OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NEPAL: WHO, WHY AND HOW

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DEDICATION

To those school children who face multiple discomforts to continue school education

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Out of School Children (OOSC) is an alarming issue, not only in Nepal but globally and especially at a time when global agenda like Education for All and Sustainable Development Goals have many challenges to face. In Nepal, the context of ensuring free and compulsory education as a fundamental right under the constitution of Nepal 2015, poses even greater challenges, and especially due to the out of school children. Though, the issue of OOSC is mainly raised from development perspectives as right-based issue in developing countries like Nepal, this research was carried out to understand the complex process of OOS phenomenon and its major dynamics. A pragmatic research paradigm with a sequential mixed methods research was designed to explore the 'who', 'why' and 'how' aspects of out-of-school phenomenon. Both quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed in order to understand the issue in a holistic manner.

This study first assessed the prevalence and distribution of out-of-school children in Nepal and also inferred the relationship between out-of-school events with its contributing factors in general. The macro level statistical results were drawn using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools such as correlation, chi square test, and logistic regression models where the National Population and Housing Census (NPHC), 2011 data and Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) data of 2010/11 were the major data sources. Analysis of the quantitative results as the background of the study provided the framework for qualitative enquiry to uncover the complexities of OOS issue. In this context, I selected an ethnic community in Kathmandu purposefully for the ethnographic study. I generated six ethnographic cases of school dropout children to assess the process of out-of-school phenomenon.

The quantitative analysis of this research confirmed many of the commonly identified factors of OOS event in earlier research within Nepal and abroad, such as school related, households related, and those that are related to local culture and parents and children related factors still remain valid and significantly contribute to out-of-school event. Similarly, the ethnographic study also revealed that the school dropouts and their parents experienced multiple discomforts and complexities in school, household and community leading them to take their decisions on school dropout. This study then discusses findings on the basis of past studies and developmental/social theories to depict the complexities of the out of school phenomenon. In so doing, I mainly used the human capital/development theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice to explain the out-of-school phenomenon.

One of the major insights I gained from the ethnographic engagement in the research is about 'educational ceiling'. The educational ceiling is the mental disposition constructed in human mind about minimum level of formal education that they have perceived relevant to their

life and livelihood. This ceiling is the composite of many constituents such as peoples' life experience, level of exposure, educational expectation and the level of discomfort felt due to various adverse circumstances they face during children's schooling. This 'educational ceiling' of individuals is the guiding forces to prepare decision maker for school dropout. However, at the time of taking decision of school dropout, people account the tension between pain and gain of schooling experienced by them.

This study encompasses developmental, theoretical, and methodological implications. The findings of this study are helpful to development practitioners and policy makers to pursue the crux of school dropout phenomenon that why and how a child becomes out-of school. Theoretically, this study showed that school dropout phenomenon is associated with the complexities of peoples' thinking and being. At the stage of thinking about school dropout, peoples' behavior was guided by their past dispositions while at the time of decision they acted somehow like a rational thinker. It reveals the changing behavior of human being in daily life – thinking mode of existence to being mode of existence. Methodologically, the macro level analysis generalized the causal relationship between out-of-school and its contributing factors for wider population while the micro level study was helpful to explore issues in depth with contextual and individual experience of out-of school phenomenon. Mixing the approaches was fruitful to understand the issue in a holistic manner.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CERID	Research Centre of Educational Innovation and Research Development
Df	Degree of freedom
DFID	Department for International Development
DoE	Department of Education
ECED	Early Childhood Education and Development
EFA	Education for All
ESLers	Early School Leavers
Exp	Exponential
FY	Fiscal Year
GoN	Government of Nepal
HHs	Households
INGO	International Non Government Organization
ISC	In School Children
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
NASA	National Assessment on Students Achievement
NLSS	Nepal Living Standard Survey
NPC	National Planning Commission
OOS	Out of School
OOSC	Out of School Children

PhD	Doctorate of Philosophy
S. E.	Standard Error
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
Sig.	Significance
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientifics and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
VDC	Village Development Committee

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In early 2014, I had spent almost a month in Baitadi, a hilly district in Far Western

Region of Nepal, conducting a study on out-of-school children (OOSC). The district was

identified as having most school dropout children including those that had never stepped in

school. Dropping out from school usually at the age of 13/14 years, was a common practice in

the district. Prevalence was higher among certain group of population generally among

economically poor and socially disadvantaged groups. As to my general belief about school

dropout, the most obvious reasons that I have had in my mind were related to family poverty,

low level of parental education, poor school/learning environment and so forth. These general

cause of school drop-outs are not just my perceptions, but are well documented in contemporary

literature – both national and international.

However, during my stay in Baitadi, I spent time interacting with different individuals -

parents, school teachers and the dropout children, I was perplexed by their stories which were

not simply the causal description of school dropout. The phenomenon of children being out of

school was not a simple causal result of their socio-economic backgrounds. Children who were

identified as dropout due to their economic condition were simply idling around in the

community. They hardly engaged in any economic activity. The parents' level of education, in

general, was mostly the same in the community – just literate. Schools in the community also

had similar context and culture. Yet, some students drop out early, while others continue their

study to certain level. Apparently, the linear cause and effect relationships, that I normally tend

to assume with regard to school dropouts, didn't exist in the community. Major predictors hardly explained the situation of the OOS phenomenon. The other emerging scenario was related with the culture and long-established tradition in the community that has become the norm for youths, especially boys – to become a *'lahure'*. Soon entering to their adolescence, most of the boys in the community would go to India with their relatives and friends to work and earn money. For a young boy it would be a shame, in their family and community, if they were just idling around. Going to the school was simply a time-pass until they became eligible to go to India to work.

The school dropout phenomenon was guided by their tradition or local value system where people's expectation from school was limited to learn basic literacy and numeracy skills. The conflict between the intent of education and its relevance in the community was clearly visible. Education system neither helped in stopping dropouts in the community, nor it supported young children to learn skills to improve their employability and earning higher. In this respect, children in the community did not seem to be dropout, but school leavers. They had left schools on the footsteps of their elders and simply followed the tradition of being *lahure*.

This was something very much intriguing for me, as I felt something is missing in the analysis of the school dropout. It is not as simple and straight forward as we think. Why some student dropout and why not others? If there are strong predictors like poverty, why student enroll in the first place – as poverty is all too common? Why student dropout at different times of the year? If the predictors are strong and linear, student must dropout at particular time or at particular grade. But this is not the case. All these questions challenged my understanding OOS phenomenon in a causal relationship of predictors, actors, and the context. I could thus sense dropout as a complex phenomenon and that the linear causal models do not explain the

complexities of OOSC. As such, I developed my interest to understand the dynamics of school dropout delving more into the process that leads to drop out.

I started my enquiry by reviewing Nepal's school educational plan, policy and peoples attitude. Nepal had endorsed education as priority sector since last seven decades. The very first periodic plan of Nepal envisioned the steady growth in education as an essential component for a democratic society, better economic condition of the nation, and to gain and hold a place in the world (National Planning Commission [NPC], 1956). But especially after 1990s, education has been globally considered as a basic human right where Nepal remained as the signatory to the international declarations of human rights and child rights. These are reflected in Nepal's educational plan and policies. For example, School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009-2015) envisioned to educate the children through the adoption of global initiations such as Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) programs to achieve universal primary education (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2009). Likewise, as the global move took place from MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the new seven year education plan, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016-2023), also aligned with the agenda of SDGs (2015-30), ratified by the UN General Assembly in 2015 and also with the Inchon Declaration of the World Education Forum and its Universal Declaration on Education by the 2030 agenda (MoE, 2016a).

The international commitments have been reflected in constitution and development policies of the country as well. The constitution of Nepal 2015 ensures education as the fundamental rights of the citizens: "Every citizen shall have the right to free education from the State up to secondary level as provided for in the law" (Secretariat for Legislature Parliament of Nepal [SLP], 2015, p. 14). The fourteenth periodic plan (2016/17-2018/19) of the country also

accepts the constitutional intent that education is a basic need of all citizens and the role of education to update the nation from a least developed country to a developing country (NPC, 2016).

People's interest in schooling is gradually increasing in the country. Historically, people's interest in education has been guided due to the nature of government job, which was not only easier to perform than the traditional agriculture but also the symbol of power and prestige (Bista, 1991). For people, sending their children to school was guided by the objective of occupational mobility from their traditional type of manual and hard physical work to non-manual and easy table work in civil service (Shrestha, 1998). Thus, schools were opened from the initiation of the elites even during Rana regime, the controlled schooling in Nepal before 1950s (Bista, 1991; Onta, 2000). Then the school was not a priority for the marginalized people, due to their first priority to manage other day-to-day needs and their inability to get any other job due to the lack of linkage *(afnomanchhe)* with power (Bista, 1991). But now, irrespective of class, caste and location, sending children to school has been one of priorities of all parents in the country.

As a result of the people's increasing interest on one hand and the state's national and international commitments on other hand, the education sector has remained state's first priority in terms of spending the largest share of its revenue. The only education ministry has been spending more than16 percent of states annual budget in the education sector for the last two decades (MoE, 2016b). The investment in education would go higher if budget from other ministries, developmental partners, I/NGO and parents alloyed. However, government's school education budget has been decreasing in national budget in recent years.

Within the education sector, school education is the major focus of the state, where more the 80 percent of the education budget is spent. SSDP has allocated almost 84 percent budget for school education (ECED to secondary level) to improve the access of all children to school by providing free tuition, text books and scholarship, uniform and day meal to socio-economic and geographically disadvantaged children (MoE, 2016a). The remaining 16 percent budget is allocated for governance and management of education. Not only for government but for the development organizations have prioritized school education in Nepal. The SSRP envisaged 24 percent of its total financing from development partners (MoE, 2009).

As a result of various efforts, the state has achieved some impressive educational results. The total number of school (all types) reached to 35,200 in the country with an addition of around 1000 new school each year in last one decade. The average literacy rate (+5 years) of the country has been raised to 65.94% in 2011 from 53.74% in 2001. Likewise, the net enrollment rate (NER) of primary level (1-5) has been raised to 96.9 percent in 2016 from 89.1 percent in 2008. Similarly the promotion rate of primary level increased to88.2 percent in 2016 from 54.5 percent in 2008. In the same way, the dropout rate from primary level declined to 4.0 percent in 2016 from 16.1 percent in 2008 (MoES, 2008; MoE, 2016b). In addition to this, Nepal has achieved a significant improvement in gender parity at all level of school education.

Despite the state's high emphasis on the education sector and having some impressive educational achievements, the national educational status and the indicators of educational efficiency are not encouraging enough. The latest census (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2012) of the country shows 34.1 percent of population, in overall and 42.6 percent specific to women are illiterate wherein 34 percent of population never stepped to school for learning purposes. Although net enrollment rate (NER) at the primary level records 96.9 percent, the rate

at lower secondary (6-8), secondary (9-10) and higher secondary levels (11-12) gradually

declines to 80.9, 59.8 and 18.2 percent respectively (MoE, 2016b). Out of 100 children enrolled

in grade 1, only 86.8 reach to grade 5 and 74.6 survive to grade 8 (United nations International

Children's Emergency Fund [UNICEF], 2016). This indicates that a significant number of

children gradually leave school when they upgrade to higher classes. As a result, as revealed by

the latest census of the country, out of 7.75 million children of ages 5-16 years, a total of 1.19

million (more than 15%) children, who were supposed to be in school were out-of-school in the

country in 2011 (Department of Education [DoE], 2013b). The out-of-school situation is more

sever, especially among socio-economic and geographically disadvantaged section of population.

Further, the national assessment of students achievement (NASA) carried out for Grade 3 and 5

students revealed only 45 percent to 52 percent achievements in different subjects while the

achievement of grade 8 students in mathematics, science and Nepali showed only 35, 40 and 48

percent respectively (ERO, 2015, 2016).

Statement of the Research Problem

The existing scenario implies a serious problem in the present school education system of

the country. This scenario focuses us to ask some genuine questions. Such questions are: Despite

such impressive improvement regarding enrollment at primary level, why do a considerable

number of children gradually leave as they move to higher grades resulting in a severe

prevalence of out-of-school children in the country? Is the state really serious in designing the

proper educational plans and policies to meet the international and constitutional commitments to

ensure school education to its citizens? Despite various programs such as free school education

and different incentive programs provisioned to economically poor and socially disadvantaged

group of people, people from the same group, in general, are not completing school level

education. Why the prevalence of out-of-school is severe to that specific section of the population? Are those existing provisions and facilities sufficient to address the problem regarding out-of-school issue? Or alternatively, are those designed plans and programs implemented properly?

These concerns demand for exploring the root of the problem in order to address them properly. First, where do the problems lie? Are they in the existing school system? For example, is this due to school-related issue such as irrelevance of the curriculum, inappropriate school structure, improper school management or poor teaching learning process? Have people found the existing school education relevant to their life and livelihood? Or in addition to the education system, the existing overall socio-political and economic systems are more responsible for these problems.

In the same way, some other queries which arise are: Who are the key decision makers for keeping children out of school and how do they reach the decision of drawing them back from school or never sending them to school? How other people such as teacher, relatives, peers and any other members of the society influence the decision of the decision maker? Likewise, is it due to external factors that compel those people to take the decision? Or is it a voluntary decision made by the people as the subjective judgment on the role of education to their life?

Considering the out-of-school issue from theoretical perspective, is the OOS decision a compulsion of people due to the result of external factors? Can it be a voluntary decision of people on the basis of what they face the environment and perceive the role of education? Do we know whether the structure or agency is responsible for the OOS problem? Likewise, whether the decision of being or keeping children out of school is the result of immediate, on time decision or is it the result of long process with compilation of various discomforts?

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to understand and explore the complexity of the OOSC phenomenon.

Research Questions

To understand the complexity of OOS phenomenon in a holistic way, this research seeks to answer the following four research questions capturing the 'who' 'why' and 'how' aspects of the issue in the context of Nepal.

- Who are the 'out-of-school children in terms of intensity of OOSC prevalence?

- What factors contribute to keeping the children out-of-school?

- How do the parents and children perceive school level education?

- How do the 'in-school children' become 'out-of-school children' before completing the school level education?

Rationale of the Study

Despite the constitutional provision, educational plans and policies, and international commitments all have endorsed the right to education and education for all (MoE, 2016; NPC, 2016; SLP, 2015), the high prevalence of OOSC is indeed a great challenge for the country. Moreover, the OOSC is a serious concern from efficiency and development perspective. The existence of OOSC indicates a higher wastage in education that reduces per-capita investment in the sector. It is the fact that education not only prepares human capital and improves productivity benefiting both individuals and nation (Woodhall, 1987), the social benefit of education spreads in many directions (Haq & Haq, 1998). Thus, the prevalence of OOSC would mean an obstacle for economic opportunity to the individual and an extra-burden to the nation.

From the methodological point of view, most of the past studies (Full Bright Consultancy [FBC], 2012; Groot, 2007; Kushiyait, 2007, MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016; Teacher's Educators Society – Nepal[TESON], 2004) analyse the causes of OOSC/dropout . These studies have explored multiple reasons which are responsible for pushing the children out of school and have identified poverty as the single major reason (MoE, UNICEF& UNESCO, 2016; Scheuremann, 2013). However, such causal explanation is not sufficient to understand the complexities of the OOSC phenomenon. For example, the OOSC process has been taking place among the school going children despite the constitutional provision of free education. This showed that the notion of poverty hardly influenced the decision of leaving schools before they completed their education in schools. The OOSC process has been embedded with socio and cultural aspects of the people. I believe that parents could not have enrolled their wards in the school if they were poor. If they were poor, how would they manage few thousands rupees to send their children abroad to work. Same principles apply in case of 'lack of awareness among the parents' which has been cited in many literatures (FBC, 2012; MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016) as the second major reason for school dropouts. How could we label those parents of dropouts as lacking aware on importance of education, who were sending their children to school for a number of years? If they had not really been aware of importance of education, why would they bear the cost of their children's schooling for a couple of years? Thus, these studies are incomplete in terms of revealing the dynamics of school dropout phenomenon. It is essential to go beyond the identification and/or validation of these factors and to explore the dynamics – the interplay between and among these factors that leads to the decision to drop out from school.

I learnt lessons from my own experience and also from interaction (with the school teachers, parents, and the dropout students) that the drop-out is a complex phenomenon as in

most cases it is not associated with just one or another factors or one event. On the contrary to

the general belief such as poverty, lack of parents' awareness, parent's level of education, were

reported as the causes of dropout, what triggers the last minute decision to drop out from school

is yet to be explored. It is likely that these triggers, that prompt a student to stop going to school,

are highly contextual, individualized and hence could be difficult to generalize. Thus,

understanding the people's meaning and their experience with the value of education and their

strategy to become out-of-school or in-school are fundamental issues. To sum up, I conducted

this study to understand the process of being a child OOS rather than simply to identify the

common factors of OOS event.

Significance of the Study

Considering the importance of education in the development of the nation and betterment

of the individual, the state is making investments and efforts along with the global partners to

provide school education to its citizen. Despite this, a huge number of school age children were

out-of-school where some of them were never stepped to school. In such a condition,

understanding the reality of the OOS phenomenon certainly helped to give new insights to policy

makers, parents, children and school authorities to address the issue. Briefly, I see the

significance of this research in three levels: knowledge generation for the readers, academic

discussion on the subject for the academia, and policy implication for the practitioners.

First, this research has provided general information on the status of, and reasons for

OOSC in Nepal. This benefits a wider group of people - from the very common to the

professionals in the educational sector to understand the situation. The research findings revealed

not only the prevalence and distribution of OOSC but also dug out the reality of the OOS

phenomenon by explaining the dynamics of OOSC and its contributing factors, which

contributes to the existing body of knowledge and also works to bridge the existing information gap in this research domain.

Second, this research also helps to understand the situation of OOSC from development theories and discourse related socio, economic, psychological and pedagogical. The finding of the research also helps to compare the OOS phenomena from the local perspective.

Third, in terms of the implications, policy makers and development practitioners can take the benefits from the findings of this research. As the research has explored the specific characters of OOSC and also uncovered the different realities of OOSC, the development agencies can also benefit in designing their educational plan, policy and programs effectively to meet the educational objective. On top of the aforementioned significance, I have achieved some personal benefits: as it has widened my understanding of this phenomenon both in terms of content and philosophies, and methodology. In addition to this, it has encouraged me to continue my study on the issue further and contribute to the issue in the future as well.

Organizations of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter begins with the experience that provoked me to select OOSC issue for the study. After briefly introducing the OOSC context, this chapter discusses OOSC as research issue with justification and significance of the study.

With the discussion on school leaving vs school dropout as a global concern, the second chapter reviews of past studies conducted in both developed and developing countries. It analyzes the major findings and research gaps in past studies in the OOS issue in Nepal. Based on the literature review, this chapter also presents the conceptual framework of the research and some theoretical concepts that explain the schooling phenomenon.

The third chapter presents the road map of the research process. After presenting the overall research frame at a glance, philosophical assumption of mixed methods research are presented along with the rationale of using this specific method in the study. The tools and techniques used in quantitative and qualitative approach adopted in the study.

The fourth chapter presents quantitative findings of research on prevalence, distribution and contributing factors of OOSC. These analyses are done in order to establish the existing scenario and to validate the findings of earlier research.

Then next chapter, Chapter five, presents qualitative part of the school dropout phenomenon. After presenting six events of school dropout, this chapter presents peoples' world views on educational value to their life and school dropout phenomenon. Interpreting peoples' world views and analyzing the dropout events, then it discusses the major dynamics of OOSC phenomenon with its constituents.

The sixth chapter has an attempt present the holistic understanding of OOSC issue. This is done by blending the result of both quantitative and qualitative analysis and discusses using different developmental and sociological theories. Finally, the seventh chapter presents overall overview, conclusion and implication of research. The references used in the research and annexes are put at the end.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

. This chapter begins with a boarder picture as to why emphasis is given globally in education. This helps to analyze whether education is simply a developmental issue or it has meaning beyond development. Then I reviewed school leaver's issue in developed and developing countries, focusing on the South Asian regions. This gives an idea that why school leaving or OOSC issue is a serious concern for every country irrespective of their developmental status.

Then I present the review of previous studies conducted on the out-of-school/ school dropout issue of Nepal in order to gain insights of OOSC situation and consequences which helped me to identify the research gaps. In doing so, I also derive some methodological implications of studying OOSC issue. These findings of earlier research reveal that those were not enough to understand the issue and justify the need to conduct this research. Further, the methodological gaps showed a need of conducting this research with adopting a different methodology.

Finally, this chapter presents a conceptual framework of the research and some theoretical concepts that I used to explain the schooling phenomenon from a sociological and development perspective. Mainly, I used human development theories, and Bourdieu's concept of human action to describe the schooling phenomenon, from the entry to the exit of school education.

Is Education only Developmental Issue?

Nepal has endorsed free and compulsory education in 1963 as a pilot project after the National Education Planning Commission recommendations in 1955. Though the idea of compulsory mass schooling started from Europe (Soysal & Strang, 1989) during industrialization and became the indispensable component of modern nation-states which institutionalized throughout the world (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). The rationale behind this evolution was led by the conventional wisdom that educational expansions facilitate favorable changes for nations and individuals in various ways (Hannum & Buchmann, 2003). Hence the mass schooling started with the modern concept of development and different development theories views education on its own strand.

Emphasis on mass education stimulated in developing countries with the human capital concept in the 1950s with the assumption that investment in education was conceptually identical to an investment in physical capital that it raises the productivity of individuals by increasing their lifetime earnings (Woodhall, 1987). The role of education in development was further enhanced with the evolution of human development concept. Education is crucial for building human capabilities and opening for opportunities (Haq & Haq, 1998). As mentioned earlier, education is considered both means and end of development. For the functionalists and the human capital theorists education works in two ends; as a means it fosters learners' ability. As an end, it makes learner instrumental for learning and earning. In addition to creating better income and opportunities for individuals and higher economic growth potentialities to the nation, education is the key to open social and political doors for people (Haq & Haq, 1998). The inevitability nature of education for development had made the school dropout issue universal to the globe.

In contrast, critical thinkers believed, education appears as a political issue. Critical theorists view schooling from the perspective of marginalized group of people and consider it as a capitalist apparatus to legitimize and maintain the 'status quo' of hierarchy and inequality prevailing in society whereas critical thinkers view present education as killing the creativity of individuals (Ritzer, 2010). In the context of developing countries, I believe that the commitments to mass schooling, rather than the development perspective, is the result of the development support provided by transnational organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank (Ramirez & Boli, 1987). The educational targets generally set by developing countries are generally prescribed by various conventions, conference and declaration which are organized by international donor communities (King & Rose, 2005).

At present, the Convention on the Rights of Child held in 1989 and the World Declaration on EFA in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand has reaffirmed education as part of human rights and thus has become the basis of international cooperation (MoE & UNESCO, 2015). Along with the unfinished EFA agenda and MDGs goal, now the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has become the reference point for developing countries to set the educational targets which ensures inclusive and equitable education and promoting lifelong learning for all by 2030 is one of the targets of development (UN, 2016). Thus, education in developing countries like Nepal transcends from developmental issue to political issue.

Out-of-School Event: A Global Concern

Education is considered not only the engine of economic growth but proved both the means and end of development (Haq & Haq, 1998); every state has envisaged to providing certain level of formal education to its citizen based on the basis of its developmental stages. Thus, a person who left schools before achieving a certain educational degree is considered as a

serious concern for both developed and developing world. The rationale, behind this concern is that incomplete education to a certain level would bring cost both to individuals and society (Millan & Marks, 2003; Dale, 2010). However, the perceived minimum level of education that one must, the level at which people become out-of-school, nature and intensity of OOSC, and reason behind becoming a person OOS are different for different countries. But distinctly, early school leaving by youth (16 to 24 years) has been the prime concern of the developed countries while the out-of-school status of school age children is an issue for the developing countries.

The Issue of Early School Leavers in Developed Countries

The review of literature on the early school leaving issue conducted in developed countries showed four major findings. First, the focus of the study is on the youth of 16 to 24 years. In the developed countries, in general, education up to the high school level is compulsory by law, and parents not sending their children to high school education are subject to punishment. Thus, never-school-attending or dropout from school level education (Grade 12) is not their issue. However, these countries are serious with the issue of educational dropout prior to higher education. Second, the early school leaving phenomenon is considered to create disadvantaged not only to their individual citizens (unemployment, low paid job, not active citizen) but also generate a large 'social costs' to the nation such as wastage of resources, social breakdown, social security program, crime prevention and lower social cohesion (Brunello & Paola, 2013; Christenson & Thurlow, 2004). Thus, various studies are found highlight the cost of early school leaving to individuals and the state.

Third, one of the objectives of those research studies conducted on school leavers in developed countries was to identify predictors or factors (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; Dale, 2010; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). All these studies found multiple reasons responsible for early

school leaving. However, those multiple factors or predictors were categorized differently in different studies. For example Rumberger and Lim (2008) presented those factors as associated with individual characteristics of students and that of institutions such as families, schools and communities. While some present it as family background related factors and school related factors (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004, Dale, 2010; Millan & Marks, 2003). Fourth, some of the literatures also revealed the fact that school leaving decision was a process of many years, rather than an instantaneous event. "The process of school leaving phenomenon begins before a young person enters school" (Dale, 2010, p. 5). Thus, such studies highlight the need of understanding the process as more important than accessing the reasons. These literatures also suggest the essentiality of understanding the ESLers interaction with a large number of ESLer factors. It meant early-school-withdrawal is a complex interplay among the student(s), family, school and community variables as well as a risk of protective factors (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004).

The Out-of-School Issue in Developing Countries

Different from the developed countries, the developing countries concern in two areas of OOSC. The first concern is on the population who do not get opportunity even to enter the school. Second concern is about school dropout children, especially the primary school age children rather than the youths. This is primarily guided by the succession of UN Conventions starting from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) to the convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) that led many UN member countries gradually to the initiation of free and compulsory primary education legally (UNESCO Institute for Statistics [UIS] & UNICEF, 2005). The global initiation such as EFA and MDGs has further led to pay greater attention to participation and completion of the primary school level education in the developing world. One of the international goals and commitments of the developing countries is to reduce the number

of OOSC in order to get development cooperation from donor communities. Hence, many research studies led by development partners are guided by program perspective and thus mainly focused on assessing two issues: prevalence and distribution of OOSC, and reasons behind the OOSC prevalence.

Although there is mismatch in numbers and methodologies used, different sources prevails that Asia and Africa are two major continents for OOSC (DFID, 2001; UNICEF UIS & UNICEF, 2005). Despite some impressive results achieved since 2000, still a high number of school age children are outside school in these areas (UNESCO, 2015). These studies also reveal that the OOSC issue as a multi facet issue in which a long list of factors related to school, home and society are found responsible for pushing a child out of school (DFID, 2001; Hunt, 2008; Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Hunt, 2010; UNICEF UIS & UNICEF, 2005)

Even within Asia, South Asia is one of the major places of OOSC in the world (UNESCO, 2015). The analysis of educational profile of four countries (Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) also showed that children from the poor households, more girls than boys, more children from ethnic and religious minorities, schedule caste and tribes and more children from rural areas than the urban areas were more likely to be out of school (UIS & UNICEF, 2014). Similar to this study, the independent studies conducted in India (Basumatary, 2012; Manjunatha & Annapurna, 2012; Gauda & Sekhar, 2014), Pakistan (Biloquees, & Saquib, 2004, Joubish & Khurram, 2011; Husain, Salfi and Khan, 2011; Gul, Gulshan & Ali, 2013) and Bangladesh (EPDC, n,d.; Khan & Samadder, 2010; Sabates, Hosian & Lewin, 2010) also revealed multiple factors as responsible for school dropout which ranged from HH related factors such as poverty, children at work and parent's unawareness on educational aim/goal to school

related factors such as lack of quality education, inappropriate curriculum and punishment were found as responsible for dropout.

Research on Out-of-School Children in Nepal

The section first discusses the findings on research studies on OOSC/school dropout issue and then identifies the research gaps. The findings of this section guided me to develop my research frame and research methods of this research.

Major Findings of the Earlier Research

The review of literature available on OOSC/school dropout in Nepal gave four major ideas: OOSC was a new issue; focus of studies was to access status and provide prescription; studies revealed multiple reasons of OOSC/dropout; and studies adopted multiple methods rather than intensive qualitative methods.

Previously, the research studies primarily focused on school dropout. Lately, attention has been shifted to include those school age children who never attended school as well. Nevertheless, very few research studies were available on OOSC in Nepal in comparison to the literature on school dropout. Further, these research studies on OOSC were basically clientele research carried out for development agencies and government (FBC, 2012; DoE, WE & UNICEF, 2012; DOE, 2014; MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016; UNICEF, 2014). This might be due to two facts. First, UNICEF and UIS launched the joint global initiative on Out-of-School Children in 2010 to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015. Second, the information on school dropout could be easily obtained from the administrative data of education offices and respective schools while a separate survey was needed to assess the status of those children who never enrolled in school. However, school dropout and never-school-attending issues were similar in terms of the reasons identified. For example, the reason for never

enrolment identified by Understanding Children's Work (UCW) (2003) and the reason behind school dropout identified by Kushiyait (2007) were the same: economic poverty and social poverty (disadvantaged group).

These studies on OOSC/ dropout are basically focused on assessing the OOSC/dropout status, exploring reasons of pushing out the children from school and finally providing the policy prescription. There was no proper record of the children who were never enrolled in school (CERID, 2002). But, after the global Initiative of OOSC, Department of Education developed a strategy and action plan document to bring OOSC to basic education (DoE, 2013b). This document also reveals the prevalence of 1.2 million children as OOSC (out of total 7.8 million children of 5-16 years age group) in the country and their distribution.

Most of the studies so far available are similar in terms of findings. Each research generally lists the multiple reasons that are found responsible for pushing out children from school. These factors include from household related factors to socio-cultural factors and school related factors including parents and children related characteristics (FBC, 2012; Kushiyait, 2007; MoE, UNICEF and UNESCO, 2016; TESON, 2004; UCW, 2003; Wagle, 2012). A long list of common factors came as the findings of those research studies conducted into OOSC. For example, FBC (2012) summarizes a long list such as income poverty, exposure to wage earning in tender age, engagement in household chores, lack of awareness, migration of family, geographical difficulties, location of school in long distance, orphans, gender discrimination, ethnicity, language of instruction, lack of adequate facilities in school like books, pencil and pen, scholarship, school uniform and day meal, and caste which were deep-rooted structural inequalities and disparities as the root of challenges faced by out-of-school children.

The compilation of reasons of dropout/OOSC identified by just five research studies (FBC, 2012; Groot, 2007; Kushiyait, 2007; TESON, 2004; Wagle, 2012) became a long list with more than 60 reasons (see annex 1). Out of various factors, poor economic conditions and lack of awareness among parents were explored as two most commonly identified factors responsible for school dropouts. However, different researches emphasize different factors as more responsible for school dropout. IIES and MoECSW (1993) and DoE, WE & UNICEF (2012) identified poverty as the single most reason while Kushiyait (2007) and Sunam (n.d.) highlighted the disadvantaged nature of the community such as *Dalit* as the major reason. Likewise, UNICEF, (2014) emphasized the tradition of community of going to India in their youth as responsible for dropout while Groot (2007) highlighted the perceived quality and significance of the school education. In addition to these factors, the research studies also revealed that the children or parents got influenced by other actors such as peers, school teachers, relatives and neighbors, and other community people who demotivated them to continue school.

Regarding the methodology of these studies, most of the research studies were found taking the sample survey data of either a single district (Acharya & Giri, 2009; Jnawali, 2010; Manandhar & Sthapit, 2012; Rijal, 2010; Wagle, 2012) or few districts to represent development region or ecological zone (FBC, 2012; Jnawali, 2010; Kushiyait, 2007; Manandhar & Sthapit, 2010; TESON, 2004) rather than using the national level survey data. Likewise, in terms of the inquiry approach, most of these research studies (Kushiyait, 2007; FBC, 2012) had used descriptive and exploratory approach using both quantitative and qualitative data. But, fewer research studies were found used purely the quantitative approach (Manandhar & Sthapit, 2010, 2012; Rijal, 2010; UCW, 2003) or qualitative approach (Groot, 2007; Wagle, 2012).

Existing Research Gaps

There have been fewer research studies on OOSC than on school dropout. From the review of literature on the earlier research studies on school dropout/OOSC in Nepal, I found the following five major research gaps on the existing studies.

First of all, in comparison to the seriousness of the issue of OOSC in Nepal, a limited research studies have been carried out. Among them, some are done for the Nepal government and some are done for development agencies for policy formulation purpose. No intensive discourses are found in public and academic level. However, some thesis and dissertation are prepared on drop-out issue to fulfill the academic requirement of universities; no dissertation is found on OOSC including the both issue never school attainment and school dropout.

Second, most of the researches so far have been conducted into smaller populations, selecting few districts and the responsible factors for the OOSC/dropout have been identified basically by the collection of the stakeholders' perceptions. In order to generalize the issue to macro level, it needs to cover a wider population where statistical analysis is pertinent.

Third, the past research studies are more focused on the factors of out-of-school event rather than the actors of the process. It is therefore necessary to identify the real agent(s) causing this to happen: parents; children; or someone else? Is there any influence of other people as well such as teachers, relatives, peers and other members of the society? If yes who are they and how do they influence the decision of the decision maker?

Fourth, many studies (eg. FBC, 2012; IIES & MOECSW, 1993; Jnawali, 2010; Kushiyait, 2007; TESON, 2004) consider the school dropout/OOSC as an event rather than a process. So these studies are confined to investigating the status of dropout/OOSC and the factors determining it. Although these are valid concerns, as these highlight the problems and

show the intensity, they do not give any idea about the processes of being out of school. One should also know how these factors work in some particular contexts to push out children from school. If the dropout/OOSC is considered as a process, the individual stories of the children are bound to bring many more things into light informing us what the issue. The 'How' aspect of the OOSC/dropout event is more important to uncover the hidden reality. Understanding the process is the pre requisite for the policy intervention. Actually the dropout/OOSC is a process rather than an event where individual stories are different (Hunt, 2008). The dropout phenomenon has been observed to be very intricate with multiple interwoven factors responsible for leading to this complex situation (Chugh, 2011). Thus it requires an in-depth study with individual stories in different contexts to uncover the hidden reality of the issue.

Fifth, the research studies on out-of-school children have been conducted to find out the technical solution to the human problem. Actually, the OOSC issue is largely a subjective phenomenon. Before making any action on OOSC, the decision first occurs in human mind which is largely influenced by the worldviews constructed there rather than the external world. This is the result of the people's subjective judgment of the external world. Thus, it is more important to see how a child or parent views the existing education in terms of relevance to their personal life, its social values prevailing in the society and their strategy to engage in school education in order to understand the OOSC issue. Thus the OOSC issues needed to be analyzed qualitatively and required to be viewed from the theoretical and philosophical perspectives as well.

The Out-of-School Phenomenon: A Conceptual Frame

Based on the review of previous research studies conducted in local, national and global levels, I developed a conceptual map to portray the out-of-school phenomenon. Multiple factors

related to household, school and children/parents themselves are intermingled for pushing the children out of school. Regarding this, Hunt (2008) states, "Dropout is not a distinct event, but rather a process of events, situation and contexts which work together to produce dropouts." (p. 44). Since out-of-school phenomenon is a process and it is the result of the key decision maker's interaction with their physical worlds all agencies and structural factors need to be considered simultaneously while analyzing the OOS issue.

