

RESEARCH REPORT

Everyday Life of School Dropout
and the Factors Limiting
them to Re-enroll

Learning, Policy and Strategy (LPS) Team
UMN, 2018



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Learning Policy and Strategy (LPS) Team and Education Team
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Acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| CBS | Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal |
| MICS | The Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey |
| UNICEF | The United Nations Children's Fund |
| MoHP | Ministry of Health and population, Nepal |
| SLC | School Leaving Certificate |
| MoE | Ministry of Environment, Nepal |
| UNESCO | The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation |
| UMN | United Mission to Nepal |
| TV | Television |

1. INTRODUCTION

Significant progress and structural reforms have been achieved in getting more adolescents¹ into schools in Nepal. This progress is observed in the increasing national literacy rate (for population aged 5 years and above) from 54.1 percent in 2001 to 65.9 percent in 2011 (CBS census, 2011). However, dropping out still remains the major challenge in continuing this progress. The Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) calculates out-of-school children by age group and gender, it shows more girls are out-of-school compared to boys (CBS and UNICEF, 2014). Similarly, according to data on table 1 of Nepal Adolescents and Youth Survey 2010/11, it is apparent that, in both genders, more adolescent dropout during grade 1-10 than during SLC or higher education. The dropout rate in rural areas is higher than urban areas in all grade categories. By region and ecological region, drop out is higher in grades 6-10 (MoHP, 2012). This empirical data reflects the intensity of dropout problem in Nepal.

Table 1: Percent distribution of Adolescence and youth who dropped out by background characteristics

| Features | Male by grade | | | | Female by grade | | | |
|---|---------------|-------|---------------|---------|-----------------|-------|---------------|---------|
| | 1-5 | 6-10 | SLC and Above | Total % | 1-5 | 6-10 | SLC and Above | Total % |
| Age | | | | | | | | |
| 10-14 | 67.29 | 31.80 | 0.91 | 100 | 83.53 | 16.47 | 0.00 | 100 |
| 15-19 | 29.82 | 58.08 | 12.10 | 100 | 27.86 | 57.83 | 14.33 | 100 |
| Rural-urban* | | | | | | | | |
| Rural | 26.79 | 52.65 | 20.56 | 100 | 27.81 | 53.08 | 19.11 | 100 |
| Urban | 16.23 | 51.45 | 32.32 | 100 | 18.24 | 50.32 | 31.43 | 100 |
| Ecological Zone* | | | | | | | | |
| Mountain | 36.00 | 52.23 | 11.76 | 100 | 32.62 | 59.51 | 7.97 | 100 |
| Hill | 24.30 | 50.80 | 24.9 | 100 | 25.06 | 54.46 | 20.48 | 100 |
| Terai | 23.50 | 53.83 | 22.67 | 100 | 26.07 | 49.58 | 24.37 | 100 |
| Nepal | 24.72 | 52.42 | 22.86 | | 25.99 | 52.55 | 21.45 | |
| * The percentage also includes not only from 10-19 years but also data of 20-24 age group Source: Nepal Adolescents and Youth Survey, 2010/11. | | | | | | | | |

1 As per Nepal government adolescence means people from 10-19 years old (early adolescence 10-14 and late adolescence 15-19)

There are numerous literatures on studying- who drops out? Why do they drop out? What are the socio-economic and cultural barriers leading to drop out? How can we reduce it? etc. The data concentrates only on reasons for dropping out, there is little known and unanswered about what drop out do after leaving school, where they are at present, how they can return to school and what kinds of difficulties they face in returning (Hunt, 2008; MoE, UNICEF and UNESCO, 2016). Further, the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) Education Team² is also working on child rights programme. Under this knowledge gap and organisational need, the proposed research aims to provide answers on the post-dropout situation. The results of this research will hopefully help to identify barriers to and opportunities for re-enrolment. Also what role, if any, non-formal education does or can play in filling the educational gap of formal education.

2 This research was conducted to provide evidence-based information on dropout issues to help develop the education project by the UMN education team.

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following key questions guided the research:

- Where are the dropped-out adolescent now and what are they doing?
- How does their everyday life look like?
- What is their attitude to re-enrolling in school/college/university? Are they willing?
- What specific factors are keeping them away from re-enrolling school/college/university?
- Is dropout adolescent upgrading their knowledge and skills through non-formal educations³?

3 The education that is achieved outside the formal learning system however aims for enhancing knowledge and skills of individuals.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study area

Kapilbastu and Dhading district were selected as study sites. This is due to the high dropout rate in both areas. Kapilbastu's dropout rates rank it as the top 9th district, with 21.5% of its 5-12 years aged children out-of-school⁴ according to Nepal's 2011 Census. Dhading district has a comparatively less rate of drop out, only 9.4% of its children are out of school, however, they also face similar challenges. These percentages translate in real numbers to 103624 students aged between 5-25 years from Kabilbastu and 38208 from Dhading who do not currently attend school. With females making up more than 60% of the total number in both groups.

