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Equity response in formal education (A case of secondary school)

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Abstract

Nepal is one the states with different dimensions of inequality and exclusion. The questions of stability, equity, social justice and democracy are arising. Since many decades, the dominant groups have been ruling over the state, authority and other phenomena. In the field, this study explored the case study of equity response in government school of Nepal. This study emphasizes that the rights of equal opportunity are not promoted. The cultural diversity and male are prioritized in the formal education in Nepal. And cultural linguistic affinity and emotional closeness seems to be highly related in the study area.

Keywords: Social cohesion, Social and economic inequalities, Inclusive

INTRODUCTION

Equity in simple words can be said as the fairness. But in broader meaning it doesn't only give the sense of fairness. Philosophers have been struggling for an extensive time to clarify what might be meant in social policy by the term 'equity'. There is general agreement that the aim of public policy cannot and should not be equality in the sense that everyone is the same or achieves the same outcomes – a state that appears to be both impossible and undesirable. Rather, a commitment to equity suggests that differences in outcomes should not be attributable to differences in areas such as wealth, income, power or possessions

There is a broad consensus in the OECD and beyond that lifelong learning is and should be a key feature of social development in the coming decades. The reasons for this view have been well developed elsewhere (OECD 1996, 2001a) and need not be repeated here, except to say that learning is seen as vital not just to countries' economic development but to their social cohesion and quality of life. There are barriers in the education system also. For example the people may even constitute reverse subsidies, in which poorer taxpayers contribute funds to the benefit of those who are already better off. But targeted programs are much more vulnerable to political attack precisely because their benefits are not broadly shared (Heclo, 1986). Thus equity is the process

and equality is the destination in any dimension for the development. Education is one of the dimensions addressing equality in Nepal. The educational inequality is existing due to the different causes.

Importance of equity

It is not just the average amount of education that is important, however, but also its distribution across the population. Equity in education is important for several reasons. There are surely human rights crucial for all people to have a reasonable opportunity to develop their capacities and to participate fully in society. The right to education is recognized, for example, in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of the Child. As opportunity is not distributed fairly there will be an underutilization of talent; some people will not develop their skills and abilities with consequent loss not only to them but to the society generally. We cannot know how many outstanding scientists, writers, artists, or teachers are lost because a significant number of people are not able to obtain the necessary learning. Higher levels of education are associated with almost every positive life outcome – not only with improved employment and earnings but also with health, longevity, successful

parenting, civic participation, and so on (Dearden, Reed & Van Reenen, 2000; Vernez et al., 1999; Osberg, 1998).

Insofar as societies contain significant numbers of people without adequate skills to participate socially and economically, there will be higher social costs for security, health, income support, child welfare, and so on (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2001). Social cohesion, or trust, is itself an important factor supporting successful countries. Greater inequality is associated with lower levels of social cohesion and trust (Dayton-Johnson, 2001; Green and Preston, in press), thus hampering countries' capacities in many areas. Though government has said education for all slogans and has made several plans and policies but the implementation is not seen as effective as the policies are made. Thus a school of Kirtipur was chosen to get the data's and facts regarding the equity response in formal education.

Mangal higher secondary school is the representative of the educational agency of Government of Nepal which applying the all educational practices ruled by the state. This school represents the almost public schools of Nepal and main features. At this school, the researcher takes the concentration to equity and learning, gender and learning and other categories related to real living. Most of the students are from the rural areas of Nepal as the child laborer and poor families of the local areas are learning to get the formal education in this school. Some of the students have no own guardians for looking after them. Thus the case has been raised as an issue regarding the formal education and the equity process in school.

Objectives of the study

Equity is taken in most of the places and much more in terms of formal education. But what is the exact situation in the real Nepalese context? Schools can offer learning experiences that a child may not obtain at home, particularly if he or she is living in a disadvantaged environment. Thus the multiculturalism is the real platform for learning by the exchange of ideas, cultures, skills and other various phenomena which are essential for individual and social living but diversity has been misused in terms of discrimination and the cause of stratification. So the study was done for the identification and for analyzing the equity response and perception of the public school within the school environment. What are the replicable practices of public schools and the special cases of Mangal school? Thus the objectives of the study are:
1. To get the ideas regarding the heterogeneous condition of the school.
2. To get the reality on equity response of the school.
3. To explore the ongoing practices for equal participation

Research Problem

The study will concentrate to the philosophical aspects about the existing diversity. The following questions will be the main concern of the study:
1. What is the present heterogeneous condition in Mangal Higher Secondary School?
2. How the school system responses to the equity issues?
3. What are the ongoing practices for equal participation through gender and deprived casts?

