

Dropout of Children from schools in Nepal

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Abstract

Nepal, a developing country of the south-asian region has bigger problem of children not completing the full cycle of basic education. In other words, large number of children dropout of schools, especially in the primary and secondary level of schooling. Especially, the situation is worse for those of the backward and socially disadvantaged populations and of the rural and the remote areas. Being in this frame, this study focused on the reasons of dropout of children from schools and the possible consequences of being dropped out of the rural and remote parts of Rupandehi District. This study also looked at the daily habits of those children who are dropped out of schools and tries to dig out the possible measures to reduce the problem of dropout. The study followed the notion of the New Social Studies of Childhood which sees children as competent beings and should be studied in their own right and from their own perspectives. The study was based on the qualitative approach of data collection which includes observation, individual interview and focus group interview (discussion) with children as primary informants followed by teachers and head teachers. The field work included 20 children, 10 boys and 10 girls and 6 teachers and head teachers. The data collected were qualitatively analyzed and conclusions were drawn. The study realised that poverty, low household income, child marriage, child work and labour, are the major reasons for dropping out of children from schools. In addition, school related problems such as corporal punishment, poor infrastructural facilities, lack of teaching learning behaviour, failing of exams, direct and indirect cost of schooling were noticeable reasons. The study realized that children had to face both physical and mental consequences of not attending school. Use of alcohol and cigarettes and feelings of exclusion in the society was observed. Most of the children who were dropped out were engaged in some forms of labour or work. Especially, boys worked in agricultural sector and as manual labourers and girls were responsible in fulfilling household chores along with planting crops during farming seasons in order to fulfill the demand of their family. Taking care of livestock and younger siblings were common for some younger children. The study realized that several interventions such as increase in the amount and management of various scholarship programmes, improvement in the physical infrastructures of schools, child friendly teaching

activities, and automatic promotion of grades helps to reduce the problem of dropout. In addition, re-introducing the mid-day meal programme at school might be beneficial.

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List of Acronyms

CAI	Creative Associates International
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CEIR	Centre for Educational Innovation and Research
DoE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
ERDCN	Educational Resource and development Centre Nepal
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
HDI	Human Development Index
IIDS	Institute of Integrated Studies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NDHS	Nepal Demographic and Health Survey
NER	Net Enrollment Ratio
NLSS	Nepal Living Standard Survey
NOSEB	Norwegian Centre for Child Research
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PROBE	Public Report on Basic Education

SESP	Secondary Education Support Programme
SSRP	School Sector Reform Programme
TESON	Teachers Educators Society of Nepal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund

1. Introduction

1.1. Phenomenon

Dropouts from school are defined as young children, who enroll in school and for some reason other than death leaves school before completing the grade without transferring to another school (Chugh, 2011). The prevalence of drop out depends on children being previously enrolled, and so in countries where there is low initial enrolment, actual numbers who drop out may be lower than where initial enrolment is high (Hunt, 2008).

Dropping out of children from school has become a serious problem in many places around the world (Young & Chavez, 2002), especially in low income countries like Nepal. According to Lewin & Sabates (2012), although large number of children has started primary school than ever before, the rate at which children drop out from school had remained high in poorer countries. More than half of the children who start primary school do not complete the full cycle of education .Nepal is a primary example where large number of children dropout from schools due to poverty and social backwardness.

There are various factors responsible for the dropout of children from school. Sarkar (2004:12) classifies these factors into four categories which can be associated to the current dropout scenario of Nepal:

- Accessibility: the physical and social distance to school, social discrimination, the burden of household chores, and the burden faced by children combining work and schooling.
- Affordability: direct, indirect, and opportunity costs of schooling.
- Quality: lack of school infrastructure, facilities, materials, and support systems for children, inadequate conditions of work for teachers, low status, lack of adequate training leading to child friendly teaching methods, aids and teaching materials for teachers and the lack of sensitivity of education authorities and teachers to the needs of children at risk and

- Relevance: curriculum detached from local needs, values and the aspirations of children at risk, inadequate curriculum to prepare students for useful and gainful skilled employment.

Chugh (2011) in relation to dropout of children adds that risk factors prohibiting children's access to school begin to add up even before students enroll in school. Family poverty, low level of education of parents, the weak family structure, pattern of schooling of children and lack of pre-school experiences are considered as the major ones. Poor family background and domestic problems create a negative environment which affects the value of education of children. Children could also drop out as a result of a multitude of school factors such as uncongenial atmosphere, poor comprehension, absenteeism, negative attitude and behaviour of the teachers, and failure or repetition of students in the same grade, etc. When children fail exams, they become frustrated with lack of achievement of quality education and end up alienated and experience exclusion leading to eventual dropout from schools (ibid).

Along these factors, I believe that the way teacher treats students at schools, social-cultural traditions of the family and society such as child marriage, influence of certain caste and ethnic groups regarding schooling, agricultural oriented families in rural areas, certain types of negativity about schools built by children peer and their influence, lack of awareness regarding the inputs and outputs of quality education play a major role in children's dropout from school in Nepal.

Adolescents who drop out of school represent a large group of the young population, who are at high risk of social and economic consequences such as engaging in illegal activities and delinquent behavior (Beauvais et. al. 1996) as well as a high probability of problems in adapting to the social environment and employment in Nepal. Once the children drop out, they rarely return back for formal education again. They also rarely become the skilled laborer, which in turn limits their earnings to subsistence-level income (Hunt, 2008).

It is evident that large number of children dropout from school in Nepal due to poverty and their building responsibility in completing household duties. Therefore, it is wise to say that children

who drop out are more or less engaged in household chores as well as different forms of labour outside their home in order to sustain themselves and their families in their everyday activities. Particularly, girls from rural areas in Nepal keep themselves engaging themselves in cooking food, cleaning utensils, collecting firewood, taking care of the younger ones besides farming seasons. During farming season, girls are engaged in agricultural activities inside or outside homes. Boys are largely involved in agricultural works like plugging fields and planting crops during farming seasons. Apart from this, they work as unskilled worker in hazardous condition as daily wage labourer. According to Groot (2007), severe poverty and the requirement of additional labour, is thus an important factor that keeps children out of school and pushes them into work. Therefore, most of the children who dropout from schools cannot enjoy their everyday life as opposed to the western notion of childhood which relates children everyday life experiences with play along with schooling.

1.2. Context and Interest

Nepal is the signatory of the United Convention on the Rights of the Child, (UNCRC, 1989) and Dakar Framework of Action (2000) and is committed to Education for All by 2015 (MoES, 2009). Article 28 of the UNCRC urges member countries to recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity. The UNCRC also calls for its members to make free compulsory primary education and available to all as well as encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education. The state parties shall make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need (UNCRC, 1989). The Dakar Framework of Action has set six major goals and one of its goals is *Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstance and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.* Similarly, Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has also focused on 'Education for All' by 2015 (MoES, 2009).

The government of Nepal, in line to the international conventions has taken several steps and formulated policies and programmes to increase the enrollment of children in schools and keep children at school until they complete the full basic cycle of education. Making tuition fee free up to grade 8, various scholarship schemes for girls and certain disadvantaged groups, providing free text books are some of the eye catching efforts made by the government. I believe that however, these programmes has shown some positive in enrollment of children into schools, they have not be much able to keep children at school.

In developing countries the opportunity cost of time spent in education by pupil in primary school may be quite high, particularly for poor families, since even young children could contribute to the family income by working in the fields, carrying water or looking after babies and thus can free adults for more productive works (Tuladhar, 2004:23).

Although the government of Nepal claims lots of improvements and progresses have been made, problem of dropout of children in Nepal is critical as many of them who enroll in grade 1 dropout until they reach grade 10. There are no legislative provisions and mechanisms governing the compulsory nature of primary schooling in Nepal.

Lack of awareness about the importance of education to illiterate parents hinders children schooling. The programmes regarding parents education has not worked proper at the grass root level. Even the Government of Nepal realises that schooling support program cannot address every child (MoES, 2009). Although several steps regarding improving infrastructures of schools, training for teachers, child friendly environment at schools has been taken, I feel that these programmes are not implemented properly. In case if the programmes are implemented, they are centralized in urban areas and district headquarters. Schools of rural areas still lack sufficient number of teachers, waving of the scholarship amount in time i.e. at the beginning of the school year, adequate infrastructures and facilities such as benches and desks, buildings, training of teachers and child friendly teaching at schools.

Even if the tuition free is free at schools, parents have to pay money for uniforms, exercise books, exam fees and some other indirect costs charged by schools in the name of school

maintenance and salary for teachers which in turn become more difficult for the poor families to bear. School education becomes even more costly as the level of grade of children increases.

Dropout rates of children are high in Nepal as children must work to supplement the family income because of their poor economic conditions. The absence of the child friendly environment at school and high prevalence of the corporal punishment is also a cause for children dropping out easily from school. There is no specific law in Nepal to prohibit corporal punishment as is expected that it will not be administered (State Party Report, 2004).

I have been interested in studying dropping out of children from schools in Nepal because I belong to that region where large numbers of children fail to continue schooling due to various reasons. I have witnessed many children leaving schools and devoting themselves in other works which might hamper their wellbeing in the future life. I want to figure out the problems associated with the dropout of children and what further attempts can be made to reduce the problem from children's own voices.

1.3. Research Questions

The present study is guided through the following research questions:

- Why do children drop out of school before completing a full basic education and the future possible consequences of being dropped out?
- What are the daily habits of the dropped out children?
- What factors can work to reduce the problem of dropping out of children from schools?

My primary informants include children aged 6 years to 16 years who are dropped out from school in the recent years along with the teachers and head teachers of primary (1-5), lower secondary (1-8) and secondary (1-10) schools. I have used interview, observation and focus group interview (discussion) in order to deal with the research questions which focus on children's perspectives.

1.4. Significance of the Study

While there is a range of literature which covers the subject of drop outs, few have dropout as a central theme. More frequently, drop out is embedded within studies, with messages around drop outs set alongside others on access more generally. Few studies account for the complexities of access and the interactive, dynamic nature of factors which may contribute to dropping out (Hunt, 2008). Although some studies have been conducted, they follow the quantitative aspects of filling the questionnaires and determining the findings according to them. Fewer studies have kept children at their central theme. Being the student of childhood studies, I have followed the notion of the new social studies of childhood that children should be studied in their own rights from their own perspectives and allows children a more direct voice and participation in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research (Prout & James, 1990).

Therefore, I believe that my study on dropout of children from schools in Nepal helps to find about the reasons of dropout of children from school including both children and teacher's perspectives. What push and pull factors is actively playing to discontinue children's schooling. Studying what children are doing after dropping out from school helps to overlook the indirect aspects of the causes of dropout and how it affects children future and wellbeing. I have focused on the measures to be adopted to reduce the problem of dropout of children from children and teacher's perspectives. Apart from that, the suggestions from children, teachers and head teachers on what type of improvement could be made in currently running programmes and the programmes run in the past in order to address the problem of dropout and keep children in school are discussed. I believe that children's and teacher's experiences and suggestions on the issue will help the government and policy makers to formulate and guide new policies and programmes as well as proper implementation of the currently run programmes. The study will be helpful to see what is actually happening and what measures should be taken in the areas of children and their schooling, especially in the rural areas of Nepal.

1.5. Organization of the Thesis

The thesis is organized into 7 chapters. The first chapter has provided the general introduction along with the dropout phenomenon and context followed by my interest in studying dropout of children in Nepal. In addition it provided the information regarding the objectives and research question and the significance of my thesis. Chapter 2 provides detailed information about the country and study area in addition with the context of dropout of children. Chapter 3 provides the theoretical perspectives and frameworks which is the basis and the guideline analysis and discussion. Chapter 4 focuses on the research methodology which includes processes of field work, methods applied to collect data and ethical consideration taken. Chapter 5 deals with the reasons why children dropout from school plus the daily habits of dropped out children and the possible consequences of dropping out from school. Chapter 6 deals with suggestions on the effective measures to be adopted to reduce the dropout problem from school from children and teacher's perspectives. Finally the 7th chapter provides concluding remarks based on the findings of my study and recommendations for further studies.

2. Description of the Study Area and Background of the Study

2.1. Historical, Geographical and Political Context of Nepal

Nepal's history goes back thousands of years, with early dynasties of 'Ahirs' and 'Gopals' and 'Kirants' ruling the country. It shows that the 'Kirants' were the first to settle in Nepal who are said to have ruled the country for about 2,500 years. Subsequent dynasties of Licchavi and Thakuri kings ruled the country before the Malla period which began in the 12th century. In 1765, King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the first Shah King of Nepal, embarked on his mission to unify the country, which had previously been divided into large numbers of small independent kingdoms. After several wars and sieges, he managed to unify the Kathmandu Valley, the current capital of Nepal and surrounding territories three years later in 1768 (Nepal Demographic and Health Survey, NDHS, 2011: 2). After this period, the country was ruled by the Shah Kings.

Reforms in 1990 established a multiparty democracy within the framework of a constitutional monarchy. In early 1996, the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) launched a movement that capitalized on the growing dissatisfaction among the general population with the lack of reforms expected from a democratically elected government (ibid). Maoists ran a decade-long insurgency (1996-2006) against the ruling monarchy, which until then kept Nepal and Nepalese people in internal conflict and isolation. The United Nation's figures shows that the war between the government and the Maoists rebels left more than 13,000 people and an estimated 100,000 to 150,000 internally displaced (UNESCO, 2011). Large numbers of children were affected during the conflict. Either children were used in the war, killed or internally displaced with their parents. The people's mass movement of April 2006 in Nepal restored parliament and the democratic process and initiated a peace movement that called for an end to the 10-year-long armed conflict (NDHS, 2011). The comprehensive peace agreement was concluded in November 2006 and the monarchy was abolished a month later (UNESCO, 2011). An interim constitution was drafted, and the restored parliament dissolved to pave the way for an interim legislature and interim government. The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) joined the democratic competition, and constituent assembly elections were held in April 2008 to devise a constitution to manage the

root causes of the conflicts afflicting the nation (NDHS, 2011). After the election of constitution assembly, there were major changes in substantive structural reforms. Certain rights were reserved to the disadvantaged communities such as 'Dalits' and backward ethnic communities such as 'Madhesi' and 'Muslims'. Similar rights were reserved to women as well (Dahal, 2008). Due to serious disagreements in different political agendas between the ruling parties and the oppositions, the period of the constitution assembly was increased several times; until May 2012. However, the members were elected to draft the constitution within a year. Finally, the constitution assembly was dissolved in May, 2012 without drafting a new constitution which was a terrible upset for the people of Nepal. The government declared the new elections of the constitution assembly to be held in November, 2012 confessing that the parties were not able to draft the constitution in a given period.

Nepal, a land-locked developing country lies in the South Asian region. The total land area of Nepal is 147,181 square kilometers with China to the north and India to the east, south, and west. Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2011) reports Nepal occupies an area from 26° 22' to 30° 27' north latitude and 80° 4' to 88° 12' east longitude; elevations range from 90 meters to 8,848 meters. Topographically, Nepal is divided into three distinct ecological zones: Mountain, Hill, and Terai (or plains). The mountain region accounts for 35 percent of the total land area with a population of less than 10 percent. The region lacks basic facilities like health, transportation, education due to its complex geographical conditions. The hill ecological region is more populated as compared to the mountain but much lower as compared to the terai region in terms of the area covered. About 43 percent of the total population lives in the hill zone and occupies 42 percent of the total land area. The terai region in the southern part of the country is regarded as an extension of the relatively flat plains of alluvial soil. This area is the most fertile part of the country. While it constitutes only 23 percent of the total land area of Nepal, about half of the population of Nepal lives here. Because of its relatively flat terrain, basic facilities like education, transportation and communication are more developed as compared to other two zones of the country (NDHS, 2011). As a result, the terai region has attracted people from other two zones leading to internal migration.

In terms of administrative purposes, Nepal is divided into five development regions; Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-western, and Far-western. The country is divided into 14 zones and 75 administrative districts. Districts are further divided into smaller units, called village development committees (VDCs) and municipalities. The VDCs are rural areas in general whereas municipalities are urban. Currently, there are 3,915 VDCs and 58 municipalities. Each VDC consists of 9 wards, and the number of wards in each municipality ranges from 9 to 35 (Central Bureau of Statistics, CBS, 2006).

The preliminary results of the Population Census (2011) show that the population of Nepal stands at 26.6 million; males with the population of 12,927,431 and females, 13,693,378, with a population growth rate of 1.4 percent per annum (CBS, 2011b). One of the reasons for higher female population is the migration of male population abroad for labour who were regarded as absentee population during the National Population Census (2011). Large percentage of the population of Nepal is rural. The proportion of children below 15 years of age is 36.7 percent which shows child population of Nepal is very high and a high percentage of dependent population. Nepal's Infant and under-five mortality rates in the past five years are 46 and 54 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively. At these mortality levels, one in every 22 Nepalese children dies before reaching age 1, and one in every 19 does not survive to his or her fifth birthday (NDHS, 2011). The mortality rate of children living in rural areas is higher as compared to urban areas in Nepal. Early marriage of mothers, lack of appropriate health facilities during delivery and influence of traditional birth at home, lack of nutrition and proper care are the main reasons behind the high infant and child mortality rate in Nepal.

2.2. Socio-Economic Context

The Population Census of Nepal (2001) listed 103 ethnic/caste groups, with their own distinct language and culture which shows Nepal is very rich in its ethnic and cultural diversity. A total of 92 mother tongue languages were also identified (Dahal, 2003). However, Nepali language has dominance over other local languages and is the official language of the country. It is also the mother tongue of majority of the population. The vast majority of Nepalese population is Hindu followed by substantial numbers of Buddhists, Muslims, and Kirants and Christians.

Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS, 2010-11) report reveals overall 61 percent of the population aged 6 years and above is literate. Especially, rural women are found less literate as compared to urban ones. There are marked gender disparities in literacy rates: 72 percent of males aged 6 years and older are literate as opposed to 51 percent of females. Gender disparities are worse in the rural- eastern and the central terai, the mountains belt, and in the rural-mid and far western hills (CBS, 2011a). The reasons behind rural illiteracy and gender disparities are lack of educational facilities, low level of awareness towards female education, early marriage and agriculture based economy. With respect to the educational status, females are comparatively more disadvantaged than their male counter parts. Recognizing son as a primary care taker of parents in an old age, parents do not feel giving much importance to daughter's education. People in remote areas have to walk far distance in order to reach school. Females feel themselves insecure to walk a long way to reach school. Even it becomes more difficult to reach school in time completing every household duty. Due to the lack of disable friendly schools in Nepal, it becomes impossible for the people, especially of rural and remote areas to get admitted in school. Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS, 2010-11) reveals parents did not want as the primary reason for not attending school followed by had to work at home, not willing to attend. Other reasons include too young, too expensive, disability and school far way. However, the reason varies according to the regions and social compositions (CBS, 2011a). Overall, the mean year of schooling is 8.1 years which means many people leave school at the primary level of schooling. The urban area has higher mean year schooling than the rural areas (CBS, 2011b). Availability of facilities and increased awareness towards education are the main reasons for higher educational status of the people of urban areas. In terms of type of school attended, Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS, 2010-11) report reveals 72 percent of currently school/college enrolled populations attended government/community school (CBS, 2011a). There is a larger dominance of public schools over private ones. Less or no fees, availability of the scholarship programmes for girls and disadvantaged communities at school are the main reasons. Significant number of population with low household income is attracted towards community schools and colleges.

Nepal continues to be one of the poorest countries in the world, with almost one-third of its population living below the poverty line and with one of the lowest life expectancies in Asia. In

2010, Nepal was ranked 138th position out of 169 countries the Human Development Index (HDI) presented by UNDP. There is a large variation in the rural and urban poverty. As of midyear 2011, it was 8 per cent and 22 per cent respectively (UNESO, 2011). Lower life expectancy, low level of income and education are the hindrances to increasing HDI in Nepal. Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS, 2010-11) report reveals mean per capita income of people in Nepal is Rs. 41,659 (\$ 450) which shows still large numbers of people are under extreme poverty. The proportion of the currently employed population is 78 percent. However, it includes both self-employment and wage-employment. Large number of self-employed population is agriculture based. The share of the wage earners in agriculture is 35 percent while share in non-agriculture is 65 percent. Among non-agriculture industries, concentration of wage earners remains in manufacturing, construction and personal services (CBS, 2011a). Although, there is a declining trend of people depending on agriculture, it is still overwhelming in the rural areas.

2.3. Dalit and Madeshi Groups

‘Dalits’ are the backward caste and ethnic groups who are socially excluded, regarded as ‘untouchable’ and face serious types of discrimination in the society. The National Population Census (2001) showed that the population of ‘Dalit’ is more than 13 percent (CBS, 2006). The tradition occupation of ‘Dalit’ population is well-known for working with metal and leather and working in the house of the landlords. There are various social and cultural taboos performed with ‘Dalits’ by so called upper caste and ethnic groups. Prohibiting them to touch water as well as other materials of daily use by so-called upper castes is common. In case if the water is touched, it needs the purification with gold before it has to be used. Although the current constitutional law of Nepal does not allow any forms of discrimination with any caste and ethnic groups, such practices still persists in the society. Especially in the rural and remote areas of Nepal, it is very high. ‘Dalits’ are deprived of actively participating in the social functions and gatherings, entering the places such as temples and are allowed to get married with other caste and ethnic groups. These type of practices in the society hinder their access to education, health care facilities, employment opportunities, water and as such their ability to secure an adequate standard of living. In some areas of the country, discrimination persists in the school too. ‘Dalit’ and ‘Non-dalit’ children still sit separately at school. In some cases, the ‘Dalit’ children are left

to stand at the back of the classroom, which is not only degrading but also severely compromises, the quality of education (OHCHR, 2011).

‘Madeshis’ are the usually known as the local inhabitants and socially and economically backward ethnic communities residing in the terai region of Nepal. They have their own local language and culture which has higher dominance in those areas which are joined with India. ‘Madeshis’ comprise more than one-fourth of the total population of Nepal. The ‘Madeshi’ people blame the government that it has neglected providing equal rights in terms of education, health services, development programmes and government sectors. They further argue that the government treats them as outsiders because of the similar culture and tradition with the neighboring country India. The occupation of most of the ‘Madeshi’ people is agriculture and each and every family depends on the traditional farming for survival. The social and cultural rituals and taboos such as early marriages among boys and girls and dowry (bride money) system is very high which has hindered continuation in schooling of most of the children. The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) has guaranteed 33 percent reservation for ‘Madeshi’ people in the government sector. However, the condition has not been changed.

2.4. Nepalese Education System

The basis for a modern educational system in Nepal was laid out in the early 1950’s when the country opened up to the outside world and development opportunities. Since then, various reforms were implemented aiming to promote universal and equitable access for all, at all educational levels, especially primary education. Some of the earlier reforms included the National Education System Plan (1971) and the Education for Rural Development Plan during the 1980s (UNESCO, 2011). A significant development in education system was seen after the restoration of the parliamentary democracy in 1991 (Groot, 2007). Based on the experiences of these plans and as a follow up to the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 1990, the country undertook planned interventions in the education sector with the introduction of the Basic and Primary Education Programmes I (1992-1999) and II (1999-2004). Furthermore, in line with the Dakar Framework for Action adopted in 2000, the country prepared the EFA National Plan of Action (2001-2015). Within its overall goals and objectives, the EFA

Programme (2004-2009), and the Secondary Education Support Programme (2003-2009) were implemented (UNESCO, 2011:14). Nepal's Interim Constitution, article 17 ensures the right to education, and a provision that each community shall have the right to get a basic education in its mother tongue and that every citizen shall have the right to free education up to the secondary level.

The formal education system of schools in Nepal exists in three levels. Schools with primary level (1-5) offers one to five years of education, whereas lower secondary schools (6-8) provide further three years of education. Secondary schools (9-10) offer two more years of education. Since the school year 2009, the government of Nepal has begun to implement the School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP), which aims at restructuring school education with basic education; grade 1-8 and secondary education; grade 9-12 (MoE, 2011). In the school education system, primary and lower secondary levels are under the basic education and the secondary and higher secondary levels are under the secondary education in the education system in the country (ibid). Although, it is still in its implementing process due to the lack of effective coordination and guidance.

Large numbers of school are running the ECD (Early Childhood Development) programmes inside the school level for children aged 3-4 years. The prescribed age groups population for different levels of school education is 5-9 for primary, 10-12 for lower secondary and 13-14 for secondary schooling (MoE, 2011). However, large numbers of children enroll in school at later years or after 5 which shows age variation among children studying at the same level. The majority of schools in the country include primary level (1-5), i.e. most of the lower secondary, secondary and higher secondary schools operate primary level. Schools in Nepal are categorized into four types: community-aided; fully supported by the government for teachers' salary and other expenses, community-managed; fully supported by the government for teachers salary and other funds but their management responsibility lies with the community, community-unaided: either getting partial support or no support from the government and the institutional schools widely known as private schools which are supported by parents and trustees (MoE, 2011).

2.5. Status of Children Education

Children educational status can be measured through country's Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) and Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER). NER is defined as the number of children of official school age children enrolled in school as a percentage of the total children of the official school age population. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) is a division of enrolment at certain school level in a particular year by a population of that age group which officially corresponds to that school level.

Nepal government's Flash Report (2011-12) shows the overall Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at primary level is 135.9 percent. The overall Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) at primary level is 95.1 percent respectively. The present status of NER suggests that a total of approximately 173 hundred thousand children (4.9 percent) are out of formal primary schooling, of them majority are girls. Similarly, the total GER at lower secondary level is 100.0 percent. The total NER at lower secondary level is 70.0 percent in the school year 2011-12. The report shows that the NER declines largely for children when they pass through the primary to lower secondary level. More miserable situation is seen in the secondary level schooling. At secondary level on average, the GER is 70.1 percent. Likewise, the average NER at secondary level is 52.1 percent (MoE, 2011).

The government's report shows that Nepal has made significant improvement in school enrollment during the past decades. However, the statistics has improved, it is not satisfactory. Large numbers of children are still out of school or are dropped out due to various reasons. Although there is high enrollment in schools at grade 1, consequently number of children in school decrease with the increase in grades.

2.6. Current Dropout Situation

Current statistics of Nepal shows dropout of children from school in Nepal is very high, especially at the primary level. Nepal's government's Flash Report (2011-12) shows that the total percentage of dropout in primary level is 26 percent. The dropout percentage for lower secondary level is 6.5 percent whereas it is 6.9 percent at the secondary level. The existing trend

reveals that around 40 percent of the children leave schools during various levels of schooling. Only less than 10 out of 100 girls and boys in the higher education age group enter higher education (MoE, 2011). It is evident that as the level of grade increases, proportion of girls dropping out from schools increases significantly. As the age of children increase, shouldering and sharing responsibilities to fulfill the demands of family increases. If we look at the figures of disadvantaged communities like 'Dalits' and indigenous communities, the figure is even worse. Lack of awareness of quality education among these group of children and feelings of exclusion among themselves are important. If we see at the available data, student-teacher ratio (based on the approved positions of the teachers) in community schools is very high, ranging from 35-60 students (MoE, 2011). The situation of the terai region is even worse for children resulting in extremely difficult condition to achieve quality education in a comfortable manner.

There are various factors responsible for dropping out of children from school. Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS, 2010-11) report reveals 25 percent of children dropout due to poor academic progress, while 22 percent report help needed at home as the primary reason for leaving school. Altogether, 17 percent children left school due to marriage. Parent not willing children to send school and higher cost of schooling shared 7 percent each (CBS, 2011a). Poor academic progress of students means either failing exams or higher repetition rates. Children fail exams due to the lack of quality education at schools. Children from poorer families, particularly girls are responsible to perform household chores including agricultural works which increases irregularity to schools and finally affects children's grades. Manandhar and Sthapit (2011) studying causes of dropout of children in primary schools in Nawalparasi district of Nepal, found almost half of the children dropout due to their responsibilities in household chores. Most of these children look after their young siblings when their parents go for work. Cost of education played another important role to keep children out of school. Overall, 35 percent of drop-out was due to inability to purchase the stationary material, dresses, and to pay exam fees because of the poor economic status of parents and followed by 18 percent due to the migration of the family. The same study conducted in Kapilvastu district of Nepal reveals the causes of primary school dropout as household chores and higher cost of schooling. Dropout due to unawareness regarding the importance of education of their parent was also significant (ibid). Manandhar and Staphit (2011) report parent's education as important to keep children at schools rather than other

factors. They further argue that unless parents are educated, it is impossible to keep every child at school to complete full cycle of basis education.

2.7. Child Work and Labour

Almost every child who is dropped out from school, especially in the rural and remote areas and from the poorer families is involved in some forms of work or labour. Nepal ratified the United Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) in 1990 and ILO Convention against Child Labour 1996. Nepalese law defines anyone below 16 years as a child. The Government of Nepal, as reflected in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (1999), views as illegal child labour work performed by children aged less than 14 years, and hazardous work performed by children aged less than 16 years. The law does not, however, deal with family enterprises, domestic work, tea estates, agriculture and the informal sector (State Party Report, 2004). Child labour reflects the socio-economic condition of a country. As the families have to face difficulties arising from economic hardship, it directly affects and has a long term implications on the status of children. In such a dire economic reality the children invariably become the first casualties in that they have to contribute their share of labour so that their families can afford the two square meals a day. Nepal has its share of problem as far as child labour is concerned. We can see our children working everywhere from disorganized to organized sectors (Pantha and Nepal, 2003). NLSS (2010-11) report reveals overall incidence of child labour in Nepal is 42 percent. This is much higher among 10-14 years age group than 5-9 years age group (61 percent as Vs 21 percent). Females have higher incidence than males. Distribution of main sector of child employment shows that around three-fourth of children are in agriculture self-employment sector. Extended economic work employs 20 percent of working children while other sectors have negligible shares (CBS, 2011a). The higher the child labour and work, the greater the dropout of children from school is evident.

2.8. Child Marriage

Nepal in line with UNCRC and other international convention has set the legal age of marriage for girl as 18 years and for boy as 21 years (State Party Report, 2004). However, it is less in

practice. The UNICEF's state of worlds' children 2011 reports marriage before age 19 is 51 percent during year 2001-2009 (UNICEF, 2011). The condition of rural areas is even worse with 54 percent as compared to 44 percent in the urban areas. The current report does not match with the government's latest report. Nepal Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS, 2011) reports among women age 15-19, the proportion of currently married population is 29 percent whereas it is only 7 percent for boys. The percentage of women married by age 15 is 5 percent. Combining both age groups, below 15 and 15-19, the figure shows that altogether 34 percent of the female population before age 19 gets married. However, from the both reports, it can be concluded from that the early marriage in Nepal is rampant, so far for female is very high.

Child marriage has existed since a long time in Nepal. Until about three decades before, it was common to hear stories of children as small as 6 to 8 years old have already been married in matches of parents (Thapa, 1996). As Nepal is a multi-ethnic-lingual country, definition of marriage varies across groups. In some ethnic groups, the actual consummation of marriage may be a long drawn out process culminating in the public acknowledgement of paternity of a child. Studies have found that cultural background, as measured by ethnicity and ecological region of residence has strong effect on marriage behaviour in Nepal. Majority of Nepalese youths who marry early do so according to the wishes of their parents. Nepalese parents have a large influence on when their children get married, especially in rural areas (Choe et. al. 2004). The level of socio-economic development of family has close association with marriage. Parents from the poorer communities feel that if they marry their girl children earlier, economic burden of the family decreases. Similarly, groom's family feel that if son is married earlier, it can add to labour force to the family which can be the added advantage for the family in terms of helping in domestic chores and farming. As still joint family persists in Nepal and large population depends on agriculture, more in rural areas. Dowry system (bride money) in the form of cash and kind is common in most of the caste and ethnic communities. People believe that older and more educated the boys, the more costly the marriage. Girls have to pay huge dowry to the boy's family as bride money according to the level of education and the current job (Thapa, 1996).

However, Thapa (1996) sees socio-economic development as a secondary factor as a reason in increasing level of early marriage for girls. Rather, he related primary reason of girl child

marriage to ethnic group membership. There is higher prevalence of girl child marriage in the terai ecological region of Nepal, where cultural norms and practices are heavily influenced by the culture of North India. People feel that if they do not marry their daughters in early age, it is extremely difficult to find boy in later ages. Boys do not like mature girls to marry (ibid).

2.9. Study Area: Rupandehi District

Rupandehi, one of the six districts of Lumbini zone lies in the Western Development Region of Nepal. Rupandehi District Profile (2007) in Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2007) shows that the total land area of the district is 1360 square kilometers with India in the south, Nawalparasi district in the east, Kapilbastu district in the west and Palpa district in the north. Rupandehi district occupies an area from 83°12'16 " to 83° 38 '16" east longitude and 27° 20'00" to 27° 47' 25" north longitude; elevations range from 90 to 1,229 meters. The district is widely known for the birth place of Lord Buddha, the profounder of Buddhism. The district was named by his mother who was very beautiful and known as 'Rupmati' which meant beautiful woman. The district consists of 69 VDCs and 2 municipalities (CBS, 2007). The district consists of fertile arable land and the main occupation of the people is agriculture. However, urban areas consist of some industries as well

Central Berau of Statistics (CBS, 2007) report based on Population Census (2001) reports that the total population of Rupandehi district is 708,492. The annual population growth rate of the district is 3.05 percent which come to be much higher compared to the national statistics. Higher population growth in the district is attributed to the mass migration from the hilly areas rather than the birth. The total population of children below 14 years is 279903 which indicate higher child population in the district. More than 80 percent of the district population is rural. The district is relatively developed in terms of basic facilities like hospitals, markets, schools and transportation as compared to other districts of the terai region, although the facilities are more concentrated in urban areas. Rural areas of the district still lack such basic facilities. The southern part of the district is deprived in terms of facilities of education, health and transportation where the population is mainly dominated by backward ethnic communities like

‘Madeshi’ and ‘Muslims’ and disadvantaged and marginalized communities like ‘Dalits’ (Rupandehi District Profile, in CBS, 2007) .

Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2007) report based on Population Census (2001) shows the overall literacy rate of Rupandehi district is 66.24 percent. The male literacy rate is much higher as compared to females. The Flash Report (2011-12) shows that the overall Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) at primary level is 118.8 percent with a marked decrease at lower secondary and secondary level (MoE, 2011). Similar condition is observed in the Net Enrollment Ratio (NER) of the district. Out of the total primary age school population, 92.6 percent are enrolled. There is a huge decrease in the net enrollment at lower secondary and secondary level respectively. The data shows lower GER and NER as compared to the national statistics (MoE, 2011).

