

## Inclusiveness in Gurukul Education System

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### Abstract

Education is as a jewel for human being. It enhances human dignity and prestige in the society. An educated person is also appreciated everywhere. Likewise, happiness is not less than the happiness that mother gives to man through education. It makes people strong. Therefore, education or knowledge is a precious asset of any person. Schooling is very significant to communicate knowledge for the generations to come. Schooling offers skills for people to receive their livelihood so that the lifestyle of people will be developed to make independence. Nowadays, there are worldwide practices on education around the world. Similarly, the education system needs to be relevant to the demand of the diverse culture, languages, ethnicity and tradition of a country. One of the practices in the field of education is the Gurukul education system. This is because all languages, cultures and civilizations of ancient times are in world heritage. According to the eastern philosophy in educational practices, that was mostly well recognized in the eastern part of the world such as India and Nepal. The Gurukul education system is the oldest and most former system of education in the present world. So, the purpose of this research study is to present the inclusiveness in Gurukul Education System.

*Keywords:* inclusiveness, Gurukul education system, compulsory education, access

### Introduction

Inclusive education means creating an environment where children with different languages, classes, regions and disabilities can go to school near home laughing, playing and learning on an equal footing with all children. This approach emphasizes child-centered education. Inclusive education is the act of providing education to other children based on their interests, abilities and personal needs. Education has got important since, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights announced education as the human right of people. Inclusive education has got fundamental rights of people. Education should be accessible to people.

UNESCO (1994) has stated that The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action has expressed some particularly core inclusion concepts such as Children having a wide diversity of characteristics and needs. The difference is normal. Schools need to accommodate all children. Children with disabilities should attend their neighborhood school. Community participation is essential for inclusion. Child-centered pedagogy is central to inclusion. Flexible

curricula should adapt to children. Inclusion needs proper resources and support. Inclusion is essential to human dignity and the enjoyment of full human rights. Inclusive schools benefit all children because they help create an inclusive society. Inclusion improves the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the education system. Since education is the source of all kinds of progress, it can lead to the progress of individuals, society, nations and the world. Today's materially prosperous age is due to education. It gives mankind both material happiness and spiritual happiness. Education is of paramount importance as it contributes immensely to the development of the individual, the nation and the nation.

We can say that the Gurukul education system has been in existence for thousands of years in the past. The Upanishads mention multiple Gurukul, including that of Guru Drona. The Vedic school of thought prescribes the Gurukul (sacred rite of passage) to all individuals before the age of 8 at least by 12. From initiation until the age of 25 all individuals are prescribed to be students and to remain unmarried. In ancient times, after the completion of the Upanayan rites in eight years, there was a provision to study in the presence of the Guru. This is the meaning of Gurukul education even now. At that time, students had to study science with their teacher until they reached the age of 25. It was also called Brahmacharya ashram as one had to study in full celibacy. There is a spiritual relationship between a teacher and the students. A student enters in Gurukul at the age of six and becomes trained in culture.

Gurukul education system is supposed to be the most ancient education system which is mentioned in our legends and Upanishads. Our legends and Upanishads are known as the basic roots of our knowledge existing ten thousand years back in the Sanskrit language. It is real that the Gurukul education system has produced many saints/ sages and educated scholars with scientific knowledge. Our ancient Vedas are known as the scientific explanation of the universe. Gurukul education has spread not only in India and Nepal but also in overseas countries, too (Yogi, 2011).

Inclusive education suggests formal and non-formal learning opportunities for any kind of children within the mainstream that include the needs of all learners. The four principles of inclusive education are acceptability, availability, accessibility and adaptability as well as respect for each individual's right to express and present themselves relative to their religion, culture, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, and physical and mental ability. Education is a fundamental right of children. Ensuring education is a prerequisite for the protection of fundamental rights. It is natural for children to have different learning needs. Inclusive education is the process of accepting differences naturally, developing learning methods that are suitable for all, and managing learning respectfully for all children. In the context of inclusive education, children with disabilities, children from Dalit backgrounds, tribal, children from backwards and marginalized families, street children, children from the

very poor, orphans, students and many other types of children are discussed but this brief article only covers children with different castes and gender.

According to Hada (2015), there are three principles of inclusive education that are every child can learn, there is any kind different of them learning styles and all children have the right to get an education. The process of inclusive education is Presence (Active), Participation (Active), Enablement (Empowerment) and Emancipation (Freedom from all evils). To get emancipation from presence is called inclusion.

