less concerned with spending in rural areas, which means that the apportioning of expenditure to the educational sector is declining, particularly for community run schools. The major factor in this is, most boys are sent to private boarding schools whereas girls are sent to poorly managed community schools. In connection with this, most concerns for robust funding were concentrated on central schools where most students are enrolled. This resulted in the decline of enrolment of the number of children in community schools. This suggests that local bodies played some part in isolating the community schools from the required government support.

Striving towards Ubuntu, Vaillant (2005) states political obstacles can hinder the modern and efficient running of management in educational system. In connection to this, the community participation can play a pivotal role in respect to bringing educational reforms to school management and administrating educational change through decentralization by implying the delegation strategy (Rajbhandari, 2007).Supporting this view, Shields (1994) states that isolating community from school has been discredited, as in the next century the community participation has to be accompanied by building closer connection between the schools and these community members. In line with this, Naidoo (2005) in UNESCO document states that nature of participation and functioning of the school management can be highly influenced by the legal authorities given to the community such as, teachers, SMC members, parents and local community.

Furthermore, participation of external agencies such as,Non-GovernmentalOrganizations(NGOs), International Non-Governmental Organization (INGOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Government Organizations (GOs) is needed to support these poorly community managed schools (Rajbhandari, 2007). In addition, contributing their knowledge, experience and expertise creates further Ubuntu in collaborating with educational reform within school settings.

Moreover, community schools could create Ubuntu among and between themselves by resolving situations through sharing commonly persisting problems that authorized governmental bodies have not acted upon. In addition, Rajbhandari (2007) argues that educational reform in developing countries is not a failing strategy, but rather most community managed schools are

frustrated by poor coordination from educational authorities. However, many community schools are enriching Ubuntu by creating home-school cooperation and collaborating with external agencies.

The purpose of this study was to explore the readiness of CMS for school management. Attention is given to Ubuntu enduring despite the immorality of prejudice affected by the government, which has resulted in locals collaborating among themselves in educating children through participation and involvement.

The following research questions explore and investigate community readiness and capacities using Ubuntu to eliminate prejudice in education on the part of the government by collaborating among themselves for development through effective school management:

1. What was the readiness of community for effective school management?
2. How were the community schools enhancing school management against the immortality of prejudice?
3. How was the SMC striving for Ubuntu to change and develop effective school management against the immorality of prejudice?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This exploration is qualitative by nature and in design. Descriptive content analysis is used in the research design, which included case studies of community schools. The qualitative analysis enabled us to explore the school's cases. Prior appointment and consent were obtained from the schools and respondents to conduct interviews of their own volition and convenience.

Research participants and selection of community schools

Three community schools were selected from Lalitpur district in Kathmandu. These schools were operating as community schools during the time in which the interviews were conducted. The names of community schools and respondents are given in pseudonyms. The schools are referred to as follows: MK School, SH School and SB School to represent the respondents from these selected schools.

All three schools are located in different parts of Kathmandu valley. This initiative of selecting schools at different locations offered the researcher the opportunity to understand the monitoring and evaluation of schools by national educational authorities. Nevertheless, all three schools are autonomous schools and have similar difficulties in financing the schools with adequate required infrastructures to commence classes for their students.

Research tools and sample size

In each school, key respondents were invited to participate in the interviews. The respondents were schools leaders, head teachers, teachers, parents and community members. The respondents were both males and females. Altogether there were 16 participants who agreed to be interviewed. The average duration of the interviews was one hour. The interview with respondents was kept confidential and was not shared with the other respondents. Schools were visited multiple times for interviews and this was tape recorded and later translated and transcribed for validation and reliability tests.

The brief descriptions of this research were presented to school staff, funding agencies and Non-governmental Organization (NGO), who were supporting the schools for the purpose of developing the buildings, classroom facilities and library equipment.

Data analysis procedures

Data were formed into coding to make meaning of the respondents' answers to the interview questions.

