Ethnographic perspective of teachers in Nepali society

By

Min Bahadur Shahi

PhD scholar, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

28 July 2020

Abstract

The ethnographic perspective of teachers in the society is a way of observation and acceptance by community people. There are different forms on teachers from the beginning of unification of Nepal and the social values are also different at the time period. So, finding how the teachers were accepted and defined by the community people was prime objective of this research. The historical and cultural knowledge was followed and interviews were conducted with different informants. Research concludes that teachers were the most valued and social leaders at different time frame even their role and community perspective is shifted in different angles.

Key words or phrasing: Teacher – ethnography – perspective – Nepali society

Introduction

In history, God Krishna was highly trusted and accepted by the people. People in the society accept as a great person who is trusted (Bhagawat Gita, chapter -2, stanza 41). Gita is a Hindu religious document and Krishna was accepted as god at time. According to Kautilya, teacher was highly respected by students and community. Teachers' wife was respected as Guru Aama (mother) in the history also (Ranagarajan, 1987) Kobel and team quote from James Russell, "…..making education not only common to all, but in some sense compulsory and lifelong on all" (Center for Education Policy [CEP], 2007). This is an idea of Russell carried on 1870. It justifies the idea having informal teaching and learning from the beginning.

The history of formal education is short in Nepal comparing with India and other countries like; Takshashila founded in around 6th century (https://detechter.com/8-ancient-

universities-that-flourished-across-ancient-india/). Chaudhary, Kayastha and Patwari were teachers in the tarai region (Sharma, 2014). Those teachers were supported by the community people with rice and small amount of cash (ibid). This history of teachers passed over four hundreds years and still the teachers ae respected with some changes and divided perceive. From seventeenth century to 1955, there were informal forms of teacher except the formal started in durbar high school in Kathmandu.

Objectives

1. To identify the community people's perception towards the teacher
2. To introduce the teacher's contribution to society from the beginning

Research methodology

This research followed Lych (n.d.), qualitative methodology leading by four questions; how did researcher go about the research? What overall strategy does researcher adopt and why? What design and techniques uses? Why those and not others (Murcott, 1997)? The research area was covered hill, tarai and Kathmandu valley communities. Lynch Associates (1996) ideas was in priority that interviews were followed mostly. Taherdoost (2016) cites, purposive sampling helps to select person or event deliberately appropriate which cannot be selected from other common sources (Maxwell, 1996) was applied in this research to reach up to proper informant.

Kristjansson, Sigfusdottir, Sigfussion, and Allegrante (2013) explained that collecting reliable and validate data is not easy task. Data is from different sources and process. So, it must be observed from same length for the accuracy. Luff and Lacey (2009), there are varieties of words, number and abstracts captured during the data collection. Since, data familiarize, indexing, analysis and interpretation were focused.

Theoretical base of research

Bronislaw Malinonwski (1884 - 1942) explained that individual character and capacity of people depend on society and culture. There is strong relationship between individual and society. Durkhiem (1912) also believes on social factors and the role of teachers. Teachers are influenced by the society and also benefitted. Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883), had ideas about the relationship among production, social status, power and influence in the society. Teachers are those who have knowledge, ideas and money at the society. Herbert Spencer (1820 – 1903)

coined new phrase, "Survival of the Fittest" on the basis of Charles Darwins' theory on origin of species. It means people follow teachers for safety and problem solving.

Findings and Discussion

Research came to following findings with positive and respective perception towards teachers.

Teachers are burning lamp

"A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself and a lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame..." (Tagore, 1994). Ruffini (n.d.) compares teachers with the candle which is giving light to others. It is big respect to the teacher. Teacher as a god, source of wisdom were the values from the beginning. Trust and social respect is getting low even they are most respected still.

