

Transformative Role of Educational Institution: A Case Study of a Rural Community**School of Nepal**

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Abstract

Researcher has tried to study a constructive attempt of a rural community school of Nepal which has been practicing crossing traditional boundary of the school. The school has been teaching Grihinies (Married women of illiterate and semi-literate) since nearly one decade apart from normal program of the school. This paper aims to explore the attempt of Grihini education and its impact in the society. The researcher adopted constructivist paradigm as a philosophical foundation and adopted flexible learning theory and Kotter's eight stage of change process as theoretical lenses. The study reveals that there is meaningful change after launching Grihini education in the community. The impact of Grihini education has found positive towards social transformation. Study concluded that the role of flexible learning is crucial to transform the rural society. This is only a single representing example which might be the great lesson for the rural community of difficult circumstances.

Keywords: *Grihini education, constructivist paradigm; flexible learning theory; rural society; difficult circumstances*

Setting the Stage

Goals set globally and that of individual nations for education and development in the 21st century cannot be realized without giving special attention to the situation of rural populations in developing countries (INRULED, 2001). In spite of the rapid pace of urbanization during the period from 1950 to 2005 the rural population of less developed countries increased from 1.4 billion to 3 billion (UN, 2008) thus more than doubling in numbers. Half of the people of the world still live in rural areas (INRULED, 2001). This demographic shift has had profound effects on rural development efforts and achievements (Anriquez, &Stloukal, 2008).In the context of Nepal 83 percent people live in rural area. Out of this population more than half number of population is occupied by women. If we observe the literacy rate of age 15 and over in total population 57.4 percent of people are literate where the literacy rate of women is just 46.7 percentage (CBS, 2012). According to INRULED (2001) it can be safely assumed that non-attendance in school, early dropout of students, adult illiteracy and gender inequality in education are disproportionately high in rural areas –paralleling concentration of poverty in villages.

In April 2000, more than 1,100 delegates from 164 countries reaffirmed their commitment to EFA at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. They adopted the Dakar Framework for Action – a bold, practical document laying out goals and strategies for achieving Education for All. FAO and UNESCO launched in 2002 a new flagship within the Education for All (EFA) initiative with a focus on Education for rural people (FAO & UNESCO, 2003). The flagship is a call for collaborative action to increase the co-ordination of efforts targeting the educational needs of rural people.

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The vast majority of Nepal's population is rural, poor, and disadvantaged. Rural development in Nepal is a complex phenomenon involving an interaction of economic, social, political and cultural factors (Acharya, n.d.). The concept of rural development is a process of development and change to improve rural social life entirely. Some key approaches like modernization of agriculture, proper utilization and mobilization of resources, creating opportunities, inclusive social development, eradication of social stigma and modernization of overall society are the prompt need of Nepalese rural community. However, achievements of rural development efforts in Nepal are not satisfactory because of imposed development, unstable political situation, absence of people's participation, lack of research and political commitment.

It is obvious that women education should be given more emphasis in order to educate the human race. They will also be able to use their rights and can even secure their future and career. Women play a vital role in developing a society as well as in developing skilled human resources in the country. "If you teach a man, you teach an individual but if you teach a woman, you teach the whole family", goes a saying. If women are educated they will share their knowledge with everyone. In the same way, gender discrimination and social evils like girl trafficking, flesh trade and prostitution will also be reduced. The women also have decision making power. The early and child marriage, polygamy, ignorance and illiteracy, poverty will be under control whereas low status of women in society, preference to son in the family, desire for large family and social superstition will be eradicated when women are educated. Domestic violence and abuse of women will be reduced only when women take part in development activities. The high infant and child mortality rates can also be controlled.

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The government of Nepal has made several efforts for the upliftment of the condition of women in Nepal. Through non formal education the government has been attempting to decrease illiteracy and providing some functional literacy for the adult population focusing women. However, the attempt has not been accelerating properly with proper momentum. Women education in rural areas has been exceedingly neglected.

