
RESEARCHING PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN NEPAL THROUGH COMPARATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

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ABSTRACT

The 1990s gave new momentum to privatization and this led to increase private schools in Nepal as well. Along with this growth many problems also were observed in the system. Therefore researchers like me have searched and researched those problems and solutions. The researcher has used multiple case studies as the strategy of inquiry where cases were compared and analyzed. This paper also overviews the global experience on private schools. As this paper is more about the research method, it discusses the background of the research philosophy followed by comparative research in education. The paper concludes with the perception of stakeholders on choice, performance and equity following the discussion on some paradoxes of private schools in Nepal.

Keywords: Comparison, Research, Private Schools in Nepal.

INTRODUCTION

We compare almost everything in the universe. Einstein's theory of relativity holds true not only in the field of physics but also almost everywhere. The perception we create about an idea or an entity cannot hold without its comparison to something similar or in contrast to something else. In research also, comparison is frequently made. Comparison is used in research to compare events, occurrences and status of the entity in question. It is useful for comparing between countries as well. Similarly, comparison is used to analyze the situation within a nation. I place the private schools in Nepal in the world context at a point of time when the World Trade Organization (WTO) has played a pivotal role in promoting private service providers in education. Therefore, I present some glimpses of private schools from around the world.

Furthermore, I compare the cases of private schools on three themes: Choice, Performance and Equity. The research strategy I have used is Case Study; Multiple Case Study where cases are compared. The development of the article is based on my research “Paradoxes of Private Schools in Nepal: Stakeholders’ Perspectives on Choice, Performance and Equity” and on a selection of books, researches and articles – both published and unpublished. Before entering the comparative research, I discuss the research philosophy to give a world view of the research.

PHILOSOPHY IN RESEARCH

Research is a scientific inquiry on the issues and matters of social concern that answers and solves the problem. For Hopkins (2002) research is all about addressing an issue or asking and answering the question or solving the problem. This process involves several elements and concerns producing a combined result. A philosophical basis is the first step in commencing the research journey. Philosophical basis is determined on the basis of paradigm – positivism or non-positivism. Non-positivism is widely used these days as one of the best methods. It considers human minds as the best examiners of reality. Even so, positivism cannot be ignored for its contributions in the past and today. The qualitative method is widely used by the non-positivist researchers. For Creswell (2007), in a qualitative research, inquirers make certain assumptions, which consist of a stance towards the nature of the reality (ontology), how the researcher knows what s/he knows (epistemology), the role of values in the research (axiology), the language of the research (rhetoric), and the methods used in the process (methodology) (pp. 16-19).

Ontology and epistemology comprise metaphysics and are two major aspects of a branch of philosophy. Ontology is concerned with the characteristics of existence, whereas epistemology is concerned with knowledge (Willis, 2007). While describing others, there is always a possibility of another reality from the point of the researcher’s own reality. Therefore, it is assumed that the reality may be multiple for people from different backgrounds. So the ontology envisaged by this research will be subjective. The transaction between the researcher and the researched is the epistemology of the research. The researcher remains in close proximity to the participants to obtain knowledge in a particular subject.

I believe that interpretive and critical theory can best describe people's voices. People, or the participants, express and also interpret what they have in their minds. They also have the capacity to describe the subject critically. According to Voce (2004), the ontology of the interpretive paradigm is subjective; people experience reality in different ways (p.2). As stated by Willis (2007), there is no reality other than what humans create in their own minds (p. 10). For Guba and Lincoln (1994), the ontology of critical theory is historical realism- virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values; crystallized over time. The epistemology of the theory is transitional/subjectivist; value mediated finding (Guba &

Lincoln, 1994, p. 193). In the case of critical theory, the ontological questions are governed by conflicting, underlying structures: social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender (Voce, 2004,p.2). In educational research, gender, geographical, economic, and social reasons are found responsible for inadequate access to schools. Similarly, access to quality education becomes a big challenge for many in the society.

The epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is that knowledge is based not only on the observable phenomena, but also on subjective beliefs, values, reasons and understandings. In critical theory, events are understood within social and economic contexts (Voce, 2004, p. 3). Therefore, the ontology and epistemology of this paradigm are multiple realities and knowledge sharing through an intensive interaction with the participants. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) said that " various paradigms work within the relativists ontology (multiple constructed realities) and interpretive epistemology (the knower and known interact and shape one another)" (p. 22).

Paradigm is a broader perspective of the researcher to view the world. "A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deal with ultimate or first principles" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.107). It represents the world view of an individual. Moreover, the paradigm guides the epistemological, ontological and methodological perspective. For Guba (1990), "The net that contains the researcher's epistemological, ontological, methodological premises may be termed as a *paradigm*" (as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 26). Defining paradigm, Voce (2004) also stated that a paradigm is rather a framework within which theories are built, that fundamentally influences how you see the world, determines your perspective, and shapes your understanding of how things are connected. Based on the explanations of various scholars, paradigm can be explained as a set of beliefs that guides the research. Therefore, for me paradigms and metaphysics interact with each other and finally arrive at the same conclusion.

Using two paradigms in a research is called multiple paradigms. "Individuals may also use multiple paradigms in their research that are compatible." (Creswell, 2007, p.19) So, for me interpretive and critical theories are the lens to see the world for a research in the social science. I agree with what Willis (2007) believes that "the interpretive and critical perspectives overlap and that critical theory is an important and productive research tradition of the social sciences" (p. 21). Awasthi (2004) also used multiple paradigms in his research. He embraced wider perspectives of qualitative research and saw the potentiality of more than one paradigm and perspective.

As stated by Willis (2007), for interpretivists, what the world means to the person or group is critically important to good research in the social sciences (p. 6). For Villier (2005), interpretivism aims to find new interpretations or underlying meanings and adheres to the ontological assumption of multiple realities, which are time and context dependent. According to

him, it is an appropriate view for studies of complex human behavior and social phenomena. As stated by Altheide and Johnson (2011), "...human social life is meaningful, and that it is essential to take these meanings into account in our explanations, concepts, and theories; furthermore, to grasp the importance of values, emotions, beliefs and other meanings of cultural members" (p. 582). For Villier, Willis and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2005, 2007, 2008), the interpretive paradigm is a development as a critique of positivism in the social sciences.

The reason the critical paradigm is defended here is to see the proactive role of the World Trade Organization (WTO) that promoted private schools and education even in the education sector. According to Willis (2007), critical theory emerged from Marxism in the first half of the 20th century and differs from classical Marxism in its willingness to explore a wide range of power relationships, including those involving gender, race, and ethnicity, whereas classical Marxism tended to focus on capitalist-worker relationships and control of the means of production. (p. 81). However, critical theory is based on the Marxism foundation, which tries to uncover the local instances of universal power relationships and empower the oppressed (Willis, 2007, p. 83). The leading proponent of critical theory is Jürgen Habermas, who promoted this theory as a philosophy. Willis (2007) said that critical research assumes the necessity of critique of the current ideology, seeking to expose dominating or oppressive relationships in society (p. 81). I discussed research and philosophical background in order to have a better understanding of the fundamental aspects of research. Now, I move into the comparative research methods.

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

Comparative research method basically is an advanced form of case study strategy where case/cases are compared horizontally, vertically, or a combination of horizontally and vertically. Comparative research can help the researcher to ascend from the initial level of exploratory case studies to a more advanced level of general theoretical models' invariance, such as causality or evolution (Routio, 2007). Comparative research can be found in nearly all disciplines and applied to the study of almost any topic, ranging from comparative study of the working conditions across nations, to the analysis of the differences of life values within a single societal context, to the examinations of the contrasts of face-work in various cultures (Allik et al., 2010; Drobin et al., 2010; Droogers, 2005, as cited in Azarion, 2011). Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (n.d.) also have a similar view when they state that "comparative approaches are regaining their popularity, both as a method of inquiry and as a frame of analysis" (Intro. para 3). Therefore, comparative research has equally been an important method from the past to the present to address various issues and events that are compared within or outside the country. Moreover, this method at its foundation uses case study into deeper levels while gathering knowledge. Knowledge is generated from the close proximity between the researchers and the researched.

