Primary Education and Dropout in Nepal

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Abstract

This article tries to highlight the dropout rate of primary education of Nepal. The main essence of the article is to explore the situation of dropout of primary education. There are several programs and policies to reduce the dropout, out of the school children and so on but still there are several issues that are left behind. Educational budget has also increased but still the economic status, family background, access and equity, quality degeneration, lack of school community relationship, public-private dichotomy are some of the reasons behind dropout. With different plans and policies like MDG, EFA, SSRP are for the fulfillment of the free and compulsory primary education but this study reveals that still there are problems in fulfilling the targets and it's difficult to meet the targets within the certain time. The unreached, marginalized, socially excluded groups are among the dropout. So the ways out are also provided within this article which will be helpful for the education actors.

Introduction

The dropout student refers to the children who leave school or college before they complete their studies. Here, drop out signifies the drop out of primary level i.e. grade 1-5. MoES (2003) mentions that, the students, who leave the school system without completing a grade or level, are called dropouts. In the words of Asharaf (1999), a child who abandons a course of study on which he or she has embarked before its completion is called a dropout. Thus, dropout refers to those children who are enrolled in school but who fail to complete the relevant level of the educational cycle. In the context of the primary level, this means that a dropout child fails to reach the final grade, usually grade 5. Likewise, according to Price (2007), the term dropout refers to an event, such as leaving school before graduating the cycle or without attaining an educational status.

In the same way, Chugh (2011) states that dropouts from school are defined as young children, who enroll in the school and for some reasons other than death leave school before completing the grade without transferring to another school. This statement indicates that there are various reasons behind children's dropout. Adding to this point, Hunt (2008) expresses that the prevalence of dropout depends on children being previously enrolled. Therefore, in countries where there is low initial enrolment, actual numbers who dropout may be lower than where initial enrolment is high. Occurrence of the dropout rate may be high or low depending on the particular school, social and cultural environment, economic and peer group etc. in other words, dropout is to leave school study for several reasons. However, it does not include death and transfer in any other school. Drop out has been one of the problem in primary level. Primary education is a catalyst of social change and empowerment. It helps to overcome the traditional inequalities based on gender, caste and class, just as the removal of these inequalities contributes to the sustainable development of education.

Status of drop out in Nepal

Dropout rate has been one of the crosscutting issues which definitely will create obstacle in obtaining EFA (Education For All) by 2015. Still the drop out of primary education of 2012/13 is 5.2, repetition rate is 10.6 and promotion rate is 84.2(DoE, 2012).This shows there is low chances of obtaining EFA in primary level by 2015. Still 4.8 % of students are leaving schools every year and repetition rate is also high which has been one of the major problems in the field of education. Nepal government Ministry of Education is also investing huge amount on primary education but the result is troublesome. The government has allocated Rs. 86.03 billion for the development of entire education sector and has prioritized more on primary education (MoF, 2014). If we see the dropout rate of 2011/12 and 2012/13 there is no significant change. In 2011/12 the dropout rate was 5.4 whereas in 2012/13 it is 5.2 (See Annex 1), only change of 0.2 % won't fulfill the targets of EFA.

The dropout rate of different years is different (See Annex 2). It shows that the dropout rate has been decreased but still there is drop out in the schools. In a study conducted by Sarkar (2004), there are major four aspects of drop out. They are i) Accessibility: physical, social distance, social discrimination ii) Affordability: direct, indirect & opportunity costs of schooling iii) Quality: infrastructure, facilities, materials and teachers iv) Relevance: curriculum-needs and values, skill, employment. In another study conducted by Manandhar and Sthapit (2011), the main reason behind drop out is responsibilities in household chores (48%), economic status

(35%) and migration (18). Roderic (1994) has said that grade repetition may influence school dropout, as high dropout rates are found among students who repeat grades. Grade repetition is, therefore, a great hindrance for efficient education system.

There are different reasons behind the dropout rate. Besides, access and equity, quality degeneration, lack of school community relationship, public-private dichotomy and under- financing are other issues of Primary Education (Baidya, 2000). Household poverty and economic hardships are important reasons behind the high dropout and low retention of children in primary education (Kushiyat, 2007). If we see the present dropout rate then it is improving in average but if we see the dropout rate of dalits, marginalized students then their dropout rate is still in a big volume. And if we don't implement some programs and strategies for the improvement then there will be problem to fulfill the targets of EFA, SSRP, and MDG etc.

There is no single reason behind dropout. The socio economic status, geographical barriers etc are some of the reasons. According to Hunt (2008), drop out of children from schools is often a process rather than the result of one single event, and therefore has more than one proximate reason. Both demand (individual) and supply driven factors (school), are rooted in cultural and contextual realities, which make each situations different (Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Hunt, 2010). So with the single solution and providing single opportunity won't be able to minimize and eradicate the problem of dropout.

There are various reasons behind the school dropout. In absence of sufficient parental income, parents are unable to provide resources to support children's education as well as learning within home (Rumberger, 2001). Students from high income families are less likely to dropout from school in comparison to low income families (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). This is another scenario of the developing countries where poverty plays an important role.

