

Service delivery in post conflict Nepal: Reflections from the education sector

Paper to be presented under the sub-theme 'Assessing knowing and learning' of the. 5th International Education for Rural Transformation Symposium 17 - 19 September 2014 in Kathmandu.

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Abstract

This paper discusses the theoretical implications and operational complications of education service delivery in Nepal. Since the establishment of multi-party system in Nepal in 1990, private education investment came heavily and numerous education service providers entered the education sector both at primary and higher education. The Nepali state promoted private investment in education in the past two decades. However, the then Communist party of Nepal (Maoist) [CPN (M)] waged a decade long insurgency (1996-2006) and one of the targets was to dismantle private investment in education sector. Therefore, they vehemently opposed the private investment in education sector. Once they came to power twice (in 2010 and 2012) for short time, they did not change their war-time position but also did not scrap the private education system. This study on the education service delivery was a part of ongoing long term research programme called the Secured Livelihood Research Consortium (SLRC) jointly implemented in 8 conflict affected countries of Asia and Africa. Both the qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in the study. In quantitative study, all total 3175 households were surveyed in the 3 districts (Rolpa, Bardiya and Ilam) to document the people's perception on education service delivery to complement the national level assessment. In qualitative methods, the in-depth interview, key informants interview, round table discussions were conducted with the key actors of this sector. The findings of the study demonstrate that the education sector in Nepal is facing serious conceptual confusion, theoretical contradictions, and operational setbacks. The state has been unable to clarify its position (education limit to public service, private service or public-private partnership). The study found that the multiple stakeholders (private investors, cooperatives, public institutions) involved in education service delivery are thematically or conceptually in turmoil of how to manage the education system and are facing operational difficulties. This paper concludes that education sector, one of the fundamental basic services will continuously face multiple challenges, confusion and contradictions in coming years too if the policy makers do not settle the conceptual confusion, theoretical contradictions, and operational challenges

Key words: Education, Nepal, post conflict, politics, private sector, public, services.

1. The context: Service delivery in the post conflict Nepal

One of the reasons of the decade long armed conflict was extremely poor performance of the state in delivering basic services to its people (Ali et al., 2011; Berry and Igboemeka, 2005) in addition to poverty, inequality, injustice, mal-governance (corruption, favoritism, nepotism, selective implementation of law, power centric and predatory behaviour of the government) and caste-, ethnic-religious-, geographical- and gender discriminations (Onesto 2005; Sharma 2006; Upreti 2004; 2006; 2009). These issues were very tactfully used by the Maoists to expand the armed insurrection as they became highly successful in winning public support. The tactics of then CPN (M) to bring the government's failure to provide the basic services to its people became powerful means for them to attract the large portion of marginalized, excluded and discriminated people in their favour. The extremely poor performance of the governments to deliver the basic services in general and the education service in particular to its people was always in the centre of the insurgents' arguments to convince the people. Several literatures (Pherali 2011; FHD and RIDA, 2010; Caddell, 2009; Upreti *et. al.*, 2012) reveal that faulty educational policies, weak

implementation, politicization of education, corruption, misuse of resources allocated for the education were some of the major problems in effectively delivering the educational services to Nepali people.

1.1 Preview of how the armed conflict affected basic services:

Sabotaging and obstructing basic service infrastructures was one of the main tactical war strategies of CPN (M). Local service centres, office of the local government (Village Development Committee buildings), telecommunication and transport infrastructures (roads, bridges, civil aviation towers, suspension bridges, etc.) were major targets, which had directly and indirectly impacted the functioning of basic services in Nepal.

The decade long armed conflict (1996-2006) severely affected the various service provisions such as health, education, water and others in Nepal, as the then CPN (M) had strategy to directly and or indirectly obstruct state agencies to deliver the services to its citizen, distancing them from the government services and create vacuum and fill this vacuum by CPN (M) activities. Hence, the CPN (M) forced by the staff of the government to leave their work by creating insecurity (forcing them to leave, threatening, abducting, killing, etc. the local staff of the government) so the local/village level government offices became dysfunctional in few years. Then the CPN (M) filled this vacuum by imposing their 'people's government. In this way they became successful to obstruct all basic services provided by the state in their controlled villages (almost 80 percent of the rural remote areas).

Regarding health, Collins (2006) and Mukhida (2006) reveal a substantial number of health care workers being killed, kidnapped or abducted by the insurgents. There were jobs quits by the health workers due to insecurity and fear (see Pettigrew et al., 2003; Maskey, 2004). Reports and coverage of kidnapping of health workers by the warring parties and the government seizing the medicines compelling the health care workers to report falsely (Maskey, 2004). Conflict affected health care seekers, especially children and girls (trafficking purpose) the most (Singh et al 2005). It induced depression and stress among people, especially the internally displaced persons (Thapa and Hauff, 2005). Kieveilitza and Polzer (2002) reveal due to the insurgent's attack on the development workers a total of four INGOs restrained continuity to their health care programmes in 2005. However, the CPM (M) was not able to stop the national health campaigns (Collins, 2006; World Bank, 2005) at the central level as they were less effective in the district

