

# Social Inequality in Nepal and Right of Education

Shree Prasad Devkota/Shiba Bagale  
Chairperson, SDEF & M.Phil in Development Studies, Kathmandu University

## Abstract

The role of education in creating a just and productive society is a topic of controversy at present. Access to education is a fundamental right of citizen of the nation. However, the access to education in Nepal is not satisfactory. Still about 5 percent of children are out of school where many plans, policies and programs have been formulated and implemented in the name of education in Nepal. If we analyzed among the caste/ethnicity, regions, and religious groups and between gender and class of people, there remain huge disparities among them in the access to education. The children who are from high caste with sound economy status have higher chances to access to good facilities of education and they have higher chances to employment opportunity in their life whereas the children from low caste with low economy background do not have access to good facilities of education system and do not have high chances of employment opportunity. This scenario has created the social inequality in Nepalese society.

**Keywords:** Education, Access, Economy status, Inequality

## Introduction

The relationship between educational and social inequalities and opportunities is one of the most fundamental issues in the sociology of education (Levin, 1976). The role of education in creating a just and productive society is very much a topic of controversy today (Boudon, 1976).

Equal access and opportunity are largely depends upon educational policies and plan of the nation. A viable educational plan and policies and educational system can play a significant role to reduce the disparities between/among the gender, caste/ethnic group, religious group, class of the people and geographical regions. Access to education is the fundamental right of any citizen of the nation. People believe that education brings the opportunity to the people and also helps to reduce the disparities among the people in the nation. However, the gap between gender, among ethnicity and caste groups, religious group and development regions in the name of education. In the name of access to education (education for all, all for education), the huge amount of capital has been invested and different sorts of plan, policies and programs have been formulated and implemented in Nepal. Nonetheless, about 5 percent children still out from school or formal education system (CBS, 2011). These 5 percent children are from the particularly the multiple exclusions (female of low caste group from poor family of remote area of FWDR or MWDR. (UNICEF, 2011). On the other hands, high class groups' children have access of school with different opportunity of education such as learning materials. The children who have such facilities have good result and have high chances of job opportunity whereas the children who do not have good access of educational opportunity do not have job opportunity. This scenario has created the huge gap between them ultimately; it has created the huge disparities or inequalities in the society.

Different scholars have defined "education and its implication" in the life of people as well as in the entire society from different perspectives. Marxists argue that the schools as agencies for reproducing the social relations of production for monopoly capitalism and its supportive state structures. Some scholars highlight that school as a essential part of society that prepare the young for modern, industrial and technological society. Against on this statement, Ivan Illich has brought the concept of deschooling that is against school's centralization, bureaucracy, rigidity and inequality. He stresses universal education through schooling is not feasible. School creates segregation in the name of credentials and discrimination on the basis of age. Similarly, Bourdieu sees the culture of the school as a creation of the dominant culture, whose practices are reinvented and perpetuated through education. As part this reproduction process, some cultural conventions acquire a special status. The owners of these things acquire status as well. When these valued conventions and traditions are passed on to their offspring, the social advantages are passed on with them (cited as Corson, 2006).

The poles of the present debate are represented by the functionalists who see schooling as the essential institution for preparing competent members of a modern, rational, efficient, and meritocratic society and the Marxists who see schooling as one of the most important instruments of the state for supporting the capitalist hegemony over the worker and foster the inequality in the different sector of the society.

In this paper, I have analyzed access of education from different dimensions such as the gender, caste/ethnicity groups and religious group.

## Equal Access to the Educational System

Access to education is a fundamental human right. Education provides the foundation for an individual's professional, economic, social and personal development. Education enables individuals to hone their skills and

realize their full potential. Everyone should have the same opportunities in life. No one should be discriminated against because of social background, gender, religion, or age. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Right states that the right to education is recognized as a human right and is understood to establish an entitlement to education (UNICEF, 2007). Unfortunately, many barriers to education persist, preventing individuals from realizing their full potential and contributing meaningfully to society. These barriers may be physical, mental, social or financial. Class, gender and ethnic inequalities are treated as the obstacles that education has to tackle in order to achieve justice in the distribution of opportunities and rewards (Purkoti, 2009). Equality of opportunity in education is seen to be the means of achieving equality in society. However, education itself is also seen by 'critical' theorists as being implicated in the reproduction of social inequalities.