A school is taken as the change agent of the concerning community. Generally speaking a school provides formal education to the children of that community. Is it merely the scope of the school of rural community with difficult circumstances? Does school perform more than this? In this paper a small attempt has been made to analyze the transformative role of a rural community school of Nepal where there was a praiseworthy attempt to teach Grihinies(Married women). In addition to providing formal education to the children at proper school time the school has been managing the time of morning and evening to educate married women in the community who were interested to uplift their knowledge and wanted to do something to their family and society. The school is situated at rural area of PadamPokhari Village Development committee of Makawanpur district of Nepal.

Purpose of the Paper

This paper attempts to bring new insight into Grihinieducation through the analysis of data from the natural setting and personal field experiences. The paper also provides ideas about the impact of the Grihinieducation to transform the rural society with its challenging history.

Theoretical Lens

Under theoretical foundation researcher adopted *Flexible Learning Theory* and *Kotter's Eight Step Change Process* to guide the research purpose and discussion of the finding. In

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flexible learning there will be weak boundaries between subject area and learner control over the way in which knowledge is transmitted (Osborne, 2006, p. 9). Learner can get access of learning in their locations and also get flexibility of learning time according to their convenience. In flexible learning approach an institution provides students with flexible access to learning experiences in terms of at least one of the following: time, place, pace, learning style, content, assessment and pathways (Chen, 2003). According to Chen (2003) The notable characteristics of flexible learning are student centered, learner collaboration with peers, provision of sufficient learning resources, context sensitive learning experiences and generic skills such as thinking, meta - cognitive, problem solving etc. Many learners choose a flexible environment over the traditional classroom so that learning can fit into their busy lifestyle (Gearhart, 2008).

A professor at Harvard Business School and world renowned change expert, John P. Kotter introduced his eight-step change process. He focused on organizational change from a leadership and management perspective (Bhola, 2010). According to Kotter, to lead the change process the leader should develop the feeling of *urgency* for change at the beginning. In this stage the organizational leader should convince the key stakeholders about the need for change (Bhola, 2010; Kotter, 1996; Lunenburg, 2010). After this a *guiding coalition* is necessary to accelerate the change process. According to Kotter (1996, p. 52), no one person is capable of single-handedly leading and managing the change process in an organization and putting together the right *guiding coalition* of people to lead a change initiative is critical to its success.

Kotter's third step of change is the *developing a vision and strategy*. The first task of the guiding coalition is to formulate a clear *and sensible vision* for the transformation effort (Kotter, 1996, p. 70.) In the fourth stage of change process it is necessary to *communicate the vision* to entire stakeholders. To lead the change process individual, organization and entire system

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should have a capacity to resist obstacle. So, *eliminating obstacle* is the fifth stage of change process. The sixth step of Kotter's change process is *generating short term wins*. To achieve huge achievement we have to obtain and institutionalize the small scale victories which create self - confidence and the belief which act as the foundation to achieve the longer-term goals (Pietersen, 2002). *Consolidate gains and produce more change* is the seventh step of Kotter's change process. Kotter states that it may be gorgeous for leader to declare victory after the first signs of performance improvement are visible. The final or eighth step of the Kotter's change process is the *Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture*. Kotter (1995) believes that new behaviors are subject to degradation if they are not rooted in social norms and shared values once the pressure for change is pointed

Methodological Approach

Case study method was used for the study. Researcher explored in depth program, event, activity, and process (Creswell, 2009). Cases are bounded by time and activity, and researcher collects detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995). While researching the case researcher can go through different approach such as, positivism, interpretivism, critical theories (Henn, Weinstein & Foard, 2006). In this study researcher used interpretive approach. So, this study is the qualitative in nature. Data was collected through in-depth interview with selected specific stakeholders. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also conducted for the qualitative data. Discussion, interaction and consultation with stakeholders were conducted during the study as per the need of information. Required help was taken from the district education office, Makawanpur while selecting case school as per the condition of the research study. School based participants were taken for the information. Questionnaire including interview guidelines for interviews was the major tool of

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the study. While analyzing the data the researcher adopted the three Cs: Coding, Categorizing and Concepts. Ethical norms were strongly followed. Consent from the participants was also taken before interacting with them. Anonymity is also maintained. Great precaution was considered about the side effect or harm of the research to the respective person and the society.