Generally parents send their children to the school to pursue their own goal including different expected benefits of education. On the other hand, the children and parents face many demotivating factors and adverse circumstances at their home, school and in their community to continue the children's schooling. They face not only with this physical world but also interact with many other individuals and agencies at home, school and wider society that influence them, negatively or positively, regarding their schooling. Both these physical discomfort faced at different places and influence of other people at a time help them to prepare them to continue school or to take the school dropout decision at some point. Thus the ultimate result of 'out-of-school children' (OOSC) is a process of the interaction of children and parents with the environment and other people. Figure 1 presents the conceptual frame of my research.
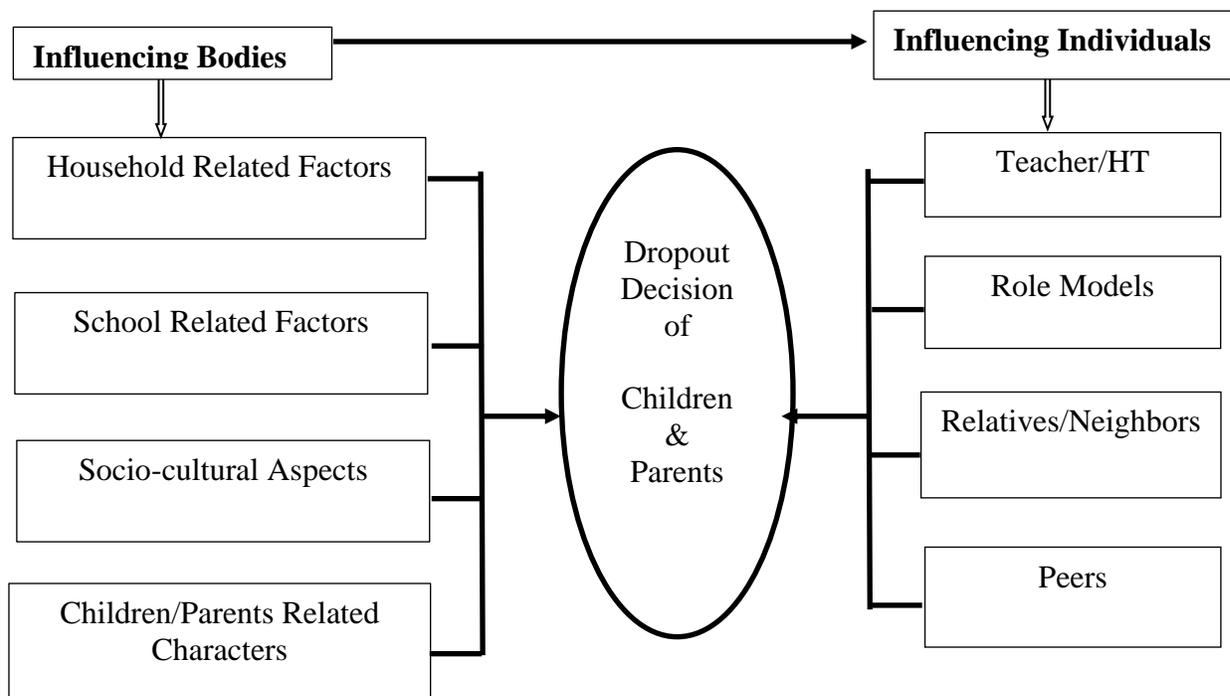
Figure 1. Conceptual Frame: The Out-of-School Phenomenon

The Out-of-School Phenomenon: Some Theoretical Concerns

In the study, I have discussed mainly human capital (development theory), theory of hegemony and Bourdieu's theory of practice to analyze the data, to generate meaning from theoretical perspective. In addition I have also mentioned some other theories such as Gidden's theory of structuration and rational choice theory for theoretical comparison. The decision to enter into school and the decision to exit from the school are two end points of school life. Between these two extreme, there occurs a lot of interaction and process resulting an ultimate decision of being OOS. Thus, to understand the OOS phenomenon, it becomes essential to conceive two different phenomena related to schooling: entry to school and exit from school. The following paragraphs discuss development and sociological theories that I found relevant

describing why people come to school and what discourage them from continuing school that guides to take the decision of school dropout.

Entering into School: Capital Acquiring Theory

The basic concern is why a child attains school or why parents send their children to school. The entry into school can be understood from two perspectives: Hegemonic and rational concept. According to hegemonic concept, it is a process of preparing citizen as 'conformist' who internalize many aspect of civil life as their natural duties without any resentment (Daldal, 2014). Thus, a child is sent or goes to school because 'all children should go to school' is an established value of the society. Thus a child's schooling has been guided by the hegemonic concept of modernization. Hegemony is a 'rule by consent', a form of ideological control by which belief, values and everyday practices are created and disseminated throughout society (Hicks, 2004).

The second perspective of children's schooling might have guided by the development concept practiced by the state. The human capital concept believes that education is a means of economic enhancement through better employment and higher wages in the labor market (Haq & Haq, 1998). If the people do not happy with their present lifestyle and means of livelihood and seek to alter their children's lifestyle, schooling might have been thought as a tool to fulfill this motive. People may have understood education as a means to make them modern, where formal schooling is considered as an important tool for acquisition of modern personality dispositions (Holsinger, 1987).Thus the school education might have been considered as a tool to pursue a different, happy and prestigious life style. Thus education is an investment made by people with a hope to get several benefits in future. In a broader sense, education might have been understood as an essential component of human development. People might have thought that education

served them for employment and earning. They might have understood it as a tool of enlarging their 'choices for a decent standard of living' (Nepal South Asia Centre [NESAC], 1998) or enlarging their 'capabilities' (Sen, 1999). People believed that education as a tool to acquire power, property and prestige. In this sense, education is an enabling tool to enjoy the lives that they have 'reason to value' (Walker & Utterhalter, 2007, p. 3). Thus, education prepares people for 'real freedom' (Alkira & Deneulin, 2009).

Conceiving Dropout: Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Although every social theory discusses the human patterns of beliefs, behavior and action, the theories differ in agency-structure and subjective-objective duality regarding human action. Some emphasize the role of agency and consider human action as the product of individual's understandings of the world. Other theories consider human action as an objective phenomenon which is largely regulated by external factors or the existing structure. Avoiding the concept of either agency or structure, I found the human action of school dropout as the result of intersection between agency and structure.

On this background, I found Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977) as much a relevant concept helpful to explain the dropout phenomenon associated with my research in terms of the concept of *habitus, field and capitals*. As Bourdieu viewed, there was a patterned human behavior in the community as habitus of regarding school dropout practice. People's dropout action was the result of a set of disposition of beliefs, preconception and observations of school education with some generated meaning for them. This is what Bourdieu defined as the *habitus* that generates 'perception' and 'practices' (Swartz, 2002) and guides them to take the action of dropout decision. Children and parents perception that school education after certain grades is neither possible nor relevant to their life was the guiding principle for school dropout

decision. The habitus led people's action of school dropout decision was the result of their 'thought' and 'perception' (Parajuli, 2003) on role of education in their life. This thought and perception on school dropout was constructed among them as part of their life experience and this perception guided their practice of school dropout.

Hence, school dropout was the primary socialization (Swartz, 2002) of parents and children in the community where they were told, directly or indirectly, in school or/and home that higher education was not much helping to their life and livelihood. The irrelevancy of school education to their life and livelihood after certain grade was their observation as well as judgment based on their socio economic and geographic situation. Hence their habitus of school dropout was "not only structuring structure, but also a structured structure" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Hence the habitus of school dropout was a mental structure of individual developed and influenced by the external structure (Swartz, 2002).

The example of continuing school by the children of similar context showed that no two individuals possessed similar habitus. As *Habitus* is disposition of fluid nature and changes along with age, exposure, level of education and parenthood (Bourdieu, 1984), people's worldviews are different. This was noticed in my research site as well where people exposed to outer world had different educational habitus in comparison to those who were limited to the community. Likewise, even from the similar background, people were found showing different behaviors depending upon their risk taking capacity. Thus as Bourdieu (1984) claimed that habitus facilitates or constrains but does not determine thought and action. This is so because, the dispositions from past socialization 'predisposes' individuals to work out what they have internalized from past experience (Swartz, 2002). Two individuals might have conceived the similar past experience in different ways.

Human practice also depends upon the particular situation they face and the personal background they possess which Bourdieu considers as two vital components in modeling habitus and shaping human behavior and action (Swartz, 2002). These two components are named as '*field*' and '*capital*' respectively.

Habitus generates action not in a social vacuum but in a social structured context (Swartz, 2002) where such objective world external to individuals is the field of the individual (Parajuli, 2003). The low income of the people, children's engagement in household work, and availability of secondary school only at distance had caused discomfort for people to complete school education. In addition to this, early marriage, lavish culture of spending on feast and festivals and parent's apathy to children's schooling were some other values of the community which were obstructing them from accessing school education. Similarly, lack of employment even after completing education had demotivated them to complete school education (Parajuli, 2015). These were the fields based on which people had developed their habitus of school dropout. Although, the field could offer both constraints and opportunities (Swartz, 2002), the existing socio economic condition and cultural values were constraints for them to complete school education depending upon their personal background.

The level of capital possessing determines the personal background. Bourdieu defines capital in a very wide meaning that includes both material and non-material things such as social, cultural, economic and symbolic capitals (Parajuli, 2003). On one hand, the people's occupation was not yielding profitable income and the people were not skilled for higher wage earning. On the other hand, due to lack of parental property and low capacity of earning, people were found with low economic capitals. Likewise, as a marginalized ethnic group and remaining away from the power, they did not posses the social capital of network with the power which had made them

vulnerable for getting employment and earning in other fields than the traditional one. Similarly due to the lack of higher education, they were lacking those cultural capitals such as knowledge, skill and experience needed to generate economic assets from the existing economic structure.

All capitals are interrelated and convertible to economic values. The convertibility of education (cultural capital) into other capital can be seen very clearly in case of educated people. A person with high academic credential not only can get high salary jobs but also social prestige and capital in the form of a network of relations (Parajuli, 2003). Conversely, social capital is equally essential to gain economic capital in the form of better employment. Out of all types of capital, the role of economic capital is dominant. Economic capital provides an immediate access without secondary cost while other types of capital cannot act instantaneously (Bourdieu, 1986). This is why families with a better economic position have a better access to education. Due to the lack of all capitals, especially economic capital, people of my research site were expecting less from education. The level of expectation generated from habitus depends upon the individual's capital holdings (Swartz, 2002).The higher the capital holding, the greater the expectation from education there will be. Hence, human action of school dropout in my research was the outcome of a complex relationship between dropout habitus, low capital endowment and obstructing field.

Despite, the action of dropout was guided by their habitus in majority of cases, some were found calculating the cost and benefit of school education showing a rational behavior of maximizing benefits (Becker, 1992; Voss & Abraham, 2000). They were found aware of the direct, indirect and opportunity costs of their children's schooling and had an experience of no significant economic benefits of school completion. Thus, the parents would hesitate to invest for further schooling. As rational choice theory (RCT) assumes, the decision of parents seems

prudent and logical to take the school dropout decision within the available choices and the local and larger circumstances they possessed (Abel, 1996).

Key Points of the Chapter

The reason behind giving high value to formal education in developing countries is not limited to the conventional wisdom guided by development agenda that educational expansions facilitate favorable changes for nations and individuals in multiple ways. It is also guided by the political agenda of getting financial and moral support from transnational organizations and donor community. One of the international goals and commitments of the developing countries is to reduce the number of OOSC. However, the issue of OOSC came lately in Nepal when UNICEF and UIS jointly launched the global initiative on Out-of-School children in 2010.

The earlier studies in general have considered the school dropout/ OOSC as an event and thus adopted the descriptive and exploratory research approach. These studies have found similar results - multiple reasons related to school and household responsible for making children out of school. But this study considers OOSC issue largely a subjective phenomenon resulting from peoples' interaction with external world and their values to education and envisages for the need exploring dynamics of OOSC qualitatively. In addition, the whole schooling process from entry to exit can be understood and explained from developmental and sociological theories.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research aims to explore 'who', 'why', and 'how' aspects of the out-of-school children issue in Nepal. To understand the issue in a holistic way, I have adopted a sequential mixed methods research using both quantitative and qualitative approach. After presenting my overall research frame at a glance, in this chapter, I discuss research design, my position in the research and the rationale behind selecting mixed methods for the study. Then I explain the research approach, strategy and data collection techniques and tools which I used in this research. Finally, I share how I have tried to maintain the quality standards of this research along with research ethics.

To identify 'who' were the OOSC and to access quantitatively that 'why' they compelled to OOSC, I used the statistical analysis of national surveys data in the first phase of this study. This part of the study revealed some statistically significant factors of out-of-school event. The quantitative study created a platform for me to understand the overall situation of OOSC in Nepal. After, I purposefully selected an ethnic community in second phase to understand the dynamics of those factors of school dropout phenomenon. Then I studied some selected ethnographic cases to understand the people's contextual meaning about school education, school dropout phenomenon, and school dropout process qualitatively.. Figure 1 presents the research map of the overall research process and the subsequent paragraphs discuss my research methodology in greater detail.
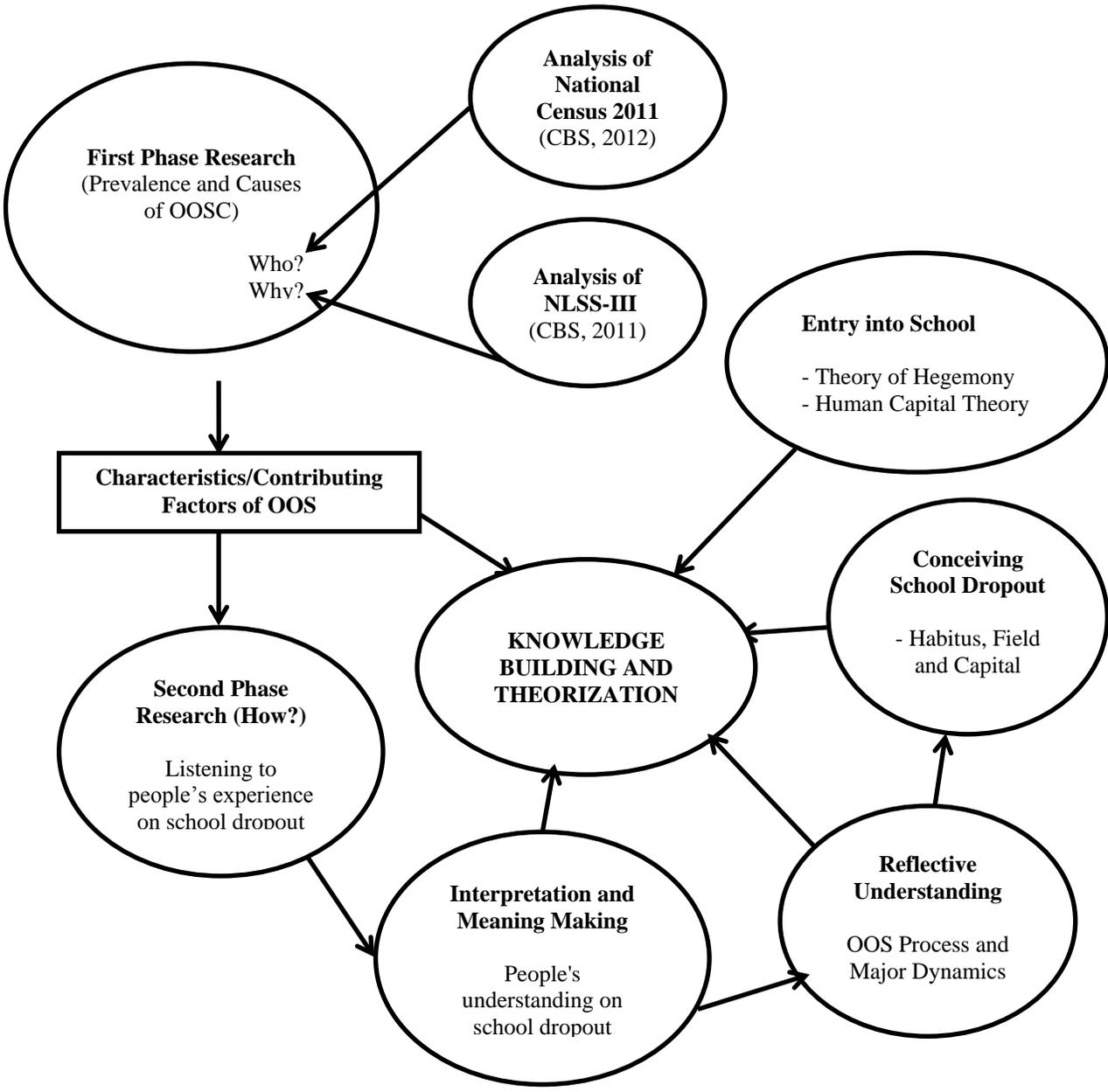
Figure 2. Research Map

The Research Design: Mixing Post-positivism and Interpretivism

A research design shows as a clear road map of a research process to get the answer to the research questions from data collection to analysis and interpretation. I began my research with broad assumptions made by researches about the world and research plans and procedures

are followed accordingly (Creswell, 2009). The assumption about the world makes the

researcher's worldviews. Individuals' worldview makes the ontological and epistemological

assumptions of the world. This worldview ultimately guides the specific research approach and

strategy, and the research approach again guides research methods (Cohen, Manion & Morrison,

2007). Thus, the research design is a set of research methods derived from researcher's

assumption about the world where research design as 'an interconnection of philosophical

worldviews, strategies of inquiry and research methods' adopted in a research (Creswell, 2009, p.

5).

 As for my position, I adopted a pragmatist approach in this research where I espoused

both 'post positivism' and 'interpretivism' paradigms as demanded by two different natures of

research questions. This worldview guided me to select the sequential explanatory mixed

methods research where I adopted again both survey and ethnography as my strategies of

inquiry. This further guided me to select different data collection tools and analysis methods.

Figure 3 presents methodological frame of my research. I elaborate my research design in the

subsequent sections. At this point, I start with the rationale behind selecting sequential the mixed

methods research followed by my philosophical position in research.

Figure within box (flowchart):

Philosophical Worldview
Pragmatic Worldview
- o Post-positivism
- o Interpretivism

↓

Research Approach
Sequential Explanatory
Mixed Methods Research

↓

Strategies of Inquiry
- o Survey and
- o Ethnography

↓

Research Methods

Data Collection	**Data Analysis**
- NLSS survey data	- Statistical methods
- Census data	- The three Cs approach
- Observation	- Use of theory
- In depth interview	- Developing theory
Quality Standard	**Ethical consideration**
- Trustworthiness	- Respect participants
- Reliability and validity	- Informed consent

(Adopted from Creswell, 2009, p. 5)

Figure 3. Methodological Frame of Research

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design: Suited to Pursue my Objective

I used sequential mixed method research design to address my both types of research questions, quantitative and qualitative aspects of the OOSC issue. These two type of research questions remain in the continuum of the objective and subjective realities. The first two research question is ontological question which intended to explore the 'who' and 'why' aspects of OOS event demanded a quantitative approach which was necessary to assess the universal laws of causal relationship between OOSC and its determinants and its generalization to the wider

population (Masson, 2006). However, the macro picture was not sufficient to answer the 'how' aspect of research question. To explore the micro level phenomenon of making a child out of school, it was essential to understand the contextual reality and individual experience of research participants. Rather than a universal rule, the out-of-school phenomenon was the result of the perception of people, different individual in different contexts. Thus understanding the peoples' meaning to the issue was also essential in order to explore the issues in 'depth and detail' (Patton, 2002). These two purposes, by nature, demanded two kinds of approach, methods, tools and data at a time.

Thus, demand of the research questions traces out that the single data source was not sufficient (Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009) and multiphase exploration was needed to understand the OOS issue in a holistic way by dealing who, why and how aspects, I found mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) suited for the research.

Within the mixed methods research, I used the two phase sequential explanatory design (Creswell, 2009). In the first phase, I adopted a quantitative strand to discover the contributing factors of the OOS situation and causal relationships between the OOS event and its factors. Keeping those major findings as the background knowledge, I adopted the qualitative approach in the second phase for: understanding the participants meaning (Yin, 2011) of the dropping out from the school. The sequential explanatory design, I found suitable for the research where the quantitative method explored and inferred the universal beliefs and concepts on OOS event and the qualitative method helped to pursue reflective understanding of the participants' meaning (Johnson & Unowuegbuzy, 2004) of the OOSC phenomenon. Thus the applied mixed methods explored both a big picture of OOS event and a close view of real life (Masson, 2006) regarding

out-of-school phenomenon. Further, the 'combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches' in a single study (Creswell, 2009) made possible to see the world from multiple way.

However, the second phase of this two-stage explanatory sequential design was taken as the follow-up of the first phase research (Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009); the design was not limited to those OOS factors identified in the first phase. I remained open to capture every new insight from the field in the second phase. Summing up, I tried to understand the relationship between the OOS cause-and-effect and the role of the OOS factors in making children out of school.

My Philosophical Position: Pragmatic Worldview

Instead of selecting a dichotomous world view of subjective or objective reality, I moved in the continuum of the subjective and objective reality. In this continuum, objective reality helped me to identify who were out of school children and subjective reality helped me to describe complexities of being out of school children from their socio-cultural perspective. Thus, philosophically, I adopted the pragmatic worldview to see the complete picture of OOS issue positioning myself in the continuum of objective and subjective reality. Creswell (2009) states, "Pragmatism is the worldview that adopts different worldviews and assumptions at a time, and uses multiple methods to provide the best understanding of a research problem." (p. 10).

I considered the school dropout event as an objective knowledge in the first phase with assumption that knowledge exists independently from an observer and to abide by universal laws (Hartas, 2010). This approach was appropriate to discover the cause and effect of the OOS event and to generalize the rules to the wider population. On the other hand, I considered school dropout process as subjective phenomenon in second phase with assumption that reality about the world is a human product constructed by the researcher (Litchman, 2013). Thus, the subjective approach was essential for me to understand individual's different values and

meanings to school education where peoples' meaning and action were different based on their worldviews and context they faced.

Post-positivism in the First Phase

Being a naïve realist, I follow the post positivism to answer the 'who' and 'why' aspects of OOS event and the first phase research intended to discover the universals or laws or law like generalizations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, Willis, 2007), on OOS event. For this, I came up with certain propositions and then converted those into hypotheses – 'a specified testable expectation about an empirical reality' (Babbie, 2013, p. 70). These hypotheses were tested statistically in order to establish cause-and-effect relation and to generalize them about the wider population.

In so doing, I believed that the OOS event was a universal phenomenon having some common responsible factors behind it. The factors of OOSC were the causes and the school dropout event was the effect (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). It means becoming a child out of school was cause and effect phenomenon between OOSC factors and the OOSC result. In doing so I adopted a scientific method (Tuly, 2010) where adopting this method, irrespective of the researchers, every researcher reaches the same conclusion that I have been while using the same information that I have used. The scientific method not only yields findings but also shows how they are found so that other fellow researchers can also follow the same if required (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Thus in this phase, my role was unbiased and value free about the OOSC event. This was based on the post-positivist philosophical assumption that "The knower can stand outside what is to be known" (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) where findings are interpreted neutrally. Being an unbiased researcher, thus, I remained detached from the OOSC issue in the first phase research where I considered the respondents as the object (Tuly, 2010) by

suspending my values (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) regarding the OOC issue, analysis and interpretation.

As post positivists assume, I believed in single reality (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) in this phase with an assumption that reality is external to human mind and exist' out there' irrespective of people (Tuly, 2010). So I tried to explore those accessible, external physical realities (Willis, 2007, p. 74) regarding reasons that are responsible for making a child OOS. Further, I believed in determinism that every event has some causes and these causal links can be uncovered and determined by means of research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p. 11).

In the first phase, I used the data for the purpose of finding the objective reality to reduce many events and situations (Cohen, Menion & Morrison, 2007) to single or few in order to generalize the phenomenon. In this phase, I used the data for the purpose of measuring variables and testing hypothesis in order to find the causal relation between the OOS and the various factors of OOSC for the purpose of generalization (Tuly, 2010). For this purpose, I used the NLSS data (CBS, 2011)–a national level survey conducted by an authentic and reliable institution, Central Bureau of statistics of Nepal.

Interpretivism in the Second Phase

The first phase research gave me a macro level picture of the OOSC issue of Nepal. Those findings were helpful to access the generalized picture but not helpful to understand the individual's experience of the OOSC issue and the process showing how an in-school individual experience out-of-school. Thus, in second phase of research, I followed an interpretivist worldview and tried to understand the individual's reality, specific to the particular situation. Rather than finding out the universal laws (Willis, 2007) and ultimate truth (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) regarding OOSC event, my interest in second phase of the research was to

disclose or uncover the propositions of people in OOSC phenomenon. For this, I collected ethnographic cases and tried to understand the reality at the micro level by demystifying the social reality of OOS event based on the people's meaning about the issue in certain specific context.

As an interpretivist, I considered the OOS issue as a subjective phenomenon which was the outcome of the people's action, reaction and interaction in a certain context (Saldana, 2015). So I tried to understand the socially constructed nature of the reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) about OOS event. I could see multiple realities of OOS phenomena as perceived by the participants in the study (Creswell, 2007) that were constructed internally in individual's mind from their social interaction (Tuly, 2010). In the process of understanding multiple realities, I examined the situations through the eyes of participants rather than the researcher's (Cohen, Menion & Morison, 2007) with the assumptions that no truth is external to human being (Saldana, 2015).

In the second phase research, I myself (researcher) was a research instrument (Tuly, 2010, p. 101), where my reflective understanding of the OOS phenomenon might have been influenced by my value-laden worldviews (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Here my role was to make layers of interpretation – including my interpretation of the meaning made by the research participants. I generated meaning from the interaction with the participants. The meaning of education and school dropout was embedded in the participant's experience which was interpreted from the researcher's perspective (Tuly, 2010). In doing so, thick description appeared as a quality standard of my research,

Data for Research

Survey data and ethnographic cases were two different types of data that I used in the first phase and second phase of the research respectively. The national level survey data was used to generalize the causal effect relation between OOS event with its factor. The ethnographic cases were used to understand peoples' meaning and understanding of OOSC issue.

Use of Survey Data

Rather than surveying on my own, I used the latest Census Data of 2011 (CBS, 2012) and Living Standard Survey Data (CBS, 2011) to answer the 'who' and 'why' aspects of the research questions in the first phase. The national census data was itself the population data while NLSS data had collected the nationally representative samples of 28000 respondents dividing the whole nation into 14 clusters. Out of total 28,000 sample of the NLSS survey, I took only the children of age 5-14 (7,194 children) for the study purpose with the rationale that this was the official age group of children for school level (grade 1-10) education in Nepal. Based on these samples, the statistical analysis was done to see the educational background of children (OOSC/ISC) with different socio economic and demographic characters and to infer the relationship for wider population.

The NLSS data collected the standardized information using structured questionnaires from the representative sample. Since no significant structural changes have occurred in the country, these latest survey and census data were still valid to assess the present situation. As NLSS data was collected by the national institution and deployed sufficient measures to make it representative, the data set was enough to generalize the OOSC events for the wider population of the country. Further, information was sufficient to see the relationship of OOS result with

various socio, economic and geographical factors and also to construct different hypothetical propositions regarding OOSC events.

Engaging with Ethnographic Cases

In the second phase of this research, I applied ethnography as a research technique to understand the participants' meaning and understanding of the OOS issue along with their cultural norms, beliefs and structures (Leedy & Ormord, 2005). Rather than trying to learn what 'really is' in the world, I used some ethnographic cases as a tool of understanding the phenomenon or school dropout process or being out of school from the participants' eye (Brewer, 2000). The cases revealed different meanings generated by the research participants about their decision of being out of school based on their backgrounds and perceptions. Despite having similar socio economic and cultural backgrounds, different research participants perceived different circumstances so as to reach their decisions.

Likewise, as regards the participants' understanding of the OOS phenomenon from 'the inside' (Brewer, 2000), I have put details of their backgrounds, the circumstances they faced and different examples they gave during the interview. For this, I had made the 'thick description' of their OOS decision to represent their real voice and experience by capturing their lived experience through the description of their voices, feelings, actions, and interactions that were observed in the field (Brewer, 2000). At times I felt difficulty to present their stories in a meaningful manner. However through out the whole research process – while in the field, while processing/analyzing the data, while drawing meaning of the data – I always remained honest to give valued space to their voices.

In the study, my role was basically the role of an interpretive ethnographer as I was making simply the reflective understanding of the participants' meaning. My role was less of a

critical ethnographer as my intention was not to advocating the existing inequality from the side

of the marginal people. However, at times I also adopted the role of postmodern critical

ethnographer (Creswell, 2012) when I found that the OOS problem is also the result of modern

emphasis on growth and development, Such emphasis results in marginalization and

differentiation in the society keeping children outside school.

        In this research, I have considered ethnography not only as 'method' but also as a

'methodology' (Saldana, 2015). I was guided by the philosophy of naturalism. In this regard, I

participated directly in the community and everyday life of participants over a prolonged period

of time (Creswell, 2007) to understand and explain what participants were doing regarding OOS

phenomenon, but without making any imposition from my side

Research Site and Participants

        After exploring the 'who' and 'why' aspects of the OOS event with national level survey

data, the 'how' aspect of the OOS phenomenon was qualitatively assessed interacting with some

research participants. For this purpose, I selected the one *Tamang* ethnic community located at

the boarder VDC of Kathmandu district where there were possessed the factors and characters of

the OOS children as identified by the first phase research. Besides, I also focused that there are

reasons that force children to remain out of school. See Annex 8 for a greater detail about the

research site and participants.

        After the first round interview with a couple of school-dropout children, six cases were

selected. They all had unique and thematic-wise representative OOS stories reflecting the

situations in the community. From sampling perspective, selecting a few or even a single unit

was sufficient in qualitative research to understand the worldview of people in certain issues

(Neuman, 2006). Here, my primary purpose of selecting the cases for qualitative researchers was

to clarify and deepen the understanding of the OOS phenomenon rather than making the samples representative.

In-depth interviews were carried out basically with those selected school dropout children and their parents along with observation of their everyday activities. In addition to this, group discussions were also conducted with other community people such as teachers, head teacher and local key informants including the in-school children. The purpose of interaction with other stakeholders was basically to understand the issue from different perspectives and also to triangulate the experience of those children and parents.

Data Collection Techniques

As already noted, I used the national survey data (CBS, 2011) and census data (CBS, 2012) for the quantitative analysis rather than conducting own survey for answering the 'who' and 'why' aspects of the OOS issue. The survey questionnaire developed by the CBS for the respective survey and census was fit for my purpose. To assess the 'how' aspect of the OOS phenomenon in the second phase of the research, I used multiple data collection tools such as group discussion, in-depth interview, participants' observation and document review where the checklist developed for the in-depth interview was my major data collection tool.

In-depth Interview

I interviewed people differently in first and second round of field visit. In the first round, I interviewed briefly but consulted with many stakeholders from students to parents and teachers to local key informants. The first round interview was aimed to generate some research themes and identify the representative cases of OOS. Based upon these, I selected six OOS children representing different stories of OOS phenomenon for the in-depth interview. In addition to this,

HT/teacher and local key informants such as businessmen, social leaders and political leaders were also interviewed so that the issue would be understood in a broader perspective.

I adopted informal conversation strategy (Brayda & Boyce, 2014) to explore the participants' meanings and their action regarding OOS phenomenon which helped to have reflective understanding on the issue. However, the informal conversation strategy was time taking (Patton, 2002). But these broader guidelines for the conversation were designed in line with the quantitative findings of first phase research. Actually, the interviews were the joint effort of researchers and participants, insights and feelings expressed by participants were essential parts in the discussion process (Neuman, 2006). Moreover, participant's cooperation being open up on the issue was more important to have the revealed subjective meanings. Thus I tried to convince the participants to win their confidence.

I observed that the community people were reserve and would answer my question just in few words rather than engaging in live interaction. In such case, I used my own strategy not only for rapport building but engaging conversation. In the initial days I experienced to have engaged conversation with my participants but later on when I was able to gain to develop trust with them we (me and my participants) fully engaged in the conversation. In this regard, I would like to share two examples which helped me to create engaging conversation with my participants.

> I was talking to *Maili* and she answered what I asked. It was too technical. I realized that *Maili* was talking minimally in my issue, a very brief answer using the least possible words. I realized that she did not enough open to me as I was expecting. Then I shifted my talking from school dropout to their daily life. I took out some special type of popcorn that I had carried with me. I gave it to them. They ate it and found very different. Then they asked about its seeds. I told them, "I will bring it in the next visit". I described

them about the special feature of the maize. They grew more interested on it. I again

promised them to bring the seed. After talking some of their problems, I found her more

open to me. I again returned to my business.

Likewise, in another case, I just met with some of young boys who were carrying stones

on their back to the house construction site. They were the school dropouts and I had to talk to

them. They were looking me as a strange. I did not know how to start the talk. Quickly a new

idea came to my mind.

I found the smell of the marijuana from them. I guessed they had it. I knew from my

experience that people using marijuana and alcohol become happy if they got

accompany. I asked them whether they had had *'maal'* (a slang word popular among the

users referring to marijuana). They cheered at me and gave me some. I took out tobacco

from a cigarette and mixed with it. I again filled the cigarette with the mixture. I took

intentionally a longer period so that I could get enough time for rapport building. Now,

the marijuana was ready to smoke and they were also ready to interact with me. They

asked me to start the smoking. But they got puzzled when I told them that I never smoke.

In the interview, I raised all three types of questions: descriptive, structural and

contrastive questions (Neuman, 2006). But, rather than listing a set of question in the first round

interview, I used only the topics and broad guideline in my mind and the probing questions were

raised based on the views expressed by the participants. However, in the second round in-depth

interview, I made a checklist under each theme that was generated from the first round interview.

Likewise, I shared my background as well to build trust and encourage the participants to

open up. However, I never enforced them to answer or use leading questions (Neuman, 2006).

During the interview, I tried to maintain the 'non-directive' strategy (Bloom & Crabtree, 2006)

without expressing my opinion or showing approval or disapproval about participants' view. This helped to understand the context while deciding some action on OOS event. All the time, I was cautious in raising sensitive questions not to make the interaction stressful for the participants (Creswell, 2009).

In addition to the individual interview, some group discussions were also done with school teachers and in-school students. The purpose of the group discussion was to understand a common perception of the community people about role of education in their life and the general causes of OOS in the context. This discussion remained helpful to identify and confirm the common issues regarding the OOS situation.

Observation

I used the observation as the method of triangulation to understand the OOS phenomenon in more detail. In this regard, I adopted different strategies such as 'close observation", 'careful listening' and 'taking field notes through different ways' (Neuman, 2006). I was attentive especially for eye contact with the participant during the interview so that I could understand the facial expression as well. The observation was made along with participating in research participant's work in normal and natural context (O'reilly, 2005) and in a regular basis. In order to understand the influence of different factors and context determining OOS situation, the observations were made in different crucial time period. I visited the research site and observed various phenomena during major local feast and festivals and special events such as marriage ceremony, *cheewar*, and death rituals; during the time of cropping and harvesting where was the important part of their daily life; and important school function such as parents-teacher meeting, parents day. Sometimes I went to the jungle as well with them pursue their hard full life where going to the jungle to collect grass and fodder was part and parcel of their daily life. These

observations at crucial points were helpful to give some better insights and understanding the issue.

Document Review

In addition to other qualitative tools, I also reviewed the documents such as school enrolment register, student attendance book and the annual result sheet. Although the head teacher of the school was hesitant, he became ready to share it when I assured the confidentiality of the research finding. These documents were reviewed to access to the student's background information to analyze and understand the OOS situation and process. A cohort analysis was also conducted to see the trend of school dropout by analyzing the school record of last one decade.This also helped to understand the lifestyle and engagement of school dropout children after the school life.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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I analyzed both the quantitative and qualitative data. In the first phase I analyzed quantitative data using statistical methods whereas in the second phase the text data were analyzed through interpretation and meaning making. The broader goal of data analysis in both phases was to extract meaning and generalizing the concept and theories by describing, explaining and evaluating the collected data (Sullivan, 2001, p. 451). However, the level of generalization was different in those two phases. The findings of the first phase research covered the national level, for a wider population while the generalization in second phase was more context-specific.

Quantitative Data Analysis: Statistical Method

As census and survey data produced by CBS was the source of my quantitative data for the first part of the research, it did not require 'coding', 'computerizing' and 'cleaning' process of

the data (Neuman, 2006). However, the raw data already entered in different files in Excel and SPSS software required to merge in one file pulling all variables that needed to include in analysis. Likewise, in case of some variables a large number of attributes were merged and transferred to few attributes. For example, 128 categories of ethnicity into 10 categories and again reduced to four categories to simplify the analysis and to pursue the specific need of the research. As the number or proportion of some specific group of children were comparatively more than other group, the data of national census 2011 and NLSS III survey data were analyzed in order to generalize the OOSC in terms of economic group, social group, gender, age, grade and geographic location. Here, these numeric data were analyzed in terms of various variables in order to draw meaning seeking out patterns within individual variables and in relationships between the variables (Sullivan, 2001).

The next step of the analysis was to summarize the findings of the statistical analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Both descriptive and inferential statistics have been used in the research. The prevalence of OOSC in terms of as age, caste, gender, grade, income group, location of residence, parents related factors and school related factors were first presented using illustrative and descriptive statistics such as frequency table, cross tabulation, chart and graph. In addition to this, I used the cohort analysis diagram to present the trend of school dropout situation from different grades of school education in my research site. Then, appropriate coefficients of association were measured to see the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables (Sullivan, 2001). The results of inferential statistics were presented in separate tables for each contributing factors of OOS event. In addition to this, after describing the pattern of variables and relationship between the variables, other appropriate inferential

statistics were deployed for various hypotheses testing. The purpose of hypothesis testing was to know whether the sample results held true for population (Neuman, 2006).

