

Consultation Report for the Education Commission

Date: 25th May 2016

Venue: Samunnat Nepal

No of participants: 15 Representatives from Ministry of Education, Department of Education, Education Review Office, University professors, Educationists, Teacher Union, researchers.

Context:

Since the early times, significance of formal schooling has been established for its role in developing human capability through augmenting knowledge and skills among mass populace. Its importance lies first in developing scientific knowledge in core subjects such as language, mathematics, science, history, geography and the like which helps to broaden and form concepts on physical, socio cultural and economic world that is lived on. With the knowledge and understanding on those subjects, individual learn to use minds well so that they are prepared to handle practical problems of daily life, be responsible citizen and enjoy a dignified social life.

Along with developing mastery over the subject specific knowledge and understanding, significance of schooling also lies in fostering among youngsters reading, writing and numeracy skills in the form of cognitive ability which in turn form the strong foundation for the development of more complex skills such as information retrieving and processing, reasoning, problem solving, advance thinking, and communication skills and the ability to adopt, diffuse and innovate technology associated with production functions. Additionally, schooling is also means for developing in youngsters life skills and social and moral values that help them live successful adult life. These knowledge and skills developed through schooling determine largely young people's prospects of entering world of work, enhancing their productivity and enable them to adopt better rapidly changing economy (King & Palmer, 2006 cited in Rolleston & James, 2014).

Researches show that improved knowledge and skills by means of schooling have a direct impact on individual success in job market, economic growth and reduction of social inequality. Given that a nation's growth and prosperity are largely dependent on having highly skilled workforce, its capability for innovation and the intellectual property it generates, nations around the world have been concentrating their efforts towards universalizing schooling in order to upskilling the mass populace. Furthermore, these skills and knowledge developed in schooling are the important means also for meeting other developmental goals ranging from ensuring human right to improving individual life outcomes, raising competitiveness, promoting economic growth and reducing inequality. Given the benefits of schooling for individual development of a person, social development and economic growth of a nation; individual people and nation states both are urged to make significant investment in ensuring learning at schools. However, both of them are not seen to have been acting and investing in education at the level needed in ensuring schooling and learning for all at the expected level. This paper first makes an attempt to look into why people and nations both have not been able to make adequate investment in education. Second, it tries to point out the main obstacle to ensure expected level of learning for all. Along with mentioning the measures for overcoming the obstacles and critical factors

for success achieved in some countries towards ensuring education for all, it also tries to draw some implications for policy towards improving the situation. Lastly it looks into the new sources for education.

I. Given that there are clear benefits of education, why do you think people have not acted and invested in education at the level needed?

Research has shown that knowledge and skills acquired at schooling accrue various benefits to individual, society and nation ranging from boosting jobs, increasing earning, promoting economic growth, improving people's life chances of healthier life and creating healthy society. These benefits are realized in life only after decade long investment. People stuck in poverty for whom earning is essential for meeting the immediate needs at the subsistence level of living can't afford long run investment in education at the expense of long run benefits. For the people whose immediate need is to meet the daily subsistence, educating their children gets little or no priority. In addition to the direct cost to schooling such as school uniform, fees and stationary, parents in Nepal also face the indirect cost which includes cost associated with loss of income that could have been earned by the child if sent to work.

The discussion pointed out that people living on traditional occupations and having little educational experiences from many generations have their own world view and hence see no prospects and relevancy in investing education. Also the people, living out of the reach of education services within proximity of their settlements tend to remain indifferent towards education.

In fact, the Government of Nepal has given high priority of investment in the education sector which is a positive past of educational financing. However, if one compare the investment with the quality lance, the amount is negligible. Moreover, there is a problem of national funding account made by the governmental, non-governmental and the parental investment. Research has shown that around 47 percent investment is being made by parents under the private schooling system which is not accounted. If all these investments are to be counted, the education investment is quite significant in the context of Nepal.

People whose children acquire very low level of learning even after attending school for some years hold their children back from education. Such instances are evident where school is unable to ensure expected level of learning. Another reason cited by parents in remote areas is the long distance to travel to school which detained children from attending school due to the safety concerns.

Low educational value from different segments of the society, traditional occupational groups and high expectation of the parents towards a quick economic return is also creating problems in increasing the educational financing in Nepal. Vicious circle of poverty and also the less relevant education as per the skilled human resource demand of the market has also discouraged the investment from the entrepreneurial sector.

II. What do you think has been the biggest single obstacle to raising educational quality in developing countries? How can we overcome this obstacle?

Ensuring quality education demands adequate resources from both family and state side for which less resourced countries have been unable to generate. In the context of resource crunches, government cannot provide adequate funding for improving physical facilities, supplying learning materials and pay salary for teacher at required level which distracts children from schooling, prevent them from desired level of learning and restricts opportunity for teachers for their professional development.

Besides the resources constraints, proper utilization is also an issue in Nepal where governance is weak. Due to the weak management, available resource cannot be channelized to the needy areas and groups resulting in the adverse effect in quality learning. Under supply of teachers in remote schools is one of the manifestations of weak management.