In addition to the high dropout rates in these areas, the UMN also has its cluster office at both study locations. This existing organisational structure ensures a deeper understanding of the local setting; increasing the quality of the study, while at the same time minimizing the costs of implementation as a team and office is already in place.

3.2. Research design

The proposed study explored where dropped out students are now and what their everyday life consists of, rather than quantifying how many are where and how many are doing what. Similarly, rather than getting numerical information on how many dropouts did not re-enrol, the research seeks to understand why students do not re-enrol and what specific factors are keeping them from re-enrolling. Thus, the overarching design of this study



4 Children are considered to be out of school if they had no exposure to school during the school year. The number is addition of both children who have dropout and also children who have not yet entered school.

is a multiple case study as linked by Stake (2006) to explore how and why dropped out children cannot or do not return to school. This multiple case study includes a variety of cases that cover a range of age, gender and socio-economic examples in order to gain insight into the drop out phenomenon, examining its manifestations in a variety of contexts.

3.3. Sample size, criteria and procedure

Table 2: Study sample distribution

| District | Male | Female | Total |
|------------|------|--------|-------|
| Dhading | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| Kapilbastu | 3 | 8 | 11 |
| Total | 7 | 16 | 23 |

Sample size was determined based on the data saturation concept. A data saturation is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study and new categories, themes or explanations stop emerging from the additional new information (Marshall, 1996; Fusch & Ness, 2015) and when further coding of data is no longer possible (Guest et al., 2006). In this study, with every interview, a pattern began to emerge. The information was reviewed at the end of every interviewed day. It was then decided whether the new respondent was necessary or not for gathering new information and pattern. In the case of male respondents, no additional new information emerged that can be coded with interviewing additional number i.e. 7th respondent. However, the information related to females was quite dynamic. For instance, females in Kapilbastu were engaged in household chores whereas females in Dhading were engaged in income generation. In addition, some females in Kapilbastu dropped out because they failed their exams, while others dropped out even after passing exams. This continuous contrasting information led to the selection of each additional respondent until (at 16th respondent) information began to repeat, and no additional coding was significantly different. Hence, altogether 23 respondents become the basis for this study (see breakdown of samples in table 2).

Sample for the study was selected based on following criteria:

- The sample for the study was selected based on the following criteria:
- Respondents falling within the 'adolescence' age category (10-19 years) during the time they dropped out. During data collection, the age of the respondents might be higher than this as there may have been a gap in time (see second criteria) since they dropped out.

- The study sought respondents who'd had around a year gap between the time when they dropped out and when they are interviewed for this study. The assumption is that, between these times they might have lots of engagements and face challenges/opportunities and have different daily schedules with lot of stories compared to recent dropout. This scenario will give a better sense of the post dropout situation and why they do not re-enrol.
- The purposive and snowball sampling method was used to reach the right respondents based on pre-determined criteria. Thus, members of the sample are chosen with a purpose to represent particular social groups, experiences, or roles.

3.4. Data analysis

The primary type of data collection method for the study was semi-structured, qualitative interviews. Depending on the responses given, the interviewer probed information or ask follow-up questions in different ways, allowing the interview to be shaped by the respondent (Arthur & Nazroo 2003). This type of interview is an appropriate method when the aim is to grasp people's points of view, experiences and perspectives. The interviewer did not influence the interview process by labelling the drop out's responses as either wrong or right position. The interview process was undertaken neutrality, allowing the respondent the freedom to talk about all issues, thus providing a better understanding of the thoughts of the respondents towards their choice to dropout. The data will be gathered under four broad themes: i) understanding everyday life of dropout; and ii) identifying specific factors keeping them from re-enrolling in school and iii) their attitude towards re-enrolment, iv) informal education that they are engaged in. In addition, secondary literature was also reviewed to analyse the findings.

The interview data was translated and systematized. The analysis method used was qualitative thematic analysis method. In thematic analysis, the data is processed in order to identify main themes, indexed and sorted in accordance with these themes. It is a way of identifying recurring patterns in the data to achieve a systematic overview of the material (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor 2003). To better explore the information of the research question, the analysis tried to gather the following information from the data set.