The statistical tools' correlation' and 'chi-square' test were found as appropriate tools to see whether the relationship/differences in educational background was statistically significant (Fox & Levin, 2006) with these contributing background variables of the respondents. The binary logistics regression (Foster, Barkus & Yavosky, 2006) model, another inferential statistics, was developed to identify various contributing factors of OOSC and also to assess the probability of being OOSC of a children having certain socio, economic backgrounds and children/parents related characters in relation to the absence of those characteristics. In the quantitative analysis the individual children were considered as the unit of analysis whereas the Excel and SPSS were the major computer software used for the purpose of the analysis.

Text Data Analysis: The Principle of Three Cs

Very different from the first phase approach, I conducted the data collection, analysis and interpretation which were taken place 'simultaneously and in an interacting way' (Sullivan, 2001) in the second phase. There was a circular and iterative process of gathering data, analyzing data/findings meanings and again asking questions. I tried to interpret the findings and then drawing some overall conclusion(s) from the study in its entirety (Yin, 2011).

Based on some background information about the area and participants I engaged in interviews with my participants in two different geographical locations. . These interviews helped to generate some themes for the qualitative analysis – a preliminary analysis of the OOSC phenomenon. In this regard, I visited Tamang community with the similar socio economic background and engaged in interview with some research participants in the adjoining district. These interviews in second site revealed that the problems faced by people and OOS

phenomenon were similar in nature. Then, the second round in-depth interviews were taken with the key school dropout children and to their parents. I used the following Three Cs approach in which the C stands for respectively: coding, categorizing and concepts (Lichtman, 2013, p. 252) for the analysis of qualitative data.
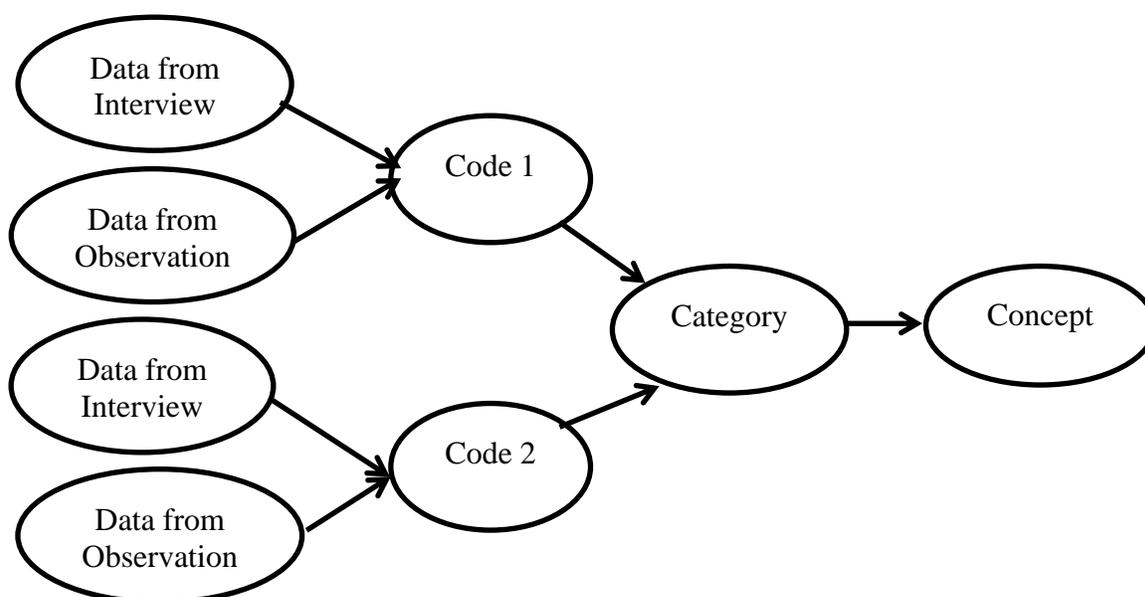
Figure 4. Three Cs of Qualitative Data Analysis: Codes, Categories and Concepts

I adopted a data-driven, contextualized approach to the coding systems where the four categories of phenomena were the general guidelines for coding: interaction of research participants with home and school environment; their perception towards school education; their perceived reason for dropping out from school; and the strategies and tactics adopted by them regarding school education (Sulivan, 2001, p. 455-459). Finally, once when I developed the concepts, it helped me generate themes. Then these themes were interpreted from the perspective of sociological and developmental theories.

Merging Data

I used the iterative process of merging data in the sequential mixed methods where the data collected in one phase contribute to the data collected in the next. In this process, I collected quantitative data in the first stage and analyzed from the statistical methods to determine that which findings to be augmented in the next phase appear as an ethnographic approach. I paid attention to select participants who can best provide that data, or to generalize findings by verifying and augmenting study results from members of a defined population (Creswell & Plano Clark 2007, p. 121). Although the data collection in the second phase of this research was influenced by macro level findings of the first phase of this research on the OOS event, the statistical result of quantitative phase and the interpretation of the people's meaning generated from the qualitative phases were mixed only during the 'final interpretation phase' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Finally, the overall interpretation of the OOSC phenomenon and the overall reflections and conclusions were drawn by combining results from these two phases.

Use of Theory in Data Analysis

As Creswell (2009) mentions, I have found the use of theory in qualitative research in three ways: first, theory is used to explain human behavior and attitude in a broader way; second, researchers use theoretical lens or perspectives as an orienting lens; third, theory is used as the end point, an inductive process of building from the data to broad themes to a generalized model or theory (p, 62, 63). In this research, I have adopted all three styles to explain, orient and to build a generalized model. First, the human behavior and attitude on ISC/OOSC has been understood and explained using different development theories as the field data demanded. Then, I used the second style to understand the action and reaction of the participants to reach certain decision using some theoretical or orienting lens such as development theories, theory of practice and rational choice theory. Finally, I adopted the third style where I develop broader themes to a

generalized model in the specific contexts. In addition to this, I explored the local theories that I found, working behind shaping peoples value and belief on the issue.

<div align="center">**Quality Standards of the Research**</div>

Credibility is the quality measure of research. To maintain the quality of a research study, it needs to ensure the validity of the data, results and their interpretation (Creswell & Clark, 2011). 'Reliability / validity' and 'trustworthiness' are two major concerns in quantitative and qualitative research respectively. These two quality measures used in research differs not only in terms of connotation but also in terms of procedures to measure. The following paragraphs explain how this research maintained quality in the quantitative and qualitative strands in order to enhance the credibility of research in overall.

Validity and Reliability of Quantitative Data

Validity and reliability are two basic concerns in quantitative research showing the quality in terms of the degrees of accuracy and precision in measuring human behavior (Babbie, 2013). Since my first phase of quantitative research totally relied on National Census data and National Living Standard Surveys data, the widely accepted and authenticated nature of data following the systematic process of data collection showed reliability of the data source. The census survey had adopted various measures from designing of the questionnaires and manuals to standardization of the training of the enumerators and from the monitoring mechanism set for field work to the processing of operation and tabulation to maintain the reliability of the collected data (CBS, 2012). Likewise, immediate data entry in the field, use of special software to find the mistake and error of data entry, revisits to the respondents immediately if the data were found mistake etc. were some quality measures adopted by NLSS survey (CBS, 2011). [See Annex 2 and Annex 3 for more detail regarding quality control adopted by these two surveys.]

Likewise, in quantitative measures I remained conscious to reduce the threat of 'internal validity' and 'external validity' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For this, the logistic regression model was designed selecting only the proper contributing factors to see their contribution to the OOSC event. Those independent variables were selected only after testing their association with the dependent variable (educational background -OOSC). Likewise, as the NLSS covered nationally representative sample, it naturally deserved less threat to external validity in order to generalize the result for the whole country. On the other hand, the Census data was the information of entire population, so there was no need to make generalization regarding the result of OOSC prevalence in the country.

Credibility of the Qualitative Data

I ensured credibility during the research process with varieties of strategies. First of all using mixed methods I used multiple data gathering methods and sources (Saldana, 2011) to enhance the credibility of my research. Let me give example, first of all I interviewed OOSC to bring their inside stories. Then the conversation with their parents and teachers offered me additional context to understand the complexities of OOSC (Saldana, 2011).

Expanding the idea of 'rigorous method' as credibility of research as put by Patton (2002) idea, Yin (2011) pointed out transparency, methodic-ness and adherence to evidence as three major components of trustworthiness and credibility of research. In this regard, I have adopted all these three constituents in my research: to make my research transparent, I have made proper description and documentation of the research procedure that I adopted in the study; to make the study methodic-ness, I have thoroughly discussed the research methodologies adopted in this research; and in order to make my decisions loyal to evidence, all conclusions are made based on

the data. Thus as Guba and Lincoln (2005) consider, adoption of these strategies had made the research findings trustworthy and authentic.

As the participant's interpretation was the primary data in my second phase research, the quality of my data depended upon capturing the participants' interpretations regarding OOS phenomenon accurately without distortion (Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009). However, I was equally aware that this may cause dual interpretation of the researcher's and the participants' understanding of the issue. I made regular visit to the research site for almost six months and occasional visits for the whole year. This was helpful to observe the participants persistently throughout the year. This helped me understand when people engaged more in socio, economic and cultural activities and children became absent in school. Likewise, it helped me to understand their value system and life priority. During the interview, I frequently shared with them what I understood in order to ensure that I understood the same as they had expressed. Likewise, soon after the interview completed and I found a suitable place, I used to write my understanding under the relevant themes. Thus, different measures such as prolonged engagement, persistent observation, member check, thick description and reflexive journal I adopted during the research has mad the research finding trustworthy and credible (Teddlie & Tashakori, 2009).

Research Ethics

During the whole research I tried to maintain research ethics according to my ideal role. In the first phase of the research, the census data and NLSS data were the major source of information. So in this phase, I tried to maintain my neutrality with the issue and I never tried to distort the data and analysis. The research findings were simply the interpretation of statistical result.

Nonetheless, in the second phase, as the participants were the major source of information, I always tried to safeguard the rights and welfare of the participants (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). I never forgot to take their informed consent (Leedy & Ormord, 2005) and they were told in the very beginning that they could skip any questions if they experienced any discomfort in answering any questions and even stop if did not wish to continue the interaction (Guthrie, 2010). Practically, as Guthrie (2010) suggested, I always told them about the objective my work, used their consent for conversation and to record their voice, and also answered their queries if any.

In sum, as Creswell (2009) suggested, the interaction was conducted with due respect of 'participants and sites'. I tried my best to respect their right to refuse to participate in the conversation. Likewise, even I found some funny and interesting remarks about the participants (Guthrie, 2010); I never disclosed those findings with other people with the purpose of making them belittled and presenting them having them and their culture as an inferior entity. It means I tried to give high honor to the values of my participants.

Theoretically, both the researcher and participants should benefit from the research (Creswell, 2009). There was possibility of getting benefits by the research participants as this research intended to help in policy formulation by creating conditions for the OOS children to join and continue their education. Even it was difficult to convince this probable benefits to the people; I assured them that they would not get any harm from this. I also tried to convince that neither I would misuse those data nor use data for commercial use. Thus, I maintained 'no harm principle' 'privacy and anonymity', 'confidentiality', and 'informed consent' while interviewing the participants (Litchman, 2013).

CHAPTER IV

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NEPAL: INTENSITY, DISTRIBUTION AND

CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

The overall objective of this chapter is to assess OOSC situation that gives the

background to explore the dynamics of out-of-school children (OOSC) in Nepal. The first

section of this chapter assesses the distribution of OOSC in terms of location, gender, age, and

caste/ethnicity of people. However, before entering the specific interest of this chapter, the

overall educational indicators such as literacy rate and the school attainment status, are analyzed

to assess the OOSC situation. Three national level data sources; the latest national census of the

country (NPHC, 2011), the latest household survey (NLSS III) and the Department of

Education's Flash Reports have been used for the purpose.

The second section basically deals with the contributing factors of OOSC in Nepal. For

this, first, various contributing factors of OOSC in Nepal revealed by earlier research studies

have been discussed under the five broad categories: i) household related factors, ii) sociocultural

factors iii) parents related characters, iv) children related characters and v) school related

factors. Then some of the major contributing factors have been analyzed statistically using the

raw data of NLSS-III. Rather than confirmatory purposes, the aim of this statistical analysis was

to see the association between different socio economic variables and child/parents-related

backgrounds with the educational status (OOS/IS) of children. In the statistical analysis, children

of 5-14 years, the official age for the school education, has been taken as the unit of analysis

where both, never-school-attended and school dropouts have been considered as the OOSC.

Educational Status of Nepal

The following subsections present the overall educational status and its trend over the period which includes the literacy rate and the dropout scenario in the school level education.

Literacy Rate

The national literacy status of the country is gradually improving over the period. According to NPHC 2011, the overall literacy rate (for population aged 5 and above) increased from 54.1 percent in 2001 to 65.9 percent in 2011 (CBS, 2012). As a mirror effect, the decreasing the number of never school attended population is the evidence of the improvement in literacy status in the country over the period. In an average, 65 percent of adult population (15 + years age) were found as never-school-attended population in 1995/96 which sharply declined to 43 percent in 2010/11 (CBS, 2011).

Figure 5 shows that there was a sharp decline in the never-schooling-attending status of the female, from 81 percent in 1995/96 to 57 percent in 2010/11 with a decline of 1.6 percent per year which is quite higher than that of male population (49.2 % in 1995/96 to 28.4% in 2010/11) in the last two decades. Nevertheless, still more females are out-of-school than males in the country.

Bar chart showing Never-School-Attended Population by survey year and gender:
- NLSS 1995/96: Male 49%, Female 81%
- NLSS 2003/04: Male 39%, Female 67%
- NLSS 2010/11: Male 28%, Female 57%
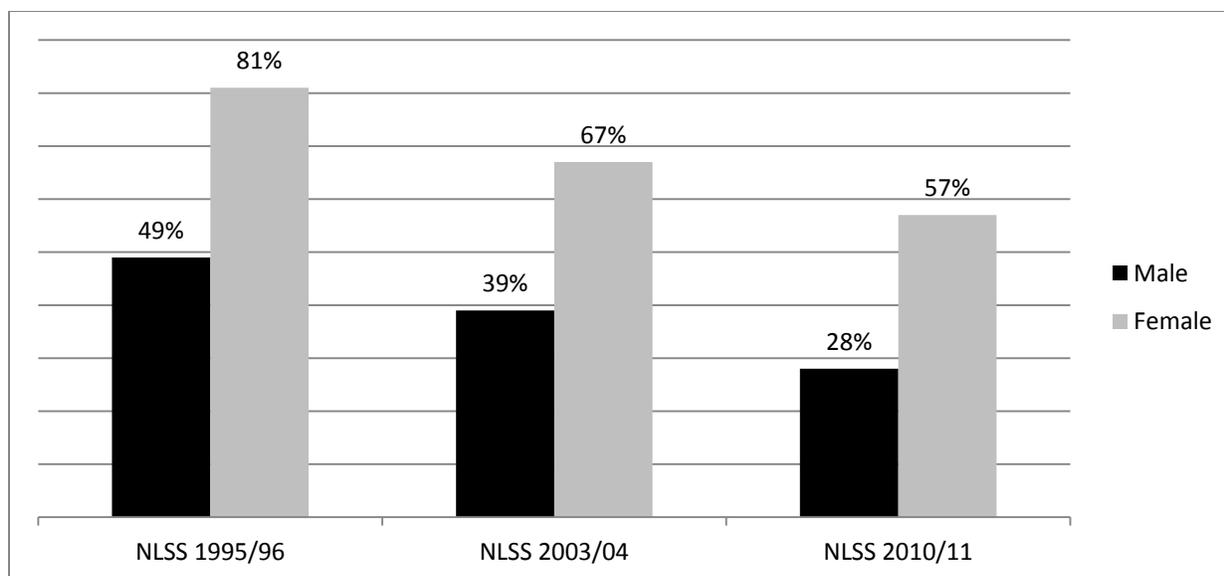
(CBS, 2011)

Figure 5. Never-School-Attended Population of 15 years and above

Despite some improvement in the overall literacy rate of the country, the Population Census 2011 (CBS, 2012) revealed an uneven distribution of the literacy rate among different groups of population: more males (75.1%) were literate than females (57.4); more urban people (82.2%) were literate than rural people (62.5%); higher among hill population (72.3%) than the Terai (61.2%) and Mountain (60.5%) regions; highest in Western Development Region (71.0 %) and lowest in Central Development Region (63.9%). Similarly, in terms of the districts, Kathmandu (86.3%) was reported to have the highest literacy rate and the Rautahat with the lowest one (41.7%). Similar to the Population Census 2011, the NLSS III also revealed similar pattern with variations in the literacy status among male and female, the rural and urban people, and people living in different regions and economic belts (CBS, 2011). See Annex 4 table in more detail.

These statistics unveiled two issues. First, despite some improvement, still one third of the population is not able to take advantage of school education. Second, female population,

rural population and people living in the Terai and Mountain regions are comparatively more

disadvantageous group in terms of accessibility to school education.

Dropout Rate

Different sources of statistics showed a gradual drop out of children from school while

reaching higher grades (CBS, 2011, 2012; MoE, 2016b). National Population and Housing

Census 2011 revealed that out of total 5-year age and above population in Nepal, 26 .3 percent

were primary level education completers whereas lower secondary completers, secondary level

completers and SLC completers were 13.7, 7.8 and 6.8 percent respectively (CBS, 2012). The

gradual drop out of the school attending population in the higher level shown in figure 2 reveals

that almost half of the primary level graduates drop out from schools before completing lower

secondary level education and 50 percent of lower secondary level completers do not complete

secondary level education.

SLC Pass Population (6.8%)

Secondary Level Completed Population (7.8%)

L. Secondary Level Completed Population (13.7%)

Primary Level Completed Population (26.3%)

CBS, 2012
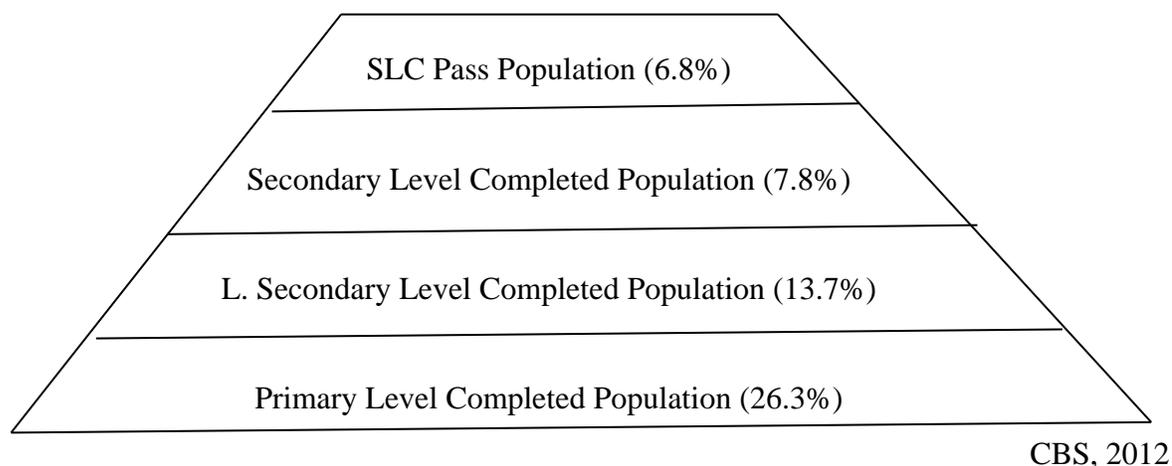
Figure 6. Population Completing Different Levels of School Education in Nepal

The administrative data (Flash Report of Department of Education), remained silent

about the never school attending population, also showed a similar trend that there was a gradual

dropout from school level education. The statistics showed that despite an impressive net

enrolment rate (NER) of 96.2 percent at primary level, it sharply declined to 74.6 percent at the lower secondary level and 56.1 percent at secondary level (MoE, 2015). Annex 5 gives some more detail on the periodic trend of national dropout rate and net enrollment rate of the country in school education.

The educational statistics given by these three sources presented above showed a similar pattern that the school attending population is gradually increasing in the country but at the same time there exist a large number of children who have either never stepped to school or dropped out before completing school level education. The next section deals with a brief assessment of OOSC prevalence in Nepal and its distribution.

<div align="center">**Profile of Out-of-School Children**</div>

This section presents the intensity of OOSC in Nepal in terms of gender, age, caste/ethnicity and location of their residence.

OOSC in Different Data Sources

The Flash Report (FR) of Department of Education (DoE), national census data and the national living standard survey data are three major sources in Nepal that give the national account of educational status of the country. However the statistics of these three different sources do not match with each other. This was natural as these three sources had different purposes and the data were collected with different methods. The concern of the flash report is more about school students and its purpose is to give the record of the in-school children (DoE, 2013b). However, the number of OOSC could be derived by deducting the number of children in school record from total population of school going age children in the country. However, the flash data does not reveal the OOSC in terms of never-school attending and dropouts.

The census data is more concerned with the demographic feature of the population and less focused on the education sector. However, the data had some information on literacy and school attending/not attending status. The strength of the population census data is that it is a population census and the data are available up to the Village Development Committee (VDC) and ward level – the lowest administrative unit. Yet, this source of information does not segregate information of OOSC in terms of school never-attending and dropouts.

On the other hand, NLSS, a national survey was designed to capture different components of peoples' living standard where education is one of them. Thus this data set consisted of a separate educational section with educational background of the respondents with both never-attended or dropout status including reasons for never school enrollment and school dropout. Thus, because of the specific strength of the data, the census data of NPHC 2011 (CBS, 2012) has been used to assess the prevalence and distribution of OOSC whereas the NLSS raw data (CBS, 2011) has been basically used for the purpose of analyzing the causes of OOSC and for the significance test of the contributing factors.

Prevalence of OOSC

The NPHC 2011 showed that a total of 906,175 children of ages 5-14 years were not attending school, which accounted for 13.6 percent of the same age group of the total population (6.7 millions) in the country (CBS, 2012). If we also consider the unreported children (2.9 %) of that age group in the census data, the OOSC figure seems to increase further. On the other hand, the NLSS III estimated 7.8 percent of 5-14 age children as an OOSC and 92.2 percent children of that age group were currently attending school (CBS, 2011). Considering the administrative data of DoE, it was calculated that about 7 percent school dropouts from the 6-14 age group in 2011

(DoE, 2013). If the OOSC of age five are also added to this number, the total percentage of OOSC in the DoE record is most likely rise further.

Composition of Never-School-Attending and Ever-Attending Children

Different from the census data and Flash Report data, the NLSS data showed the composition of the never attending and ever attending (dropouts) status in OOSC where the composition of never attended and ever attended (dropouts) on total OOSC is different at different age groups. The OOSC at the age of five and six were almost all the never-school-started children. It meant, although age five and six was considered as official age group to start school most of the children of that age group were yet to join school. At age seven, the share of school dropout children in total OOSC was found 2.6 percent, where the ratio of dropouts to total OOSC gradually increased with higher ages (CBS, 2011). This implies that children start to drop out from school from very early age/grade and the volume of dropout gradually increases among the higher age of children. Annex 6 gives the composition of the never-school-attending and dropouts in the total 5-14, age group of OOSC.

Distribution of OOSC

As already mentioned, the distribution of OOSC is uneven among different locations and in terms of gender and age. The following paragraphs analyses the OOSC distribution, mainly based on the raw data of NPHC 2011 (CBS, 2012). Nevertheless, in some cases, the raw data of NLSS III survey (CBS, 2011) have been also used to justify the pattern of distribution.

Location-wise. The analysis done on the prevalence of OOSC in terms of the development regions, geographic regions and rural-urban population yielded an uneven distribution of OOSC in the country. The concentration of OOSC was high in certain locations than in others.

In terms of development regions, Central Development Region remained the major area for OOSC, composing almost half (47 %) of the total number of OOSC of the country. This was mainly due to the Terai districts of this region where the OOS is severe. The number of OOSC was comparatively low in other Development Regions (CBS, 2012) than the central region.

The central region was the major concentration of OOSC not only in terms of the absolute numbers of OOSC prevalence but also in terms of the proportion to the total school age population living in this region. In the central development region, 18 percent of the school age children were not attending school. In comparison, the situation of western region was comparatively better where the share of OOSC in its total school age population was only 9 percent. Figure 7 shows the intensity of OOSC prevalence in different development regions.
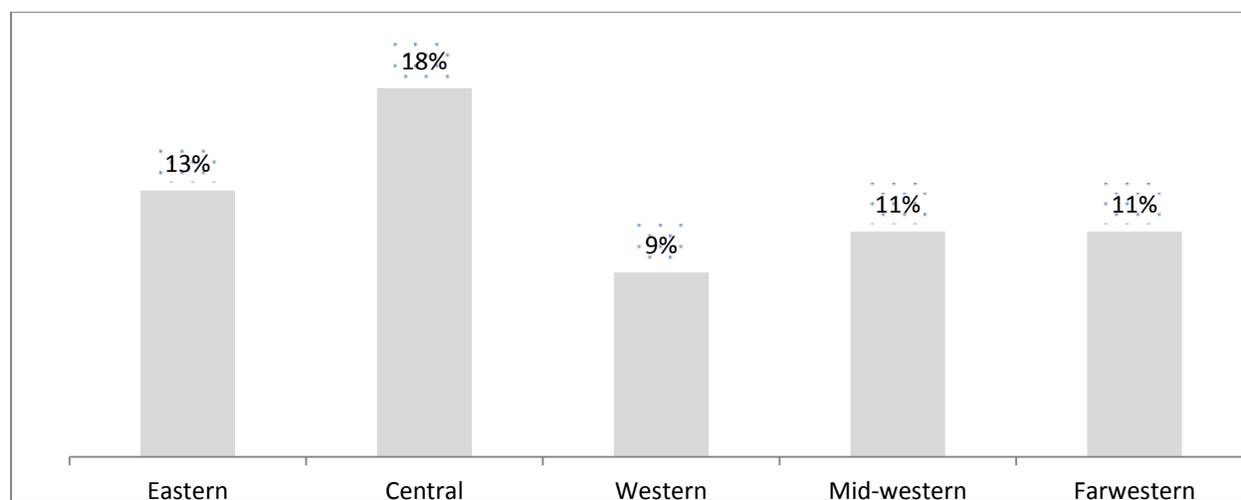
(Calculated from NPHC 2011 data)

Figure 7. Development Region-wise Intensity of OOSC

In terms of geographic region, the Terai region is the major place for OOSC in Nepal. The national census 2011 showed that out of the total number of OOSC, 68.5 percent of OOSC were found residing in 20 districts located in the Terai region whereas the districts located in the Hill and Mountain regions shared 25.2 and 6.2 percent respectively (CBS, 2012). The intensity

of OOSC was high in the Terai not only in terms of the total number but also in respect to their school age population: 17.3 percent in the Terai, 8.2 percent in the Hill and 11.7 percent in the Mountain region (CBS, 2012).
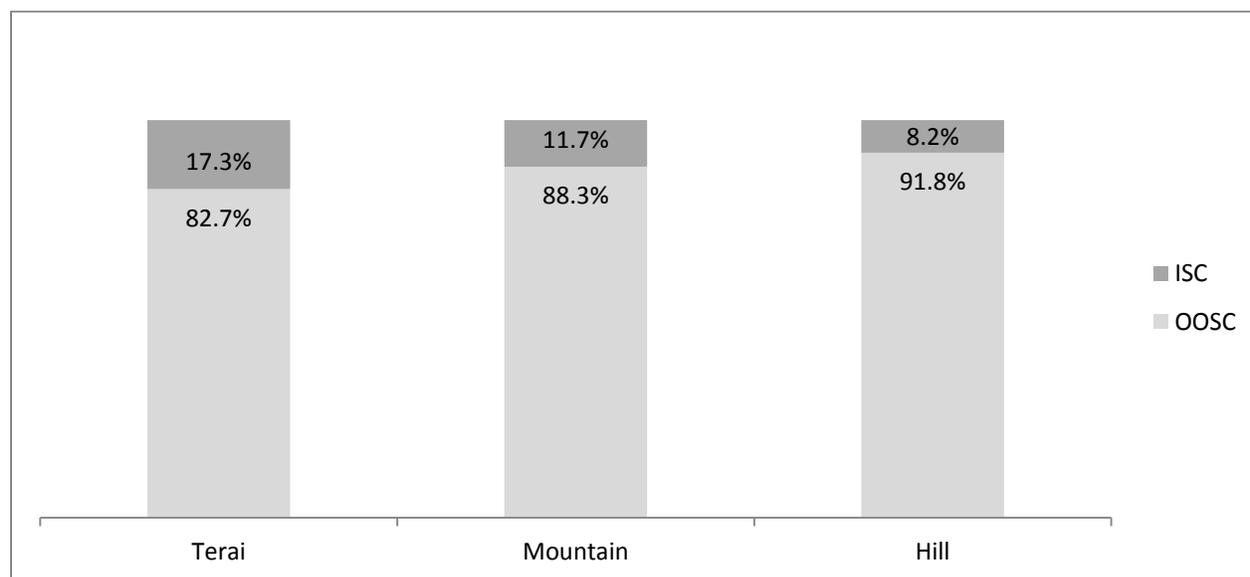
(Calculated from NPHC 2011 data)

Figure 8. Geographic Region-wise OOSC/ISC (in %) Composition

In terms of the districts, the hilly districts such as Kathmandu, Palpa, Lamjung, Bhaktapur, Kaski and Syanja accounted for the least prevalence of OOSC, in order, with less than 5 percent of their school age children (CBS, 2012). In Syanja, there were some VDCs such as Alamadevi, Kalikakot and Ratanpur which had less than 2 percent of OOSC.

The analysis of the raw data of NPHC 2011 also recorded that the Terai districtswere found as the major location of OOSC concentration (CBS, 2012). Among these districts, Rautahat was the first with almost 70 thousand OOSC which accounted for 36.8 percent of its total school age population. After Rautahat the highest prevalence of OOSC was in Sarlahi, Mahottari, Dhanusha, Bara, Siraha, Parsa, Kapilvastu, Saptari and Banke in order. Banke had 18.4 percent of OOSC. Further, more than fifty percent of the school age children were OOSC in

a couple of VDCs of Rautahat districts such as Bairiya, BasbitiJingadiya, Bhediyahi, Dharampur, Gadhi, Sakhuwa, Dhamaura and RajpurTulsi. The AkolawaVDC of Rautahat accounted for more than 70 percent of OOSC in terms of the school age population.

The analysis of the census data for the rural-urban composition of OOSC showed that almost all of the OOSC reside in the rural areas: 94.8 percent, but only 5.2 percent reside in the urban areas (CBS, 2012). This was natural as the majority of the population resides in villages. Even in proportion, the number of the OOSC was higher in rural areas (14.9 %) than the urban areas (5.2%).

Even in the urban areas of the Terai region, there was high prevalence of OOSC. Among Municipalities of Nepal, Gaur Municipality of Rautahat district had the highest prevalence (16 %) of OOSC whereas the Baglung municipality was found with the lowest OOSC (less than 2%) of their population of 5-14 age groups (CBS, 2012). Kathmandu Metropolitan City was found with more than five thousand OOSC which accounted 3.6 percent of its total school age children.

Gender-wise. The prevalence of OOSC among females (14.2%) was more than the male (12.6), as a common pattern in all development as well as all geographical regions (CBS, 2012). However, in some eastern mountain and hilly regions, the prevalence of male OOSC was found slightly higher than the female OOSC. Like the NPHC 2011 data, the NLSS data also showed the higher prevalence of OOSC among the females than the males in general (CBS, 2011).

Caste-wise. The prevalence of OOSC in terms of caste/ethnicity of the population is very heterogeneous in nature. The national census 2011 showed that children from the Brahmin families are found having the lowest OOSC whereas that was the highest among Dalit families. Even within the *Dalits*, the OOSC prevalence was considerably high in Terai region in comparison with the Hill *Dalits* such as *Damai* and *Kami* (CBS, 2011, 2012). According to

NPHC 2011, the prevalence of OOSC among the Terai Dalit such as Dom (58.4%), Mushar (51.3%) and Halkhor (44.7%) and non-Dalit communities such as those of Muslims (36.8%) was far above the national average (MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016).

Age-wise. The age-wise distribution of OOSC showed that the OOSC at the age of 5 was highest (22%) which gradually declined up to age nine (2.8%). After some irregular trend between 10 to 12 ages, it suddenly went up after 13 In comparison to the OOSC at the age of 13 (6.5%), the OOSC at the age of 14 is almost double (12.5%). The prevalence rate further increased in the age of 15 and 16 (CBS, 2012).
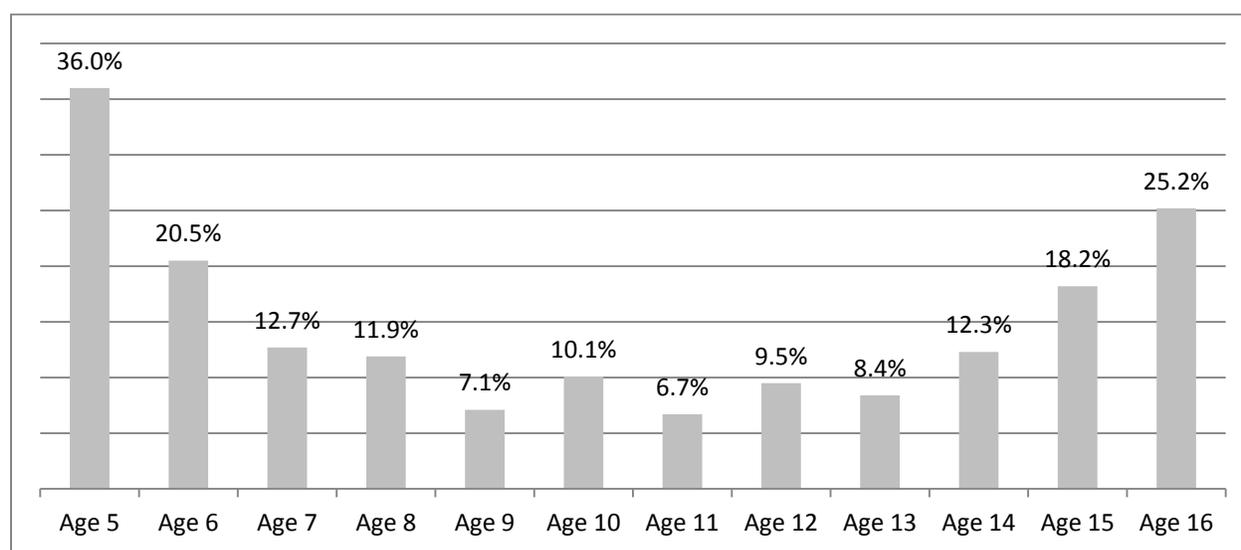
(Calculated from NPHC 2011 data)

Figure 9. Distribution of OOSC with Respect to Single Age Population

The age-wise OOSC prevalence as shown in figure 9 gives two ideas. First, although the age of 5 has been considered as the starting age to begin school, more than one-third (36.03 %) of the children of this age 5 does not go to school. It means either parents consider this age as still young age or schools are not accessible. Second, the sharp increase in number of out of school children in each successive age after age 13 implies adolescence is very critical time period for school dropout.

Essence of Intensity and Distribution of OOSC

This chapter basically dealt educational status of the population and OOSC prevalence in the country. Actually these two indicators are the two sides of the same coin. The gradual improvement in overall literacy rate and the proportion of population participating in the school level education showed that there was a gradual progress in the educational status of the country. However, still a large number of children were outside. Some of them were never stepped in school and some were dropped out from school before completing school level education.

The above discussion revealed a fact that the distribution of OOSC was uneven with a high concentration in certain section of population and also raises a crucial question as to why the prevalence of OOSC falls highly on certain age, certain place, certain gender and certain group of people. In other words it becomes rational to explore the contributing factors of OOSC that matters in making a children out-of-school. The next section focuses on this issue.

