

Importance of Quality Education and its Challenges in Nepal

Fr. Dr. Bobby Joseph Thadathil, S.J
Director of St. Xavier's Loyola Campus
Kathmandu.

Abstract:- The rapid advancement of science and technology emphasizes the need for quality education, particularly in the job market. Educational policies, guidelines, regulations, and practices are crucial for implementing quality education in Nepal. Despite having systems in place, challenges persist in executing quality education across institutions. This research highlights the importance of quality education and the obstacles to its implementation in Nepal. The paper also emphasizes the promotion of quality education and its potential benefits for the nation. Quality education fosters holistic development by enhancing knowledge, skills, and values. There is significant interest among educators in providing quality education to drive economic growth, develop skilled workers, and secure a prosperous future for all citizens. The progress and prosperity of a nation depend on the quality of education its citizens receive from early school years onward.

Keywords:- Educational Policy, Quality Education, Economic Growth, Holistic Development.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Education in Nepal looks after educational activities throughout the country. Nepal's educational system, inherited from India, reflects the legacy of an older structure. The literacy rate in Nepal was 71.2% in 2021, with male literacy (81%) surpassing that of females (63.3%). Despite having twelve national universities, six provincial universities, and seven autonomous institutes, many students leave the country for higher education, with a rising number of Nepali students pursuing studies in the U.S.

Nepal is home to over 30 million people, comprising 125 ethnic groups speaking 123 languages. Primary education plays a pivotal role in shaping young minds and fostering overall growth. Basic education is a fundamental human right and is mandated by law (Ministry of Education, 2015). The government is working toward ensuring quality education and has implemented various initiatives to enhance educational excellence at all levels. Nepal's comprehensive educational policy aims to provide accessible, inclusive, and high-quality education for everyone. The government is focused on promoting equality, improving teacher training, enhancing

infrastructure, and fostering innovation in education. Nepal has also established a quality assurance and accreditation system (QAHE) to monitor and evaluate the performance of educational institutions.

S.K. Sahani (2023) noted that the literacy rate in recent years has seen a steady increase. He examined the various educational levels in Nepal, including primary, secondary, and higher education. The current educational status in Nepal presents a mixed picture, with notable progress in access to education and quality improvements, yet significant disparities remain, particularly in rural areas and for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. The government has made considerable efforts to increase access to education in both rural and urban areas. There are schools for underprivileged children, and many NGOs and INGOs are providing support in the form of infrastructure, textbooks, uniforms, digital resources, and meals for rural students.

The quality of education in Nepal requires significant improvement. Quality education facilitates self-transformation, fostering a more civilized society by enhancing individuals' capacities to live better lives. It requires the concerted effort of teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders. The National Campaign for Education Nepal (2020) emphasized that one of the most pressing challenges facing the education system is the absence of a well-defined and comprehensive framework, which has been identified as a critical issue impeding the effective implementation of educational policies and reforms aimed at improving overall quality and accessibility.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources for qualitative research. The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with seven participants, including principals, department heads, and subject heads from various higher secondary schools and colleges. The interviews also gathered perspectives from both male and female participants residing in rural and urban areas.

A pilot study was conducted to refine eight final interview questions. Interviews were conducted in person, and demographic information was collected from each participant. Prior to the interviews, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants. The seven participants had significant experience in the education sector and represented both private and government educational institutions.

In addition to the interviews, secondary research techniques were employed. Information was gathered from existing sources such as empirical literature, journals, articles, research reports, databases, and other online resources.