### **Class wise**

In the case of Equal access to the educational system in Nepal, it is not satisfactory. Percentage of out of school children at primary and lower secondary level is 5.4 and 30.5 respectively (CBS, 2011). This is high in higher level. The main cause of out of school children is socio-economy class. Children from lower social class origins are less able to take advantage of "equal accessibility" provisions than are children from higher social class backgrounds. Differences in family income, class culture, social reinforcement, parent's education status and other factors are likely to differ so substantially. The different researches have shown that mostly the children from low economy class and low caste groups family and poor geographical structure do not have equal access to educational system. There could be numerous causes of behind it. Those causes can be divided into two parts that reduces the educational participation of children from lower-class origins relative to those from higher ones. These are (1) barriers external to the school and (2) those within the school structure. The former include such factors as family expectations and limited income where the lower-class family may have lower expectations for its children with respect to education; and limited income restricts the provision of funds for books, clothing, and tuition charges for special courses or for examination preparation. If we analyze at micro level in Nepal, the children who get good learning environment and proper guidelines, they may have better performances in their classes and results. On the other hands the children who do not have such facilities, they may far from the learning. They may have poor performances in their classes and results. Higher class will be higher generation to generation. On the other hand low economy class will be gradually fall down poor to pro-poor generation to generation. Consequently, this trends will create the huge gap between "Havs and Havs not" (ADB, 2010). Being out from the school can invite the different sorts of disparities like economy, social, political and so on (Upreti, 2009).

In the context of Nepal, the average persons from lower social class backgrounds receive fewer years of schooling; schooling of lower quality; and poorer educational results for each year of schooling that is undertaken (Bennett, 2005). Moreover, they are likely to be studying in less prestigious and remunerative careers, if they reach the higher educational level, and they lack the social and political connections to obtain the better jobs in a set of countries where the problem of unemployment and underemployment of graduates is becoming more and more serious as a result of the prodigious expansion of secondary and higher education (Bhattachan, 2009).

### **Regions wise**

Equal educational participation is viewed as the equal probability of representative persons from different social origins achieving the same amount of educational participation in both a qualitative and quantitative sense (Levin, 1976). Equal participation in education system is not satisfactory in Nepal. Enrollment rate of boys and girls in primary level is similar but as per the increment the level, enrollment rate has been declined and varied. For instance, Net enrollment rates for both primary and secondary schools are higher in urban areas than rural areas and in the hills than in the terai and mountain. The mid and far western regions have the lowest net enrollment rates across the regions. Dropout and repetitions are higher in rural areas than urban area (UNICEF, 2010).

### **Caste and Ethnicity Wise**

Access to education should be equal among the caste and ethnicity groups. However, in Nepal, there are huge disparities among caste groups in access to education. High caste groups' children have good access to school with sufficient learning materials and they have been guided by their parents along with special home teachers. Barriers erected by social attitudes toward the disabled can be addressed and overcome by community outreach programs that raise awareness and dispel myths about disabilities.

Whilst, the children from low caste group do not have access to school if they have, they do not have access to learning materials and they do not have special care from their parents due to the low income of their family. In the context of Nepal, the children from the high caste group. They are doing good rather than the children from the poor family. Educational result is not seen equal in all caste/ethnicity. Moreover students of

*Dalit and Janjat* backgrounds have poor result compared to other caste groups (UNICEF, 2007). Male students have good result compared to female student. Urban students have better result than students from rural and remote area. There could be numerous causes behind it. Out of them; some are low awareness of education in the community particularly in marginalized community, parents' educational level, governance system of the school, types of school (experienced or not experienced), culture, norms and value of the family, curriculum, teaching and learning methodology (Upreti, 2009).

Differences in result brings a huge disparities in the life of people in the real ground. For instance, we observed the scenario of Nepal. The families who have sound economy status, their children do better than students from the low status of the family. The students who have done well in the result, they have higher chances to have job opportunity rather than the students who obtained poor result. This has created the disparities in Nepal among caste/ethnicity, gender and development regions, between rural and urban etc (Bennett, 2005).

### **Gender**

To achieve the goal of social development both male and female should have equal opportunity in all aspects of social life including education. Educating girls is a particularly effective way of eradicating poverty and the positive effects of education for girls are well documented on the health and welfare of families as well as on economic opportunities and social transformation on a larger scale (Kane, 2004). Girls' education holds the key to a stronger role for women in private sector development. In Nepal, the situation is still very far away. Despite the existing policies, action plans and programs, there is still a gender gap in school education. It is arising as a cross cutting issue.

The major issues and challenges are lower enrollment rate of girls, low percentage of female teachers, difference in the nature of the ratio of the existence of male and female teachers, attitude of underestimating the capacity of women working in education, less participation of girls in technical subjects like mathematics and science, elevated dropout rate of girls and so on (Social Development and Research Center (SDRC), 2007). The under-representation of women teachers increases tendency to show more attention to boys and display a lower opinion of girls' abilities. The choice of subjects and the way subjects are taught in schools mirror and widen social inequalities, such as denigrating physical labour as 'the job of the poor' and domestic activities as 'the women's job'. Girls and boys are often streamed into different disciplines (United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), 2012). Girls are encouraged to take up 'arts' subjects, and boys are encouraged to pursue 'scientific' and 'technical' subjects. This influences job opportunities later in life.

A number of aspects of the education system reinforce unequal opportunities, access and results for girls and boys. They include policies and resource allocation, quality of facilities and education materials, curriculum, teacher training and recruitment, school-fees, and bursaries. Other deep rooted aspects reinforcing gender imbalances concern traditions and values of families and communities, security in and on the way to school, risk of rape, teenage pregnancy causing expulsion from schools, and out-of-school work-load for girls. Another major causes of inequitable gender status in school level are male dominated society and less awareness for girl education in indigenous community.