Significance of the study

The study will be practical for educated individuals to notice the diversity and the equity scenario in Nepalese government school. This study will be helpful for the research scholars to know more about diversity and its status. The study will also be beneficial especially for the Nepalese communities who to know the existing status of their local diversity and to enhance their position in local level.

Literature Review

An equitable education system can redress the effect of broader social and economic inequalities. In the context of learning, it allows individuals to take full advantage of education and training irrespective of their background (Faubert, 2012). Education is the window of the world (Wagley and Lamichhace, 2008) which provides the glimpse of outside scenario and associates with social advancement, economic prosperity and employment. The relationship between education and above presented factors is being even stronger.

Education in Context of Nepal

Now we are in the twenty-first century interacting with the issues of post-modernism. But for Nepal like countries where people have not yet experienced the conditions of modernism, it is very difficult to tackle new education system in Nepal was introduced during Rana regime .In order to understand the importance of present status of Education in Nepal; we can see its background history. The crown goes to Jang Bahadur Rana for introducing English language in Nepal. Malla (1999 as cited in Pant 2007) has explained that English Language teaching in Nepal started more than a century and a half ago, when Jang Bahadur Rana went to visit European countries in 1850 AD and returned in 1851 AD. He realized that European countries and England were developed due to the outcome of education. So, he also invited two English

people to teach English in the English school established on 27th Aswin, 1910 BS in Thapathali Palace, Kathmandu. But it had been confined to Rana families and general public were out of the reach of the English education. The exclusion has rooted at its foundation only so called high

Class people were in reach of modern education at its inception.

After the introduction of democracy only education became accessible for ordinary people also but there were many ups and down in political system of Nepal, due to this, only those people who has power to get it socially, economically, geographically, culturally became successful to get the education in the real sense. In real sense schooling for the general people began only after 1951 when a popular movement ended the autocratic Rana family regime and initiated a democratic system.

Schooling in Diversity

According to report of National Population and Housing Census (2011), there are 126 caste/ethnic groups reported in the census 2011. Chhetri is the largest caste/ethnic groups having 16.6% (4,398,053) of the total population followed   by Brahman-Hill (12.2% ; 3,226,903), Magar (7.1% ; 1,887,733), Tharu (6.6% ; 1,737,470), Tamang (5.8% ; 1,539,830), Newar (5% ; 1,321,933), Kami (4.8% ; 1,258,554), Musalman (4.4% ; 1,164,255), Yadav (4% ; 1,054,458) and Rai (2.3% ; 620,004). And through the report, we have ten types of religion categories reported in the census. Hindu is followed by 81.3 percent (21,551,492) of the population followed by Buddhism (9%; 2,396,099), Islam (4.4%; 1,162,370), Kirat (3.1%; 807,169), Christianity (1.4%; 375,699), Prakriti (0.5%; 121,982), Bon (13,006), Jainism (3,214), Bahai (1,283) and Sikhism (609). The high percentage of Hindus indicates that members of some ethnic groups professed, or were labeled as adherents of Hinduism instead of their traditional religion. For example, the adherents of Buddhism and Mundhum (Kiranti) are 11.6% and 26.1% less than the respective population of the groups that traditionally follow these religions.

In terms of language issue, from the report of report of National Population and Housing Census (2011), it states that there are 123 languages spoken as mother tongue reported in census 2011. Nepali is spoken as mother tongue by 44.6 percent (11,826,953) total Population followed by Maithili (11.7% 3,092,530), Bhojpuri (5.98%; 1,584,958), Tharu (5.77%; 1,529,875), Tamang (5.11%; 1,353,311), Newar (3.2%; 846,557), Bajjika (2.99%; 793,418), Magar (2.98%; 788,530), Doteli (2.97%; 787,827), Urdu (2.61%; 691,546).

