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Case Study

ALTERNATIVE FUNDING PRACTICES OF SAILAJA ACHARYA MEMORIAL POLYTECHNIC, MORANG, NEPAL

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Abstract

This study “Alternative funding practices of Sailaja Acharya Memorial Polytechnic (SAMP) explores the approach in practice in the institution even exploring its sustainability and replicability. In so doing the evidences clearly indicate the challenges with the existing practices in the institutions even though the institution has made reliable strategic interventions to overcome them. There are no valid grounds for applying such alternative financing model for its replication in Nepalese context. For carrying out qualitative research, researcher employed case study research design.

Key words: Technical education; Vocational training; Alternative financing

Introduction

Public finance in education sector has remained the common practice of developing countries since 1950s, where the public investment in education sector has been gradually increasing in the successive decades. According to World Bank estimates, the proportion of GNP devoted to education in developing countries rose on the average from 2.3 percent in 1960 to 4.5 percent in 1984, and the proportion of the national government budget rose from 11.7 percent in 1960 and 16.1 percent in 1984 (Psacharopoulos and Woodhall, 1985). Nepal also experiences the same trend. The share of education budget in 1960s was 6.1 percent of total budget which increased successively in each decade. In Fiscal year (FY) 2011/12, the share of education budget reached to 16.6 percent in total government budget (UNESCO, 2011).

Especially with liberal economic model adopted by the country from late 1980s, many private schools came in existence in Nepal. By 1998, there was a significant growth in the private sector due to the prevailing school liberalization policy (Carney and Bista, 2009). At present the number of technical school provides education to significant number of students. Out of 322 technical schools in the country there are 21 council for technical education and vocational training (CTEVT) constituent technical schools, 42 annex schools and 259 CTEVT affiliated technical institutes (CTEVT, 2013). From financing perspective, these institutional schools and religious are helping government fulfilling the role of providing education to its people. Most of the private institutions are

profit oriented and therefore those institutions hardly receive public funds (Tuladhar, n. d., p. 4).

With low gross national income and not enough private sectors to invest, the government in developing countries cannot entirely finance its education system. So it depends on several other sources. Individuals, parents, NGOs/INGOs, foreign investment, private institutions, local governments and community are some other major sources for investment in education (SMAERC, 2011). Likewise, the government can adopt different approaches to lessen the financial burden of state.

Statement of the Problem

During the period of the excessive dependency on foreign aid (Acharya and Koirala, 2011), SAMP - the study came up having a distinct philosophy. It aims to charge 75% of attendees and support 25% marginalized group pupil all studying together in the institution. The institution (Sailaja acharya memorial polytechnic[SAMP], 2012) claims it to be a co-educational non-profit institution practicing “A Center of Excellence in Technical Education and Vocational Training (TEVT).” SAMP provides technical education and vocational training to marginalized pupil even ensuring higher education to the supported ones. The ambition looks very good but whether the practices are financially feasible and sustaining remains a central concern for us. Getting into the practices, if the model is replicable why not to propagate the practice, this concern guided us to this case. The study intends to explore the financing practice in the school and see the prospects of duplication of the model to other part of the country.

The educational policy of Nepal has focused very little about the alternative financing practices such as SAMP has adopted. Some other alternative funding models were and are in practice such as, benevolent individual furnish the resources for school; Gurukul education; education in Goomba and Madarsha. Sparsely I/NGOs and or missionaries, some cooperatives/community groups (eg. Forest users groups) are also reported to supplement school costs in some community.

Research Questions

1. How does Sailaja Acharya Memorial Polytechnic practice financing model?
2. How does the model enable to contribute the alternative financing in Nepalese technical school?

Delimitation

Firstly, the study is a case; by nature of the study the findings are not independently valid to all contexts. Though caution has been taken to get genuine information, the sources of evidences are based upon the responses and visits made by different researcher over a month. The study may contrast to extent with the position developed by longitudinal study over time. Secondly, the study covers the general philosophy of SAMP instead of studying core financial report of it.