Teachers are "One for All"

Teachers were accepted as "all in all" in the society. They worked as a teacher, doctor, lawyer, loan provider and others. Hey were only person having salary income. So, they were only one person of hope and trust among the community. One member shared, *"...... depend to teachers for everything so they were only one for every challenge in the society. KII"*

Students trust more to their teachers

Kim and Yuniarti (2012) concluded their research that 63% students believe their teachers more than their parents (DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2012.v1i2.77). Teachers are accepted as parents because of their behavior and knowledge. One parent shared,

one day her son was doing math (multiplication) and he was following wrong and she taught the right one method but he did not agree with her. ... master le je vanyo tehi matra thik vanchha ani k garne. Trusts teachers whatever they say. KII parent

Teacher as political change agent

Teacher management is influenced by political power (MoE, 2017). It proved that teachers are affiliated with different political parties. One informant shared, teachers are always active in political movements from 1961 and their contribution is highly counted by parties. Also, a teacher added, political system is first priority for the development. Teachers played major role even in the Maoist movement from 1997 to 2004 (Sharma, 2014). Sharma added, Puran bachan (reading religious), volunteering to Pashupati, and opening teacher union were all forms of movements (ibid).

Teachers spoiling schools and students

This is emerging perception towards the teachers. The drop out rate is still high, repetition rate is high, and average achievement is lower in the community schools (MoEST, 2018). Student regularity, well preparation for the day, better performance and parental support are major challenges in the schools. One informant shared; "……teachers come in rotation, there is no classes, teachers sit in sun and students are playing everyday, they do not care either students perform or not. We are sending school to learn but teachers are not taking care. *Hamilai teacher le tere po, mathi mathi miler talab khanchhan ani kin padhaun* (teachers ignore community people because they convince and receive salary from the government) KII".

It means children are not learning in the schools and teachers are not honest with their duties and to the society.

Power delivery "Up to Me but not After Me"

A Nepali proverb, *" Ma khaun ma laun sukha sayal wa moj ma garun aru saba marun durbalharu (Everything is for me not for others)"* by Lekhnath Paudel is very famous in our society. Every person and the unit in the system roars strongly about power delivery and decentralization but everyone wants to limit up to own.

The Nepali society accepts teachers as a government at the local level. People observe the behavior among the principal and teachers which is superiority problem. It is same with school and community. One person shared;

"….. khai school ma k hunchha hamilai thah nai hudaina. How school is running is not informed to us." (KII member). So the community trust is running far about teachers because they are presenting themselves as a government person.

Discussions and conclusion

Teacher were accepted and respected in the beginning society and it is continued in present. There is changes in the level because of increasing access of people towards the resource and power. In the beginning teachers were only on source of knowledge, power, ideas, and support but there are multiple sources of those daily needs of human. The ultimate role of teachers is divided in many like; technology, media, government institutions and others in the society. Even the reality is true about the teacher that they are life gardener of children, they are not perceived at the level as it was in the past. So it is teacher's obligation to involve in multiple businesses is another reason to reduce the level of respect.

In Nepali society, teachers are respected by the community people from the past to present. The professional involvement and achievement decide the community perceive towards the teachers. It is more challenging in coming days to remain high.

References

Kim, U. and Yuniarti, K. W. (2012). *Factors influencing trust of teachers among students.* DOI: 10.5861/ijrse.2012.v1i2.77

Kristjansson A. L., Sigfusson J., Sigfusdottir I. D., Allegrante J. P. (2013). Data collection procedures for school-based surveys among adolescents: The Youth in Europe Study. J Sch Health. 2013; 83: 662-667.

Lacey, N. and Luff, D. (2009). *Qualitative data analysis.* Boston, USA: The national institute of health research

MoE. (2017). *School sector development plan.* Kathmandu, Nepal: Author

MoEST. (2017). *The schools sector development plan: Teacher rationalization and redeployment plan.* Kathamndu, Nepal: Author

Rangarajan, L. N. (1987). *Kautilya, the arthashastra.* New Delhi 110 017, India: Penguin Books India Pvt. Ltd.

Sharma, G. (2014). *Nepal ma shikshya ko itihans – vag dui (2nd Ed.).* Kathmandu, Nepal: Makalu Prakasan Griha

Tagore, R. (1994). *The English writings of Rabindranath Tagore: A miscellany.* Delhi, India: Sahitya Akademi

Taherdoost, H. (2016). *Sampling methods in research methodology: How to choose a sampling technique for research*: DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.3205035