➤ *Scope of the Study*

This study focuses on exploring the importance of quality education in higher secondary schools and higher educational institutions. Given the increasing national and international demand for quality education, the research highlights the necessity of promoting quality education, despite the challenges involved.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality in education can be defined in terms of excellence, high standards, and the ability to fulfill a specific purpose. A quality education equips individuals with knowledge, skills, and values, enabling them to lead better lives and secure higher-paying jobs. According to the British Council (2014), "quality education inspires creativity and innovation, while also improving the nation's economy. Graduates and interns engage with society, sharing knowledge, aiding national decision-making, and proposing new ways to improve various sectors."¹

The number of students enrolling in both private and government-run schools in Nepal is increasing. However, many schools struggle to provide conducive teaching and learning environments due to inadequate infrastructure and resources, which adversely impacts the quality of education. A notable issue is the use of local languages in classrooms, while textbooks are often in English, causing difficulty for many students in understanding the material.²

The rising trend of Nepali students seeking education abroad is driven by unemployment and poor policy implementation at home. High-income families often send their children to Western countries for education, while others opt for Asian countries or local institutions. The lack of faculty in developing countries also contributes to the increasing mobility of students and lecturers, as they seek opportunities abroad.²

Frequent changes in government have negatively impacted Nepal's education system. Addressing issues related to quality, access, and relevance requires collective action from the government, society, and international organizations. By tackling these issues, Nepal can pave the way for a future

where every citizen has access to quality education, empowering them to contribute to national growth and development.⁴

Suleiman et al. (2017) evaluated the primary education policy in Zanzibar, highlighting the importance of improving instruction quality and ensuring universal access to education. Similarly, Filgona et al. (2020) explored the role of motivation in learning and its connection to quality education. They emphasized the importance of student motivation in academic success, a factor often overlooked by educators.

Sah (2016) pointed out that the quality of education is closely tied to the quality of teachers. Teacher motivation, influenced by factors such as pay, classroom success, job commitment, training, and opportunities for career advancement, plays a critical role in ensuring high-quality teaching. Hung (2020) concluded that both extrinsic and intrinsic factors, including salary and job security, are key motivators for teachers, and improved teacher performance directly enhances the quality of education.⁶

Educational reform in Nepal, particularly in higher education, has been a challenge. Reforms began over two decades ago, and the University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced the Quality Assurance and Accreditation (QAA) program as part of these efforts. Despite the presence of several reputable universities in Nepal, the quality of education still requires closer supervision. The UGC plays a vital role in ensuring higher educational institutions meet accreditation standards through rigorous monitoring and evaluation.

According to the UGC report (2018/19), challenges such as ensuring equality, establishing norms and standards, managing professionally competent teachers, and budget allocation remain critical. Nepal has 11 universities and 4 specialized institutions, with plans for more, in response to the growing demand for higher education. However, Sijapati (2005) argued that problems in higher education stem from previous levels of education, particularly primary and secondary schooling, and highlighted the tension between social equality and efficiency in developing countries like Nepal.⁵

The European Commission's 2024 report emphasizes the need to encourage learners to develop personal and professional skills that improve their quality of life. As societies undergo green and digital transitions, there is a growing demand for new skill sets. The EU advocates for the development of key competencies, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, numeracy, and digital skills, to ensure economic competitiveness at a global level. These advanced transversal skills are essential for addressing current and future labor market needs.¹²

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Quality education emphasizes the holistic development of an individual. It is crucial in the modern age for anyone living in the present and future generations. To ensure quality education, it is important to have improvement programs, an optimal teaching and learning environment, financial resources, and good infrastructure. Promoting quality education is essential for preparing individuals to face future challenges. The following six points were identified and analyzed from the research:

➤ *Quality Education and Its Need*

Quality in education means fostering the development of a person into a human being and a good citizen, not just for themselves but for society as a whole. Quality education is not limited to academic excellence but also encompasses the social, mental, spiritual, psychological, and moral aspects of personal development. It's a two-way process, involving both teachers and students in active participation.

One participant shared, "Quality education means developing a person's life skills and growth through their own efforts for the betterment of society. It provides people with better skills, values, and a good life, enabling them to contribute more to society."

Teachers play an important role. According to one participant, it's not necessary for a teacher to be extremely intelligent or a master of their subject, but it is crucial for them to deliver subject matter effectively and help students learn. Teachers should maintain a learning attitude and discipline, which are key aspects of quality education. Parents, students, and teachers (via PTM) play vital roles in shaping an individual's education. Parents should provide quality time, guidance, and engagement with the class system. School administration must also play its part.

