

Landholding Size and Educational and Occupational Status in Two Villages of Dang

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Abstract

The landholding size has colossal impact on level of educational attainment and types of occupation in the villages under study where major sources of household income is from agriculture. Truly speaking, those who have large land holding size have accomplished higher education and have got better jobs outside agriculture. But many landless and near landless people are apparently illiterate. The children of these people either never go to school or drop out when they become older enough to help their parents in agricultural activities. People cannot afford to send their children to school as children either have to look after younger siblings or have to graze animals when parents are busy working in the field. The members of households in landless and near-landless category either have to work in the land or have to work as wage laborer. As they are illiterate they cannot get white-collar jobs. This article presents a relation between landholding size, and level of education and the situation of employment. These characteristics have depicted a scenario which tantamount to the manifestation of structures of agricultural economy. It is an attempt to analyze how agrarian relation has impacted the educational and occupational structure of every household. The article aims at revealing economic condition in association with education and occupation among the cultivators who are divorced from the means of production. An effort has been made to seek poverty in educational and occupational structure.

Key words: Landholding size, educational status, occupational status, political economy, structuralism, postmodernism, literacy.

1. Introduction

"In the midst of plethoric plenty, the people perish. So wrote Carlyle..." (Lipton, 1989, p. 44).

In most of the Least Developed Countries unequal distribution of landownership is most important determining factor for prevailing unequal distribution of wealth and income in rural areas (Todaro, 1988). The landowners have leisure to pursue their studies or take up white-collar jobs. They can afford to be absent from farming activities as they have land to rent out and have more than one source of income. However, the peasants are not in such position. To remain absent from farming activities is to remain hungry for those who do not own land.

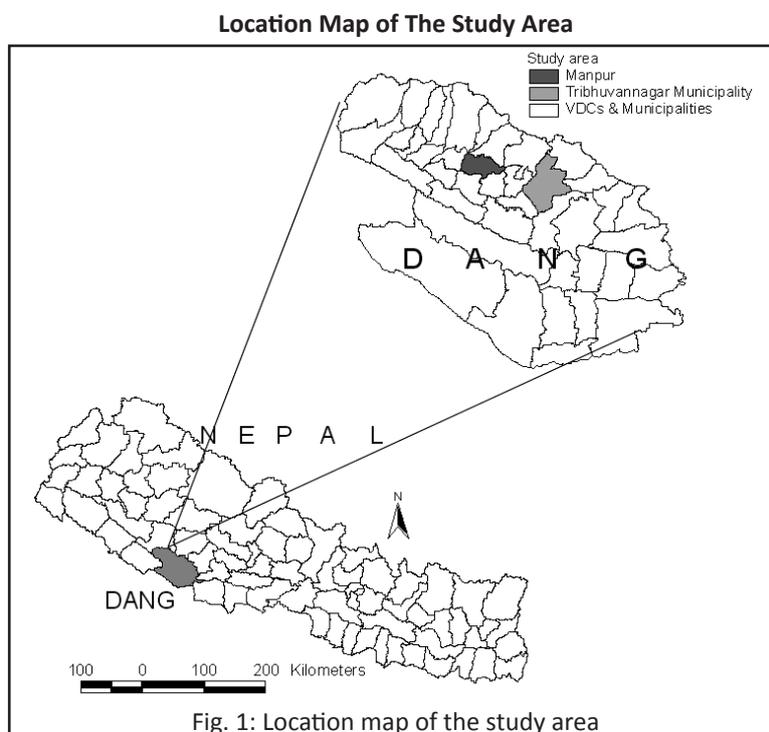
2. Objective

The objective of this article is to reveal the impact of landholding size on educational and occupational status of the people.

3. Methodology

The socioeconomic condition of people is analyzed from political economy/structuralist approach. In empiricists' point of view the socioeconomic position is just what it appears and what can be observed on the surface. The statistical data and their presentations in percents, averages and several other computations unveil merely the façade of the existing situation. Political economy/structuralism approach, however, helps to peep behind the frontage and evaluate the reality. So this approach emphasizes the discussion of pertinent issues like the politics of land and agrarian relations or ownership of means of production within political economy framework. Nevertheless, some people question the universal application of modern theories like political economy and structuralism among others. But the causes of poverty are universal and alienation from means of production lies behind the fascia of social set up.