Interview data were cross-verified before drawing conclusions. Data from each school were also compared to explore the case study. The technique of data coding were conducted through understanding the interview by the short phrases indicated by the respondents, which consisted of give meaning of prejudice in education, inequalities and injustice in education and social values and social marginalization. Data coding was also constructed by giving meaning through single word. The data from three schools were compiled and described to give meaning to the meet the purpose of this study.

The coding was an efficient tool to interpret and to analyze the respondent's interviews. This coding was formed into different categories to represent the meaning that connects to the research questions from different interviewees. The coding also made the analysis efficient to view the different interviewee's answers and for seeking the meaningfulness of data.

Triangulation of the data was done for validating the respondent's evidence to arrive at making meaning of their input. Although all voices were tape recorded, data reduction was performed to display the data and construct meaning in the process of conducting the content analysis. Even though data were obtained from 16 participants, data reduction for data triangulation resulted in the reduction of repetition data displaying conclusions drawn to arrive at the purpose and problem statements.

RESULTS

Ubuntu! I am because you are! Bill Clinton (2006).

Discrimination in the educational sector has always created angst in the educational system of the country. The transfer of school management to the local community has resulted in the problem being addressed differently. It was believed that the local community can handle the school management more efficiently and effectively. However, in reality it has taken a different shape, although the rules and Act have the same implication for all community schools. It was found that community schools in Lalitpur are situated in different localities with different demographic and geographical conditions. In fact, nine community schools out of ten in Lalitpur are located in rural areas. Some areas are blessed with rich natural resources and some are blessed with rich local people, while others are not.

Immortality of prejudice

The discrimination, however, from the government is

inevitable. The less blessed areas should be given more emphasis by the government in terms of teachers appointed, financial grants and in technical guidance. The respective educational departments are overlooking the problems that still exist in some community schools where there are less educated people and the living standard of local people are poor, which, therefore, the locals cannot afford to contribute their ability despite their willingness to take over the school responsibility. The Principal of MK School states:

Most of the local people of that community are poor farmers. Some of them are laborers and drivers and very few have offices. There are no government employees.

Despite parents having shown their likeliness to accept the responsibility of self-managing the school, they still hesitate when interacting with the SMCs, as they feel inferior about their ability in terms of educational qualification; the principal further adds:

Despite being uneducated, SMC parents members attend meetings though they hardly speak or comment in meetings but we try to make them comfortable. They just suggest on school cleanliness but lack management practice.

The willingness of community to get involved in self-managing schools has nevertheless become a motivational factor for the locals. In addition to having the willingness, the ability to contribute financially is equally necessary. In connection with this, the parents and the locals of less blessed areas have nothing to offer except their professional expertise. With regards to this, the principal of MK School further states:

We need financial support to run school and for teachers' salary we need resources. The school cannot provide free education but we haven't talked with the parents for their financial contribution. If we let them know they may not show their interest as are showing it now.

The bias behavior of respective educational departments has created discrimination between community schools, by appointing uneven numbers of teachers in some community schools, for example, the SH School has five Government appointed teachers and SB School has six government appointed teachers, whereas less than two teachers are appointed in the MK School. In addition, Rajbhandari and Rajbhandari (2015) argue for school responsibility whether it is the school leaders who are based in the school or is it the educational leaders who hold the positions at the national educational department. Furthermore, they argue that every school and educational leadership is guided by their Psychological, Sociological and Physiological parameters that generate reciprocity of mirror effect from both leaderships and followership. This could be maintained by understanding

the school leadership environment by the governing educational department of the country.

The unequal distribution of government-recruited teachers seems to have left a sort of dissatisfaction in community schools. Nevertheless, the teachers are privately recruited from the local communities by the SMC where government teachers are fewer and salaries are being paid with the support rendered by the NGOs. The assistance of NGOs is inevitable in financial as well as in technical support. However, their support can never be kept aside from the school management as in some cases these outside agencies possess the prime duty of fulfilling the basic need of the school infrastructure development aside from government assistance.