Results

Results are analyzed in different themes which were explored during analyzing the data. Each theme has been explained below.

Feeling Urgency of Grihini Education

In the beginning the key female personnel of the community took responsibility to collect illiterate and semi-literate married women and discussed about the urgency of education. In the village there was big problem of poverty, low status of the women, girls trafficking, domestic violence for the women etc. To minimize these kinds of problem few key female change agents consulted school management and administration and started Grihini education as per their need. In this regard one Grihini leader said:

“Most of the women of our village were illiterate. They had not any skill in their hand. Due to illiteracy and unemployment problem the socio economic condition of the village was very poor. In the village there was the problem of domestic violence for the women, illegal income generating activities like deforestation for fire wood trade, making local alcohol in home for business purpose, girls trafficking and prostitution etc. To overcome those problems we thought an idea of Grihini education getting support from NGOs and INGOs acting in our village”.

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It is obvious that *necessity is the mother of invention*. So, keen interest to transform self, family and society there was the great commitment of the women to run Grihini education in their own community school. School took it positively and started to Grihini education in evening time taking support from its teachers and other local volunteers. At the beginning more than 300 married women enrolled in the school in different grades and started their new life of education.

Supporting Role of Host School

It is obvious that school is the assets of the community. So, it tried its best to run the Grihini education though there were numerous problems like social, economic, organizational, administrative etc. There were the problem of physical infrastructure, educational materials, electricity, supporting staff and teaching staff as well. School coordinated with local government and other agencies like NGOs, INGOs and CBOs to support Grihini education and also keep in contact with district education office to manage Grihini education. In this connection the Head teacher of the School reported:

“To fulfill the desire of the local women our school tried best to manage Grihini education. It was very challenging task for us. However, we took it seriously and started to search the solution of each problem. The major problem to manage Grihini education was the lack of clear policy. We are not for the non-formal education. Nevertheless, we searched for the solution and tried to manage Grihini education adopting the policy of open school of the government.”

Surely, School took serious responsibility to fulfill the desire of local women. School administration advocated Grihini education seriously. School has been facing so many problems

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to manage Grihini education. There were the problems of salary for teaching and administrative staff, appropriate educational materials, trained teachers, school timing, need based curriculum and text book, evaluation strategy etc. However, school has been trying to manage Grihini education taking support from local community, local government and also getting few support from district and national educational system.

Social Justice, Equity and Inclusiveness

In the society there are so many people who are illiterate and facing so many problems in their daily life. The Grihini education is supposed to eradicate these problems. During the study the school head teacher and chairperson of the school management committee were asked about the social justice, equity and inclusiveness. They said that they wanted to eradicate illiteracy from the community and also wanted to develop awareness to illiterate Grihini about the importance of the education in their daily life. In the program backward women were focused to involve. In the class the heterogeneity was found. There were Dalit and Janjati as well.

Students and their Ambition

The students were satisfied from the school in some extent. There were some grievances from the side of the student. One student Ramila said:

“We have just two hour time to read and there are more than 25 students of different classes. We can't get enough time to learn from our teacher. The study time should be increased and classes should be separated according to the grade.”

Another student Sharmila said:

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“We need to learn English more because English is necessary now. Without English we cannot read the MENU of hotel and we feel illiterate. Another important thing is we need to learn computer also because we have to contact our children in remote area.”

From these narrations it is clear that there is great ambition to the learner but the reality is beyond this. According to school head teacher, it was difficult to increase study hour due to dependency in class room because the room remains free after 4 P.M. This is possible only when there is own school building.