Regarding dropout of children from school, the total percentage of dropout in primary level is around 22 percent. The percentage of the dropout has decreased with the increase in the level of grade. The current statistics shows about one-third of the school children who are admitted at primary level dropout from schools until they reach grade 8 (MoE, 2011). The percentage of dropout is higher in the southern rural belts of the district where the population is largely dominated by socially and economically disadvantaged communities. Although education facilities such as availability of schools are good enough, there are several other factors hindering the level of education of children at schools. Poor infrastructural facilities at school, low income of families because of high dependence on agriculture and labour and socio-cultural traditions play negative role to uplift the educational status of children.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

This chapter presents the theories as the basis for the analysis and discussion for my study. It provides a strong foundation to build up my methodology and research methods for my data collection which realises children as competent and independent beings and should be studied from their own rights and perspectives. It criticizes the traditional methods adopted to study children through adult notions giving fewer values to children and their voices.

3.1. Social Studies of Childhood

Before 80's, studies on children were dominated by two theoretical approaches, developmental psychology and socialization. After this period, scholars from sociology and anthropology started to challenge these mainstream approaches (James et. al. 1998, Jenks, 1996, Qvortrup, 1994, Prout & James, 1990). For instance, Hardman (1973) gave explanation about childhood beyond the psychological explanation from anthropological perspectives. She said that childhood is self-regulating and autonomous phenomenon. Children represent one level of a society's beliefs, values, and social interactions. As a result of these critical approaches to mainstream studies, the new paradigm of the Social Studies of Childhood emerged. Prout & James (1990:8-9), represent six points as a rough outline of the potential which the 'emergent paradigm' may hold for the study of childhood which states childhood as socially constructed; childhood as a variable of social analysis which cannot be separated from other variables like class, gender or ethnicity; children's social relationships and culture are worthy of study in their own right, independent of the perspective and concern of adults; Children as active enough in the construction of their own social world and are not the passive subjects of social structures and processes; children should be studied through ethnographic method which allows children to actively participate in the production of sociological data and the new paradigm of childhood sociology is a process in reconstruction of childhood in society. Scholars in this research paradigm take children as the centre of research while they actively participate in their day to day lives.

The three main branches of Social Studies of Childhood are: (De) construction Sociology of Childhood, Structural Sociology of Childhood and Sociologies of Childhood (Actor-oriented Research).

3.1.1. (De) construction Sociology of Childhood

(De) construction sociology of childhood focuses on childhood as an idea constructed in the society. Knowledge, ideas, concepts, through language internalized in a society defines what childhood is or how childhood is viewed. In other words, according to Alanen, (2001), in (De) construction sociology of childhood, the notions of child, children and childhood, all are viewed as discursive formations through which images, ideas and knowledge of children and childhood are conveyed in the society. Sociologists in this approach attempt to deconstruct the formations of childhood in societies which include cultural ideas, knowledge, models, images and practices of children and childhood and critically analyze theories and societal practices about children taken for granted (Alanen, 2001).

The traditional development psychology is heavily criticized in the Social Studies of Childhood. Piaget's model of developmental stages consists of making use of child psychology in order to find the solution to general psychological problems. Within the developmental psychology framework, children are adults in training and their age is linked to physical and cognitive developments (Bass, 2006). Children travel through a developmental path taking them in due time to a state of being adult members of the society in which they live (Kehily, 2004). Children are therefore viewed as learners with potential at a certain position or stage in a journey to child to an adult status (Bass, 2006). This approach of Piaget has been largely criticized by social researchers stating that the developmental psychology sees children as potential subjects who can only be understood along the child-to-adult continuation (James & Prout, 1990; Jenks, 2004; Lee, 2001).

The typical characteristic of (De) constructivism is that it rejects universalism. Boocock and Scott (2005) argue that developmental psychologists have not been able to reach on the consensus of relative importance of physical, psychological, social, and cultural factors in

shaping child's development. (De) construction sociology also rejects naturalism. Scholars in this paradigm believe that it is the meanings what the society gives more than biological characteristics of childhood that affects children. The approach emphasizes the power of knowledge and language on the beliefs and practice of the society on childhoods. Qvortrup (1994) argues that developmental psychology describes children as human becoming rather than human beings. The approach also believes on active and competent character of children.

Piaget regards children's play as non-serious, tribal activity in as much as it displays an emphasis on assimilation over accommodation (Jenks, 1996:27). Criticizing Piaget's explanation, Jenks (1996) argues that play is indeed an important component of the child's work as a social member. Jenks (1996) states that the idea of childhood is not natural but a social construct and childhood's status is constituted in particular socially located form of discourse.

3.1.2. Structural Sociology of Childhood

Alanen (2001) states that a structural approach presents childhood as being in continuous interplay with class and gender and other social structures like family. Childhood has its own characteristics that differ from other socially constructed structures. According to Qvortrup (2002), sociologists studying structure of childhood should try to study childhood by looking at the dynamic interplay between childhood and other societal structure. Quortrup (2002) shows the general observation of the relationship between childhood and adult society by expressing an uneasiness and ambiguity of our culture towards childhood. He categorizes the relationship by stating that although children are supposed to benefit from being with their parents, children and parents live more and more of their everyday lives apart from each other. Quortrup (2002) views that children lives are more and more regulated by their parents and most of the political and economic decisions are made without their consultations. Children are denied of making their own decisions of attending school. It is difficult for poor parents to fulfill every need of their children. Children are also categorized as the least important beings in the society. Children's voices are not heard by the adult dominated society. Therefore, children are still in trouble although society knows the importance of children as compared before (Qvortrup, 2002:45)

Qvortrup (2002) points the two major characteristics of children in the modern world. Although children attend school for considerable time now days, they are regarded as minors in society. Children and childhood should be studied in terms of societal structure; neither by age nor by individual characteristics. Although children transfer to adult biologically, childhood still permanently exists in the social structure. The assumption behind childhood as one social structure is that children in a given society have something in common.

Therefore, as one structural social category, it is believed that it is better to study the social life of childhood by comparing it with other social structure, among different childhood in different geographical regions. In relation to generation, Alanen (2001) perceive generational analysis as important factor in Social Studies of Childhood. Generation is important factor to see the relationship between childhood and adulthood. Bass (2006) states that social structural approaches to childhood studies can be divided into two areas, those that distinguish children's experience by age status and those that distinguish children's experience by generational status.

In societies where few institutional arrangements aside from the family-based organizations exist to care for individuals during these periods of dependency, the norms and values of a community ensure that children were cared for in their early years and in turn have to take responsibility for their parents in their old age (Kabeer et. al. 2003). I realise parent's decision to educate the male child over daughter depends upon the assumption of parent's viewing son as their primary caregivers. The decision to educate children represents a significant shift in the intergenerational contract for a number of reasons. First of all, it requires parents to make a substantial investment of resources and to postpone perhaps by several years the age at which children start to contribute to the household economy. For families living on extreme poverty, with very few resources to fall back on, such a postponement may jeopardize their ability to meet their basic needs. Children are most likely to start work at an early age, initially in the form of expenditure saving and subsequently in income generating activities as a beginning in sharing the burden of their own costs of living. The intergenerational contract in poorer families requires children to shoulder some of the responsibility of meeting the basic needs of the family and in turn gave them some say in the running of the household (Kabeer et. al. 2003). Qvortrup (2002) sees differences in children's everyday life between developing and developed world. Children's

labour in developing world is more valuable and recognized as a constructive activity that has economic value. Therefore, it is harder for adults today to acknowledge that school work is a valuable activity (ibid).

3.1.3. Sociologies of Childhood (Actor-oriented Research)

Sociologies of childhood focus children as active and competent human beings. Hardman (1973) used participant observation in the study of children in a primary school and built the idea that children should be studied in their own right and treated as having agency. In her study, she found that children represent a level of a societal beliefs, values, and social interactions shaping them and being shaped by them. According to Alanen (2001), children should be taken as the units of research and the study should focus directly on children and their life conditions, activities, relationships, knowledge, and experiences. Children should be approached as social actors and active participants in the social worlds as well as the participants in the formation of their own childhood. My study, in the line of sociology of childhood has attempted to include the voices of children to study daily habits and the reasons of being dropped out from school from their own perspectives.

3.2. Minority Group Approach

Minority group child approach is the 'adult-child' approach which sees children as essentially indistinguishable from adult's discrimination, marginalized like women and ethnic groups, and studies children as active subjects (James et. al. 1998). Minority group approach explores children's perceptions of the adult-centred world in which they participate and is often concerned with children's rights. *One area of study which is particularly relevant to the minority group child approach, perceiving children as similar to adults but more likely to exploited, is that of children's work* (Punch, 2003:7). The majority world children tend to be studied from the perspective of the minority group child because most of the literatures about childhood are located within the context of children's work (ibid). As my study focuses on children of majority world where children's social and economic discrimination prevails, I see the minority group approach relevant in studying children.

3.3. Social Capital Theory

The two determinates responsible for children well-being are ‘family income’ and ‘parental education’. These resources have been titled as financial and human capital respectively (Meier, 1999). However, the third one as suggested by Coleman (1988) has equal effect on children wellbeing, especially in terms of achieving education. Coleman developed the concept of ‘social capital’ where he states that unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure relations between actors and among actors. According to Coleman (1988:98)

Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, they facilitate certain aspect of social structures and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure.

Smith et. al. (1992:75) providing the importance of social capital in studying dropout states that *one of the more promising theoretical approaches to the study of the problem of high school dropouts is social capital theory. Social capital refers to social networks and social interaction that facilitates educational attainment.* Social capital may occur both within and out-side the family. Coleman suggests a relationship between a child, his/ her family, friends, community, and school could translate into higher academic achievement (Meier, 1999). Within the family, social capital is represented by the amount of positive parent-child interaction which allows children to translate the financial and human capital present in the family into human capital or some other attribute that in-creases well-being (Coleman, 1988, Teachman et. al. 1996). Outside the family, density of social interactions among parents in different families and among parents and institutions in the community, particularly schools, serves to increase closure in intergenerational relations (ibid). Social capital exists in the norms, social networks, and interactions between adults that facilitate or support educational attainment at the community level (Smith et. al.1992).

Palas (1986) suggests three broad theoretical orientations that emerged to account for dropping out behavior as: academic performance, accelerated role transitions, and social disability. However, I assume the first two orientations to be important in my study. The academic

performance perspective contends that dropouts tend to lack the requisite ability for academic success. The accelerated role transition view suggests that lack of maturity in shouldering responsibilities - as when taking on a full-time job or getting married while in school-creates role strain that precipitates dropping out (Smith et. al. 1992).

Isreal & Beaulieu (2004) further simplified the social capital theory by dividing into different categories. Firstly, they describe 'family social capital' by saying that family structure and resources affect the extent of social capital. Coleman (1990) states that family social capital represents the norms, social networks, and relationships between parents and children which are valuable for children while growing up. Family income and educational attainment of parents represent important resources that can influence a child's academic aspirations and success. *The greater the socio-economic resources present in a home, the better the academic performance and school completion rates of students* (Isreal & Beaulieu, 2004:37). I assume that if the family lack socio-economic recourses, it becomes difficult for parents to give continuation to children's schooling.

'Interactive social capital' within the family deals with the scope and quality of a parent's relationship with their children. It includes parent's nurturing activities, such as helping children with their homework, discussing important school activities with them, and expressing high educational aspirations for them (Downey, 1995). I assume that if parents are uneducated, they might not feel the importance of educating children. Those parents expect the ultimate benefit for their children in an early age and push them to work. Families with high educational expectations choose to spend more family time on activities that support learning for children (Isreal & Beaulieu, 2004). Family social capital and academic achievement can be moderated by geography as well. Rural families tend to have larger number of children with limited education and income that fall below the poverty line which affect the quality and quantity of parent-child interaction and, in turn, children's academic achievement and aspirations (Beaulieu & Israel, 1997). Large number of siblings in a family might create difficulties for parents to fulfill every demand such as schooling of children.

‘School social capital’ includes the composition of the student body, the size and resource base of school, and the nature of the climate evident in the school and classroom (Stockard & Mayberry, 1992). Smaller schools often tend to have lower student-teacher ratio, teachers can give closer attention as per the needs of students, and consequently students have higher academic performance. Increased school size is often associated to greater absenteeism of students, lower academic performance, lower participation in school activities, and lower high school completion (Beaulieu & Israel, 1997). I assume that the attraction towards schooling and education decreases with the increase in higher pupil-student ratio, lack of quality teaching learning behaviour and physical facilities available at school. ‘Community social capital’ which includes community structure, available resources and socio-economic capacity determine children’s schooling whether high or low (Beaulieu & Israel, 1997).

3.4. Poverty and Social Exclusion

Poverty can be seen through the different approaches. Wagle (2002) states literature is dominated by three approaches to thinking about poverty i.e. economic welfare, capabilities and social exclusion. The three models of poverty can be imposed as ‘create access model’ which states that absolute poverty delays entry into school, social exclusion describes the best way why children going school dropout at an early school days and the capability approach provides the clues why children dropout after basic education (Redmond, 2008).

Redmond (2008:68) states ‘economic welfare’, perhaps best defined as material well-being represented by command over resources, typically a household’s or individual’s income, their consumption, or another monetary or strictly material estimate of their well-being. The great majority of poverty analysis and debate has taken place within the economic welfare paradigm, and indeed, within the even narrower household income and consumption paradigm. To most people, poverty and deprivation together, is equated with a shortage of personal income of the family (ibid). It is evident that income of parents determines the adequate standard of the family which had direct effect on children. Parents having lower income might be unable to provide every facility to children including the child’s best interest. Among the poor, irregular incomes often results in withdrawal of children from school and ends in work. Family income is often

seasonal among the low income families (Bourdillon, 2006). Failure to attend school is usually due to poverty rather than cultural values (ibid).

The ‘capability approach’ is inherently value-laden, and gives some clear directions as to what an ‘adequate standard of living’ might be. Capability suggests that children who die or who are malnourished or who cannot read or write are capability deprived in its minimum base (Redmond, 2008).

Sen (2006:35) states capabilities of relevance are not only those that relate to avoiding premature mortality of children, being in good health, being schooled and educated, and other such basic concerns, but also various social achievements, appearing in public without shame and being able to take part in the life of the community.

Theorists have different versions to deal with the definition of social exclusion. Atkinson (1998:13-14) identifies three elements that appear vital in the debates of social exclusion. He firstly defines social exclusion as a relative concept where people are excluded from a particular community or society at a particular place and time. Secondly, as an agency where exclusion implies an act, with an agent or agents. Finally, he links social exclusion to dynamics saying that people are excluded not just because they are currently without a job or income but because they have little prospects for the future. By ‘prospects’, he means not only people’s own but also those of their children. While studying the dimensions of exclusion applied to children, Micklewright (2002) provides a check list that to which children should be compared, in what geographical space should children be compared and who excludes children. Despite the low family income, other types of disadvantage, such as low caste status, can also push more children to work. (Expressed appreciation of education may be contradicted by aggressive behaviour towards school and teacher (Bourdillon, 2006). Cultural norms and systems in which work rather than school is perceived to be appropriate to children affect schooling (Kabeer, 2003).

Talking about the geographical space, Abebe (2007) sees differences in rural children and states that children are responsible to productive and domestic works according to the social system. Children are important part of the family in terms of social and economic settings. The economy

of rural family is largely based on agriculture. Therefore, large numbers of rural children are engaged in farming and household chore in rural Nepal. In terms of responsibility for excluding children, Micklewright (2002) lists the following agents: parents (either through deliberate action or neglect), schools and education systems, employers (either directly in the youth labor market or through employment of parents), national and local governments and finally, children can exclude themselves.

4. Methodology

This chapter discusses about the research methods based on the theoretical perspectives and procedures of data collection used in my field work. The data collection took place from June 20 to August 20, 2011 in the southern rural areas of Rupandehi district of Nepal.

4.1. Qualitative Methodology

Kitchin & Tate (2000:6) define methodology as *a coherent set of rules and procedures which can be used to investigate a phenomenon or situation*. Methodology focuses on how research should be conducted by using appropriate techniques and methods, in order to achieve the intended goals. The choice of methodology to carry out a given research largely depends on the purpose of the research, the research questions that will be asked and the type of information gathered (ibid).

As the major focus of my study is with children, research with children is associated with qualitative research (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers. Qualitative research normally looks for patterns of interrelationship between many categories rather than the sharply delineated relationship between a limited set of them (Punch, 1998).

The qualitative researcher uses a lens that permits a much less precise vision of a much boarder strip (McCracken, 1988:16). Using the qualitative research method with children and teachers helped to establish the close relationship between the participants and me, as a researcher. It too allowed me to understand and experience the reality which makes researcher feel easier to interact with the respondents. Using qualitative approach in collecting data enabled me to elicit dropped out problem from children and teacher's perspectives, reasons and possible consequences behind the dropout of children from school, daily habits of dropped out children and the possible ways to reduce the problem of dropout.

4.2. Researching with Children

New perspectives and ideas working with children and childhood have called for new and innovative research methods. Punch (2002) states that using child centered methods which are more sensitive and are associated to children's competencies and interests can enable children to feel much more comfortable with an adult researcher. The New Social Studies of Children and Childhood focusing children as beings rather than becomings and should be studied in their own right from their own perspectives has been made practical.

Solberg (1996) experienced that doing research with children is different as researching with adults. Researching with children needs more trust which is more challenging. Child researchers have to give a very close attention to research process in encounters between researchers and researched (ibid). Therefore, data collection in my study is based on qualitative methods, so often called participatory approach in childhood research. According to Cahill (2004) and Kesby (2000:423), participatory methods generate 'better' knowledge than other as well as access and valorize lots of previously neglected knowledge and provide more clear understanding of complex social phenomena (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). As, Prout (2005), states current childhood research is broadly justified by two key measures; that children should be studied for themselves and that the researchers should be attentive to the unusual features specificities of individual childhoods as geographically, historically and socially situated (Gallacher & Gallagher, 2008). Children participation involves a changing emphasis in research methods and topics. Recognizing children as subjects rather than objects of research entails accepting that children can speak in their own right and report valid views and experiences (Alderson, 2000).