OOSC Contributing Factors: What the Earlier Studies Revealed

The available research studies conducted on the out-of-school children situation in Nepal revealed, first a large number of factors responsible for keeping children out of school or for not being able to pull children to school. Similar factors were found responsible for both types of OOSC: never- school-attending children and dropouts. If the reasons for OOSC/dropout revealed by the five studies (FBC, 2012; Groot, 2007; Kushiyait, 2007; TESON, 2004; Wagle, 2012) carried out in Nepal were compiled, the compilation would give a long list of more than sixty reasons (annex 1).

Second, all studies on OOSC/school dropouts present multiple factors responsible for the OOSC situation (FBC, 2012; Groot, 2007; Kushiyait, 2007; TESON, 2004). Even on the basis of the single research conducted three districts of Nepal as a sample, FBC (2012) presents a list of

two dozen OOSC reasons such as income and poverty, exposure to wage earning in tender age, engagement in household chores and income generating activities, illiterate parents (lack of awareness), migration of family, geographical difficulties, orphans, gender (culture of discriminating between son and daughter), ethnicity, school at a distance, language of instruction, lack of basic physical facilities in school , and lack of support such as scholarship, school uniform and day meal as the root challenges faced by out-of-school children. Similar to this, another comprehensive survey research conducted in Siraha and Dhading districts, TESON (2004), reveals two dozens factors as common causes of the dropout of children from school.

One of the noticeable finding was that the reason for OOSC/dropout identified by various studies have not been unaltered, whether it was conducted during early 1990s or in recent years (FBC, 2012; IEES & MoECSW, 1993; TESON, 2004). Despite presenting multiple reasons of OOSC, some were found highlighting school related factors (Acharya & Giri, 2009; Wagle, 2012) while some were highlighting the socio economic condition of the society and family (FBC, 2012; DoE, WE & UNICEF, 2013; Kushiyait, 2007). The drop-out problem seemed to be more closely related to socio-economic and family factors than the factors within the educational system (FBC, 2012). But the reasons were different for different groups of people such as girls, the *Dalits*, ethnic people. The prevalence was comparatively high among these groups. In addition to the general causes of dropout such as economic causes and engagement of children in household chores; the gender discrimination, social discrimination and parental carelessness were three specific causes of dropout of girls, *Dalits* and ethnic people respectively (TESON, 2004).

These multiple reasons yielded by different studies, were summarized under some categories. However the categories were different for different studies. These factors of OOSC

were school related, child related and parent related (IEES, 1993). "Most influential causes of dropout children are found to be related to economic status of the parents, socio-cultural practices, environment of home and school and child related variables" (TESON, 2004, p. vi). But MoE, UNICEF and UNESCO (2016) present the OOSC factors as the barriers of OOSC and discussed individually as low income level, social inclusion, disability, migration and child labor, social norms, supply constraints, governance and financial bottlenecks.

These findings unfolded multiple factors behind the OOSC issue from household related factors to socio-cultural factors and school related factors including individual parents and children related characters. However, those factors overlap and are complex in nature (MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016). It means these factors are interdependent on each other and it is difficult to draw a demarcation stating which factors belong to which category. For example, is the engagement of the child in household chores is a sociocultural factor or household related factor or a parent related character? Likewise, it is difficult to categorize the cost of schooling as a school related factor or household related factor. This study categorizes and discusses the reason of OOSC as identified by earlier research studies in Nepal into five categories: household related factors; Socio-cultural factors; parents related characters; children related characters; and school related factors. These will be discussed in the forthcoming texts.

Household Related Factors

Out of multiple reasons responsible for pushing out the children from school, the household related factors which included mainly economic conditions and the occupations of household were more crucial.

The single most reason for OOSC, as internationally identified, is the economic one. After the review of cross country literature on school dropout, Hunt (2008) concludes that low

household income adversely affects the children's schooling making them irregular at school to getting drop out (Hunt, 2008). Due to a low economic condition, a poor family would find not only the cost of education high but also experienced the opportunity cost of schooling more than the families could gain from education as an immediate return. Hunt (2008) further claims that low income families call their children to add to the household's income, either through wage earning or by helping in household chores to free up other household members for work. In a study on the slums of Delhi, India, Chugh (2011) also concluded that parental poverty was one of the significant reasons for the low participation of children in schooling. Not only the regular cost, it was something like a shock to manage the unexpected costs for the poor parents to meet the costs like contributions to teachers' leaving or joining schools, funerals, repair of buildings affected by natural calamity etc.

The same was true in the case of Nepal as well. Regardless of age, sex and place of residence, poverty was the biggest reason for children not being in school in Nepal (DoE, WE & UNICEF, 2013). In poor families, the children need to help to the families either engaging directly to income earning activities or supporting in household chores (Acharya & Giri, 2009; FBC, 2012; IEES & MoECSW, 1993; Scheuermann, 2013). Acharya (2007) further argued that educational attainment was associated with economic status whereas economic poverty was linked with social inclusion in terms of caste, language and disability. It meant the poverty had a wider meaning rather than simply hiving lack of money. Kushiyait (2007) further elaborates the nature of family poverty that causes higher dropout.

> The parents of dropout children are either landless or are very small farmers: their incomes are low and insecure; their sources of livelihood are a mix of irregular activities, consisting mostly of tilling small plots of land, working as wage laborers at home and abroad, and, to some extent, as lowly paid employees or petty traders (p. 34).

Likewise, poor families needed to migrate to other areas due to the lack of regular work in their own place which was another implication of poor economic condition in the OOSC. Groot (2007) found that parent would take their children away with their cattle as a food security strategy in mountain districts to collect *Yarshagumba* which was major reason for school absent and later which ultimately led to a permanent dropout.

The household poverty makes children irregular at school and irregularity at school makes them unable to prepare enough for the examination. As a result they get failed in the examination or even passed, they get low grades. This phenomenon would make the children weak performers in the class which leads to class repetition in the short run and to permanent dropouts in long run (Acharya & Giri, 2009; Wagle, 2012). One of the studies done in Chitwan and Nawalparasi districts revealed that 38.5 % of dropouts were caused due to their compulsion to engage in household work in which case children had to look after their young siblings to make their parents free to go for work (Manandhar & Sthapit, 2012).

Actually, despite the claim of free school education, most of the schools are not totally free as parents need to pay certain fees such as for examination and admission. This was burden for the parents who are financially poor and causing to keep their children away from formal schooling (Tuladhar, 2004, Wagle, 2012). Thus, as Manandhar and Sthapit (2010) argue that making free education is not sufficient to retain all children in school. It needs to have a significant improvement in their household income.

In addition to the direct cost of schooling, parents experience an opportunity cost of sending the children to school. Despite some efforts made by government, some communities were still reluctant to send their children to school due to this opportunity cost (Tuladhar, 2004). Actually, children need to work to support the family due to their poverty. But the parents regard the cost of schooling such as fees, uniforms and stationary as the reason for OOSC (DoE, WE & UNICEF,

2011). Although the costs involved in primary schooling are low and affordable, people show their poverty as the reason for keeping their children at home (Groot, 2007). FBC (2012) found that the family with more than two or three school age children had a strategy to send some to school and some were kept at home for domestic chores or wage earning. Actually this was due to the opportunity cost rather than the direct/indirect cost of schooling for OOSC.

The discussion above reveals that the low income or poverty status of the family is the major determinants of OOSC. Actually, poverty creates multiple adverse situations for sending children to school. On one hand, it demands to engage their children at household chores. On the other hand, the burden of cost of schooling and opportunity cost of sending their children to school was relatively higher to poor families than the medium and rich families.

Socio-cultural Factors

Some studies highlight the socio cultural aspects responsible for OOSC which find the deprived sections of society such as the *Dalits*, have high prevalence of OOSC as compared to their counterparts belonging to other caste or ethnicities (FBC, 2012; Kushiyait, 2007). These deprived sections of population faces multiple discomforts such as: no time with children to do their homework; lack of parents support in their children's studies; and indifferent parents to their children's absence or presence in school (Groot, 2007).

In some society, engaging their children in household chore is part of their culture. The culture of children's' engagement in the household chores and helping in household occupation was another reason for OOSC. Taking out children from school once they become able to support in household work is responsible for the OOSC situation whereas in some families, they have a strategy of sending some siblings to school and some in work in rotation (Groot, 2007). In Dalit families there is a culture of dropping out of school once they grow older (DNF, n.d).

Generally children leave school at the age of 13 or 14. Daughters then get married while sons engage in wage earning (FBC, 2012). Hence, as a discriminating role ascribed to male and female as a part of the culture gender is another social factor of OOSC. So sending school is the families' strategies to gain knowledge unless they become able to work where work which is their prime concern. Thus, these impeding factors of OOSC exist partly due to their cultural practices and partly due to their strategies to address their existing condition.

FBC (2012) blames on the lack of awareness among parents and their attitude toward schooling, particularly that of their daughters as the major reason of OOSC. Even though girls are sent to school at early age, more girls compelled to get dropped out as there is a practice of engaging girls in household chores and to look after their younger siblings (Wagle, 2012). In many communities early marriage is a deeply rooted culture, so after the marriage, they need to face many problems, especially for girls to continue school. Second marriage done by parents was another impeding factor to continue child's schooling. Especially, the girls are forced to engage in household chores when their parents divorce or remarry (Groot, 2007). In the same way, the culture of seasonal migration is another impeding factor for child's schooling. Especially in the western mountain district, many schools remain closed in certain seasons as many children also go for *Yarshgumba* collection (Groot, 2007)

Parents Related Characters

Different research studies indicate that the parents or family members' perception on education determines the educational background of the children, whether the children attain school or not and even whether the children enroll in school, to what level she or he completes of schooling. Again the perceptions of parents are influenced by the economic condition as well. As food, clothing, and shelter are the primary concerns of people, a person struggling for basic subsistence cannot readily relate to the secondary and tertiary benefits of literacy and numeracy

(IEES & MoECSW, 1993). Thus, socio cultural values of education perceived by the parents are one of the determinants of OOSC. But the value of education perceived by the parents is a subjective phenomenon which is socially constructed on the basis of worldview interacting with different factors and circumstances they face.

Many studies concluded that lack of knowledge among parents about the importance of education and its consequences in their life was one of the prominent reasons for the OOSC phenomenon (Groot, 2007; Kushiyait, 2007; Manandhar & Sthapit 2012). The parental attitude especially from poor families is not favorable for sending their children to school as they do not perceive any prime consequence of difference whether their children are educated or not (FBC, 2012). Further, Tuladhar (2004) blames parents for their very insensitive attitude with very low commitment towards their children's education. Likewise, Kushiyait (2007) finds parents neither do care at the drop out nor get afflicted by it. Fathers often take on a passive attitude where especially the children do not follow mothers if the fathers are absent (Groot, 2007).

But some other literature (Groot, 2007; Kushiyait, 2007; Wagle, 2012) considers this perception and attitude as their compulsion because of their situation. For parents, fulfilling the demands such as food and clothes for the family is their main responsibility rather than sending children to schools (Wagle, 2012) so they posses a strategy of 'a bird in hand' to 'two in the bush' as survival is their first priority (Kushiyait, 2007). Moreover, this kind of attitude was the result of uncertain economic benefit of education where engaging their children in household chores would give them immediate return (Groot, 2007).Thus, for poor families, work is the first and most priority in choosing trade-off between education and work and they also consider the education spending not worthy of saving and investment (CERID 2005). Thus there seems to be

an egg-and-chicken relationship between economic condition and the perception of parents on education.

Kushiyait (2007) found a convincing and positive relationship between parental literacy and education with the likelihood of children to retain in primary school. According to him, mother's illiteracy was a critical factor behind high dropout and low retention of children in primary education. When parents perceived the school education not beneficial to their life it would reduce level determination to make sure that their children attend school daily, then all responsibility falls upon the child itself whereas usually children are absent from school (Groot, 2007). This increases the possibility of being those less cared children out-of-school.

Multiple characters of parents such as economically poor, socially disadvantaged and occupationally wage earners associated with the illiteracy (not able to read and write) of parents. These characters in combine would make parents less committed for children's school and more preferred to the engagement of their children in wage earning and household chores.

Children Related Characters

The individual characters of children are also equally responsible for OOSC. Age is one of the factors that having multiple impacts in children's schooling. Generally children leave school at the age of 13 or 14 where daughters get married while sons engage in wage earning (FBC, 2012). When a child gets married, especially girl children, their schooling stop. When they enter into adolescence, not only the family expects from them in supporting household chores, they themselves start to demand many things because of their age factor. All these take way them from school.

Children's accompany also determines whether a child continues or break the school education. Despite a lot of effort made by parent, the children leave school due to bad company

at school or neighborhood (Groot, 2007; Kushiyait, 2007). Actually, a child feels happy when s/he is with friends outside school where they cannot enjoy at the school environment (Wagle, 2012). Likewise, personal deficiency in children is another reason for OOSC. Due to lack of proper infrastructural set up for children with physical disability, it becomes very difficult to admit and retain those children in school (Wagle, 2012). Due to the barriers and problem at school family, the dropout of children with disabilities is high (DoE, 2014).

School Related Factors

In addition to the aforementioned socio economic aspects of family and society, school related factors are also equally responsible for OOSC. One of the factors is the physical distance and facilities available in schools. Many parents do not send their children to school as the school are at long distance in combination with geographical features (Groot, 2007; FBC, 2012). In addition to this, many parenst do not realize that they should send their children to school as they do not receive the incentive like school uniform, day meal, books, copies, pencils etc. (FBC, 2012).

The studies show that the physical condition of the schools has been found to have positive impact on student enrolment, retention, and achievement (CERID, 2002; Kushiyait, 2007; Wagle, 2012). In most of the schools in remote villages, there is not even a seating room and furniture for the children where parents expect even financial support for income generation for sending their children to school (FBC, 2012).

Quality of education is another incentive for children for sending their children to school (Cough, 2011). In the study, parents opted to remain out-of-school as they find public schools with no quality while private schools education is unaffordable to them (DoE, WE & UNICEF, 2011; Groot, 2007). The studies revealed that the low dropout schools had regularity of teacher, availability of textbooks in time, school calendar, child-friendly teaching methods, individual

attention to students, and CAS implementation etc. (Kushiyait, 2007). Language related barriers in student learning were not prominent in upper grades but the frequency of dropout and grade repetition was higher among non Nepali speaking students in lower grades (Acharya & Giri, 2009).

The teaching learning process is another vital factor producing OOSC. Teachers' teaching style that helps children to understand helps to retain the children in school (Cough, 2011; Wagle, 2012). Provision of teaching and learning materials, trained teachers and ensuring children to upgrade classes are helping retention where some parents allow their children to school if they regularly pass (FBC, 2012).

The attitude of teachers is another main reason for OOSC including parental demotivation, and lack of interest in school. Communities and parents believe that in addition to teachers' inadequate attention to weak students, they discriminate the lower caste students (IREWOC, 2007). 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. The beating and intimidation leads the dislike of schooling to the children and demotivate them to attend school (Boyle et.al., 2002; Wagle, 2012).

Statistical Analysis of OOSC Contributing Factors: What the National Survey Data Say?

This study has used the raw data collected by NLSS-III (2010/11) to see the contribution of different factors revealed by earlier studies statistically. The following paragraphs present the descriptive statistics such as frequency table and cross tabulation to describe the OOSC status of children with different socio economic background and their personal characters. Then the correlational statistics and inferential statistics the Chi-square test to see the relation between dependent and independent variables, i.e the relation between the respondent's educational

background (OOSC or ISC) and various OOSC contributing factors. Likewise, another inferential statistics, binary logistic regression model have been used to see the probability of being OOSC of children having certain characteristic in comparison to the children with not having that characteristic. The logistic regression also gave the total contribution of some major OOSC factors in explaining OOSC.As discussed above, the contributing factors of OOSCs are broadly categorized into five groups: household related factors, socio cultural factor, parent's related characters, children's related characteristics and school related factors.

Household Related Variables and OOSC

The relation between OOSC prevalence with the per capita consumption of the family, poverty status, household size and presence or absence of the parents at home have been analyzed under the assumption that these characteristics are the proxy variables to measure the economic condition of a household.

Household poverty and OOSC.NLSS survey had assessed the OOSC status of the respondents under two groups: below the poverty line and above the poverty line. The cross tabulation of the poverty status of the HHs with the educational status of children showed that the prevalence of OOSC among the HHs below poverty line was almost three times higher than the HHs above poverty line (Table 2).

Table 1: *Prevalence of OOSC in below/above Poverty Line Household, 2010/11*

Households	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Below poverty line	86.3%	13.7%	2133
Above poverty line	94.7%	5.3%	5061
Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The correlation value (Phi coefficient) between educational status and poor/non poor HHs was 0.14 and the Chi - square test shows significant relation (p=.000) between below/above poor HHs and OOSC/ISC.

Table 2: *Relation between HH below/above Poverty Line and Prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation		Value			Approx. Sig.	
Nominal by Nominal	Phi coefficient		.144			.000	
N of Valid Cases			7194				
Chi - square test	**Value**			**Df**		**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**	
Pearson Chi-Square	149.2			1		.000	
Binary Logistic Regression	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**	
Poor HH (in relation to non-poor)	1.051	.089	139.066	1	.000	2.859	

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Table 2 gives the results of the correlation and Chi-square test result. The correlation coefficient (phi) confirmed that there is a direct relation between households with below the poverty line status and the OOSC prevalence in the population. But, the low value of correlation coefficient (phi = 0.14 < 0.2) shows that relationship is very weak. As there are multiple factors causing the OOSC, economic poverty contributes only to a small part of the total contribution. However, the Pearson chi square result shows that the relationship between household poverty and OOSC prevalence is statistically significant.

Likewise, the binary logistic regression fit between OOSC/ISC status and the HHs with below/above the poverty line reveals that the children from below the poverty line are 2.86 times more likely to be OOS than that of the children from above the poverty line household.

Household per capita quintile and OOSC. In order to see the relationship between poverty and its derivatives to OOSC, the statistical relation was analyzed between HHs consumption quintile and OOSC/ISC background of children.

The cross tabulation of nominal quintiles of the HHs with educational status of children showed the HHs from lower quintile had higher prevalence of OOSC. The descriptive analysis (Table 3) clearly shows that the prevalence of OOSC was highest (14.6%) among children from the poorest quintile of HHs which gradually decreased in the upper quintiles and it was only 2.1 percent in richest quintile of the HHs. The prevalence of OOSC in bottom quintile (lowest 20 percent) has almost seven times higher OOSC rate than the HHs from top quintile (highest 20 percent) of per capita consumption.

Table 3: *Prevalence of OOSC in HHs with Different Consumption Level, 2010/11*

Nominal quintile of Per capita consumption	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
First (bottom) quintile	85.4%	14.6%	1701
Second quintile	89.2%	10.8%	1521
Third quintile	94.3%	5.7%	1372
Fourth quintile	96.7%	3.3%	1291
Fifth (top) quintile	97.9%	2.1%	1310
Overall	92.2%	7.8%	7195

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The correlation analysis and Chi - square test also proved the association between OOSC and the economic poverty of HHs (see Table 4) was statistically significant. However, the low value of correlation coefficient (v=0.18) showed that the relationship was weak. It means, the economic poverty has contributed only to small part in the total contribution of various factors.

Table 4: *Relation between HH Consumption Levels and Prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.181	.000
N of Valid Cases		7195	
Chi - square test	**Value**	**Df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**

Pearson Chi-Square	235.5		4		.000	
Binary Logistic Regression	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**
Bottom Quintile			197.468	4	.000	
Top Quintile	-.345	.107	10.313	1	.001	.708
Second Top Quintile	-1.041	.135	59.153	1	.000	.353
Third Top Quintile	-1.649	.173	90.861	1	.000	.192
Second Bottom Quintile	-2.093	.206	103.001	1	.000	.123

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Further, a binary logistic regression model was fit on the OOSC/ISC status of children and their HHs consumption level. Besides confirming the significant relationship between the variables, the regression model explored the probability of OOSC prevalence of children from different consumption quintile in relation to the poorest quintile.

- the children from top quintile are 0.708 times less likely to be OOS.

- the children from second top quintile are 0.353 times less likely to be OOS.

- the children from third top quintile are 0.192 times less likely to be OOS.

- the children from second bottom quintile are 0.123 times less likely to be OOS.

Household size and OOSC. The large household size is another characteristic of the poor household. The statistical analysis carried out between the family size of HHs and the educational background of children showed that the HHs with large family size (more than 5 members) possessed more than two times higher prevalence of OOSC than the HHs with small family size (5 or fewer members. (See Table 5)

Table 5: *Prevalence of OOSC in Small and Large Household Size, 2010/11*

Household Size	**ISC**	**OOSC**	**Total (no.)**
Small (5 or less member)	89.7%	10.3%	3378
Large (more than 5 members)	95.1%	4.9%	3816

Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The results of the correlation and Chi - square test presented in Table 6 also confirmed the relation between household size and the prevalence of OOSC as statistically significant. Like in the case of other OOSC factors, the low value of correlation coefficient (v=0.101) showed that the relationship is weak which means, as there are multiple factors causing OOSC, the HH size alone contributes only to a small part in keeping children out of school.

Table 6: *Relation between Household Size and Prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation		Value			Approx. Sig.	
Nominal by Nominal	Phi coefficient		.101			.000	
N of Valid Cases			7194				
Chi - square test	**Value**			**Df**		**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**	
Pearson Chi-Square	73.4			1		.000	
Binary Logistic Regression	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**	
Large Family size (in comparison to small family size)	.805	.096	70.294	1	.000	2.236	

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Likewise, the binary logistic regression fit between family size and the OOSC/ISC status showed that the children from large family (more than 5) are 2.236 times more likely to be OOS than that of the children from small family.

Socio-culture Related Variables and OOSC

The relations between OOSC prevalence with the caste/ethnicity, gender and location of residence of the children have been analyzed under the assumption that these variables are proxy measures of the socio-cultural status of a family.

Caste/ethnicity and OOSC. In order to assess whether caste is a significant determinants of OOSC, first a long list of caste/ethnicity was regrouped into the 10 groups: the Hill Brahmans, Chhetris/ Thakuris, Janajatis, Hill Dalit, the Terai Brahman, Middle Caste, Janajati, Dalit, Muslim and Other caste. The cross tabulation of OOSC and different caste showed that, the OOSC is substantially high among the Terai *Dalits* (27.8%) followed by the Muslims (21%) population. The existence of OOSC was lowest among the Hill Brahmans with less than one percent of the population.

Table 7: *Prevalence of OOSC among Various Hill and Terai Ethnic Population, 2010/11*

	Ethnicity	Prevalence of OOSC
	Brahmans	0.80%
Hill Ethnic Population	Chhetris/ Thakuris	3.50%
	Janajatis	6.10%
	Dalits	5.90%
	Brahmans	7.00%
Terai Ethnic Population	Middle castes	14.40%
	Janajatis	6.50%
	Dalits	27.80%
	Muslims	21.00%
	Other castes	14.00%

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Then the caste/ethnicity of the respondents was regrouped into four categories irrespective of geographic location and then their OOSC prevalence was analyzed. This analysis showed the highest prevalence of OOSC among the Muslim population including the others followed by the *Dalits* (see Table 8). The prevalence of OOSC among Brahmans/Chhetris and Janajatis was less than the national average.

Table 8: *Prevalence of OOSC among different Caste/ethnicity, 2010/11*

Caste/ethnicity		ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Brahman/Cheetri (Both Hill and Terai)		94.1 %	5.9 %	3183
Janajati (Both Hill and Terai)		93.9 %	6.1 %	2556
Dalit (Both Hill and Terai)		87.5 %	12.5 %	1026
Muslim (including others)		80.0 %	20.0 %	429
	Overall	92.2%	7.8%	7195

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The statistical analyses (correlation coefficient and Chi - square test) also showed the relationship between caste/ethnicity of the people and their OOSC prevalence statistically significant (p=.000). Like in case of other factors, the value of correlation (Cramer's V= .143) showed a very weak correlation between these two variables (Table 9).

Table 9: *Relation between Caste/ethnicity and Prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation		Value	Approx. Sig.		
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V		.143	.000		
N of Valid Cases			7194			
Chi - square test	**Value**		**Df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**		
Pearson Chi-Square	147.5		3	.000		
Binary Logistic Regression	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**
Dalits (Reference variables)			134.121	3	.000	
Brahman/Chhetri (hill+terai)	-.820	.121	46.134	1	.000	.440
Janajati (Hill+Terai)	-.785	.126	39.141	1	.000	.456
Muslim and others	.565	.153	13.590	1	.000	1.759

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The logistic regression model fit between different caste/ethnicity and their OOSC/ISC status gave the following result. In comparison to the children from the *Dalit* family the children from Brahman/Chhetri family are 0.404 times less likely to be OOS whereas the children from

Janajati family 0.0456 times less likely to be OOS. But, the children from other caste (mainly

Muslim) are 1.397 times more likely to be OOS than that of *Dalits* family.

Gender and OOSC. The statistical analysis calculated to see the relationship between

gender of the children and their educational status revealed that the OOSC among the female

children (8.4%) is slightly higher than that of the male children (7.1%).

Table 10: *Gender-wise prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Gender		ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Male		92.9%	7.1%	3558
Female		91.6%	8.4%	3636
	Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Although the Chi-square test and correlation done between gender and OOSC prevalence

showed a significant relation (p=.000) between these two variables, the low value of correlation

coefficient (Phi coefficient = .024) shows a very weak association betweengender and OOS

prevalence (Table 11).

Table 11: *Relation between Gender and Prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value		Approx. Sig.		
Nominal by Nominal	Phi coefficient	.024		.043		
	N of Valid Cases	7194				
Chi - square test	**Value**		**Df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**		
Pearson Chi-Square	4.1		1	.043		
Binary Logistic Regression	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**
Female (In comparison to male)	.179	.089	4.094	1	.043	1.196

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

As there are multiple factors causing OOS, gender also contributes to a very small part in

the total contribution. Likewise, the binary logistic regression model of OOS prevalence on

gender showed that, in comparison to male, female children are 1.196 times more likely to be OOS.

Rural-urban population and OOSC. The socio cultural aspects of the population are naturally different according to their geographical contexts. More specifically, the rural areas are is different from the urban areas in terms of people's life and livelihoods. Likewise, Terai is different from Hill and Mountain. The same is true for different development regions. Some other statistical analyses were done to see the relationship between geographical context and educational background of the children.

The statistical analysis of the rural urban residence of the people and the prevalence of OOSC showed that OOSC concentrated on rural area not only in terms of number of OOSC but also in terms of the share of OOSC. The prevalence of OOSC is higher in the rural area (8.7%) than the urban area (5.2%).

Table 12: *Rural-Urban Population-wise OOSC, 2010/11*

Location		ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Urban		94.8%	5.2%	1872
Rural		91.3%	8.7%	5322
	Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Both the correlation and Chi-square tests (Table 13) showed a significant relation (p=.000) between prevalence of OOSC and the rural-urban residence of population. However, the low value of correlation coefficient (phi = .057< 0.2) between these variable showed a very low association. It meant as multiple factors were responsible for keeping children outside school, the location of respondents contributed very little out of total contribution due to various other factors.

Table 13: *Relation between Rural-Urban Population and Prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi coefficient	.057	.000
N of Valid Cases		7194	

Chi - square test	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.5	1	.000

Binary Logistic Regression	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Rural Population (in comparison to urban Population)	.551	.115	22.938	1	.000	1.735

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Further a binary regression model was fit to see the probability of rural and urban children to become OOS. The logistic regression analysis showed that children from rural areas are 1.073 times more likely to be OOS than that of the students from urban area.

Geographic regions and OOSC. Likewise, the statistical analysis on OOSC prevalence between different geographical regions showed that the prevalence in the Terai region (11.5%) was more than double than that of Hill (4.7%) and Mountain (5.1%) regions (Table 14).

Table 14: *Development Region-wise OOSC prevalence, 2010/11*

Location	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Mountain	95.0%	5.0%	566
Hill	95.3%	4.7%	3393
Terai	88.5	11.5%	3235
Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Both the correlation and Chi-square test carried out between the OOSC prevalence and the geographic region showed a significant relation (p=.000) between these two variables (Table

15). However, as the low value of correlation coefficient (Cramer's V = .127< 0.2) indicated that the location of respondents contributes very little out of total contribution among other factors.

Table 15: *Relation between Geographic Regions and Prevalence of OOSC, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation		Value			Approx. Sig.	
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V		.127			.000	
N of Valid Cases			7194				
Chi - square test	**Value**		**Df**			**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**	
Pearson Chi-Square	115.149[a]		2			.000	
Binary Logistic Regression	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**	
Terai Region			108.261	2	.000		
Mountain region	-.915	.202	20.612	1	.000	.401	
Hill Region	-.978	.098	98.947	1	.000	.376	

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The logistic regression done between the residence of students in terms of geographic region and their OOS/IS status showed that, in comparison to the children in Terai region:

- the children living in Mountain region are 0.401 times less likely to be OOS.

- the children living in Hill region are 0.377 times less likely to be OOS.

Development regions and OOSC. In terms of the development region, the Central region accounts for the highest prevalence (10.4%) of OOSC whereas the prevalence is lowest in the Far western region (4.08%) (Table 16).

Table 16: *Development region-wise OOSC, 2010/11*

Development Region	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Eastern	93.3%	6.7%	1609
Central	89.6%	10.4%	2293
Western	92.8%	7.2%	1410
Mid-western	93.0%	7.0%	1124

Far-western	95.1%	4.1%	758
Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The correlation and Chi-square test results presented in Table 17 confirmed that there is a significant relationship between the development regions and the OOSC prevalence. However, the low value of correlation coefficient (v = 0.075< 0.2) showed that the relationship is very weak. As there are multiple factors causing the OOSC, the location as development region contributes very little to the total contribution explaining OOSC.

Table 17: *Relation between OOSC prevalence and Development Regions, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.075	.000
N of Valid Cases		7194	

Chi - square test	Value		Df		Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.1		2		.000

Binary Logistic Regression	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Central Region			38.792	4	.000	
Far-western Region	-.999	.196	26.052	1	.000	.368
Mid-western Region	-.427	.135	9.941	1	.002	.653
Western Region	-.396	.124	10.254	1	.001	.673
Eastern Region	-.476	.121	15.504	1	.000	.621

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The logistic regression done between development region and OOSC prevalence gave that in comparison to the children living in Central region

- the children living in Far western region are 0.366 times less likely to be OOS.

- the children living in Mid-western region are 0.653 times less likely to be OOS.

- the children living in Western region are 0.673 times less likely to be OOS.

- the children living in Eastern are 0.621 times less likely to be OOS.

Parents Related Variables and OOSC

The relationship between OOSC prevalence and the parent's educational status has been analyzed under the assumption that the parents' education is one of the proxy variables to measure their perception on education. Since there was large missing information about parent education, the logistic models were not fit to generalize the relation between parents' education and OOSC prevalence.

Father's education and OOSC. In order to see the relationship between parents' educational background and OOSC, a statistical analysis was done and the result revealed that the higher the educational attainment of the parents the lower the prevalence of OOSC. The cross tabulation between father's education and OOSC prevalence showed 17.6 percent of OOSC among illiterate fathers (Table 18). But if the father was literate or had attained up to basic level education (grade 8), the OOSC is merely 4.3%. Further if father was SLC or higher graduate, the prevalence of OOSC in those HHs declines to 1.4 percent.

Table 18: *Prevalence of OOSC and Parents' Educational Attainment, 2010/11*

Father's educational status	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Illiterate	82.4%	17.6%	433
School attended up to grade 8	95.7%	4.3%	1092
School attended up to SLC	97.9%	2.1%	565
Above SLC	98.6%	1.4%	147
Total	92.2%	6.3 %	2267

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The correlation and Chi - square test results (Table 19) confirmed that in case of illiterate fathers, the prevalence of OOSC was higher than the children with more educated father. This is applicable to the population as well. However, the low value of correlation coefficient (v=0.242)

showed that the relationship is weak between these two variables. As there are multiple factors causing the OOSC, the contribution of father's education had accounted only for a small part in explaining OOSC prevalence.

Table 19: *Relation between Father's Educational Attainment and OOSC Prevalence, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.242	.000
N of Valid Cases		2267	

Chi - square test	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	132.4[a]	4	.000

a. 1 cell (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.89.

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Mother's education and OOSC. A similar result was found in case of mother's education. If the mother was illiterate, the prevalence of OOSC was 18.6 percent (Table 20). Interestingly the HHs where the mother had attended SLC above education, there was no single school age child outside school.

Table 20: *OOSC Prevalence and Mother's Educational Attainment, 2010/11*

Mother's educational status	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Illiterate	81.4%	18.6%	290
School attended up to grade 8	99.0%	1.0%	192
School attended up to SLC	98.4%	1.6%	61
Above SLC	100.0%	0.0%	14
Total	89.5%	10.5%	572

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The result coming out of the correlation and Chi-square test (Table 21) confirmed that the child whose mother was illiterate had higher chance of being OOS than the children with more educated mother. Despite the result was applicable for population, the low value of correlation

coefficient (v=0.286) revealed that the contribution of mother's education had accounted for only a small part in the total contribution of all factors.

Table 21: *Relation between Mother's Educational Attainment and OOSC Prevalence, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.286	.000
N of Valid Cases		572	

Chi - square test	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	46.8[a]	4	.000

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The analysis of NLSS III raw data also showed that parent's perception is one of the major reasons for never school attendance of the children. The response of 443 surveyed never attended children shows the following reasons for their never attendance in the school.

Table 22: *Response of Never School Attended Children for Their Never Enrollment in School*

Reason for school never attendance	Responses
Home /Family related	**22%**
a. Parents did not want – 15%	
b. Had to help at home – 7%	
Personal character	**61%**
a. Too young – 35%	
b. Not willing to attend – 22%	
c. Disable – 4%	
School related	**9%**
a. Too expensive – 4 %	
b. School too far away – 5 %	
Other reasons	**7%**

(CBS, 2011)

Parents not living at home and OOSC. The absence of parent living with the children is one of the characteristics of the poor HHs. Unlike our assumption, the statistical analysis showed that the HHs where fathers were living at home had higher OOSC than the HHs where fathers were not living at home or died. But the situation was just opposite in the case of the mother. The OOSC was slightly higher if the mother was out of home. Interestingly, in the cases of the HHs where the mother was died, the OOSC was very high (20 percent). See Table 23 for detail result).

Table 23: *Mother's absence at Home and OOSC Prevalence, 2010/11*

Households	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Mother living at home	92.5%	7.5%	6622
Mother not living at home	92.2%	7.8%	451
Mother died	79.3%	20.7%	121
Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The results shown in table 23 about correlation and Chi-square test confirmed the hypothesis that the children from the HH where the mother was not at home had higher prevalence than the children with mother at home (Table 25). Despites, this was applicable for population, the low value of correlation coefficient (v=0.063< 0.2) indicated that the mother living at home or not was less contributing factors in the total contribution of all factors.

Table 24: *Relation between Mother's Absence at Home and OOSC prevalence, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.063	.000
N of Valid Cases		7194	
Chi - square test	**Value**	**df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	28.7[a]	2	.000

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Children Related Variables and OOSC

The relationships between OOSC prevalence with age and marital status have been analyzed under the assumption that these variables are the proxy variables to measure the children's personal characteristics influencing the OOS phenomenon.

Age and OOSC. The statistical analysis of NLSS III data showed that there was the highest OOSC (22.8%) in the population of aged five which gradually decreased up to the 9 years (2.8 %). Then it started to increase gradually with the higher age groups after 12 (Table 25). The maximum OOSC at age 5 and the trend of gradually decreasing till 8 reveals that despite age 5 is officially school starting age, it has not be practiced by a large number of population.

Table 25: *Age-wise OOSC Prevalence, 2010/11*

Age Group	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Age 5	77.2%	22.8%	624
Age 6	89.0%	11.0%	726
Age 7	94.3%	5.7%	698
Age 8	96.2%	3.8%	716
Age 9	95.1%	2.8	669
Age 10	95.7%	4.2	814
Age 11	96.5%	3.5	680
Age 12	93.2%	6.8	836
Age 13	92.5	6.5	696
Age 14	87.8	12.2	735
Total	92.2%	7.8%	7194

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The results on correlation and Chi - square analysis confirmed that that there was also a statistically significant relationship between age of the children and the OOSC prevalence in the

population as well. However, the low value of correlation coefficient (v = 0.206) showed that relationship is weak. This means, the age of the children, as one of multiple factors, contributes very little to the total contribution explaining OOSC.