Sustainability of the Program

The school management committee was found worry about the sustainability of the program. According to the chairperson of school management committee it was difficult to motivate teacher in economic point of view .There was very little amount of money for the teachers. The facilities for the students were also nominal. There was not any fixed resource to run the school comfortably. There was not any specific plan for the sustainability of the Grihini education. In this concern the Lead Resource Center officer said, “There is a little support from the government side. The specific policy is not formed. By this reason there is confusion in sustainability of the program.” From this analysis it is clear that the sustainability part is very critical though the Grihini program is necessary and contextual.

Policy Related to Grihini Education

Though there is the clear provision in the policy document about non formal as well as open and distance education, in practice the matter is different. In some places Grihini education was conducted as a pure non formal education while in some places they were attached with the open school as a form of formal education combining the course of 10 years of general school

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into six years. Clear financial policy was not found for managing Grihini education. In PadamPokhari VDC the Grihini education program was running with number of critical problems and dilemma. Teachers, head teacher and even with management committee were found in confusion about the policy. The school was running adopting the concept of open school but most of the Grihini students were confused. Their ambition was just to learn the matter. The formal degree was not their prime concern. They were studying the loaded course of open learning in the school. They were feeling much difficulty to complete their course in limited and uneasy study time.

Constraints Faced by Grihini Education

Program was running by facing number of difficulties. The major problem for the Grihini education is building. The students want to read more hours in day time but due to dependency towards government school it was not possible. A student Samita said:

“We want to read in day time because we are free at this time. At evening time we have to face so many household problems and protest of the senior family member such as husband, mother in law, father in law etc. but due to the problem of class room we are compiled to read at evening time. Another thing is we need minimum three hour time for reading. We can't manage this time in evening.”

Similarly, there was the problem of appropriate teaching materials for effective teaching. According to the head teacher of the school the economic condition of the school was very weak. The government just provides very few amount of money for salary of teachers and materials. The community supports as well as support of local government and other NGO'S were also nominal. The head teacher added that there was the problem of absenteeism as well. The

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Grihiniwomen were interested to read but due to various reasons like economic, general household work as well as physical wellbeing, they were dropping the school.

Perception of the GrihiniLearners

During the study researcher asked the learner about the benefit of the education. Researcher asked about behavioral change, about further education, career, job opportunity as well as social life. Researcher also asked about the strong part of the program and constraints faced by the learner as well. The relevancy of the education was also asked. It was found that after completing certain level of course there were some changes in the learners. After completing certain level of course they were capable to do certain task. Some had the capacity to conduct the small business. They were able to calculate the simple numerical problem regarding their business. Some graduates had bank account.

Box: I

I Succeed to Find the Department

Kamala, Grade 4, Age, 38. One day I went Bharatpur Cancer Hospital to check up my husband. I entered the hospital and asked the security guard about the Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) department. He asked to go for fourth floor. The building was very big. Me with my husband climbed up the stairs. After climbing some stairs there was written "ChauthoTalla" (fourth floor). I read that. I looked here and there for the ENT department. I saw a tag hanging on the wall where ENT department was written. I was excited and went to the door. I asked the receptionist about the doctor and got my husband checked. My study at the late age helped me much. If I was illiterate it would be difficult for me for this task. That day I felt we need to study English as well.

They were able to operate cheque activities in the bank. A Grihini who was reading in grade 4 told a story about the benefit of her education, which is presented in box I.

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Another one Grihini learner was conducting a whole sell shop. She was completely illiterate before joining the school. According to her, her father was a teacher but he discouraged her to read as she was the daughter.

She was in grade 4 in Grihini School.

She was the first student in the class.

She has learned to read and write simple Nepali and English language.

She has the knowledge about mathematics as well. About her success she told her story which is presented in box II.