A report of the Education Journalist Group (undated) for UNICEF has document the following impacts:

- UCPN (M) threatened or put pressure on the students and teachers to support their cause.
- Rebels pressurised schools to implement the '*Janavadi Sikchhaya*' (people's education), their curriculum and stop the government system (and threatened to kill if not listen them).
- State security forces constantly harassing the teachers and students for supporting the rebels or for sheltering them and providing food to them.
- Students left the schools and many teachers flee to district headquarters to escape abduction, arrest, kidnapping and harassment and even death in the hands of the parties-in-conflict
- Schools were used for training for CPN (M) militia.
- Daily class were hampered. Teachers and students were under immense psychological pressure-to keep themselves safe-between two forces.
- Many schools (both private and public) were destroyed all around the country.
- The student organization of the CPN (M), who was declared them as 'terrorists' by the government, targeted the private education institutions the most.
- The CPN (M) killed teachers blaming them as spy, exploiters.
- Total of 227 teachers were tortured (120 by the state 107 by the CPN (M), at least 248 teachers were arrested 185 by the state and 62 by the rebels).

Source:

https://www.google.com/search?q=RPPN+Nepal&rlz=IC1TSNF_enNP513NP513&zoq=RPPN+Nepal&saqs=chrome..69i57j0l5.31l2j0j4&sourceid=chrome&espv=2l0&res_sm=93&ie=UTF-8#es_sm=93&espv=2l0&q=Impacts+of+conflict+on+education+by+Education+Jo

headquarters and capital city because of heavy presence of the military of the state.

Interestingly, once the CPN (M) vacated the basic series providing local units of the government, it has started operating health facilities in the rural areas which were originally meant for their wounded combatants. Such initiatives helped those communities which had no access to health facilities. Nevertheless, there is still great need for a national-scale in-depth research to assess the actual negative effects of the armed conflict in the health sector, as there are less data available in this area (Hart 2001, Devkota and Teijlingen 2009). Further, the state was severely weak in providing health services to rural people of Nepal even before the armed conflict.

Likewise, the education sector suffered the intense damage due to the armed conflict. There are tangible evidences of youths and children's forceful participation in conflict (Pherali, 2011; Hart, 2001; Thapa and Sijapati, 2003). Much of the public and private school and infrastructures were damaged. About 3000 teachers left their jobs in districts where conflict was major with a closure of 700 public schools across the country (Gyawali, 2009). Schools playground became a ground for setting camps for the warring parties. The overall act of forcing children to act as human shields or even sex slaves or combatants vitiated the school environment, embedding sense of hatred, denial and frustration among these children. In a nut shell, children whose age in general is defined by their rights to education were deprived of their rights through strikes, school bombings, calling for bandhs (general strikes) of educational institutions or sabotaging the educational territory.

Moreover, there is a dearth of in-depth and researched literatures about the loss that private schools faced. However, newspapers and media report that the private schools were affected by the insurgency due to demand for huge donations from both teachers and school owners. In the rural areas teachers were the main sources of funding for the Maoists as they had regular inflow of money (Pherali, 2011: 137). Additionally, the teachers of government schools with children going to private schools were forced to transfer their children to public schools. Also, besides school being the source of finance during the insurgency, it was resourcefully handy for both the Maoists and the government forces. The rooms were used for housing purposes and the overall school for various functions that took place (Wessel and Hirtum, 2013). Vaux et al (2006) reports that the Maoists proclaimed that their intention of using school for the war purpose was not to obstruct the education system. They wanted the education system to function well. Also teachers were taken as the most knowledgeable in the rural areas and were used by the Maoists as source of ideology expanders (Wessel and Hirtum, 2013).

The impact of conflict on teachers was daunting as they were wedged between their support for the warring parties and the government. Either of these parties would watch over the teachers to see whether they are supporting the opponent parties (Paulson and Rapple, 2007; Pherali, 2011). Teachers who were accused of supporting the Maoist forces were tortured and killed by the government (Amnesty International, 2005; Pherali, 2011). About 30,000 private schools were forced to shut down all over Nepal in 2000 (International Crisis Group, 2005). The CPN (M) very tactfully brought their philosophies of how private schools were not for the welfare of the citizens but that it was robbing people through high fee structures and unwanted payments further affecting large number of laborious middle class people. As far as the public schools are concerned, the Maoists used the children as their shields and collected donation from the teachers.

There are empirical evidences of how women were affected by conflict. About one third of the combatants were thought to be women who were also exploited sexually, had to undergo forced migration, were onerous of providing food, had their rights to education seized and were tortured consequently leading to mental illness (Thapa and Sijapati, 2003).

During the physical wartime with casualties, small scale hydropowers were destroyed as well. Moreover, conflict affected people's livelihoods, induced forced migration and seized people's right to various forms of services and access across the country. There was destruction of telecommunications worth 577 million rupees. Apart from the services, the people's war also affected the state in charge of providing services. Despite, the central level government's strenuous effort in allocating staffs in the local level, it was difficult for them to actually conduct the services. Therefore, the administrative management seemed very weak (Upreti et al, 2012).