Currently, researchers are using a range of methods that privilege children as the subjects of research, such as participant observation, focus group discussion, small group discussion, interviews and structured activities (Mauthner, 1997). I too have used the methods which are familiar and convenient to childhood research such as observation, interview and focus group interview (discussion).

4.3. Selection of the Study Area and Informants

The study was conducted in the rural and remote areas which were highly affected by the dropout problem. Most of the child respondents were from backward and disadvantage ethnic communities like Madhesi, Muslim, Dalit and local indigenous groups like 'Tharu' in addition with few children from other caste and ethnic groups. My data collection comprised a total of 20 children including 10 boys and girls each. Twelve children were selected for individual interview whereas the remaining 8 children participated in focus group interview (discussion). The age group of the child informants was from 6 to 16 years. The reason for using this age group is that large numbers of children drop out of school during these years and the legal age of children to get admitted at grade 1 is 5 years in Nepal. Apart from children, four head teachers and four teachers were also my informants. The main reason of including teachers and head teachers as my respondents was the close relationship of teachers with children when children were at school. I believed that teachers also can be useful informants in terms of studying dropped out children from school.

4.4. Accessing the Informants

I started my role of getting access of the informants soon after reaching the study area. As the study area was already known to me, my first aim was to identify the real dropped out children. Inquiry with the local people was not only sufficient to make sure whether children were actually dropped out from schools. Unfortunately, schools were closed in the beginning stage of my data collection process because it was summer season and every school had summer and rainy vacation in a glance. It made even more difficult to know whether children I found were dropped out from school or not. Every child at that time was out of school comprising both dropped out and school going. To make sure that children were dropped out from school, first of all I had to introduce myself. I introduced myself as a student studying abroad and have arrived in the study area for the field work with an aim to study children who are dropped out from school. I had to spend more time with children and see whether they had some interest in schooling because students do have homework during the school vacation. My practice was to walk with children and watch their daily activities during the whole day. Children who were continuing schooling gave their time for education and children who were dropped out focused in other activities apart

from study. I asked the name with children and verified their name with teachers and head teachers in the nearby schools to confirm that whether they are currently attending school or not. These procedures although was a bit lengthy, helped me to confirm that my informants were dropped out children.

It was easy to get access of teachers and head teachers as compared to children during my field work. However, due to summer and rainy vacation in schools and informants being busy in farming, I had to give more time to arrange appointment with teachers and head teachers for an interview. Several attempts were made through phone calls. In some cases, I had to wait several days in order to have their leisure time. Finally, I was able to manage and started the data collection with teachers and head teachers. Most of the interviews were conducted at homes while some head teachers invited me at school for interviews.

4.5. Data Source and Methods of Data Collection

4.5.1. Observation

Observation is the basis of all good research. Observation may be structured or unstructured and is vital for understanding the context of data, as well as for writing an interesting and believable research report (Ennew et. al. 2009). Participatory observation is a form of qualitative research method that uses observation among peoples own natural environment (Kristiansen & Krogstrup, 1999). According to Atkinson & Hammersley (1994), in some sense all social research consist of some form of participant observation in that it is impossible to study the social world without being part of it. Participatory observation can be defined as *a relatively intensive social interaction between the researcher and the subjects, he or she studies in the subjects own social environment* (Kristiansen & Krogstrup, 1999:7).

I had to travel from Norway to my home country for the field work and did not have sufficient amount of time to totally get involved in participant observation. In traditional ethnographic research, researchers spend a long time, for at least one year in the study area collecting data

through participant observation which shows it consumes huge amount of time (Mack et. al. 2005). I collected the relevant data using more unstructured observation and less participant observation. The research site was also familiar to me because I belonged to the same area where I grew up. It helped me as I did not require much time to understand the contextual phenomenon including culture, society and behaviour.

After identifying the actual dropped out children, I started studying children. The aim of my observation was to study their daily habits. I used three different times for my observation schedule. At morning I used to start observing children from 7 am to 10 am as children already get up during this time. In the noon, I started at 1 pm until 5 pm and in the evening I observed children from 7 pm to 9 pm. My observation focused on what children do during the whole day after they discontinued schooling. I found an observation procedure quite relevant to understand the lives of dropped out children from my own experiences. I wrote notes in my note book at the very time I observed because it is difficult to memorize and document the data later. I stayed in the house of some children which helped me to further understand and give a closer look at their daily life. While observing children, I was mostly nearer to them. As it was the farming season and children were busy in farming, I travelled to the farm land where they were currently working. While observing children at home, I helped children in performing the household chore in order to develop the closeness with them. Children even treated me as a friend and were happy when I was with them. At the time, children played, I even played games with them which provided opportunity to understand children's perspectives (Solberg, 1996). I never tried to influence and evaluate children when they were involved in their duties. I was aware that influencing and intervening children might affect children to their duties what they actually wish. Intervening children may be an ethical requirement, just as nonintervention typically is important in participant observation (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988).

Observing children helped me to understand children more apart from other research methods. Ven Blerk (2006) states children sometimes are less confident in speaking as compared to adults and observation is useful in understanding respondent's life through interaction and understanding them (Apentik & Parpart, 2006).

4.5.2. Individual Interview

The second method I used in my field work was an individual interview. As I had knowledge and understandings of socio-economic and cultural context of the study area, interview became a vital tool for me to gather valuable information in my field work.

Interview is a means of data gathering information through conversation between researcher and participant (Crang & Cook, 2007). Along with other methods, the most common method used in researching with children is the interview in one form or another. Interview gives the opportunity to step into deeper and related issue of a particular topic and also allow a more thorough examination of experience, feeling or opinion that close questions never hope to capture (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Interview gradually is becoming the most important method that researchers use to explore different forms of qualitative research questions and is now the most widely applied research tool in qualitative research (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). Interviews are very important for providing empirical data about people's social world by asking people to talk about their social condition (ibid). A move towards interviews can be seen a result of the move away from the idea of the objective truth being out there for the researcher to gather. Rather, to explore how people interpret different everyday life events, how they perceive, understand and experience them, and how their practices are affected by their interpretation, we have to actually interact with our informants letting them participate in the construction of knowledge (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

I realised semi-structured interview as important for my field work because follow up questions were necessary to go into the deeper aspect of children along with the interview guide. Interview guide was the most important which I had to prepare before leaving to the study area and start the field work. As I was planning for semi-structured interview, I gave some space to include related issues of dropout on the process of interviewing (Grey, 2004). The researcher conducting semi-structured interviews is freer as other than conducting a structured interview in which the interviewer does not have to be bound to a detailed interview guide (Kajornboon, 2004:75) But I was aware that the interview guide should not go beyond research questions.

Table 1. Child Respondents in Individual Interview

S.N.	Participants	Gender	Age
1.	Participant-1	Boy	14
2.	Participant-2	Girl	10
3.	Participant-3	Girl	13
4.	Participant-4	Girl	14
5.	Participant-5	Boy	8
6.	Participant-6	Girl	9
7.	Participant-7	Boy	15
8.	Participant-8	Boy	13
9.	Participant-9	Girl	7
10.	Participant-10	Boy	10
11.	Participant-11	Girl	11
12.	Participant-12	Boy	16

Interview was conducted in ‘Awadhi’ Language; a local language spoken in the western terai region of Nepal. Respondents found much easier to answer in their mother language. I too felt easier to communicate in the same language with children because it was my local language. The use of local language with children helped me to gather more information and bring the respondents even more closely and friendly to me.

My major aim was to assure that children are feeling comfortable with me during an interview so that they feel free to talk with me (Kavle, 1996). As the interview proceeded, I found children more close and open in the conversation which was very important to fulfill the goal of my research work. Before starting the formal interview, I gave my basic introduction explaining who I was, where do I come from and what is the main purpose of my field work. My questions were descriptive which I started through ‘tell me’ and ‘how’ rather than ‘why’. When the responses were contradictory with one related with another, I tried to make the questions clearer and simple so that children could understand and response in a better way.

Life form interview method also known as ‘Recall’ was an inspiration in my interview guide. Social, psychological and medical research with human beings often collect data based on people’s memories of things that have happened to them (Ennew et. al. 2009:5.24). In recall method, participants are asked to remember past events- either specific events or routine activities- often using a chart or table and sometimes recording events immediately after they have occurred (ibid). I used this method in order to recall the daily habits and activities of children based on a routine. The aspects covered were what children did the day before yesterday, yesterday and today since they get up in the morning till going to bed at night.

After finishing interview with children, my task was to interview head teachers and teachers. I believed that teachers and head teachers have closer look at the problem of dropout. They stay with school children for the whole day during school hours and are aware of most of the conditions children face in the process of dropout. I felt much easier to introduce myself and start interviewing them because they were already known to me.

Table 2. Teachers and Head Teachers in Individual Interview

S.N.	Participants	Gender	Position	Level
1.	Participant-1	Male	Head Teacher	Secondary (1-10)
2.	Participant-2	Male	Head Teacher	Secondary (1-10)
3.	Participant-3	Male	Head Teacher	Lower-Secondary (1-8)
4.	Participant-4	Male	Teacher	Primary (1-5)
5.	Participant-5	Female	Teacher	Lower-Secondary(1-8)
6.	Participant-6	Female	Teacher	Primary (1-5)

4.5.3. Focus-group Interview (Discussion)

As individual interviews are generally one-to one interview, now a day there have been an increasing use of focus group interviews (Kavale & Brinkmann, 2009). Several authors have recommended interviewing children in pairs or groups (Einarsdottir, 2005). A focus group interview (discussion) consists of 6 to 10 people led by a moderator (Kavale & Brinkmann, 2009). Focus group discussion is characterized by a non-directive style of interviewing, encouraging a variety of viewpoints on the topic in focus for a group (ibid). A focus group discussion is a formal, facilitated discussion on a specific topic ('focus'). Focus group discussion is useful for identifying the knowledge, ideas, values, beliefs and attitudes of the group (Ennew et. al. 2009).

Preparing an interview guide for the group interview (discussion) was the major task before heading to the study area. I formulated the questions in a way which can be easier for the children to understand the concept and would be enough to discuss with each other. Questions were guided in a sequence following an order of the reasons of being dropped out, possible consequences, daily habits of children and the possible ways to reduce the problem of dropout.

During the field work, I combined both focus group interview and discussion to gather relevant data. I found focus group interview (discussion) as important to fulfill my research objectives along with an individual interview and observation. I conducted focus group interview (discussion) comprising 8 children. I felt that doing group interview might be challenging and difficult to handle alone. I hired a person to help me in the process who was an undergraduate student and of the local area. His role was to gather children in a particular place and hold the digital recorder while children were discussing. I had to give close a look at each child and note every conversation in a note book.

At the beginning of the focus group interview (discussion), I informed my helper to gather children in a certain place. I selected the place which was usually used as a social gathering spot. It was an open place where respondents were called. A total of 8 children were invited. Less number of children was present in the given time (morning) due to work. After waiting for few hours, I witnessed children start gathering. There were even more children present than the actual

numbers who showed interest to participate in the group interview. It made me difficult to deny those children and tell them to stay out of the group discussion. I asked them to stay in the same place with other respondents. Although, their voices were heard, focus was given to the actual respondents. I sometimes found children talking to each other rather discussing on a given issue which I feel as common characteristics of children. At the same time, I introduced interesting topics such as children's experience in the school and asked them to share which made easier to keep their interest in the specific issue. A surprising fact was that children were found more friendly and talkative than the individual interview which was sometimes challenging to manage. I sometimes had to switch off the recorder and listened children for some minutes when the issues were discussed which were not related to my research. After few minutes, I used to raise the topic related to my interview guide and children were involved in the discussion again. During the group interview, I managed the break interval when breakfast (tea and biscuits) was served. I noticed children being very happy having the breakfast and was even more energetic in the discussion later. The respondents were aged from 6 to 14 years who were dropped out from schools in the recent times.

Table 3. Child Respondents in Group Interview (Discussion)

S.N.	Participants	Sex	Age
1.	Participant-1	Boy	6
2.	Participant-2	Girl	12
3.	Participant-3	Boy	12
4.	Participant-4	Girl	13
5.	Participant-5	Boy	9
6.	Participant-6	Boy	7
7.	Participant-7	Girl	14
8.	Participant-8	Girl	8

4.6. Ethical Consideration

While conducting research particularly with children, ethics is an important issue that researchers are supposed to deal with (Young & Barrett, 2001). Morrow (2008:51) states that *ethics in*

research is related to the application of the system of moral principles to prevent harming or wronging others, to be good, respectful and fair. Conducting research with dropped out children needs serious ethical considerations which have to be taken into account. It includes consent, confidentiality and anonymity.

To get started with my field work, I had to get consent from the local officials of my study area. A valid letter from NOSEB was used to introduce and make the authorities sure that I am involved in the data collection for my studies. Actor oriented research as one of the branches of the 'New Social Studies of Childhood' sees children as active enough in participating and creating their own social world (James et. al. 1998). After identifying the child respondents, getting consent from children and parents was important. An ethical consideration includes informing children as well as parents and related stakeholders about the goals and methods of the study, what they would gain or lose if they participate and also are free to refuse. Both parents and children were assured that it depends on children whether to take part in the data collection process as the respondents had their own rights to actively participate in research. I included those children who were interested to be a part of my field work. I also assured that participating in the data collection process is voluntary and children are able to leave at any time as they wish. Confidentiality about the respondents was cared. They were made sure that their identities will be confidential. Respondents were also assured that information given by them will only be used in research work. I was aware that respondents should not be harmed or damaged in any way by the research (Gray, 2004).

Digital recorder was used for an individual and focus group interview (discussion). I was allowed by the respondents to use the digital recorder machine which was very helpful to record every aspects of the interview. However, one of the respondents (girl) hesitated to give an interview in the recorder stating that she does not want to record her name. She stated that her parents will be angry with her if she talks anything wrong about her family. I had to make sure that this girl's name will not be recorded. I found large number of respondents interested talking in the recorder as well. Individual interview was conducted in a place where no other individuals were allowed to avoid any possibilities of influencing respondents and diverting their opinions. During the group interview, every possible measure was adopted to keep adults far from their involvement and children were requested to answer of their own.

Informed consent was also taken from teachers and head teachers and they were secured that any information provided by them will be kept confidential and only be used for research purpose.

4.7. Fieldwork Challenges and Limitations during Field Work

Being a local resident, conducting field work was relatively easier for me. Pre-known culture, language and the habits of people were helpful during my fieldwork. However limitation of time and moving according to the defined schedule was always challenging. Regular contact with officials and local people made a bit easier to get started my work. I started keeping contact with the concerned people before I started my field work.

However, it was tough to finish the data collection within one and half month period with limited resource. Excessive heat of around or more than 40 degree during the day time was another challenge which I faced just after reaching from Norway which was much colder. It was a rainy season and every people were busy in farming which made my work a bit difficult to reach the respondents. As noted, school were closed, therefore, it took more time to identify the actual dropped out children. Children were busy in farming along with household works which forced me to change my pre-designed schedule. As children had to spend more time in interview, sometimes they too felt bored to answer. I even felt that it is always difficult to manage time for such person who is going to be with children for limited time during their very busy period.

Expectation of rewards and gifts by informants was another challenge which I faced during the course of my field work. Respondents as well as their parents were very curious that I will be helping them by some means if they are going to be my participants. I had to make sure that I am a student and has come for the field work for my studies.

I have to face some challenges to get secondary data from the governmental and non-governmental organizations. I was compelled to visit the organizations several times because the related authorities were often reluctant to response which was time consuming. However, most of relevant information was available in internet and less in books and article forms which was helpful to get access to the secondary data.

5. Dropped out Children: Reasons, Possible Consequences and Daily Habits

This chapter analyzes the data of my field research covering the facts, findings, ideas and concepts I collected from my participants who are dropped out children from schools. Along with dropped out children, views and suggestions of teachers and head teachers who are directly or indirectly linked with the problem of the dropout have been discussed. I have related my analysis with the relevant literatures and theories where necessary. The areas of my analysis and discussion in this chapter covers the reasons of dropout of children from schools and its possible consequences and the daily habits of children after being dropped out from school. Reasons of dropout covers areas such as why children quit school before completing full cycle of school education. Possible consequences focus on the positive and negative effects which children are experiencing and will experience in future based on children's perspectives and experiences followed by teachers and head teachers. Daily habits of dropped out children attempt to find out what children do in their daily life after discontinuing schooling.

5.1. Socio-Demographic Status of Dropped Out Children

A total of 20 children were sampled for my field work with equal representation given to each gender (10 each) with age range of 6 to 16 years. Large numbers of child respondents were from extended families whose numbers of family members were eight or more than eight. Few children were from the families which were small or nuclear. Knodel et. al. (1990) & Pong (1997) showed a negative relationship between number of children in the families and school attainment in developing countries. Parents with more siblings have larger problems to fulfill every need they wish regarding time and other resources on each individual child (ibid). Talking about children's marital status, large proportion of respondents included were single. However, there were girls who were either married or already engaged in a relationship. A total of three young girls were either married or engaged where as a boy who was already married and was separated after marriage. Particularly, in the areas where girls marry early, dropout is high (Hunt, 2008). According to Mohammed (2000), early marriage is one of the major socio-cultural

elements which have negative influence in girl's continuation to school (Alika & Egbochuku, 2009). Large numbers of respondent children were from disadvantaged and backward ethnic groups and the local indigenous communities along with few children from other caste and ethnic groups. Economic disadvantages of socially-disadvantaged groups regarding children's household family are the major reasons behind the higher dropout of children (Sedwal & Kamat, 2008). Every child informants were born at the same place where they are currently residing. In other words, children were not migrants of other places but were born and grew up with their families in the same locality. Majority of the child respondents were either elder sons or daughters as compared to younger ones. Younger siblings are more likely to stay in school than the older ones especially in larger and poorer families because older children are more responsible for household activities and chores and/or contribute to the household income by earning some extra money to fulfill family needs and desires (Estudillo et. al. 2009).