In Nepal, National Language Recommendation Commission 1994 studied the status of national languages and recommended a language policy. But not much has been done except the preparation of textbooks for primary level in a few indigenous languages. Although its recommendation for a three language policy was made 15 years ago, it is still relevant today and the federal structure should adopt it. But which languages should be used in schools, the media and administration is the issue to be debated. Initiation of mother tongue education in Nepal started only after the restoration of democracy in 1990. Every ethnic or language group can acquire primary level education in their own language (The interim constitution of Nepal, 2007). The medium of instruction in school was made Nepali language. However, the provision of imparting primary level education was made in mother tongue. In a pluralistic society, the use of many languages makes democracy all the more meaningful. In the past, Nepali speakers were considered more Nepali than non Nepali speakers, who felt a sense of alienation in their home country. It is a positive sign that many feel that language can be one of the cornerstones on which the federal structure is constructed. Although the principles for enabling children to become fully proficient multilingual through schooling are well known, most indigenous and minority children are not provided with multilingual education, which would enable them to succeed both in school and in society.

Inclusion and Education

I like to start from the quotation of anonymous "Children, who learn together, learn to live together." Based on the reflection of the above quotation, a dialectical relationship between education and social inclusion has been analyzed. Education can contribute to achieve equal opportunity for social integration, but a minimum level of social equity is also required to achieve the democratization of access to knowledge. Social stratification of groups and people due to inequalities of caste, gender and ethnic hierarchies produced to develop educational policies that deal in a comprehensive manner with the factors that generate exclusion, discrimination or inequality. It is a process aimed at responding to students' diversity, increasing their participation and reducing exclusion in education. Social exclusion has been defined as 'the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society within which they live' (European foundation, 1195, p.4, quoted in de Haan, 1998, cited in Francis, 2002). It is related to access, participation and learning achievements of all students, with special emphasis on those who, for different reasons, are excluded or run the risk of being marginalized (UNESCO, 2008).

In such circumstances, education is always guided by the policy but the policy needs to be implemented in practice. A successful education system assumes that: every student can learn at significantly higher levels and

can be taught successfully; high expectations for every student are reflected in curriculum content, though instructional strategies may vary; and every student and every preschool child needs an advocate--preferably a parent. The learning in these modern days' schools should focus on the learner that is to be learner centered or child/student-centered. The teaching/ learning strategies should start from where the learner is and what he/she needs by way of learning. Their learning levels and needs should be assessed before the teaching/learning starts. On the basis of that, the teacher should decide what the student needs to learn, accordingly design and implement the learning/teaching strategy.

Aasland and Flotten (2000) state that the concept of social inclusion gained prominence in the policy discourse in Europe since it replaced the concept of poverty, taking into its fold more dimensions of people's lives than the poverty concept. The concept of social exclusion is useful in Nepal because of its emphasis on the role of relational issues in deprivation. It is important to distinguish between exclusion which is in itself a deprivation (that is, the exclusion has constitutive relevance) and exclusion which is not in itself negative, but which can lead to other deprivations which do have constitutive relevance (Sen, 2000). It is the great and challenging problem in terms of Nepal because of various reasons. Children's life chances are strongly influenced by the quality of their education. Schools aim at providing children with knowledge, skills and interpersonal competences required for their development, adult life and contributions to economy and society.

Inclusion is the shifting from integration where integration and inclusion are movements with a different aim and focus, promoting different educational policies and practices. Going from integration to inclusion implies the shift from assuring the right of some traditionally excluded groups, to educating all students in mainstream schools that provide an equal quality education to all, the shift from individualized actions for the "integrated students", to the transformation of educational systems and schools for them to respond to diversity and the needs of all.

Inclusion is an educational approach and philosophy that provides all students with community membership and greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. Inclusion is about making sure that each and every student feels welcome and that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to and valued. Inclusion is characterized by a different view of education, based on diversity and not on homogeneity. Balance between what is common and what is diverse. It aims at identifying and minimizing the barriers students face to access and remain in school, participate and learn. The problem is not the student but the system; support systems that collaborate with schools and

teachers in responding to the diversity of students. It is a process that implies a systemic change of educational systems and of the cultures of schools.

Inclusive education is important as it ensures the right of all to the equal quality education and non discrimination, advances towards more democratic and just societies, improves the quality of education and the professional development of teachers, learns to live together and build a personal identity.

According to a participatory seminar in Agra, India, 1998, "Inclusive education acknowledges that all children can learn, acknowledges and respects differences (age, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, HIV status, etc), enables education structures, systems and methodologies to meet the needs of all children, is part of a wider strategy to promote an inclusive society, is a dynamic process which is constantly evolving, need not be restricted by large class sizes or shortage of material resources".