The article builds on the information collected from field survey. The information on landholding size, educational status and occupational status was gathered from the field. A questionnaire was administered and interview was carried out with the household heads of two villages of Dang namely Baghausi and Ghanibagiya. Before administering the questionnaire a list of all the households in the villages (92 households in Baghausi and 37 households in Ghanibagiya) was prepared and then all the households were surveyed. The reconnaissance of information is helpful to show the relationship between landownership and education attainment and occupational status.



4. Educational Status vis-à-vis Landholding Category

Educational status also forms an important indicator to show the socio-economic condition of a household or an individual. The rich are much ahead in acquiring education and so are able to grab white collar jobs in towns and cities. It needs no emphasis that those who hold means of production have better access to higher education. The poor are not able to afford even school level education because of dearth and destitution. Therefore, it is not any exaggeration that poverty is conspicuously evident in low level or absence of education. Meier (1989) is quite vocal about the association of poverty and poor educational status. He writes that the children from the poor families remain far removed from the classroom, they have to work continuously, have to endure long days on farms. There are many children from poor families who never enroll in the school. In case they are admitted they cannot continue their education. About 60 percent of the children from poverty stricken households do not complete more than three years of primary education.

Poor education is, therefore, a manifestation of poverty in deep structure. Poor educational status is sufficient evidence of poverty. Poverty had crept in the areas under study long back and remained there. So education could not make its headway in those places and families.

Table 1
Baghausi: Distribution of Population by Landholding Size and Educational Status

Landholders' Category (in hectare)	Educational Status							Total
	School Going	Under SLC	SLC**	Inter-mediate	B.A. and above	Literate	None*	
Landless (0-0.17)	29	1	1	0	0	3	177	211
Near-landless (0.18-0.5)	20	5	0	1	1	1	54	82
Subsistence (0.53-1.0)	8	5	7	3	5	7	3	38
Small (1.03-3.0)	24	13	28	20	26	8	25	144
Medium (3.03-5.0)	8	9	5	8	11	0	11	52
Large (5.03-7.0)	2	0	0	2	1	0	2	7
Total	91	33	41	34	44	19	272	534
Percent	17.0	6.2	7.7	6.4	8.2	3.6	50.9	100

* None includes all those who have never been to school (including under-age children)

. In Baghausi underage population is 6.4 percent.

**School Leaving Certificate . Source: Field Survey 2005/06.

Table 1 shows the relation between educational status and ownership of means of production. Access to means of production has a lot to do with the level of education acquired. The information on different levels of education is obtained separately. A flaw lies in the classification of categories. The children below school age are included in 'none' category i.e. a group that consists of those who do not have skills of both numeric and literacy.

Out of total population (293) in landless and near-landless class 79 percent people have never been to school and do not have ability to read, write and even compute simple numeric. Of the total population of Baghausi only 49 percent are literate. This figure is smaller than national literacy rate which is 54.8 percent (Manandhar & Shrestha, 2003). Among the people that belong to medium class owners only 21 percent have not been to school. Most of them are children who have not attained the school going age. This information is enough to show that those who have owned the land property have always advantage over the people who do not possess land or have small size of land in the attainment of education. Only 17 percent of the total people that belong to the category of small landholders have never been to school. If we reduce the number of children below the school going age the proportion will be even smaller. Similarly nearly 18 percent people in the same category have obtained education up to bachelor level and beyond. Exactly 21 percent of the people in medium class category have got education above bachelor level. Statistically speaking only 0.3 percent people in landless and near-landless class has acquired bachelor level education. Only 0.6 percent has pursued education after SLC. The information can be taken to have connotation that ownership of property has decisive role in the attainment of education. Those who have low educational status are virtually poor people. They have not been able to fulfill basic needs. The poverty of the cultivators is amply manifested in their educational status.

The households with higher landholding size are in the lead so far as educational status is concerned. The households in the large and medium landholding size have greater number of members doing graduation and post-graduation study. In the households that fall in the categories of landless and near-landless no one has acquired education beyond school level. Drop-out rate is very high (nearly 75 percent among farmer's community) as young member have to assist their parents in cultivation and in looking after the animals. Their economic condition is so poor that they are not in the position to give priority to education. Low consumption and hard work have made the cultivators indifferent towards the education of their children. They are so engrossed in physical labor that they do not see any meaning in activities that do not grow food grains or bring money.