In general, conflict exacerbated the already lack of basic services for the Nepalese citizens creating an absurdity in terms of understanding whether the aim was to save the people from a different ruling – that did not include every ethnicity or marginalized group into the agenda – or whether the intention was to let people suffer. Security forces and the rebels had obstructed food supply and transportation in rural areas by both the. For example, security forces restrict the flow of dry foods or readymade foodstuffs to the rebel-influenced rural areas whereas the rebels restrict supplying or marketing of food and agricultural items from their influence areas to district headquarters. Most of the district headquarters of mid and far western hilly districts were facing CPN (M) blockade and access restrictions of supply of basic services and goods.

The study of the Seddon and Hussein, (2002) reveals that security forces are restricting people from carrying more than one day food supply at a time to deny food supply to CPN (M), as against the general practice of people to carry a few months supply in rural areas. The CPN (M) had damaged vehicles delivering food, medicines and other basic services. Frequent transport strikes and *bandhs* have not only restricted physical mobility but also constrained the transportation of goods and services to the needy areas. Furthermore, placement of landmines on major roads is used by the warring parties, physical damage to vehicles (burning or blasting of buses, loaded trucks, motorbikes, etc.), increases feelings of insecurity. Hence, Nepalese people have faced several psychological disturbances such as feeling of insecurities, fear, frustration, etc.

Similarly, drinking water sector was severely affected from the armed conflict. The CPN (M) not only obstructed the supply of drinking water systems but also massively damaged the drinking water structures (Upreti, 2009).

1.2. Post conflict scenario of service provision:

In the post conflict setting, multifarious efforts have been made by the state and other service providers to restore the service delivery mechanisms. First and foremost, the government restore local governing units such as agriculture and health service centres, police posts and VDC offices to provide basic services to the citizens of Nepal (Upreti et al, 2012). Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Social Works and Women and Children (MoSWWC), and Ministry of Local Development and Federal Affairs (MoFALD) and others organisations made special efforts to restore their services at local level. Further, NGOs have also restored their services at the villages.

Another prominent design supporting the basic services sector is the 20/20 Compact. This compact was promoted by UNDP and UNICEF and later brought into practice in 1995 by the World Summit for Social Development (NPC and UNICEF, 2010). This compact is an international collaboration aimed towards reducing poverty which ensures that 20 percent of the total government's budget be used for the basic service sector and the other 20 percent of the budget will be used from the international aid. This compact's basic service sectors are the basic health, education and safe drinking water. The programmes

are prioritised and labelled as P1 (Project Category One, highest priority), P2 and P3 based on the priorities.

One major challenge for the citizens of Nepal is the access to enough safe drinking water despite having rich sources. In an estimate, about 20 percent of the total population of Nepal are deprived of safe drinking water (CBS, 2009; DWSS, 2010). There have been various attempts made by the government to reach out people with safe drinking water. The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Development Board (RWSSFDB) support to the drinking water supply. Different NGOs and organisations such as the Nepal Red Cross Society, UNICEF, WHO and Nepal Water for Health involved in drinking water supply. In the local community level, evidences from the panel survey conducted between September and November 2012 by the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research in Rolpa, Bardiya and Ilam suggest that providing safe drinking water in rural areas is still a major challenge (Upreti et al 2013). Though small water projects such as the Small Town Drinking Water and Sanitation Projects are providing drinking water facilities to the people, the effectiveness of such projects need a lot of improvement. In this line, the government is functioning through the Drinking Water Management Committee at the local level, where these committees are responsible for assessing the needs of the locals and provides supports for pipes and safety tanks, organising meetings to discuss about issues of cleaning the tanks and the water sources, which is becoming more effective.

In the past few years, the government's expenditure on the basic service from the budget of the social sector has been increasing. For example, the expenditure on the basic service sector rose to 74.7 percent in 2008/09 from 71.5 percent in 2004/05 (NPC and UNICEF, 2010). In the education sector, however, the percent share of expenditure fell to 59.6 percent in 2008/09 from 70.2 percent in 2004/05. In the health sector, the share of expenditure rose to 24.9 percent in 2008/09 from 20.2 percent in 2004/05. Similarly, the drinking water and sanitation sector saw a rise of 15.5 percent in 2008/09 from 9.6 percent in 2004/05 (ibid, p 31). However, the allocation of budget for the basic service sectors requires increment especially in the level education, health and drinking water.

Recent study from Rolpa, Bardiya and Ilam (Upreti et al., 2013) show that the primary education cycle is not completed by many children due to factors such as early marriage, migration for labour and children required to support in households chores (selling vegetables in the market). However, the rise in expenditures in the health and drinking water and sanitation sectors show the progress on addressing people's needs of proper health services (reproductive, child and maternal care linked to Millennium Development Goals) and safe drinking water and sanitation (awareness about sanitation and hygiene, safety tanks initiation).