Three key elements are crucial: knowledge, values, and skills. These should be integrated into the curriculum and given prominence. These components are essential for effective teaching and for empowering students with the tools for critical thinking, problem-solving, and leadership development. Furthermore, quality education should promote holistic development, including psychological and social growth, which must be reflected in curriculum design.

Another participant remarked, "Education primarily means making people aware of the existing knowledge they have." Education should not only serve individuals but also contribute to societal improvement, with practical applications beyond the classroom. For instance, the impact of quality education during the pandemic highlights its value in scientific advancements and social change.

➤ *Importance of Quality in Education*

Quality education allows individuals to thrive and gives them the confidence to seek employment in their own country, rather than abroad. Many Nepali students leave the country in search of better education. It is crucial to build confidence that quality education can be provided domestically. Quality education can eradicate unemployment, create jobs, and drive economic growth.

Nepal's education system saw significant changes after the advent of democracy, but a lack of quality has led many to seek opportunities abroad. Quality education is essential for personal, familial, and societal growth. A stable political environment, effective administration, and reducing the commercialization of education are also important for achieving this.

➤ *Promotion of Quality Education*

Promoting quality education is a necessity. Nepali culture, with its spiritual emphasis, can help reduce stress and enhance concentration through practices like yoga and meditation. In addition, good preparation for classes, regular revisions, and interaction in the classroom can further promote educational quality. Regular guided work, homework, and project submissions are also essential.

However, disparities in infrastructure and teacher performance between rural and urban areas are significant challenges. Teacher training and empowerment, investment in infrastructure, and curriculum development are key areas for improvement.

Starting from elementary education, the focus should shift away from making education a business. For example, children in class one should not be burdened with excessive books, as it can impact their mental health. The mindset that success only comes from becoming a doctor or engineer must change, especially among parents.

Teacher training, curriculum development, access to research, and addressing language diversity are critical. Ethnic communities, with different mother tongues, face challenges in understanding lessons taught in the national language. Policy monitoring and evaluation are necessary to ensure progress.

➤ *Challenges to Quality Education:*

There is a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in rural areas, where living conditions are tough. Additionally, the curriculum is outdated and lacks frequent revision. Language diversity is another challenge, as teachers often cannot speak the local languages of ethnic communities. Political instability and a lack of proper policy implementation also hinder progress.

Another significant challenge is geographical. Nepal's diverse regions—Himalayan, mid-hill, and Tarai—face different barriers, such as snow, landslides, and floods, that disrupt teaching and learning. Political instability and poor infrastructure, both in private and government schools, exacerbate these challenges.

➤ *Steps to Achieve Quality Education*

Implementing sustainable development goals, achieving political stability, and enforcing education policies are necessary steps. Corruption needs to be addressed, and collaboration between private and public institutions should be strengthened. Capacity building for teachers is fundamental. Curriculum development is also essential, and technological advancements must be incorporated into the learning environment. Extra-curricular activities, such as sports and arts, can help refresh students' minds and motivate them to develop their skills and talents.

➤ *Quality Education and Nepali Society/Country*

Quality education will gradually lead to economic empowerment and societal development. It can help reduce poverty, bring social change, and minimize issues like corruption and inequality. If students can access quality education domestically, they will be less likely to seek education and employment abroad, boosting the country's overall educational standard. Additionally, research and knowledge gained from quality education will benefit society at large.

V. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that quality education is essential for the development of both individuals and nations. With excellent leadership, teacher initiative, and support from school management and parents, quality education is achievable in educational institutions. The quality of teachers and their teaching plays a significant role in delivering quality education. To promote it, there is a need for improved infrastructure, addressing financial constraints, enhancing teacher quality, and fostering collaboration between institutions within and outside the country.

Education in Nepal faces various challenges. However, with clear policies based on best practices, the allocation of resources, and capacity building, quality education can be achieved. National leaders can make a significant impact on the quality of education by reforming the structure, policy, and culture of the education system.

The journey towards quality education demands an uncompromising commitment, dedication, collaborative effort, and action from all stakeholders. Quality education paves the way for a transformative future, enabling every learner to realize their full potential.

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