Inclusive education is a constantly evolving process of change and improvement within schools and the wider education system to make education more welcoming, learner-friendly, and beneficial for a wide range of people about restructuring education cultures, policies and practices so that they can respond to a diverse range of learners - male and female; disabled and non-disabled; from different ethnic, language, religious or financial backgrounds; of different ages; and facing different health, migration, refugee or other vulnerability challenges.

Inclusive education brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students. Inclusion is an effort to make sure that diverse learners – those with disabilities, different languages and cultures, different homes and family lives, different interests and ways of learning are exposed to teaching strategies that reach them as individual learners. Inclusive schools ask teachers to provide appropriate individualized supports and services to all students without the stigmatization that comes with separation. Teachers in inclusive classrooms vary their styles to enhance learning for all students.

There is also a big issue of special educational needs that refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties. Many children experience learning difficulties and thus have special educational needs at some time during their schooling. Schools have to find ways of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. There is an emerging consensus that children and youth with special educational needs should be included in the educational arrangements made for the majority of children. This has led to the concept of the inclusive school. The challenge confronting the inclusive school is that of developing a chil - centered pedagogy capable of successfully

educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. It helps to develop inclusive society as well.

There has been the debate of inclusion and exclusion in Nepal. The ethnic groups, the Madhes and Dalits have now challenged what they call the hegemony of the parbatiya hill 'high' castes. Ethnic groups in particular have rejected and come down heavily on what they call the process of Hinduization, which according to them have relegated them to the margins. They have called for proportionate representation and ethnic autonomy with the right to self-determination (Rawal, 2009). Social inclusion has been defined with regards to social exclusion in many of the literatures, Jackson (1999) argues that there can be simultaneous exclusion inclusion, that is individuals and groups can be excluded in one domain and included in another, for instance, "social relations of kinship and marriage include whilst they exclude and affirm, as they deny membership rights' (Jackson, 1999, p. 129). One can thus talk about inclusion in the domain of language but exclusion in political and economic domains, e.g. in the case of parbate, Dalits; or exclusion from the dominant language and culture but inclusion in political and economic domains, as in the case of Newars (Pradhan, 2006).

One of the aspects to make inclusive education based on the curriculum that plays a significant role in educational reform. A new paradigm shift is necessary in education through the reform in curriculum. Some learning activities and teaching-learning materials are highly contextualized - chosen or created for this one learning group alone with considerable involvement of the learner group in the design of both curriculum and learning materials. This is sometimes called self-directed or participatory education (Mocker et al 1982; Campbell and Burnaby 1999).

Curriculum development is always influenced by the various political, social, cultural, and economic factors. It is inseparable from politics and the social climate. It is an important element in the development of mother tongue language materials which supports inclusion. Some government-funded mother tongue initiatives have simply translated the Nepali language primary school books into minority languages, without regard for cultural difference. Such schemes are doomed to fail, since the content of a school book must reflect the cultural values of its students.

METHODOLOGY

Methodology part includes the method that is used for the data collection and interpretation. The data collecting process and procedures are from the quantitative approach with the positivistic paradigm. For this, the survey tools and techniques were used to analysis and interpret the case of the Mangal school. Kaboub (2008) says that positivist asserts that real events can be observed empirically and explained with logical analysis. This signifies that the positivist approach helps to do the empirical study so that the analysis could be done on the base of the collected data in the form of graphs, charts, etc.

Data collection and analysis

The data are collected from the survey method. The case of equity response was taken and the primary data were collected from the teachers, students, member of management committee. The secondary data were taken from the internet, journals and so on. After collecting the data, it is analyzed and interpreted in a meaningful way through the help of charts with short description.

Data analysis and interpretation

The data's' are collected from the field visit to Mangal Higher Secondary School, Kirtipur. The data's' are analyzed and interpreted in terms of diversity and equity response in the school.

School Management Committee

Below chart 1 shows the total members included in the school management committee of Mangal Higher Secondary School. In this chart, it is clear that among the total number of the committee, there are no any participation of dalit and other community. As Mangal Higher Secondary is in the mid of the Indigenous community of Kirtipur, all the members are indigenous. As kirtipur is the place of the majority of Newar community most of the members are newar. Among them also male participation is higher than the female participation in the management committee. The participation of dalit and others was zero. This shows that the school is the center place of the local indigenous community and diversity in management committee is not seen. According to report of National Population and Housing Census (2011), has also said that there are 5% Newar in total population but the study reveals that the participation of Newari people is high. The participation of ethnic casts for decision making process of the school will be more democratic and participatory or inclusive. The cast diversity is trying to translate to the accumulated energy for social development.