Comparative research is equally important in the case where cases are similar or dissimilar. In similar cases also there may be different causes and effects in its nature. Cause and effects are the intrinsic part of the research. The difference is found through comparison, which utilizes tacit knowledge or attitude. Comparison is one of the most efficient methods for explicating or utilizing tacit knowledge or tacit attitudes (Routio, 2007). Comparison as well as the difference is the focus of the examination. Therefore, during these processes, a researcher compares the knowledge with similar form of knowledge received through the researches contributing to the new knowledge and the theory. For Routio (2007) a logical procedure for gaining generalizable knowledge could be combining the results from the study of several resembling cases or objects (p. 6). I discuss towards the end of this paper what my research found from the comparison of the cases.

COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION

Comparative research has been considered very important in the sense that its utility is generally recognized. For Mills, De Bunt, and De Brujin (2006), the importance and utility of comparative research are as old as the discipline itself. Durkheim (1983, p. 139) has explained comparative sociology as itself the sociology (as cited in Mills et al., 2006, p. 619). Regarding education as a core subject of sociology, I discuss the historical development of comparative education based on the knowledge created by Novoa and Yariv-Mashal (n.d.). According to them, development in comparative education needs to be placed within a large framework of historical and societal transitions. The tentative chronology that Novoa and Tariv-Mashal have given is as follows.

1880's - KNOWING THE "OTHER"

It was a period towards the end of the 19th century when the world witnessed mass schooling. People were curious to know about other countries and education processes. "International missions, the organization of universal exhibitions and production of international encyclopedias all led to the emergence of the discipline of comparative education, which was intended to help national reformers in their efforts to build national system of education" (Novoa & Tariv-Mashal, n. d.,Intro.para.5). Therefore, some forty years starting from 1880 to 1920 was the era of knowing others and bringing reforms into the country.

1920's - UNDERSTANDING THE "OTHER"

The second period of the comparative education started from 1920s when World War I inspired an urgent sense of the necessity for international cooperation and mutual responsibility. "Concomitant with this impulse was a desire to understand the "other", both "other" powers and "other" countries, bringing with it an interest in different forms of knowledge production,

schooling and education" (Novoa & Tariv-Mashal, n.d., Intro. para.6). In order to build the new world, it was required to educate a new man. This implied a new school. There was a concentration on educational policies as well as on pedagogical movements that helped to compare the education in different countries.

1960's - CONSTRUCTING THE "OTHER"

It was a post-colonial period which witnessed a renewal of comparative approaches. "The need to construct the "other", namely in terms of building educational systems in the "new countries", led to the dissemination of development policies, at a time when education was considered a main source of social and economic progress" (Novoa & Tariv-Mashal, n.d.,Intro.para.7). This was a very crucial period which emphasized the scientific approach of comparative studies. The scientific approach was developed as the basis of comparative studies. The study of comparative education created educational solutions and was exported to different countries and regions.

2000's - MEASURING THE "OTHER"

This was a period of globalization, liberalization and mass communication and it required comparative studies, particularly in education. There was an increase in the belief of the key role of education in the endowment of marginal advantage. "The major focus of much of this comparative research is inspired by a need to create international tools and comparative indicators to measure the "efficiency" and the "quality" of education". (Novoa & Tariv-Mashal, n.d., Intro, para. 8) With a view to measure the performance of education at the international level, organizations like the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), and the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) were put in place. The significance of these organizations is immense, as their conclusions and recommendations tend to shape policy debates and to set discursive agendas, influencing educational policies around the world (Crossley, 2002, as cited in Novoa & Tariv-Mashal, n. d.,Intro..para 14). We can take the example of WTO that has greatly influenced education. The World Trade Organization (WTO) established in the year 1995 has been promoting the private sector as the education provider. It believes in competition among educational institutions within and outside the country. This is what I captured in my research as I found the subject and its method very timely and appropriate. Now I present the global experiences and comparison.

