

Kumal Children Schooling: History, Culture and Parents' Perception

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze how history, culture and parents' perception influenced children's schooling. In the context of Nepal, cultural values and norms are deeply rooted in society. So this study explores how involving children in cultural activities hampers their schooling. The study is based on field data and I organized this study into three key themes, history and tradition of Kumal people, cultural influence in Kumal children schooling and Kumal parents' perception towards children schooling.

Keywords: schooling, perception, cultural activities, ethnic group, occupation.

Introduction

Schooling of children is essential and it is origin of consciousness. Schooling is a means to reduce poverty inequality and empowering children (UNESCO, 2004). So providing education to all children have become the central goal of the countries in the world either developed or developing. Similarly, education is taken as a single most vital element in combating poverty, empowering women, promoting human rights and strengthening democracy, protecting the environment and controlling population growth (as cited in Hall & Midgley, 2004). Realizing the importance of education, the government of Nepal made many efforts to promote girls children education. However, girls and disadvantaged children's participation in education is still low. As a result, female literacy is lower than male literacy (male 75.1% and female 57.4%) (CBS, 2011). Likewise some ethnic-group related children hardly complete the primary level of education. Those who complete the level do not continue in their schooling.

Furthermore, Nepal is small and beautiful country but it has multicultural, multilingual and multi-caste system as well as geographical diversity. Therefore, people have different cultures and traditions. Kumal

people also have their own culture and most of them are occupationally farmers. Anyway, it is true that knowingly and unknowingly, parents' culture, occupation and perception affect children's schooling. Thus, how Kumal traditional culture and the parents' perception influences their children's schooling has been discussed and analyzed in the following three subsections.

Statement of the Problem

The problem statement describes the context for the study and also identifies the general analysis approach (Wiersma 1995). There are some problems, which are related to the Kumal children schooling. From the history of Nepalese students faced many problem in relation to schooling. However, the development of girls education in Nepal was started after the democracy in the 1990s. As I believe these educational development growth at all of system.

There are different kinds of problems in Kumal children education development and process of the schooling. Education brings a lot of opportunities to the teachers and students but they need good schooling. Similarly, our nations seeks educated person but still lack the number of educated person from ethnic community such like Kumal communities. These are visible challenging factors in the study. Therefore, this study is reasonable to analyze the Kumal children schooling.

Objectives of the Study

This study has the following objectives,

1. To explore history and traditional culture influences for Kumal children schooling.
2. To analyze Kumal parents perception on their children schooling.

Method and Data Sources

This study is based on primary data of two schools in Palungtar Municipality -7, of Gorkha district to analyze the history, cultural aspect and parents' perception of their children schooling. For this purpose, semi-structured interview was conducted in the study area of four schools. In relation to sample population were taken from four sample schools and Kumal communities on the basis of purposive sampling.

Sample population type and number are given below in tabular form.

S.N.	Participants	Type	Number of participant	Used tools
1	Teachers	Head and teacher	4 and 4	Interview
3	Students	Girls and boys	10	observation
4	Parents	Father and mother	6	

All participants four school, four head teachers, five girls and five boys as well as six parents were selected on the basis of purposive sampling. Following discussion and analysis was related to Kumal children schooling history, culture and parents perceptions.

Study Area

Palungtar Municipal city, 7- is selected as study area which it lies in the south west part of Gorkha district. Marsyandi River flows near by this area so it looks like basin. Therefore, majority of Kumal people live there. In the following discussion and analysis based on field data which is directly related to participants' experience and statement in the subject of children schooling.

Limitations of the study

In this study, some limitations are mentioned. Primarily, this study was carried out Gorkha district of Palungtar Municipality, Word No- 7. All participants (four school, four head teachers, four teacher, five girls and five boys as well as six parents) were taken from hilly part but not from other parts of Nepal. Subsequently, the result of this study might not be generalized among the entire schooling population of Kumal children in Nepal. Thus, the result of the study might be different based on the informants' perception.

History and Tradition of Kumal People

History is a scientific study and a record of our complete past (Ghate, 1972). Similarly history recall our past event and it helps to human being for improving the present. In this relation, the study site of Kumal people live in flat villages near Marsyangdi River and it looks like Terai therefore majority of Kumal people live in there. They like to live in plain area because they are very similar to Tharu, Bote and Majhi. Almost their nature and tradition also similar. Kumal people make their house closely and they like to live in dense form. Their traditional houses were made of bamboo and mud. They had own language in history but still few old Kumal people speak with mixed

Nepali words but their language is near to extinct. Their traditional occupation is mud pot maker and fisherman but nowadays, most of them are occupationally farmers and different service holders. Kumal people schooling history is not so longer mean almost old people are illiterate but their children schooling is increasing.