From the explanation obtained from the Grihins there was changed in their behavior, career, job opportunity and social life as well. They were satisfied from the Grihini education as it helped to open the eye in their late age. They felt easy in everyday life by the education. According to them the most crucial part of the Grihini education was that the education helped them to become real women with educated eye. Now they are able to do so many things which needed education. According to Grihini learner though the school was relevant to them there was some grievances related to curriculum, school time and educational materials and school building.

Box: II**Me and My Present Life**

Susmita, Grade 4, Age 41. I feel I am in dream now. I was an illiterate daughter of renowned teacher of the school. I didn't get chance to study in school due to my gender. Now I am very happy getting chance to enroll in Grihini education program. I am first girl of my class. I was completely illiterate before four years. Now I have a shop. I put all records of my shop in ledger. I have bank account now. I can fill bank Bhaucher and Cheque now. I have unique signature in my account. I can operate all cheque activities of the bank. I also use calculator to do mathematical operation. I have an interest to learn English and computer as well. I need to learn computer because my son is in Quatar, Saudi Arab. I want to talk him in chat. I want to pass SLC from Grihini School. I need education to spend life with proud.

Impact of the Grihini Education

Impact of the Grihini education can be analyzed in different level like individual level, family level and societal level. Individual capacity has been found developed through Grihini education and the learners have felt proud about their late age education. Self-esteem of the learner has been found developed. Most of the learners of the Grihini education expressed that their confidence level has been developed due to education. Now they have courage to do something in their life.

The impact of education has been observed at family level as well. At the beginning of the program there had dispute among senior family member including husband of the Grihini learners about their interest in education. There were various obstacles such as social stigma, poor socio - economic situation and scarce resources against the Grihini education. Now situation is reversed. The socio - economic status has been found change now. Some families have opened grocery shop in the village. Some have started vegetable farming, poultry farming, bee keeping etc. and have been earning money from these activities. Domestic violence has also been decreased in some extent due to positive impact of the education. The senior family members were found more responsible for their children's education.

The impact of Grihini education has found positive towards social transformation. The Grihini women of the community have established cooperative in their village and by the help of cooperative they have been engaging different income generating activities. Cooperative has been providing technical and economic support for the needy family. Due to joint effort of the conscious Grihini team net enrollment rate and retention rate of the school children has also been increased. The Padam Pokhari VDC was recognized as a village of girl trafficking. Now the girl trafficking is meaningfully decreased. They have been trying to make alcohol free zone for their

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community. Felt need, honest involvement and continuous support of the stakeholders were the notable reason for success. This was happened due to timely and continuous involvement of the stakeholders.

Discussion

Above explained results have been discussed using flexible learning theory and Kotter's eight stage change process. Grihini education is a key example of flexible learning. Grihines of PadamPokhari VDC have got partial flexibility to obtain education in their life. There was flexibility in time and curriculum though the Grihines had not properly satisfied with the time of study in the school and provided course. Most of the Grihines were demanding day time for the study and they were demanding functional curriculum for them. They were asking about study of English language and computer education as well. According to flexible learning theory learner can get access of learning in their locations and also get flexibility of learning time according to their convenience. In flexible learning approach an institution provides students with flexible access to learning experiences in terms of at least one of the following: time, place, pace, learning style, content, assessment and pathways (Chen, 2003).

The Grihines of PadamPokhari VDC had felt urgent to advance their knowledge through education. According to Kotter's eight stage change process it is very crucial for the change. The Grihines made a small team to talk with local community school and management of Grihini education. This was the very appropriate process of change according to Kotter. The small team of Grihines and school administration collectively formed the vision of the Grihini education to transform the individual, family and society and they communicated the vision with large group of stakeholders. There were numbers of obstacles while starting the Grihini education in the school. There was the dispute among the family member of Grihines about the study of late age.