The new concept of school handover to the community has never been favored by most; with such situation in hand, the school management committee is reluctantly depending upon NGOs. However, depending on NGOs would be beneficial for the school to administer the finances for some period of time. In contrast the NGOs, as social workers, do benefit the most from it, which is also overlooked by the international donors. The Principal of MK School supports this by saying:

We get advises from our donors (NGO organization) about the school activities but when the NGO does not appear then sometimes we do school meeting in our own. We however also have fears of the circumstances if the NGO do not support us financially. People also argue why they need to convert public school into community school and what are the achievements, how the community school handle the school management and what will be the situation if donor NGO organizations take out their hands from school. These are some frequently asked questions.

It is also understood that the government provides some financial assistance to the community schools. Despite being unable to raise funds from the local community for school development, community schools have to depend upon government sources for teachers' salary. These funds have never reached the community schools in full payment, because of the government bureaucracy. The chairperson of the SH School states,

Yes, we do receive administrative expenses from the government but the bureaucratic management of our country is very corrupted. The expenses we get from our government are not the actual sum we get. We get only half of the amount than actual amount and half it disappear and we cannot do anything about it. Now this has become the part of system.

Political interferences have never occurred in the community schools in selecting the chairperson as it used to be in the government school. Nevertheless, the conflict theory according to Karl Marx, the best jobs are maintained

by the high class, as stated by Ballantine and Spade (2004), "conflict theorists like Karl Marx and Max Weber question the contribution of unequal distribution of allocating job to the people of the society, the best position are maintained by the more powerful members of the society, whereas the low rank jobs are allocated to the less powerful groups often women, racial, and ethnic groups".

However, the results suggest that allocation of the higher rank position as chairperson has never been instigated by the minister or political parties lately after the transfer of management. The influences of such conflicts have never emerged in community schools because the chairperson is selected by the people within the community. However, the person seeking the position of chairperson may have vested interest in the prestigious position of being chairperson, with its associated social status. Nevertheless, political parties and the minister have never favored the selection of chairperson in community schools. In connection with this, the chairperson of SH School mentions:

When it used to be public school, chairperson was appointed through the recommendation of ministers. When the government change, chairperson changes accordingly but now political interference does not exist as the management is handover to the community.

Hence, with less interference from political parties the community schools have carved out a space of autonomy, which is also a factor of motivation for becoming self-determined to self-manage the school. However, if SMC of community schools efficiently concentrate on the development of schools and manages to bring about definite productive changes with collaborative partner-ships, optimum utilization and mobilization of resources, hiring competent teachers that benefit the school and the community may lead to the successful of managing the school.

Without competent and able members in SMC, the management somehow may be biased upon the decision of partners, such as NGO, who are intellectually progressive and have the power to invest in the school at their discretion. In relation to this, the Head Teacher of the MK School mentions:

The donor NGO organization is very supportive and helps us in schools infrastructure development, but the situation might change as the person in that organization change. The school however manages to distribute stationary items through PTA but school is not capable of paying salary for the teachers. However, the NGOs are concentrating on income generating.

Another aspect of prejudice that may arise from the internal environment is if SMC does not perform the duty as efficiently and effectively as desired by the community

and the school staff. However, occurrence of negligence in school management may lead to the failure of self-managing schools, as was the case with public schools prior to the transfer. The SMC teacher of the SB School supports this by saying:

In previous days when the school was governed by the government, at that time the school's overall management was very poor. The school cannot be self-managed if such management still exists.

Teachers appointed by SMCs are paid low salary compared to DEO appointed teachers. DEO appointed teachers are paid wholesome amounts. Even though SMC appointed teachers are active and participative in any field of activity that school demands from them, they earn far less by comparison. The SMC local community member of the SH School states:

Government appointed teachers are receiving full salary where as teachers appointed through our own resources are paid less. This financial aid that we get is from nearby Private School. Even though they are paid less, they are more active than the former because they are from the local community.

