

Madhesh Province's Examination System of Nepal: Problems and Difficulties

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Abstract

The main difficulties and problems with the examination system in Nepal's Madhesh Province are attempted to be brought up in this article. The entire educational system, including the curriculum, lecturers, instructional materials, and methodology, is intimately related to the examination system. The paper makes a strong case that the dualistic educational system, exclusion of local cultures, languages, and knowledge from the curriculum, pedagogy, and exams, lack of enough trained and qualified teachers, use of transmission-oriented pedagogy, and holding only three-hour paper-pencil tests to gauge students' intelligence once a year are the main obstacles to quality education in Madhesh Province, Nepal. Lack of access to high-quality education results in an undereducated workforce, increased rates of unemployment and poverty, war and violence, and perpetuation of prejudice, injustice, and inequality in Nepal's larger Madhesh Province society. This article aims to explore the problems and difficulties surrounding the examination system in the province, highlighting the socio-economic, infrastructural, and administrative barriers that hinder the system's success.

Keywords: Madhesh Province, Examination, System, students, Equality, Education

Introduction

School examinations can vary widely in format and purpose depending on the education system, level of study, and country. Young men and women with less formal education are typically produced by the educational system of Nepal's Madhesh Region. They frequently lack the information and abilities necessary for their future career. Several young people in the Madhesh Region of Nepal struggle

to find employment even after completing higher education. Many of them have been prompted by this circumstance to apply for menial or semi-skilled jobs abroad, primarily in India, the Arab world, and Korea (Mathema, 2007). On the one hand, there is a rise in the unemployment rate among college grads, but the bulk of these recent grads are not employed in the agriculture and commercial sectors. Their employment in these occupations is discouraged even by the traditional Madhesh Province Nepali community. It has caused parents' concern and dissatisfaction with sending their kids to school and supporting them in their education because the educational system in Madhesh Province, Nepal, has been creating a sizable number of unskilled and unemployed individuals. That has helped them take an inactive role in the school. According to Riley & Khamis (2005), school is not always an ongoing activity for many students. Instead, it is a disjointed process. One of the primary learning obstacles preventing many students from benefiting from school is the lack of pertinent curricula and instructional resources.

The crucial components of education are frequently left out of the assessment systems in many nations. Instead, pupils' perceptions of passing the exams are limited (Berkvens et al., 2014). In this instance, the Madhesh Province of Nepal is not an exception. The Madhesh Province of Nepal's examination system favors memorization and repetition above pupils' creative learning methods. The material in the textbooks must be memorized by the students. The danger of having to memorize all of the lessons learned in class increases anxiety in learning when the exam date is revealed and pupils are given very little time for preparation. They will perform poorly on the exams if they don't completely memorize the lessons that were taught in the classroom. In this way, the exam neither aids in student learning nor aids in teacher improvement (The Master Plan Team, 1997). Increased dropout and repetition rates among students in schools result from pupils failing exams because they did not retain all of the material that was presented to them. According to UNESCO (2011b), greater dropout rates are closely related to the inefficiency of education spending. According to Breidlid (2013), if a child repeats a class throughout their academic career because they don't fully grasp the material, the parents will bear the financial burden.

System of Dualistic Education

The system of dualistic education, also known as the dual system of education, refers to an educational approach that combines classroom-based instruction with practical, on-the-job training. This model is commonly associated with vocational education and training (VET) programs, particularly in countries like Germany, Switzerland, and Austria. The dualistic education system effectively prepares

students for the workforce by combining academic learning with practical experience. While it requires significant coordination and investment, its benefits in terms of job readiness and industry alignment make it a valuable model for vocational education and training.

Access to and completion of basic education are the key issues facing the Madhesh Region of Nepal. Around 5% of both boys and girls are still not in school (UNESCO, 2011a). In terms of location, caste, class, ethnicity, and religion, the boys and girls who are not in school are primarily from oppressed and underprivileged communities (CDC, 2007). Many of the first-graders who are enrolled continue to miss school, drop out, retake exams, and flunk them. As a result, they drop out of elementary school. Less than 10 out of every 100 boys and girls are in the higher education age group.