In every academy, sector inclusiveness is taken into consideration these days. Regarding this situation, DoE (2010) has stated as follows:

Inclusion is a process or strategy for addressing groups deprived of opportunities. Inclusive education refers to the inclusion of understanding for each other, respect for each other, and responding to academic needs, including the experiences, aspirations, norms and values of all learners. In the formal school education system, inclusiveness is expected to address the conditions of children deprived of various opportunities. It accepts the differences between children. In addition, inclusiveness guarantees the right to obtain the education of children in a non-biased environment.

In this way, inclusive education helps to improve the education of all disadvantaged groups of people. This is the main responsibility of a country to maintain equity, access and quality in all levels of education. Equity, access and quality in education, if mentioned in a country, there will not be disadvantaged, Dalit and ethnic groups in the country.

### **Research Problems**

The main research problem of this study is the condition of inclusiveness in Gurukuls is. Is there any discrimination behaviour of students in Gurukuls? How do Gurukuls manage the inclusive environment? This article is related to these research problems.

### **Research Objective**

The main objective of this study is to present inclusiveness in Gurukuls and it also makes efforts to find the status of inclusiveness in present Gurukul education systems.

### **Research Methods and Materials**

This is a qualitative study and the methodology applied is related to qualitative technique, the process of data collection is through semi-structured interviews. So this is also based on a fieldwork study of Gurukul schools located in the Chitwan and Tanahun districts of Nepal. And data analysis process is interpretive; moreover, content analysis is done for this study.

## Literature Review

The Gurukul education system is known as the oldest system of education. This system of education has educated many people around the world through the ancient Indian system of education

The Vedic school of thought prescribes the Gurukul (sacred rite of passage) to all individuals before the age of 8 at least by 12. From initiation until the age of 25 all individuals are prescribed to be students and to remain unmarried (Shree Gopinath Adhyatmik Samsthan, 1999). This system has also got a historical background. The Gurukul system of education has been in existence since ancient times. The Upanishads mention multiple Gurukul, including that of Guru Drona at Gurgaon. The Bhrihu Valli (a discourse on the Brahman) is said to have taken place in Guru Varuni's Gurukul. As per the Vedic tradition, there are four stages of life which are known as the four Ashrams of human life. The word Ashrama means a place of spiritual shelter. The four ashrams are Brahmacharya (between birth to 25 years) which is related to the age of education under the Guru, Grihastha ashram (between 25 to 50 years) which is related to engaging time in household activities after getting an education from the Guru.

The Gurukul system of education is supposed to be the most ancient education system which is mentioned in our legends and Upanishads. Our legends and Upanishads are known as the basic roots of our knowledge existing ten thousand years back in the Sanskrit language. It is real that the Gurukul education system has produced many saints/ sages and educated scholars with scientific knowledge. Our ancient Vedas are known as the scientific explanation of the universe. Gurukul education spread not only in India and Nepal but also in overseas countries, too (Yogi, 2011).

According to Sharma (2000), Pandit Tasmayia Baba established the first Gurukul school in Nepal named as Matiyani Sanskrit Pathashala at Matiyani at Mahotari district in Nepal in 1882 BS. Narayani Sanskrit Pathashala was opened at the time of Prime Minister Janga Bahadur Rana in 1927 BS. Pandit Sadananda Adhikari founded Sadananda Gurukul School in Bhojpur district in 1932 BS. Pundit Sadananda Adhikari founded a Gurukul, which sustained for almost a hundred years on its own resources (Sharma, 1986). At that time, there was no provision for levying fees from students. The system was managed in such a way that the students would get two days' leave every month to visit their homes and family. After that, they would come back to Gurukul School taking their rations to last for the rest of the whole month ahead. At that time students were independent and brought their food themselves to the place of their guru (Adhikari, 2014).

Regarding the Gurukul system, Sharma (2000) has stated that the saint, Yogi Hansananda Saraswathi established a popular Gurukul in the western part of Nepal named

Swargadwari (a place named the gateway to heaven). This Gurukul School provided food and accommodation to all the students which were free of cost. And it was a priority for inclusive education without any discrimination in terms of caste and race.