Total number of teachers

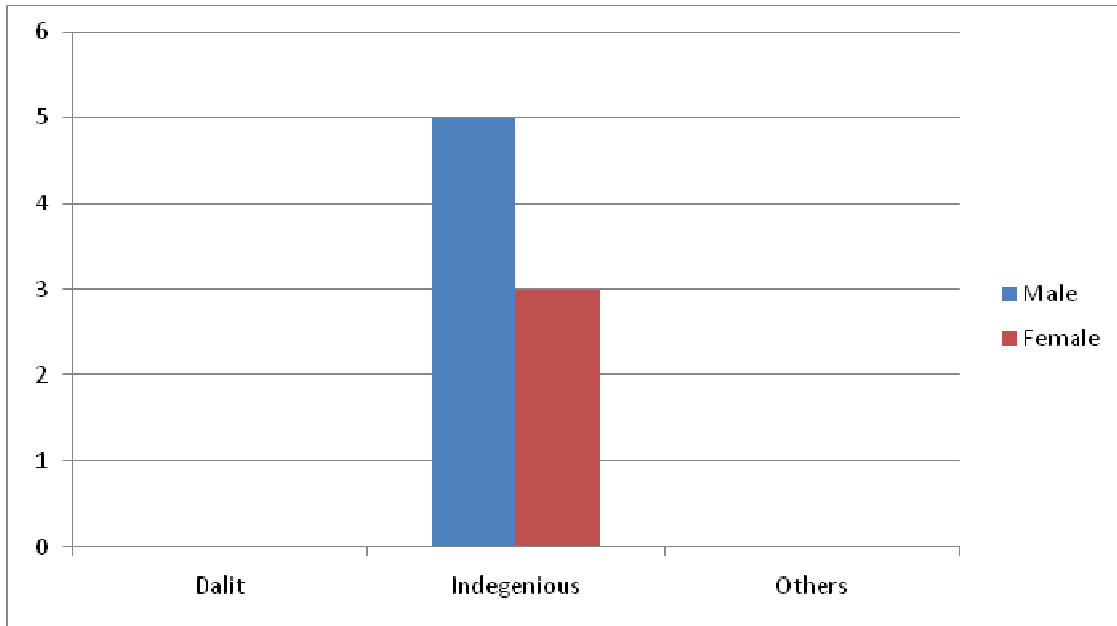The below presented chart 2 shows the total number of teachers in Mangal Higher Secondary School. Teachers

Chart 1: Showing the total members included in the school management committee of Mangal Higher Secondary School
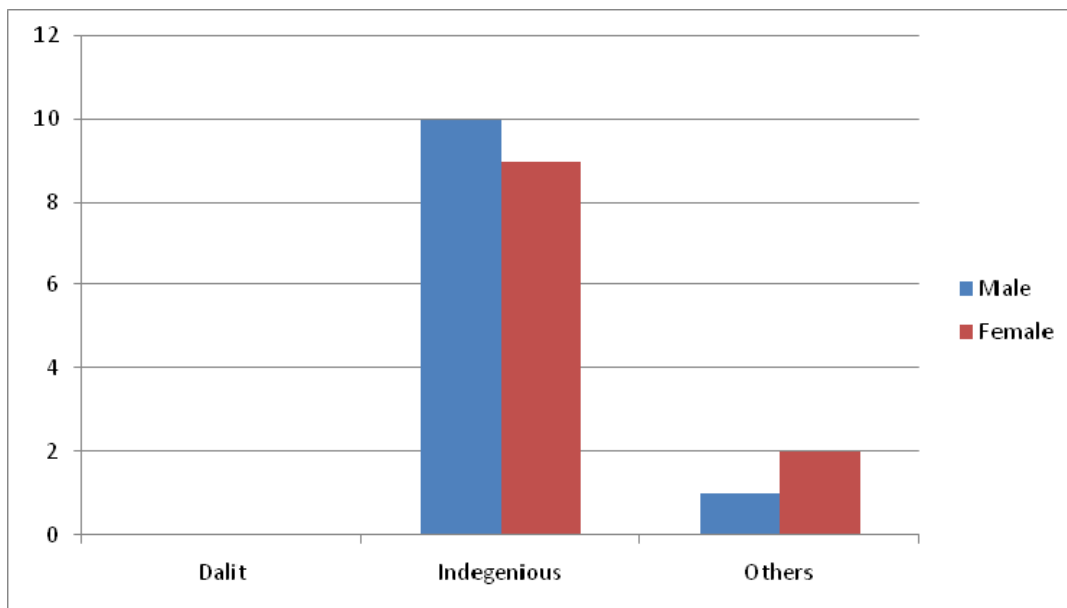
Source: Field survey, 2070