GLOBAL EXPERIENCES AND COMPARISON

After the 1990s, globalization, liberalization and privatization have played a bigger role in the world economy as well as in world education. International organizations like the World Bank and the World Trade Organization are among those which not only promote the concept

but help technically as well as financially for the activities operated by the private sector. The role of private sector at this time has increased dramatically though government is always on the driving seat. Wobsmann (2009, pp. 20-22) analysed the involvement of both public and private provision and allocation of education in 29 countries using Program in Student Assessment (PISA) data. These countries are Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Check Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Latvia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United states. The table developed by Wobmann (2009, p. 22) shows the public funding and the publicly operated schools. This table shows 86.9% of the funding being managed by the public and the share of publicly operated schools is 83% with 3.9% difference between allocation and provision. Similarly, the remaining 17% of schools are managed by a private entity. The share of publicly operated schools varies substantially across countries, with Belgium (25%) –the Netherlands (26%) at the bottom end and Russia (100%) and Iceland (99%) at the top end. The average share of public funding is highest in most Scandinavian countries (99%). This shows that public funding as well as public provision is much higher than the private sector involvement. But, in some countries, private education is highly accepted at the local level and it is on an increasing trend.

In India, both public and private schools are serving the educational purposes of their children. Private schools are of three types in India: the first type is managed on government grant in-aid, but these schools are privately run; the second type get little government funding, but must follow certain regulations; and the third type are unrecognized that have not fulfilled government criteria (Desai, Dubey, Vanneman, & Banerji, 2008, p. 15). Desai et al. further elaborate that the first type of schools, called aided schools, receive money from the government but teachers are directly hired and paid by the schools. These schools carry private character in management and day to day operations. The second type of school tends to be larger, often run by non-profit management. The third type of school tends to retain a home grown flavor and is frequently run in a more ad-hoc fashion. (Desai et al., 2008) combined aided and unaided schools into a single category "private schools".

Tooley (2009) has been an enriched researcher in the case of private schooling and he explores the private schools in India. He observed many private schools that are serving the children from poor families. He visited the slum areas of Hyderabad, a part of India, where he was surprised by seeing the ubiquity of private schools. Tooley (2009) said, "the stunning thing about the drive was that private schools had not thinned out as we went from one of the poshest parts of town to the poorest" (p. 5). He found more and more private schools in India serving the children from poor families than he had thought possible. The fee structure too was not that expensive though it varied. Tooley discovered that dozens of low-cost, for-profit private schools

served the poor in the slums of Hyderabad despite the fact that government schools were available for free. A similar conclusion was drawn by Jamil, Javid and Rangaraju (2012). They concluded that "of all the private schools, more than 60 % are low-cost, in both India and Pakistan" (p. 39).

The effect of globalization in education has also been witnessed by the People's Republic of China (PRC). Private schools have started to deliver their services in the country. Mok (2000, p. 109) stated that after the adoption of the socialist market system in the 1990s, educational development has been effected by strong market forces in the PRC. Article 25 of the Education Law promulgated in 1995 reconfirmed once again to establish schools through enterprises, social institutions, local communities and individuals (Mok, 2000, p. 114). Mok (2009) further reconfirmed that the shift of state responsibility in educational provision to families and individuals, the prominence of fee-charging, as well as the introduction of internal competition among educational institutions, clearly suggests that China's education system has been going through a process of marketization. However, Tooley (2009) had difficulties in finding schools which were privately run as the phenomenon was new in the country. He had to work hard to get to private schools in China in the beginning of his quest to explore these schools. But slowly he explored them with the help of locals and the government. These schools were mostly for the poor people, and therefore the fees in these schools were also cheaper than in public schools (Tooley, 2009, p. 100).

Private provision of education was initiated in Pakistan long ago. The state promised universal primary education as well as sought other actors to participate in it. It justified the need for participation of the extra-state actors because of lack of resources. Since then, the private schools have existed in the form of madrasahs and Christian missionary schools as well as schools run by business entrepreneurs and non-governmental organizations (I-SAPS, 2010). Over the past decade, the private sector has emerged as a key provider of education services in Pakistan. This can be realized through the observation of data of public and private schools. As far as the number of institutions is concerned, 30% of all educational institutions in Pakistan were private in 2007-08. An important conclusion from the data is that private institutions are expanding at a much faster rate (an increment by 104%) than those in the public sector (I-SAPS, 2010, p. 7). A research made by Jamil et al. (2012) found significant private enrollment in the target districts as compared to public enrollment: 61% of the school-going students were enrolled in private schools (p. 16). This shows that the number of private schools is on the increase in both the urban and rural parts of Pakistan.