Apart from the government's involvement in addressing the basic services of the Nepalese citizens, various international organisations as Asian Development Bank (ADB) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are also supporting programmes related to girl's education, food for education, drinking water and sanitation (Upreti et al, 2012). Similarly, major organisations such as the Department for International Development (DFID), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Health Organisation (WHO), and Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) have been contributing in the health sector. The World Bank (WB) and Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) are active in supporting education and the United Nations (UN) has been supporting the food security and livelihoods projects (Kohler et al, 2009). Other than implementation works, international organisations have been involved with the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) for survey and documentation.

Sharma (2010) reveals that the development works are largely dominated by the donors. So far, the primary education and health sectors have gained much attention by the aid agencies. For this, the Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) framework has been used to address the health and education services (Upreti et al, 2012).

Regarding the private sector, the extent of its influence in the service delivery is mostly bounded by the urban areas than rural (Köhler et al., 2009). The private sectors have been providing services in health and education sectors since 1990's political change. For example, huge number of private academic institutions (boarding schools and colleges) and health service providers came in urban areas and town centres. However, most of them are beyond average people's ability to afford (Upreti et al, 2012). Though the private sectors, especially in health and education, are providing services, these services are expensive to ordinary people and therefore large section of society is left out.

2. Service delivery in Education sector

The education system of Nepal is broadly divided into private and the public schooling system. In general, the education system is categorised into school [primary, elementary schools (nursery to upper kindergarten), lower secondary, secondary, higher secondary schools), college (intermediate, bachelors), university levels (higher education)] and Technical Education and Vocational Training. However, there is a vast difference between the private and the public education in terms of quality and fees. The private schools are run by the private companies and individual investors while the public schools are funded by the government.

Different organisations are engaged in education service delivery ranging from Ministry of Education (MoE), Department of Education, Regional Directorate of Education, District Education Office, Education Review Office (ERO) and Education Policy Committee (EPC), Policy Analysis and Program Section of the MOE Planning Division, Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training, Higher Secondary Education Board, National Centre for Educational Development, National Examination Board, Non-Formal Education Centre, National Vocational Qualifications Framework, Office of Controller of Examinations, Centre for Educational Research are some the government's institutional arrangements for providing education services.

The Government of Nepal had implemented the education services with a series of national programs such as the Basic Primary Education Projects (BPEP I, 1992-1998 and BPEP II, 1999-2004), Community School Support Program (CSSP, 2003-2008), Secondary Education Support Program (SESP, 2003-2009), and Education For All Program (EFA, 2004-2009). Other programmes include School Sector Reform Programme, Early Childhood Education and Development, Teacher Professional Development, Innovation and Development, School Improvement Plans, School Out-reach Program, School Sector Reform, Teacher Education Project. Further, another important arrangement of the education service is the National Framework and Guidelines for Capacity Development Plan of MoE.

Introduction to School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP), Three Year Interim Plan (TYIP) and other such initiatives had encouraged public-private partnerships in education but it is not much. The Interim constitution of Nepal insists on education being the basic right for all the citizens and ensures provision of education for all (NPC, 2012). Moreover, the introduction and implementation of TYIP takes into consideration the provision of primary education for free ensuring better quality and taking into account inclusion of gender and other ethnic groups. The SSRP mainly addresses the issue of decentralized education system and management with motives of increasing access to education for all, quality education and proper management of public schools. Also, the School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2015)

pronounced free and compulsory education for grades 1-8. It is said to be the only document that unfolds the issues related to financial initiatives in the education sector from primary level to higher levels (RIDA 2010). The SSRP is the major initiation that took place for the education sector post conflict. The Local Self Governance Act (LSGA) of 1999 and the Education Act Seventh Amendment (EASA) of 2001 proclaimed free education for grades 1-5 including textbooks and other forms of support for disadvantaged groups (FHD and RIDA 2010). Moreover, the government of Nepal put strenuous effort in taking up with the EFA campaign. It was committed in developing the education sector through improvement using the Dakar Framework of Action on Education for All (2000). Also, between 2004/05 and 2009/10, a total of 24,773 Child Development Centres (CDCs) were established where the target was only 17,750 (MoF, 2010). These all initiatives have opted for general educational improvement, largely fitting to both models. However, the private education system is less responsive to the provisions of these initiatives.

The bilateral and multilateral support to education sector are mainly funding for primary education (NPC 2012) and funding for 11 out of 15 projects related to education reform. The development partners (donors) have supporting for teachers training, capacity building, and nutrition programmes for children in primary schools. As soon as the CPA was signed in 2006, the MoE, UNICEF, UNESCO and Save the Children Nepal joined hands to promote education for peace (Save the Children, 2010).

UNICEF is actively contributing towards peace through education (UNICEF, 2011). The UNICEF was active in supporting some interventions from 2006 and 2010 such as promotion of Schools as Zones of Peace (SZOP) and reintegration of child soldiers. The UNICEF supported programme “Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition (EEPCT)” is working towards promotion of education as rights to children. In this project UNICEF is closely working with the MoE in developing new curriculum for schools through inclusion of lessons related to peace and human rights, training facilities for teachers, raising issues of health and sanitation in schools and overall support to the displaced children in attaining their educational rights (Barakat and Hardman, 2010).