Another challenge to raising the quality is the weak assessment of student learning. In countries where regular assessment is in place with proper assessment tools, immediate improvements are possible in teaching and learning through the means of feedback and motivation. In Nepal, assessment has been for summative purpose; diagnosis of poorly learned and underperformed areas is rare which ultimately impedes children's further learning.

From the discussion both literature and the input from the interaction program, it was evident that one of the major obstacles to raising educational quality is a lack of political commitment, willingness and the ownership from the main educational stakeholders. These have resulted in a gap between policy and practices, low level of teachers' preparation and less encouraged and motivated teaching community, problems of good governance and unequal and inequitable distribution of educational resources. These all are deteriorating the quality of service delivery and the level of students' achievement.

To overcome the obstacle following could be the possible measures:

- Developing the political commitment, willingness and ownership by the major educational stakeholders
- Enhancing the capability of educational personnel in resource generation and its proper channelization to the targeted area
- Improving the governance system
- Improving student assessment system
- Capacity building of teacher in the use and design of proper assessment tools
- Mobilization of development fund from donors to the poor countries
- Increasing investment to enhance the quality of education
- Empowering the capacity of school authorities for the effective and efficient management
- Equitable distribution of educational resources to assure the equity and equality in education

III. For those countries which have made the greatest improvements in education in recent years, what do you think have been the critical factors in their success?

The countries which have made commendable success in education have adopted many measures to improve student learning. Among them are a high priority to education, concerted effort on pedagogical improvement through professional support to teachers, improving teacher governance and use of ICT in

teaching and learning. Participants discussed that hiring and retaining competent teachers as a critical factor behind their success in improving education.

Summing up the best experiences with regard to successful education in other countries, some of the reasons associated with are strong and sound political commitment in developing the education system (Tanzania), humanistic approach to curriculum and its implementation (Canada), well educated, trained and highly committed teaching profession (Finland), structured provision and clear vision oriented education system (Singapore), provision of teaching licensing system and recruiting the well qualified teachers (Thailand), practice of continuous educational reform and continuous improvement culture (Singapore), mobilization of non-governmental organization in conducting basic education (BRAC, Bangladesh) are some of the reasons for a quality education. In this context, the least and developing countries need to adapt and adopt these best practices/ process through careful analysis and consideration.

IV. How do you think education/school will look different in 2030? What implications does this have on the Commission's recommendations?

As the consensus on improving school is growing worldwide abided by national and international legislation and conventions and an increased demand for quality schooling from general populace, schooling need to look different by 2030. The following points reflect on this:

- Increased demand for universal education with good quality by the general populace and liberal reformers.
- Growing consensus among teachers, education managers and policy makers to improve schooling for ensuring learning at desirable level.
- Perceived need by all stakeholders for assessment to appropriately track students learning.
- Stronger focus on learning outcomes as the main agenda in UN's post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals.
- Increased access to ICT technology in schools and use of ICT based teaching learning.
- Abundance of youth with higher education in the society along with their attraction to teaching.
- Growing concerns among wealthier societies and donor agencies in support of school reform of the poor and low income countries.
- Widespread of education technology and innovations for the use of teaching learning.
- Value based education system and its practices
- Linking education with the industrial sector (labor market) and mobilizing the market economy in education sector through joint venture scheme.
- Equity-based financing in order to create the better access to quality education to all
- Use of social corporate model of financing
- Student as a source of education financing.

Given the context, the following will be the implications for commission's recommendations.

Devising support mechanism for least developed countries in:

- School reform through research and innovation
- Developing the capacity of the educational practitioners and planners in policy analysis, strengthening management and governance
- Devising strategies to implement decentralized governance.
- Adopting educational technology
- Devising global funding policy for donors and wealthier countries to support poor countries.
- Devising policy for harnessing and channelizing the funds to education from various sources

V. What will be the most important (new) sources of finance for global education over the next decades? How could these sources be harnessed?

There will be various new sources for financing education. Among them domestic resources generated from GDP will be the main source for funding through strengthening their taxation system. As some countries are emerging from low to middle income level, they themselves can generate required level of funding through strengthening their own taxation system. To top up the government fund, local government will also be able to generate parts of the funds through levying local taxes. To fill up the gaps on domestic funding, national government will also tap the external funds.

Regarding Technical and Vocational Education and Trainings public private partnership should be approached to generate funds. Those sector where human resources is required they will make contractual agreement to the technical and vocational educational institution to supply the HRD and they pay money to the educational institutions. For harnessing these funds, based on the nature of fund, specific strategies are needed.

Finally, summing up in order to generate educational resources the following measures will be the best alternatives as a new source of financing

- Taxation
- Labor market (educational investment as a corporate responsibility)
- Student loans and student as a source of financing
- Quality grant from development partner
- Local government funding scheme
- Community resource mobilization
- Linking education sector into the income generating activities through curricular interventions

Final remarks:

Some specific efforts from the Commission to enhance the education quality are the national expectations. Developing strong political commitment and drafting a long term educational vision; assurance from the government to invest certain percentage of fund for quality interventions; establishing a strong, committed, and standard based teacher education program as well as teacher recruitment policies and practices; equity based financing and assuring the quality of education for all; achieving the SDGs goals and strategic indicators are the potential and crucial areas where international support is required to oblige the national government.