In Denmark, all children have the right to be educated. Parents who do not want to send their children to public schools have the obligation to make sure their children have the opportunity to learn the same things in the way the parents think appropriate. This means that

children must be taught, but do not have to attend a specific school, and the local government is responsible to make sure that no any child in the district is left without education. The law of Denmark makes it possible to run private schools with economic support from the state as long as the schools maintain certain standards. This law follows from a long tradition for "free schools" in Denmark. These schools are run irrespective of religion, ideology or ideas. Private schools can be run for progressive education with a particular educational aim. These schools get state support up to 80-85% as long as they meet the standards. Parents have to pay only 15-20% of the school cost (Danish Ministry of Education, 2014).

The Netherlands is one of the countries in the world where private schools have a larger role in providing education. Over 70% of children in this country go to private schools to acquire education with extensive public welfare provision (Patrinos, 2013). The Netherlands has one of the oldest national systems based on school choice in the world (Patrinos, 2013). Although all schools in the Netherlands are government funded, most are managed by private school boards. As a result, most children in the Netherlands attend private schools, a trend that has been increasing over the past 150 years (Patrinos, 2013, p. 3). In the Netherlands, most schools are private and are managed at the local level. Foundations, church and municipal authorities are responsible for management of the schools. Municipalities are the competent authorities for the management of schools in the area. All schools are governed by a legally authorized body (school board) and the school board is responsible for the implementation of laws and regulations.

Education in Australia is classified according to the source of funding and administrative structure. From this perspective, there are two broad categories of schools in Australia: public schools, known as government or state schools, and private schools, which can be further subdivided into Catholic schools and independent schools. Religion-based systems of education are operated by the Anglican, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic denominations as well as a number of other church or parachurch-based low-fee schools (Education in Australia). By far the most numerous are Catholic schools, which are run by diocese-based educational institutions within the Catholic Church called the Catholic Education/Schools Offices, although some more prestigious Catholic schools are independent. The rest are known as independent schools, which are largely Protestant grammar schools (Education in Australia). There are also a few Jewish and Islamic schools, and a growing number of independent Montessori and Steiner schools. At primary and secondary level, government schools educate the majority of students. The major part of their cost is met by the relevant State or Territory government. Private schools, both religious and secular (the latter often with specializations), may charge higher fees. Regardless of whether a school is government or private, it is regulated by the same curriculum standards framework.

Private schools have a long history in the US dating back to the sixteenth century. These schools were opened by the Catholic missionaries in Florida and Louisiana in the sixteenth century (Education in the USA (n.d.). In the year 1999, the share of these schools remained 30% of the total 27,223 private schools (elementary and secondary) occupying the second position after other religious schools (49%). Nonsectarian schools occupied 22% of all private schools (Education Encyclopedia, 2014). An elementary or secondary school (1) controlled by an individual or agency other than a state, a subdivision of a state, or the federal government; (2) usually supported by other than public funds; and (3) the operation of whose programs rests with other than publicly elected or appointed officials is a private school (Cookson, Jr.,1989, p. 60). The definition of a private school by the United States Department of Education requires the government non-participation in these schools; however, various documents support the evidence of government's funding to private schools through vouchers and various other means.

Hirschoff (1986), states that the regulation and funding of these schools adapted in the US should follow the technical requirements and not violate any federal, state, or local laws and the board of trustees may govern as they see fit (as cited in Cookson Jr., 1989, pp. 76-79). Private school teachers obtain a state-regulated teaching certificate. Generally, private schools can hire whomever they choose, as the terms and conditions of employment are governed by a private contract. Private schools are free to admit any students they wish, although they cannot discriminate on the basis of race and any other criteria. Likewise, the states are also authorized to regulate private school curricula. Some states have no regulations, while others require that private schools provide at least an equivalent curriculum to that found in public schools. This means there is no single curriculum at the national level. There are also several plans to help parents defray the cost of private education. Under a voucher plan, parents receive a voucher worth a certain amount of money, which they then spend at a school -public or private- of their choice (Cookson Jr., 1989, p. 78). In this system, parents are free to send their children to non-neighborhood schools of their choice whether they are public or private. From PK-12, the enrollment of students in private schools was 5,268,000 during the year 2011-12. This is 10% of all US students. The number of private schools was 30,861 in the same year, which was 24% of all US schools in that year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012). The research of private schools from around the world showed that private schools do exist in many countries but the coverage and their modality varies from country to country. Now I discuss the finding of the private schools in Nepal regarding choice, performance and equity. The findings were drawn following the comparison of the multiple cases.

