

Participatory School Self-evaluation as a Tool for Transformative School Performance

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Abstract:- The paper aims to explore the engagement of school stakeholders for transformative school performance through participatory school self-evaluation. I visited community schools in the Dhading district regularly from January to May 2022. I interacted with the teachers, students, parents, management committee members, as well as local government representatives, and commonly they shared that our school is in a bad situation. While talking with the teachers, they said parents don't give priority to their children and their studies. Parents also said teachers don't come to school regularly and don't teach properly. In addition, the head teacher said teachers don't follow my advice and school norms, as well as that nobody supports me. Further, management committee members said teachers don't teach properly and are not dedicated. Children's said we have to travel so far to school, and we don't have proper sanitation, drinking water, a library, extracurricular activities, or educational materials, so how can we study well? I visited 19 schools where more than 70% of the population represented the Chepang community. I found an average of 55% learning achievement in 1–5 classes and 47% learning achievement in 6–9 classes in the 2078 B.S. education calendar. But while allowing the primary-level students to read a national newspaper, 50% of the students couldn't read properly, which was below the standard of learning achievements. Throughout my visit, I found no mechanism or practice where all stakeholders gather and discuss the common agendas or issues of schools. Finally, as an action research approach, I conducted a two-day participatory school self-evaluation workshop in three secondary-level schools, where all stakeholders were presented. Finally, all participants realized they have individual responsibilities to make a better school and committed to active engagement in the coming days. The research is based on observation, informal discussion, in-person interviews, and field-based experience. The study was conducted based on the child-friendly school standard for quality education developed by the Department of Education in Nepal in 2010. The paper is useful for researchers, teachers, educators, and many more who are involved in the education field. The study ultimately contributes to the use of school self-assessment tools for transformative school performance.

Keywords:- School Self-Evaluation; Stakeholders' Engagement; Participatory Approach; Transformative School Performance.

I. INTRODUCTION

Simply put, evaluation is the process of measuring achievements based on standards. According to Swaffield and MacBeath (2005), "School self-evaluation is, by definition, something that schools do to themselves, by themselves, and for themselves." School self-evaluation is a potential means of knowledge; it shows where the school is now, and where it aspires to get to, and it gives a picture of the quality of one's own work. School is an institution where every child's dreams are connected (Carlson, 2009). Every school has target goals. Essentially, schools in Nepal have created a five-year school improvement plan as well as an updated annual plan. While preparing the five-year plan, schools should conduct a participatory school self-evaluation (DoE, 2010). During the evaluation process, there should be school management committee (SMC) members, parents' and teachers' associations (PTA) members, teachers, members of child clubs, and interested and active parents. Gaps in various thematic areas are discovered throughout the evaluation. The assessment ultimately contributes to preparing the school improvement plan.

School self-evaluation can be a fundamental force in achieving school improvement, and this review establishes what the key debates are in relation to school self-evaluation, what principles and processes are associated with it, and what the implications are for school self-evaluation as a means of leading school improvement. School self-evaluation is a process "by which members of staff in a school reflect on their practice and identify areas to stimulate improvement in areas of pupil and professional learning" (Chapman & Sammons, 2013, p. 2). It is a form of school improvement, learning, and accountability that is increasingly adopted internationally and is *led by and for the school*. School self-evaluation is a method of creating and involving stakeholders in the development of better learning centers. One of the difficult aspects of community schooling in Nepal is making all stakeholders responsible for the school's activities. Due to a lack of concern among all stakeholders impacting the performance of community schools in Nepal. Transforming community school performance is one of the challenging issues in Nepal (MoEST, 2021). Self-improving schools require a culture that is committed to and recognizes the value of self-evaluation in its own right, not as a precursor to external inspection (Macbeath, 1999). There could be various tools and techniques for self-

evaluation. In Nepal, the Department of Education created school self-assessment tools with 149 indicators, naming that child-friendly school national manual in 2010, whose implementation is woefully inadequate.

