

Educational Policy Implementation in Highly Marginalized Community of Nepal: An Equity Perspective

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Abstract

Last march 2013, when I went to Chitwan and Makawanpur district where I got a chance to visit Chepang community and found that the life style of Chepang and living stander of them were totally different than others. Children were playing and staying at home and no one is going to the school. But even they were happy in their day to day life. They had their own culture, honesty, friendly behaviors and helping nature to each others. Then I remembered government public policy for marginalized group and asked myself why public policy is not able to address and implement with equity perspective toward the Chapang community. So, this article argues that policy implementation in flat is not appropriate. If so happened that cannot give desired result and impact in community because of existing socio cultural, political and economic context of the particular community. This article explains public policy implementation with equity perspectives on policy design for disadvantaged community in educational sectors. It tries to see the application of blanket approach based education policy in Nepal and elaborate the ideas with reference to a case study of Chepang community.

Keywords: Chepang community, national and public policy, equity, disadvantaged community, implementation, decision making.

1. Introduction

Normally, people believe that public policies are designed for all the people in the country but people like Chepangs are not getting according to the designed by national policy. Public policy refers a system of laws, regulatory measures, courses of action, and funding priorities concerning a given topic designed by a governmental entity or its representatives (Kilpatrick, 2000). Policy implementation is a process of a series of decisions and actions directed towards putting a prior authoritative decision into effect (Mazmanian & Sabatier, 1983, pp. 20-21). However, Policy implementation is processed by those people who have a power that make decision and take action.

Policy implementation studies are not value-free due to socio-cultural, political and economic variations in the country's context. It may lead to new forms of policy implementation not yet well understood (Paudel, 2009). However, forms of policy implementation is not implemented as need based of the people as marginalized group like Chepangs are much far away from this policy.

Public policy is implemented to effect some change in the behavior of a target population and it can normally be assumed that this change will ameliorate some public problem. Therefore, it stands to reason that unless the stipulations of a given policy are actually carried out, the problem will persist. As soon as the tenets of the new policy are implemented, a detailed policy evaluation can be conducted to determine if the desired results are being obtained and if not, why not, and what needs to be changed (Pennsylvania, n.d.). However, in the context of Nepal public policies are designed by elite people for their benefit and for reproduction of their generation. It was allowed to exercise power over government agencies without having to be accountable to the public (Ghimire, 2002, p.11). Due to hegemony exercise, marginalized group like Chepangs are always far from access and opportunities.

Administrative decision-making also has a far reaching impact on society as a result of the promulgation of agency regulations, contracting, licensing, inspections, enforcement, adjudication, and the actual discretion for agencies to interpret their own agency rules. (Pennsylvania S. U., n.d.). However, reaching on Chepang community is very far away as administrative decision-making and need based result of Chepangs.

So, this article explains public policy implementation with equity perspectives on policy design for disadvantaged community particularly in educational sectors. It tries to see the applicability of blanket approach based education policy in Nepal and elaborate the ideas with reference to a case study of Chepangs.

1.1. Disadvantaged or Marginalized /Groups/Community

Disadvantaged or marginalized are those Groups and Community who are much far away from access and opportunity by public policy, law, provision, planning, programmes and security from state. To address the problem of targeting, the concept of "disadvantaged" was introduced. Deprivation from the economic opportunity leads to poverty. When social opportunity is added to deprivation that leads to disadvantage. Poverty together with social and gender discrimination in the society form a group of people called disadvantaged group (DAG) (Bishwakarma, 2008). However, a group of people who are, either socially and or economically deprived are

called as disadvantaged group of abbreviated as DAG.

Poverty is powerlessness, lack of representation and freedom (Bishwakarma, 2008). However, poverty, in a simplest term is hunger. It is lack of shelter. It is being sick and not being able to see a doctor. Poverty is not being able to go to school. Poverty does not know how to read, not being able to speak properly. Poverty is not having a job, is fear for the future, living one day at a time. Poverty is losing a child to illness brought about by unclean water.

In Nepal, highly marginalized group are Majhi, Siyar, Lhomi (shinsaba), Thudam, Dhanuk, **Chepang**, Santhal, Jhagad, Thami, Bote, Danuwar, Baramu (Gautam & Sharma, 2011).

1.2. Equity Perspective

Equity is a method of distributing resources to groups and is linked to excellence regardless of race, ethnicity, economic status (Sirotnick, 2001). Equity is an ensuring fairness and basic equal rights to women and men with sometimes actions must be taken to compensate for social or historical disadvantages (UNESCO, 2003). However, Equity in education means fair allocation, equal chance and equal treatment of any group of people based on race, sex, class, ethnicity, disability, region etc. It believes that every group should have a fair stake in education according to proportion.

After fifty years, even with so much inputs being undertaken, the gaps in inputs, in the process, and in attainment between different groups of students and between inputs and attainments are still noticeably significant and improvement. Because of these gaps, there is a need to scrutinize and identify the possible weakness in the policy and in its implementation, so that a revised effort could be launched in bringing about equal opportunity in education. Policy implementation by the Ministry of Education is difficult to interpret due to a number of reasons. Firstly, there is confusion in differentiating the identified gaps in education, be they the inputs, the cause, the process, or the results. Secondly, the approach to equity seems lacking clear framework, and exclusive in its assumption, causes, and impacts which were not helpful in formulating of policy and forwarding steps for action. Thirdly, there were elements in the policy which were antithetical to the attempt of attaining equity (Nordin, 2012).