PRIVATE SCHOOLS FOR PROFIT OR SERVICE

The number of private schools is on the rise around the world. This has also been ever growing in Nepal since the time of globalization, particularly from the late 1980s. However,

many parents are not able to send their children to private schools because of school fees and other costs. Similarly, those parents sending their children to private schools are also not happy with the private schools. Sending to private schools is more a compulsion than parents' willingness. For many reasons, private entrepreneurs are enjoying the fruits of liberalization as it is a reward of their invested capital and efforts. Their academic result also is found better than in public schools. "The performance of the institutional schools was comparatively very much higher than that of community schools in all subjects-Nepali, English, mathematics, science and environmental education and social studies" (Fullbright, 2005, Education and Development Service Centre, 2008). But all private schools are not performing equally. There are cases of private schools which have not maintained minimum standards. Some private schools have closed their doors forever. Closing a school is often the result of the bad performance of the school. Many private schools in Nepal are run and are guided by the principle of profit making. But one of the schools I studied was found different in many respects from others that students coming to this school were mostly from middle and lower economic backgrounds. The study revealed that in Nepal there is no standard motive for running a private school. These schools are run for a social service, social benefit or for a profit motive or for a combination of all three. Therefore, making generalizations about private schools is not fair; similar with the practices at schools in the US, as I was told by a private school teacher from the US.

ELIMINATING OR CREATING SOCIAL DIFFERENCES

We have witnessed that schools have eliminated social differences in many respects. For example, there have been many changes in the caste system in Nepal and for this to happen education has been one of the change agents. According to the article 18 of the Constitution of Nepal, 2072, all citizens shall be equal before the law. No person shall be denied the equal protection of the law (Government of Nepal [GON], 2015). Similarly, the Constitution is oriented to promote social justice and social integration providing compulsory and free basic education, and free education up to the secondary level (GON, 2015, p. 11). The Ministry of Education is working to provide quality education to its children (School Sector Reform Plan, 2009). International organizations, governments and schools are engaged in promoting schools for the benefit and harmonization of the society. They envisage a better and harmonized society through the access of education for all. But education and private schools played a role in creating social inequalities (Valentin, 2001). There are nearly 4% of children in Nepal who do not attend school. Similarly, more than 75% of children do not get access to private schools. This forms a new category of deprived children. Therefore, education and private schools in Nepal have not contributed to equitable society, but have created social differences. However, the research revealed that the contribution of private schools on eliminating or creating differences varies from one school to another.

PARENTS - CHOOSER OR LOSER

Parents choose schools for their children by what school they think best meets their expectations. They use various means to choose the school so that they will not regret their choice and the investment required. They use their best judgment and make the best decisions for their children because the progress of the children is associated with their own best interests. Therefore, the advocates of school choice say that parents have the prerogative to choose the school. For Kelly (2007), “The facility for parents and pupils to choose their secondary schools free from government constraint appears to make manifest, in some as yet ill-defined way, the spirit of twenty-first century socio-economic freedom” (p. 3). Kelly has rightly described school choice as a fashion and practice of the postmodern age that we have also started to practice in urban and even in the rural part of Nepal. However, the question is, how far parents have succeeded in practicing the essence of choice in real sense. As I interacted with the parents regarding choice, they stated their reasons for their choices. My research concluded that all parents were not able to choose schools wisely as they had no adequate knowledge and competency to choose the school. One of the parents was not happy with her decision of choosing the school as she said:

“My son is not doing any better in this school. I changed his school from a public to the private one. I realized that private schools focus their concern on maximizing their income through parents but they care little about those students who are weak. I am confused what I should do further; should I send him back to the public school or stay with this school?”