5.2. Reasons of Dropout of Children

According to Hunt (2008), drop out of children from schools is often a process rather than the result of one single event, and therefore has more than one proximate reason. Both demand (individual) and supply driven factors (school), are rooted in cultural and contextual realities, which make each situations different (Sabates et. al. 2010). However, there are varieties of driving forces which play the major role of keeping children out of school or force them to dropout. I will be drawing from these variables which are responsible for children dropping out from school before completing full cycle of education.

5.2.1. Household Income and Poverty

Household Income

Household income particularly directed to parents plays the major role either to continue children's schooling or to keep them out of school. Household income includes money generated by parents to feed themselves and their children for every purpose including the cost of education as an important factor for children's wellbeing. Children's schooling includes both

upfront and hidden cost. Upfront costs include school fees, while the more hidden costs include uniforms, travel, equipment and the opportunity costs of sending a child to school (Hunt, 2008).

Household income is linked to a range of factors: when children start school, how often they attend, whether they have to temporarily withdraw and also when and if they drop out (Hunt, 2008:7).

During the field field, a girl aged 10, who was dropped out at grade 3, said that daily income to sustain family is important for her mother (as father is missing since 5 years). She said:

My family has lots of problems. Our biggest problem is money and the regular income of my family. I had to leave school because of money problem. I miss my father at home. Before, I used to go to school when my father was with me. He used to take care of everyone. But now I cannot think that my only mother can help me to buy every education materials like exercise-books, pencils and uniforms. My mother works as a daily wage worker. She is busy in construction of buildings. My family does not own any farm land. We only have a small hut to live. Even I am small, I too go to work during the rainy season. I plant crops in the landlord's house, make some money and give to my mother.

Dachi & Garrett (2003) state one of the main constraints to send a child to school is financial and parent's inability to pay money required as the level of schooling increases. Brown and Park's research in rural China (2002) found 'poor and credit constrained children' are three times more likely than other children to drop out of primary school. During the field work, a girl, aged 13 said:

My parents felt easy to send me to school when I was small. Now I am grown up. Parents want me to support the family. I too feel that I have to support my family otherwise it is difficult to fulfill every demands of the family because my family is poor.

Teachers and head teachers also stated low income of parents as the major reason for dropout of children from school. During an interview, teachers said that parents who earn less money feel

that they are more responsible to fulfill family demands like food and clothing rather than sending children to schools. One of the head teachers said:

Parents work on the daily wage basis and come with certain food in the evening to feed up their families. How can they think of keeping their children at school? If parents feel that their children are capable enough of earning, they force their children to work rather than supporting on their schooling. Children who are from good family background are only the ones who continue their schooling and complete full cycle of education.

Parent's work pattern also shows low income of family. Most of the respondent's fathers were unskilled leading to be either unemployed during different times or pushed to work in unskilled professions such as construction labour. Largely, children's mothers were unemployed and worked only during farming seasons. Few worked as a daily wage labourer. As a result, they get little income which is not sufficient to cover every cost of the family needs. If income level of family is low, children may be called on to add to the household's income, either through wage-earning employment or taking on additional tasks to free up other household members for work (Hunt, 2008). A girl, aged 13 said:

My father is a daily wage labourer. He only works when work is available for him. My mother spends most of her time in home and is busy in cultivating crops during farming season. I help my mother to cultivate vegetables. I too help my mother to sell those vegetables in the market.

Although the families with some land cultivate cash crops, the amount for the items they get in the market is very less. The production tends to be less due to the traditional methods of cultivation but requires more human resource. Lack of appropriate market place, cold stores for the storage of crops, expensive fertilizers creates economic burden for those families who are interested in cultivation.

Family Poverty

Household income can be calculated through poverty measures. Families with higher income do not face poverty whereas households with lower income are at higher risk of poverty. Major recent attempts to conceptualize poverty have focused on a multi-dimensional model which includes 'absolute' poverty at its main and further expands to include opportunities to access good quality services as well as the indicators that point to a person's ability to participate fully in the society (Noble et. al. 2007).

During the field work, I asked children about the reasons for not continuing schooling. Large number of children mentioned family poverty as the main reason. A boy, aged 14, who was dropped out from school at grade 6 said that it is difficult to sustain the whole family for six months with the earnings family receives from farming. As a result, parents as well this respondent himself are compelled to work in different types of daily wage works such as 'labour' which helps them to feed up for another six months period. His parents cannot think of sending him to school where family has to invest more money in schooling which includes buying school uniforms, educational materials, paying exams fees, and meeting every demand for him to continue schooling. Parteus et. al. (2010) see poverty to be by far the most common primary and contributory reason for children dropping out of school.

Parteus et. al. (2010) see poverty in relation to dropping out from school physical poverty, social isolation and psychological disempowerment. 'Physical poverty' includes children's families inability to buy regular educational materials and meet the cost of schooling (fees, shoes, uniform, transport, etc), 'Social isolation' as not only were social support structures and services lacking or difficult to access, but the high number of single-parent families and the lack of extended family support and 'psychological disempowerment' as although family members want to send children to school but not doing anything else due to individual reasons.

During the field work, a girl, aged 14 said:

We are altogether 8 members in the family.....6 children and my parents. I am one of the elder siblings. The two younger members go to school. I too used to go to school before but now I have to help my family members including my younger brothers and sisters. My parents sell vegetables which they grow in the farm land. They are busy for the whole day in the market. Nobody is at home. I have to complete household chores and look after my cattle. When there are holidays at school, my brothers and sisters stay at home and I too go to work in the farms and earn some money. I buy clothes for myself and the remaining money.....I give to my parents.

Hunt (2008) states that children from poorer families in particular have pressures to withdraw from school as they get older, particularly as the opportunity cost of their time increases. Some children in my study felt that their parents seem to be happy when they earn some money and give some of the amount to their parents. During the field work, a boy, aged 14 said:

I work as a transport worker.....I earn around Rs. 150 (around \$ 2). I spent about Rs. 100 for my personal activities like buying having breakfast, watching films sometimes and buying clothes. When I give Rs. 50 to my parents, they become very happy and love me.

Although Buis, (1998) states households often do not want to remove children from school as they see it as an investment for the future (cited in Hunter & May, 2003), and withdrawal from school is a last resort for poor families (Sogaula et. al. 2002), poorer households might not think more about future but look for present. In an interview, a primary school teacher said it is almost impossible for poorer families to think of investing on children's education which helps them in future. Parents want an ultimate benefit from their children and send children to work rather than focusing on continuation of schooling. Though poorer parents see education as important for children in shaping their future, they feel difficulty to apply in the practical life. Colclough et. al. (2000) state poorer families tend to have lower demand for schooling than richer households: whatever are the benefits of schooling, the costs, for them, are more difficult to meet than is the case for richer households. Chugh (2011) in her research in the slums of Delhi, India concludes that poverty of parents is one of the significant reasons for the low participation of children in schooling.

5.2.2. Child Work and Labour

Children belonging to poorer and larger families tend to work inside or outside homes. The sustainability of poorer household families depends on the labour and money children contribute by engaging themselves in those works where they receive money (Abebe, 2007).

The most prevalent types of child work and labour appear to be domestic and household-related duties (girls) and agricultural labour (boys), which are for the most part unpaid, under-recognized, and take up substantial amounts of time (Hunt, 2008:11).

Most of the children who dropped out of school in my study area were found working at their own house where they are unpaid and in agricultural sector. Some male children were working in informal sectors where they earned some amount of money. Girl children were busy with their household work which includes cleaning utensils, grazing cattle, cooking food and helping their mothers followed by agricultural works during farming seasons. Colclough et. al. (2000) giving an example of Ethiopia state that most of the children from poorer communities who are admitted in schools in the beginning of September go to the farms to work in November because of the labour demand. Most of the agricultural works which are labour intensive has direct impact on children participation in schools (Abebe, 2007). Although, children combine work with school in the beginning and some are enrolled later, they are unable to complete their full cycle of schooling (Colclough et. al. 2000). Dropout of children is very high during farming seasons (Abebe, 2007). Admassie (2003) states domestic and household-related duties (girls) and agricultural labour (boys) does not necessarily harm the continuation of schooling. Many children of rural areas are directly or indirectly related to these works (ibid). Boyle et. al. (2002) sees agricultural work as often seasonal clashes with schooling timetables which leads to seasonal withdrawals from school. However, these withdrawals are temporary; it may lead to more permanent withdrawals from school. A girl, aged 10 said:

I had to complete every household work in the morning and evening like cooking and cleaning utensils at home. I was often late to attend my school. It led to my irregularity to my school. Later on during exams, I failed several times. When I failed my exams, I had to stay in the same

grade the next year. I was in pressure of completing lots of household works.....I did not want to go to school regularly. At last, I quieted my school.

Domestic and agricultural form of labour or work creates pressure on a children's school schedule. Children who combine both school and work have negative effect on school attendance. Works increase irregularity at school and often children fail their exams which significantly decrease children's interest in schooling (Croft, 2002 in Hunt 2008). A boy, aged 14 shared his experience by saying.

I had to go to my farm land with my father early in the morning. I used to come back at home at around 9 a.m. However, I managed to reach school at 10 a.m. I was very tired and I was not able to concentrate in teaching. I often felt dizzy in the class. I failed several times in my exams. I do not want to go to school if I have to work.

Due to heavy work load, it becomes extremely difficult to focus in studies. As a result, students might fail exams and are compelled to repeat the same grade. Even if the students pass exams, they get poor grades. This leads them to leave school in the near future.

5.2.3. Gender Disparities, Early Marriage and Dropout

It is wise to say that those children who do not continue or dropout from school at early years usually belong to poorer families. The majority of such children are girls. The question that arises is why? Colclough et. al. (2000) state gender roles in the society change the balance between boys and girls to attend school. He further adds that several household contexts and cultural practices also increase these gender disparities. In societies where men are regarded as the main leaders of the society, girls are generally married earlier and girls future are seen as being devoted to home and family, the intensives for girls to attend and continue schooling is generally lower than boys (ibid). Girls are generally more expected to perform household chores and to look after their younger siblings. These variables increase demand of girls to stay at home rather than going to school which affects their regularity to school and finally leads to high rate of dropout.

Lower educational attainment among girls may be due to a number of factors such as fewer job opportunities for girls, parental or societal favor towards boys, or parents who are credit constrained who may be more likely to invest in their sons (Oaster & Thornton, 2002).

During my field work, I found societal and cultural norms and regulations playing vital roles among girls who discontinued schooling. A girl, aged 13 who was dropped out at grade 6 said:

I perform every household chore like cooking and cleaning utensils, planting crops during the seasons, caring livestock because I am a girl. I had to leave school because I was responsible to look after my family.....care younger siblings as well. I cannot find jobs even if I am educated.....girls major duty is to stay at home and look after family and farms whereas boys are responsible for outer employment.

According to Colclough et. al. (2000), where many jobs are reserved, either formally or informally for males, unemployment is higher or the gender balance of formal employment is strongly male.

A respondent girl, aged 12 who dropped out in grade 3, is married. This girl is from a backward ethnic community called 'Madeshi'. Although she is still at her parental house, she will be going to groom's house after some years. She said she has seen groom's face once and have not talked with him. She further added that she cannot go against parent's decision in terms of marriage. Another girl, aged 13, said that she will later go to groom's house after she is married, therefore her family members are not responsible for her further education. Her younger brother goes to school. She is older, therefore, she is now ready for marriage and if some good proposal arrives, she will get married soon.

Thapa (1996) states child marriage is closely tied with values, norms and institutional arrangements specific to certain ethnic groups. With an example given from Siraha district of Nepal, he further said *guardians feel that if they waited long, they cannot find boys for their daughters* (Thapa, 1996: Appendix). Even boys don't like mature girls to marry and it's the system continuing from our forefathers. Colclough et. al. (2000), giving an example of Ethiopia

state that some parents claim twelve years of schooling for daughters mean they could not perform housework and as a result may not be able to find husbands for girls. Most of the girl participants during my research had similar opinions on parent's perception on their marriage and giving a preference to male members. Mohammed (2000) states a girl may be withdrawn from school if a good marriage prospects arise. Early marriage is a socio-cultural factor that hampers the girl child's continuation to school. When girls marry, their attachment will be with groom's family which makes their parents feel that they will not benefit educating a girl child. Therefore, the focus of parents is only to educate boys (Colclough et. al. 2000).

In certain communities which are mostly patriarchal, girls are encouraged to marry as they reach puberty and/or become sexually mature (Hunt, 2008). Although, a number of organizations have suggested menstruation, in particular, may drive dropout and low attendance rates at school (Oster & Thornton, 2009), I realised that girls did not hesitate to go to school due to menstruation, rather they get mentally pressurized that they have to get married which compels them to go to their future husband's house at an early age. Finally, groom's family determines whether a girl should continue schooling or not.

5.2.4. Roles of Schools in Dropout of Children

There are several factors responsible for children dropping out which has direct or indirect relation with school. Chugh (2011) states infrastructural facilities, school environment and teachers' attitude exert powerful influences on student's interest or disinterest in studies including dropout rates. During my field work, children revealed different reasons where schools were mainly responsible for the dropout of children. Punishment, infrastructural facilities and resources available at school, quality teaching and learning behaviour, demands of more investment in schooling were found as the major ones along with other factors such as ending of mid-day meal programme in school.

Corporal Punishment

The government of Nepal has rectified UNCRC and other major conventions and has made several legal provisions against any kind of violence against children.

No child shall be subjected to torture or cruel treatment, provided that the act of scolding and minor beating to the child by his father, mother, member of the family, guardian or teacher for the interests of the child himself shall not be deemed to violate the provisions of this section (Government of Nepal, Children's Act, 1992, Article 7:4).

The government of Nepal realises that one of the reasons of school drop out of children is the learning environment at school. Most of the teachers do not use child friendly teaching methods. A huge teacher-pupil ratio is another problem. Schools lack facilities of teaching material which are very essential for effective teaching and learning processes (DoE, 2009).

During the field work, one of the major reason children mentioned to be responsible for school dropout was punishment. Children were punished of not completing homework and class work regularly, making noise in classroom, not giving proper attention to teachers. Similarly, not being able to answer what the teachers ask, doing mischief in the classroom and being irregular in the classroom were the reasons behind the punishment.

Corporal punishment means to inflict punishment on the body. It is to beat, hit, spank, swat, pinch or cane a child with belts, hands, sticks or any other tool (UNICEF, 2001:4)

A boy, aged 6 said that once he was doing homework in a classroom. At the same time, a teacher was teaching. Teacher blamed him for not paying proper attention to the lessons being taught and was brutally beaten. The teacher also linked not paying attention during lessons to getting poor grade in exams. Another boy, aged 8 said that once he was unable to reach the school in time i.e. 10 a.m. Teacher punished him with a stick. Teacher blamed him of being disobedient and careless in his studies.

Although it has proven both to be fairly ineffective and harmful, corporal punishment persists in schools in many national contexts even where it has been banned (Humphreys, 2008). Corporal punishment often regarded as a means of discipline by teachers and sometimes by guardians, is taken for granted as an excuse to forcefully enforce obedience. It has become an important tool in getting the best out of the student in an unhealthy situation to fulfill parental expectation, competitive environment and a highly commercialized education sector in Nepal (Shrestha & Thakuri, 2004). Altogether 60 percent of the teachers in Nepal believe students cannot be disciplined without punishment (ibid). Different types of physical punishments common in Nepalese schools are listed below:

- Beating: with a stick, cane, belt, pipe, fist, wet stinging nettles, duster etc.
- Pulling ears and the hair of the temples.
- Making children to stand up for the whole day in the sun.
- Kneel down and do the work and then enter the class room.
- Making children stand up on the bench.
- Making children to raise hands.
- Pressing a pencil between two fingers.
- Holding children's ears with hands passed under the legs.
- Tying children's hands.
- Making children to sit-ups.
- Caning and pinching cheeks or arms.

(Mishra et. al. 2010)

A common effect of corporal punishment is a growing fear of teachers among school children and therefore leading to the dislike of schooling. Studies have shown that corporal punishment is a direct and significant reason for children dropping out of school. In Nepal, 14 percent of children claimed to have dropped out of school because they feared the teacher (Haq & Haq, 1998). The Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE) report (1999) describes a 'gradual discouragement from attending' as a result of the beatings and humiliation from teachers, and that drop out is not uncommon after being beaten (Hunt, 2008).

A girl, aged 9, in my study said that punishment was very huge in school when children could not complete homework and were not able to answer questions asked by teachers. Using sticks, beating with bare hands and making sit-ups were reported to be common. Another boy, aged 8 said that even if he wished to continue schooling, he was not in favour of the punishments. This boy further added that he used to sit at the last bench. As a result, he could not hear teachers and concentrate at his studies. When teachers asked questions, he was unable to answer and was punished. Verbal abuses were common. Chugh (2011) reports that when teachers hold low academic expectations of particular students, they tend to treat those students (consciously or unconsciously) in a negative way.