Despite the different efforts of the government and support of the international community, the schooling system in Nepal is becoming contentious because of the social divide created private investment in education system, particularly once the CPN (M), who had waged civil war and vehemently opposing the private investment in education, stood against privatisation of education. Within the public school system, there are several governance problems such as misuse of allocated budget, corruption, politicisation, trade unionism, lack of motivation of teachers, lack of timely availability of the school textbooks etc. Though the public schools are very cheap and the government provides many benefits to the students, the quality is not satisfactory. Unlike public schools, the private schools are costlier as it charges students huge amount of fees and other miscellaneous costs when required but the educational performance is comparatively good. Hence, the state is in dilemma.

Further, the education system encountered severe setback from the CPN (M) armed conflict. In order to repair the damage caused in the education sector by the insurgency, some efforts have been made to edify and improve the system, especially after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The provisions of the CPA, protects the education sector from the using school's resources and infrastructures for war purpose (Dupuy, 2008). The government also introduced the decentralized school management, i.e., schools to be managed by communities. As a result, the MoE introduced School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) in 2009 with a total budget of USD 2.6 billion for five years (Pherali et al, 2011). The SSRP is only public school focused intervention to ensure trainings for teachers and reforming schools.

While looking to the service delivery in the education sector, the positive indicators are also observed. The progress on meeting the MDG goal on primary education is encouraging. The enrollment rate of primary school going children increased to 94 percent in 2012 from 87 percent in 2005 (MOE, 2009). There has also been a good improvement in girl's enrollment in schools. The government's provision of providing scholarships for students of marginalized groups and girl child became useful to increase enrolment of girl children. Data shows that among the girls enrolled in primary school 761,638 students (50 percent of the total students) who come from the lower family status or from marginalized groups received scholarship in 2008/2009. Further, the Education for All (EFA) programme, as a five year strategic plan to enroll all the children in the primary school, edifying the quality of primary education and upgrading the institutional capacity through different efficient mechanisms. Under the EFA 823,764 Dalit students enrolled in primary schools received scholarships (Vaux et al, 2006). Also, under the Secondary Education Support Programmes initiated by the government, about 60,000 students studying in the secondary level received scholarships. Also disadvantaged groups like Dalits received stipends (Upreti et al, 2012). These are some of the positive indicators in the education sector. However, there are many unsettled structural and conceptual (epistemic) issues to settle.

Budget wise, there has been an increased expenditure in the education sector in the recent years along with visions to increase the literacy rate, provide better facilities to students through quality education and proper environment (NPC, 2012). This is due to the MDG aims as well as the Education for All Policy of the government. The budget's increment is seen mostly on the primary education which is also relevant to the MDGs goals of achieving a perfect score in primary school enrollment (ibid).

In order to distinguish the private and public schooling systems, Pherali et al (2011) points out that the implementation of School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2015) did initiate changes of addressing inclusion by social groups and gender in public schools. However, the increase in private schools have raised issues of class discrimination, parent's interested in investing on children's education by sending them to private school and the overall system in general (such as qualified versus unqualified teachers of private versus public schools). Further, the private schools (especially the big schools or schools managed by the powerful people) often resist implementing the government's directive and rules, especially while collecting different fees. The private schools and investors are so powerful that the MoE is not able to impose the rules and regulations to them.

Though, the private investment in education became more prominent after 1990 and fell in controversy after the CPN (M) started their armed insurgency the history of private schooling goes back to the time of the establishment of the 'Durbar High School' to teach English language for rulers (Government of Nepal: Ministry of Education, 2009; Kulung, 2008). Further, with the political change in 1950, many individuals started private schools (Poudyal, 2013). However, the introduction of Education Act 1971, aimed towards nationalization of schools became an obstacle for expansion of private schools (Kulung, 2008). But realizing the limitation of the public education system the government encouraged private sectors involvement, also amending the Education Act in 1980 (Poudyal, 2013). Consequently more private schools came. Since the 1990s, the private schools have mushroomed across the country with a rapid increment by number. These schools are funded by owners or trusts and do not comply with the government in terms of funding or other sources.

Private schools, are managed by individual investors as per their convenience, where as the public schools are managed at the local level with the provision of the School Management Committee (SMC). For the community managed schools the financial support is from the central government (MoE) through its district offices [District Education Offices (DEOs)]. The DEO is technically supported by the Department of Education (DOE) at the central level which is also responsible for implementing

education sector programmes. Once the decentralization act (Local Self-Governance Act) came in 1999 the local governments (District Development Committees, Village Development Committees and municipalities) were also engaged in funding public schools. Non-governmental organizations, charities and individuals are also funding school education. The budgeting is passed from the central government on a twofold basis: the first called the earmarked grant and the second called the block grants (FHD and RIDA, 2010). The earmarked grant is used for the pre primary level, teacher's salary, the SMCs, grants for children as scholarships, school infrastructure building. While the block grants are given in blocks for administration purpose, school improvement and the performance.