The students who are members of Dalit and other oppressed ethnic groups have the least access to higher education (UNESCO, 2011a). Economic disparity and social injustice have been encouraged by the current dualistic educational system in Nepal's Madhesh Region. According to Mahat (2005), the bulk of private schools were founded for commercial purposes. They are unplanned and urban regions are seeing a significant growth in them. On the one hand, public schools offer a subpar education, and on the other, private schools charge exorbitant tuition. According to Mahat, inequities and disparities in terms of geography and class have been brought about by the current dualistic educational system. Children from isolated and rural locations, for instance, do not have access to private schools due to geography. Similar to this, children from low-income families and communities—regardless of caste or location—do not have access to these schools. Hence, students from wealthy, educated, and urban parts of Nepal have more opportunities thanks to superior education than students from underprivileged, illiterate, and rural areas (Mahat, 2005). Private English schools in Nepal are primarily located in urban areas that cater to somewhat affluent families (Mathema, 2007). Private English-medium schools only accept kids from certain socioeconomic backgrounds and urban areas, thus children from wealthy families attend these schools. It's interesting to note that those who create legislation, author textbooks, or discuss educational inclusion send their kids to private, English-language schools (Poudel, 2007). In addition, a lot of Nepali educators who work in public institutions enrol their kids in private institutions. The primary reason given by parents for enrolling their children in English-medium private schools is also related to the fact that these institutions have an SLC pass rate that is around twice as high as that of public institutions. The majority of ethnic and Dalit groups, on the other hand, do not enrol their children in

private English-medium schools because they are unable to pay the high tuition. Thus, their kids are unable to attend these schools (Bhandari, 2016). According to Mathema (2007), Nepal's urban areas are seeing an increase in the number of private schools as a result of the public schools' subpar performance. He continues by saying that a lot of Nepalese teachers who work in public schools don't finish their coursework on time. As a result, children from underprivileged neighborhoods who attend public schools face discrimination to succeed in their studies. Furthermore, middle-class parents choose to send their sons to private English-medium schools while sending their daughters to public institutions. As a result, pupils from low-income families, particularly girls, have greater learning challenges. Language, Culture and Knowledge

The Nepali examination system is heavily influenced by the Western idea that "one size fits all." The questions on the school tests are the same for all students, regardless of their varied cultural and language backgrounds. Moreover, local cultures, languages, and expertise are ignored in the curriculum and policy of topics like physics, English, and mathematics in favor of western viewpoints. These subjects are taught in a decontextualized classroom setting, where students also learn them. As a result, students not only struggle to study these courses but also frequently perform poorly on exams. According to UNESCO (2015) and King & Schielman (2004), it is crucial to include both local and Western assessments when measuring learning equity. In order to empower pupils in their learning achievement, the examinations used in Nepalese schools must integrate both local and standardized/Western methodologies.

Minority and indigenous students' successful use of cultures, languages, and knowledge through the mother tongue medium of instruction in the classrooms is insufficient to empower them in their academic achievement if the language of the exams differs from their mother tongue. Students frequently do poorly or fail exams as a result of linguistic problems (Bredlid, 2013). Because all students beginning in grade one are required to take exams solely in Nepali, Nepalese schools perpetuate inequality and injustice. Only pupils who speak Nepali would benefit from it because they can comprehend questions presented in that language. Yet, because they are unable to grasp Nepali, the language used for exams, minority and native pupils are oppressed. For instance, the Rajbansi, Santhali, Tharu, and Uranw languages are not being taught in textbooks or by certified teachers, hence the exams are being given in Nepali. As a result of their difficulties with reading, writing, and taking exams in Nepali, students from the Rajbansi, Santhali, Tharu, and Uranw language communities are under pressure to perform well on tests (Bhandari, 2015). Additionally, it shows that the government of Nepal's policy on

language-in-education for mother tongue-based multilingual education is not being effectively implemented in the classroom when exams are not given in the native tongues of minority and indigenous pupils. Children from ethnic groups are less likely to learn if they are taught in a language they do not understand (UNESCO, 2014). The availability of textbooks in Nepali and the use of this language as the medium of instruction hinder the development of fundamental abilities among students from underrepresented groups (Mathema, 2007). Education does not incorporate ethnic group culture. Children from ethnic groups are thus compelled to absorb mainstream school culture, which is distinct from their culture at home and in their community. Furthermore, traditional Hindu standards and beliefs are prevalent in many schools. It makes ethnic kids less interested in learning. Implementing an irrelevant curriculum discourages students from pursuing further education (Acharya, 2007). Due to the Nepali language being used in the classroom that they do not comprehend, many children from ethnic communities tend to quit school in the first grade. It increases the likelihood of failure and repeats among non-Nepali-speaking youngsters (Acharya, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009). Students' poor performance is not caused by cognitive issues, but rather by a lack of understanding of the classroom's chosen medium of instruction (Alidou, 2009).