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School had not adequate infrastructure and trained human resource to conduct Grihini education. The great problem was economic. They fought with the obstacle according to their capacity and managed Grihini education. According to Kotter it was the natural phenomenon of change process. Through Grihini education the individual Grihins, their family and their society got something. According to Kotter these are the small wins and to continue the change process it is necessary to accomplish the small scale success to make it large. In the Grihini education of PadamPokhari VDC it was found weak. There was great attraction towards Grihini education but now attraction has been decreasing in order. The Grihini learners have been decreasing from 300 to 25 during one decade of time. According to Kotter it is due to poor capacity to consolidate *gains and produce more change*. Kotter states that it may be gorgeous for leader to declare victory after the first signs of performance improvement are visible. The movement of Grihini education of PadamPokhari VDC is necessary to uplift. For this anchoring *new approach in the culture* is necessary according to Kotter.

The decreasing number of students is the major concern of Grihini Education. The critical question is why the number of the students is decreasing? According to the result explained above the school time was unsuitable for the Grihini student. The evening time is the crucial time for the house hold work for the Grihini in the context of Nepal. So, this time was unsuitable for the Grihini School. Morning time is also unsuitable for them. In the day time there is the problem of class rooms and other disturbance. This is the major cause of decreasing the student. There was the problem in effective management as well. School management committee members were not much experienced and visionary. Without visionary leadership it is impossible to accelerate the school smoothly. There is the need of proper training for the school management committee.

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The conditions of the resources are very poor. There are just two teachers. There is the need of additional minimum an administrative staff to support school administration. Financial part of the school is also very weak. To increase the financial condition of the school proper networking with the related institution is necessary. For this, management committee should be trained and equipped as per the need of the school. There is high ambition in the Grihini students from the school. They are interested to study English language and computer skill as well. To full fill their need school should increase its strength with its human and materials resources. The role of the SMC is crucial to improve the school. So, management committee should be empowered. The monitoring and evaluation system is not satisfactory in practice. The DEO and LRC are responsible for this but practice is miserable.

There is not separate curriculum and text book for the Grihini education. Due to this reason Grihini student are facing difficulty to read and they are feeling difficulty to take the exam as well. Moreover, one group of Grihini just wants to be literate. They want to learn but formal certificate is not their interest. But they are studying same kind of curriculum. They are feeling difficulty to learn in the class. It is another crucial reason for declining the Grihini education. The Grihini students are satisfied with their learning as the knowledge and skill they got has helped them in their practical life. They are interested to learn more like English language and computer skill. To full fill this need school should think seriously. Their grievances like unsuitable school time, loaded curriculum, short duration of the class etc. need to be consideration.

Conclusion

The role of flexible learning is crucial to transform the society. Grihini education is the key example of it. Grihini education is the timely movement but there are so many challenges to

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manage it. First of all positive attitude of entire community is essential for this movement. There should be collective efforts to manage it properly. The role of the government, CBOs, NGOs, and INGOs is much crucial to develop Grihini education. Support of concerning family of the Grihinies and management of appropriate time is very crucial for the advancement of Grihini education. Capacity development of individual, organizational, institutional and proper enabling environment is necessary to grow Grihini education. Need based flexible curriculum, adequate and appropriate learning materials, trained teachers are the crucial factor for the effective Grihini education. Visionary leadership and proper management help to develop Grihini education properly.

There is positive impact of Grihini education in the community. It has helped to develop individual capacity and confidence of the adult women. Families are benefitted by the educated Grihinies. The educational performance of the children of the educated Grihinis is uplifting. The enrolment rate and retention rate of the school children have been increased due to this movement. Student absenteeism is decreased in the school. Socio cultural and socioeconomic status of the family has been increased in some extent due to Grihini education. Due to positive awareness girl trafficking, prostitution, alcoholism, domestic violence etc. are decreasing in order. Society has been accelerating towards positive direction of development getting proper momentum from Grihini education. So, appropriate vision, honest commitment and appropriate effort are necessary to manage Grihini education. It might be the transformative step for the rural transformation.

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An Image of Grihini Classroom