Regarding the Gurukul education system, Jean (1977) has mentioned that Gurukul Education System is a traditional education system based on Vedas. At that time, education was an obligation to every child and nobody was meant to be uneducated in society. Moreover, education had nothing to do with family income. Gurukul institutions did not take fees from students. It was the responsibility of the whole society to spend on the education of the children. It is understood that society was responsible for the education of children in society. As far as possible children did not have to stay at home without studying so they have to go to Gurukul schools. Gurukul education is a novel educational system in which large numbers of students live and study under the direct supervision of the teacher. The teacher would be responsible to modify and develop the character of students. The students had to wake up early in the morning and do prayers and they were also prohibited to eat meat. They had to live on begging alms which would give them knowledge of spiritual humanity and a high level of thinking. Gurukul is an education system of receiving education with the full guidance of a guru/ teacher. This system has been in practice since ancient times. The curriculum of traditional Gurukul education had been prepared by a guru/ teacher.

In the context of child friendly education, a report of DoE (2010) has stated that most of the schools running in Nepal are of traditional styles in terms of teaching-learning activities and management procedures. It has been included that the children in many schools still learn by heart but it is not so in child-friendly schools. Students get less mental and physical tension in child-friendly schools. It needs to be improved and incorporated in school reform plans. DoE has focused on making all schools as child-friendly schools.

### **Results and Discussion**

This is a qualitative study and analysis has been made without any quantitative symbols. Moreover, a thick description has been done for content analysis including some reasonable themes. This study presents the activities related to inclusiveness in terms of disabled students, ethnicity, access and equity, the distance of the school from home and teacher training program and the participation of stakeholders.

In selected Gurukuls, the researcher observed how inclusiveness was managed in Gurukuls. Regarding these ideas, the researcher interviewed the head teachers of the selected schools. The head teachers, on the points of inclusiveness, responded that although they have made management for disabled students, there was no enrollment of disabled students. Regarding access to Gurukul education for ethnic and minority students, the head teachers said that they had no restriction to get enrollment of ethnic and minority communities. The head

teacher of Yogi Naraharinath Gurukul said that they have managed to enroll the students from other ethnic groups including Magar and Gurung. This situation makes it known that Gurukuls are not biasing to any communities to part of education. Regarding accessibility to Gurukul education, it was found that all of the students had to stay in a hostel compulsorily so that there was no matter of distance between home and the school.

To develop inclusiveness in education, UNESCO (2005) has stated that at the core of inclusive education, there are Human Rights, to education known as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and it has mentioned the right for all children to receive an education without any discrimination on any grounds is the basis of inclusive education. Inclusive education evolves to all the advantages group of children for taking education without any discrimination related to socio-cultural differences.

The head teachers also mentioned that students from all communities and ethnic groups are treated equally. And Gurukuls were not meant for only Brahmins and followers of the Hindu religion but there have been changes in this ideology and students from the groups of Dalits and Janjati as well as other religious groups will also get a chance to enrol in these schools these days. Such types of inclusiveness of different religious and ethnic minorities have got a positive impact on the community towards community schools. Regarding the teacher training system with respect to the Gurukul education system, the head teachers made it clear that they had no provision for a teacher training program to maintain inclusiveness in the Gurukul education system. There was no more provision for disabled students but poor people also would get a chance to get enrollment in Gurukuls because they did not have to pay money for schools.

In the past, Gurukuls enrolled students from only Brahmin and Chhetri group of people but now Gurukuls have enrolled students from the group of Dalits, Janajati and ethnic minority group. In this way, inclusiveness in education is properly followed in Gurukuls which have supported the concept of progressivism. It is found that Gurukuls have maintained all indicators except teacher training of inclusive as declared by DoE (2010). So, Gurukuls are trying to make inclusiveness.

On the other hand, in Gurukuls, there are only male students but there is no enrollment of female students and this situation has not promoted inclusiveness in the Gurukul education system. So, to maintain inclusiveness in education, Gurukuls need to manage separate hostels for girl students and they have to manage the enrollment of girl students, too.

The provisions related to education in the constitution are that every citizen shall have the right to access basic education' equal right to education is for disadvantaged groups of children.

About Gurukuls, Timalshina (2017) has mentioned that in 2068 BS, Gargi girl Gurukul was opened in which the girl students would learn Rudri, Painting, Yoga, Music and Dance.