### **Religious Group**

Social exclusion is a condition of being excluded from normal activities in society in multiple ways. It is the exclusion from social, political and economic institutions which prevents individuals or groups from accessing resources, participating in society and asserting their rights. The majority-minority situation of a group can be resulted as the exclusion of the latter group. Their minority status is reinforced because of their religion, which is quite different from Hinduism being followed by the majority of the population of Nepal. The Muslim community of Nepal is an educationally disadvantaged population (Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), 2003).

### **Conclusion**

So far access of education in Nepal perpetuates inequality among the people of different caste, class, gender and ethnicity as analyzed by the critical theorists like Bourdieu. He has argued that education helps for cultural reproduction in the society that creates the inequality in the societies. Similarly, Marx argues that education helps to produce the manpower to serve the capitalists. Similar situation has been seen in Nepalese society. The people who are from the poor economy background, they are being the manpower to serve the high class family (capitalists). The children who have good capital and cultural background, they are seen at good status in the society and this process has been transmitted one generation to another whilst the people who are from the low social and cultural capital, they are remaining at the same status where they were. This process has been transmitted from one generation to another. Ultimately, the education has created the social inequality in Nepal. So that Education system and educational opportunity in Nepal is miserable. Where many programs, policies and

plan have been formulated and implemented in the name of education but still largenumber of children is outside school (formal education).There is huge disparities among the children in term of education. This educational disparity has led towards the economic disparities in the society. The students who are from the high class family, they have obtained good marks.Ultimately,they can get good jobs in the future but children from low class they are deprived from the schooling age to adult. Other interesting fact that the students who have obtained good result if their family do not have sound social relation and good political affiliation, they may not get jobs as per their capability. In their whole life, they may be far from the access to resources. So, education has created the entire society into two groups.

To alter this situation of cultural reproduction I believe that education must be made more accessible to the people of different religious, cultural, and geographic locations. The different plans and policies including the present School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) has aimed to reduce these exclusion in education. It is the responsibility of government to make education accessible to the people as it is one of the major indicator of development. The educated human resource are able to enhance the economic development of the country. Thus, I argue that education must be made inclusive and has to create a just and productive society.

## REFERENCES

- Asian Development Bank (ADB).(2010). Overview of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Nepal. Kathmandu. Author.
- Bell, B. (1996), 'Skill-biased technical change and wages: evidence from a longitudinal data set'
- Bennett.(2005).*Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal: Following the policy Process from Analysis to Action.*
- Bhattachan.B.(2009).Caste Based Discrimination in Nepal. Indian Institution of Dalit Student.
- Boudon.R.(1976). Education, Opportunity, and Social Inequality. Vol. 81, No. 5 pp. 1175-1187. The University of Chicago.U.S.A.
- Bound, J. and G. Johnson (1992), 'Changes in the structure of wages in the 1980s: an evaluation of alternative explanations', *American Economic Review*, 82, 3, pp. 371–392.
- Bowels.S. (1976).Schooling in Capitalist America.
- CBS. (2012).National Population and Housing Census,Nepal.
- Discussion Paper No. 8, The Labour Market Consequences of Technical and Structural Change, CEP, LSE, and IES, Oxford.
- Illich.I.(1971).DeschoolingSociety.NewYork.Harper and Row.India.
- Kane, E. (2004). Girls' Education in Africa: What Do We Know About Strategies That Work? Africa Region Human Development Working Paper Series, 73. World Bank
- Kreuger, A. B. (1993), 'How computers have changed the wage structure: evidence from microdata, 1984–1989', *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 108, 33–60.
- Levin. (1976) .Educational Opportunity and Social Inequality in Western. Vol. 24, No. 2. pp. 148-172 University of California Press.USA
- Purkoti.K.S.(2009). Study of Reservation for Dalits in Nepal.Social Inclusion Research Fund.Nepal.
- Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID). (2003). Access of Muslim Children to Education. Kathmandu, Nepal. Author
- Social Development and Research Center (SDRC) (2007). A Study on the Status of Gender Equality in School. Ministry of Education and Sport Government of Nepal Sanothimi, Bhaktapur, Nepal.
- UNICEF. (2007).Social Inclusion: Gender and Equality in Education SWAPS in south Asia. Nepal Case Study. Nepal
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). (2010). Child Poverty and Disparities in Nepal. Nepal Report 2010.
- United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI), (2012). Gender Analysis in Education. New York. Author
- Upreti,B.C.(2009).Challenges in the post-election scenario in Nepal. *Journal of Economic and political weekly* 44, 23-25
- Wood, A. (1994), *North–South Trade, Employment and Inequality: Changing fortunes in a skilldriven world*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

## CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

**Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page:** <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

## MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Academic conference: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/>

## IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