Chart 2: Shows the total number of teachers in Mangal Higher Secondary School.

Source: Field survey, 2070

are taken as the agent of the nation. Teachers play the main role for making the students' quality and qualification. Among the various diversity groups, the chart shows that the total teachers in the school are also from the indigenous community. Rest of them is from others group and none of them are from dalit community.

The total number of male teacher is higher in indigenous community whereas the total number of
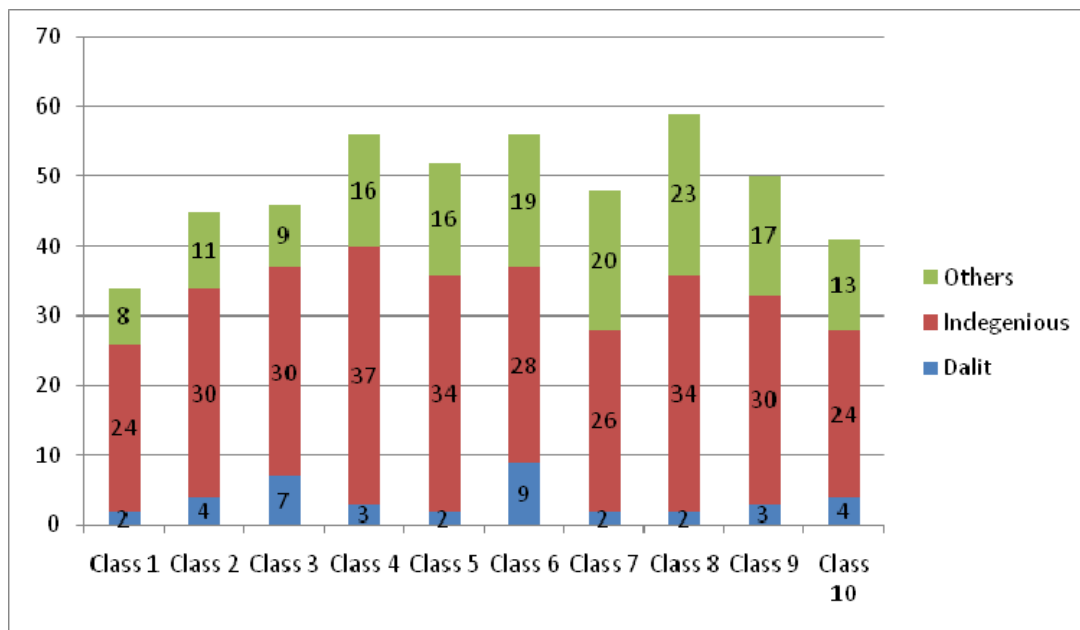
Chart 3: Showing the class wise distribution of students.

Source: Field survey, 2070

female is higher in other community. It also describes that there is no equal participation of the teachers in the school. According to Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, Department of Education (2012) states that the total number of male teachers in valley is 33.6% and female is 66.4% in valley. But the reveals the fact and the number of male and female teachers is different in different ethnic group.

Class wise distribution of students

The above diagram 3 shows the class wise distribution of students. The highest number of the students is in class 8 and the lowest number in class 1. Among the students of class 1- 10, there is diversity among the students. In all the classes there are students from dalit, indigenous and other group. But it is clearly seen that the highest number of students are from the indigenous community.

Total students

In the given diagram 4 below it shows the total number of students in the base of the ethnic category. In Mangal school, the majority of the students are of indigenous community. It covers more than half. 61% of the students are from indigenous community whereas 31% are other community and only 8% are of dalit community. It shows that among the students also the majority is of indigenous community.