Cultural Influence in Kumal Children's Schooling

Social group activities are guided by cultural beliefs and values, so it is the mirror of human civilization and it tells background of society. Culture is attached with human civilization and development. To understand a society, it is important to understand their culture which is based of human being like many other societies. According to Kumal (2006), Kumal people celebrate more than fifty festivals including the great festival Dashain and Tihar. Kumal people have their own cultural lifestyle of celebrating festival and ceremony. In these days, children go to relatives' houses and mostly participate in singing and dancing programs. In festival, girls have to be active for cooking and serving food for guests. Regarding this, Sanjel (2001) shows that socio-cultural factors are equally responsible in creating gender bias activities. Therefore, these days they never turn the books. All the relatives enjoy in drinking and talking with each other. So, the Kumal students also get enjoyment from them. On the way of talking about Kumal culture and festival a 32 years old male teacher respondent expressed the following view:

Kumal people have their own culture and they still follow the same culture. They have not changed their culture according to time and situation. In festival and ceremony Kumal children are very busy to make wine. They are involved in singing and dancing. Mostly Kumal girls serve wine and food to guests with warm welcome. Therefore Kumal culture and situation affect the Kumal children schooling.

Above discussion shows that, their cultural beliefs play a significant role in the division of labour which becomes legitimized in house and society that mostly do not favour Kumal children schooling.

Most of the people of this area have not yet to realize that primary education is a basic and fundamental right of the people. The old people do not have awareness of the education which plays vital role in poverty alleviation and transforming the society towards progress in the long run.

Kumal people celebrate many festivals therefore, they spend their days culturally. Regarding this, parents' attitudes and behaviours are guided by social norms and customs, whereas the roles of girls/women and boys/men determined by the family and community (UNESCO, 2005). Thus few Kumal parent want to see their children busy in household work instead of study.

Kumal Parents' Perception towards Children Schooling

Parents' perception is very important for children schooling. If parents have positive perception towards children schooling they could be encouraged to study.

In broad sense, perception is the most important determinant factor for education. In this study area almost Kumal parents prefer their children's schooling but mostly children are engaged in the household work. It is also true that most of the participants' concept were found that education makes children's life meaningful but I met an old woman who said that girls' schooling was meaningless. Instead it, girls should learn all household and farm related works. Such learning would be very helpful in her future life. In this context, feminism gives emphasis to understand the gender inequality in literacy and educational attainment (Mathur, 2001). Thus old people have discriminating value especially in girls' schooling but some parents who are positive on children's schooling but due to poverty, they have many difficulties to spend money on children schooling. Regarding this, (UNESCO, 2004) report states that discrimination and poverty keep poor children out of classroom. However another respondent (male, age 35) had different view on children schooling:

I am Kumal parent and I realize that children's education is very important but our Kumal community due to poor economic condition and lack of educational awareness they are not serious about children's schooling. However, my son and daughter have been enrolled in the school at the age of five and they are continuing their study. I have a dream to make them educated and high-skilled workers. .

Based on the above data, more Kumal parents prefer children's schooling. They view that education makes their children wise and capable to solve problems and can face challenges. My analysis is that the people of old generation are not so positive on specially children schooling but compared to the old generation, the new generation is more positive

towards children's schooling. In this regard, liberal feminism is concerned with equal citizenship rights which demands laws that give equal rights to men and women (Thapa, 2007). According to the informants, poor parents expect their children to be literate after completing the primary level of education.

Kumal parents' main occupation is farming and their socio-cultural structure has given more household and field work responsibility to children. Though some parents know workload is harmful but they are bound to do so.

In this context, I asked one school teacher (male, age 45) about how Kumal parents perceive their children's schooling and he viewed that:

Some Kumal parents have concept that girls have to go to others' home and wash dishes whether or not they go to school. Similarly boys have to plough to eat. Therefore some parents less emphasize children's schooling. They spend their time in household work, field work and festival related work. In farming season they are very busy and cannot complete any homework and they look sleepy in class.

As mentioned above children hardly get time to study at home. Given description pictures out the concept of Kumal parents toward children's schooling. In farming seasons they have multiple work responsibilities in field and house. In that season, parents do not want to send their children to school. However, most Kumal parents are found positive towards children's schooling.

My arguments

Traditional cultural activities do not favour their children's schooling. Still, few old parents believe that their children's schooling is not essential. New generation of parents perceive schooling is meaningful but some of them suffer from poverty.

Conclusions

The above discussion has clearly shown that children's schooling is inevitable as it helps for all round development. Parents' perception is very important for children's schooling. Bringing changes in parental attitude towards schooling is essential because it is found that some Kumal traditional cultural values and parents' perception affect their children's schooling knowingly or unknowingly. In this study area, there are two

generations (old and new) of parents, especially old parents do not prefer children's schooling because they are not aware of the value of education or they have not long schooling history. They want to see their children in the fieldwork. But new generation of parents perceive that schooling of children is essential for their good future.

Moreover, Kumal people celebrate many festivals and consequently their children become busy at cultural activities. Due to that reason, they get less time to study at home. For children's good schooling, they have to keep them away from the cultural activities and they should understand the importance of education. Finally, most of the teachers think that personal development never ends, because it is an ongoing process.

Implications of the study

This study is essential subject in the sector of culture, history and parents perception on children schooling in the context of Nepal. This study is qualitative and it generates several opportunities for additional research, regarding the ethnic children schooling. This study's result will be useful to the Nepalese government and other NGOs for children schooling context. Similarly, this study uncovered the actuality of ethnic children schooling culture and history of Kumal children schooling. This study also adds in raising the skill level, imparting ample knowledge and shifting the perspectives of the Kumal children schooling. This study played an important role to picture out ethnic children schooling status in Nepal.

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