Table 26: *Relation between Age and OOSC Prevalence, 2010/11*

Data Type	Correlation	Value			Approx. Sig.	
Nominal by Nominal	Cramer's V	.206			.000	
N of Valid Cases		7194				
Chi - square test	**Value**			**Df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**	
Pearson Chi-Square	304.5			2	.000	
Binary Logistic Regression	**B**	**S.E.**	**Wald**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Exp(B)**
Age of the Children	.162	.026	39.412	1	.000	1.176

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

A binary logistic model was fit to see the relationship between age and OOSC prevalence taking only the children of age 7-14. This was done as the descriptive analyses showed that before age 7 not all potential school children arrive at school. The model revealed thatwhen the children become one year older; they are 1.176 times more likely to be OOS.

Marital status and OOSC. The statistical analysis of NLSS data showed that there was high OOSC prevalence (57.1%) among married students in comparison with the unmarried students (6.5 %). However, the number of the married children in the survey was very low (Table 27).

Table 27: *Marital Status and OOSC, 2010/11*

Marital Status	ISC	OOSC	Total (no.)
Unmarried	92.9%	6.5%	3747
Married	91.6%	57.1%	14
Total	93.4%	6.6%	3761

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

The statistical analysis of the correlation and Chi-square test (Table 28) confirmed that there was a significant relation between marital status of the children and the OOSC prevalence in the population. However, the very low value of correlation coefficient (phi = 0.124 < 0.2) revealed that the marital status contributed very little part in the total contribution explaining OOSC.

Table 28: *The Correlation between Marital Status and OOSC*

Data Type	Correlation	Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi coefficient	.124	.000
	N of Valid Cases	7194	

Chi - square test	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	57.742[a]	1	.000

Binary Logistic Regression	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Married children (in relation to unmarried)	2.777	.542	26.265	1	.000	16.073

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Likewise, the binary logistic regression model fit between marital status and OOSC prevalence revealed that in comparison to unmarried children, the married children are 16.073 times more likely to be OOS.

Contribution of School Related Factors to OOSC

The analysis of raw data of NLSS III also proved that the school related factors are equally responsible for the dropout of the students. The following was the response of 115 dropout students regarding their reasons for school leaving.

Table 29: *Response of Dropout Children on Reason for Dropout*

Reasons for school leaving	Response
School related	53 %
Poor academic progress – 35 %	
Too expensive – 11 %	
School too far away – 3 %	
Mistreatment in school – 2 %	
Not allowed admission – 1 %	
Language problem – 1 %	
Home /Family related	29 %
Had to help at home – 20%	
Parents did not want – 6%	
Started working/got a job – 2%	
Moved away – 1%	
Other reasons	17%

(Calculated from NLSS III, 2010/11 data)

Multinomial Logistic Regression on OOSC and its Contributors

The multinomial logistic regression model fit between OOSC and its contributing factors revealed two noticeable points. First, Out of 12 factors of OOSC that were found significant on binary logistic model, the four factors: sex, father living at home, rural urban residence and below/above poverty line were found significant. This might be due to the interaction effect between multiple factors of OOSC. Second, the total contribution of these 12 factors in explaining the educational background of children as OOSC or ISC was simple 18 percent (Nagelkerke R Square = 0.181). It means the remaining more than 80 percent of the explanation was not captured by these factors which are considered as the major contributors of OOSC. See annex 7 for detail of nominal regression model.

Recapping the Quantitative Analysis of OOSC Contributing Factors

The discussion and statistical analysis of the distribution of OOSC indicate many

significant factors contributing to the occurrence of the OOS phenomena. As revealed by earlier

studies, the statistical analysis of NLSS data presented in earlier paragraphs also confirmed the

HH related factor (e.g. household poverty and household size) as one of the major influencing

factors causing OOSC. Some of the salient findings about HHs related factors from the NLSS II

data are:

- The prevalence of OOSC among families living below the poverty line (13.7%) is

   almost three times higher than the families above the poverty line (5.3%). The

   children from below poverty line family are 2.859 times more likely to be OOS than

   those from above poverty line.

- The prevalence of OOSC among the HHs from bottom quintile in terms of per capita

   consumption is highest (14.6%) which gradually declines and yields to the least

   (2.1%) among the HHs from the top per capita consumption quintile. The children

   from top consumption quintile HH is 0.702 times less likely to be OOSC than those

   of the children from the bottom quintile of consumption.

- The average OOSC from the large family size (10.3%) is double than the prevalence

   of OOSC among the families with small size (4.9%). The children from large family

   size are 2.236 times more likely to be OOSC than those from small family size.

The analysis of NLSS data shows that the socio-cultural factors such as caste/ethnicity,

gender and geographic location of the people are also statistically significant for prevalence and

intensity of OOSC.

- The prevalence of OOSC is highest among the *Dalits* from Terai (27.8%) followed by the Muslims (21.0%). OOSC in the other caste from Terai (Middle caste - 14.4%, Brahmans - 7.0% and Janajatis - 6.5%) are also higher than the Hill people. In the Hill, the Janajatis have the highest OOSC prevalence (6.1%), which gradually declines among the *Dalits* (5.9%), Chhetris/Thakuris (3.5%) and Brahmans (0.8%) respectively. The children from Brahman/Chhetri (both hill and terai) family are 0.44 times less likely to be OOS than those from Dalit family.

- In terms of gender, in general, there is slightly a high prevalence of OOSC among the female children (8.4%) than the male children (7.8%). The female children are 1.196 more likely to be OOSC than the male children.

- Location is another factor causing the difference in the socio cultural context of the people. In this regard, location is another contributing factor in OOSC prevalence.

    o OOSC prevalence is higher among the rural population (8.7%) than the urban population (5.2%). The children from rural areas are 1.735 times more likely to be OOSC than those children from urban areas.

    o OOSC prevalence is higher among the Terai population (11.5%) than the Hill population (4.7%) and Mountain population (5.0%)

    o OOSC prevalence is highest among the people from the Central Development Region (10.4%).

Third, another factor causing of OOSC is related to parents such as their education level and their presence or absence in in the family. These factors are also found statistically significant on explaining OOSC.

- The prevalence of OOSC among the children with illiterate parents is 17.6 percent which gradually declines with the higher level of father's education. The prevalence of OOSC is only 1.4 percent with the fathers who have education above SLC.

- Similar is true in the case of mothers education. In the cases of illiterate mothers, the prevalence of OOSC is 18.6 percent. Notably, there is no OOSC in the case of mother who has education above SLC.

Fourth, the individual characters of individual children, such as age and marital status are also factors influencing to OOSC prevalence.

- OOSC prevalence is much higher (57.2 %) among married children than the unmarried ones (6.5%).

- In terms of age, there is highest OOSC (22.8%) in the population of the five-year-age group which gradually decreases up to 9-year age group (2.8 %). Then it started to increase sharply after the age of 13 years.

The fifth OOSC contributing factor is school related factor. In the NLSS survey, 53 percent of school dropout children have reported school related factors as their main reason for their dropouts from school. Among those dropouts, 35 percent had left school because of low academic performance such as failure in examinations.

Summary of the Chapters

To sum up, the results of quantitative analysis of OOSC in Nepal verified multiple factors, as identified in past studies, contributing for the occurrence of OOS in Nepal. Generally speaking, these factors are related to the same broad categories such as households, society, school and individual characteristics of the parents and children. These are all commonly observed factors associated with the out-of-school phenomenon in other countries as well. The

only difference in the case of Nepal is the difference in degrees or size of its impact. The overall findings of this chapter confirm that most of the factors found as accountable in other contexts, are accountable in Nepal's context as well. Further, these findings guide this research to the next level of question and that is, how do social, economic and individual characteristics contribute to the parents and children in their final decision to drop out from the school? What process or the dynamics is involved in their final decision? Chapter V discusses these areas of OOS phenomenon qualitatively.

CHAPTER V

ENGAGING IN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASES OF SCHOOL DROPOUT

In the previous Chapter, I discussed the educational scenario of the country, in general, using educational indicators focusing on prevalence and intensity OOSC. Analyzing the factors of OOSC contributed to find out the blanket causes of the OOSC which hardly permits me to explore the complexity of the OOSC process. I engage in the field for exploring complexities of the OOSC to generate ethnographic cases. In this regard, I have focused to selected six dropouts and their stories.

This chapter consists of three sections. The first section presents the events of six school dropouts. These events are generated from the interaction with those dropouts and their parents. These dropout events seemed broadly similar in terms of socioeconomic and cultural context but possessed peculiar in nature due to their different experience of school dropout. Dropouts and their parents narrated different discomforts which are responsible for their dropout decisions. Actually those experiences shared by them were the result of their worldviews which I described in second section in terms of their meaning to benefit of school education and worldviews on school dropout. Finally, I present my overall reflection on school dropout phenomenon. I understood that 'educational ceiling' was the major dynamics behind peoples' decision of school dropout. This is my interpretation and reflection on the issue built on the basis of school dropout events and peoples worldviews on it. In addition, I have presented the qualitative constituents evolution of educational ceiling in the community.

Perusing School Dropout Events

This section presents six selected events of school dropouts. These peculiar events disclose different aspects of school dropout phenomenon where people considered certain specific circumstances as responsible for their dropout decision. However, I could see multiple inconveniences and circumstances leading to their decision which they expressed implicitly during the interaction.

Story of *Badhyata*: "Who Pays Our Loan?"

It was a cold day in November 2015 when I went to *Badhyata's* (a 17-year old boy, a school dropout after completing grade eight) house for the first time. Arriving to his home in a village was somehow similar to a good trek to a remote village of Nepal. It took me more than two hours walk from the bus park, gateway of the village. I observed people including children who were walking downhill carrying heavy loads on their back. A dusty road was built but without any wheel-marks. After crossing a dense forest for almost one hour, dwellings appeared. Some people were harvesting millet while some were carrying cow dung in *doko* (bamboo basket) to their fields.

With a body drenched in sweat, I reached *Badhyata's* house at 9 am. His father, *Kanchha* was lying on the yard and was basking in the Sun. There was a bowl of *Chhyang* (homemade alcohol of rice) by the side of the bandage- legged man. Before I could introduce myself, *Badhyata* arrived with his two sisters from the jungle. These three siblings were carrying bamboo baskets of different size on their back, as per their carrying capacity, full of fodder.

Badhyata came nearer to me. We exchanged courtesies. I had already met him a few days ago. Then he introduced me to his father. His elder sister entered into the kitchen and started cooking their meal. She seemed hasty because she had to reach school before ten am. His

younger sister brought the goats from the shade into the Sun. *Kanchha* ordered *Badhyata* to bring

a chair for me as if he might have thought that I was from the city. I sat on the same mat with

him and started talking to him about the place, people and their daily lives in the village.

He showed his damaged house and shared that that the house was collapsed during the

big earthquake of April 2015. They made the temporary shed where they were living, *Kanchha*

shared miseries of his life not only created by the earthquake but also the destiny of his life.

After his wife's death, he was always worried and thinking to manage his household

chores and to make his life easy. I was surprised when Kanchha told me that he had not taken his

meal for the last two days. During my three-hour stay, he emptied three bowls of *Chhyang*.

"*Chhyang* is our intimate friend since our earliest memories, in both pain and pleasure – a good

source of energy as well as medicine", he glorified the value of *Chhyang* in their life and

explaining his habit of drinking *Chhyang*.

Then I gradually probed the issue of *Badhyata's* school. Badhyata had started school at

the age of seven.He repeated the class once in grade five due to failure in final exams. When I

wanted to know about his school dropout, *Kanchha* told very sentimentally, "The main reason is

our poverty." After being bedridden for six months, *Badhyata's* mother had died. Extreme

alcoholism was the long term cause while jaundice was the immediate cause of her death.

Although they did their best from traditional healing to medical treatment including worships of

many gods, they could not save her. She died leaving them in debt; one hundred thousand rupees

was borrowed for her treatment and another one hundred thousand for her death rituals.

Then, the father and the son discussed the situation and decided that the best strategy was

to stop *Badhyata* to go to school so that both of them could engage in wage earning to run their

family and pay back their loan. "How can the poor people like us send our children for further education?" he wondered.

He further added, "Badhyata completed grade 8. I think it was sufficient for reading and writing and also to be recruited as a *Sipahi* (lowest position in Nepal Army) if he had luck. After this, we never think for further education to our children. Further education is no more useful to us." Then, *Badhyata* had tried once to join the Nepal Army but he failed in his first and last attempt. Adding to his father, *Badhyata* said: "I knew I would not be selected as we neither had any close relatives in Nepal Army nor we do have money to bribe the *hakim* (office chief). "Now I am in the process of getting a passport to go abroad for employment", he said. Working as a laborer in the village or engaging in agriculture was not enough to pay back the loan. So he had made a plan, following the footsteps of his seniors of the community, for foreign employment for more income. Although he had never been anywhere away from Kathmandu Valley, he was planning to take further loan and go abroad with his seniors who had already been there.

Actually, just one month after his mother's death, *Badhayata* married a girl- one grade junior at his school, whom he had been in love with for the last six months. I sensed that their marriage was the strategy of the family to handover the responsibility of household chores and agriculture that *Badhyata's* mother was doing. But, she could not live with him for a long time. She also eloped with someone else after nine months. So, *Kanchha* had a new plan to give this role to his elder daughter who was studying at grade eight. Hence, she was going to stop her schooling from next year. In addition to household chores and caring for their cattle, about 150 to 200 person- days were needed to run their agriculture and there was a *parma* (working in exchange for work, rather than giving the wage) system. He said, "Agriculture is not a beneficial occupation. But we are doing it since our grandfather's time. Moreover, if we keep the land

barren, neighbors and relatives laugh at us. In such condition, how my daughter's further schooling is possible?" He also shared his plan to marry off his elder daughter after three years and then his younger daughter would leave school and take all these responsibilities - who was now studying in grade five.

Story of *Sahanshila*: "What Should We Get from her Further Schooling?"

It was almost four o'clock when I along with a school teacher reached *Shanshila's* house. The female teacher had taught her from grade one. She introduced me to *Sahanshila's* mother, who was making alcohol in the verandah of her home. This was the side business of the family to meet their daily expenses. While we were talking, *Sahanshila* arrived at home carrying grass in a big *doko* (bamboo basket) while herding in some goats. She blushed when she saw us. After unloading the grass and wiping off her sweat, she came to us. After some generic talk, we started discussing her schooling; from her very first day of schooling till the last moment before she dropped out from school.

After she completed grade eight, she went to grade nine with her friends just for one day. For grade nine she had to leave home early in the morning and get back only in the evening as school is at a distance of two hour walking. She said, "My father was not happy with this. He did not give me money to get admitted in grade nine. Further, he scolded me and ordered me not to go to school from the next day." She continued expressing regret, showing the bamboo basket, "If my father had sent me to school, today I would be going to college with a bag of books rather than carrying grass and fodder on my back." With a long sigh, she said, "I feel great humiliation when I see my friends going to college while I find myself working in the fields." Her mother had taken *Shahanshila*'s dropping out as a normal and natural incident as this was not new in the

community. After attaining certain grades or after marrying there was a common practice of dropping out in the community.

Sahanshila's expression showed that her school dropout was entirely her father's decision. So, after a few days, I visited her father again. He was drunk and laying on the verandah. He was a popular carpenter of the community at one time but now he was not able to walk well due to a permanent leg problem. I slowly breached the topic of *Sahanshila*'s dropping out of school and tried to understand the rationale behind his decision to force her out.

To my offensive question that why he made injustice to *Shanshila* by dropping out from school, he retorted with anger, "What benefit would I get from *Sahanshila*'s further schooling? Even after college education my two sons are unemployed. Instead of helping family financially, they are asking for few hundred thousand rupees to go to Golf countries for employment." He further remarked, "Even the *logne manchhe* (adult male) are not getting any job in this country and going abroad for work, what can we do by sending a *swasni manchhe* (adult female) to school!" In his opinion, as *Shanashila* was already able to read and write, it was enough to perform her future role. He was looking for a suitable candidate for her marriage. His two elder daughters were also literate up to the primary level and married at the age of 16 and 17 respectively.

Upon further interaction with him, he opened up about the financial difficulties of further schooling, "How can we poor people send our children for further study? On top of this, I am lame and cannot work for earning." It was necessary to give Rs 50 per day for tiffin while sending a child to grade nine as they had to travel a longer distance, spending the whole day going to school. This had further reduced their children's time which they could spend at home.

Spending more money on further education was paying nothing back to them. Getting their both sons unemployed even after having higher education was their lived experience. Instead, stopping school had made it possible to generate income. It was *Sahanshila*'s duty to go to market to sell alcohol while her mother's role was to prepare it. Both of their sons were trying to go abroad for employment, which was necessarily pushing the family into debt. He added, "*Sahanshila* is our backbone who is helping us both in household chores, our business and agriculture. I cannot imagine how to run these things after her marriage".

Story of *Behosi*: "How can I Shut up Deceitful Tongue?"

When I met *Behosi* for the first time, she was breaking stones with some of her friends on the side of a tributary, carrying her two year daughter on her back. I was there with her teacher who introduced her as the most talented girl she had ever met in the school. *Behosi* was bright not only in the classroom but also in extracurricular activities. When we started talking, the supervisor of the work-site gave us angry looks so we decided to meet the next morning at her mother's tea shop.

Behosi fell in love with her own school teacher and she got married with him soon after grade-eight completion. Her husband, as a teacher, always encouraged her to complete at least up to SLC. So after studying grade eight in her own village, she joined grade nine in another school. The school was located in the downhill of the village. She had to walk two hours downhill in the morning to go to school and two hours uphill to return from the school in the evening through a dense forest. She spent most of the time on her journey to school. When she returned to home she had to complete all household chores. However, she was managing her household chores and school duty.

Behosi's interest of school did not last for a long time. She said, "My neighbor did not tolerate my school attendance. They started backbiting against me in the field, farm and at the public taps." Her neighbors engaged in malicious gossip about *Behosi*'s school attendance. They blamed that she left her old mother-in-law at work and she enjoyed activities outside of home. Moreover, the villagers could not digest her school uniform. They ridiculed her because she put on a skirt showing up to the thighs. Thus, she could not tolerate malicious gossips of her neighbors and decided to drop out from school. From this I conceived that school going after marriage was the action against the social values and practices.

On further exploration, she disclosed other secrets of her dropouts. Her family loan, which was taken at the time of her marriage, was creating headache to them and it was another demotivating situation to continue school. It was not possible to pay back the loan from her husband's monthly salary only. Thus, her husband went abroad leaving the teaching job. In such a situation she realized her responsibility. "If I left school and engaged in earning a wage, it would be great help to my husband" she shared her strategy of that time.

On top of this, she also critically judged the benefit of further education in her life. She said, "Even after completing school level education, I was not going to work anywhere. This is our community practice and my seniors were also engaged in household chores despite completing school level education." At the same time, she got pregnant and walking four hours daily for school was risky for her health. This also motivated her to leave school.

Although *Behosi* did not express any regret about her dropping out of school, her mother was not happy with her daughter's decision. She was running a small tea shop in the village for their livelihood. First, she was not happy with their decision to marry at such an early age. But she agreed as she thought it was not possible to stop such decisions once people fall in love,

especially in adolescence. Second, even though she had advised her not to give birth to a child soon, *Behosi* did not listen to her. This was the tradition in the village that generally when the people got married at an early age, the husband would go abroad and the wife would engage in caring for their children. *Behosi'*s mother further criticized her own husband's attitude to this result, "He always drinks alcohol and engages himself in gambling. Children generally do not obey their mothers in this community. As a result, none of my children completed school." *Behosi*'s elder brother had dropped out after grade 5. Her younger brother was now studying in grade 7 but he was very irregular in going to school. This was a strong indication that he could soon become a permanent school dropout.

Story of *Swikarya*: Accepting Tradition or Escaping from School?

When I reached *Swikarya*'s house, she was massaging her one year old child with oil in the Sun. Her mother-in-law was washing the dishes. Unlike other families, I did not see any *Bhatti* (alcohol making plant) in her house. Later I knew about her husband who was in foreign employment and he was sending the daily expenses needed for the family. However, they would make alcohol occasionally for their own consumption.

After some informal conversation about the local people and place, I started by asking her about her experience of her early school days. She said, "My mother was very strict about my studies and she did her best to send us to school. She has beaten us many times in case of our denial to go to school. However, I was not interested in study from the very beginning and school never attracted me. I was weak in my studies and usually ranked last in class. I repeated the grade three and five twice, ", she said without any humiliation. When she reached grade 7, she fell in love with a boy who was studying grade nine at school,He was her neighbor from the

same village. She said, "We made a plan to flee and marry if our parents would not accept our relation. But my mother accepted our relation."

"When I got married, I became the daughter-in-law of this house and my role also changed. My role was to take out the household chores, and the kitchen. I am happy to do all these chores which are traditionally done by women in our society. One year after marriage, I gave birth to this baby." she said.

"Even after marriage, my mother and husband told me not to leave school, but I found neither any use from further schooling nor was it possible for me to go to school as a daughter-in-law. It was not possible to perform the double duty, at school and at home. Moreover, I was not supposed to do any job outside this village. So I decided not to continue school", she explained the reasons very clearly. "Every woman of this village does household chores and the men go out of the village for jobs," she explained the practice of the society. Further, she thought that it was impractical indeed to continue school after marriage in the village as it was also a matter of shame for her. She told with shy that, the school dropout decision was pleasing event which relieved me from the burdensome school life.

The next time I met her mother, *Maili* to know further why *Swikarya* dropped out of school. I had gone to her house at nine o'clock in the morning, which was the right time to meet people at home in the area. People would go to the jungle for wood or to the market for selling alcohol in the morning, and to their fields during the daytime. *Maili* had just arrived home from the jungle with a big load of firewood at her back side. She then engaged partly in making alcohol and partly in cooking the morning meal. As there were only two members at home and because her husband was lame, she had to perform every household duty, from alcohol business to household chores and agriculture. Her son was in the Nepal Army and stayed in the barracks.

Maili, mother of *Swikarya*'s further shared that she wished she had gone to school but *Swikarya* left school. She expected that her sons and daughter should not have any unpleasant experience because of illiteracy. She had had a bitter experience of humiliation and difficulties faced several times due to her illiteracy. When *Swikarya* got married and left school after grade 7, she was not bothered for two reasons. First, her school attainment of grade seven was enough to fulfill a woman's role in the community. Second, now it was the responsibility of her husband rather than her. However, she had wished that her daughter should have continued school.

Like *Swikarya, Maili*'s son was also about to leave school after grade 7, but she made various efforts to make her son a grade eight graduate. Then she sent her son to the house of a senior army officer where he worked for three years as a houseboy. Then it was possible to join the Nepal Army with the power of that army officer. She opined, "Unlike the daughter, at least the school education of grade eight is necessary for the son as it opens the door to enter a government service. Sons have much more responsibilities beyond household chores and agriculture."

Story of *Allare*: "How Can I Escape from Burdensome Duty?"

The cohort study done on the school of the community had revealed that one of the destinations of dropout boys was public transportation sector. So, I was carefully watching the gateway of the bus stop in their area for a few days. In each 7 minutes interval, a minibus would leave for Kathmandu and one would arrive back at the bus stop from there. So in a couple of hours, I saw many bus drivers, *khalasis* (helpers) and passengers. Generally, *khalasis* were generally teenager and the drivers were comparatively more mature in age. The role of *khalasi* ranged from dealing with the passenger and collecting bus fare to assisting the driver and cleaning the bus. I saw one Tamang face, a young boy of 14 or 15 with smiling and active

appearance. I was right. He was a school dropout from my research area. After some informal conversation and exchanging our cell phone numbers, I booked his time for next evening, after he completed his duty.

The next day, I was looking for his arrival. The long awaited bus came at five o'clock in the evening and it was his last trip. After getting his consent, we spent almost two hours chatting while enjoying some tea and snacks in a lonely eatery where no one could listen to us.

Allare, the *khalasi*, had left school the previous year at the age of 14 when he was in grade six. He was neither enjoying school nor home. He had joined a new school in grade six as there was only a primary school (up to grade five) in his settlement. He had to walk one hour to reach his new school and had no friends with him on the way to school. He said, "It was always boring going to school and coming back alone as there was no one to speak to, as no one used to go to school of my age from my settlement." His friends had either migrated to the cities or had already left school. In addition to this, all students and teachers were new to him and the classes bored him. "Spending a day in the classroom felt like spending a year for me", he said laughing. More than that, he was doing a double duty – daily engagement in household chores, partial engagement in agriculture, especially during the cropping and harvesting times, and the school duty. "My duty would start from early in the morning. Going daily to the jungle for *sottar* and *syaula* (fodder and forage) was my first duty. Then I had to do my school work as well when free from household chores. Both were difficult. So I was always thinking about escaping from my difficult daily life".

One day while he was returning from school, *Allare* met a friend senior to him by two or three years. He was returning to the village after one year of working as a *khalasi*. *Allare* was also aware of the joyful life of *khalasi* to some extent as there were a few of his seniors working

in this field. That day he knew about some more exciting stuff. Visiting the city every day, just staying in the bus was not only pleasing but much easier job than what *Allare* was doing. His friend was returning to visit his parents with some savings. The new jacket he wore and the mobile phone in his hand were especially attractive to *Allare*. *Allare* was so impressed with him that he asked him about the possibility of getting a similar job for him soon as well. When his friend replied positively, he instantly decided to leave home and go with him. It was the panacea for all his problems that he had been hoping for. His friend was returning to work the next day.

Allare kept his mouth shut at home with the fear that his parents would stop him to be *Khalasi*. The next day, after returning from the jungle, he took his meal and left for school with his school bag as usual. His parents were working in the field on the way to school. He recalled that moment very interestingly, "First, I was in a dilemma between whether to inform my parents or not. But I thought that I should give them some indication of my decision. So I shouted out loudly, right from the path across the field they were working in, that I would not return home that day." He was not sure whether they heard his words properly or not. Anyway, he started a new life.

Having known all this about *Allare*, I went to his father some days later. I was excited about finding out his father's feelings of that specific day when *Allare* left home. Interestingly, the event of his son leaving home was not a great surprise to the father. This was a common practice in the village. Actually, he knew the incident only when *Allare* did not return from school. Later, he found out that *Allare* had gone to the city with that bus conductor. "This age is a time to look for work," he expressed normally. In his youth, they also used to go to the adjoining villages for labor work. However, he was concerned that he had lost his helping hand

as his other children were still too young to assist him. But at the same time he was happy that *Allare* would return someday with savings that would help him to run his family.

Just like his father, *Allare* too was happy being away from school forever. He told "I do not have any regret about my decision. Now-a-days, my life is much more comfortable than those days of distasteful burdens of school and household chores. The dream of *masu-bhat* (non-vegetarian lunch and dinner) and travelling to the city has been materialized. Now I am playing with hundreds of rupees, while I could hardly see any money then", he compared pre and post dropout period." He further shared his experience, "However, I feel sometimes humiliation upon meeting my school friends."

Story of *Bewarise*: "How to Get Revenge with My Parents"

When I met *Bewarise* for the first time in a community school in December 2015, studying in grade nine, this talkative and fashionable but confident boy of 17 had already changed four institutional schools, one after another. This was his fifth school. The migration of his family, frequent family quarrels, and his own preference for playing and other stuff rather than his studies had made him change those schools.

I chose this in-school student as my research participant with three rationales. First, listening to his teacher as well as his parents, I had a feeling that he would become a school dropout at some point soon. No one believed in his continuation of school. Second, from interactions with teachers and neighbors I knew that he was the victim of family quarreling. This was a special case for me, different from all the other research participants that I had in the area. Third, during the very first interview, I was impressed with his bold and confident saying, "I have understood the importance of education in the life of a human being. I want to forget my past and now I have to get impressive results from school to show my parents." There was a

contradiction between other people's perception on the boy and his expression. This made me more interested in selecting this boy as my research participants. However, four months later, just as everyone had guessed, he did not appear in the final exam of grade nine and left school permanently after he got a job with a good salary as a drilling machine operator.

One could easily experience the lack of cordial relationships among the family members while visiting their home. When I reached to his home, *Bewarise*'s father (Shyam) and mother (Kanchhi) were making alcohol together while his step sisters were doing school homework. I sensed that both the parents were drunk. When I wanted to see *Bewarise*, his father pointed with finger to his room without speaking a word. *Bewarise* was sitting alone in his room behind the closed doors. As I had pre-informed them that I would be visiting, all were at home. Later, I found out that he had not spoken to his mother for the last three years and he did not have a friendly relationship with his father, either.

Bewarise expressed his dissatisfaction against his parents, "I am well known in this community because my parents get drunk and quarrel frequently. The Police have taken my father into custody quite few times. In such a condition, how can I concentrate on my study?" He further added sentimentally "In addition to that, how can an orphan like me tolerate the discriminative and ruthless treatment of a step mother? My own father also always takes her side against me. They want me to engage in work so that they can get money out of my work." He further reflected his past, "I have joined work few times even leaving school few times to meet my financial need."

Like *Bewarise*, his father also blamed *Bewarise* himself for this result. He said, "I did my best to send this son to school. I have even identified sponsors and enrolled him in an institutional school. But he never took interest in studying. Because of his bad behavior he got

rusticated from several schools." When he left one school, I always found another school for him. However, due to bad company, he enjoyed himself outside school where he was free to do everything as he liked including smoking and drinking alcohol." He neither supports in household chores nor goes to school regular. I have no hope from this son", he replied frustratingly. His step-mother further added, "Despite caring for him and feeding him, *Bewarise* never wanted to see me in this house. He has little regard even for these little girls. ". She told showing her daughters.

I also interacted with one of their neighbors about *Bewarise* 's being a school dropout. He blamed both for the result. He perceived that in addition to the discouraging home environment *Bewarise*'s bad company had helped him bunk school to go swimming, smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol in restaurants. His parents did not pay attention to this regard. In addition to this, *Bewarise* got chance to play with money which was a major reason for his dropping out of school. He further added his experience that once the children of growing age stats to get money and start to fulfill their material world, they never give attention to education.

<div align="center">Peoples' Worldview on School Education and Dropout</div>

The six events are the representative stories of the school dropout. These events showed that parents and their children perceived education as an important component in their life because the rhetoric of school was created in the community. Despite, realizing certain benefit of education in their life, people were not able to harness the full benefit school education. Thus, the situation of education less connected with their life and livelihood led them to dropout from school at some point of their school life.

Attraction to School: A Hope of Comfortable Life

The ethnographic field engagement revealed interesting scene of school dropouts in the community. In last generation, people had exceptionally attended school while every child of the present generation had been necessarily stepped-in to school. However, only few of them had completed the school level education. The cohort analysis of the school showed that, majority of children would leave school education before they entered into secondary level education. School dropout would begin when the children entered into adolescent age. This made me curious about what attracted the parents and children to join school and with what expectation? I asked each parent explicitly about their reasons behind sending their children to school. For this, I also discussed with in-school children about their expectation from school.

Although sending children to school was the parent's decision in the early stage of schooling. Children were also happy to be in school in early years, because they find a change in their daily life, play full day with new friends and get books, bag and school dress had made their early school life joyful.

'Education opens the eyes and it is beneficial in every aspect of life'. This was the common answer from every parent. Parents, especially those who had never been to school and engaged in agro-based occupation, were still working hard at the older age. Likewise, parents who were lacking skill in letter and numeracy, from the housewife to the carpenter, and from the businessman to the migrant laborer shared their difficulties that they faced in their life due to the lack basic literacy. First, parents, like *Maili*, shared their experience of humiliation in front of others while needed to put the thumb signature rather than the written one. Second, putting the signature without knowing the matter was felt a risky job. Third, the problems of measurement in their occupation, inability to handle new technology such as mobile phone were some other

problems that had made them dependent on others. Thus, the expectation of those parents from school education was to make their children, literate in alphabets and numeracy from school education so that their children should not be the victims of those difficulties what the parents had faced. It was so mothers of *Behosi* and *Swikarya* were happy with their daughter even they dropped out before secondary level education. They were hopeful that that, their daughters, unlike themselves, would not face those problems which they had faced in their life. Thus, education is seen by parents as a means to tackle the problem they experienced in their life (Groot, 2007).

The field observation showed that people had considered school education as an instrumental for realizing their self-esteem and to build their confidence (UNESCO, 2006). Their ability to put written signature was a matter of realizing their self-esteem while their ability to read the signed document had made their action as informed action. The role of literacy is important for 'learning to talk', increased self-esteem and confidence (Pant, 2005). Additionally, to become literate for them was a kind of liberation from constraints of dependency (Dugdale & Christina, 2008). On top of this, the functional literacy would enhance their efficiency and productivity making their daily life more fruitful. Hence, it was a toll of people's empowerment at home, work and community (UNESCO, 2006). These were the basic benefits of school education what the people realized and expressed implicitly during the interaction. This was also the implicit motivation for sending their children to school, at least for some years.

The next expectation from school education was to escape from the disgusting, cumbersome and unprofitable occupation of agriculture which they expressed explicitly. No one in the community was happy with their present occupation. The life of a farmer was very difficult and they needed to work until late at their old age. So, their expectation from education

was that it would make their children able to get some other employment rather than agriculture. The example of the joyful life of his friends in Nepal Army given again and again by *Kanchha* showed that their life was more comfortable and happy in comparison to his hard life of agriculture. He was also expecting same for his son, *Badhyata*. Thus, education was perceived as a means to enjoy a comfortable life way from hard labor and cumbersome nature of agricultural occupation (Parajuli, 2008).

This educational objective was disclosed while talking to the in-school children as well. In the beginning, they expressed a wide range of educational expectation and high sounding motives of school education such as development of the nation, serving the poor people, making nation's name bright in the world, and personal ambition such as becoming a rich and good person including the fulfillment of the parents' dream. Looking from the contextual reality, I became skeptical that those motives had come from their heart. Upon discussing with them personally and probing more deeply, they also shared the same objective that escaping from the traditional occupation was their main motives of school attendance. The alternative occupations to agriculture were either to enter Nepal Army or go abroad for labor work. This was the exposed area of occupation which the community was experienced and understood as feasible to them. The community people were found uninformed about other sectors of occupation. Those high sounding motive expressed in the beginning were simply the ideal role of education gained from the classroom teaching or reading text books.

Thus, the motive of parents sending children to school was mainly guided by their two life experiences. First, education would help helpful to their children to tackle the problems which they had faced in their life due to illiteracy. It was expected to gain everyday skills from

education (Parajuli, 2008). Second, it would help their children to transcend from the hard life of agriculture to a more comfortable occupation.

School Dropout: Livelihood Strategy of People

Especially the events of *Badhyata's* dropout showed that their school dropout decision was guided by bread earning objective which was the compulsion of the family due to their low income from present source of earning. During the interaction with *Badhyata* and his father *Kanchha* individually as well as together, they expressed and highlighted strongly that their poverty and low level of income compelled them for *Badhyata's* school dropout. While listening to a story of *Badhyata* who could not further continue his school education, it was clear that *Badhayata* - a single son - became responsible for the house. To manage household chores he got married and her wife was also compelled to leave school. The compulsion of bearing the responsibilities of the house was important much more and immediate necessity for him than going to school. Engaging in household work had confirmed immediate benefits while continuation of school, rather simply increasing some hopes, would not confirm any benefits in future. On the other hand, the economic benefit of education was neither certain nor immediate (Kushiyait, 2007).

The situation *Badhyata* faced reminded me the meaning of the proverb 'one bird in hand is better than many birds in the bushes'. Survival was the first priority of the family and in such a condition, going to school always loses in the trade-off between education and work (Kushiyait, 2007). Since education is a huge investment and gives secondary and tertiary benefits only in a long run, the families holding a poor socio-economic capital cannot afford these long waiting (IIES & MoECSW, 1993; Manandhar & Sthapit, 2012).

After the death of *Badhyata's* mother, his burden of paying the loan was associated with their economic condition which was gradually deteriorating. The mother's death pushed them not only into a debt; this incident was also a loss of the helpful hands to regulate household activities. In such a condition, such unfortunate incidents increased various burdens to family members and the consequence was the children's school dropout (CERSOD, 2010; Groot, 2007). Thus *Badhyata* and *Kanchha* decided together for *Badhyata*'s dropout and also planned the same for the elder daughter. Engaging *Badhyata* in income earning and her sister to household chores and agriculture was the family's coping strategy for the livelihood (see Acharya & Giri, 2009).

Not only in case of *Badhyata, was Behosi's school dropout* also the family's livelihood strategy. As a responsible member of the family, *Behosi* thought to help her husband by leaving school and engaging in wage earning for their livelihood. There is a social practice that students drop out when they are found important in performing some roles at home or they can generate income from an occupation (IIES & MoECSW, 1993).