Methodology

Case Study Design Rationale

The case study as Yin (2003) and Flyvbjerg (2006) believes fall under constructivist paradigm. Researching on the one of the alternative financing model practiced in public technical school fits here as it focus to answer process questions (Yin, 2003). Taking reference of different researchers Cohen *et al.* (2000) evaluates high flexibility to get to the issue through case study. A case study is a specific instance that is frequently designed to study a more general principle and practices (Nisbet and Watt, as cited in Qi, 2009), it is 'the study of an instance in action' (Adelman *et al.* as cited in Qi, 2009). The single instance is of a bounded system, for example a child, a clique, a class, a school, a community. It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories.

The strength of qualitative case studies lies on researcher as key instrument and multiple sources of information along with several others characteristics. Qualitative researches especially the case study research design may shift tool and even focus to the problem as study undergoes to the issue. "The research process for qualitative researchers is emergent" (Creswell, 2008). The issue of seeking alternative finance model practice and replication possibilities can be best explored with more flexible research methods. This builds a ground for selection of case

study approach for the study. As no logical subunits can be defined in this study, SAMP remains the single unit of study. "The holistic design is advantageous when no logical subunits can be identified or when relevant theory underlying the case study is itself of a holistic in nature" (Yin, 2003).

Sources of Evidences, Tool and Respondents

A pre-study by the researcher to the study unit helped to define the informant for the researcher. The three sources of evidences (Yin, 2003) were predetermined in the first visit; interview, observation and documents on and of school were the major information source to get to the research question. The respondents included different category; parents, SMC members, teacher, administrator, students and government officials who were interviewed guided by the themes. The field notes during the visit stood the second information and the details (in document) provided were also used in the study.

Case Presentation and Analysis

The study started with the consent from the institution to carry the study and provide the required details of the institution. A pre-visit/courtesy call to the school administrator had been successful drafting the visit plan to meet different stakeholders of the institution. The institution stood cooperative and facilitated the researcher during the entire process of research. The following days were utilized to collect the evidences on the study. This chapter has been organized into two themes based on the research questions.

Financing Practice at SAMP

First of the all the research team observed a classroom and conducted focus group interview among the students in the class. Researcher chose diploma in agriculture second year believing that they would know something about the scholarship provision and fee paid in the class. While observing the class most of the students enjoyed learning in SAMP because they did not have any pressures of learning activities. They appreciated the school facilities such as active board and excursions they had. Most of the time students liked to discuss on the pedagogical approaches in the class to the students. They shared their experiences that SAMP was different than other school because of different facilitates they had in the classroom and school. However, the research team intended to shift from pedagogical approaches to the financing. Few themes such as scholarship provision of technical school and fee paying scheme were given to students for the discussion. None of the students knew how many of them got scholarship and how much did they pay for partial subsidize fee. Then few of them knew that their parents paid fee in the SAMP. They were not sure how much their parents paid as fee in the school.

Having a mini discussion with the students the research team came to know that either student were hesitated to tell that they got scholarship or they did not know about paying

fee in the school. Researcher had discussed in the corridor of the school and shared that school may not have informed to students either they paid fee or not. Later on it was justified from the interview of the administration representative of school.

Later the researchers had a discussion to the finance officer of the school. He clarified more about the purpose and philosophy of school that was guided by the charity purpose rather than profit making. He insisted on that it was Non-profit government polytechnic. He further shared that SAMP was established by the capital investment of philanthropic and democratic leader Sailaja Acharya . He said that school was established from an individual Nepalese social leader Sailaja Acharya who invested at first and they are going to make sustainable it by increasing the number of students per class. The main resources of the school finance are the fee of the students and partly support by council for technical education and vocational training and they were carrying its philosophy to teach deprived students as a charity (CTEVT, 2013).

At present around 25 percent of budget has been spending on the scholarship as a charity. They offered scholarship mostly from the fostering home after the judgment of the scholarship committee of school. This scheme of scholarship is closer to the eclectically approach of financing as Psacharopoulos and Woodhall (1985) said. Such practices were practiced in Africa as Akpotu *et al.* (2007) said “government inability to help families to prevent or ban child labour and enforce compulsory basic education, the economic viability of the child to the Nigerian family has been enormous, particularly to the poorer families. Based on the similar premises SAMP chose students for scholarship from four different foster houses. “However, there are lots of challenges to carry on the school’s philosophy”, said school administrator. In this line it is understood that they faced many challenges to maintain the quality education and offering the charity as scholarship to students. Most of the technical and vocational schools in Nepal are guided by liberalization policy (Carney & Bista, 2009). However SAMP tried to maintain the non-profit distribution policy. They did not share the information of scholarship to student for breaking the superiority and inferiority.