A boy aged 12 said:

I left school because of how my teacher used to abuse me physically and mentally. He used to beat me and often used to say 'when you grow up you are going to be a rishaw puller instead of a good human being'. I felt that I cannot do anything even if I study because I am not good on my studies.....he used to greet me by saying 'how are u ... foolish.....'

A boy, aged 15, dropped out of school at grade 6 said that teachers who used to punish were very bad to him. Students were not able to go to the toilets even if they wished. He added:

Once the teacher was absent in the class and I went to toilet without the consent of the monitor of the class. In the next class, monitor complained with the teacher and I was punished very badly. Sometimes teachers used to take exams in the class. I used to fail often because I did not understand. I think I was the first among all of the students in terms of getting punishments.

Some children however supported teacher's punishment by saying that if children are not serious with their studies, obviously will get punishment. Children said that punishment helped them focus on their studies and sometimes children felt lucky enough to pass exams even if they were very poor in studies. A boy aged 9 said that he almost used to bunk school during the breaks. He was not interested in studies. Once, his mother complained about his habits to school teachers. As a consequence, this boy was punished severely in school with sticks in his butts. When he

informed his father about complaints of his mother, his father was very happy to know that he was punished and now onwards, he will be regular to school. Acceptance of the need for physical punishment in schools as a way of teaching and instilling discipline in children may be perpetuated by parents, particularly fathers with the belief that in the absence of corporal punishment, children will go astray (Mishra et. al. 2010).

According to Boyle et .al. (2002), beatings and intimidation affect children's motivation to attend school. There is growing evidence which suggests that while corporal punishment might sometimes succeed as a short-term deterrent, it does little to induce more long-term behavioural reform, and frequently leads to escalations of violence (Humphreys, 2008).

Poor School Infrastructural Facilities

Poor school quality is associated with poor academic results leading to higher level of repetition and finally dropout. Quality of the teaching by teachers and learning experience by children in schools are linked to the learning outcomes of children (Colcough et. al. 2000). If children are fond of the way teacher teaches, obviously they like to stay at school.

High student- teacher ratio due to lack of enough classrooms was the reason given by children leading to failing exams and grade retention. A small classroom with average 50-70 students does not develop the quality of education of children. A boy, aged 12 said:

We were altogether 70 students in the single class room in class 7. It was very difficult to concentrate when there is lots of noise in the class as I always used to sit at the last bench. There were no such regulations of keeping students in a particular bench. Students who reached early used to stay in the front. As I had to complete my household work, I was always late in the class and was always a backbencher. I failed several times and was compiled to stay at the same class for 2 consecutive years. Later on, I was not interested in schooling and I left.

During my field work, teachers agreed with the existing higher teacher-pupil ratio and urged that it does not improve the quality of education and is responsible for children failing exams. Failing

exams is also found to be strongly associated with dropping out of school in higher grades (Hunter & May, 2003). Cough (2011) observes poor understanding at the elementary level is the main factor contributing to lower attendance at the secondary level. Boyle et. al. (2002) and Hunter & May (2003) also report links between measures of academic performance in early years of schooling and dropout behaviour before high school graduation.

School's poor infrastructural facilities also lead to the irregularity of children in attending daily classes. A girl, aged 13 said that one day she got unconscious due to excessive heat in the classroom and was sent home. There are not any medical facilities in school except some painkiller tablets. Molteno et. al. (2000) state lack of school facilities and unavailability of resources e.g. textbooks, desks and benches, blackboards increase dropout.

Lack of Quality Teaching

Where teachers have not prepared lessons, have no schemes of work, do not mark pupils' books consistently and do not determine satisfactory goals for teaching. Classrooms lack materials and textbooks and little worthwhile learning can be observed (Hunt, 2008:39).

During the field work, many children disagreed with the methods of teaching. The way of teaching can rather be preferred to a one way teaching method as suggested by children. Once teacher comes in the class, he reads book, asks some questions to students. If children are able to understand, teacher does not try to simplify, rather asks children to read in home and keep memorizing. Many teachers focus on memorizing rather than making children understand. However, there were some teachers who used to focus whether children were able to understand or not in different times. Regular discussions with students were conducted during class hours Cough (2011) states that reasons for dropping out of children include not being able to identify with what is going on in the classroom; teachers not really explaining what needed to be done further; going too fast (reading books rather than discussing with students); and insufficient time for children to complete class works. Further, children feel that they had been put on a schedule with no flexibility and a sense of defeat seemed to have prevailed due to the insensitive attitude of the teachers and other staff members, leaving them with no any other alternative but to leave

school (ibid). There were some children who were irregular at school because of the home works they had to complete. However, home works were not checked in regular basis.

Direct and Indirect Cost of Schooling

Many children discontinue schooling due to direct and indirect cost of school. Direct costs include fees, expenses for exercise books (books are free up to grade 8), uniforms, pencils and pens. It is more or less linked to the household poverty of children. Although education is free in public schools in Nepal, schools ask extra money from children in order to meet different demands. The cost of schooling for poor families in Nepal is still high although school education is free. The direct annual cost of schooling, covering admission and examination fees and the cost of educational materials like exercise books and pencils, is about Rs. 819 (\$ 10) for a child studying at primary level and Rs.1819 (\$ 25) for a child studying at secondary level (IIDS, 2004). Indirect cost includes exam fees and school maintenance fees. Each and every child said that they paid fees for exam at school. Even teachers realised that they are compelled to ask money from children in order to cover the cost of the teachers hired by school, for which government is not responsible to pay. Similarly children are asked extra money for the maintenance of school building. These extra costs increase extra pressures for children who are poor and finally force children to leave schools. Boyle et. al. (2002) state unexpected costs like contributions to teachers' leaving or joining schools, funerals, repair of buildings affected by natural calamity etc. also featured as a major difficulty for parents and children to meet.

5.2.5. Disability and Diseases

Many children with disability in low income countries who suffer from physical or psychological disorders are denied access to education (Peters, 2003). Due to the lack of effective policy measures of the government regarding disabled children, it becomes very difficult to admit disabled children or bring them back to school after disability occurs.

During an interview, a boy, aged 13 was compelled to discontinue schooling at grade 3 due to physical disability. The respondent said that he used to go to school until he had not had any health problems. He said:

I fell from the roof of the school....since then my legs are not working properly....I cannot walk.....need people's support to move.....had a wheel chair before.....now it's not working....could not get proper treatment because of poverty.....wish to go to school....but the school is not disable friendly.....far....I am helpless

Another girl, aged 13 said that she had skin problem in her face which was the cause to leave school. The girl's parents invested money for her treatment. She further added:

Regular treatment of my disease made me irregular to school. I failed several times. Finally, I quitted school. My family was not able to cover every cost for treatment and schooling.

Birdsall et. al. (2005) argue that around 40 million of the world's children who are out of school have some form of disability. Among them, 5 percent are estimated to complete primary school, and the majority either never enrolled or dropping out very early. Hunt (2008) states disabled children are not able to continue schooling due to individual, supply and societal factors, such as distance to school, particularly if children have mobility problems; supply of schools which offer specialist facilities or inclusive educational practices; and cultural expectations around disability.

5.2.6. Being with Friends

I interviewed and observed few children who said that there are not any specific reasons behind their discontinuation to schools. One of the boy participants, aged 8, said that he rather likes to take cattle to the grazing land and be with other friend rather than study. He feels happy when he is with his friends. He does not want to study any more. He further stated that studying is very difficult. Rather he wants to be with his counterparts and have fun with them. During the field work, a boy, aged 7 said:

Many of my friends do not attend school. They stay at home playing marbles. I used to miss them when I was at school. I had to study every time at school. I did not get time to play. Now days when I am out of school, I feel happy to be with my friends. I spend most of my days with them playing games.

Cough (2011), in her findings reports social composition of children as one of the determining factors behind children leaving schools. Children do not wish to be in school without their friends. However, children peer culture has positive effects in sending children to school as well. Hymel et. al. (1999) in (Vitaro et. al. 2001) underlines the role of peers in contributing to school dropout as negligible. During an interview, although teacher agreed that children leave schools because of the influence of their peers, there are children who continue schooling when they see other children attending schools despite having family problems. A primary school teacher said:

There was a girl, aged 12 in my village whose marriage was fixed despite of her consent. She argued with her family members that she do not want to marry and showed serious disagreement. She forced her parents that she wants to continue her schooling despite getting married at an early age. If she gets married, she will be compiled to quit school. A girl gave an example of other friends that they were still not married at the same age and go to school. She was suggested by her friends at school not to marry at this age. After her disagreement, parents were bound to delay her marriage and continue her schooling.

Some children who did not wish to go to school before are also attracted towards school when they see their friends attending school and getting respect in the society.

5.3. Possible Consequences of Dropout

During my field work, both the current and long-term consequences of children dropping out from schools were investigated. Children and teachers were asked about the consequences children are currently facing and have to face in future. Several factors were revealed which had negative impacts on children's life. The current consequences were children working in different

forms as workers and labourers, use of alcohol and cigarettes, and the future consequences as lack of skill jobs, unemployment, crime, social-exclusion and foreign labour migration.

A boy shared his experiences after dropping out from school by saying:

I am 15 and got married at the age of 14. My two brothers are married as well and they are living separately. My father died because of paralysis and now it is my duty to take care of my mother which is the main reason besides my marriage. Continuing schooling was almost impossible. I work as a transport worker where I get some money on the monthly basis which helps me to feed my family. Working for the whole day and sometimes night too makes me tired. My senior 'driver' suggested me to have some liquor in order to get relief from such stresses. In the beginning, I felt a bit relaxed. But now, I am addicted on it. I cannot sleep well without liquor and smoking some sticks of cigarette. I don't know what my future life is going to be though my aim was to become a teacher when I was at school.

During the interview teachers said that many male children who have dropped out of school are either working in homes or informal sectors resulting lots of physical and mental stresses at an early age. To get relief from physical and mental pressures, children are addicted to alcohols and cigarettes and few of them too take drugs. However, one teacher said that addiction to drugs is common among those children whose are 12 and above.

One of the male respondents, aged 14, works in a tractor. His duty is to supply construction materials. Although earns some money, he spends almost 12 hours per day in such work which is very difficult in his own words. It indicates that some children dropping out are engaged in hazardous works and have serious mental and physical stresses which have negative effects. A girl, aged 13, during the interview said that she always thinks that she cannot be a good woman in the future. She further adds:

If I am not educated.....nobody will greet me.....I will not get societal respect as educated people do. I will become nobody except staying in house and completing household activities.

Teachers during the interview stated that those children who are dropout from school today will be unskilled in future. People will face difficulties to find skilled jobs and finally it leads to

unskillful works or migration to other countries for labour. School leaving might create heavy unemployment which has other negative side effects like theft and criminal activities. As Rumberger (1987) in (Vitaro et. al. 2001) reports higher dropouts experience higher levels of unemployment. Sum et. al. (2009) state that children are less likely to be active labor force participants as compared to better educated peers, and they frequently experience considerably higher unemployment rates when they do seek work. As a consequence, they are less likely to be employed than their better educated peers which have negative effect in economic and social development (ibid).

During my field work, I observed most of the girl children although have important role inside their families for helping parents in household works and farms. These types of activities prohibit participating in social activities and practicing as social beings and rights as active social actors (Prout & James, 1990).

5.4. Daily Habits of Dropped out Children.

During my field work, children were interviewed and observed about their daily habits. They were asked to share their everyday day activities since they get up in the morning till going to bed at night. Although, children wish to go to school, they do not have any choice and are compelled to support their family members and as per parents' wishes. Children are not able to practice their own rights of going to school.

Large number of children shared their feelings that they were involved in some types of works inside or outside homes. Girls said that they are busy with their household activities along with working in farms in the farming seasons. Among boys, there was mixed opinions. Few boys said that they were involved in household works which are mostly known to be performed by girls. Boys were mostly found working in the agricultural sectors during the farming seasons, informal sectors as daily wage labourers, and rearing cattle. A boy, aged 14 dropped out at class 6 said:

It is the farming season. I go to plough the field early in the morning at 7 a.m. During breakfast, I take food which was cooked a day before and a cup of tea. I continue working until 10 a.m.

After that, I come home for launch, rest for some time and start the same duty at 2 p.m. until 8 p.m. I have my dinner at around 9 p.m. After having launch, I listen to songs in my personal radio and sleep at around 10 p.m.

He further added:

Besides farming season, I work as a transport worker and my duty is to carry construction materials in a tractor from early in the morning at around 7a.m. soon after having breakfast. I work till 11a.m. I take my launch at around 12 a.m. which I bring from my home, rest for some hours and again start working from 2 p.m. in the day till 6p.m. It's really difficult. I am very tired when I reach home. I take launch at around 8p.m. and go to bed.

A girl, aged 13 shared her experience by saying that she gets up early in the morning at around 6 a.m. to complete every household chores like cleaning houses and making tea for every family members. After that, she has to be ready for cooking as her mother and father leave home early for farming. This girl further added that she completes preparing food at around 8 p.m. After preparing food, she goes to the farm land in order to help her parents. Parents come home at around 11 a.m. and have launch. After having launch, her duty is to clean every utensil. She takes rest for almost 2 hours. In the afternoon, this girl goes to work with parents. She comes home early to perform evening routine i.e. preparing food. After preparing food, she serves food to every family member. However she said that the utensils which have to be cleaned at night are done by her mother. This girl goes to bed at around 9 p.m.

Children's productive and domestic work within the household constitutes the core of social reproduction in rural areas. As a result, children's labour is not only vital in economic terms; it also comes to the fore in the continuation of societal system themselves (Abebe, 2007:82).

During the field work, a girl, aged 12 shared her experience by saying:

Farming is my family's main occupation. Apart from completing household chores, I go to carry fire wood for cooking purpose in the day time. I too look after the cattle in the morning and evening. I have to take care of my nephew as well.

Another respondent, a boy, aged 13 said that he gets up at around 7 a.m. in the morning. He is often with his friends until 10 a.m in the morning and takes rest for some time. Before some period, this boy used to work as a construction worker but now, as it is farming season, he starts working in his farm at around 2 p.m. in the afternoon and works until 7 p.m. in the evening. After coming home, he takes dinner at 9 p.m and goes to bed.

Work is more common place and visible in majority world childhoods (James et. al. 1998:103). First world children are regarded as the minority groups while third world children are the majority groups of the world's children population (Punch, 2003). Talking about the work of children, Kabeer (2003) states that the incidence of children working is generally greater in poorer countries than in the richer ones, where different variable such as lower caste work as a catalyst .When families live in severe economic pressure, elder members of that family are bound to get engaged themselves in alternative form of livelihoods which transfers the burden of domestic work to children (Abebe, 2007). Quantitatively, in the global context, it is more common for children to work and go to school than to have a childhood dedicated to play and school. Although, children's work and schooling are seen combined by some of the researchers (Admassie, 2003; Moser, 1996), studies indicate forms of child labour create pressure on a child's time (Hunt, 2008).

One of the secondary school headmasters during the interview said that most of the children who do not attend school or who discontinued schooling are directly or indirectly engaged in different types of hazardous or non-hazardous works.

A girl, aged 12 said that as her father sells vegetables in the market. Her duty is to help parents to grow much vegetable. She said:

I give my whole day in taking care of the farm land. Planting, irrigating and caring up of vegetables is my daily duty because my father has a responsibility of looking after the whole family.

Another interesting fact I observed was one of the boys, aged 14 dropped out school in order to give preference to his farm land. He said that his family owns sufficient land. Income to be generated from the farm land is more important for him and his family than education. He spends most of the time taking care of his farm land and working along with parents. He said:

I get up at 7a.m. My mother prepares breakfast for every family member. After having breakfast, most of the male members go to cultivate land. We come back to have our meal at around 11 a.m. After having launch, we take rest for some hours. In the afternoon, the whole family moves to get engaged again in farming. Female members do not have to perform any household chores in the day time. I start my work again at 3p.m. and work until 6p.m. However, female members come home to prepare the evening meal. After coming back at home, we together sit and have dinner. I usually go to bed at around 10 p.m. after watching television for some time.

Giving an example of Africa, Bhalothra (2003) states that at the household level, children are more likely to work if the household has some resources such as land.

During my field work, I witnessed how a child's economic, social and cultural contexts affect his/ her everyday life experiences. As, Holland et. al. (2008) state socio-cultural factors like class, gender, ethnicity, nationality all have social and material effects on their everyday experiences of children. Societal expectations of children from particular socio-economic and cultural background strongly affect how people respond to children and how these children develop their own sense of self.

6. Measures to Reduce the Problem of Dropout

During the field work, data was gathered with children, teachers and head teachers to find out the appropriate measures to control the problem of dropout of children from school. However, respondents had mixed opinions, major focus was on increasing the amount and number of scholarships for students, structural improvement of schools, awareness towards education among children and parents and academic supports along with the increased nutritional status of children in schools.

6.1. Student Scholarship Programme

According to the report of Centre for Educational Innovation and Research (CEIR, 2007), submitted to the Department of Education (DoE) of Nepal, large numbers of primary school age children are still out of school. There is a decreasing trend of students' enrolment in the higher grades and levels. Student repeating the same class is another problem. The geographic conditions, socio cultural traditions and practices, the educational and economic status of the people are some of the constraints hindering in the improvement of quality education of the country. Different levels of problems like illiteracy, non-enrolment and dropout varies by region, gender, disadvantages, and backwardness and by difference in ethnicity (CEIR, 2007). Nepalese girls, children of certain ethnic minority groups and 'Dalits', children from remote rural areas and the poor are disadvantaged in terms of educational attainments (ibid). In order to address these problems, challenges, hurdles and concerns and the commitments made by Nepal in the international conventions, Nepal developed Education for All (EFA, 2004-2009) programme. The major aim of this programme was to give more emphasis on new and improved scholarship and incentive scheme for girls and children from disadvantaged groups (Acharya and Luitel, 2006).