Table 3: Analysis framework

| Research questions | Analysis framing questions |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Understanding everyday life of the dropout | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are they living productive and healthy lives? ➤ Are they employed in child labour? ➤ Is the dropout facing barriers for pursuing their life's goal? ➤ What kind of risk and vulnerable situation do drop out adolescents face? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identifying specific factors keeping them from re-enrolling in school | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What are the influential actors and agencies that limit their re-enrolment? ➤ What are the major incidents or chain of events that limit their re-enrolment? |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Attitude towards re-enrolment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ How much are they personally motivated to initiate re-enrolment? ➤ How they perceive their dropout decision? And what is their position on re-enrolment? ➤ What opportunities they have missed? ➤ Their efforts to re-enrol. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engagement in non-formal education | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Are they taking any informal education to enhance their knowledge and skills? ➤ Has informal education or working been building their capacity? |

3.5. Research ethics and data triangulation

Research ethics was sincerely followed while conducting this study. For example, the dropped-out adolescent did not want to be publicly known as students who did not complete their basic/formal education. Hence, the identity of the respondents was kept confidential and a pseudonym has been used in the research report. Similarly, for valid and reliable information, the triangulation of data was undertaken from multiple sources during the data collection in the field. For instance, one male respondent informed that he dropout from school due to economic reasons and re-enrolment was also limited by economic factors. However, when looking at his daily schedule, he was engaging in his father's rice mill business. Owning a rice mill in the Tarai is only possible for economically well-off families. His reason contradicts with his economic background. The same information is also put forward with his cohort who were accompanying him during the interview. One of the others present, spoke up the truth saying, 'its not economy but he failed in exam and did not want to repeat the same class because of shame'. Hence, as and when possible, these information sources were crosschecked for correct information.

3.6. Delimitation

- The research sought to select the sample group from adolescents aged 18 or above at the time of interviewing. This might omit the reflection of re-enrolment in reference to children.
- Although the views of dropout's family members would contribute rich information in understanding the re-enrolment context of each respondent, the study did not consult extended family due to limited resources and time.
- As dropping out is largely associated with failure and personal inability, there were some study encounter respondents who were too emotional and ashamed of talking about their full story. Hence, it was not possible to fully gather detailed information from such respondents

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Basic information of participants

All together 23 dropped out adolescents (see detail breakdown of participant in table no 2) were interviewed in this study. The research participants aged from 18 to 25 years at the time of interview.

Two scenarios of drop outs were observed: i) failed in exam and dropout and ii) passed in exam but did not continue further education. Around two-thirds of the participants were dropouts due to failure in exams. The highest degree attended before dropping out or discontinuing their studies was higher secondary education. With the lowest level of education from a respondent being the middle of 4th grade. Drop out mainly occurred around grades 8-11 or after completing higher secondary. Research participants had at maximum 7 years and to minimum 10 months gap⁵ from when they dropped out until the time of interview.

4.2. Everyday life of dropout

This section tries to explore where the dropped-out adolescents spend their time and what they are doing, this is done through the help of 24-hour activity mapping calendar.

In Kapilbastu district, male dropouts were seen as engaged in family businesses such as a rice mill, Pan shop, tea shop etc. The day starts with around 6 am. Some open the shop from early morning and others only go to business after lunch. Usually they have lunch during 9-10 am. Most dropped out males seemed to be engaged in the family business for the whole of the day time. Some close the shop late at night. For some the day starts and ends at the shop from tea to lunch, to dinner, they serve in shop. Those who finished their work early and have free time in the evening engage in chatting with their friend, travelling here and there, using the internet or watching Television (TV) etc. They tended to go to bed at around 10-11pm. Overall, the nature of their role in the family business is a supporting one, with the respondents not engaged in leading or managing.

5 One-year gap between the respondent' dropout and interview period were in assumption that between these periods they expose to various situation that helps to better articulate the situation they have been through. One respondent encountered in the study have only 10-month gap however was engaged in various activities after dropout. Thus, a year gap is not compulsion unless they have engaged themselves in various activities after dropout.

On the other hand, all the female dropout respondents were engaged in daily household chores. Even the 'topper'⁶ in the village and passed students did not continue schooling and are engaged in fulltime household work. Their daily schedule starts with wake up at 5 to 6 am in the morning. After tea, their morning chores include general household cleaning, fetching water, cutting grass, feeding livestock, cooking food etc, this work is continued until around 9-10 am. Lunch is served at around 10 which is followed by cleaning kitchen utensils. The day time is spent engaged in a wide range of activities; however, it seems they cannot fully make it productive. Some make baskets, sweaters, table covers, sew cloths; however, they are not commercial but limited to only household purposes and gifts. Some engaged in looking after livestock, preparing meals and delivering to family members working in the fields or looking after siblings. Some enjoy free time, sleeping, chatting, watching TV, using internet etc. In the evening, from around 5 pm, they are occupied again with preparing dinner. These activities might also add indirect economic value, however are not productive when considering the career growth of those girls for the future. After dinner, the time till 10 to 11 pm is occupied again with cleaning the kitchen and utensils. Some directly go to bed after that, some watch TV and help siblings do their homework. Others spend some time chatting with family members and neighbours before they go to bed.