Equity response of the school

From the above presented data also it is clear that there is no equal distribution of students in terms of caste, ethnic group and gender. It is one of the examples of the public school. Many more public schools have the similar problems. Regarding the equity response, there is provision of providing scholarship to the dalits and other indigenous students who are really backward and also for the other student's scholarship is provided on merit basis. This, somehow focuses on schools steps towards the equity response but only providing scholarship may not be the proper solution to address equity response. But still there is an equal chance of being bias as the community is more homogeneous and cultural affinity is high.

FINDINGS

The man findings of the study are as follows:
1. In school management community, there is no participation of other community rather than indigenous (Newar).
2. More than 50% of the teachers are also from the indigenous society.
3. There is also homogeneous status in the school children.
4. Newar communities are in more number in management committee, among teachers and students.
5. 8% students are dalit, 31% are others and 61% are indigenous which consists majority of Newar students.
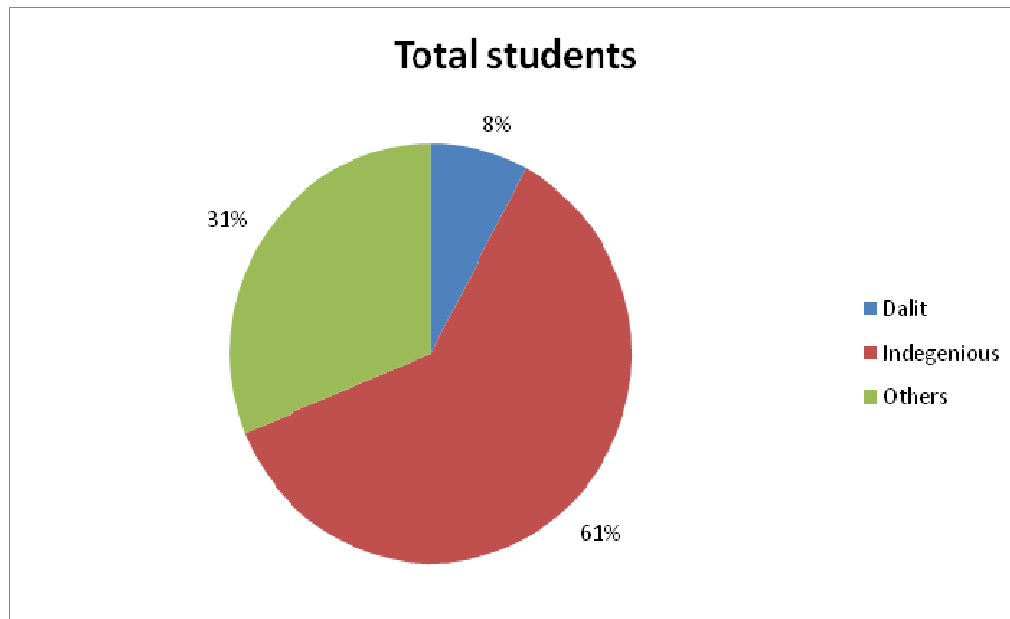
Diagram 4: Showing the total number of students in the base of the ethnic category.

Source: Field survey, 2070

6.   In class wise distribution also the indigenous students are in majority. Thus there is equal distribution of students.

7.   The scholarship is provided the students to address the equity response from the school.

8.   The study has revealed the national status of Newar community in this area as it is the Newar community.

CONCLUSIONS

Nepal is one the states with different dimensions of inequality and exclusion. The questions of stability, equity, social justice and democracy are arising. Since many decades, the dominant groups have been ruling over the state, authority and other phenomena. In the field survey it is seen that the majority of the students, teachers and management committee is from indigenous community whereas dalit and others community are in minority. In the school management committee, there is only participation of indigenous community and all the members are from the newar community. It also signifies that the school is in the newar community and the students are also the same. Scholarship is provided for the needy students on the base of gender, ethnicity and merit base. This shows that public schools have somehow focused on equity response.

Hence, cultural linguistic affinity and emotional closeness seems to be highly related in the study area. There is cultural closeness among the students, teachers and even in the school management committee. The homogeneous group of the indigenous community has also focused on the EFA goals. Locally available teachers and the physical facilities are also according to the need of the local area. This emphasizes that the rights of equal opportunity is not promoted.   In comparison, the number of male teachers is high in indigenous community and female in other community. This shows the cultural diversity and male are prioritized in the culture. To ensure the conclusion, enhancement of the human capabilities is crucial and it needs to be legislative changes for the promotion and implementation of equity response in formal education.

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