A study report by Educational Resource and development Centre Nepal (ERDCN, 2011), submitted to the Ministry of Education (MoE) of Nepal states student scholarship program as one of the major initiatives taken by the government of with an expectation to encourage children to join school and continue their studies. Various initiatives are taken by Nepal to increase children's access to education especially of the marginalized and disadvantaged communities

with focus to girls since the girl child is still treated as one of the disadvantaged groups (ibid). Scholarships and incentives for children are distributed in the form of money, subsidies, food (e.g., cooking oil or mid-day meals), uniform allowances, accommodation and so forth (Acharya & Luitel, 2006).

In order to address the educational problems of the disadvantage groups, the government of Nepal launched Dalit scholarship, 50 percent girls' scholarship, children with disability scholarship, Karnali zone scholarship and Martyr's children scholarship programmes under the Education for All (EFA) program, Dalit scholarship, secondary education scholarship, Female hostel (feeder hostel) scholarship, Remote Mountain, Residential scholarship, and Marginalized group scholarship program under the Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) (Centre for Educational Innovation and Research, CEIR, 2007). However, scholarships for 'Dalit' students, girls and disable children are regarded as the crucial ones, provided by the government from which many children are benefiting. In 2010, 50 percent girls' scholarship was improved by providing scholarships to every girl. The scholarship amount provided to 'Dalits', girls and children with disability at school is merely Rs. 450 i.e \$ 5 (ERDCN, 2011). The respondent children who benefited through school scholarship programme in my study comprised 'Dalit', girl and disability scholarship during their schooling.

6.1.1. Importance and Impacts of the Student Scholarship Programme

Scholarships and intensives have positive impact on children to bring back to school and keeping children at school until the completion of full cycled education. During my field work, data was gathered from teachers and head teachers in order to see the importance and impact of scholarships to keep children in schools Teachers and head teachers agreed that scholarship schemes have somehow shown good progress in children schooling. Children who never attended schools or who dropped out after having some years of basic education were interested to join and continue schooling. One of the head teachers said:

I have seen several evidences that children had joined school because of the attraction of money provided through scholarships. Particularly, girls have shown more interest to continue

schooling which has helped them to increase and improve the level of their grades. Providing the scholarship is helping girl children to keep them in schools and get education which has improved their status. Many girls have started to realise the value of education in their future life. All the credit goes to the scholarship scheme. Otherwise they have had stayed in house and engaged themselves in household chores.

Another respondent, a primary school teacher said that the scholarships provided by the government have improved the educational status of children of disadvantage communities, particularly 'Dalits', who are deprived of education due to poverty and social exclusion. She further stated that very few 'Dalit' children used to attend school before the introduction of the scholarship programme. Children used to spend their whole day being busy in household works and farms. After the introduction of the programme, children as well as parents started feeling that they are going to get some money which can be used to buy educational materials such as school dress, school bag, exercise book, pen and pencil. Therefore, parents do not feel extra economic burden to educate their children. A head teacher of the secondary school said that children who were irregular and were not able to continue schooling due to daily household works have started being regular in classes. As a result, children are able to complete their full term of school education, up to secondary level. He further added that children have begun to be serious with their studies which have helped them to stop repetition of the same grade. The enrollment of girls and children from minority ethnic communities has increased significantly.

Cameron (2000) looked at the impact of social safety net scholarships in reducing school drop outs during the Indonesian economic crisis and found that scholarships provided to children had positive effects in reducing drop outs at the lower secondary school level by about 3 percent. Although, the scheme did not show much effect at the primary and upper secondary school levels

A secondary school head teacher said that the money provided in the form of scholarship, focusing girls has helped children's level of confidence. He further adds:

One of my girl students joined school after the introduction of the scholarship programme. After joining school, she is doing very well in her studies. Her elder sister was illiterate and was

married early. Now she is confident that she will not have to face such problems because her parents are satisfied and happy with her progress on school education and her grades.

A study report of Centre for Educational Innovation and Research (CEIR, 2007), submitted to the Department of Education (DoE) showed that the scholarship programme in Nepal has great impact academically. There is a large and positive effect on children in schools which includes their attendance and regularity, achievement, promotion of grades, minimizing the drop out and repetition rates and promoting the school cycle completion rate. Similarly, due to financial assistance in schooling (to buy educational materials), parents, students and community members have been sending their children to school. Scholarships also have positive psychological and behavioral impacts which have empowered children from various aspects such as health and cleanliness, good discipline and morale, timeliness, interactive and communicative (ibid).

In developing countries, financial incentives to encourage families to send children to school are the favored services, usually in the form of money given to the family and sometimes money given to the school (Creative Associates International, CAI, 2011:17).

Filmer & Schady (2009) giving an example of Cambodia reports that scholarships for poor students at risk of dropping out helped 20 percent more children likely to enroll in secondary school and 20 to 25 percent more likely to attend schools. Another example given by Friedman et. al. (2011) show that scholarships were provided to girls based on the performance on the government's standardized end of year exam placed them in the top 15 percent in Kenya. After 4-5 years of receiving scholarships, girls were 7.8 percent more likely to still be enrolled in school and 8.6 percent more likely to have attended at least some secondary school.

6.1.2. Dissatisfaction with the Scholarship Amount

During my field work, I asked the children about their responses on the government scholarship programme available at schools. Children who dropped out of school were dissatisfied with the amount given in the form of the scholarship. They said that the amount was not enough to cover every cost of educational materials like school uniforms, bags, pens, pencils, exercise books and tiffin. A girl, aged 14 said:

I used to get 350 Rs. (\$ 4) per year when I was at school. What shall I do with that small amount of money? It was not even enough to buy one set of uniform when my parents are unable to cover every cost for my schooling. If we are getting money, it should cover every cost needed to continue our schooling. I shall continue my school again if the amount of scholarship is increased keeping no any economic burden in my family. I expect to have that money per month not per year.

A minor boy, aged 10 of the 'Dalit' community said that the money provided through scholarship is not enough even to cover the breakfast which he had to take in the break during school hours. He showed his disagreement with the amount given by saying that he was not able to buy a pair of shoes with the money provided.

Dissatisfaction with the amount of the scholarship was seen while interviewing teachers and head teachers as well. Some teachers stated that the amount given in the name of scholarship was only to show the government's commitment to send children to schools in paper, not in practical. Most of the teachers and children had similar view point of increasing the amount of money given to students which can cover every cost of schooling for poor and needy children.

Teachers and one of the disabled children, aged 13 both agreed that the scholarship amount for disabled students was very few i.e. Rs. 500 (\$ 6) per annum. Teachers said that there should be provisions of transportation for disabled students to reach school and go back home. Addition supports like wheel chairs should be provided looking at the level of disability. One of the head

teachers said that the government should take necessary steps to establish schools targeting disabled students in required and appropriate places. A disabled boy said:

I used to go to school when I was healthy. Now I cannot because I am unable to walk. I have to crawl on the floor. My wheel chair does not work properly. School is very far. I know that school provides Rs. 500 per year to disabled students. But what shall I do with that small sum of money. My wheel chair costs more than that money. There is no one to take me to school and bring me back home.

A study report by Educational Resource and Development Centre Nepal (ERDCN, 2011) shows the scholarship amount given to children was far less against the inflation and the current market price of the commodities. Although the government of Nepal has started providing free primary education since 2008, free education in Nepal generally means free tuition and free textbooks only. Parents still have more economic burden to spend money on school dresses, bags, shoes, tiffin and stationeries. For example, some public schools charge for exam and extra money for additional facilities (DoES, 2009). This situation shows that the amount of scholarship provided by the state to students is negligible.

6.1.3. Management and Distribution of the Scholarship Programme

Student scholarship programme in Nepal lacks proper management and distribution in time. A study report by Centre for Educational Innovation and Research (CEIR, 2007) points variations in criteria of distribution, lack of uniformity in distributing scholarship, rare supervision and monitoring, chances of misuse, lack of data management system and lack of assessment of the impact of scholarship which are the major drawbacks related to the distribution of scholarship at the grassroots level in Nepal. Acharya & Luitel (2006) state although the available scholarships/incentives reached the needy population, they were unable to cover all of the needy children.

During the field work, teachers agreed that every children from the poorer families were not benefiting from the government's scholarship programme because they belonged to the so call upper caste. These children do not belong to the government's priority groups i.e. girls and

children from backward groups like 'Dalits'. Teachers suggested that there should be a proper mechanism to identify poor and needy children although they are from the so called higher caste. A head teacher of the lower secondary school said:

There is a boy, aged 13, who resides near my house. His family is under extreme poverty. His parents do not own any farm land. Father works as a daily wage labourer in order to sustain his family and mother is busy in taking care of the younger children and household chores. His parents cannot afford his schooling. Although the family is economically deprived, he belongs to the so called upper caste. There is not any proper mechanism to identify such groups and provide scholarships.

Almost every teacher and head teacher showed serious concern regarding management and distribution of the scholarship money. Teachers showed their dissatisfaction regarding the release of fund in time by the government. They stated that children are not able to receive money at the beginning of the school's academic year. As a consequence, students and parents suspect that the scholarship provided by the government might have been misused by the school which creates pressure on head teachers to distribute money in time. Every participant teacher suggested the government to provide flexibility in time and process to distribute the scholarship amount. A study report by ERDCN (2011) states uncertainties and time lag/ delays in disbursement of the scholarship to schools and students exist in most of the schools in Nepal. Particularly scholarships for girls were not distributed in the beginning of the educational session, sometimes not even by the end of the session, or in the next session.

One of the participants, a high school head teacher disagreed with the government's policy to release money and distribute in an annual basis. He said that the scholarship should be distributed on monthly or weekly basis in order to increase both, children's interest towards schooling and regular attendance. Otherwise the scholarship schemes are only going to increase the enrollment rather than stopping children's dropout. He gives an example of some students who admitted schools in order to get money. After getting money, children are irregular and fail exams. Next year, children get admitted in the same grade. Later on, repetition of the same grade results in dropping out from school. Schultz (2000) states conditional cash transfer programme

has significant effects on school enrolment, but not on student attendance (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006).

6.1.4. Utilization of the Scholarship Amount

Scholarship provided to students in terms of money is used for different purpose. Utilization is most crucial aspect to see how scholarships have played an important role to help children get full school education which is also an ultimate aim of the scholarship program. During the field work, teachers and children were asked how the scholarship provided by the government is utilized. Majority of the teachers and children agreed that scholarships were used to buy educational materials. However, few children and teachers urged that there were misuses of scholarships both by parents and children and used in other items apart from education. A secondary school head teacher said:

There is a rule of distributing scholarships in the presence of both children and parents. However, the cash is handled to parents. I have seen lots of evidences that the money is used to buy educational materials like exercise books, uniforms and exercise books. We even ask children for what purpose it was used few days after the scholarship is handed over. The reactions are positive. Both parents and children have used scholarship amount in education.

Most of the girl children also agreed that the money was used in their education. Children who were benefited through scholarships stated that the amount was properly used to buy educational materials. A girl, aged 12 said:

The scholarship amount I got at school was used to buy school uniform because the money was small to cover other costs of exercise books, pencils and bags.

A girl, aged 8 said that she used the amount to buy shoes. She preferred to buy shoes because she had never put on shoes before. There were some children and teachers who said that the money was misused both by parents and children. The money provided in terms of scholarship was invested in household purpose i.e. buying food items. A minor boy, aged 9, of the 'Dalit'

community said that once the money he received was misused by his father to purchase alcohol for him. A primary school teacher said.

I have found some cases that when the money is handed to father, in the very evening, he finishes the money by drinking alcohol and buying food items for the family.

A girl, aged 7 said that her father was drunk on the day very day scholarship amount was given to her father.

A study report by CEIR (2007) submitted to the Department of Education (DoE) shows scholarship amount in Nepal is used mainly in three areas. i.e. utilizing in children's education, food items for family; buying children's necessities, alcohol, drugs and substance use. This report revealed that instead of proper use, there exist chances of misusing the scholarship money, which further suggested a strong controlling mechanism for the effective utilization of scholarship. A study report by ERDCN (2011) shows proper utilization of money by parents and children in purchasing clothes/school uniform, copy and pencils and buying foods/ school tiffin.

6.2. Academic Interventions

During the field work, every teachers, head teachers and children stated that along with the monetary support, children should be provided with other educational materials for free which helps more children continue their studies at school and reduce the problem of dropout. Although, books are provided for free up to grade eight, teachers and children stated that it is very difficult to cover the extra cost of schooling for parents who are under extreme poverty. A boy, aged 10 said:

Although I used to get free books, my parents were unable to cover extra cost for uniforms and educational materials. My parents had to spend much money on me and my younger brother and sister. Later, they were unable to invest money on me because we are poor. Finally, I left school. If school was able to support me, I would have continued.

Similarly, a head teacher of the secondary school said that in addition to books, government should provide every educational material for free. This supports help children to continue their schooling. A boy, aged 9 said that he had to buy pencils and exercise books twice a month. When he asked money with his father in order to purchase the necessary stuffs, he was unable to get sufficient amount. This boy was compelled to write his homework of two subjects on the same exercise book and was punished teacher pointing that the separate works should be written in separate exercise books. After few days, he started being irregular at school and due to fear of punishments leading to his irregularity, he discontinued schooling. The teacher was unable to understand the situation of this boy and his family which was under severe poverty. A study report by Teachers Educators Society of Nepal (TESON, 2004) suggests that large number of people in rural areas of Nepal cannot afford to buy stationery materials which in turn force their children to discontinue schooling. Therefore, some stationery support helps children stay in school. The report further suggests providing school uniform/dress to children and attracting them to school.

Teachers and children both agreed on providing skill related education for children who dropped out of school. Children were found more interested in skill oriented informal education such as tailoring, plumbing, carpentering and painting. Children said that if they are going to have certain skills, it will help them to be skillful worker though children are deprived of formal schooling. Teachers and head teachers suggested introducing life skill education programme in school. A girl child, aged 12 said:

I wish to learn tailoring now. If I get an opportunity, I will stand by myself and help my parents from the earnings I will get from it. Everyone will respect me.

A boy, aged 14 said:

I prefer having training of electrician. If I will get an opportunity to learn and become electrician, I will work in an electrical shop....earn money and help my family.....my parents will be happy...I will be a good person and get respect of every members in the family.

The government of Nepal, in its National Plan of Action has taken initiations in developing technical and vocational education suitable and accessible to secondary school children who need/ wish to join the job market. Vocational programme dovetailing the school system has also been developed (MoES, 2003). However, it has not been practically implemented at the grass-root level due to the lack of economic and human resource.

6.3. Structural Intervention of Schools

The major aim of structural interventions is to change the school including its organization or functioning (Creative Associates International, CAI, 2011). Such actions include improving and upgrading facilities of school, focusing on the teaching learning behaviour which may increase student interest and performance and keep them safe from dropping out of school (ibid).

During my field work, teachers, head teachers and children were asked about the steps schools should take in order to reduce the problem of the dropout. They suggested in the improvement of physical infrastructures and facilities like construction of new building and classrooms, electricity facilities, sanitation facilities, recreational facilities for children in schools, teacher training leading to child friendly teaching method and changes in teaching learning behaviour, automatic promotion in grades of children, recruiting more teachers to reduce pupil-teacher ratio.

6.3.1. Improvement in Physical Infrastructure of schools

During the field work, children, teachers and head teachers suggested for the improvement of physical infrastructures of school. A secondary school head teacher said that teachers are compelled to teach large number of students in a single class which affects quality education. He further added that it is extremely difficult to give proper attention to every individual child. Regular inspection of class and home works and interaction with every student is almost impossible which degrades the quality of education. As a result, children fail exams and the repetition of grades increases and finally end in dropout. In order to take control of every student in a single class, teachers are forced to use different measures of punishment. Children also complained that it was extremely difficult to sit inside a classroom during summer because it is

extremely hot and there were not any facilities of fans.

Dynarski et. al. (1998) found maintaining the class in small sizes had positive effects on staying in school of children with an average 18 percentile points improvement in attendance. A report by Teachers Educators Society of Nepal (TESON, 2004) shows schools in rural areas in Nepal lack proper physical and instructional facilities and suggests improved physical facilities to ensure comfortable stay of the children in the school and during the school hours.

During my observation, I found schools lacking various physical facilities. There were large number of students in a single classroom especially in primary and lower secondary level, lack of benches and desks for students to stay, crowded classroom, and teachers keeping sticks with themselves. It was summer season and there were not any fans inside the classroom. I found children sweating and feeling uncomfortable inside the classroom. It was difficult for both students and teachers to focus in teaching and learning.

When asked about the recreation facilities available in school, children said that there were not any sport items except the playground. Schools did not have any rules of keeping separate sports teacher. Teachers and head teachers also agreed that schools lack basic recreational facilities which are important means to keep children in school. During my observation, I even found schools lacking sports items for children to play during intervals.