In sufficient trained and qualified instructors are needed in the schools throughout Nepal. Acharya further claims that the majority of the teachers in the schools are members of the high-caste Hindu society who speak Nepali. They are all monolingual educators (Acharya, 2007). This indicates that there are not enough instructors from ethnic and Dalit populations. There aren't many teachers from these communities who have the necessary academic credentials and training. Students of color and Dalits are oppressed in the classroom. Poudel (2007) asserts that non-Dalit teachers hardly ever motivate Dalit students to engage actively in their education and improve their academic performance.

The transmission model of pedagogy is widely practised in Nepalese schools from the school level to the university level. Adopting this pedagogy by the teacher, s/he becomes an active, controller and transmits his/her knowledge to the students who are passive, controlled and receivers of knowledge through carefully listening of the teacher's voice, repetition and memorization of the lessons taught in the class room. Foucault (1977) & Freire (1996) claim that the exam enables the teacher to transmitting his/her knowledge to the students. Moreover, the exam is conducted to make the teacher's knowledge valid and authentic. Therefore, pedagogy based on the transmission model oppresses all students including ethnic and Dalit students and girls in learning achievement. Without taking into account the curriculum

objectives and learning outcomes, Nepalese teachers who lack training and qualifications design the exam questions (The Master Plan Team, 1997). Particularly in rural and distant places, many Nepali teachers still lack the necessary academic credentials. Additionally, they lack adequate instruction on how to write questions that will be used in exams and how to evaluate students' answers. In such a setting, administering exams does not support pupils' academic success. When formal assessments are handled poorly, the relationship between teachers and students is destroyed, claim Pollard et al. (2002). It makes the children feel vulnerable and threatens their ability to study. As a result, the flawed assessment tools employed in the exams in Nepalese schools hinder student learning. According to Khaniya (2005:43), when the examination procedure is beneficial and relevant, it fosters effective learning. By making the exam more approachable than intimidating, it lowers anxieties and student apprehension. There is a gender disparity in the classroom. Due to poverty and the prevalence of Hindu-based patriarchal ideology both in the community and at school, a large number of Nepali girls enrolled in grade one continue to be absent, drop out, repeat, and fail (Acharya, 2007). As a result, the girls' main completion rate is incredibly unsatisfactory. The inferior exam performance of Nepalese girls is due to several other factors. The primary causes include things like the absence of a gender-neutral learning environment in the classroom, the lack of sufficient study time at home, the inconsistency between classroom pedagogy and girls' learning styles, the insufficient number of female teachers, and the infrequent representation of women in management and administrations (Acharya, 2007). The SLC exam results for girls are less impressive than for boys.

The primary causes of the girls' poor performance and even under achievement in the examinations are strongly linked to their attendance at school and home. The teachers at the school treat the girls badly and provide them little feedback and focus on their academic progress. They must work or assist parents with household duties at home, which limits their study time (Mathema, 2007). Students who must work full-time in addition to their studies are more likely to experience low academic performance (UNESCO, 2015). In Nepalese schools, exam syllabuses are taught in place of lesson plans. From the standpoint of exams, teachers instruct and students absorb information. The subjects that do not present on the exams pique their attention less in conversation and education. In this environment, exams don't help teachers become better teachers or advance student learning (Khaniya, 2005). Teachers frequently believe that their main goal in instructing pupils is to ensure that they pass the exam, thus they overlook to teach them crucial lessons (The

Master Plan Team, 1997:326). Moreover, teaching and learning are not promoted when exam results are exclusively used to determine pass or fail (Khaniya, 2005). Students cannot gain fundamental abilities if the teaching and learning process is solely focused on exam preparation. It encourages kids to learn by memorization and repetition while ignoring the need for them to cultivate creativity throughout their lives. It discourages the type of education that children, notably girls and pupils from Dalit and ethnic minority groups, need for their future. Instead, it helps individuals to perform poorly academically in their exams.