They had been skilful in these activities. The girl Gurukul had been established under the effort of the social reformer, Angurbaba Joshi, where sixteen students from different social strata such as Brahman, Kshatriya, Janjati, Dalit and Madhesi would study. The girl students would read hymns with musical tunes in different programmes of Kathmandu. The girl students had read hymns during the visit of the president of India, Pranab Mukharji, and he was surprised by their genius skills. Now, the girl Gurukul has been merged with Balikashram in Devghat since 2073 BS, which is itself an inclusive institute.

Ramjanaki Gargi Girl Gurukul has been as an example to provide inclusive education to girls. The characteristics of Gurukul School are to be inclusive, gender equality, community participation, health care, safety and protection, infrastructure, teaching-learning in the mother tongue and effective management.

In Gurukul, children are not discriminated in terms of race and tribe. All of them are treated equally as a family member. Gender equality and involvement of the community are some of the strong points of Gurukuls. Here, children feel safe as child rights are protected. They do not have to be afraid of punishment in Gurukuls. They will be treated very kindly.

Teachers have to play a great role in determining inclusive classrooms. Teachers need to play a positive role in making the classroom more inclusive. The teacher should teach in the classroom in an equally impartial and non-discriminatory manner. Respecting diversity, every child needs to be well understood. The communication process needs to have made easy and frank. Having difficulty in adopting the medium, speaking, walking and seeing children need to adapt to the communication process based on their condition. Communication is essential to move forward in the right way.

Regarding inclusiveness in Gurukul Education System, Timilsina (2017) has stated as follows:

Hindu tradition generally rejects to chant of Vedic mantras by women. No female priest has been found for regular rituals in Nepali society so far. Biologically menstruation and cultural Upanayana Sanskar are taken as major obstacles in achieving the skills of Vedic knowledge. Some kinds of literature state Dwija (that born cast) lady can learn Veda either after Upanayana (Bratabandha) or marriage. However, there are few Gurukuls who have been teaching Veda and Vedic skills to girls. Some have been teaching only to Brahman girls and another one has been teaching inclusively. Brahman, Chhetri, Janajati, Madheshi, Tharu and Dalit girls have been learning Veda in the girls' Gurukul as similar to boys' Gurukuls. The paper finds that multiple ethnic groups of girls are being produced as female priests in Kathmandu (p19).

An inclusive classroom does not discriminate and marginalize any child based on gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability and disability. Such types of classrooms are

effective for children because they get support and facilities for quality education. Parents are called and discussed their children's learning activities. In the same way, Burkel (1996) has stated that low attitudes among teachers towards a specific programme may adversely affect government policies on education. It is better to consider teachers' attitudes before launching the programme. Burkel's views have mentioned that all stakeholders including teachers have to involve in the discussion to prepare the programme before implementing the programme and it is not good that no teachers are included to judge their attitude before launching programmes. So, it has been difficult to get success through any programme in the educational sector of Nepal.

### **Findings**

The finding of this study is that the Gurukul education system has tried to maintain inclusiveness in the teaching-learning process. Students are treated equally without any kind of discrimination. Gurukuls have provided all the things of basic needs to the students free of cost. The students do not have to pay a rupee for their cost of lodging, fooding, tuition fee and other required materials. These provisions show that there is no discrimination among students of different castes and races. Inclusive education, with the belief that all children can read and learn if given the opportunity, prevents further exclusion and suggests new ways to grow, study with society and become competitors. This method believes in an integrated method rather than a segregated method. By placing children of different classes, regions, genders, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds in the same classroom, children get a chance to learn from each other and learn to respect and appreciate each other.

### **Conclusion**

The Constitution of Nepal (2072 BS) made basic education compulsory and free. During the distribution of state power, education was made responsible at the local level. Immediate preparations should be made with the formation of the local level to implement the constitutional provision and ensure favourable education for all children with disabilities. Officials working in the field of disability, all those who have the coordination and goodwill should have the responsibility to implement the inclusive education provided by the constitution at the local level. The essence, spirit and guidance of the constitution seem to be practically successful if the long-term thinking towards the children, clear vision and management of adequate resources are managed by the government of Nepal as a whole under the leadership of the formed local level. Inclusive processes and inclusive education are both today's demand and need. In society, children are forced to live with various needs, physical and mental abilities, language and other difficulties. Education is an equal right of all citizens but due to physical, and mental conditions, social structure, and values, many children are living a life deprived of access to education. In this context, the concept of inclusive education



has come to the fore form with the belief that everyone can get an education and everyone can learn.

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