

Secondary Education Perspective Plan (1997-2011): Planned Investment for Quality Education

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Abstract

Quality of Education has drawn public concern in Nepal. However, what constitutes quality education at what cost and how is it measured has been left unexplained. In this context an attempt has been made in this paper to deal with conceptual ground of quality education and its measure with reference to Secondary Education Perspective Plan (SEPP). The perspective plan has focused on quality education and has made plan for planned investment to enhance quality in secondary education. This paper also examines current financial status of secondary education.

Introduction

There are two main objectives of this paper: (i) to deal with the conceptual ground of quality education and its measure with respect to planned investment of Secondary Education Perspective Plan (1997-2011 SEPP) and (ii) to examine current financial status of Secondary Education. "The quality of secondary education has been questioned by the public on the ground of its not being relevant to public needs, efficient in its delivery and optimizing learning outcome for the students. All aspects of secondary education are brought under heavy criticism and a personal concern has been raised as to work out measures to improve its quality" (Orientation Seminar 2000: 5). It also examines the current financial status of secondary education as well as a comparison of different indicators between 1997 and 2001.

Based on these objectives stated above an attempt has been made to define quality education and its measure at the very outset of the paper followed by a brief historical setting of educational development focusing secondary education perspective plan and planned investment for quality education. Subsequently, current status of financial as well as general status of secondary education will also be examined. Finally conclusion will be drawn at the end of the paper.

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Concept of Quality Education

Quality of education has drawn public concern in Nepal. However, what constitutes quality education at what cost and how is it measured has been left unexplained. This has created a lot of confusion among different stakeholder, students, parents, teachers, administrators, researches and policy makers to improve the quality in education. The most common meaning of educational quality as inferred from its usage is related to level of student's achievement on selected portion of national curriculum (Adams and Chapman, 2002). In a narrow sense, quality of education may imply simply the attaining a specified target and objective. More comprehensively, an interpretation of quality may be based on an institution's or program's reputation to which schooling has influenced change in student's knowledge, attitude value and behavior (Adams, 1998).

According to Chapman and Adams (2001:2), "Educational quality apparently may refers to inputs (number of teachers, amount of teacher's training, number of text books), process (amount of direct instructional time, extent of active learning), outputs (test scores, graduation rate) and outcomes (performance in subsequent employment)."

Thus, from the definition given above the essence of quality of education is very precisely and clearly expressed relating to four main variables: input, process, output and outcome, which cover all aspects of education. Positive sign in these variables obviously results quality education.

Measurement of Quality Education

There are different views regarding the measurement of quality of education as:

Some educators have measured educational quality by looking only at the product of the schools or college being considered e.g. percent of graduates from a college but unless inputs are controlled, these types of measures say nothing about how effective the educational experience was or the role of the education in determining the outcome (Solman, 1987).

Other opinions regarding the measurement of quality are the process of education itself. That is if schools do certain things in a certain way to educate students (e.g. small personal classes, good residential living, and effective pedagogy). These are important elements of quality (Trow, 1975, as quoted in Solman p. 1461).

The next view comes from economic theory which takes the approach that an institutional or educational program will produce higher quality when it has greater positive impact on the students who attend or on other recipients of educational benefit, such as society in general (Solman, 1987)

The views expressed by economic theory and Trow has been considered difficult to measure and "Economist in particular, and others have inferred quality difference from differences in more or less objective measures of institutional characteristics which have a price tag attached to them. For example at the elementary and secondary level quality has been measured by school facilities (building, laboratories, or books), teachers' qualifications

(Training and experience) and academic program, salary, class size, social composition of students body or per pupil expenditure which is a summary of most of other cost related measures (Solman, 1985: 1461).

Fuller (1995: 4865) presents three models for improving school quality out of which one model is (i) "Allocating public resources to the most effective mix of schools input, including higher quality teachers more and better instructional material. (ii) Improving Pedagogical Practices and how teachers mobilize materials, either by stronger control of curricular context or by professionalization of the teachers' role and working conditions. (iii) Altering School Management and paths of public accountability in ways which empower local actors and boost teacher effectiveness."

Thus, analyzing different view regarding the measurement of quality, it is easy to infer that quality education seeks greater investment.

Pursuing this concept of quality education, an analysis of quality of Nepalese Secondary Education will be made taking into consideration the 15 Year Perspective Plan, which clearly intends to enhance quality investing on physical facilities, teacher training and instructional materials.