Materials and Methods

Some published article related to Madhesh, Different newspaper, Social media were used as secondary data.

Study area: The Madhesh area in the below figure has clearly shown. Which is the study site of this article. Districts of Madhesh Province are Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusa, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa. **Figure 1** from <https://www.freepik.com>.



Figure1: Map of Nepal indicating the Madhesh(<https://www.freepik.com>)

Different Approach (Methods) of study

- Socio-Economic Disparities
- Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources
- Language Barrier
- Pressure and Mental Stress on Students
- Corruption and Examination Malpractice
- Ineffective Evaluation and Feedback
- Administrative and Logistical Issues
- Paper Pencil-based Tests

Results and discussion

Socio-Economic Disparities

Madhesh Province has a predominantly rural population, with many communities living in economically disadvantaged conditions. One of the major challenges that students face in the examination system is the lack of financial resources. Education-related

costs, such as school fees, exam registration fees, and the purchase of study materials, are often beyond the reach of many families in the region. This economic burden not only affects students' ability to prepare adequately for exams but also prevents many from sitting for them altogether (Mishra & Mishra,2024).

Additionally, the poverty prevalent in the province forces many students to abandon their studies early and enter the workforce to support their families. This cycle of poverty impacts the quality of education, leading to lower academic performance and creating a significant gap in educational outcomes between students from wealthier and poorer backgrounds.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Resources

Many schools in Madhesh Province lack essential infrastructure and resources that are necessary for an effective examination process. Basic facilities like well-equipped classrooms, libraries, and clean drinking water are often missing in rural schools. This lack of infrastructure impacts students' daily learning experiences and contributes to subpar academic performance, which is further reflected in examination results.

Furthermore, exam centers in remote areas often suffer from a lack of proper facilities and supervision. Inadequate seating arrangements, insufficient lighting, and lack of security measures during exams can lead to a chaotic and unfair examination environment, undermining the credibility of the system(Shrestha, 2023).

Language Barrier

Madhesh Province is home to a large number of ethnic communities, many of whom speak regional languages like Maithili, Bhojpuri, and Tharu, among others. However, the primary language of instruction in most schools is Nepali, and examinations are conducted in Nepali. This language barrier creates significant challenges for students who are more comfortable with their native languages.

As a result, many students find it difficult to fully comprehend the exam questions, let alone express their thoughts and ideas effectively in writing. This language divide negatively impacts the performance of students, particularly in the public examinations that determine their future academic and career paths(Mishra & Mishra, 2024).

Pressure and Mental Stress on Students

The examination system in Madhesh Province, much like the rest of Nepal, places immense pressure on students. In the competitive environment, where academic success is often equated with a secure future, students face the burden of high expectations from parents and society. This pressure leads to heightened stress levels, which can negatively affect students' mental health and academic performance(Dhakal, 2016).

The focus on rote memorization, rather than fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills, further intensifies this pressure. Many students prioritize cramming over

understanding the subject matter, which results in shallow learning and poor retention of knowledge. The intense exam-related stress also contributes to rising cases of anxiety, depression, and even suicide among students in the province.

Corruption and Examination Malpractice

Examination malpractice is a significant issue in Madhesh Province, as in other parts of Nepal. The prevalence of cheating during examinations, often facilitated by corrupt officials, teachers, and even students, undermines the integrity of the system. In some cases, answer sheets are leaked, and bribes are exchanged to secure higher marks.

Such malpractice not only affects the credibility of the examination system but also erodes the principle of meritocracy, where academic success should be based on individual ability and effort. This perpetuates a culture of dishonesty and unfair advantage, leading to unequal educational opportunities and outcomes for students (Chaudhari,2016).

Ineffective Evaluation and Feedback

The evaluation system used in Madhesh Province largely focuses on written exams, which can be an inadequate measure of a student's overall abilities. The reliance on rote learning and memorization means that students are often evaluated based on their ability to recall information, rather than demonstrating understanding or analytical thinking.