In Dhading District, the daily schedule of dropout females is also interesting. They seem to be spending more time in income generation activities compared to females in Kapilbastu and also compared to males from Dhading and Kapilbastu as well. Some females in Dhading even have multiple jobs, for these respondents most their daily schedule does not involve household chores. Girls in this category generally wake up between 5-7 am. Those who wake up early are the ones who engage in sand, stone and gravel collection/ quarry in river bank that are later used for construction materials. They also load those materials into trucks for transportation. For these group of people, they spend the whole day from dawn to dusk outside their household work. All the breakfast, lunch, tea and snacks are served at the job site itself. They return home tired and got to sleep after dinner at around 8 pm. It is surprising to see that most of the dropped-out adolescents who engage in this kind of work have at least school level or higher secondary qualifications completed. Nevertheless, their daily time seems to be spent in more productive work compared to those in Kapilbastu, even if they are engaged in low skilled jobs. The females who wake up late help in household

6 Secure the highest marks in School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam out of 70 to 80 students in the village.

work until they move to their jobs after lunch. Their jobs include beauty parlour, cash collector in television channel office, sitting in a cloth shop and teaching in schools. It is quite interesting to see that some also engage in another job for a couple of hours in the evening, after their day job ends. These additional jobs included teaching tuition or folding cloths at a cloth shop. They reach home late, have a dinner, enjoy some personal free time after dinner and then they sleep. Overall, their daily life after dropping out seems engaged and productive, even if they are engaged in low skilled and low-income employment. These engagements also add value to their future career growth to some extent.

Comparatively, males who have dropped out in Dhading engaged in uncertain jobs. With some spending their days roaming around doing nothing. Jobs they engage do engage in includes: demolition of houses damaged by the earthquake or conductor in a public bus. The nature of their jobs is irregular and short term. The wake up between 6- 9 am, after lunch they may go to their irregular work, stay in local tea shop and pass time, or move here-and-there in the village doing no significant work. In the evening, they come back, have dinner and go to bed. The next day's schedule is also similar.

Reflecting, dropped out girls in Dhading spend their time productively compared to others seen at the time of study, particularly in reference to income generation and adding value to their future career growth. The comparative, open socio-culture context of Dhading compared to Kapilbastu is the major factor allowing girls in Dhading to engage in outdoor and income generation activities. Dropped out children are also not seen to be engaged in any significant sector. Some are limited to supporting roles, some in low income jobs. Kapilbastu females end up doing household chores while boys in Dhading end up roaming and doing irregular jobs. In general, current work which dropout are engaged is not similar to what they have studied. By stating this, it does not mean to argue that if they have studied, they will surely end up in significant positions. Findings just reflect the normal dropped out adolescent's current situation and their daily lives seen during the study. However, it is pleasing to see that most of the dropped-out adolescents are at least literate and some even received basic education and have cleared higher secondary school.

4.3. Attitude towards dropout decision

Table 4: Attitude towards dropout decision

| Regret | Confuse and uncertain | Positive decision |
|--------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| 7 | 6 | 10 |

Diverse attitudes towards the decision to dropout were observed. Table 4 reflects the attitude of participants post drop out. While many felt positively about their decision, a majority viewed it with regret or uncertainty. When questioned further, it was their guilt at not being able to obtain a good and steady job that contributed mostly to their regret, especially the realisation that one reason they were not successful in this was because of their low education qualification (see section missed opportunity). On the other hand, the respondents who were uncertain expressed their opinions more softly - and at times responding with socially correct language - of mentioning that studying is good, and they should have continued. For this group, at least they hypothetically assume that education might have done something good to them, even if they cannot explain what that good would be. Opposingly, the perspective of participants that are positive toward their dropout decision maintain they did not need further education to succeed stating: i) equipping themselves with skills as more important than gaining knowledge for the future, ii) it is better to first be employed and financially independent before continuing further higher studies, iii) pessimism on the use of education as they did not believe it had resulted in any return in their lives, and iv) feeling that they had received a basic level of education that was sufficient enough to function in every daily life.

In general, negative attitudes prevail towards education among dropped out adolescents. Two of the female respondents from Kapilbastu district humorously responded saying “padey pani bhadae majne ho, napadey ni bhadae majne ho” meaning, whether you study or not ultimately, you will end up cleaning household dishes. Almost all females, whether they had passed or failed in exams, had ended up doing household chores. Thus, they do not see any added value from education in their lives. One 10 grade male dropout from Kapilbastu even labelled his school education as ‘time pass’ activity, signifying the worthlessness of education to him. To surprise, he has chosen to drop out so that he could enroll in a choreography course in India, believing that a formal education had not value and he would do better in the future is he could improve his dance skills. However, he could have continued and finished till basic education and later join the dance course. . Some feel if they had started working earlier, rather than studying, that they may will have

progressed further with their employment. Thinking the time, investment and effort spent on education would have produced a better outcome if it was spent on an occupation. When they see others, who are educated but still unemployed, they conclude that dropping out was the right decision. On the contrary, when they see their classmates educated and working in important positions, then they highly regret their decision. Hence, they are constantly making comparison with others and are not really clear on what is best for them individually. On the whole, this group feel that the education they did complete has not added any significant value and opportunity to their life and hence, were determined to learn a practical, skill-based trade rather than continue in academic learning.