Additionally, at the local level there is provision of the Resource Centres (RCs) which keeps track of resources used or need by public or community managed schools. These centres are run by resource persons appointed by the government (schools and communities) at the local level. However, these centers were heavily politicized and not able to function as per their aim.

The private schools have consortia called the Private and Boarding School's Organisation (PABSON) was established in 1991. Another umbrella organization for private boarding schools called the National Private and Boarding Schools (N-PABSON) was established after a feud with the PABSON on certain issues and directives in the education sector. The major aims of these two organizations are to provide protect their interests and provide quality education by developing proper guideline for the private schools in Nepal for better functioning. They have also established their branches in district. However, these consortia became so powerful and defying the governments rules and regulations (especially about the criteria and rules to be followed by private schools). For example, the government of Nepal, in order to create a proper education system in Nepal, came up with Institutional School Criteria and Operation Directives-2069 (2012). This directive was created with an aim to 'monitor and regulate all the schools across Nepal' (edusanjal.com, Feb 2013). One major highlight of the directives has been that any public or private schools should be opened under the government's consent given that there is a need for a school in the particular area. Hence, a mandatory provision made which is "*big playground, one toilet per 50 students, one drinking water tap per 50 students, one water filter per 25 students, one library per 500 students, quality food in hostel and monthly food inspection report, no sale of textbooks and stationery, no more than two sets of uniform for students*" (ibid). The directive has also provision that if one school fails to run with its standard, two will be merged and the private schools should contribute one percent Education Service Tax to the government. However, these tow consortiums (PABSON and N-PABSON) vehemently opposed these provisions of the Directives because the government through the Directives wanted to regulate the free-riding private schools (they were imposing various fees in their own, using their own curricula etc.).

3. Theoretical implications

The most important theoretical contradiction faced by the education sector in Nepal is emerging from the state's conceptual clarity. After the political change of 1990 the state opted to promote private investment in education. As a result, private sector (companies and individuals) invested huge amount of financial resources and numerous private education institutions established mainly in the urban areas and city centers. However, the then CPN (M) when waging its armed insurrection (1996-2006) severely oppose the privation of education and vehemently targeted the private education institutions and demanded to dismantle privatization of education (Upreti, 2009). Therefore, they vehemently opposed the private investment in education sector. They had forced to close many private education institutions at that time. After signing of the CPA, the warring parties' interference in education was principally discouraged. In practice, the private education institutions faced constant pressure from the CPN (M) and its student wing, teachers' wing and trade unions. However, the CPN (M) reiterated its commitment to the CPA.

From the April 2008 Constituent Assembly Election, the CPN (M) emerged as the largest political party and formed the new government under the leadership of Puspa Kamal Dahal Prachanda, on 15 August 2008. However, neither the CPN (M) government scrapped the policy related to privatization of education and health services, which it was vehemently demanding earlier, nor supported the privatization of education. The private investors especially the health and education sectors were worried because of the clear position of the CPN (M) against the privatization of health and education. It was conceptually confusing and indecisively ousted from power after 9 months of the rule in the country.

Again the CPN (M) leader Dr Babu Ram Bhattarai became the Prime Minister (28 August 2011), the war-time position of CPN (M) was largely unchanged but the Prime Minister repeatedly assured the private education investors to let them continue. As the CPN (M) is the most influential political decision maker in Nepal but completely confused about the private investment in education and health sector. Our study basic service delivery (Upreti et al., 2013) demonstrated that the education sector in Nepal is facing serious confusion, contradictions, and setback because of the lack of clear theoretical orientation on whether to keep education and health under public domain or to opt for privatization of these services or public-private partnership.

Similarly, the education system of Nepal was nationalized earlier (Poudyal, 2013) but the nationalization process of the public schools is not yet complete. However, the globalization process challenged the nationalization of education and private sector emerged strongly. But once the CPN (M) opposed privation of education and health sectors based on the ideological orientation, this sector face further confusion and contradiction.

Hence, the basic conceptual issue on 'basic services are the responsibility of the state' (welfare state model) v/s competitive market mechanisms/forces are better means to provide quality basic services (market model) is still in the centre of debate in Nepal. As Nepal is in the process of writing ne constitution through the Constituent Assembly (CA) elected by people, defining roles of state is centre of contention where these issues are in core (earlier the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles of the CA), with huge influence of the CPN (M) included basic services like education, health, water in the Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles. This means the state has to be made responsible for the education but many CA members from different political parties were not in favour state control on basic services.

4. Operational complications

Major operational complications arise in implementing the education services in Nepal are related to the decade long insurgency, the defiance of Institutional School Criteria and Operation Directives-2069' by the private schools consortiums (PABSON and N-PABSON) and politicization of schools by the political parties (teachers and students to be member of the party's sister organizations (teachers Associations and Student Unions of parties) and mal-governance.

Vast majority of the schools were not providing: playground, number of enough toilets, drinking water, library, quality food in hostel, and selling textbooks to be distributed free, etc. Small to medium private schools were not providing these facilities and therefore PABSON and N-PABSON started opposing these provisions of the Directives. Various newspaper articles have frequently published about the

constant feud between the government, the PABSON and the N-PABSON¹ about the school directives (2012)^{2,3,4}. PABSON rejected accepting the points made in the directives and showed no cooperation with the government. The directives were supposed to be initiated by mid April of 2013; however, PABSON's reluctance in abiding by has created problem.