II. PROBLEM/PURPOSE

The paper aims to explore the engagement of school stakeholders for transformative school performance through participatory school self-evaluation. I visited community schools in the Dhading district on a regular basis from January to May 2022. I interacted with the teachers, students, parents, management committee members, as well as local government representatives, and commonly they shared that our school is in a bad situation. While talking with the teachers, they said parents don't give priority to their children and their studies. Parents also said teachers don't come to school regularly and don't teach properly. In addition, the head teacher said teachers don't follow my advice and school norms, as well as that nobody supports me. Further, management committee members said teachers don't teach properly and are not punctual. Children's said we have to travel so far to school, and we don't have proper sanitation, drinking water, a library, extracurricular activities, or educational materials, so how can we study well? I visited 19 schools where more than 70% of the population represented the Chepang community. Among the 19 schools, 3 are secondary level, and the remaining 8 are basic level. While visiting 19 schools, I found an average 55% learning achievement for 1–5 classes and a 47% learning achievement for 6–9 classes in the 2021 education calendar. Also, I found schools don't have the practice to develop SIP with an instruction manual. During the visit, I found everyone blaming each other and not knowing their own responsibilities towards school. The study examines how the engagement of stakeholders in schools helps to foster the ownership of community schools for transformative performance.

III. METHODOLOGY

The research is based on observation, informal discussion, in-person interviews, and field-based experience. Throughout my visit, I found no mechanism or practice where all stakeholders gather and discuss the common agendas or issues of schools. Finally, as an action research approach, I conducted a two-day participatory school self-evaluation workshop in each of the three secondary-level schools, where all stakeholders were present. Before and after attending the workshop, the perceptions of participants toward schools were collected through interviews. I have chosen these three schools because they are the cluster leaders among them.

IV. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The workshop was held at various times throughout the school grounds. Participants were first made aware of the child-friendly school concept, child-friendly approach, and school assessment concept throughout the program. The Department of

Education (DoE) of Nepal developed 149 indicators for school self-assessment in 2010 as a child-friendly national manual. The assessment was conducted with 4 values (1–4), which were designed by the Department of Education. Not-completed minimum standards have a 1 value; completed minimum standards have a 2 value; completed minimum standards and not-accomplished targeted goals have a 3 value; and achieved targeted goals have a 4 value. Thirdly, the assessment results were presented to the participants, who prioritized the actionable activities and introduced the SIP formation manual and formats. Finally, the SIP development committee was formed in each school. In the workshop, school teachers, SMC and PTA members, child club members, and some parents were presented.

The first school self-assessment workshop was conducted in Rastriya SS Benighat Rorang RM-10. The workshop was conducted on June 10–11, 2022. In total, 29 males and 21 females participated in the workshop. The assessment finds very poor use of the mother language in the classroom and curriculum in schools while assessing school status based on 149 indicators in nine thematic areas. The results showed poor effectiveness, infrastructure, health, safety, and security practices, as well as school management, children's families, and community participation in school activities. The school has some slightly good practices on gender equality and inclusiveness. Following the school self-assessment, Bikash Praja, SMC Chairman, stated, "*Before the workshop, I felt our school had a good status and had studied well, but after attending this workshop and reviewing the school assessment result, I felt my school is in the worst scenario, and as SMC chairperson and government representative, I will give more time to school and will coordinate with other stakeholders for resource generation.*" Participants in the workshop had a lively discussion about how to improve seeing gaps in schools. Kinsler and Gamble (2001) state that, "Where children are placed first, everyone involved with the schooling process has as their guiding concern the educational advancement of all the school's students."

The second school self-assessment workshop was conducted in Kalika SS and Benighat Rorang RM-08. The workshop was conducted on June 12–13, 2022. In total, 25 males and 19 females participated in the workshop. While assessing school status, the assessment finds very poor use of mother language in the classroom and curriculum in the schools, as well as children's family and community participation in school-level activities. The results showed poor teaching and learning; infrastructure; health, safety, and security; effectiveness; as well as school management. The school has some slightly good practices on gender equality and inclusiveness. After the school self-assessment, Reshma Chepang, secretary of the children's club, stated that "*it was a very wonderful event, and it helps us to review our work and effectiveness; to make a good school, have multiple stakeholder roles like the SMC, teachers, PTA, the head teacher, students, and parents.*" Similarly, a parent, Bikash B.K., stated, "*We*

should come to school regularly to update our children's learning and behavior status and for the school's support; neither teacher could only make changes in school." Participants shared that they are still not engaged in the development process of SIP.