The benefit of hiring teachers from the local community is that they are more competent in participating in school affairs, since they are all equipped with the existing environment of the local school and the children of the village. In relation to this, the SMC local community member of SH School further adds:

Private teachers are more dedicated to school maybe because they are from the same local community and they know the student personally. Talking about government hired teachers, as they do not belong to the same community and have to come school from far so that might be one reason of being less dedicated to the school. Other reasons might be because they don't like the type of environment here as they are used to bureaucratic environment.

Besides the internal prejudice, external pressure has its own impact on community schools. These groups include the teacher's union, rebellions (Maoist) and students unions, who have been asking the SMCs to close down the school and withdraw from the school management structures. They believe that the management, which was once handled by the government, has to be taken back from the community, since education is primarily concerned serving national interests, and should not be the interest of individuals or the community.

Striving Ubuntu through participations

However, the rebellious ones were actively discouraging

the transfer of management have somehow helped the SH School by supporting them with physical activities, such as constructing religious places, such as a bamboo hut for commencing Hindu religious puja organized by the school to generate some resources for educational purposes. However, student unions have never shown their support for the transfer of school management to the community. Their prime concern was to shut down the community school until it withdrew from the management process. In connection to this, the SMC teacher of the SB School states:

Right now we are given pressure by the teacher and student unions to shut down the school and withdraw from the management. They are saying that education and health are two prime sectors and it's the responsibility of nation to look after it. The government cannot get rid of it and give burden to the poor people and the community.

Although the transfer of school management has the positive effect on school improvement with community, parents and teacher involvement, the student union is threatening to disrupt the progress. They strongly believed that education should be of national interest.

DOE (2006, p.68) states "the main cause of the lower than expected implementation rate was the policy debate on programme implemented from the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) Maoist including its sister organizations (student, teachers etc.). This disruption of student union was only to those schools whose management was transferred". However, management transferred schools are taking challenging steps and have satisfied the local community groups, teachers, and parents. Supporting the progress community schools have made, the head teacher of the SB School states:

We are receiving positive response from the teachers. It is a good step that community took over the management. Teachers are satisfied and have shown no negative attitude towards the management.

Despite the progress in school management in such a short period of time, the prejudices and the antagonism of the student union still exist. This is happening because they are unaware of the real progressive picture of the community schools. However, the antagonizing behavior of the student union has forced the SMC to take a step back, despite their unwillingness to withdraw from taking over the responsibility of management. The head teacher further state:

We are threatened by the student union to close down the school and handover it to the government. They were criticizing us about the school being community and its management. We have sent notice to the district education office regarding this matter.

Regardless of disruptions from the student unions the community schools in the Lalitpur district have never withdrawn from the SMC model. However, the threat for student unions still engulfs school management committees, as they always believe that the government is shying away from taking responsibility for the burdens of education by handing over management schools to the community. In connection with the threat from student unions, the principal of the SH School states:

Currently the student union is asking us to withdraw from the community management because firstly, they think that government is trying to escape from its responsibility and secondly, the school will collapse if the community management could not run it properly.

As long as parents, teachers and locals participate in school management, community schools have nothing to fear, since the attitudes of parents, teachers and locals for facing difficult circumstances were never shown towards schools before the transfer. This has brought changes to schools such as, creating a sense of belongingness and ownership; collaborative behavior; participation in management; commitment of teachers and staff; and leadership quality. This was never encountered when the school was managed by the government. However, student unions forced community management to withdraw and hand the responsibility of management back to the government. Had the government schools been managed efficiently and effectively the transfer to the community would never have to be consigned.

It is the fact that powers dedicated to SMC in community schools are likely to be antagonized by teachers, because they fear that their incompetence would compel the SMCs, whereas in government schools this kind of practice is not done. However, student unions, have no problems with community schools; they are just backing up political parties to create agitation. Nevertheless, the pressures from student union for shutting down the community schools have come to halt with the new formation of government administration in the country. Disruption from students has not been encountered by the three community schools in Lalitpur, however, political agitation may create such a situation in the future (Personal communication Head teachers of SH School and MK school).