Table 2 explains that in Baghausi the landholding size is the major determinant of the educational status of the households. Not a single member in the households in landless and near-landless category has done SLC and beyond. This situation sufficiently indicates to the fact that the households with small landholdings cannot afford to send their children to school and colleges.

Table 2
Baghausi: Educational Status of the Landowners

Landholding category (in ha)	Total HHs	% of total households in each category					
		S.L.C		Intermediate		Bachelor and above	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Landless (0-0.17)	36	0	0	0	0	0	0
Near-landless (0.18-0.5)	12	0	0	0	0	0	0
Subsistence (0.53-1.0)	11	5	45	3	27.3	3	27.3
Small (1.03-3.0)	25	17	68	18	72	16	64
Medium (3.03-5.0)	7	5	71.4	7	100	7	100
Large (5.03-8.0)	1	1	100	1	100	1	100
Total	92	28		29		27	

Source: Field survey September-January, 2005-2006.

The entire households in large landholding class have members that have acquired education up to SLC and beyond. The possession of land has major effect in attainment of education. The rich can afford to send his children to school. Almost all the households in medium class have members who have got education up to bachelor and beyond. Hundred percent of the households in large holding categories have members that have got education up to SLC and beyond. This is enough to show that landed property is the deciding factor in the attainment of education among others. In the villages only those who have some land can reap the benefit from government investments in education and other sectors.

The educational status of cultivators of Ghanibagiya (Table 3) is quite disappointing. The educational condition of the poor peasants is much worse. Out of total population (166), in landless and near-landless category exactly 86 percent have never been to school and have never learnt to read and write. This figure is higher than corresponding figure of Baghausi. This shows that higher the disparity in distribution of means of production greater the gap in educational status. Though Ghanibagiya is not as far as Baghausi from district headquarters, (a district level center of education) the landless people have not been able to benefit from this proximity.

Table 3
Ghanibagiya: Distribution of Population by Landholding Size and Educational Status

landholding category (in hectare)	Educational Composition						Total
	School Going	Under SLC	SLC	Inter- mediate	B.A. and Above	None*	
Landless (0-0.17)	10	0	0	0	0	112	122
Near-landless (0.18- 0.5)	10	1	1	1	0	31	44
Subsistence (0.53-1.0)	2	0	0	1	1	15	19
Small (1.03-3.0)	3	1	0	1	1	10	16
Medium (3.03-5.0)	3	0	0	1	8	2	14
Large (5.03-8.0)	4	0	0	2	14	4	24
Total	32	2	1	6	24	174	239
Percent	13.4	1.0	0.4	2.5	10.0	72.8	100

* None includes all those who have never been to school (including under-age children). Exactly 4.6 percent of the population is not in school age.

Source: Field Survey September-January, 2005-2006.

So, physical distance does not matter at all. Many poor people just outside the entrance of a reputed and colossal university that promises enlightenment of mankind remain illiterate and ignorant. The condition of Ghanibagiya in a way resembles the paradoxical situation evident in preceding statements. This leads one to conclude that to promote the interest of the people in education, their economic status has to be raised. Otherwise an inauguration of a university in their door step will not have any meaning. Poverty hinders human aspiration to improve their living conditions.

More than 57 percent of the medium class people (landowners) have acquired education above bachelor level. In the same way, more than 58 percent of the people in the class of large farmers have got bachelor level education and beyond that. This is enough to show that the landowners are much more ahead in education than the people having small amount of land. Unless economic status of the landless and near-landless cultivator is raised up, many of the poor farmers cannot send their children to schools and illiteracy rate will not experience any decline. Free education, adult literacy program, compulsory education program and the like will not have any positive effect. Those who are poor and lack property cannot afford to send their children to school which is not their priority amid widespread poverty.

In Ghanibagiya too, the households with large property have acquired higher level education. The property offers variety of opportunities for the owners who do not have to work and can study at college. The table 4 clearly shows that in Ghanibagiya too, the households with large landholdings are extremely ahead in the education. All the households in large and medium class have members who have acquired education up to bachelor level and beyond. In these households all those who have completed SLC have gone for higher education. The children are studying at schools and adults and olds have completed at least bachelor level.