Policies

There are different plans and policies, rules, regulations and acts that add value in quality education and education for all. They are highlighted below:

 i.   EFA

EFA draws its program components from the six policy goals of the Dakar Framework for Action and one of the most crucial and important goal is "to ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality". It strives for ensuring access and equity, enhancing quality and relevance and improving efficiency and institutional capacity of primary education.

 ii. MTEF- Prepare children's cognitive, physical and emotional aspects for PE

 iii. 13th plan (2013/14- 2015/16)-To protect & promote the overall rights of children.

 iv. Article 28 of the UNCRC(1989)-

To recognize the right of the child to education,

Free compulsory primary education

 v.   MDG (2000)- asserted universal primary education

Also there are several other plans and policies like school as a zone of peace, children as a zone of peace. But only policies without effective implementation couldn't be meaningful. So, effective implementation of the policies is a major need to decrease the dropout rate.

Challenges

There are different challenges and lacking points that needs to be improved to provide free and compulsory primary education by 2015 or beyond. Though there are several mechanisms that help for promoting inclusiveness in education buts still reaching the unreached children is one of the major challenge. Scholarships are provided to the needed children but how efficient has it been and are the needed children's getting it is another part of monitoring mechanisms. Release of the scholarship amount is often delayed; it reaches at the end of the academic year which discourages the students and parents alike, thus jeopardizing the completion of primary education (Maharjan, 2013).

Among the drop out children and out of the school children most of them are children with special needs. Among the total students enrolling in primary education, 51,766 are different able students and their percentage is 1.1(Flash Report 2011/12). But there are no such and a pertinent mechanism to address their problems Addressing needs of various special need children is also another challenge. Policies and programs were neither sufficient nor efficient for providing rights-based education (CERID, 2009) which has become barrier in getting primary education.

Ways Out Ahead

From the above discussions also it is obvious that dropout rate has been one of the challenging factors in achieving education for all by the targeted year (2015). In the existing situation, without any reform and improvement it would be a great challenge to fulfill the target and provide free and compulsory education for students of primary level. Wagley (2014) also highlights that without creating conditions for change, reforms can never be made. Thus this issue should be focused in the right time.

School environment, home environment and the surroundings are the major factors for the dropouts. So school family, school management committee, parent's awareness, etc are some of the hindering factors that should be solved. There are different notions in achieving free and primary education but still there are gaps and chances of improvement to fulfill the nations demand, international plans and policies. The following activities will help to decrease dropout rate in primary level.

   i.   Scholarship programs/ mid-day meal/tiffin as per the need
  ii.   Provide basic physical facilities and educational materials
 iii.   Enhance teacher quality-child-friendly teaching methods
  iv.   Introduce alternative education provisions for dropouts
   v.   Encourage local and female teachers
  vi.   Two language(mother tongue) as a medium of instruction

Conclusions

The overall educational status of disadvantaged groups has changed over time but they still lag behind in several instances. A firm commitment to the widespread and equitable provision of the primary education is the first requirement for eradicating social and economic deprivation. If the problem of dropout in primary education is to be solved, remedial actions are needed that address and also involve all stakeholders of the primary education system. The wisdom is to act in concerted spirit by all – parents, teachers, head teachers, SMCs, and education officers and the government. The children and the community should also be made aware of the afflictions caused in family and community by student dropout in primary education.

The reasons of dropping out of children from and that dropout are common among children whose family is poor, have less income, social status, migration of family etc. It is difficult for the poor, marginalized, socially excluded families to continue and support children's schooling where parent's income is even not sufficient to fulfill the basis needs such as food and clothing. Though there are scholarship provisions, help and support from government side, different I/NGOs but still the solutions are not sustainable and the children are facing the same problem of dropout. Direct and indirect cost of schooling was high which made it difficult enough for parent's to cover the cost of schooling. Giving evidences of lack of proper jobs even for educated ones, some children were not sure of getting good jobs even if they were educated. So there is the urgent need of the alternative mechanisms to solve these types of issues, decrease and finally no dropout rate in the school level.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1

Table: Educational enrollment in primary level

Level	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Average annual growth
Primary(1-5)	4,502,697	4,515,059	4,418,713	4,782,313	4,900,663	4,951,956	4,782,885	1.0

Source: Flash Report 2011/12

Table 2: Promotion, repetition and dropout rate of 2011/12

S.N.	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Total of grades
Promotion rate	70.8	87.4	89	88.8	88.4	83.1
Repetition rate	21.3	8.3	7.4	7.5	5.4	11.5
Dropout rate	7.9	4.3	3.6	3.7	6.2	5.4

Source: Flash Report 2011/12

Table 3: Promotion, repetition and dropout rate of 2012/13

S.N.	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Total of grades
Promotion rate	72.5	87.8	89.4	89.4	88.7	84.2
Repetition rate	19.9	7.9	7.1	7.1	5.3	10.6
Dropout	7.6	4.3	3.5	3.5	6.0	5.2

Source: Flash Report 2012/13

ANNEX 2

Year	Drop out rate	Repetition Rate	Promotion Rate	Share of Educational budget in PE
2008/09	6.0	12.1	81.9	62.87
2009/10	6.5	14.4	79.1	67.22
2011/12	5.4	11.5	83.1	68.86
2012/13	5.2	10.6	84.2	67.62

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