Moreover, the feedback provided to students is often minimal and unhelpful. In many cases, students do not receive detailed feedback on their performance, making it difficult for them to identify areas of improvement. Without constructive feedback, students are unable to learn from their mistakes and are often left unprepared for future challenges (Hangen, et.al., 2013).

Administrative and Logistical Issues

The examination process in Madhesh Province is also marred by administrative inefficiencies and logistical challenges. From delayed admit cards and errors in result publication to problems in coordinating exam schedules, the administrative hurdles contribute to an overall chaotic examination experience. These issues cause frustration among students, teachers, and parents, undermining trust in the examination system.

Additionally, poor coordination between local education offices, examination boards, and schools leads to confusion and delays in the management of exams. This lack of synchronization hampers the smooth conduct of examinations, further complicating an already fragile system (Mathema, 2011).

PaperPencil-based Tests

The conventional examination is another name for the paper and pencil exam. In Nepal, it rules from elementary school to university. It only evaluates pupils' cognitive abilities. Thus, it is insufficient for evaluating pupils' overall

growth (The Master Plan Team, 1997). The three-hour paper-and-pencil exams don't assess factors that have helped learners develop physically, socially, intellectually, or emotionally (Khaniya, 2005:67). The paper-pencil test only assesses the most superficial learning, but it does not assess valuable educational outcomes or the overall nature of learning (Ebel & Frisbie, 2009). Even in the selection of teachers and other government positions in Nepal, paper and pencil tests are prioritized over the experiences, contributions, and practical skills and knowledge of applicants in the field. The numerous intelligences of kids are not measured by the paper-pencil exams given in Nepali schools. A student who performs better in one topic or area might not be similarly competent in another subject or area, for instance. In a similar vein, a student who performs poorly in one subject or area may not necessarily perform poorly in another. Also, not all pupils may be equally adept in the practical course as they may be in the academic course. While some students may perform better in the practical course, others may perform worse in the theoretical course. The Nepali examination system places a greater emphasis on learning's academic components and pays less attention to its practical components. Even the exams are administered without taking into account the requirements of students and society (Bhandari, 2016). Students are categorized and assigned ranks based on their exam results. Each student learns his or her rank and individuality during the examination (Foucault, 1977). When exam results are merely utilized to categorize and choose pupils, teaching and learning are not improved (Khaniya, 2005).

Conclusion

Throughout its history, Madhesh Province Nepal has experienced a rising rate of unemployment and poverty, war and violence, injustice, inequality, and prejudice. Universal enrollment in and completion of basic education constitute Madhesh Province Nepal's biggest educational challenge. The dualistic educational system, which has exorbitant tuition for private schools and a subpar education in public institutions, presents another difficulty. Likewise, Madhesh Province Nepal's examination system is heavily influenced by the Western idea that "one size fits all." At the school exams, all kids from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are given the same questions while having their local cultures, languages, and knowledge disregarded. It makes it more likely for kids to fail, repeat failures, and quit out. However, rather than encouraging pupils to be creative in their study, the examination system rewards memorization and repetition. In Madhesh Province Nepali schools, there is a dearth of trained and qualified educators. Even in the

teaching profession, there is a very long way to go before the representation of ethnic and Dalit communities and women is satisfactory. The available instructors, ranging from elementary school teachers to professors, employ the transmission model of pedagogy in the classroom and administer three-hour paper-pencil exams once a year. Both the school and community cannot develop sustainably under the current assessment system, nor can pupils improve their academic performance. As a result, Madhesh Province of Nepal urgently needs to provide quality education by reforming the entire educational system in order to increase the employment of qualified and skilled workers, lower the unemployment and poverty rates, and foster the sustainable and peaceful growth of the school system, society, and entire Madhesh Province of country. The success of these reforms will depend on the collective efforts of the government, educational institutions, teachers, and the local community. Through these efforts, Madhesh Province can build a stronger, more inclusive educational system that benefits all students and contributes to the province's long-term development.

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Recommendation

We have recommended that such type of works will be done by taking the questionnaire form and taking the data at different school and college of different district of the Madhesh province in future. Which provide the better result with evidence.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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