Historical Setting of Educational Development in Nepal

The organized educational development of Nepal begins with the establishment of Durbar School in 1853. The first school in Nepal was, though not for the consumption of ordinary Nepalese people but it was established to imparting education to the ruling Rana families and their courtiers (Shrestha, 2001). Despite exclusive use and restricted access to ordinary people in education, until some years, the light of education could not be prevented and it began to travel and gradually reached to the ordinary Nepalese people along with the passage of time.

Since then, a lot of efforts have been made to develop and modernize Nepalese education system. Several turning points have been experienced such as the establishment of Tri-Chandra College in (1929) and the SLC Board (1934). All round education committee (1961) National education system plan (1971) and declaration of free primary education (1975) were some of the noteworthy events in the history of educational development in Nepal. If we look from historical perspective, Nepalese education system has gained an experience of one and half century; however, the development of education in the latter half of the nineteenth century was quite negligible and latter half of the twentieth century was very rapid (Shrestha, 2001).

After the restoration of democracy in 1990 education sector received renewed government attention with public commitment (Baidya, 1993). National Education Committee was formed in 1991. The committee recommended 15 percent of government budget to be allocated to education sector reform. Accordingly, the newly elected government also allocated 12 percent of government budget in 1991/92 in comparison to 8.8 percent in 1990/91.

In 1997, a 15 year secondary education perspective plan was prepared in order to improve the quality of secondary level. Obviously, this plan was an additional cumulative effort and an historical precedent of educational development which can be taken as one of the turning point in secondary education in Nepal.

Secondary Education Perspective Plan (SEPP, 1997-2011)

The Secondary Education Perspective plan has been prepared by the Secondary Education Development Project under the Ministry of Education with a support from Asian Development Bank (ADB) and British Overseas Development Administration (ODA). It is an indicative strategic plan prepared to address emerging issues and challenges in this sub sector to a period of 15 years (Kafle, 2000). Being strategic document, the perspective plan plays very crucial role in development of secondary education and supposed to have been a policy documents and development directive of quality secondary education.

The main objectives set forth by this plan are as follow.

- i. To enhance the quality of secondary education including the standard of teaching and learning.
- ii. To ensure equity in access to secondary schooling especially the equal participation of girls and children of disadvantaged ethnic group.
- iii. To enhance both internal and external efficiency of secondary education sub-sector.
- iv. To promote the relevance of secondary education to national needs.

To meet the above objectives, the following targets are set by the end of the Plan (2011).

- i. Sixty percent pass rate in SLC exam.
- ii. Eighty percent or more pass rate in grade 8.
- iii. Equal number of boys and girls.
- iv. Gross enrollment ratio (GER) 70 percent in grades 6-8 and 50 percent in grades 9-10.
- v. Eighty percent teachers are fully trained.

Planned Investments for School Quality

Secondary Education Perspective Plan has clearly focused on quality education. It has defined quality education as "Quality of output has been identified in this perspective plan as most likely in the areas of physical facilities, improvement, teacher training, curriculum development and examination reform and district and school management" (SEPP, 1975: C5). Table 1 shows planned investment for quality improvement

Table 1. Various Items during the SEPP Period (1997-2011)

(In million US\$)

Items	Investment during the Ninth Plan	Tenth Plan	Eleventh Plan	Total
No. of New Schools (800)	26.66	26.66	26.66	80
No. of schools rehabilitation (1500)	5	5	5	15
Model-schools (75) including classroom, library, staff rooms, toilets, water, electricity, equipment etc	7.5	7.5	7.5	22.5
Teacher Training (4500) Opt. 1	2.45	2.45	2.45	7.36
Instructional materials and equipments	1	1	1	3
Possible additional govt. commitment (recurrent and capital)	1.08	1.08	1.08	3.26
Total	43.71	43.71	43.71	131.13

Source: *Secondary Education Perspective Plan (1997-2011)*.