It was sensed that the dropped-out adolescent has a limited view of education, seeing it as only worthwhile if it leads to guaranteed employment. A broader perspective, inclusive of education's contribution towards thinking skills, shaping human values, developing a questioning and creative mind that can problem solve and the ability to make rational decisions are overlooked. The critical observation made here is that the scenarios discussed seem to be questioning the contemporary education system of Nepal at large. Schools are the dedicated institution where students are equipped with education. If students do not feel any added value of those educational settings then this indicates a significant deficit in the education system and also poses further questions regarding how we perceive practical education, especially in rural locations where dropout rates are high

4.4. Missed opportunity due to dropout

Significant opportunities and life goals have been missed for some adolescents due to dropping out. One dropout from Dhading missed the opportunity of a vacancy in the rural municipality which required bachelor level qualifications – completed or running - as a qualification requirement. Since she had only a higher school degree, could not apply for the job. She thinks that this opportunity could have been significant for her, but she could not apply due to her low qualification. In the same district, one male who dropped out at grade 8 had a life goal to be an army officer when he was small. After he dropped out, his dream to be an army officer was stagnated. He shared 'Since I was small, my life objective was to join the army. I did not have the grade 10 certificate required for my application to the army. So, I was not able to apply' Neither was he able to apply for foreign employment (his second interest) with only a grade 10 qualification. These missed dreams were also echoed in one female's sharing where she recalls studying 'A successful business women' topic during school days and visualizing herself into that story. Being a business woman now seems distant due to her limited

education. These kinds of missed opportunities were not shared by all in Kapilbastu district by the participants. Some felt, in general, that if they had continued studying, it would have added value to their knowledge, made them smarter, helped them to be independent and increase their income. Others still, regretted dropping out in the middle of the academic year and not completing a degree or certificate which could have been used into the future. Lastly, another group of respondents thought nothing significant would occur even if they had studied.

4.5. Re-enrolment decision

Table 5: Attitude towards reenrolment

| Interested to reenrol and making attempt | Interested but made no any attempt | Not interested to reenrol |
|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 4 | 6 | 13 |

Understanding the re-enrolment process and being re-enrolled is not an easy transition after dropping out. Table 5 shows the interviewed participants willingness to re-enrol in education. Only a handful of respondents were willing, these are also making an attempt to re-enrol. Despite trying to re-enrol, they had not done so at the time of interview. Six participants responded that they were willing to re-enrol but had made no attempt to do so. More than half of the respondents had no interest in re-enrolment. Table 4 and 5 may appear to contradict each other however in real terms they don't. There was not always a link between genuine regret over dropping out and a desire to re-enrol. The data set reveals that the respondents who felt regret but are much older than other students, who think economic independence should be priority, or who feel they have at least achieved basic level education tend not to be interested in re-enrolment. Likewise, if they are now a main source of income for their family re-enrolment may not even be a possibility to consider. The rational decision for them at this point is to move on from education and to commit to the regular work in which they are now engaged.

4.6. Factors limiting re-enrolment

The limitations on re-enrolment are many and varied. Each individual's story is unique, and much knowledge of individual circumstances required to fully understand limitations on and hesitations towards re-enrolling. Table 6 provide an over view with paragraphs 4.6.1 – 4.6.12 giving in-depth overviews of various cases.

4.6.1. Dropout reason: The main reason for not re-enrolling is usually associated to the dropout reason. Marriage in case 1 and economic need in case 2 clearly reflect how drop out and re-enrolment issues are linked. For instance, the dropout reason triggers a chain of events that later create a condition where the dropout finds it difficult to re-enrol. In case 1, marriage became the reason for dropping out. After marriage, the bride comes to live at the groom's residence making it difficult to continue school in her old location. In addition, the new bride must hold the responsibility of household chores at the groom's home, making it difficult to enrol in a new school close to the husband's home location. Pregnancy in the following year further delay the following academic year enrolment. Further, the need to look after a newly born child further pushed her enrolment decision for couple of years back despite her strong desire to re-enrol. Similarly, in case 2, due to the lack of a marksheet, the respondent was not able to re-join the higher grade.

4.6.2. Feeling of Shame in re-enrolment: The big age gap and the humiliation of repeating the same grade or attending the same school as the juniors is a source of shame. Case 5 demonstrates this issue clearly as when the respondent re-enrolled in grade 8 he was studying alongside classmates who were much younger than him. Due to the shame of being an adult in a child's class the respondent dropped out again and did not re-joined.

4.6.3. Professionally engaged or employed: Once respondents were engaged or employed in any sector with income, their interest in returning to study reduces. The benefit of income, even from low paying jobs, is preferred over a return to study which brings with it expenses and fees but not income. Case 4 and 5 demonstrate this observation. An ability to earn even a small amount of money is much more enticing than returning to school, some respondents commented that they might return to study, but first they want to earn more money.