One of the major operation challenges is to address inequity in reaching out to the poorest 20% of the population with a proper and quality education (FHD and RIDA, 2010). Free education till the secondary level as pinpointed by the interim constitution has not yet been visible in terms of its implementation. The SSRPs initiation of free and compulsory education for grades 1-8 has not been yet producing visible achievement. There is still lack of coordination and collaboration between the various stakeholders in addressing these issues. Operationally, most of the initiatives taken by the government in reforming the school sectors are limited to public school reforms. The PABSON regulate private schools in its own way without cooperating much except sharing the curriculum. The education system in Nepal with private and public education has two different problems. Public schools are weak in providing quality education and largely the private schools are not affordable to poor and excluded groups. Our study (Upreti et al., 2013) in Rolpa, Bardiya and Ilam districts reveal that the governments schools are viewed as weak entity with very poor quality of education and services required for children, ranging from resources (classroom, desks etc, toilet facilities) and service (teacher's presence and disciplined). On the other hand, there were structural problems with private schools as they are higher than unaffordable for majority of people (see also Pherali et al 2011).

But addressing this challenge need correcting the politicization of education system, making private education system responsible and improving the governance in education sector. Therefore, various stakeholders are demanding for the restructuring of the education sector.

It is observed that the provisions set to reform the education sector, their implementation are complicated and challenging. These complications discussed in this section are because Nepal lacks a proper state commitment to translated the concepts and policy into practices., problems created by the networks of private schools, the politicization of the education by political leader.

5. Empirical Evidence from survey

A total of 3175 households were surveyed d between September and November 2012 covering three districts: Rolpa, Bardiya and Ilam. Of the 12 modules in the questionnaire, one consisted of questions regarding education. Questions related to whether the child in the household goes to private or public school, their payment of fees, the distance to school in minutes were asked. Though quantitative, some rapport building was done aside to back up with the data.

The findings from the surveyed area show that conflict indeed seized the rights of children to education (Upreti et al., 2013). Many respondents narrated their loss of young children during the conflict and

¹ "N-PABSON to follow government directives" Republica. 2013-03-22. see http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=51930

² "Institutional School Criteria and Operation Directives-2012 to be implemented soon". Edusanjal. 2013-02-20. <http://edusanjal.com/blog/2013/02/institutional-school-criteria-and-operation-directives-2012-to-be-implemented-soon>.

³ EduinfoNepal, March 2013

⁴ Republica, March 22 2013

youths electing themselves to migrate to India or other countries for labour. There is a significant percentage of people migrating from all these districts showing lack of interest in going to school among the youths. Moreover, early marriage (15 years of age) has also shown a dropout rate in the schools. School going children tend to pick their partners while in school, and marry by choice, thus withdrawing from schools. This is another concern that shows government's policy failure regarding age (20 years) set for marriage.

Table 1: Average distance (in minutes) to reach primary school by district

District	Male	Female
Rolpa	32	29
Bardiya	16	16
Ilam	30	29
Total	25	24

Also, there is a huge discrepancy in the access to education within the districts. Schools in the periphery of the headquarters tend to have better facilities such as availability of teachers and quality education since the headquarters tend to acquire facilities of all sorts. Within these districts are the Village Development Committees (VDCs) where access varies based on the geographical topography of these VDCs. Moreover, lack of proper mapping for establishment of schools excludes children from certain communities and areas. The exclusion is mostly related to distance to the school from the homes of children. Our findings show that on average children walk up to 25 minutes to school. Hence, these children seldom attend school when there are problems such as rain or other natural causes.

When compared about the boys' and girls' regularity in attending schools (private or public) in the three different districts, 83.6 percent of boys going to primary school are regular in school as opposed to 82.2 percent of girls.

Table 2 Do you need to pay school fees?

District	Boys (Yes)	Girls (yes)
Rolpa	55.6	49.7
Bardiya	46.9	46.9
Ilam	67.5	67.2
Total	55.7	54.2

Our study (Upreti et al., 2013) shows that more than half of the respondents paid school fees for their boys and/or girls child to attend primary school. In the government schools no fees are required except for examination and school maintenance. Those not paying fees in the public schools are the ones from marginalized social groups or those having scholarships. However, if we tend to see the provisions the Nepal government has implemented for children such as girl child scholarships, the data seeks further research on why certain girls are paying school fees. The issue of budgeting and provisions made for children is a concern here.

Table 3 Who runs the schools?

District	Government		Private		Others	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Rolpa	76.1	78.8	23.9	21.2	0.00	0.00
Bardiya	61.7	71.5	37.7	27.8	0.60	0.70
Ilam	38.5	38.8	61.2	60.9	0.30	0.30
Total	58.8	63.1	40.8	36.6	0.40	0.30

Majority of children of the surveyed households went to schools run by the government. However, it is also evident that in Ilam District most of the children of the households were sent to private schools. Ilam is much developed than the other two districts (as these were severely conflict affected) and much of the education facilities are influenced by Darjeeling, India adjoining to this district. In Ilam, many schools that are private have excellent teachers of Indian/Nepali origin migration from India for teaching purpose.