In case of poor and low income family, parent's income is not even sufficient to fulfill the basic need such as food and clothing (Wagle, 2012). Thus after dropping out from school, *Badhyata* engaged in labor work to earn money for fulfilling his responsibilities, especially to pay the loan of his mother's *Ghewa*. However, the earning was not enough for him to settle all the loans and run the family. Thus, *Badhyata* planned to go abroad for more income. The unavailability of new economic opportunities and the inability to create self-employment works pushes out youths not only from school but also from their place of origin in search of wage earning (Karki, Acharya & Baral, 2014). It meant, the school dropout was also the result of existing structure of the society as well as the shortcoming of school curriculum.

The dropout phenomenon in a low income family was further aggravated by the lavish culture of their life. Both in case of *Badhyata* and *Behosi,* their economic condition was deteriorated due to loan taken to for *Ghewa* (death ritual) or marriage. The interaction with the community people from various sectors revealed that Tamang people had great emphasis on feasts and festivals in the community. *Maili*, mother of *Swikarya* told that people in the community were habituated in spending more and more without assessing their own economic condition. Her analysis was "There is an unspoken competition among relatives and neighbors to spend more and more for the sake of their prestige to prove that they are not weaker than others." From the following experience of *Maili* we can guess how costly the feasts and festivals in the community were.

> There was marriage or *Chhebar* (one ritual for male member only after which he becomes eligible to conduct his parent's death rituals) ceremony in my own mother's home, I sent twenty liters of alcohol, five hundred *Shel* (a special type of bread), a big chicken rooster and many other things which cost more than 20 thousand rupees. Now you can guess how much a family needs to spend on the marriage of their son or daughter. Likewise, the death ritual is much more expensive than marriage. It lasts 15 to 45 days to complete, depending upon individual's capacity. During that period, a group of *Lamas (*Priests in Buddhist religion) are invited to worship and all relatives and neighbors are given lunch and dinner in those days.

The head teacher of the community school also shared his experience showing the community's high emphasis on their cultural events which had an adverse effect on the children's schooling.

In case of social ceremonies like marriage, Chebar or *Ghewa (death ritual),* or any other festivals in the village, there is a tradition of inviting the whole community. When there is such a ceremony in the village, almost all children become absent from school and the school remains almost closed.

As a result of such cultural practices, a family would necessarily fall into debt and mostly adolescents got burden of paying debt. They were not able to earn in the community thus they searched an alternative to go abroad. Thus, this practice had created a solid background for the school dropout phenomenon in the community.

School Dropout: Questioning the Relevancy of Education

As *Sahanshila* understood, her family's low income was the major reason for her school dropout. Her father was not able to pay for her admission in grade nine. But, from the conversation with *Sahanshila*'s father, I reflected that he was raising the fundamental issues of the relevancy of present school education system. His decision of *Sahanshila*'s school dropout indicated three types of relevancy of school education perceived by people in the community: potentiality of education giving higher income and better employment; cost of schooling against its benefit; and gender specific role of education.

The first relevancy of education that people looked about the potentiality of education was to give better job and higher income. Despite investment of scarce time, money and effort on education to his sons, *Sahanshila*'s father experienced that none of them was able to get any job or earning. Rather than helping the parents, they were further asking for money to go for foreign employment. He did not find any relevancy of school education to their life and livelihood. On the other hand, the grade eight dropped out daughter was doing everything. She was helping not only in household chores and agriculture but also contributing to the business of alcohol selling.

Only after listening to his life experience, I understood the reason for the irritation shown by *Sahanshila*'s father while I blamed him on *Sahanshila*'s school dropout. Thus, against the general finding of many literature that lack of awareness among as the reason for children's school dropout (CERESOD, 2010; FBC, 2014; Kushiyait, 2007), I understood that the parents had some experience and explanation of their action that was responsible for their school dropout decision. Although school education had assured basic literacy skills, parents were not found assured about a job for their children after completing school education (CERSOD, 2010). In generating income and employment, the parent had found education less helpful making them apathy towards children's education (Karki, Acharya & Baral, 2014).

From the stories of the dropout, I analyzed, the second relevancy of school education which was associated with its cost and benefit as well. Although the absolute cost of education was not higher than their livelihood cost, the relative cost of education would sharply increase in higher level of school education due to the opportunity cost. Up to primary education, parents found no economic burden at all, where the basic literacy skill was possible without feeling any sacrifice of cost. In addition, school was supportive to parent who needed to take care the young age children all day. So every parent was willingly and comfortably sending their children to school up to primary level education. Hence, I conceived that the household poverty was less influential for the school dropout at primary level where people perceived less cost to the primary level school education in comparison to the benefits they experienced. Hence parents would choose not to invest further in their children's education if they perceived it as irrelevant to their future needs (Groot, 2007).

When the children gradually upgraded to grade seven or eight with the age 13 or 14 years, the parent would gradually release the opportunity cost of education. At this age, the

adolescent children could work as an adult. However, the academic certificate of grade-eight completion had opened some hopes for employment, especially for boys, they would not count much the cost of the education up to this point. However, it did not guarantee the job in the government without having socio-political capital and good network with *'thulo manchhe'* (person with power) (Bista, 1991).

The extra cost of children's tiffin and additional tuition classes needed for secondary education was a greater burden for the poor families. Children needed to go down to the valley, walking for almost two hours for the secondary level, which would leave very little or no time for household work. This had made the parents experience a high opportunity cost. In Nepal, "The opportunity cost is perceived by many parents, rightly or wrongly, as too great." (Boyle et. al., p.75). Thus, both parents and children would start questioning the relevancy of education in terms of cost and benefit of the education beyond its basic level. On the contrary to this, people of the community were not experienced any distinct output from the completion of grade nine and ten. Thus they did not see any additional benefit to them in relation from secondary level education in comparison to grade eight. The goal of secondary level education, as perceived by parents, was simply to prepare the children to go for college education which was not their motive. Hence, particularly due to high opportunity cost especially perceived by parents, children from poorer families would face pressures to withdraw from school (Hunt, 2008). Thus, the drop-out problem is more closely related to other factors than the direct cost of schooling (FBS, 2012). In such a situation, provisions such as free tuition fee and free book distribution were some motivation to parents and children but these were not sufficient to catch up all the school age children to continue in primary school (Jnawali, 2010; Manandhar & Sthapit, 2012).

The third type relevancy of school education that people judged was guided by the social norms and values. The school dropout events of *Sahanshila* or *Badhyata*'s sister or *Swikarya* was guided by the double standard adopted for son and daughter adopted by the family. Likewise, none of the sisters of *Sahanshila* had attended above grade seven and both of her sisters got married at the age of 16 and 17. On the other hand, the counterpart of male members of these families had completed school level education or at least grade eight. *Sahanshila*'s elder brother further completed the bachelor degree. The brothers were unmarried even at older age where the sisters were married at the teen age. Thus drop-out problem especially that of girl's is more closely related to view its relevancy from social norms than the factors within the educational system (FBS, 2012; Jnawali, 2012). The community people perceived different values of education for men and women. Thus school dropout was the circular issue of peoples' perception on education and relevance of education to their social life.

School Dropout: Discriminatory Role Assigned to Female

As just discussed, the school dropout of girl children was largely guided by the tradition of discriminatory position and limited social roles assigned to the female were the guiding principles rooted in their dropout decision. Looking for a job in the government service or going abroad for foreign employment were two exposed sectors of employment for the male youths in the community while females were assigned to be limited to household work and family cares. The engagement of *Behosi* and *Swikarya* in household chores, while their brother or husband's engagement in Nepal army or in foreign employment were evidences of discriminatory gender-wise roles ascribed by the society. This phenomenon could be distinctly observed in *Maili*'s discriminating behavior to her son and daughter. She made her best effort to bring her son back

to school and make him complete grade eight whereas she was not much bothered even her daughter decided for school dropout in grade seven.

Because education is valued as a means of an economic gain for the male, they were expected to complete higher grades while social and welfare concerns such as better family care and marriage prospects were associated in case of the female (Boyle et. al, 2002), they could not believe that higher education was essential for them. This was a tacit strategy of the community people to run their life and livelihood. These discriminatory practices against girls were guided by two phenomena. First, daughters were considered as the property of their husbands, so investment by parents in other's property was considered worthless (Bista, 2004). Second, the social role of the female was limited to the engagement in household chores and their traditional occupation and to perform these roles, even the primary level education was sufficient.

Because of the ascribed social role to the female culturally rooted in the community, I realized that *Swikarya* perceived her roles as being limited to the household duty including a restricted mobility (Acharya, 2007). In addition as *Swikarya* was weak in study, she easily accepted the practice of dropout from early grades. But in case of *Behosi*, despite she was brilliant and good in study; she was compelled to take the decision because of community's peoples' indirect pressure. Her continuation of school even after marriage was against the existing social practice. The community people expressed their value system through the backbiting against *Behosi* in public places that was a kind of pressure to keep the culture at status quo. *Behoshi* could not fight against the social norms and decided to dropout from school. This was her strategy to close the lips of those neighbors. Reflecting on *Behosi*'s case, the worldview of community people about the role of a married woman was playing a fundamental role in the school dropout phenomenon. Bista (2004) finds, marriage was considered as bringing a labor

force in husband's house in the community. With such culture, the community people were not easily digesting the issue where a 'daughter-in-law' spends the whole day in school leaving the 'mother-in-law' at work. Due to social and cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes against girl's education, females are much more likely to be limited within household, and confined to traditionally defined roles of unpaid household work and caring child (ILO & CBS, 2008).

The discriminatory values and norms against girls and women were deeply rooted in Nepali culture and society (Bista, 2004). As a result strong prevalence of such values, despite their guardian's motivation, *Swikarya* and *Behosi* were perceived to accept the socially assigned role as the social rule (Acharya, 2007). The events of *Swiakrya* and *Behosi* supported the conclusion of Brown (2012) that marriage at an early age is a destroyer of opportunities and brings several problems for further education.

School Dropout: Lack of Role Models

Two types of trend were distinct in the community. In one hand, there was a practice of joining school at the late age of 7 or 8 years old. On the other hand, marriage at an early age of 15 or 16 was the community practice. This meant, in an average, girls could spend only 7 or 8 years in school. The field observation, interaction with peoples and the cohort study showed that most of the girls were married during the school life or soon after drop out from school. Further, these teen age girls would becoming mothers soon after their marriage. *Behosi and Swikarya* are the examples. Nepal experiences that once married, young girls do not continue school as 'Child marriage is both a cause and consequence of girls dropping out of school.' (MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016, p. 64). Even some girls had completed school level education in the community, their engagement were limited to household chores.

Likewise, there was a practice of marriage at their teen age in case of boys as well. When they got married their financial burden would also escalate. In lack of employment available at local level, going to gulf countries or Malaysia had remained the exposed sector for employment. This was the attraction for male youth and was in increasing trend. These practices were common and popular which was increasingly being adopted as livelihood strategy by the people. Moreover, there was not any academic prerequisite to go to foreign employment. There was no difference between school completers and non completers in terms of nature of job and income. Hence the youth never thought to complete school completers. This showed peoples' acceptance towards change of sending school but at the same time people were resisting the envisioning of the completion of school level education.

Dropping out of school was a common phenomenon in the community and no dropouts expressed their regret for their decision. They would further justify their decision of dropout by giving the examples of their seniors such as Rakesh, Resham and Raj. These three personalities were popular examples among dropouts in the community to undermine the role of education. Resham, even after attending college education, had returned to the village and engaged in the work of alcohol making. Rakesh, after teaching in the school for some years, had gone to a Gulf country for employment. Raj, a college graduate, had sought foreign employment after failing to join Nepal police three times. Thus the lack of role model of educated person in the community was another excuse for the people to discontinue their children from schooling. The life style of these three educated gentlemen was considered very absurd for the community people as education had not helped them anymore. These lifestyles were no more different from the life styles of many other school non-completers where education was no more helpful to pursue their goal to escape from their current way of life (CERSOD, 2010; Groot, 2007).

School Dropout: School Distance to School System

The location of school, especially secondary level (grade nine and ten), at a distance and with geographic difficulties was another vital obstacle to motivate people for school dropout. One of the reasons for *Behosi*, and *Swikarya*'s dropout was the school at distance. Spending long time on the way, risky path through dense forests especially for adolescent girls, more time resource and effort needed for school attendance due to its remoteness were other demotivating conditions to continue school. As Groot (2007) suggests, the physical distance and difficult geography had pushed out many children from school.

Although *Swikarya* described her dropout decision as the acceptance of the existing social values, I reflected the school related factors were equally demotivating her to take the decision of school dropout. Listening to her stories, she never found school as a joyful place. She was attending school just for the interest of her mother. She was poor in class and never understood the classroom teaching well. Usually children do not feel comfortable at school, nor are able to learn at school (Kushiyait, 2007). This is more applicable in case of poor students. As a result, she repeated the grades two times. Because of the unpleasing and burdensome school experience, I guessed that *Swikarya* was always looking for the alternative. Then marriage became an excuse to escape from the disgusting school environment. It was a great excuse for her to escape from the disgusting school showing her additional roles as obstacle for further schooling.

Regarding school related factors, the problem of language was a common hurdle against many children for making the classroom joyfulness. As Jnawali (2010) finds, many children interviewed from this community told that they would fully understand teacher's classroom teaching when they reached to grade three or four. Teacher would teach in Nepali medium and

were not able to communicate the subject matter in the children's mother tongue. The experience of *Sher Bahadur*, a successful businessman of the community, revealed the existing language barrier in the school.

> The first lesson of the school was to teach 'Ka' (the first letter of Nepali alphabet). For this, showing the alphabet 'Ka', the teacher would instruct the children as 'Say Ka'. The children would also repeat the same sound 'Say Ka', rather than 'Ka' alone. If the teacher had said 'Ka *Pango'* ('Pango' means say in *Tamang* language) the children would have said 'Ka'. Instead, the teachers were not able to say 'Ka Pango' whereas the students were not able to understand the instruction 'Say Ka'.

Despite after the practice of Nepali as the medium of instruction for long, most linguistic and ethnic minorities had difficulties expressing themselves in the official language at school (MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016). Although the children did not understand the teachers, they had never had enough courage to ask the teachers to clear their confusions in class. For example, perhaps, the fear of the teacher and shame in front of the friends created *Swikarya*'s silence in the classroom. As a result she was able to understand what her teacher shared only when she was in grade three or four. Other students had also similar bitter experience making them poor in study and finding school as an unpleasing place. The early grades were the critical time to learn basic reading and counting skills where due to the language barrier, she was not able to fully utilize this critical time to learning basic skills. Thus, the lack of children friendly environment and learner's friendly pedagogy were obstacle for the children making them weak in classroom was the hidden component leading to school dropout at some point in future experiencing school as an unpleasing place.

Another problem regarding the school related factors was the mismatched domestic activity and the school calendar. Most of the time, they did not have enough time at home doing schoolwork because they had to work in the field during cropping and harvesting seasons. For example, the first terminal exam was usually scheduled during the month of July which was the season of planting millet while the second term examination was held during the harvesting season of millet. As a result they were not well prepared for either of these exams. As a result, they could not score pass marks in the examination. Failure in exams was another excuse for some parents to pull their children out of school. Such mismatched home-school routine might be another reason for her poorness in classroom performance resulting to classroom distaste.

The HT shared his experience that usually students left school when they failed in examination in the past. Children were afraid of their parents who used to scold them. But in some cases parents, especially fathers, would come to school drunk and had an argument with the school family about their children's failure. Thus, the school had changed their strategy for the retention of children by adopting a liberal promotion system. Now, there was no case of failure in the examination held in the school. A student could complete grade eight in eight years. This was good for the continuation of schooling for all children but it was equally risky that children would regularly get promoted without meeting the minimum standards as curriculum proposed. The school had never launched extra coaching those students who did not meet the minimum standard.

This adverse result of a liberal promotion practices could be seen in grades nine and ten. When the children changed school after grade eight, they found themselves very poor compared to other students. They were not able to grasp the classroom teachings. As a result, the classroom would become an unpleasant place for them. In these grades, children had already entered into

adolescence, failing an exam or ranking last in classroom studies had a psychological implication of humiliation in front of others. This would motivate some children to drop out of school. In this regard I reflect that teacher had understood the CAS (continuous assessment system) not properly. There was never conducted any remedial classes for such students. At the same time, this was the result of indifferent parents and unaccountable teachers where parents hardly visited school and showed their concern to their children's educational performance.

School Dropout: Culture of 'Children at Work'

Listening especially to *Allare's* and some other children's stories, it gave me an impression that the burden of double duty at school and home was making their life unpleasant, disgusting and hard. From the individual interaction, group discussion and observation, I perceived that due to the very nature of agriculture and culture the community engaging their children at work, school children were victimized the whole year, and especially during cropping and harvesting seasons. During the group discussion with in-school children, they shared their disgusting daily life. They said that

Their daily life would start with the early morning. They woke up before six and went to the jungle with our family members to collect *Sottar* and *Syaula* (fodder and forage) for their goats and buffalos. They also brought fire wood as well for making alcohol. It took about three hours to go, collect wood and fodders and come back. But collecting any forest product was illegal so they hide from the security persons of the protected jungle. It became almost nine am in the morning when they got back home. They ate their meal in a hurry in order to reach school on time. Sometimes they cooked food as well in case other family members were working in the field. Again After school, we rushed to their home and ran to the forest to cut at least one bamboo-basket of grass.

Some of their friends went to market early in the morning to sell the alcohol that was prepared at their home. They made secret journey from home to market to escape from police. If the police found them with the alcohol, they spill it over the ground and they were further fined considering it was an illegal activity. Those friends did not have time to return home for lunch. They could have a light meal in a tea-shop and hurried to school.

They did not get much time to do school work at home. They became free only after dinner. At that time, they were exhausted and tired for their study. They did not like such a lifestyle but it was a compulsion. But still, they were struggling for school with the hope that it will bring change in their lifestyle; something which is possible if they get a decent job after school education. They know that only educational certificate is not sufficient to get a job elsewhere. There should be favor of *thulo manchhe* (powerful person) to get a job which they do not have. But still they were struggling with a hope to be favored by good luck.

From the struggle to continue their school education, their traditional occupation seemed as a barrier. By nature, agriculture is a labor intensive occupation and it demands a higher role of human labor and there are some roles for each family member according to their age and capacity. The role of the young children could be in caring for cattle and looking after younger siblings when their parents went to farm. If they were a little bit older, they needed to go to the jungle or help their parents on the farm. So, in Nepal, the majority of working children are associated with the agricultural sector (ILO & CBS, 2008; UCW, 2003) where the parents prefer having their children stay at home and helping the household with domestic or agricultural activities (FBC, 2012). This was the dominant reason for Nepali rural children not to attend school (Boyle et all, 2002).

Children's engagement in agriculture sectors is guided by two things. My observation in the research field showed that agriculture was done in subsistence level which was labor intensive nature and yielded low benefits. Thus, income from agriculture was not adequate to meet family's daily expenses. More than this, engaging children in agriculture was a part of their culture and strategy as well where family was seen as a working unit and every member had some roles and responsibility to make agriculture activities smooth. Comparing with benefits of education, return from agriculture was certain. While talking in the way to the community, one of the parents returning after selling alcohol, shared the traditional Nepali knowledge on comparison between education and work "*Padhe gune kaune kaam, halo jote ahelayi maam*" (Plough guarantees an immediate return while the return from education is uncertain). This was the contextual reality of the place.

Despite agriculture was not a beneficial occupation to give minimum income to run the livelihood, the family was still not able to give up this occupation due to the absence of other alternative employments in the village (Karki, Acharya & Baral, 2014). Engaging in agriculture was essential not only from the livelihood perspective but also from the perspective of the cultural value. The issue of keeping barren land was the matter of inferiority and shame in the community. This cultural phenomenon drove *Kanchha* to plan her daughter's school dropout so that they could shut up the sharp tongue of the neighbors and relatives. Although the school dropout phenomenon seemed household related issue, it was also rooted in their cultural values and the contextual realities (Sabates et. al. 2010).

The double duty of children had brought several adversities to continue their school education. The HT of the school said that children from the army families were distinctly better than children from the agro-based families when it came to schooling. The interaction with some

army families I conceived that the family with father's service in the army would bring several favorable environments to the family. First, there was a regular source of income which reduced their over-engagement in agriculture. Second, it gave more freedom to mothers for better care of their children. On top of these, an army was not only more exposed to the role of education making them more committed for their children's schooling, they could make a good network with the people in power.

Although *Allare* presented his school dropout as a result of a desire to avoid the burdensome duties of household chores and school, I reflect that peoples' culture of entering the job market in adolescence was playing a role for this ultimate decision. From the experience of his father and his expression ("It is the time to search for other work than agriculture"), I understood that it was their tradition from generations to join the labor market at this specific age. From this phenomenon, I also reflect that school was the place where children were sent or engaged with some basic educational expectation and wait till they become adult to enter the labor market. Thus the dropping out phenomenon due to child at work was a cultural issue therefore not necessarily a switch from school to work, but might be a gradual process of disengagement from school (MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016).

From the experience and expression of *Allar*e's father I reflect that the dropout phenomenon was an ordinary and natural event in the community. The father had experienced that he had also left home and visited other places for work at this age. He was more concerned with his son's contribution to his household chores rather than his school dropout. As Kushiyiat (2007) finds it was only the teachers and education officers who are unanimously anxious about the problem of dropout. As *Allare*'s father did, many parents were found indifferent to the dropout of their wards from school and the children were also not afflicted by it. Even his sons

left school without informing him, it was not a serious matter to the father. This made me recall

the observation of one HT of the adjoining primary school who had worked for 33 years in the

school in the community. She shared the characteristics of some parents in the community: "In

this community, parents regard their children as a *'Tharo Bhaisi'* (buffalo that does not to give

milk). Generally, once a buffalo becomes *'Tharo'*, the owner does not mind even if it does not

return to the shed. Generally they leave those *Tharos* in the jungle unless they become pregnant.

It means, there was a culture that rather than being worried about dropout, they look for the

earning from their children when they become able to work.

School Dropout: Unfavorable Home Environment

Reflecting specially the *Bewarise*'s case, I realized that the home environment he faced

was at least not favorable to concentrate his mind on study. The problem of alcohol was one of

the chronic problems in the family where his father was always drunk and quarreled. This family

was not an exceptional case in the community though; one could observe a couple of cases of

drunken adults in the community arguing with each other or lying out unconsciously. *Behosi*'s

mother also blamed her husband's alcoholic attitude responsible for her children's school

dropout and *Behosi*'s early marriage. As Manandhar and Sthapit (2012) claim, only the parents

active engagement in children's educational process ensure the children[s stay in school.

Bewarise's, school absence and frequent change of school might be the result of his father's

negligence. School education for children is almost impossible if their parents do not have

enough interest and provide support and motivation to them (CERESOD, 2010).

From his grievances against his parents, I could see some misunderstanding between

Bewarise and his stepmother. Bewarise expressed that he his mother at the age of 4 and then his

step mother came home with her own two daughters. She was not a good person and this was her

fourth marriage. She discriminated against him mercilessly and his father also supported her. His father usually got drunk and had beaten me several times after listening to his wife. This made him much frustrated and he started to even use Ganja (Marijuana) once because of his loneliness at home. There was no one to share his sorrow. Due to their behavior, he could never concentrate in his study. Further, they expect to go for work and bring earning to them from him. He went to work to meet financial need. Now realized that education would be helpful enjoy a luxurious life in front of them. So now he had again repeated grade nine. he want to show them being an engineer in future.

Bewarise's feeling of partiality between the regard given him and his step sisters, and the ruthless behavior of his step mother along with his father had given rise to a sense of revenge against his parents. This made his mindset as a pendulum. Sometimes he considered education as a weapon to take revenge on his parents by performing something special in front of them, and sometimes he wanted to leave school and get a job to fulfill his personal financial needs. Before coming to school he had joined to work few times for wage earning. This was again his last entry into school after a long gap. But soon, he left school permanently and started to work.

Listening to *Bewarise*, I reflected that the unfavorable environment was responsible for his school dropout phenomenon. In this regard, the parent's determination was a vital component to create a favorable home environment. As *Bewarise*'s father complained, he never got support from his son in household chores. There was a common concept among parents that one needed to complete their house-duties first and then only engage in other work including schoolwork. They had conceived that housework could not keep waiting but studying was possible even after completing the work. This perception had made the parents indifferent and irresponsible behavior (FBC, 2012; Karki, Acharya & Baral, 2014) towards their child's education. Further,

*Bewarise'*s had expected wage earning from his son. Parents prioritize income generation over the rights to education for children (FBS, 2012; Jnawali, 2010,).

The next circumstance, *Bewarise'*s engagement to play with money was a major reason for his dropping out of school. When the children enter the adolescent age, the psychology of the children works as a contributing factor for the dropout in different ways such as attraction to much physical stuff that family cannot provide but they can fulfill those wants if they engage in work (Karki, Acharya & Baral, 2014). So the children can take the decision of a permanent school dropout to fulfill those immediate interests.

School Dropout: Children's and Parent's Personal Characters

The aforementioned six cases showed that school dropout phenomenon was associated with multiple discomforts faced by the people at household and school. In addition, I could see the association between people's specific characters and culture of the community with the dropout phenomenon.

Let me share the story of *Bir Bahadur Lama*, an ex- Indian army of 80 years and a well-known person in the community as *Bir Bahadur baje* (respect to the older male), very different from the others. With rich exposure to the outer world, he was a witness of the community for a couple of decades. He strongly blamed parents and children themselves more responsible for school dropout than the economic structure of the family and community. He shared that he did not believe that it was due to the weak economic condition of the family or their engagement in household chores. The life of children at present was much more luxurious than what it had been in our time. Actually, the main reason for those children's dropping out of school was the result of an immature decision made by the child due to lack of sincerity to education. On top of this, the indifferent attitude with a short sighted view, parents sanction the children's decision. These

people do not know the potentiality of education. If one of them, parents or children, behaved in a mature and responsible way, no child from this community would have to leave school.

The immediate question then would be to explore that how child-related and parents-related characteristics had influenced the school dropout phenomenon. For this, I interacted in a group with in-school children from grade seven and eight. Different ideas were expressed in the discussion from which I draw three common features to the school dropout children: higher age, lower class performance and love affairs. Leaving some exceptions, the dropouts were comparatively older than the other classmates.

Likewise, there was some association between adolescent age, weak performance and marriage. Thus, the age factor was one of the influencing characters of the school dropout phenomenon. When children start school at late age or repeat grades it increases the likelihood of school dropout (Manandhar & Sthapit, 2012). On the basis of the interaction with the children and field observation, I could say that the higher age had several consequences on children creating demotivation to continue school. First, once the children find themselves older than others they find themselves odd in front of the others. In addition, when they find themselves weaker than the other in the study, this feel a sort of humiliation and embarrassment and become the classroom unfriendly and unpleasant for them. The reaction to this situation was more powerful in case of adolescents. Second, when the child enters adolescence, naturally the parental expectation of their engagement in household chores or wage earning activities increases. Not only the parents' expectation increases, the adolescence themselves realize more responsibilities to their family. So, many children continue school until they reach certain age and once become able to work they are taken out of school (Groot, 2007). Third, this age brings several psychological changes on them such as an attraction to the marriage, developing the ego

and attraction to the opposite sex. As a result, the field experiences showed that many adolescents had fallen in love or been engaged in wage earning that had caused their school dropout. In such situation, the failure story of educated person and lack of relevancy of further education experienced in the community was further motivating them to decide for a permanent dropout from school education.

As Manandhar and Sthapit (2012) finds, parents' inactive engagement in the educational process was also responsible to decreases the probability of children's stay in school. Parents visiting school and asking about their children's performance would be a rare case. The school teacher and HT shared their experience that no parents ever came to school to know about their children's performance even when they were invited on the days when exam results were handed out. If the parents forced them to come to school, the mother rather than the father would come. During the 3-4 months of field visit, I never came across with any parents in the school. The parent's day celebration of the year 2016 remained quite ironic. Only two parents participated in the program but both of them were the organizers rather than invitees. One was the PTA chairperson and the other was the SMC chair.

Parents also accepted their less and less school visiting. For many parents, sending their children to school was their only responsibility and that was the best they could do. They laid the rest of the responsibilities of schooling on the school itself. In this regard, *Maili* did not find the parents at fault as she argued, "The parents are illiterate and completely innocent. What is the use of parent's school visit? In such a case how can one blame the parents?" Similarly, *Kanchha* admitted, "I never go to school except at the time of the children's admission. I am illiterate and don't see my any role in the school. Our duty is to send our children to school and the teachers' role is to teach them. ……… I do not see any point in conducting teacher-parents meetings" The

parents were concerned only during their children's enrollment in school as at that time they needed to pay money for admission, books and other stationery. After the enrolment they left their children to their own devices at school. Resham, one of the youths of the community with higher education, thought that the parents were never serious about their children's education, never visited school and were never concerned whether their children were attending school regularly or not. He blamed the parents for the children dropping out of school, "The main reason for school dropout is their parents' indifference attitude towards their schooling. Moreover, they prefer their children to engage in household chores."

There were multiple reasons playing at background for making parents apathy in their children's school. First, unlike *Bir Bahadur Baje*, the community people were having limited exposer to outer world. Due to this background, they were not able to realize the potentiality of education in human life and their own potentiality. In addition, with poor economic condition and lacking network with other people who were in power, the educated youth were also not able to get the benefit of education in terms of better employment and higher income. This failure example of educated person in their community had demotivated them to be active. More than this, there was a distance between school and parents. In one hand, parents were feeling inferior themselves and there was a kind of hierarchy between school and parents. There was no such program in school that would motivate the parents to come to school and engage in children's schooling.

School Dropout: Cultural Aspect of People

Listening to peoples' experience, other components such as the cultural values, and attitude of the community people were equally important about the school dropout phenomenon. *Padam Bahadur*, a reputed person from the same community, shared his evaluation regarding the

lavish culture and some negative attitude of the *Tamang* people that had adverse effect on the children's schooling.

> We, the *Tamang*s simply want to enjoy today and never get worried about tomorrow. Not only are we illiterate and innocent, we are stupid as well. Most of the adult men and women of our community get drunk most of the time and possess an insincere attitude toward their children's studies. In addition, they don't know anything about how to rear and care for their children.

Generally, people work hard today in the hopes of a comfortable life tomorrow. It was just the opposite in the case of the *Tamang* people. "If it was not so, the *Tamang*s would not have sold their land to celebrate marriage ceremonies or death rites", said *Maili* Lama. *Behosi,* one of my school dropout research participants, also agreed with some typical characteristics of the *Tamang* people. She expressed that *Tamang* people are not creative and can't think on their own. They simply copy the others - what their friends and neighbors are doing. If you look at the *Tamang* youth, after finishing school they either try for the police or army or go abroad for labor work. They do not see any other option. These people never use their brain; they simply use their muscles. From the *Behosi*'s devaluation of her own culture, I reflected that they were so dominate by the culture of Brhamin/chhetri that they never gave value to their own culture. This was the example of cultural domination of dominating group.

Likewise, *Sher Bahadur*, a successful business person of the community shared his own bitter life experience. He told that he had left his job simply because of his inherent *Tamang* attitude. "I had a good job in *Nepal Rastra Bank* (Central Bank of Nepal) but left that job just because I did not like having to obey my boss's order all the time." He further highlighted the characters of the community people.

We, the *Tamang*s, value personal freedom and never like being asked to do this and that by others. But in the school system, one needs to work according to the guidance and order of teachers which the *Tamang* children do not like. They liked to enjoy today and never thought about tomorrow. This was one of the reasons why the *Tamang* children's school performance is not good.

The experience of Kanchha, *Badhyata*'s father, also justified this inherent attitude of the *Tamang*s. He had left school in his time for which both his own attitude and the teacher's behavior was responsible:

It was some day of winter of three decades ago. Our teacher was enjoying the sunny day outside while we were asked to stay inside the classroom and do the classwork. I did not like this discrimination and could not tolerate the teacher's behavior. Then I quarreled with him, fought physically him with the help of two other classmates. The consequence was my school dropout from the next day. Now I have shame about that incident and also regret. If I had tolerated my teacher's misconduct, I would certainly complete certain grades. It would certainly help me to get a job in the Nepal Army.

In addition to this, the research participants agreed that the society gave more value to money rather than other benefits of education. People got respect in society based on their economic prosperity rather than for other aspects of their life. A rich person was considered as a successful person of the community and the community had very few examples of people being rich with education. Thus, the role of education for adding other qualities in human life was undermined. People had experienced that education had a limited role for gaining employment and higher income. One of the lady teachers of the school shared her experience about the perception of one of her dropout students.

"I was returning home from school when I met one of my past students who had dropped out after the completion of grade 5. I asked him to join school again. He immediately asked me, "How much do you earn from school?" I told him, "I get Rs. 10,000 each month." He revealed that he was earning 12,000 rupees a month. He would like to demonstrate that he could even earn more without being educated. His expression diverted my mind and I also got confused – whose strategy was right, his or mine?

These interactions with people gave me two ideas of analyzing Tamang culture and schooling. Perhaps, Tamang people in my research site were resisting the existing educational system. First, despite having sound economic background, people had a preference of lavish life style. Their culture of giving high value to money made them to expect more and immediate income from education. The education, on the other hand, by its nature would give benefits only in long term and in multiple aspects of life. Thus, the people in the community had found education as no more means of giving better employment and higher wage. The mismatch between potentiality of education and peoples' expectation from education was motivating people for school dropout. Second, the Tamang people of the community had preferred to enjoy a free environment and did not like any order from the senior. The examples of school dropouts like *Kanchha* or office dropouts like *Sher Bahadur* showed that the existing submissive system was not tolerable for the people. The school system was in a practice of hierarchy between teacher and student envisioning the student as obedient of the system. Thus school dropout was the resistance of the system by people. However some tolerated the system with a hope to get benefit in the long run.

Understanding Major Dynamics of School Dropout Phenomenon: Educational Ceiling

Listening to all stories of dropout and understanding the world view of Tamang people in the research area, I observed almost every parents and children perceived that a certain level of formal education was essential for their life and livelihood which I termed as 'educational ceiling'. This educational ceiling was the major dynamics causing the school dropout phenomenon.

The educational ceiling was set by an individual based on their socio-cultural background. I further unpack components of educational ceiling into parts educational aspiration and capacity to achieve that aspiration. From the experience of dropouts, I reflected that once the children would reach their educational ceiling, they were less interested for further education. They perceived that education above their ceiling was less relevant to their life in relation to the cost they needed to bear for it. As a result, they were demotivated for further education and aggravated for school dropout. Similar to children, I perceived that parents would also dispirit themselves for further investment in their children's education after this point and get less bothered even their children left school after it.

From the interaction with those selected six dropouts and their parents, I conceived three levels of educational ceilings and the decision of dropout was guided by these constructed ceilings. The first was to complete at least primary level of education which would make the children literate in letter and numeracy. The second ceiling was to complete grade eight which would open some opportunities for employment, especially in Nepal Army. The third ceiling was to complete school level education (grade 12) and attain higher education.

The First Ceiling: Basic Literacy

Education was considered essential by all in order to perform the basic function in human's life both at work and household. Every participant expressed the role of education as the 'eye opener'. They share that education is helpful in every aspects of life. However, education for them, as I reflect, was literacy that they perceive as an essential component of daily life. As a result, there was no single school-age child left behind school in the community. In addition to its functional value, literacy was appreciated in the community as a symbol of civilization. Whether a person could write their signature or use finger print was the demarcation of social prestige. So, some adults, especially women, were found joining adult literacy classes even at the age of 30 or 40 or even at the older age. They would feel proud if they were able to write their signature. Further, they had recognized the functional value of basic literacy in their life.

My research participants, *Sahanshila, Behosi* and *Swikarya*, all were school dropouts before attending secondary level education. Although *Sahanshila* and *Behosi* completed grade eight, they never tried for employment outside their community whereas the other male children of the community were, in general, trying to enter the Nepal Army after completion of grade eight or to go abroad for employment. These dropout girls had easily accepted the social role ascribed to female. They made neither complaint nor expressed any regret for their dropout. Moreover, during the interactions, they justified their dropout decision by comparing them with their peers, who had completed school education. There was no difference between them and their peers regarding their daily life and livelihood.

My research participants believed that both male and female got benefit from literacy skills. Female in the research areas mainly performed household chores, agricultural activities and caring their children whereas male tended to work outside of the home. This was the socially

ascribed role to male and female. Thus, parents perceived that the value of education to their daughters was to make literate because they would not face any problem to perform their role in husband's home. Thus, education above the primary level was considered less relevant to the female members of the community. Hence, the parents were not motivated for further investment in the girl's education after they acquired basic literacy skills. Thus the parents did not bother even if their daughter left school in grade six or seven. The dropout girls also understood the role of education in their life accordingly.