Most participants of the three schools (three cases) of my research had different reasons for choosing the schools. For the participants of case I the reasons for choosing the school were cost/affordability, good teaching and learning, and good SLC results, respectively, whereas for participants of cases II and III, cost/affordability was not an important reason for their school choice. The reputation of the school was the most important reason for choosing the school.

SCHOOLS FOR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION OR REPRODUCTION

Education has contributed to the shaping of the present world. Schools have imparted knowledge and skills to children and thus contributed to remaking their lives. In this respect, modern schooling is central to the social and cultural shaping of children and youth (Levinson & Holland, 1996, Levinson, 2001, Porter, 1998, Stambatch, 2000, as cited in Valentin, 2001, p. 51). But there are lapses in schools and the education system in Nepal that cause people to be disappointed in the results of their children’s education. Children attending private schools are mostly from privileged families. This, in turn, reproduces social, economic and cultural status. In Skinner and Holland’s (1996) study also, education in private schools gave an advantage to the

participants over ordinary people educated in public schools. A similar result was found by Valentin (2001) who studied children of Ramghat and Kaski, and in Bourdieu's language he says it as the disguised hereditary transmission.

For Bourdieu (1990, pp. 52-54), a *habitus* is a product of history that stands for social reality inside the individual. A *field* is the social reality outside the individual (as cited by Iannici & Kok, 1999). This produces individual and collective practices as these both have an in-built affinity. The habitus is an individual's subjective experience and it has a dialectic relationship with the wider world (the *field*). It ensures the active presence of past experiences which are deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thoughts and actions. As Bourdieu said, our past *personae* predominates in us (p. 56), history is more important in shaping our behavior. A symbolic capital which is always very expensive in material terms is one of the mechanisms which makes capital go to capital (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 120). Those having symbolic capital (better schooling) have everything in their favor; those studying in private schools had better SLC performance, extracurricular experiences, language, etc. Moreover, symbolic violence is reproduced in education; dominant's power in a process of inculcating *habitus*. Cultural capital is acquired through private schooling for those who can afford it. This can contribute to form a dual society, like the Hindu caste system contributed to form the privileged and under-privileged, rich and poor groups.

Kelly (2007, p. 24) emphasized cultural capital, accrued from educational capital, though "schooling in Nepal is to a large extent a matter of economic capital; both in terms of access to a school education as well as the expected outcome. It is an economic burden to many families" (Valetin, 2001, p. 49) that I found in my research as well, leaving fruits of private schools in the hands of some families. Smith and Nobel (1995) state that English choice policies have been damaging to the already disadvantaged groups (as cited in Whitty et al., 2000, p. 101). For Ball (1994), the implementation of market reforms in education is essentially a class strategy which has one of its major effects on the reproduction of relative social class advantages and disadvantages (p. 103). One form of capital has an influence on another form creating a bigger gap between the privileged and the under-privileged. The education system and private schools in Nepal are also playing the same role in widening the differences between those already having access to social and economic capital and those deprived of the resources.

CONCLUSION

The comparison helped to understand the reality of private schools regarding their choice, performance and equity. Based on the comparison of multiple cases, I conclude that choice made sense to only some stakeholders as the rest were ignorant or incapable of using the criteria of school choice. For the participants of school I, cost/affordability and SLC results were their

primary choice factors in sending their children to a particular school whereas for school II and III participants, their choice was based on the school reputation. The meaning of school performance for the participants of school I was the SLC results and teachers in the classrooms, whereas for participants of schools II and III, interactive teaching and learning and extracurricular activities carried more weight in judging school performance. The school I was more sensitive regarding the seating arrangements. There was separate seating for girls and boys in this school which was relaxed in schools II and III. The merit based disparity was common in all schools; better performing students were better taken care of leaving others unattended. The research also showed that in bigger and reputed schools the number of boys was higher than in a school which was cheaper. This type of discrimination has contributed to create social differences in society. The research also revealed that participants from well established schools focused on school reputation, extracurricular activities and English as the quality indicators of a particular school, whereas participants from the small schools focused on low cost and SLC results as the quality indicators of their schools.

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