Empirical evidences collected from the study areas reveal that there is a sense of competition between the private and the public schools in the local level. While the private schools lure parents of children about their SLC passing rate and facilities to build children's future, the public schools seldom care about these issues and are often negligible. People are unaware of the budgets that come to the public schools and are often found quoting "who are we to know? They probably put it in their pockets and they show us a building worth a dime". The interaction between the SMCs and public seems rather low which makes the public generate false and negative impression of the government services.

However, and interestingly, the public school lying in Headquarter of Rolpa district is preferred more over the private schools. Most of the respondents claimed that the school was better than the private school because of its resources such as a science laboratory, better buildings, spacious classes without crowds, clean and multiple toilet facilities, water facilities and a huge playground with various sports and games, which are not available in the same scale in private schools.. Additionally, this public school had competent teachers, strict schedule such as marking a student absent if they left home during lunch time which is a common practice for public schools.. The SLC passing rate for this school in the year 2012 was more than 80 per cent. When inquired the information revealed were such that there is an intense coordination between the SMC, DEO and this school. The school welcomes volunteer who will to train teachers or teach for a while to support it. This successful case indicates that if the coordination between the School Management Committee and the District Education Office is better and facilities are provided, the public schools can do better than the expensive private schools.

In terms of making choices of schools, private or public, parents are lured by the services private schools provide in comparison to public schools (Caddell, 2009). Our study (Upreti et al., 2013) showed that the services such as teaching in English medium, no absenteeism of teachers, regular classes, high passing rate for SLC and proper discipline were what made parents choose private schools over public. These findings are supported by various literatures (see Poudyal, 2013; Standing and Parker, 2011; Caddell, 2005; Shields and Rappleye, 2008; Vaux et al, 2006). In education sector it is becoming a challenge to distinguish between the budget expenditure in the basic service sector and the non-basic service sector (NPC and UNICEF, 2010) because of the projects which lumps these two sectors together.

The National Planning Commission's report on public expenditure tracking study on primary education states regarding the MDG's education goals that it is a challenge to achieve the 100 percent enrollment in primary school by 2015. Also it is stated that there are more than 218,000 primary school aged children who are still deprived of their rights to education. The empirical survey findings (Upreti et al., 2013) revealed that lack of budget is one of the major problems to run schools. A teacher in Rolpa stated 'the scholarships for Dalit children and girl child have supported the marginalized families and girls which is good but there are families of other social groups that are very poor, so poor that they cannot even pay their examination fees.' This shows that the growing demand for free education for all based on the provision of the Interim Constitution does not seem to come in play. The lack of ability to pay children's fees or school's requirements seizes a parent's wish to send his or her child to school, hence, a major reason why many children are still out of school despite the government's free education policy (NPC, 2012).

The recent study of the authors (Upreti et al., 2013) revealed that there were political influences in the education sector especially when it came to hiring of teachers, formation of school management committees and allocation of the financial resources. This finding related to a political economy study conducted by Pherali et al (2011). The political parties tend to have huge influence in the basic service sectors, including education in the survey districts. . Operationally, the recruited teachers are also found to be incompetent in their subjects of teaching especially in English and Science. Moreover, very few show their desire to teach in rural areas. The public schools do not even have science laboratories (which is a must for science study) or such facilities which already lower the quality of education and degrades proper learning. Similarly , our findings (Upreti et al., 2013) showed that there was lack of coordination between the DEO and the schools/SMCs as the DEOs were mostly busy responding to political nature of issues/concerns arise in the district rather than actually putting the policies into practice (also see Pherali et al, 2011 for similar results).

6. Conclusions

Despite the various efforts and relative success in some specific areas, education sector in Nepal is largely facing serious confusion, theoretical contradictions, and political interference and therefore obstructing the effective education service deliver to its people. The state has been unable to clarify its position (whether the education has to keep under the state managed public service or allow education to be full-fledge market driven private service or make it operational public-private partnership). Despite the fact that the multiple stakeholders (private investors, cooperatives, public institutions) involved in education, the educational service delivery are thematically or conceptually in turmoil and facing managerial, political, theoretical and operational difficulties and complications. The major causes of such situation are: the negative effects of the decade long armed conflict, the conceptual confusion at the political level, especially the CPN (M), the largest political party (who was waging decade long civil war with the aim of making health, education and other basic services as public and prevent privatization) who is much influential at present, mal-governance and politicization of the education sector, trade-unionism, academic institutions are used as political platforms by the sister organizations (e.g., students unions and teachers associations) of the main political parties, non-cooperation from consortia of the private schools with the government and the conflict between the private and public school. Hence, improving service delivery in education sector need clear theoretical orientation, non-interference from the political level, improvement in the governance system and effective implementation of the policies into practices.

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