The third workshop was conducted from June 17–18, 2022, in Panchakanya SS Benighat Rorang RM-06. In total, 23 males and 25 females participated in the workshop. While assessing school status, the assessment finds very poor use of the mother language in the classroom and curriculum in the schools, as well as children's family and community participation in school-level activities. The findings revealed deficiencies in teaching and learning, infrastructure, health, safety, security, effectiveness, school management, and gender equality and inclusiveness. After the school self-assessment, Krishna Prashad Silwal, principal of the school, stated that "*we don't have an idea on the development of the SIP of the school, and throughout this program, I got the information to process for the development of the SIP and know the key activities that should have been included in the planning process.*" During the session, participants shared different community and school-level issues and challenges. Participants thought it was a good platform for discussing community and school issues.

V. BEFORE AND AFTER WORKSHOPS:

➤ *School Status*

During the school visit, the majority of people said our school's status is poor, and only a few people said it's going well. However, they were unaware of what was going on in schools. During the discussions in the various thematic areas, they learned what should and should not be in school. An SMC member said, "I always blame the teachers for the poor school results, but I also realized after the session that I have the responsibility to attend meetings and discuss school problems and possible solutions." Government schools face challenges in ensuring stakeholder participation and engagement in school activities, as well as ownership of school buildings. After reviewing the school status, participants know where the schools are going. What they have been requiring and supporting.

➤ *Aware of Individual Responsibility*

Before the workshops, SMC and PTA members didn't know how many times they had to conduct meetings or what their responsibilities were. Similarly, teachers, childcare providers, and parents don't know their responsibilities. While assessing their contribution, the results show very low engagement and fulfillment of responsibilities. Throughout the results, participants became aware of their responsibilities and realized the importance of being stakeholders in schools.

➤ *Stop Blaming Each Other's Mistakes*

During the interaction before the workshops, all stakeholders blamed each other for the bad performance of schools. During the conversation, teachers blame parents and

the management committee, parents blame teachers, and the management committee blames teachers and students. Nobody is taking responsibility for the issues and problems in schools. After conducting the workshop, each stakeholder stops blaming each other because each stakeholder knows their responsibility for the better performance of the school.

However, Doherty et al. (2001) stated the following benefits for a school that engages with a critical stakeholder: understands itself; understands the process of change; becomes more open to critique; engages in genuine dialogue; becomes more effective at managing change; be more effective at self-evaluation and self-monitoring; be more thoughtful in defining and prioritizing targets; increase your self-assurance in self-management and self-improvement; learn how to use outside critical friends, networking, and other sources of support; and learn how to sustain "habits of effectiveness." Making people accountable to the organization is difficult, but a common discussion platform can bring thematic discussions to a close, hold people accountable, and ultimately help transform performance. If stakeholders don't come together and start a discussion on different issues and agendas, they will never transform the institution.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Organizational change is extremely complex but also very necessary. Effective change and transformation usually require a blend of internal and external evaluation, support, and pressure, as well as a combination of top-down and bottom-up initiatives (Carlson, 2009). Understanding the status of schools, being aware of one's own responsibilities, ceasing to blame, and engaging oneself in school improvement are the paths to transformative school performance. Public education's performance is decreasing day by day due to the lack of concern and engagement of stakeholders in schools. The major leadership roles of schools are, in some ways, creating awareness of responsibilities, sharing status, and creating discussion forums. I saw that many schools don't have a practice of gathering all stakeholders in one place and discussing school-wide issues, which is the major cause of poor school performance. Even though school self-assessment is one of the tools through which schools can improve performance, it also aids in holding the school's stakeholders accountable. According to Nepalese government standards, schools hold a school self-assessment workshop while developing school improvement plans, which are typically prepared for a five-year period. However, schools can do this annually and assess performance. Throughout the evaluation, schools can identify the gap regarding school performance based on standards, and they can prepare a plan with allocation responsibilities. Despite the fact that it can increase participation and engagement in school performances. At present, school performance is decreasing day by day, and every school can begin the school self-evaluation workshop and identify the gap with the development of an action plan with stakeholder engagement

and roles and responsibilities for transformative school performance.

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