The threat, nevertheless, is a challenging obstacle to the SMC's of community school until the public schools themselves transfer the management to community school and the immorality of prejudice would never settle down until the political scenario is stable in the country.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discrimination in educational settings has remained

immortal in Nepal. It creates mayhem in the educational system both from the policy level and administration. The anomalies in Educational Act and CMS are still immoral (CERID, 2004, 2003). This generated difficulties in creating harmonious environment and implementing decision for the developmental aspect of community schools. Management transfer of public schools has mainly been initiated in rural and deprived areas where educated community members are almost nonexistence.

Although SMCs were encouraged to take responsibility and be accountable for community schools, the discrimination from the government is inevitable, in terms of allocation of subject teachers, fund allocations and infrastructural development. Most government teachers are appointed to urban areas where facilities are adequate at public schools.

The results suggest that the community members who are held responsible and accountable for school management are from deprived backgrounds. The financial injection to schools from these local communities is feeble. The uneven distribution of government teachers in community schools generates inequality between the Community Managed Schools (CMS). The result suggests that SMCs are given the autonomy to appoint teachers as per the CMS Directives but the Educational Act forbids this.

The findings suggest that teachers were appointed by SMCs despite the Act not allowing for this. The directives entail the SMC to appoint head masters, but it was found that none of the SMC's have depend on the government to supply adequate number of teachers where the salary of these teachers are paid directly by the government, the process lessening the burden placed on SMCs appointed teachers. The prejudice in range of salaries is immortal and the SMC appointed teacher's salary differs from the government appointed teachers. This has further encouraged the prejudice intact.

The findings suggest that most community schools are collaborating with the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) for financial support. This encouraged the NGO to demonstrate leadership role especially on the decision making process. The chairperson and SMC members are elected by the school administration where best positions were maintained by the powerful groups (Kafle et al., 2012). However, low ranked positions are allocated to women, racial and ethnic group. This further is creating prejudice in the distributions of roles and ranks within the school settings.

In reducing the immorality of prejudice, the community schools created their own organizational environment settings within the school management authorities. This was done in cooperation with the SMCs, which created a feeling of Ubuntu. This was preceded with offering information to the local community on generating awareness of the educational importance given to deprived children.

Ubuntu was maintained reciprocally by offering their services to the schools, for example, the poor families working as a laborers offered their time to the school in constructing buildings for free. The other community locals offered free transportation of construction materials for school buildings. Some less affluent families in the community offered small donations and spread the network to the higher organization to participate in school development.

Nevertheless, exercising Ubuntu among School Management Committees (SMC) created the best opportunity to act upon school developmental activities by introducing English methods of teaching, developing local curriculum for local needs, collaborating with the external agencies for financial resources and also enrolling the students into the school.

Even though Ubuntu was one of the major components for the school progression, few of the issues related to power and position within the system still created a disruptive atmosphere within the school community. The one with the higher status in the local community desired for the higher position as they were being appointed as a member of the SMC. The lower positions were offered to females who considered them as a part of the school, but, also conducted cleaning of office space during and after the SMC meeting.

In conclusion, Ubuntu generated social harmony within the school environment. The school climate was based on the relationships. Some schools in this study also managed to become model community schools. Some schools followed the model school pattern. However, the donor agency were also attracted to involve with the school which was developed to offer financial help.

However, these donors showed less interest to support the schools deprived from geographical conditions and within the heritage areas. This continued the immorality of prejudice, although Ubuntu generated the social and cultural harmony.

Moreover, the community schools are now facing the double prejudice from the donor agencies and from the government. Hence, the readiness of community alone was insufficient to challenge academic management. Nevertheless, community participation and involvement in school management resulted in bringing about development in schools that had limited support from the government. Thus, it is just the way it goes entailing Ubuntu! We are because you are.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflicts of interest.

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