The Second Ceiling: Means to Escape from Agriculture

Literacy was necessary but not a sufficient especially for the male members of the community who were supposed to look after the financial aspect as well in the family. This required a regular and reliable source of income to run a family. Thus those people emphasized on employment beyond agriculture occupation to the male members. The people had seen the comparatively better life of the army personal in the village with many merits. The army personnel would get not only the regular salary and pension at retirement with comfortable duties; this was also a symbol of prestige in the community. On the top of this, holding this position was possible for them as well as the grade eight completer could apply for this. Thus, the completion of grade 8 was constructed as the second ceiling in the area.

Maili remained indifferent while her daughter *Swikraya* left school in grade seven, but she was very unhappy when her son left school after grade seven. So, she convinced her son to complete grade 8 with many examples. But he did not listen to her and discontinued school. He went to the city for work. *Maili* had a belief that completion of grade 8 was essential for a male in order to enjoy a different life. Entry to Nepal Army was a commonly exposed area for this. So, she went to HT and requested him to allow her son to give the final exam of grade 8. She said,

"Thank god, HT understood my heart and gave permission to my son to participate in the final exam even he did not attain a single day in grade-eight. My son got the certificate of grade 8". She then sent her son to a house of *Thulo Manchhe* (one senior army officer) to work as a house boy. He worked there for three years and made his landlord happy. As a result, her son became a 'sipahi' (the lowest position in the military service) with the power of that army officer.

Most of the grade eight completers of the community were found, in general, trying first to enter the army service. If it was not possible, then going abroad for employment was their second option. *Badhyata* is the concrete example of it. Actually the people were fed up with their traditional occupation of agriculture and making alcohol. The first occupation was not profitable and very hard full life. Although the people in the community were largely engaged in the second occupation as alternative source of income for their livelihood, it was their compulsion rather than their inner interest. Making alcohol was illegal by law, and they needed to perform this profession hiding from the security person. Thus, education was considered helpful to relieve from these unreliable and unproductive occupations and to shift to a reliable and productive one.

The Third Ceiling: Meaningful Change in Life.

There were few parents, who perceived that higher education, at least grade 12 or Bachelor degree was essential for a meaningful change in their life style. Generally people who were already engaged in some other sector beyond agriculture or returned from foreign employment fall in this category. This was the third educational ceiling which was constructed among few parents in the community.

Resham's father, *Bada Ba* expressed his dissatisfaction towards the parents of the community for their apathy to their children's education, those who paid very less attention to

their children's schooling. "Parents in this community have neither understood the role of education in human life nor are serious about their children's education", he expressed his evaluation about the community people. He opined that parents should facilitate their children, at any cost, to complete at least grade 12 or college education if they really wanted to change their children's life. His commitment to education could be seen in his son's case. He had sent *Resham* up to college even by keeping him in a rented room in a city area. It was in fact needed a high investment to send the children to college education. Thus he had sacrificed a high opportunity cost with a hope that it would bring a higher return in future. His investment in *Resham*'s education was guided by his high value to education to make the life of a person meaningful.

Because, I found his perception very different from other parents I ever met in the community, I further explored his life experience. I was curious to know that even having similar socio cultural environment how it was possible to have such different understanding on him. Actually, he was a pension holder of the Nepal Army. Even after his retirement, he was working as a guard in some company. After digging out his knowledge construction, I was conceived that he had seen the decent life of senior army officers who were possessed power, prestige and prosperity. In order to get that position, grade 12 was a prerequisite.

The people who had aspiration of some position above than the '*sipahi*' or the people who had gone to Gulf countries for work were found giving more value to education and having the third level educational ceiling. The *'sipahi'* had seen the comfortable life of army officers. In addition to having many problems with their low education, the immigrant workers were experienced with the high potentiality of education regarding good earning and prestigious job in the Gulf countries. Thus for those people education was a means of earning everything in life:

power, prestige and property. However, many people with such understanding were already migrated from the community to urban areas. One of the reasons for their migration was to assess quality education for their children.

Qualitative Constituents for Ceiling Construction

The educational ceiling was constructiedby certain social values peoples' life experience, exposure to outer world, and their economic condition. However these three components were again related with each other.

Social values. The different educational ceiling for the male and female member of the community was constructed according to the different social roles ascribed to them. The first educational ceiling - 'education for literacy' was socially constituted for the female as they were socially given limited role of giving birth to children and running household chores and agriculture in their husband's house. So, neither the parents nor the female children were highly worried even if the girls left school at grade six or seven. Likewise, the second educational ceiling – school education of grade 8 was constructed for male members as they were socially assigned to go outside for work and manage the financial aspect needed for the family.

Life experience and exposure. Depending upon the nature of occupation, people endowed with different life experience and level of exposure to outer world. Thus, people found giving high a value to those specific problems which they had faced in their occupational lives due to lack of education. The lack of reading and writing skill was a great pain for the illiterate parents in different ways. So, for illiterate parents, their prime educational aspiration was to make their children at least literate. Likewise, most of the people engaged in agriculture or alcohol business were compelled to work hard even at the old age and considered that lack of reliable and regular income job was the result of their educational inadequacy. For those parents,

educational aspiration was to secure employment for their children outside the traditional agriculture through education. Thus, they were constituted of second level of educational ceiling with a hope that employment opportunity in other sector than agriculture helps to escape from the burdensome occupation of agriculture. Similarly, the parents who were experienced with foreign employment or junior level staff in other services were constituted of third level educational ceiling - higher level of education. In such cases, their educational aspiration was to bring about meaningful change in life earning power, prestige and property. These people had a realization that they would get better position and salary if they were well educated. These different level of ceilings constructed among these people was constructed, in addition to their experience, due to the greater exposed to the outer world realizing the wider potentiality of education.

Economic condition. Just thinking was not sufficient to materialize the educational sufficient, a sound financial capacity was also inevitable to complete school level education. This was so, there were some examples of economically better off families in the community who had higher educational ceiling and their children had attended higher level of education, although the parents were illiterate. In comparison to the farmer, the parents who were engaged in the government service or in own restaurant business endowed higher, reliable and regular source of income.

Evolution of Ceiling: 'No School' to 'Yes School'

Historically, the development initiations of 1950s and 60s created white and blue color jobs in Nepal rapidly and many educated persons then entered to government jobs (Bista, 1991). This phenomenon constructed a kind of meaning to education to people that schooling meant occupational mobility from their traditional type of manual and hard physical work to non-

manual and easy table work in civil service (Shrestha, 1998). The same perceived value of education, as a tool of shifting from the laborious occupation, primarily agriculture to more comfortable ones – generally joining to Nepal army, is functional in my research site at present. These jobs were not only easier than the agriculture and animal husbandry; it was also the symbol of power and prestige (Bista, 1991).

There was a gradual raise in the educational ceiling in the last 50 years in the community. Around 50 years, the case of school attending childe was rare while at present, no single school age child was left in the community behind school. The interaction with the research participants gave a sense that a common concept among those people had been established without any arguments that education is 'must' for their children as an essential component of life. The notion of free and compulsory education was a provision made in Nepali constitution 2015 as adapting the premise of right based education (UNESCO, 1999).

Historically, this *Tamang* community relied on subsistence agriculture, cutting wood and selling it in the nearest market was their daily round to make money for their livelihood. In addition to this, the male members were found visiting the adjoining villages for labor work in the agriculture sector. So, they perceived education then as totally irrelevant to their occupation and livelihood. Then those people believed that school was made and created for the other castes such as the Brahmans and Chhetris. *Tamang* community had some connections with the '*Pipa Goshwara*' section - the special section with major functions for cutting down trees at the road side and supplying of the timber, of the Nepal Army. As the *Tamang* people were expert in cutting trees, there was a tradition of hiring these people in that section of the army. As a result, some *Tamang* people of this community and their relatives from the other part of the country were found working as "*Pipa*". As the nature of the work, no educational degree was needed to

join this service in the beginning. It made people never feel the need of education and so practiced the concept of 'No school' for a long time.

Along with time, a big change occurred both in demand and supply side of the system. In supply side, two distinct structural changes were responsible to change peoples concept from 'no school' to 'yes school'. First, as a global educational agenda and various efforts in line with free and compulsory primary education, EFA and MDG, the state became more offensive to bring more children to school by setting up new schools, and implementing various policy provisions such as enrollment campaign and scholarship programs. These initiations were ultimately bringing some structural change in school. The school was upgraded from primary to secondary level. The supply had encouraged people to upgrade their ceiling. Second, the gradual rise in educational prerequisite for the government service also compelled the people to rise their educational ceiling. Those people who could enter in '*Pipa*' and '*Sipahi*' earlier even they were illiterate, it became prerequisite of reading and writing ability. Now only grade 8 completers can apply for the post. The people of the area think that SLC will be the prerequisite for the position soon. Thus, the educational ceiling was also gradually rising according to the changes seen in structure.

On the demand side, the basic literacy in letter reading and numeracy skill was felt necessary not only for other service, but for also the housewives in household chores. They thought reading, writing and basic numeracy could add some value to their life. But in lack of those basic literacy skills, they faced with several problems. This could be understood from their life experience expressed during the interaction with them. The parents who had not got any opportunity to go to school in their time or those who were never been to school expressed that these were the exact reasons why they sent their children to school. This gave them the

realization of role of education in their life and it also motivated them to send their children to school. Likewise, in the later phase, the youth who had been to Gulf for labor work had also similar bitter experience caused by the lack of their education. The need for schooling than gradually became the peoples' realization in the community as their lifestyle changed from traditional to modern one.

The rise in educational ceiling was based not only on their needs but also due to the exposure to the outer world. Due to the fast growth of the media and communication now it was possible to know wider world. With the access of the radio and television, people in the community are aware about human progress through education. In addition to this, the mobility of people has increased. The people have seen different parts of the world. One of the lady teachers of the local school thought that the peoples' increasing awareness about education was all due to the radio and television. She further elaborated that as the people heard about the success story of people due to education, they also wished for similar things to happen to their children. This phenomenon enhanced their cultural capital which in turn changed their habitus. All these changes brought the practice of the community- from 'no school' to 'yes school' but yet to be developed from basic level education to 'higher education'.

Recapping the Field Engagement

Listening to all dropout stories and understanding the world view of people in the community, I reflected that almost every parents and children had given some value to education. They believed that a certain level of formal education was essential for their life with a hope to enjoy a more comfortable life after getting formal school education. The educational aspiration developed as result people's life experience, exposure to outer world, valuing the social values, their economic condition would construct an 'educational ceiling' among every individual. Thus

every child was necessarily enrolled in school and in the community and continued unless the ceiling was reached.

But with gradually upgrade to higher grades, both children and parents would experience different discomforts to continue school. The school dropouts felt discomforts both at classroom and household which had made the daily life of in-school children tough. The compulsory duty of household chores had left school attainment as an optional activity. The parents felt burden of financial management. The increasing opportunity cost had made the higher grades more costly to attain. Thus after realizing their educational ceiling, they would see the relevance of further education. In lack of successful role models of educated person in the community and experiencing the outcome of education not meeting their need of higher income and better employment, people would find further education as simply waste of time, money and effort.

All these phenomena would bring them into a dilemma to continue school. On this background, when they faced with new unfavorable event and need a greater effort to tackle it, they would take the ultimate decision of dropout. Thus, dropout was the immediate relief from the various pains experienced by parents and children in household and or school.

CHAPTER VI

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN PHENOMENON: TENSION BETWEEN ANTICIPATED

GAIN AND APPREHENDED PAIN

Chapter IV presented the macro level picture of out-of-school situation in Nepal by assessing its intensity and distribution in terms of location, gender, age, and caste/ethnicity of people. In addition, the chapter explored the quantitative relationship of OOS events with various OOS contributing factors. Then, in Chapter V, I chose some school dropout events, and presented peoples' world views on dropout and interpreted the meaning of school dropout phenomenon at micro level. In the present chapter, I synthesized those qualitative and quantitative themes and made interpretation for a holistic understanding about the school dropout phenomenon. This includes the process and constituents of school dropout decision.

In this regard, this chapter first describes the role and explanation of the major factors of OOS for making in-school children to out-of-school. This is done based on the experience of school dropouts and their parents. Then it discusses the school dropout process right from the beginning of the children's entry to school; their experience inside the school and; the circumstances they faced in school and household during their school life; and the discomfort experience of children and their parents to interact school and community. Likewise it also discusses the major concern of children and parent in the process of decision making of dropout. Finally the school dropout phenomenon is discussed in the line of some development and sociological theories.

Increasing Anticipation from School Education

Both the national census data and ethnographic field work show that people's attraction to school education is gradually increasing in the country. The country experienced almost one percent annual increment in literacy rate in the last sixty years and so does the similar improvement in net enrolment rate in primary level education (CBS, 2012; MoE, 2016b). The national literacy rate of the country in early 1950s was around 2 percent (MoE, 2009). I do agree with the national data because the parents of the school children are almost illiterate. The people from the last generation (above 40-50 years old) were rarely attended to school while at present there is a rare case of 'never-school-attended' children in the community.

This change might be the result of improvement in both demand and supply sides of mass schooling system. As a supply side, the vision of universal primary education (Nepal National Education Commission [NNEC], 1954; Overall National Education Commission [ONEC], 1962) and making primary education free with the provisions of scholarships for the disadvantaged and backward people's education (National Education Sector Plan [NESP], 1971-76) depict national interest and attempts were made over the period. Likewise, with the policy of inclusive and equity based education, the country has continuously attempted to ensure access of weaker section of population such as women, indigenous nationalities, *madhesi, dalit*, and children with disability to education (DoE, 2014; NPC, 2016). For this, global movements such as EFA, MDG and SDGs have also put on considerable pressure to the governments to meet the target of educating all. As a result, in 20 years, from 1990 to 2010, the government established 10,000 new primary schools in the country, on the average 500 schools per year (MoE & UNESCO, 2014). Various awareness campaigns and capacity building programs were launched

that were helpful to orient parents to bring their children to school. This had made education more accessible to people.

On the demand side, people have seen historically the easy access of educated persons especially in the government job and the government job in general not only comfortable job in comparison to traditional agriculture but also carries a symbol of power and prestige (Bista, 1991) in the society. Such attraction to education is very distinct and visible in my research site. The job of Nepal Army was the commonly exposed sector to the Tamang people in my research site which was understood as a panacea for their daily problem. Thus, one of the objectives of attending school, especially for boys, was to enter to Nepal Army after completing the educational prerequisite for the position.

Widely spreading access to the media such as radio, television in the community also appealed community people to go to school. These media played vital role to spread the information showing the value of education. These media might have tempted people to enroll their children to school but these media hardly played role for the retention of the students. Similar to other disadvantaged group of population of Nepal, the ethnic community of my research cite hardly perceived the role of education at past and they never considered education as their priority area. But with changing context, the same community now has understood education as an eye opener and helpful in every aspect of their life.

Perhaps, these ethic community people might be affected from the mass schooling. The concept 'mass schooling', an approach started in Europe during industrialization (Boli, Ramirez & Mayer, 1985), implemented by state for a long time was successful to shape the attitude and behavior of people to sending their children necessarily to school. Thus, parents were guided by the hegemonic concept (Hicks, 2004) of 'all children should go to school'. This practice made me

conceive the concept of schooling as a 'cultural hegemony' prevailed in the society. As Gramsci viewed (Lule, 1995), the culture of schooling has been developed as a 'superstructure' in the community which was being developed as an ideology of development prevailing in the larger society rather than any coercion made by the state. Sending children to school without any question has been already established as a social norm and 'common sense' in the community (Stoddart, 2007).

Some parents were guided, at least theoretically, by the structural functionalists' and capitalists' view of school that such schooling benefits individuals (Ritzer, 2000; Stash & Hannum, 2009) in future role, especially to get employment in the market with non-agricultural occupation. Perhaps, my research participants believe that education is considered as a potential vehicle for escaping from the traditional agriculture sector and a means to relieved from the 'intergenerational cycle of poverty' (Boyle, Brock, Mace & Sibbons, 2002), these people have yet to experience this potentiality of education in the community.

Theoretically, education is perceived as both means and ends of development (NESAC, 1998) and the benefit transcends from economic benefits to social benefits (Haq & Haq, 1998). Unlike these theoretical claims, people from this ethnic community have found the role of school education limited to making them literate in letter and numeracy skills rather than a means to develop human capital with increasing their productivity. The economically poor people like my research participants were neither able to make invest nor to take risk for investing in higher education. Further, the community people in the research area experienced that in lack of good network with power, simply acquiring certain level of education was not sufficient to get employment in non-agricultural sector. In this context, I question the value of education as my research participants had not obtained the successful results of acquiring better employment or a

higher social status. In this context, I was skeptical with the notion of human capability concepts of education such as a means to enhancement of peoples' capabilities (Sen, 1999), enjoy the 'real freedom' (Alkira & Deneulin, 2009) or to choose the lives that people reason to value (Walker & Utterhalter, 2007). This was the reason why majority of the children dropouts before completing school level education. They were experienced only with the basic function of education being literate in letter and numeracy.

In such context, I generated meaning that people hardly got benefits from school education in the community because of the incompatibility between the existing education system and their socio economic context. People engaged in the less productive traditional sector of agriculture and they had searched for alternative occupations by getting school education. But the school education aims to prepare children for higher education, beyond making children literate. School education hardly focused on the vocational skills which prepared them to get job in the market. In this sense, I argue like critical pedagogue that the school education hardly beneficial for the *Tamang* people as Boli, Ramirej & Mayer, (1985) believed that education missed dealing with particular local problems and the need of any specific group (Boli, Ramirej & Mayer, 1985). Thus, schooling after certain grades seemed futile for these people. This is the reason for children's low participation in schools and early school leaving (Parajuli, 2015). Hence, though every parent had perceived the phenomenon of sending their children to school as an inevitable action, many of them dropped out their children from school as a resistance to the existing school system. In this sense I found Giroux (1984) claim appropriate who believes schools are not one-sided determinism, these are sites of action and structure where people negotiate, contradict and forge identities.

Players of School Dropout

As South, Haynie and Boss (2007) believed the decision on dropout depends on five major things: a) the academic performance and school engagement, b) parent–child relationship characteristics, c) peer social networks, d) psychological well-being, e) mobility at the school level. Beyond these influencing factors, I was quite curious to identify the contextual players of school dropout phenomenon. Thus, I discussed with people keeping two concerns in my mind: who had really taken the decisions, and who other people had influenced them in their decision making process of drop out the school.

Decision Makers

The interaction with people and experience of people showed that it was entire parents' decision for sending the children to school. As the children were too young to decide on their own at the time of school entry, they were simply the followers of their parents' wish. Unlike the school entry, children had some or entire stake in the school dropout decision. Depending upon the cases, both children and parents in consultation or simply one of them could take the decision of dropout. Out of six cases, both dropouts and parents, in consultation, decided for dropout in case of *Badhyata*. However, *Swikarya*, and *Behosi* decided on their own despite their parents were not happy with their decision. But in case of *Bewarise* and *Allare'*s decision, their parents remained indifferent and they accepted their children's decision with some reservation. In these later cases, although the decision seemed independent choice of the children, the parents' acceptance with reservation or apathy meant that this was directly or indirectly shared with them. Thus, without parent's green signal it was difficult for the children to materialize the decision of drop out from school.

Sahanshila's case was different from other five cases, where despite her keen interest to continue school; her father forced her to leave school and she accepted her father's decision. *Sahanshila*'s acceptance of her father's decision made me recall the Nepalese tradition that females are always controlled by males. Girls are controlled by their father before marriage while they get controlled by their husband during their married life. Even after the death of the husband, a mother is controlled by her sons. *Shanshila*'s inability to speak against her father revealed the deeply rooted discriminatory values and norms against female in Nepali culture and society (Bista, 2004). In the same house, the parents were not able to govern the sons who were not helping in household chores even they were not employed elsewhere. School education of children in Nepal mostly depends upon their parents' interest and it is simply impossible in lack of parental support and motivation (CERESOD, 2010).

Analyzing the relation between the children and the parents regarding the children's school dropout decision, I saw an existence of an authoritarian and negligent attitude rather than the authoritative and permissive attitudes of the parents. Both the authoritarian and neglectful characters of the parents had some roles for the children's school dropout. According to Holloway & Jonas (2016), these parents were the authoritarian parents who considered their thought as the ultimate truth and they compelled to their children to accept their values where they intended to save the existing structure. As an authoritarian parent, *Shanashila*'s father forced her to dropout in order to engage her in household chores. On the other hand, the sons of the same family were roaming around the city in search of other employment opportunities without helping in household chores. Thus, the father's action was guided by the existing structure of the society who was unable to pursue beyond the roles of the male and the female ascribed by the society. Likewise, the negligent character towards their children was largely

prevailed among many parents. I discuss the dynamics of neglectful behavior of parents in the following sections.

Motivators

A child's admission to school was the starting point of the OOS/dropout phenomenon and the decision of leaving the school was the end point. Between these two end points, the dropouts and their parents would make a lot of interaction with other people of that community. Among them, some had meaningful influenced the mindset of the decision makers. Those influencing people included from the school teachers to the role model of the community plus relatives, neighbors and peers. The school dropout was a common phenomenon and the example of their relatives and neighbors had made it a common event. Especially the presence of educated unemployed or educated people engaged in the traditional sector had provided the strong motivation to discontinue school. Just reverse to this, the people who were able to earn money without attaining even school education were also motivators for school dropout. Interestingly, the teacher's counseling to complete grade eight and enter into Nepal Army was actually motivating the children to leave school after grade eight.

Among those motivators, the role of peer had a greater impact. Although, the shift of engagement from school as a student to job market as a *khalasi* was already an exposed sector in the community and same for *Allare*, he was looking for the appropriate time to drop out the school. At this critical juncture, meeting with the village retuning *khalasi* as a pear was much influential (Groot, 2007) to take immediate decision who motivated *Allare* to materialize his long term strategy. This phenomenon was also guided by the child psychology that generally, children want to stay with their peers and have similar engagement (Wagle, 2012). This was also the result of psychology of adolescence (Karki, Acharya & Baral, 2014). Generally, the adolescents

have attraction and desire to stuff but the family is not able to provide such demands. But at the same time they find that they can earn themselves if engaged in the labor market. In such a situation, school dropout becomes a panacea for them.

Among those influencing personalities, some had immediate and some had long term influence on the decision maker's decision. *Behosi*'s school dropout decision due to her backbiting by the neighbors or *Allare*'s decision due to the influence of another *Khalasi*, was the immediate influence of agent. Similarly, educated females engaged in household chores and unemployed educated males engaged in the traditional sector or those been abroad for employment were other influencing who had influenced the mindset decision makers in a long run. These people acted as role models for all those dropout cases.

Factors, Circumstances and School Dropout Decision

To understanding the OOSC phenomenon in a meaningful way, simply knowing whether any factors do or do not contribute is not sufficient. It needs to analyze the scope and implication of the contributing factors in peoples' life. So, in this regard, I made interactions with research participants along with field observations. Like quantitative findings, the qualitative exploration also revealed that multiple unfavorable circumstances experienced by people are responsible for the school dropout. However, people consider only the immediate discomfort they face during the time of dropout decision as the major reason for their dropout. In fact, there were a number of other unfavorable circumstances that had worked in the background to create a solid platform for the ultimate decision of dropout. Actually, the contributing factors faced by people and circumstances perceived by those factors in combine would construct a different dynamics that was the major reason for school dropout. This section discusses the scope of those contributing

factors, the enabling circumstances and finally the major forces of the school dropout phenomenon.

Role of Contributing Factors

The reviewed literature in national and international reveals a number of factors within school, family and communities determine that whether a child dropouts or not from school (, FBC, 2012; Hunt, 2008; Rumberger, 2008; TESON, 2004). The statistical analysis done between educational background of the students (ISC or OOSC) and their socio economic background in Nepal also verifies those findings and shows the significant correlation between various factors and OOSC/ISC status in Nepal. It means OOSC was, globally, the result of multiple factors where each factor does have some contribution to it. The results of the quantitative analysis done on the national level data reveal three notions regarding the relation between OOSC phenomena and its contributing factors in Nepal.

First, the statistical relation between OOSC and these contributing factors are significant but with low values of correlation coefficients. The low values of correlation coefficient imply that there exist weak relationship between OOSC/ISC status and those individual factors which further indicates that the contribution of individual factor is minimal. For example, the value of the correlation coefficient between the educational status and the economic condition (below or above poverty line) and with the family consumption quintile (which are the proxy indicators of poverty status) are merely 0.14 and 0.18 respectively while many literatures suggest the poor economic condition as the major reason for making a child out-of-school. Similarly, the low value of correlation coefficients (0.24 in case of father's education and 0.28 for mother's education) between the educational status and parents education (proxy indicators for parents' awareness) also reveals that these factors affect minimally for children being out of school.

Whilst the second most highlighted reason for OOSC is lack of the awareness among the parents. Thus, although these factors are significant, their contribution is not as large as suggested by different research studies. No single factor completely account for dropout decision where there are number of salient factors that influence the decision (Rumberger, 2008).

Second, the logistic regression between the educational background and the 12 significant factors of OOSC (which are commonly identified by literature as major contributing factors such as gender, ethnicity, educational status of parents, economic condition, place of residence, age etc.) gives a very low value of coefficient of determination (Nagelkerke R Square =0.18) which indicates that the total contribution of all these major contributing factors in OOSC event is simply 18 percent. So, more than 80 percent of contribution in OOSC remains quantitatively unexplained. It means either there are some other variables which are still not captured by earlier research studies or the school dropout is more a subjective phenomenon where more weightage falls under the perception of the people rather than these objectively determined variables associated with the dropout children.

Third, the crosstab between the different contributing factors and educational background shows that there is a higher prevalence of OOSC among economically poor families than the rich, more in marginalized caste groups than others, more to the family with higher family size than the lower, and the children of illiterate parents than those literate. But, certain group of people having one favorable character for out of school phenomenon also possesses other characteristics of OOSC. For example, a child from an economically poor family belongs to a marginalized family where there is a large family size and the parents are illiterate. So there is a 'multicolinearity' problem between different factors. Thus it is difficult to say which factor is major and which is minor. All these factors might have influence on the OOSC decision with a

synergetic effect which motivates the individual with greater power and this subjective

phenomenon is not possible to determine quantitatively. Moreover, is difficult to assess

quantitatively the enabling factors from the trigger one for the ultimate decision of OOSC. Thus

simply the statistical analysis of looking the relationship between the contributing factors to the

OOSC event is not sufficient to understand the phenomenon. It demands to see the scope of

those contributing factors. The following paragraphs discusses the scope of some major OOSC

contributing factors

Both the literature and field findings show the multiple factors were responsible for OOS

event where people considered some factors were more influential than the others. As earlier

research studies revealed the role of parents and economic condition of the family as two major

contributing factors, the qualitative findings also revealed the same. But this qualitative research

remained more helpful to explore the multiple implications of these factors in creating

unfavorable circumstances and motivating for dropout. In addition, the ethnographic cases

revealed the age factor as another important factor that has the wider implication in the school

dropout phenomenon. The subsequent paragraphs discussed the dynamics of these three

important factors in the school dropout phenomenon.

Economic condition. Almost all literature and earlier research studies revealed that the

poor economic condition or poverty of the family as the major reason for pushing out children

from school or blocking them to enter into the school. The statistical analysis of national data

conducted by this research also verified the fact showing the significant association between

economic condition and OOSC prevalence. The intensity of OOSC among the population below

the poverty line has almost three times higher than among the population above poverty line.

Likewise, the prevalence of OOSC among the population belonging to the bottom quintile is

seven times higher than the population belonging to top quintile per capita consumption. However the correlation value between economic condition and the educational background (OOSC/ISC) was very weak. This implies that even though the economic condition is one of the determinants of the educational background it is not the major contributor as it is generally understood.

Despite the school dropouts and their parents perceived their poor economic condition as the major reason for school dropout, they shared many other unfavorable circumstances as well, implicitly or explicitly, demotivating them to continue school. Actually, all those circumstances in combination would create a background for the ultimate decision of school dropout where people find the financial aspect as the leading cause.

There were some logics for considering economic condition as major factor for OOS phenomenon. The statistical analysis also showed that the prevalence of OOSC was higher among the rural residents than the urban residents; a large family size than a smaller family size; the marginalized caste/ethnic population than the higher caste; and illiterate parents than the literate one. It means these other factors were also the determinants of OOS event. Interestingly there was a significant correlation between these other OOS contributing factors and the economic condition of the people. It meant, in general, the families residing in rural area were poorer than those residing in the urban area; families living in a larger were poorer than small size of families; the marginalized caste/ethnic people were poorer than the high caste people and the illiterate parents were poorer than the literate ones. More than this, the farmers were poorer than the people with other occupation whereas the agriculture was the major occupation of rural people. Thus the poor economic condition of a family was the composite form of many other features which creates unfavorable situation to continue school. Since, poverty was a convincing

factor to perceive as well as to communicate with others, the poverty was noted in every literature as the major contributing factor of OOSC.

The statement 'school dropout is the result of poverty' is generally a misled the notion of poverty because poverty is the multidimensional aspect which could be better presented via qualitative approach. First, various characters associated with poor economic households faces multiple inconveniences to send their children to school. Hence, the sum of all factors associated with poor economic condition of a family generates a synergic effect to make the circumstances much more unfavorable to schooling for the poor families. Second, the cost of schooling carries an absolute value, the burden of same cost levied relatively higher sacrifices to the poor families in comparison to rich families. Since the level of sacrifice to invest in education becomes higher to poor family in comparison to an economically better family, the same cost of schooling becomes expensive to the poor family. This is something like an investing in business by taking loan in a higher rate of interest. Further the burden of cost in an investment depends upon the level of utility that is expected in future. Thus the poor households find the cost of secondary education considerably higher than that of primary education. Hence, they don't find the sacrifice needed for continuing school justifiable in terms of benefits brought to the household (Boyle, Brock, Mace & Sibbons, 2002)

Likewise, survival is the prime concern of poor families whereas education is the matter of investment for the future profit. So, the poor families adopt the strategy of 'one bird in hand to two birds in bush' where, it is feasible to take risk for only the economically better families, who can manage finance more comfortably. This is something like a investment in a share market where only the rich families can invest where the return is not confirmed. Thus, even the financial return is not confirmed, the rich families make invest with a hope of alternative

benefits. Even they did not get economic benefits, they take educational return in terms of the social value of prestige and honor. But in the case of the poor families, first it is difficult to manage finance for investment. Second, they cannot take risk of their investment as it does not guarantee an economic benefit. Third, only the educational qualification is not sufficient to get better employment and more income. A good social network with power is needed which the poor families do lack. Because of all these dynamics of poor economic condition, the poor families possess smaller risk taking capacities and find the education less relevant to investment. This condition increases the probability of school dropout to the poor families.

Parents' engagement. Boyle, Brock, Mace & Sibbons (2002) argues that many children do not attend school because their parents do not value education, particularly the secondary education. Similar to Boyle et all (2002), point out lack of awareness among parents as one of the major OOSC factors. But, it is difficult to define and measure the awareness level quantitatively. However, illiterate parents are generally considered unaware about the role of education and also less committed to their children's education in the research area. Field observation also showed that that the higher the educational status of the parents made the higher level exposure to the outer world and thus they pursued with the wider role of education in human life.

The result of the statistical analysis of this research also verified the association of parents' education and OOSC prevalence. The intensity of OOSC among the children whose fathers were illiterate was almost thirteen times higher than the children with father having education above SLC. Likewise, there was not a single OOSC prevalence at all in the case that the mother was an SLC graduate. Despite the significant relationship between the children's educational background and parent's educational level, the low value of the correlation

coefficients shows a very weak relationship between these two variables. This implies that as OOS event is the result of multiple factors, even the parents' education was one of the determinants; its contribution to the children's educational background was not high.

The statistical analysis also shows a statistically significant association between the illiteracy of the parents with a few other hindering factors for OOSC. Illiterate parents were mainly from poor economic strata and from socially disadvantaged cast/ethnic population, rural residence and so on. However, it is difficult to confirm the relationship between illiteracy and OOS event that whether the result was due to the illiteracy or other characteristics associated with illiterate parents.

But when the relationship between parents' illiteracy and the children's educational background is analyzed qualitatively, several implications for illiterate parents are found as contributing to OOSC. The field engagement revealed the ground reality that how the children with illiterate parent faced several unfavorable circumstances regarding their schooling. First, illiterate parents perceived themselves as inferior persons while dealing with a school related issues. As a result they hardly visited to school as they think that they were incapable of discussing their children's study. Likewise, those parents were not in a position to help in the children's education at home. These circumstances made them less engaged with their children's education resulting their children as a weak performer.

In the same way, as the illiterate parents involved in agriculture, the children needed to engage in the same occupation and household chores necessarily. Due to the low productivity of their occupation, the illiterate parents from poor economic strata adopted the survival as the priority of their life strategy. Additionally, the illiterate parent meant they were from poor economic household and poor economic household meant lack of good network with other

people who were in power. It indicates that the family with illiterate parents possessed the lower

level of economic, social and cultural capital endowment. In absences of those capitals, the

children find the school more unfavorable field for struggle who finds school as unpleasing place

and education after certain grades irrelevant to their life.

As a result when the children entered into adolescence stage they became able to decide

on their own, they looked for other options for their engagement which would relieve them from

these unpleasing places. At this very critical juncture, the role of the parents was very important.

If the parents were committed for their children's education, the children were compelled to

continue school but this generally lacked in the case of uneducated parents due to multiple

implication of their illiterate status. Thus, with such adverse circumstances, the parents either

forced to drop out their children themselves or they remained indifferent or support silently when

their children decided for dropping out. Thus as claimed by earlier research (Boyle et all, 2002;

Kushiyait, 2007)) that parents do not value education or posses lack of awareness, the school

dropout decision is the situational analysis of those illiterate parents to be outside of school who

are also posses the poor economic condition and disadvantaged social position.

Children's age factor. Both NLSS and population census data revealed a sharp increase

in the school dropout rate in the country after the age of 13. As the statistical analysis revealed,

the dropout rate increased at a galloping rate at each successive age after 13. The 8 percent

dropout rate among the children of 13 increased to 12 percent, 18 percent respectively among the

children of 14, 15 (CBS, 2011). Moreover, 25 percent among the children of age 16 were

dropped out from school system. The ethnographic cases further substantiate that children start to

leaving school when they enter adolescent. The cohort study conducted in the field also showed s

a substantial number of children leaving school at the age of 16 or 17. Thus, as revealed by both

the quantitative and the qualitative data, that the intensity of school dropout was severe during adolescence, it should have meaningful dynamics about the school dropout phenomenon.

Ethnographic cases revealed that as the children grew older, they started gradually responding more to their environment: school, home and the larger society. The first response was toward school. Due to weak class performance, many children would find the schooling painful and school as a place of distaste and burdensome. In case of weak performance, the students would get at least scolding from their teacher even the class was not repeated due to failing in final exam. They felt shame in front of their friends and feeling guilty about themselves. Moreover, at adolescence, teacher's scolding or poor ranking in classroom was more painful in front of the opposite sex and against their ego.

Likewise, the children soon entering into their adolescent age also would feel more responsible towards their family - parents and home. There was a culture of the community that when the children grew older, they needed to support their parents either by engaging in household chores or by generating income from labor. Thus, naturally their parents would expect more from them at this age. The acceptance of decision of dropouts either to help in paying back the family loan, or helping in household chores, was guided by this principle.

As a response to larger society, children would also start analyzing the cost and benefit of school education and its relevance to their own life. They further analyzed to social and psychological aspects of going and not going to school. So at this age, they would find very little relevance of school education to their life which is manifested among the dropouts in during the field work. These people hardly see the tangible advantages of completing school education which neither differentiate the livelihood of school completers and non-completers in the community. Thus, the adolescent age people would perceived that the limited role of education

in finding a job and making income. They take further education more costly as compared to the benefits.

Moreover, adolescent age is also the age of attraction to fashionable stuff, and the opposite sex. On one hand, the parents were not in a position to meet the wish of fashionable stuff. On the other hand, adolescences would they find themselves able to earn money to meet these immediate needs. The parallel engagement in some wage earning activities had made them able to appropriate the earning to fulfill their heir material needs or interests. Thus, engaging in earning had gradually made them less interested in study leading to a permanent dropout.