6.3.2. Improvement in Teaching Behaviour

Different methods of teaching exist in school which affects children schooling. During the field work, Children even complained about the teaching behaviour of teachers. A girl, aged 11 said:

Teachers used to come in the class and start teaching in their own way. They asked us whether the homework was completed or not. Homework was not checked regularly. I was punished when homework was not done. While teaching, teacher did not try to know whether I was able to understand or not. I just tried to listen. I was not able to understand most of the time because of

the huge crowd. When I was not able to answer questions what the teacher asked, I was punished. I was always scared when I used to see sticks with teachers.

According to Dyer (2002), children are regarded as homogeneous and the focus has been on what is to be taught, rather than on children's learning, assuming that if the teacher teaches, children will learn. There is a need to bring radical shift in the culture of teaching and learning.

When teachers and head teachers were asked about punishment, most of them were against punishing children. They however argued that using different types of punishment measures help keep large number of children in control and maintain silence in classroom. A head teacher said that punishment has become a common system to take control of students. Threatening children using verbal words when children are unable to answer the questions during teaching is usual. Children are punished when they are unable to complete home works and irregular at school without any specific reasons. A primary school teacher said that even parents suggest punishing if children were not able to concentrate in their studies and go against the rule of school i.e. completing homework, bunking classes, mischief in classroom. Head teachers suggested proper training for teachers in order to develop child friendly teaching and change in the teaching curriculum in order to decrease punishment level. He further added that teacher should not feel children must learn, rather they should understand how they can make children learn. The feeling of supremacy among teachers of anyhow keeping children under control should be abolished.

A study report by Teachers Educators Society of Nepal (TESON, 2004) reveals majority of the teachers, especially in rural areas in Nepal are still untrained. Teachers lack the child friendly teaching activities and even the trained teachers have made little efforts to create joyful learning environment in the schools in Nepal. According to Dyer (2002), a crucial shift is to encourage a two way interactions, with a teacher as a facilitator of children's discovery which entails valuing and encouraging individual differences and giving all children opportunities to progress comfortably at their own speed. A study report by Teachers Educators Society of Nepal (TESON, 2004) urges changes in existing teacher training packages along the principles of activity-centered, child-friendly learning and the untrained teachers are to be trained in the revised training package. The government of Nepal has planned and is in the way to initiate

teachers training in clinical supervision approach suggesting that it can be the effective way of training teachers. Teachers should be trained in using local resource material and in handling children according to their psychology (MoES, 2009).

6.3.3. Automatic Promotion of Grades

It is evident that children discontinue schooling when they fail exams or have poorer grades. Hunt (2008) states schools in many countries require students to successfully complete a grade before allowing them to gain access to the higher grade, which means children who do not attain the required level often have to repeat. Repetition of grade influences dropout and discontinuity of schools

In order to keep children in schools, I found more teachers and head teachers in favour of automatic promotion of grades of students until they complete their full basic education. A head teacher said that failing exams is one of the main reasons children discontinuing schooling. When children fail, they feel ashamed to stay in the same grade with junior ones. Therefore, government should take ultimate step to promote students in grade rather than failing children in exams. Colclough & Lewin (1993) state automatic promotion in grades has positive impact in reducing drop out of children. A study report by Teachers Educators Society of Nepal (TESON, 2004) reveals increased number of under age and over age enrolment of children in lower grades in Nepal, combining the increase in repetition and dropout rate. This report demands a careful application of effective implementation of liberal promotion policy in the early grades. However, one of the head teachers disagreed with an auto promotion system of grades. He said that rather than promotion of grades if children fail exams, focus should be given to improve quality education, basic infrastructural facilities and recruitment of qualified teachers.

6.4. Community Intervention

The role of community and society is seen as important to reduce the problem of dropout of children from schools. Birdsall et. al. (2005) state different forms of community involvement with school which can improve the educational access to children, reduce the dropout and

improve teachers' attendance. During an interview, teachers and head teachers said that children discontinue schooling due to the lack of awareness of the quality education and its impact in their future life. Teachers said that basically, children dropping out of school are from those families whose parents are illiterate. Therefore, the fore and foremost measure to be adopted is to create awareness for both parents and children about the role of education and schooling in shaping children's future. Use of teachers to create awareness among parents and children and motivate them to send their children back to school through door to door programme is one of the effective means. Use of medias like F.M. radios, posters, cartoons, to spread information regarding schooling helps parents and children realise the importance of education in current and future life.

6.4.1. Awareness towards Schooling

When asked about the role of education in children's life, majority of children said that education helps to become a good person in a society and earn respect by other. Children were aware that higher level of education helps to get good and skillful jobs in future. A girl, aged 13 said:

If I was educated, everyone in my village would love and respect me. I greet teachers when I meet them on the way. I feel the same in future if I were educated. I too have become teacher if I completed my schooling.

However, some children stated that there are evidences of not getting jobs even if people are educated. Children said that although people are educated, they are compiled to go for foreign labour migration in order to fulfill their family needs. A boy, aged 14 said:

I do not regret leaving school because I have seen my seniors staying without jobs in home even if they have passed S.L.C (School leaving Certificate) level. There are more seniors who work as a transport and wage labourer as I do.

One of the head teachers said that practical evidences of people attracted towards foreign labour

migration had hindered the continuation of full cycle of schooling of children. Illiterate parents who work expect earnings from children soon rather than to invest their earnings in children's schooling. He further adds that parents are not sure whether the returns are granted after educating their children. Therefore, illiterate parents prefer sending children to work rather than to school. A teacher of primary school said that some parents prefer to educate sons than daughters. Preference to son's education is given because parents think that son's are the future caregivers. Parents feel less responsibility in educating girls. Parents have the perception that after marriage, girls are handed to groom's family.

Teachers said that although door to door campaign occurs in order to aware children and parents every year at the beginning of study year, it focuses on the enrollment rather than focusing on the positive effects of education and sending children back to school. Teachers suggested the formulation of several awareness programmes targeting the dropped out children and their parents and conduct such programmes in regular intervals.

Teachers also stated that only schools and teachers cannot play an effective role to bring children back to school. Social and political workers, clubs and different organizations should bear responsibilities to reduce the dropout. Teachers urge their active involvement in motivating parents and actively participating in monitoring, suggesting and supervising school and its programmes. A study report by Teachers Educators Society of Nepal (TESON, 2004) found parental indifference towards schools education and their lack of awareness as one of the strongest factors of school dropout in Nepal. The report's findings suggests that in order to facilitate the development of positive attitude in parents towards the girl child, a carefully planned parent awareness, training and education programmes should be initiated specially in the affected areas. Similarly the report states that majority of the dropped out children are from illiterate families. Therefore, programmes focusing on awareness towards the importance of education, the impact of dropout in the life of their children and basic literacy skills for parents should be implemented. Positive relationship between schools, community and local government and utilizing local resources is an ultimate necessity in coping with the problems of dropout (ibid).

6.5. Nutritional Intervention of Children

Children's nutritional status determines their length of stay in school. Children who are healthy enough prefer to continue schooling as compared to children who are malnourished. Acharya & Luitel (2006) state that the serious problem of hunger results in under nutrition of children which causes many children to leave school without completing the whole-day's learning activities, and even stops them from going school. If children start getting nutritious food and health-related support at school, children daily lives become relatively satisfying and enjoyable and prefer to stay at school and continue schooling (ibid). The government of Nepal with support from World Food Programme (WFP) is running mid-day meal programme in some parts of the country to assist children deprived from proper nutrition. However, the programme is unable to benefit each and every child throughout the whole country.

During an interview, teachers and head teachers suggested the mid-day meal programme is essential to attract children from the poor families. Children wish to attend school regularly if mid-day meals are provided on a daily basis. One of the head teachers said:

Our school had a mid-day meal programme before some years. Children used to be regular at school. Children were given the 'halwa'- fortified blended food (maize, wheat and soya) which was provided during the breakfast interval. It is very sad to say that currently the programme has stopped.

When children were asked about the benefits of mid-day meal programme, almost everyone showed positive response and suggested to give continuity to the programme. A girl, aged 11 said:

I enjoyed the mid-day meal and it helped me to get rid of hunger even if I did not have lunch at home. I was regular in school when it was available.

Teachers suggested the mid-day meal programme should resume again keeping children in school. In addition, a secondary school head teacher urged to provide food grains and oil to

children from the poorest families in order to attract children attend school and continue schooling. Teachers said that such programmes should run in coordination with schools.

Levy et. al. (2009) giving an example of Burkina Faso report providing lunch at school showed improvement in attendance of children with about 16 percent. Meng & Ryan (2003) state 'Food-for-Education' programme in Bangladesh on average increased school attendance by 21 percent to 28 percent and duration of the child's schooling by 0.57 of a year to 2.1 years of the poorer family children.

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

In this last chapter, I have provided a short summary and conclusion of the whole study conducted in the rural areas of Rupandehi district based on my research questions followed by the recommendation for further research.

7.1. Summary and Conclusion

Following the notion of the New Social Studies of Childhood that children are socially constructed and the importance of children's voice as informants, I have been studying children's dropout behaviour from their own perspectives. Additionally, I have interviewed teachers and head teachers who have close connection with children's schooling.

I studied the reasons of dropping out of children from and that dropout is common among children whose family is poor and have less income. It is difficult for the poor families to continue and support children's schooling where parent's income is even not sufficient to fulfill the basic needs such as food and clothing. Direct and indirect cost of schooling was high which made it difficult enough for parent's to cover the cost of schooling. Giving evidences of lack of proper jobs even for educated ones, some children were not sure of getting good jobs even if they were educated. Despite of schooling, children are compelled to support their parents to cover every household demands. The parents had less income because their work was related to unprofessional works which were mostly based on daily wages. When parents were out of their homes for work, I learned that children had to stay at home to complete every household duties such as cooking, cleaning, farming agricultural land.

There is a long tradition of marrying children, especially girls in poorer families and backward and disadvantaged groups in order to get rid of the responsibilities at early ages in the girl's house and add human resource in the boy's family. Families are even not sure of getting bride and groom if they keep children at home for longer ages which resulted in the higher incidence of dropout among rural children.

Children also dropped out of schools due to school's physical and infrastructural facilities such as lack of enough classrooms and proper recreational facilities. Due to the lack of proper teaching-learning behaviour, many children used to fail exams and had to repeat same grade. Lack of teaching-learning behaviour resulted larger punishment in schools. Punishment in school was common which had direct effect in children's schooling. Children were scared of attending schools regularly. Irregularity in school affected children's grades and finally ended in dropping out. Schools were not disabled friendly, therefore, disabled children could not attend and complete the whole cycle of schooling. However, few children were not interested to continue schooling and wished to be with those friends who were previously dropped out.

Children mainly dropped out of school due to economic and social reasons. Children who were dropped out were engaged in various types of work and labour in their daily lives. Girls were responsible to perform every household duty such as cooking, cleaning utensils, taking care of their houses and younger siblings. In addition, they were responsible to plant and harvest crops and take care of the livestock during agricultural seasons. Boy's every day activities were to engage themselves in agricultural works like plugging fields, planting and harvesting crops and taking care of cattle during farming season. Apart from farming season, boys were engaged in hazardous work and labour such as construction of houses and transportation. Every child who was dropped out was contributing to their family needs and demands.

Children who were dropped out of school were physically and mentally stressed. Engaging themselves in heavy and hazardous work and labour resulted in physical and mental tiredness. To get rid of these tiredness, some children were habitual to alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Children felt a sense of discrimination as compared to school going children. Children felt that they lack or will lack a social respect in future which is given to educated people

In order to reduce the problem of dropout of children from school, major focus was to increase the amount of scholarship which was currently provided. Both children and teacher informants stated that the money which is given in the form of scholarship is negligible and not enough to cover every cost of schooling. Scholarships which are currently given to girls, disabled and 'Dalit' children should be extended to those children who are under extreme poverty and children from remote areas, although they belong to so-called upper castes. Making tuition fee free and providing free books to some extent is not only enough to minimize the problem.

Management of the scholarship programme such as waving the amount in time, distributing at the end or beginning of school year, providing the money every month or week was suggested. Teachers and head teachers stated that proper mechanism should be developed to create awareness among both children and parents in the proper use of the scholarship amount.

Apart from increasing and managing the scholarship programme, suggestions was to train teachers to increase child friendly teaching methods, increase the number of teachers to reduce people-teacher ratio, ending corporal punishment, provide skill oriented education at school, improve and increase the physical facilities of school such as sufficient number of classroom, benches and desks inside classroom and recreational facilities. It is evident that teachers follow one way teaching method which creates extra pressure on students. Children are punished for various reasons such as irregularity in school, not completing educational tasks, failing exams, lack of proper attention given towards education, etc. Children feel shy sitting with their junior counterparts and there is a gap in children's age if they fail exams which finally ends in dropout. Change in school curriculum and a liberal policy to stop retention and repetition was suggested. Targeting poor children, suggestion was made to restart the nutrition programme at school in order to improve the nutritional status. Teachers and a disabled child suggested establishing disabled friendly schools, therefore, every disable students get an opportunity to enroll and complete full cycle of school education. Both children and teachers stated that the nutrition programme which was previously run in the schools and provided daily meals should be resumed in order to keep those children at school who suffer from poverty and hunger.

7.2. Recommendation for Further Research

The current study provides useful information on various topics such as reasons of dropout, daily habits of dropped out children, and the suggestions to reduce the problem of dropout from children and teacher's perspectives. This study also provides possible consequences of being dropped out in general. I suggest further studies can be done on this area being more specific which is highly relevant in the country like Nepal where school dropout is one of the major problem hindering education of children. This study basically includes children from all castes focusing on 'Dalits', backward and disadvantaged groups. More in-depth studies can be

interesting focusing on a particular caste or ethnic group which has higher dropout prevalence as Nepal is rich in its cultural and ethnic diversity. I have provided suggestions from children, teachers and head teachers in order to reduce the problem of dropout. However, this study does not analyze policies and programmes addressed by the government and NGOs and INGOs working in the field of dropout in Nepal. Further studies can be done giving a closer look and analyzing policies and programmes and their effects through policy making and stakeholder level and combining studies with children. My study is based on the rural and the remote areas of the terai region of Nepal. It would be highly interesting if the comparative study can be done comparing rural with urban and terai geographical zone with other zones of Nepal where facilities such as education vary in larger terms.

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Appendix

Interview Guide for Children: Individual and Focus Group

Start the interview by introducing the interviewer and the purpose of the research. Assure the respondent that the data collected during the field work is anonymous and will be treated confidentially.

- **Background Information of Children**

Would you please introduce yourself? Name, Age, Caste, Marital Status.

Where you come from?

How long have you been here?

- **Family Background**

Have you grown with your family?

Do you still live with your family?

Is your family single or extended?

Do you live with your biological parents?

How many family members do you have?

Are you an elder or the younger one?

- **Life-form Interview on Children's Daily Habits.**

Please share about your daily experiences which you have. How do you spend your daily time?

When	What	With Whom	Where	Remarks
Since children get up-8 am				
8 am-10 am				
10 am-12 pm				
1pm-2 pm				
2 pm-4pm				
4 pm-6 pm				
6 pm-until children go to bed				

- **Educational Status and Social Connections**

Could you please tell me about your previous educational status which you achieved?

Please tell me about your school where you were taught.

What are your experiences about your friends and teachers in schools?

How did you feel about the teachers in your school? About your teacher's teaching method?

Were you punished at school? If yes, how you feel about the punishments given in schools?

How did you feel with the subjects whom you learned in schools? Were they interesting? Please share me with your grades and the subjects you found the most interesting and the difficult ones.

Please tell your thoughts about the facilities provided by schools from which you were benefited? Such as playgrounds, toilets, drinking water, transportation facilities, scholarships, uniforms, health facilities and mid-day meals.

Share me about the activities you liked the most in school and the ones which you do not prefer.

- **Knowledge of Dropouts**

Have you ever heard of dropouts of children from schools?

In your opinion, why do children dropout of schools?

- **Support from Family**

Do you think your parents love and treat equally with other siblings/family members?

Please tell me about your parents' daily activities. What do they do?

Could you tell me about the responsible person for your schooling and other siblings except you?

Please share about the obstacles regarding your discontinuation to school in terms of your family conditions?

- **Personal Feelings and Attitudes**

Please share about your experiences of not attending school? Do you see any negative or positive effects of not attending schools?

Do you feel that you are excluded as compared to school going children? For e.g. lack of important skills, experiences.

How do you see your general life situation and your future plans?

- **Measures to Reduce the Problem of Dropout**

What type of support did you get from school while you were at school? Could you share your experiences about the programmes conducted by schools to help children keep at school?

Do you suggest any changes and improvement in the existing programmes to reduce the problem of dropout of children from school?

Could you please suggest the introduction of the new programmes which can help keep children at schools? Please share your expectations regarding supports for your schooling?

- **Conclusion**

Do you have any personal and special thoughts and wishes?

Do you have any further to add?

Thank you very much for participating

Interview Guide for Teachers and Head Teachers

Could you please introduce yourself? What position do you held?

How does your work involve regarding dropout of children from schools?

Please describe what do you know about the dropout of children from schools?

Please elaborate who do you see the most prevalence group of dropout in the district?

Can you tell me about the reasons children drop out from schools?

What are the current and future consequences of drop out of children from schools? How do you see the impact of dropout in the children's life and well-being and the society and community?

Please tell me about the current policies and programmes to control the problem of dropout of children?

How do you compare the current dropout control policies and programmes with the past ones? If you have seen changes, could you please describe what these changes are? And what brought about these changes?

In your opinion, what types of policies and programmes could be vital to reduce the problem of dropout?

Please tell about the importance of the community and their roles to reduce the problem of dropout?

To your knowledge, what could be done to betterment problems of dropout?

Thank you very much for participating