4.6.5. Social structures that enable gender discrimination: Especially for females in Kapilbastu, the social structures limit the possibility of re-enrolment. Key factors that make re-enrolment difficult for females include the low priority given to girl's education, restrictions on female mobility and females being unable to travel alone. In one case, a girl passed SLC but her female friends from that class that she travelled to school with did not. Since travelling alone was not an option for her and as she no longer had friends to travel with she did not continue with further studies despite passing the exam. Some other dropouts used to adopt strategies where they do not attend class but attend only final exams. This then raised the question about the quality of education they will receive if they do not attend regular classes. There were many cases seen where if the family desires to send the children

alone, schools are physically accessible, and parents can economically afford the children's education as well. However, the gendered perspective they experience discourages them to travel alone. Almost all females there were seen facing some or the other problem related to these social issues. Affordability was not seen as a dominating factor for limiting re-enrolment especially in Kapilbastu. In Dhading, in some case economy might be the factor but was not seen as a main factor for limiting reenrolment.

4.6.4. Completed basis education: Some dropouts reached the conclusion that the education they completed or have received is enough for them to do basic things in their life. This view is held by adolescents who have dropped out after pass in grade 8 or higher. Their perception of their own common sense and their economic need in line them to be satisfied with a basic level of education and rather than continue in schooling believe they should seek paid employment.

4.6.5. Economic reason: The study showed that financial status plays a role in both the decision to drop out and limitations on re-enrolment. Case 2 shows how financial limitations meant the required marksheet could not be purchased, which in turn lead to dropping out with an inability to re-enrol because re-enrolment requires the marksheet. Other cases showed that students dropped out because they recognised the financial burden their education was on their family. This recognition of financial burden also contributes towards negative attitudes regarding re-enrolment and education in general.

Table 6: Cases of dropout adolescent

| Cases | Basic information | Case Description |
|--------|--|---|
| Case 1 | Female from Kapilbastu who dropout in 10 grade due to marriage | She dropout when she got married during studying at 10 grade. As she moved to husband's house after marriage and have to look after household work, she could not continue one academic session. The next year she become pregnant which again limit her join following academic session. Again, the child birth and child care kept her limiting next one academic session gap. Overall, at least for three years she was not able to reenrol. |
| Case 2 | Female from Kapilbasitu dropout at 8 grade due to financial reasons. | Due to the financial reasons she was not able to pay the marksheets charge. Without, marksheet she was not able to continue further grades. The marksheet further limits her to reenrol even if she wants to continue in future. |
| Case 3 | Female from Dhading enough what I have studies, now let's earn some money. | She had many siblings making difficult to finance education to all. She cleared the higher secondary and as their parent cannot afford she change her mind not to continue higher studies. She planned to take some years to earn money and meet basic need before she makes up the mind to study again. She gained the confidence to decide not to continue as she thought she have achieved basic level education and that's enough at this moment. |
| Case 4 | Male from Kapilbastu who did not continue after passing 10 grade. | He joined the family business after school and did not continue further studies. He was engaged in looking after business transaction and other supporting role in the family business for around five years. he constantly calculates (however short term) the cost benefit of working and going school and argues that once you are involved in earning money, you cannot go back and sit at class. |

| | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| <p>Case 5</p> | <p>Male from Dhading who dropout at 8 grade. Re-enrolled at passed 8 grade but dropout again after passing.</p> | <p>His father expired when he was at grade 8. To divert this grief, he dropout and went to Kathmandu with his brother who was in driving profession. He was engaged as a conductor for 3 months with his brother there. He re-joined the grade 8 in the same school after three years. During these times, he could not concentrate on study as he was living different lifestyle when working and started to earn some money compared to student life. He also found the classmate way below his age which he labels as 'Vhura' meaning kids and compare age signifying he has moustache and father of a daughter. This age gap among classmates further embarrassed him personally. Somehow, he completed 8 grade but dropout again after that. He never made an attempt to reenrol.</p> |
|---------------|---|--|

4.6.7. Peer influence: Peer influence is significant in making decision about re-joining school. As re-joining is associated with shame, cost-benefit analysis and various complex issues discussed above, the dropout student face huge dilemma in make decision. They also feel uncomfortable to discuss the re-enrolling issue with family members and other people. However, it is more convenient to discuss these personal issues with friends and classmates. A girl in Kapilbastu discussed with her friend when they all failed in the exam whether to repeat the 10th grade or not? Despite of her willingness, the other classmates were not positive to repeat. She did not share her interest to repeat the class with her family but instead went with the choices of colleagues as she became alone. As a result, she did not continue. Hence, re-enrolling equally depends on the peer circle and their influences.