So, the allocation of resources was based on compensating for those who are being handicapped by the circumstances such as being poor, being in the rural area, and belonging to at risk groups. This could be seen in terms of giving priority to providing of school facilities and equipments, taking care of student health and welfare, opening of opportunity for boarding school placement, and allocating of other forms of aids to the disadvantage and marginalized groups and community like Chepang community.

2. Method: The Case Study of Chepang Community

Chepangs are the indigenour and marginalized people of Nepal, mostly find in the remote areas like Dharding, Chitwan, Gorkha and Makawanpur district of Nepal (Rai, 2009). With the population 52237, constitutes 0.23 percentage of the total population of Nepal and out of which male population is 26,685 and female population is 25,552. (Rai, 2009 & CBS, 2003).

Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN) has categorized Chepangs "as the second most backward/marginalized community" from the bottom list from among the 59 marginalized Indigenous Communities listed by it (WVAF, 2009). It means Chepang community is most marginalized and exploited community which should be addressed for development programmes and activities.

"Case study assumes that 'social reality' is created through social interaction, albeit situated in particular contexts and histories, and seeks to identify and describe before trying to analyze and theorize" (Stark & Torrance, 2011, p.33). It assumes that things may not be as they look and hence it emphasizes on the in-depth and objective observation and study of the case. This approach focuses on understanding the case in detail horizontally and vertically, rather than generalizing to a particular population.

Literal meaning of the word ethnography is 'writing about people', but for the research purpose, ethnography deals with an "understanding how people *interpret* their worlds, and the need to understand the particular cultural worlds in which people live and which they both construct and utilize." (Goldbart & Hustler, 2011, p. 16). Nepal is politically a democratic country with plural political parties, economically poor developing nation with low domestic production of goods and services, socially heterogeneous with low human development index, administratively weak state to enforce rule of law. People are divided into different socio-economic-cultural strata, hence, they hermeneutically understand and construct different meaning of the social phenomena based on their knowledge, experience, and prism.

It takes an example of activity and uses multiple methods and data sources to explore the truth. It tells what the reality is on the ground from the data and information from interview, observation, and documentary analysis of the case in hand; and hence helps to hold policy makers and implementers accountable to their performances.

3. Responsible Structure for Educational Policy Design and its Implementation in Nepal:

3.1. Ministry of Education and its Structures

The Ministry of Education (MoE) was established in 1951 and was renamed as the Ministry of Education and Sports in 2002 and again renamed as Ministry of Education with the decision of Cabinet on Bhadra 15, 2065 BS. The MoE, as the apex body of all educational organizations, is responsible for overall development of education in the country as well as responsible for formulating educational policies and plans, and managing and implementing them across the country through the institutions under it.

The Central Level Agencies (CLAs) under the Ministry are responsible for designing and implementing programmes and monitoring them. Five Regional Education Directorates (REDs) are responsible for monitoring the programmes undertaken by the district level organizations. Seventy-five District Education Offices (DEOs) and one thousand ninety-one Resource Centres (RCs) at sub district level are the main implementing agencies of the educational policies, plans and programmes at local levels.

Moreover, all the functional units of the MoE and other constituents and autonomous bodies within the framework of the MoE are parts of the organizational structure to carry out their functions for achieving their goals.

3.2. Educational Policy in Nepal

Education is a spark and machine for development and transmission of knowledge, skills and information for social change (Shukla, 1998). So, today's society desire "meaningful education for all" (Pradhan, 1999, p. 12). However, education provides knowledge, skills and information to improve and develop for social change and education is not only about knowledge, skills and information but also individual and social capability (Sen, 2000) and subjective well being that how much you are happy on your quality of life (Kenny, 2005). However, education is not only capability but also how much you are happy in your life and aware on the quality of everyday life in our society. Now, based on this meaning of education our national policy has been developed or only designed by elite people for creating hegemony toward the backward and marginalized group and community.

About 34.1% people are still illiterate in Nepal (CBS, National population and housing census 2011: National report, 2012) and the poverty rate of Nepal is about 25.16 percentage (CBS, 2011). However, Nepal is not able to develop and designed as need based of backward and marginalized group and community like addressing equitable improvement in education for Chepang community. So, there should not be walls like giving a lot of homework and based on teacher centered and should be run as school without walls where children feel free and no tension to learn in schools (Jha, 2008). However, today's students do not like pressure, tension, broaden, isolated in study. They want to study with free and having fun as learning by doing with friendly environment.