None of the households in landless class has member who has acquired SLC and beyond. From near-landless households only about 14 percent households have members who have done SLC but no one has obtained further than that. About 33 percent households in the subsistence category have at least one member who has completed bachelor level education. Similarly the households in small landholding class also show that they are in the lead to acquire education.

Table 4
Ghanibagiya: Landownership and Higher Education

Landholding category (in ha)	Total HHs	% of total households in each category					
		S.L.C		Intermediate		Bachelor and above	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Landless (0-0.17)	18	0	0	0	0	0	0
Near-landless (0.18-0.5)	7	1	14.3	0	0	0	0
Subsistence (0.53-1.0)	3	0	0	1	33.3	1	33.3
Small (1.03-3.0)	1	0	0	1	100	1	100
Medium (3.03-5.0)	3	0	0	3	100	3	100
Large (5.03-8.0)	5	0	0	2	40	5	100
Total	37	1		7		10	

Source: Field Survey September-January, 2005-2006.

The association between landholding size and level of education is apparently seen. In the rural area agriculture is the major source of living and earning. Those who do not have land above subsistence class are not in the position to exploit benefits of public investment in social sector. Almost all the educated in rural areas are from the landowners in the category above small holdings. The size of land above 1 hectare is the decisive amount so far as educational status is concerned.

5. Occupational Structure

The structure of occupation is also an indicator to reveal the inequality in access to lucrative jobs as it depends largely on the educational status of the individuals. But many people lack access to education and so remain deprived of entry in better jobs. This is just an appearance which overlies the structure beneath. In the infrastructure one can see unequal access to landed property. Members from those families who own land more than subsistence level have been doing government and other types of white-collar jobs and those who do not have land are forced to work in farms either as agricultural wage laborers or as sharecroppers.

For the discussion of occupational structure outside agriculture the information on those doing different jobs and those without jobs has been collected. However, the information is fraught with shortcomings. Those people not in economically active age also are included in the total figure. However, the information has been useful to disclose the existing situation.

Table 5
Baghausi: Occupational Structure of People by Landholders' Category

Non-agricultural Occupation	Landholding Category (in Hectare)						Total	%
	Land-less (0-0.17)	Near-landless (0.18-0.5)	Sub-sistence (0.5-1.0)	Small (1.03-3.0)	Medium (3.03-5.0)	Large (5.03-7.0)		
Govt. job	0	2	4	12	2	0	20	3.7
Trade/business	0	2	1	0	0	0	3	0.6
Teaching	0	0	3	9	6	1	19	3.6
Labourer	58	10	0	0	0	0	68	12.7
Mason /carpentry/tailoring	6	1	0	0	0	0	7	1.3
Foreign employment	0	2	0	3	0	0	5	1.0
Private office	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	0.2
None	147	65	30	118	44	6	410	76.8
Total	211	82	38	144	52	7	534	100

Source: Field Survey September-January, 2005-2006.

It would not be out of place to mention that the type of occupation (work) one has to take up depends on the property he owns. Those who have property do not have to do physical labor. Contrarily those who are deprived of the access to property have to work very hard and live a miserable life. This sounds paradoxical.

Agriculture forms the main occupation of the people residing in rural areas of Nepal. At national level nearly 66 percent people living in rural areas are engaged in agriculture (Shrestha, 2003. In Baghausi the total economically active population (i.e. population in the ages between 15 and 59)

is 370 (69 percent). Out of total economically active population 124 (33.5 percent) are engaged in non-agricultural activities. Of these, 75 people (20 percent) are engaged in wage labour and tailoring, carpentry and masonry in off-seasons for agriculture. During seeding/plantation and harvesting period they are present in agricultural field. Excluding those in the age below 15, above 60 and those engaged in full-time non-agricultural activities the proportion of people principally engaged in agricultural activity is 60 percent. The size of people actually engaged in cultivation is much smaller. Most of those who own more than 0.51 hectare (30 katthas is equal to 1 hectare) of land rent out land on sharecropping basis. Of the total population 3.7 percent people are in government jobs and 3.6 percent are teachers. Most of them are from the households that belong to small, medium and large landholding categories. About 13 percent of the total population is wage laborers who belong to landless and near-landless families.