4.6.8. High aspiration of children: One case in the study strongly illustrates how high aspiration of students shadows the education priority leading to dropout and continues to develop attitude not to continue. One boy from Kapilbastu was passionate in dancing and considers school education as a time pass. He is pessimist toward school education, however want to study choreography. He dropout out school and ran away from home to India to learn dance. Due to household problem he had to return. He unwillingly continued but also failed in SLC. After failing, he again decides to pursue his dancing dream. His father was at ill-health and mother could not look after their tea shop alone. Therefore, the family did not support his

decision and did not let him to go India to learn choreography. The boy seems to be frustrated and equally angry for not being able to pursue his dream. The consequences of this action were further seen on his negative attitude to school education. As family did not support his interest, he was reluctant to follow the advice of parents too to pass SLC. The passion of that boy is genuine; however, it is also possible to pursue this dream after gaining basic level education. Hence, failing to manage the personal aspirations can also lead in limiting people not to re-enroll.

4.6.9. Limited scope and linking education only to job: This point is one of the critical issues seen in the study for making the decision not to continue again. Many dropouts hardly see the use of their education. Some say its time pass activity and others label it as investment decision that hardly brings return in context of Nepal. One male dropout from Kapilbastu shares, 'what if after spending five years of money and time, you do not get a job? There is no platform. If I studied and become an educated person and if I have to go back to same old small family business due to unemployment, then its worthless. If there is no job, then you have to start from zero level in new occupation even if you have education. Only focusing on decreasing dropout will not address dropout problem unless unemployment is decreased. Who every study will look at the output. If you do not have output, then it is useless studying.' They generally link their education with only to job. The unemployment status of country further fuel in developing this perception. It is obvious that the job market is limited, however linking education only till job is a narrow outlook towards education. It seems that they never look education as broadening their critical reasoning ability, questioning the socio-economic structure they are living in and making them wise human. These broader pictures of education seem to be overlooked. Hence, this narrow outlook to education is one of the reasons that dropout do not continue.

4.6.10. Infrastructural limitation: At structural level, the limited educational infrastructure is also key in hindering dropout to re-join. The limited high school in the community, lack of girl's hostel facilities in the municipality, quality schools are some reported infrastructural limitations shared by respondents. Generally, those who cannot migrate or have limited mobility to access suitable schools/ college tend not to continue. It is worth mentioning here that some infrastructural limitations are also linked to social factors. For instance, in case of Kapilbastu, travelling to the school through cycle takes half an hour. It means its accessible. However, female, particularly adolescent travelling alone is not entertained. Hence, that accessible infrastructure still becomes inaccessible due to social reasons. It limited female access to education.

4.6.11. Number of sibling in the family: It is interesting to explore how having many siblings in family also leads to discontinue the education. In this context, more the siblings, more the family have financial burden educating all the children. One dropout female from Dhading shared ‘my parents told me ‘only you studying is not right, your brothers and sisters also should get a chance’’. Hence, when there are many family members studying and less working for income, its economically unfeasible. In this case, the elder child tends not to continue further studies morally and provide opportunity for their siblings to study.

4.6.12. Ignorant household head and Dysfunctional home: The decision to reenrol not only limited to dropout student level, but also is influenced by the household situation. In context where the family situation is dysfunctional/ broken and ill-informed or ignorant parents who do not care about the children education are in this category. Situation like alcoholic father, ill parents, old age parents, ignorant father etc. makes them feel and decide over education and choose rather to seek for employment opportunities. Undoubtedly, family is also integral part in re-enrolling decision.

4.7. Informal education/training

Table 7: Type of informal education received

| Informal education | |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Tailoring | Beauty parlour |
| Driving | Mobile repair |
| Accounting package | Basic computer skills |
| Mason training | |

Only handful of respondents were found to have received some informal trainings to upgrade their skills (see table 7). Out of these training, only beauty parlour, mason and driving skill were seen generating income for the dropouts. Other skilled they have learnt were limited to household purposes or not still used in their lives at the time of interview.

5. CONCLUSION

This study was an attempt to explore the less studied area of the circumstances and thinking of dropped out students. It is an effort to better understand where dropped out students spend their time and what they do after dropping out as well as gain insight into their attitude towards re-enrolment. The study also explored the structural and personal factors that hindered re-enrolment. The information gathered has shed light on how complex the re-enrolment decision is and therefore, shown how it can be better tackled to increase access to education.

Reflecting on the daily life of dropouts, the majority were not seen engaging in any significant sectors. Females in Kapilbastu areas are spending their entire time in household chores. Males in both study sites are either working in supporting roles, uncertain jobs or simply doing nothing. Females in Dhading seem to be spending some of their time productively in terms of income generation and adding value to their future career compared to other males and females, despite their job being low skilled and low pay in nature.