Table 1 shows that the planned total investment for quality education is \$131.13 million. It is for physical facilities improvement, model schools, teacher training and instructional materials and equipment. This investment on secondary education is to be made between 1997 and 2011, i.e. in the plan period. Out of total investment, the share of donor on physical facility (construction of new schools) is 60 percent, government 20 percent and community and local government 10 percent each. In rehabilitation package donor will contribute 70 percent and 30 percent by government. The same ratio will be followed for construction of model schools as in the construction of new schools. In case of teacher in service training, instructional materials and equipments donors/government ratio will be 60:40. In each plan period a sum of \$43.71 million is to be invested. Out of total investment the share of community is though 10 percent but a huge sum of \$10.25 million. The share of per year investment for community will be \$0.68 million, which is unlikely to afford by the community since the financial status of Nepalese Community is basically subsistence level and below subsistence level. The same share will also be born by local government as well.

Current Financial Status of Secondary Education

The education sector received 15.6 percent of total government budget in the Fiscal Year 2000/01. Out of which primary education has taken lion's share 55.6 percent and secondary

education only 19.4 percent. This sub sector has not been receiving due emphasis in comparison to primary education. Over the last several year projects were initiated from time to time to bring improvement in primary education but secondary education did not receive the same amount of attention over the years before the decade of the 90s (orientation seminar). On ward to 90 also the same situation continues to prevail. Table 2 shows the financial status of secondary education.

Table 2. A Comparison of Allocated Development Expenditure and Planned Expenditure in Secondary Education (1997/98-2002/03)

Year	Allocated Amount to (SEP) in Rs	In million	
		Planned investment of SEPP	
		In \$	In Rs
1997/98	175.54	8.7	649
1998/99	172.44	8.7	649
1999/00	95.77	8.7	649
2000/01	50.80	8.7	649
2001/02	56.68	8.7	649
2002/03	2.75	8.7	649
Total	553.98	52.2	3894

Sources: Budget Red Book, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003 and SEPP.

Table 2 shows that the actual allocated development expenditure and planned expenditure by SEPP is shown. The total planned investment is divided by 15 to obtain per year planned expenditure since perspective plan has planned equal amount of investment in all three plan-periods—ninth, tenth, and eleventh. The total development expenditure allocated from 1997/98 to 2002/02 is 553.977 whereas planned development expenditure is Rs. 3894 million which is 14.22 percent of the planned investment.

This is absolutely low level of investment. Very low level of investment may have several implications, first, planed investment may be excessively higher and unaffordable by National economy, and second, investment has not been made following the direction given by the plan. The third one is remaining investment will be made (85.8) in remaining years, but it is neither feasible nor desirable. This gap of target and achievements on investment ultimately reflected in the development and quality of secondary education. Analyzing from this angle the conclusion drawn by Wildavesky (1972: 1) is relevant to quote "planning in Nepal has little to do anything that happens in that country. Planned expenditure are not made, planned targets are not met."

Table 3 shows the progress and general status of Secondary Education between 1997 and 2001 (The Ninth Plan Period).

Table 3. General Status of Secondary Education (1997-2001)

Indicators	1997	2001
No of Secondary Schools	1720	3106
Gross Enrollment Ratio	45	58
Percentage of Trained Teacher	39	49
Pass Rate of Grade 8	NA	79.2
Enrollment of Girls	38.2	41.25
Internal Efficiency	NA	57.12
SLC pass percentage	36.52	31.62

Source: School Level Statistics, 1998, 2001, SLC exam statistics 2001.

Table 3 shows a positive sign of first 6 indicators in a given period of 5 years. The number of schools during this period has been increased enormously from 1720 to 3106 nearly doubled. Percentage of trained teacher and gross enrollment ratios have increased by more than 10 percent, pass rate of grade 8 is also good. Enrollments of girls are also increased marginally. Internal efficiency can not be regarded as satisfactory one, and the most striking indicator is SLC pass percentage. Instead of approaching to 60 percent targeted by the plan in 2011 it tends to approach to the 30 percent in 2001.

There may be several factors associated with low success in SLC exam. Low level of financial investment on development expenditure cannot be denied to be a stronger factor among other several factors.

Conclusions

Quality of Education has multi dimensions, inputs, process output and outcome. Educational quality is measured in terms of financial investment except one variable social composition of student's body. Low quality of education is major concerned in Nepal Particularly in Secondary Education. Secondary Education perspective plan has initiated a big push investment plan to enhance quality and overhaul of secondary education, however the level of investment made from last 6 years is quite low than expected or desired. There is wider gap between planned investment and actual investment which eventually hampers quality, growth and development of secondary education.

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