Table 6
Ghanibagiya: Occupational Structure of People by Landholders' Categories

Occupational Composition	landholding category (in Hectare)						Total	Percent
	Land-less (0-0.17)	Near-landless (0.18-0.5)	Sub-sistence (0.53-1.0)	Small (1.03-3.0)	Medium (3.03-5.0)	Large (5.03-8)		
Govt. Job	0	2	1	2	1	2	8	3.3
Trade/business	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0.8
Teaching	0	2	1	0	0	1	4	1.7
Labourer	29	10	2	5	0	0	46	19.2
Tailoring/masonry/carpentry	6	0	0	0	0	0	6	2.5
Private office	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0.8
NGOS/INGOs	0	0	1	0	1	1	3	1.3
None	87	30	14	9	11	17	168	70.3
Total	122	44	19	16	14	24	239	100

Source: Field Survey September-January, 2005-2006.

Only those who own land above one hectare (30 Katthas) have been able to grab job opportunities in government and semi-government establishments. Large size of population in low paid job and agriculture, thus, shows poverty.

In case of Ghanibagiya, out of total population (239) the economically active population (i.e. population between 15-59 years of age) is 67 percent. Out of total economically active population (i.e. 161), 15 percent are engaged in non-agricultural activities and rest 85 percent are engaged in agricultural activity. However many of them do not take part in cultivation. So, the actual number of economically active population engaged in agriculture is even smaller. Some of the farmers in the category of landless and near-landless (24 percent) are seen to have been attracted to daily wage labor. It is their compulsion as it appears. Since the demand for laborer is extremely erratic they are unable to leave their traditional occupation. They can not rely on wage laboring.

In Ghanibagiya, only a very small number of people of landless and near-landless class are in government jobs. They have taken up low level jobs like peon or watchman. Most of the

households in landless and near-landless and subsistence class belong to Tharu community. A number of people from landowners' class (that belong to medium and large landowners) are doing government jobs. When we look at the proportion of people engaged in non-agricultural jobs other than wage laboring the medium and large landholding categories account for greater number. We see in both the villages that many of the economically active people that belong to small and medium landholdings are greater in number compared to those in large class. It is due to constant fear of tumbling down to lower status among small and medium sized landowners who are engaged in non-agricultural jobs. Perhaps people of large class do not need to work either as government employee or as a teacher. Large landowners are only a few in case of Baghausi. But in Ghanibagiya all of the most of non-Tharus are large landowners. It is already mentioned that all of these landlords have got land in other parts of Dang. Most of them do not do any job as they think that doing job is below their standard.

6. Conclusion

In this article the focus is placed on the analysis of information on landholding class, educational condition and occupational structure. All these information reveal a situation which is tantamount to a stagnant society and poverty

Arable land, though not the only source of living as a number of people are engaged in jobs outside agriculture, is the main occupation of majority of people in rural areas of Nepal. Baghausi and Ghanibagiya the two villages under study are no exception. Majority of the people in these two villages depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

Those who own land have acquired better education. It is the people with some landed property who are doing jobs in government offices, who have taken up trading business whereas poor people are either doing sharecropping or wage laboring.

Those people who are in the landless and near-landless class are extremely backward in the attainment of education. Education attainment and literacy among landowners is higher than the households with small landholding size and no land.

So far as occupational structure is concerned, the people with small landholding size do not have access to lucrative jobs in the government and private sector. A small proportion of the total economically active population (excluding wage laborer) is engaged in non-agricultural jobs. The involvement of people from landless and near-landless class of households in government jobs is insignificant since the number is quite small and they are working as peon or watchman just for low wage

The ownership of means of production appears to have played important role in shaping socio-economic dimensions. People are backward, landless, and illiterate; lack alternative jobs except agriculture. However, when we try to look at things from political economy and structuralist perspectives we see the difference between those who own land of considerable size and those who are landless or own very small size of land. An effort to interpret the information within postmodern framework will show that the existing social condition is the reflection of various factors and it cannot be attributed to a single and universal factor. However, this perspective cannot pinpoint the problem and suggest the solution.

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