Education should provide, in particular, women, the physically and mentally disabled, and the economically disadvantaged individuals with the means of earning a livelihood. If one section of the society becomes educated, cultured and affluent, while another section is steeped in poverty and ignorance, it cannot be described as a healthy development. In view of the position which women occupy in the society, priority should be given to give them appropriate place in all kinds of educational activities so that they become partners in the crusade for social reconstruction and national development. It will require a lot more time in improving the present condition of female education, unless special consideration is shown to women without compromising the quality of education and norms of social justice. On the other hand, economic development will fail to gather as much momentum as it should. Besides, special type of educational programmes should be brought forward for their benefit

In the multi-ethnic society of Nepal there are still some castes and communities that lie far behind from the economic, social and geographic points of view, and it is feared that they will go further down on the scale, unless, timely efforts are not made to raise them tip. Priority should be given to basic literacy and skill development along with the provision of facilities for primary education, as part of the effort to change their socio-economic status. Another thing that could be done for the amelioration of their condition is to provide the able and talented members of such backward tribes and communities with progressive opportunities for higher education (NEC, 1992) .

4. A Study of Chepang Community of Nepal

The article writer visited the Chepang community lies in Chitwan and Makwanpur in last March 2013. The writer particularly looked the educational enabling environment in communities and schools. The writer visited at least 3 schools with some related stakeholders. On the basis of the field observation, interviews with the concerned stakeholders have generalized the ideas.

4.1. Existing Situation of Chepang Community

4.1.1. Community and Parents

Awareness level of the parents on sanitation, health, education, regularity of children in schools, importance on education, parental care to children etc is low. Poverty is existed in the community. Malnutrition is also high.

Health based awareness is quite low among all the members in community. Parents send their children to work (hotel and restaurants and carpet factory in Makwanpur and Chitwan) nearby bazaar. In the same way, child Marriage and birth rate is high. Parents are almost unaware on importance of education. Stakeholders are not giving importance for giving educate and aware them. If someone is trying to provide some sorts of awareness and support, they are providing it in isolation, not coordinating with relevant stakeholders.

4.1.2. School Environment

Just saying let's them free for children is not good but if there is no one behind to see or to take care of children then just imagine what would happen and what would they learn without school and teachers. That's why, schools should be change with good quality education and school environment, free from political influences and respect to each other (Bhattra, 2007).

However, there are no child friendly environments in schools (classrooms, playgrounds, furniture, playing materials). Enough numbers of teachers is rarely expected in schools and those existed teachers are not well trained on child friendly teaching, non-violence teaching etc. So children often got more punishment from the teachers and peer. Parents send their children for working as child Labourer. Parents are poor so it is being strong motivator/stimulator for family to make their children out of schools.

4.1.3. VDCs response

The writer visited 3 Secretaries of VDCs; Darechowk, Chandivanjag in Chitwan and Varta in Makwantpur. A VDC secretary of Darechowk (Kurintar based) said that he doesn't have more ideas on how to formulate activities for Chepang children and their upliftment. They are eager to work together with us. They have around one and half Core of annual budget of them. They can allocate needed budget and contribute for the educational enhancement of Chepang community and school education.

4.1.4. School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parents Teachers Associations (PTA)

School Management Committees and Parents Teachers Associations are existed but too much weak. Head teacher is all in all to make decisions relating to the schools and children. Parents don't reach to schools for the improvement of educational environment. Similarly parents aren't reached to betterment of educational activities/ sanitation/ parental care etc/ of their children.

Similarly existing SMC rules/guideline ignores the reality (power relation in community, psychological aspects of SMCs or PTAs members, illiteracy of disadvantaged community). SMCs have power to make any decisions. They have rights and authorities technically. But SMC and PTA of Chepang Community follow and/or agree whatever the head teacher does or decides.

4.1.5. Teacher Development

Most of the schools of Chepang community are recently established. They are located in remote area. Government has the provisions of teacher training (GON, 2009). Government has approved the application to open the schools but hasn't provided the teachers quota. Thought the government has been implementing the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP), it has lots of provisions for teachers; the teachers of these communities are not getting such training. Because chepang community has managed the most of the teachers working in these schools are privately. So the teacher are not fully trained and equipped for teaching.

5. Conclusion

Normal programme and policy in blanket approach won't fit to the chepang community. It needs to introduce Holistic Approach of community development. To show the effective result in education and maintain equity, it is necessary to link the education based programme with livelihood improvement based activities in the Chepang Community.

Creating Community Based Enabling Environment through Village Education Committee (VEC) for quality education is important. It needs to empower the community particularly the Chepang community ensuring their participation and engagement involvement for the quality education at school and quality learning of children. Similarly organization of the Education Based Reflect Class among parents of Chepang community is necessary.

Improvement on School Based Environment for Chepang community is also key to educational equity for the chepang children. School based environment should include the child friendly related activities, trainings package for teachers. Similarly it is better to introduce community based reading materials- Local story books, poems, saying etc for improvement of reading habit of chepang children. Similarly use of information and technology in classes is important for learning achievement.

Normal assessment system cannot work for chepang community. It needs Comprehensive Continuous Assessment System (C-CAS) for quality improvement – of learning achievement of Chepang children and need to connect it with parents and community. Generally parents are not aware much about the educational status of their children and not so much responsible towards and one more important aspect to equity based educational programme implementation is integrated the effort of various level of stakeholders from central level to local level.

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