Various opportunities and life goals have been missed by some adolescents due to dropping out. Despite this, it is alarming to see that only a handful of respondents were seen willing and making any attempt to re-enrol. Out of the many important factors observed, three factors dominate in limiting to the possibility of re-enrolment. Firstly, a negative attitude towards the education system. Hence 'attitude towards education' and 're-enrolment' is highly linked. They are sceptical about the usefulness of both their gained education or any higher education. The unemployment rate in Nepal and scarcity of good jobs further fuelled a negative perception over the usefulness of education. This study showed dropouts only value their education in terms of employment at the end of it. It can be said that they hold a limited comprehension of the usefulness of education and overlook a broad perspective of how education can positively contribute towards their life. In other words, the current education system to an extent has failed to help them see the practical application of their education for their general wellbeing.

Secondly, social factors and structures restrain re-enrolment, especially for females in Kapilbastu. Cases were seen where even qualified, passed out and economically well-off students were not in the position to continue further education due to social perception and mobility restriction towards females. And finally, the shame culture in re-joining felt by the students. The big age gap and humiliation of repeating the same grade or in same school with the juniors is the source of this shame.

Beside these three, financial stability of the family, peer influences, infrastructural limitations and family dysfunction also contributed towards limiting re-enrolment. The study concludes that once students dropout, it is really difficult for them to re-enrol again. Promoting informal/vocational education to compensate the knowledge and skill gap of dropouts is seen to be effective solution. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to see that almost all dropout students interview has basic literacy and can read and write.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- By looking at their daily engagements after dropping out, it can be said that they do not end up in significantly productive sectors. Further, significant employment opportunities and life goals have been missed due to dropping out. In this condition, the dropout student's opinion that they can progress and result better outcome if they had invested time and started working earlier, rather than studying turns out to be false decision. Choosing to drop out might provide them with some income and a short-term solution, however would it proves to be a costly decision in long run. Hence, this information, specifically that dropping out effects your opportunities later in life, should be disseminated to the dropouts or potential dropouts.
- An intervention to shift the negative attitude towards education is important and urgent, students need to see the value of their study. The effects of dropping out seems to be poorly understood, with the value of education unrecognised, thus leading to negative attitudes. Until and unless we can transform this attitude to a positive view of education re-enrolment is less likely to occur. Perhaps they (the ones who do not want to continue theoretical education) need education/information about vocational education so that they can make informed choices about their life and livelihoods options.
- Their frame of analysis over use of education is limited by only one factor, successful and long-term employment. It is utmost to change this outlook and offer them much broader implications and practicality of education if re-enrolment is to occur. Building an awareness of how the skills learnt while studying can also help us to in our personal development, problem solving, social awareness etc would also influence a more positive attitude toward continuing or re-enrolling in study.
- Apparently, economy is always a determinant factor in any dropout and re-enrolment decision. It is also seen as a factor in this study, however not as a dominating or primary factor. Rather, the traditional gender norms and social practices were seen to be more influential. Hence, while designing any development intervention focusing on re-enrolment, social factors should be at the centre, especially for females in the Tarai.
- Establishing and promoting a role model is highly necessary to motivate females in these regions to reflect that they can also be employed if they are educated. Dropouts always compare themselves with their peers and educated people to analyse their own situation. A strong role model figure could challenge their naive and traditional perspective that they will end up in household chores even if they study. Hence, any opportunities that allow women role models to speak out and encourage girls to stay in school should be implemented.

- It is seen that the dropout and re-enrolment decision is not only the student's personal affair. The immediate stakeholders, family members, are strongly influential in the decision-making process. Hence, the parent's concerns and perspectives should be included while designing re-enrolment strategy.
- Students need to be well informed about the consequences of dropping out and challenges of re-enrolment and encouraged to make choices that are best suited to their personal development. When planning for their future it is important for them to consider and respect the preferences of their family however this does not mean they always have to follow such preferences.
- The study showed that once students' dropout it is very difficult for them to overcome many barriers of re-enrolling. Hence, strategies to prevent dropout in the first place should be prioritised, in the long term this will be the more effective and efficient way to overcome the problem.
- Promoting informal/vocational education to compensate the knowledge and skill gap of dropouts is seen to be effective solution in providing productive work for students who had already dropped out. It is shown to be a particularly viable option to dropouts who have a big age gap and are ashamed to re-join formal education.
- Broader structural factors like unemployment, limited educational infrastructures, limited awareness about the broader scope of education in life, weak educational governance, narrow scope in rural local communities and gender discrimination over access to education seen during the study are macro level circumstances leading to a negative attitude towards education. However, this study does not have clear answers on how to overcome these problems. Nevertheless, developmental efforts should equally intervene on creating a decent structural condition for access to education, not only on motivating individual students to re-enrol.
- A coordination with schools to make education more practical and equipping with extra-curricular activities might attract the dropped-out students to choose to stay or re-enrol.
- It is also desirable to find out a way in which the adolescents can engage in earning as well as learning. Since most dropouts are engaged in income generation activities they become reluctant to stop those financial engagements and study again. If solutions can be found where students can study while also having time available for employment this could potentially motivate them to re-enrol.

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