First of all they tried to be less dependent in donors and it was not possible very soon because they started a construction of the building and improve the capacity of the SAMP. He shared that it was difficult to increase the fee of the students. So they have a plan to increase the number of paying children in the school to sustain for a long time within their philosophy.

In so doing they have been supported by the government bodies. At the same time he believed that SAMP contributes to the national economy to by creating employment opportunities for people. Form the conversation, it is reflected that there are few challenges on offering

scholarships for students. Parents also believed that SAMP approach was a special technical school non-profit education center focusing on quality education (emphasis to teacher’s quality, opportunity), generating skilled knowledge oriented students and citizens. At the same time it supported to underprivileged children.

Replication Possibilities of the Model

This kind of model has been practiced very less in the technical school financing for two reasons. The government official in an interview shared his opinion: “This kind of financing model cannot contribute to reduce the burden of the government expenditure because these technical schools are running with the parents financing. Ultimately financial burden lies to the parents”. He further said that this alternative model will not fit in the Nepalese context because all most all technical schools are profit making organization. This reveals that such alternative financing are not sustainable and replicable because it hardly contributes for decreasing the financial burden of the government.

The voice of state through the official seems very indifferent in such alternative financial approaches as SAMP adopted. The government official asserted that government can have ability to manage it financing system instead of focusing alternative approach. However, very few technical schools have practiced alternative models. In the same line teacher participant opined, “Most of the technical schools philosophy is to earn instead to serve whereas SAMP started to serve as a result it has been recognized as a different school”.

While exploring the replication possibilities of such model technical school administration focused it is the government’s initiation that helps to set up such practices in other technical schools too. But government has not been supporting enough for such activities as government official said. In this case, SAMP has not started to think to establish other technical schools in the same pattern.

In such lines government of Nepal has adopted various approaches to school financing through it plans and policies. Basically the major educational plan, SSRP envisaged alternative financing with the collaboration approach. Examples from expansion and enhancement of quality of ECED, SSRP (2009) envisions mobilizing local government and other local groups such as mothers’ groups, youth organizations, user groups, micro-credit groups as support of different government agencies and nongovernment organizations (Ministry of Education , 2009). However, any policies hardly focused on the engagement of the private sector in managing the alternative financing model as SAMP did.

Insights and Conclusion

This case study with limited scope on the alternative financing on technical school education might address the question how long does Nepalese education system depends

on the foreign aid. Employing case study research design, the study in no way predicts a sustainable approach on financing education by the state alone. This is because on one hand the government is not ready to accept the alternative financing model and in the other hand, it seems that very few schools are ready to bear the share government accountability including the financial share of the state on school education.

Ensuring free and compulsory education in constitution of Nepal may not be sufficient to educate all the children in Nepal. At the same time it is very important to develop some alternative approach of school financing to bring all children in school. Despite of the countless efforts of the government to increase the alternative financing model creating the base for programmes and projects provisions (such as Ninth Plan, Tenth Plans, SSRP), the mindset of growing alternative financial approach in school education has not materialized to the level. In such situation, the SAMP has been facing many challenges to sustain school in the one hand. On the other hand government hardly encourages such alternative financing model in education. Regarding the replication of such alternative financial model, it seems difficult to our contexts. Though insignificant SAMP attempted to mitigate the social stratification in the technical school, it appears as the major problem to get the high fee paying students in area of Nepal. Similarly, it arises another question how fairly the technical school distributes the scholarship to its students. When government insisted to grow such alternative financing model it is equally important to monitor and evaluate the scholarship distribution pattern of school. While failing to monitor and evaluation its regular programmes, it is worthless to assume from the government that they would monitor and evaluate such alternative financing models.

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