Adolescence is equally critical age because it browses the adolescents' interest in the opposite sex which brings a psychological implication leading to love affair. This was much noticeable events in my filed where many school children eloped with their boyfriends/girlfriends at the age of 16 or 17 or even at a younger age. Again, their parents' indifference attitude to their decision to flee in early age was helpful to sanction their decision. Again, it was almost impossible to continue school after marriage.

Adolescents thought that they were old enough to decide on their own to drop out. The parents in my research site perceived when their children entered the adolescence they could manage their on their own. This was what they were experienced with their own time. Thus, parents' less intervening attitude in their children's decision at adolescence was another vital component in sanctioning the children's decision to drop out of school. In none of the cases of my research participants had the parents intervened in their children's decision.

Enabling Circumstances: Triggers and Background

When parents and children experienced such contributing factors of OOS phenomenon which created problem and needed extra effort to continue school, they considered the situation

as enabling circumstances for school dropout. The contributing factors and enabling circumstances were fundamentally different in its nature. The factors were external to human minds and objective in nature while enabling circumstances were constructed in human mind so subjective in nature. For example, when the parents needed to make extra money for their for their children's schooling and they needed to struggle more for it or they needed to make extra sacrifice, then the poor economic condition or economic poverty became the enabling circumstance for this. Likewise, when the children faced their low performance in the examination it created the unpleasant situation to them. Thus, low performance became another enabling circumstance for school dropout.

Actually the dropout decision is the result of the parents and children's accumulated interaction with to those OOS factors generated circumstance and the influential other people of the society. Since the interaction is subjective in nature, within the similar background, the individual perceives the same circumstances with different values and get influenced from other people differently. Thus, different individuals value the same circumstances significant or insignificant resulting to continue or discontinue their schooling.

Parents or/and children faced inconvenience on the verge of their dropout decision is considered as the cause of their dropout. But I think these are the merely triggers rather than causes which was just one more discomfort appeared on the existing compilation of various other inconveniences. However these triggers became vital in decision making in the fertile ground that was constructed and developed in a long period by the experience of multiple discomforts that parents and children faced in their life course. In addition, the influence of various people such as earlier dropouts of the community, failure examples of educated person, peers also stimulated the children and parents for a long period to prepare the ground against schooling.

The accumulation of all these adverse situations made them schooling more disgusting and burden full. The children and parents were hardly found considering all those discomfort playing at background and influence of other people of the society as responsible for their decision. Thus as people concentrate more to the trigger as the reason of their school dropout people face different triggers at the time of dropout decision, the people with similar socio economic and cultural backgrounds perceived different reasons for their school dropout decision.

The strength of qualitative findings, different from the quantitative one, is differentiating the trigger from other enabling circumstances. The quantitative analysis simply showed that whether factors contributed to OOS even or not. But the qualitative study made possible to identify trigger from the common unfavorable circumstances for making children outside school. Thus, the qualitative method is helpful to understand to identify the unfavorable circumstances which comes first and which comes later. However, the major and minor circumstances responsible for the dropout decision are different for different individuals depending upon their subjective judgment of the situation.

Different from the quantitative analysis, the qualitative assessment of OOSC also counts the interaction of decision makers with the influencing actors. The quantitative assessment would assess only those objectively measurable contributing factors. This is exactly why the total contribution of OOSC factors explains less than the one-fifth of the total explanation of OOSC in regression model. Actually the decision of OOSC is a subjective phenomenon of the decision makers over the issue. This is the reason of low predictability score yielded in a quantitative assessment.

School dropout: A long interaction with people and situation. As Hunt (2008) opined that school dropout phenomenon is a result of multiple factors and often a process rather than the

result of one single event. The inconveniences experienced at home and school due to those factors for a long time by the parents/children would make a firm background against schooling for the children. The more and more discomforts faced by the parents and children in combination of various household, school and socio-culture related factors would gradually construct a more solid and strong background which increases the possibility of the ultimate decision of the school dropout at some point in the future. These multiple adverse circumstances created strain and pressure to the parents and children leading to confusion and dilemma about continuation or dropping out. On the top of these socio-economic and school related factors, the role of various people they encounter in the community could be influential for school dropout. The role and action of school dropout peers, relatives and neighbors, school teacher, educated but unemployed youths and uneducated people but having good earnings can be motivating person for them to take the dropout decision.

Despite experiencing such difficulties in multiple ways and direct/indirect motivation from different people of the community for school dropout, they still tolerate the adverse situation and cope with the emerging problems. In such circumstances, when they face with some new problem or encounter with some people and it needs a big effort to cope or escape, they may take the decision of dropout. At this critical point, depending upon the experience of different levels of tolerance, they take the ultimate decision of school dropout while they consider the new event intolerable and unmanageable.

Metaphorically, a rope of straw represents the school dropout phenomenon where inconveniences of multiple factors they face and influence of various people of the society demotivating for further schooling can be compared as multiple strands or yarns of the rope. These strands or yarns of the rope are interwoven in such a way that one cannot distinguish the

potentiality or effect of those separate strands in enhancing the strength of the rope. In the

beginning as shown in the below figure, the bunch of strands made by dropout factors is thin one

and it becomes thicker and thicker when multiple incontinences are mingled. On the other hand,

the perceived relevance of education is same and the relative weightage of the relevance

gradually decreases in comparison to the increasing values of inconveniences. At the point of

decision making, the background created against schooling becomes so complicated that it

becomes very difficult that which strands of inconveniences is decisive for the result of dropout.
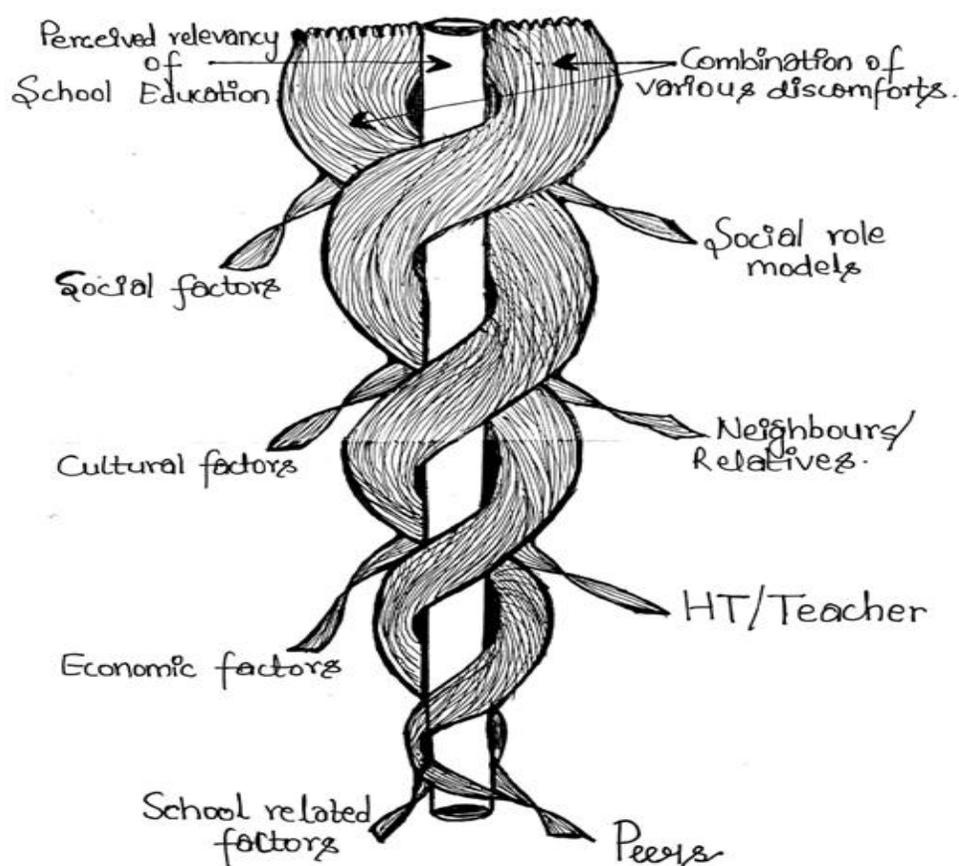
Figure 10. Metaphorical Representation of School Dropout Phenomenon

School Dropout Decision

After making children literate in letter and numeracy, parent's next level expectation

from education was to relieve their children the hard full life of traditional occupation. Although

people expressed various benefits of education, this was the highest return that they could expect from school education in the context. When both, the children and parents would start facing more and more discomforts along with the children's gradual upgrading to higher grades, they would come to the practically possible return. Thus they would start to calculate the expected gain from the experienced effort they needed to put in order to continue school.

The inconvenience faced by parents was different from that of children. Parents' discomfort was mainly associated with of financial aspect of schooling while children would face both the physical and psychological pain. When the 'feeling of discomfort' would reach to the climax, I reflect that both parents and children would start comparing the future expected advantage with present cost of schooling that they were sacrificing. This was the main underlying forces of the school dropout phenomenon at the time of decision making. However, the background for the dropout decision was already developed due to various adverse structural forces and the decision makers' interaction with the environment.

Parents' concern: Experienced cost versus expected benefit. Depending upon the experience, exposure and their economic condition, parents were endowed with different level of educational ceilings which was the major guiding force to construct their mentality in favor of dropout. However, at the time of decision they would be more focused in calculating the expected benefits of education in future against the present cost they were sacrificing for it. Different from other, especially in *Badhayta* and *Sahanshila*'s cases, I perceived somehow a conscious behavior among parents where they calculated cost and benefit of further schooling and took the decision accordingly. Their decision seemed logical in the sense that further investment in education was not economically beneficial to them. However, their calculation of benefits was guided by their life experience and the existing socio economic and cultural context

rather than purely monetary one. Despite their intention to maximize their utility with the given resources with them (Becker, 1992, Foley, 2003), they were not well aware about the market. Looking at the cost and benefit of schooling as perceived by parent, I found three modalities of cost-benefit relations prevailed in the community for pursuing different level of school education.

The first modality was 'no cost only benefit'. The field observation showed that the economic cost of education for earlier grades was nominal. The monthly fee was totally waved and a minimum amount of admission fee was needed to be paid. Books were available at free of cost. Likewise, the children at early age were demanding not a big amount of money from their parents for school purpose. Moreover, school was like a day care center where children were getting all day care service free of cost. If there was no school, the parents would need some people in the home to look after their children. On the other hand, the children were found learning very fundamental things such as reading, writing and numeracy skills at school. As most of the parents experienced many problems in their lives due to lack of these fundamental life skills, these achievements of reading and writing skill would put some meaning to their life. Thus during the early grades, the parents had found school education only beneficial having no cost for them. Consequently, the parents found it comfortable to send their children to the school in the early grades. As a result, there was a very rare case of dropout from the primary level of schooling in the community. Thus, 'making their children literate at no cost at all' was the real dynamics behind the parent's strategy of getting their children's continuation of school.

The second modality was 'moderate cost - moderate benefit'. As soon as their children crossed the primary level, the parents started experiencing some cost of schooling. Both, direct and indirect costs had increased as they needed to buy extra books from grade six. The admission

and examination fees were comparatively higher. More than this, the children with adolescent age would start to demand various stuffs such as school uniform in a good condition and more money for stationery. While at this age, parents would start to expect their children's help in household chores. Thus, then the children were gradually considered by their parents as a reliable human capital and sending those children to school was like putting a higher opportunity cost to the parents.

Regarding the expected benefit, after the primary level, the second milestone was to complete grade eight which would give some tangible output with the possibility of employment in government service. Although the entry to the Nepal Army was the only exposed sector for employment in general, this benefit was not confirmed. Thus, even parents had experienced the education more costly and return was not confirmed. They would invest, especially for their sons up to grade eight. Whether to invest up to grade eight schooling depended upon parents' worldviews, economic conditions, their risk bearing capacity and the probability of getting employment with respect to personal and social contexts. Thus, if the parents found the expected benefit higher than the present cost of education, they would continue their children's education. At this level, the parents were found having the strategy of 'moderate investment for moderate benefit. This strategy was adopted mainly by the boys who expected to enter the army service. This option was popular among many parents as in a moderate cost, it was possible to have three benefits: a reliable employment, regular source of income for the whole life; and opportunity to escape from the traditional occupation in the research site.

The third modality of cost-benefit relation was "High costs for high benefits but uncertain". After grade eight, the cost of education would sharply increase due to several phenomena where the share of opportunity cost was experienced by parents as significantly high.

In some cases, the family itself needed to migrate and in some cases, parents needed to keep their children in a rented room near by the schools providing secondary or higher secondary level of education. These activities lead to a drastic rise in cost. More than this, once the children went to secondary or higher secondary school, the parents were not able to engage them in any household chores. Hence only the parent who was well convinced with the higher return of higher education or having sound economic condition would adopt this modality. Hence, in addition to the parents' commitment of making their children well educated, a good economic condition was prerequisite to send a child to secondary level schooling.

The attainment of secondary level education was largely for preparing for higher education other than giving any distinct outcome. Due to a low capital endowment with the community people, higher education was considered by them as out of their reach. Only after having higher education, the parents could expect another level of outcome, a charming employment. Although becoming a *Sipahi* had a big charm for many people in the community, just becoming a *Sipahi* was not a way out for a meaningful change in their life style for those who had already achieved that position. Despite giving employment and regular income, they experienced that the position of a *Sipahi* was not helping to earn power, prestige and property in the real sense. Likewise, those people who had gone to foreign countries and returned with a good amount of money, but they were also not happy with their status. So, for the parents, who had already achieved certain level of social economic and cultural capital were committed to invest more to continue their children's education.

Further, having higher education did not guarantee better employment and higher income. The people had seen some unsuccessful examples of the educated youth in their community. So it was a risk to make a high investment for the uncertain benefits. Thus, there

were very few parents who were daring this third strategy - more investment for a better future but uncertain. For this, the parents needed to have sound economic condition and to take high risk of investment for uncertain benefits.

The action of some parents in school dropout phenomenon, particularly at the point of decision, could be partially understood with the help of rational choice theory where individual actions are guided by their objectives, resources, and circumstances (Abel, 1996). When the cost was nominal and the expectation of making their children literate was confirmed in primary level of education, parents were found very comfortable for their children's schooling. But when children graduated to lower secondary grades, it had imposed them some cost. On the other hand the expected benefits of employment from grade eight, which was neither guaranteed nor relevant to all. Thus depending upon the circumstances and their available resource, the decision of dropout was taken for some cases. Likewise, when they found the cost of secondary education was much higher with no concrete benefit; many parents had taken their children out of school after grade eight.

Thus, the decision of school dropout, I conceived, aligned somehow with the rational action. The 'rational action' of human beings implies a conscious actor engaging social action where the strategy is calculative (Scot, 2000). People were counting the experienced cost that individuals were paying in terms of direct, indirect and opportunity cost for some expected benefits. However the decision of individual was highly influenced by the Bourdieuan *field* and capital. The expected benefit was guided by their life experience rather than the concept of free market as assumed by economics. Hence, this was simply the judgment of the probability of the 'consequences of their action' (Voss & Abraham, 2000) in the existing *field*.

Children's concern: Apprehended pain versus anticipated gain. Like the parents, the children also went to school comfortably during their early age and grades. Soon, they had faced many adverse situations in school. Students found the classroom teaching was problematic in terms of language and pedagogy. Gradually they grew up and trying to accommodate themselves in the school environment, they did not get parental support in the study. They did not have less time to study at home. As a result, they could not perform well in the examination. This situation had two consequences. First, they found the classroom unpleasant and boring as they did not understand the classroom teaching. Second they found themselves humiliating and inferior because of the achievement. As a result, their teachers scolded them and even punished. They experienced further humiliating in front of their colleagues. Further, failing in the exam would bring more frustration to them. In the case of failure in class, the parents would also express their anger to the children. In some cases, this would be a good excuse for parents to engage their children more in the household chores. As a result, the school gradually becomes place of distaste for children with their higher age and grade.

Likewise when children entered into adolescence stage, the parents had more expectations form their children to complete household chores. Even some of the parents expected to engage in wage earning where 'children at work' was the culture of the community. In such a condition, children compelled to performed double duty at home and school, which was burdensome. Moreover, these adolescents have undergone with physical changes. They wanted to be smart in their dress up and food habit. They demanded l fancy stuff which their parents were unable to fulfill. On the other hand they had seen their peers' earning money. This would make them think that they were also able to earn and fulfill their wants if they were free from school. Thus, with the older age they felt more and more pain of school attainment.

Parents and students believed that education brings significant changes in their life. Parents shared that they experienced miserable life because they did not get education. However, teachers in the school made the children optimistic to continue school, they had experienced themselves spending a cumbersome life in their traditional occupation. Thus, they would judge the continuing school as important to pursue their objective of more income and comfortable employment outside agriculture.

In this dilemma, the feeling of heavier apprehended pain over the anticipated gain from education construct a fertile ground to take out for school dropout decision at some point in future. This was a very volatile time period. But still, the children get waited for some external reasons so that they could blame on the situation or the other people for their decision of school dropout. At this juncture, the action of the others (parents, teacher, peers) or upcoming new events related to school, household or social context happened to become a trigger for the decision of school dropout.

Thus, the children's decision of school dropout seems the logical action taken based on the pain and gain of schooling. Upgrading to higher grades with older age, the children themselves were found not only judging more on the role of education but also reacting more explicitly to the environment and actors they faced in their life. The out-of-school situation was the ultimate result of their strategy of choosing the other field than school life with the feeling of more pain on it rather than pursuing the expected relish from education in the future.

Bordieu's Theory of Practice and School Dropout Phenomenon

Although multiple unfavorable circumstances generated by various factors were responsible for the school dropout phenomenon. I think these were simply the discomforts influencing people for their action rather than real cause of school dropout. The major dynamics

behind the school dropout decision is the educational ceiling which is a composite of various adverse circumstances experienced by people over a long period and their perceived educational relevancy to their life. Here, the factors and circumstances are more objective in nature while the perceived relevancy is an entirely subjective phenomenon. Thus, school dropout phenomenon is the reconciliation of the dualism(s) of structure vs. agency, structuralism vs. constructivism, determinism vs. freedom or macro vs. micro (Bourdieu, 1972; Walther, 2014). In order to make a theoretically informed understanding of the school dropout issue, the following subsections discuss the school dropout phenomenon in the light of Bourdieu's Theory of Practice (Bourdieu, 1977). Since, people's life experience, exposure to outer world, and way of interaction with the physical contexts is different; people with similar background possess different level of educational ceiling and thus their action of school continuation or dropout happens accordingly.

Habitus Led Educational Ceiling in Cultural Relativism

The construction of educational ceilings in the *Tamang* community, I perceived, was influenced from the culture of the community which I perceive from the cultural relativism perspective. Employing the ideas of cultural relativism (Hofstede, 2001), I argue that they set the ceiling from the cultural context of the individual and community. As culture is the collective programming of the mind which is different from the member of one group to another (Hofstede, 2011), the educational ceilings of peoples are different from one culture to another. Thus rather than judging the educational ceiling of the community from judgmental perspective pointing it as right or wrong, I discuss the ceiling construction from explorative perspective.

Analyzing the specific educational ceiling from the theoretical perspective, I reflect that educational ceiling was *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977) led understanding about educational role in their life and livelihood. In other words, the construction of the ceiling was the mental structure

of individual about understanding the role and usefulness of school education in their life and livelihood. Since *Habitus* is a system of dispositions and unified practices of group of individuals, it is relatively homogenous across individuals with similar social background (Thompson, 1991).

Actually, similar to habitus, the educational ceiling was a set of dispositions of observations, beliefs, preconception that guided people to constructing the meaning and role of education based on their background (Parajuli, 2003). Depending upon their background, life experience and exposure, certain understanding about the role of education was constructed in human mind. Different individuals stored different dispositions through the internalization of the past experiences as they experience their life differently and those dispositions guided the thoughts and the action of the individuals (Bourdieu, 1984) regarding school dropout action. However, *Habitus* is more a guiding principle rather than determining the individual's action, the educational ceiling differs even among the people with similar socio, economic and cultural background.

The understanding on role of education among people was created and developed through life experience and interaction with many other people and contexts; it was the result of primary socialization of individual in the family, community and school (Swartz, 2002). Thus, the habitus led educational ceiling was not only a 'structuring structure', but also a 'structured structure' (Bourdieu, 1984, p.170). This structured structure was responsible to guide individuals for their practice of school dropouts after certain grade.

As Bourdieu's concept of habitus regards, various discomforts experienced in the past create dispositions in individual minds that generate different products such as thoughts, perceptions and expressions that guide certain action for school dropout (Parajuli, 2003). But still

these dispositions against continuing schools were simply the internalized past experience and they do not determine their ultimate decision (Swartz, 2002). The dispositions were simply the guiding force rather than the decisive forces to take certain. In such condition, when the individual face with some immediate intolerable discomforts, that lead to take the decision of dropout.

As above mentioned, the habitus was the mental disposition about understanding any issue constructed under certain context. This was not developed in a vacuum. The existing socioeconomic, school related and cultural structure of the context and various types of resource endowments possessed to people were two other principle components of ceiling construction. In Bourdieu's language, these were the '*field*' and 'capital' respectively which in combination would construct the peoples' habitus about role of education in their life and that habitus would guide the individual's action of school dropout (Swartz, 2002). The subsequent paragraphs discuss the existing *field* and capital endowment of individuals that determine the individual educational ceiling.

Field, Ceiling, and Dropout

In Bourdieu's concept, *field* is the socio economic position of individuals where they struggle either to maintain the status quo or change their position (Awasthi, 2004). In relation to schooling of a child, the circumstances that parents/children face at home, school and in the larger society were their *fields* of struggle. Since, different individuals have different positions in the existing socioeconomic structure and school structure depending upon their background, this position guides them to construct educational ceiling and take dropout action according to their position in the specific social economic contexts (Thompson, 1991). Metaphorically, Bourdieu compares the *field* with a game and players need to play within the rules of the game. Since the

positions in the struggle of *field* possess different chances of acquiring their goals, the corresponding position governs the school dropout action. The following paragraphs discuss the role existing *fields* and individual's strategy in ceiling construction and their action of dropout.

Engaging with the research participants, I reflect that both parents and children would face various discomforts one after another when children started school. The existing school structure they face as the unfavorable *field* to continue school and they needed to struggle with it in order to maintain the continuity. Soon after entering into school, children would face the Nepali language as a medium of instruction as one major obstacle to understand the classroom teaching making them weak performer in higher grades. In this regard, school for *Tamang* children would be something that reproduced middle or upper-class values and forms of communication with the Nepali language. The language used by the teachers and curricula created a distance between children and school. Children might not able to connect the language of their home to school as Feuerstein (2000) believed. Likewise, they face with many other hurdles such as the mismatch between school timing and the busy schedule of their livelihood, contradiction between of parents; expectations and school's expectation from children, mismatch between goal of school education and peoples' livelihood expectation that makes them school as a overburden and distaste place. But, these existing structures, like the rules of any game, needed to follow in order to continue their schooling. People did not have capacity to change these rules; rather they had to adjust with it to continue the game in order to pursue their goal. It meant people either would continue the school with struggle or take the decision of school dropout.

Likewise, the social division of work between the male and the female was accepted and accustomed by every member of the community which was responsible to construct different fields for male and female in schooling. The experience of *Behosi* and *Sahanshila* showed that

despite they tried to break this social norm and tried to continue their further education, the social structure was very strong to push them from school. Despite two brothers completed school education from the same family, it did not apply for *Sahanshila*. Thus, these school dropout decisions were the result of constructed educational ceiling and these dropout phenomena again structured the existing structure. In the same way, the prevailing inequality of social status due to different occupation was also making different field for different people as these occupations had different level of life experience and exposure level to outer world. Parents engaged in hard life of agriculture were constituted of second level of educational ceiling and parents employed in other sector were constructed with third level of education.

The existing economic structure also helps to construct the educational ceiling. The lack of skill endowed from school education and alternative employment opportunities in the community, people found school education simply wastage of time and money. Their perception on irrelevancy of education in making money was further strengthened by failure of school graduates of the community. These existing structure played important role to construct the ceiling. The constructed ceiling motivated people for early dropout from schools.

Analyzing various discomforts experienced by the children and parents as discussed earlier section, I reflect that the both existing school structure and socio-economic structure was highly responsible for school dropout phenomenon. In Bordieu's word, the existing *field* (Bourdieu, 1986) for the dropouts was not comfortable. Rather, it was fertile for the school dropout phenomenon and needed a high struggle very continuing school. Thus, the school dropout decision made by the children and/or parents was the result of struggling with their *field* - objective world (Parajuli, 2003). It meant, the individual's action of the school dropout decision was made based on the existing structured context (Swartz, 2002). Depending upon the

background of the individual, the field has offered constraints for school continuation. Some children were continuing school not because of the hope from school, not but because they were enjoying there but just for avoiding the disgusting household chores. They were waiting for the right time to take their decision of dropout.

Thus, the contradiction between educational doctrine and peoples' practice is manifested in the social structure, school structure and economic structure. The state became more dominant in spreading the doctrine of education whereas the local social structure of *Tamang* people denied following such structure. The state seemed unable to change the economic and school related structure favorable to implement the doctrine of education successfully.

Hence, the dropout phenomenon was the autonomous resistance among the *Tamang* people instead of hegemony of the school education. Such an autonomous movement might be the opposing hegemony as Day (2005) suggested that radicals adopt "logic of affinity" and the dropout phenomenon appears as an anti-globalized phenomenon of going to school. Perhaps, these *Tamang* people rejected the notion of school as hegemonic goal and would like to be free from the fundamental form of oppression. The logic of affinity recognizes that "as individuals and members of communities, [we] must free ourselves, in an effort that cannot be expected to terminate in a final event of revolution." (Day, 2005, p. 127)

Capital Endowment, Ceiling and Dropout

The life experience and exposure to outer world were two qualitative constituents of ceiling construction whereas two fundamental philosophical concepts were in the background in the ceiling construction process. First, every parent was found interested to push their children at least one step ahead from the point where the parents had stopped their schooling. For illiterate parents, their prime educational aspiration was to make their children at least literate. In the case

of those parents who were literate but were unable to get any employment other than the agriculture, their educational aspiration was to secure employment for their children outside the traditional agriculture. In the same way, some parents were able to assess some additional low-position job such as *sipahi* in Nepal Army or some foreign employment. In such cases, their educational aspiration was to bring about meaningful change in life earning power, prestige and property.

Second, the parents valued to those specific problems which they had faced in their lives due to lack of education. The lack of reading and writing skill had created different pain to the illiterate parents in their life and livelihood. Likewise, the literate parents who were unable to get job in the government were also suffering from their hard life of agriculture. Due to lack of reliable and regular income job, they were compelled to work hard even at the old age. Both type of these parents possessed similar thoughts that lack of education was one of the reason for their suffering. Even those parents who were able have some low-position nonagricultural job they got suffered from the dominance of high-level personnel in their sector. Thus, higher education was considered by them as a means to attain that dominant position. Based on these, these experiences and exposure, people were found constructing some ideal level of educational ceilings.

But the possibility of materializing their ideal educational ceilings would depend upon the individual's capacity to harness it. As Parajuli (2003) claims the struggles by individuals, groups or institutions, for positions within the *field* are largely configured by differential access to power and sources of capital or resources. According to Bourdieu, capital refers to "the set of actually usable resources and powers" (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 114). It means not all resources that possess to individuals are capital; only those resources are which are saleable and valued in a market within a *field* is capital. Borrowing Bourdieu's concept, different types capital

endowments possessed on individual such as cultural capital, economic capital and social capitals that in combination would determine individual's capacity to harness the ideal educational ceiling or to compromise with the realistic one. The following paragraphs discuss how the capital endowment of the community people was playing role in their ceiling construction.

Economic capital is that capital in the form of income, wealth and property which are directly convertible into money (Bourdieu, 1986). In this sense, people with poor parental property and engaged in unproductive agriculture, majority of the people possessed low economic endowment and thus they were associated with lower level of educational ceiling up to grade eight.On the other hand, people engaged in the government service or in own restaurant business endowed higher level of economic capital. The income of these people was comparatively higher, reliable and regular. This was the example of 'easy transferability nature of economic capital' into social and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 91), because, higher educational ceiling was possible for them even some of them were illiterate.

Out of different resources, social capital is another form of asset that influences individuals' capacity to harness their goal. Bourdieu (1986) defines the social capital as

> …. the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition … …. … which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (p. 247)

As Bourdieu claims, the social capital is the good network with power. Due to low social network with power, the *Tamang* people were not able to get any job beyond education even they had completed higher education. In the kinship dominated society of Nepal, unless there is

someone reference in the power – *afno manchhe* (Bista, 1990), it is very difficult to get employment in the market. Meritocracy matters if only one possess the social capital. Even within the similar socio economic and cultural background, the people who were engaged in the government service or in own restaurant business endowed higher social capital than the farmer engaged in agriculture sector. Actually, people in these sectors were having higher economic capital and it was easily transferrable to social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). This had made possible to construct higher level of educational ceiling to those people.

According to Bourdieu (1986), the possessing of cultural capital explains the success in schools. If the culture of the people matches with the culture of the school, it leads to advantageous position in school leading to success. The language, subject matter, way of speaking in school was totally new for the parents what they were using in their daily life. Since school did not recognize their culture, the parents were considered illiterate made them feeling inferior and hesitant to go to school and discuss their children's education. Due to this culturally disadvantageous position, parents thought that discussing about the children was beyond their capacity blocking them to participate in their children's schooling. This generated negative impact in children's education. First, there was no sharing between teachers and parents. Second, teachers were dominant and used to perform according to their wish. There was a big hierarchy between school and community. Likewise, the children hardly used Nepali Lanuage in their childhood days which was used in the classroom.. Since the medium of instruction in school was only Nepali, while children's home language was *Tamang*. This made the classroom unpleasing and unproductive for the children

Thus due to lack of their cultural capitals recognized by the school system, majority of the parents constructed the low level of educational ceiling. The literate parents might have

greater exposure to the outer world, more confident and better social network. This helped them to construct higher educational ceiling than those illiterate parents. Likewise, the parents whose children had better classroom performance were fixing higher educational ceiling.

Some other Theoretical Underpinnings on School Dropout

The school dropout phenomenon discussed so far was based on the data that dealt with different proxy factors of school dropout, unfavorable circumstances that the people faced and peoples' judgment of school education in terms of its relevancy to their children's life. The following paragraphs present a broader level of knowledge about the school dropout phenomenon based on the analysis of the different sources of data.

Dilemmas: To Go and Not to Go School

A child starts formal schooling in the interest of parents following the social norms with a notion that every civilized citizen must send his/her children to school. In addition to this, parents do have some expectation that school education gives them some benefits in the future. In the beginning, children also become curious as they experience new environment of school with new cloths, schoolbag with books and copies, changing daily life and the pleasing environment of playing with more friends. Further, from the teaching of the parents and teachers, the children develop their own understanding to become a *thulo mnchhe* (a prosperous, respectful and powerful) in future.

But, the cost of the education works demotivating factors to the parents when their children gradually upgrades to higher level. Then education gets gradually second priority as it opens only the possibility rather than it confirm guarantee of future benefits whereas their present engagement in work gives the benefit immediately. This situation makes the parents rethink on their ideal expectation they made in the beginning. In this condition, if they face with

other unfavorable circumstances such as children's weak performance in school, difficulty to manage the unpredicted expenses for schooling, sickness of some family members etc. When they feel such discomforts, they collect the failure stories of school graduates from their surroundings. All these inconveniences faced by them, parents gradually build a stronger background in favor of taking decision of dropout at some point in future.

Likewise, with their older age, the children become able to react to the environment, and especially the unpleasing classrooms and burdensome home-school duty. Those children were not in a position to convey these dissatisfactions earlier. But these hidden dissatisfactions always make them set to escape from such distaste situation. For this they also collect the failure stories of school graduates so that they can justify their dropout decision. Like in case of parents, once they perceive that their educational ceiling is met, they wait till they find some trigger of their decision, so that they can blame other for their decision. Hence, as dropping out from school in considered as a long a process (Hunt, 2008; Rumberger, 2008), which begins from the very first day of the children's schooling. Although the decision is taken at some single point when the decision maker encounters with some unfavorable actor or factor, this is simply excuse for them to justify their action.

As the decision of dropping out is the result of interaction with many actors, multiple factors and context, this is naturally a complex process. It is difficult to measure and understand that which of these multiple factors does have a more significant influence (Smeyers, 2006). Identifying the causes of dropping out is extremely difficult as it is influenced by an array of 'proximal and distal factors' related to individual characters and the contexts in which the children live (Rumberger, 2001). Further, these multiple factors work at different time period and contribute to the making of background of the dropout decision and they influence the decision

accordingly. So, the dropping out is not a simple causal relationship. Nevertheless, it is difficult to distinguish between prime causes, intermediary factors and effects. For example, a low class performer faces mental stresses due to the double duty of home and school and also finds the school education not much relevant to their life leading to the decision of school dropout, how one can find real cause and effect of the dropout phenomenon. Thus, the dropout factors or situations are not likely to be relevant separately and precisely in understanding cause and effect, it needs to understand the complex and dynamic interactions between them (Smeyers, 2006, p 103-104,107).

These expected gain and experienced pain mad the school dropout process as a phenomenon of dilemma between continuing and discontinuing the schooling. As far as evidences reveal, school dropout is all about children or/and parents' understanding of the role of education in human life in general and particularly its relevance to their life and livelihood. This understanding is constructed as a life experience or from teaching and exposure. But both parents and children need to spend money, time and energy to acquire school education which makes the school continuation inconvenient to them in different ways. The perceived role of education is the peoples' interaction with environment, mainly school, family and the larger society whereas the inconvenience of people is their feeling of pain and inconveniences.

Thus, both parents and children always pass through internal dilemma to decide mentally to continue school or become OOS based on their interaction with surroundings; people and context. In this dilemma, once the experienced cost or pain becomes heavier than the expected benefit or gain, they become ready to dropout from school at some time and they wait till some immediate incidents appears in front of them to take the ultimate decision of dropout.

Both the benefits and costs experienced by the parents and children are the subjective feeling or judgment to the objective world of benefits and inconveniences. However, their interaction or judgment depends upon several factors such as the personal life experience, exposure level to the outer world, personal background and capacity to take the risk, experienced level cost or pain and the realization level of benefit of education. These backgrounds make every human being unique creature who is not only conscious and self-reflexive but also actively shapes his/her own behavior (as cited in Sandstrom, Martin & Fine, in Ritzer & Smart, 2003). Thus the actions of continuation/discontinuation or dropout at different levels depend upon the individuals' background. The different actions are the result of different their definition or perceived meaning and interpretation rather than simply the reaction to the situation (Best, 2003). Due to the subjective judgment of individual in valuing the objective reality regarding cost/pain and benefit/gain of schooling makes dropout process a complex one.

Changing Behavior in 'Thinking' and 'Being'

I reflected the changing behavior of an individual in the school dropout phenomenon. The first change I observe regarding the setting of educational objective. In the beginning, the goal of sending a child to school is considered pursuing a wider role of education from personal benefits to the children to achieve the ideal role of serving the nation and creating an ethical and moral value in individual. That is individual's 'thinking mode of existence'. But when multiple discomforts are gradually experienced, the individual becomes very realistic in setting feasible benefits at personal levels. This is the individual's 'being mode of existence'. Thus, the first change in individual's behavior was becoming from an idealistic to realistic.

Likewise, the individual shows a changing behavior regarding the 'thinking' of dropout and really 'acting' at the time of dropout decision. As already discussed, the *habitus* (Bourdieu,

1986) led educational ceiling is the major dynamics in school dropout phenomenon which is the mental structure of past disposition about the usefulness of school education in their life which is created and developed through their primary socialization of the people in the family, culture and school (Swartz, 2002). Similarly, the experience of various discomforts to continue school depends upon the individuals' *field* and *capital* of individual in Bourdieuan concept (Bourdieu, 1986). Thus, preparation of ground is more guided by the existing structure of the society.

However, habitus led educational ceiling simply guides parents and children to develop their thoughts, perceptions, and expressions about school dropout. These dispositions of internalized past experience against continuing schools do not determine the ultimate decision of dropouts and their parents (Swartz, 2002). At the time decision making, as in case of *Badhyata* and '*Sahanshila* who judged the cost and benefit of further schooling. Thus, their decision was guided more by the rational choice theory (RCT). The RCT believes in 'rational action' (Scot, 2000) where a conscious actor adopt a deliberate and calculative strategies based on their objectives, resources, and circumstances (Abel, 1996). In these dropout cases, the decision was to make the best consequence in terms of the actor's own aim (Voss & Abraham, 2000). Thus an individual shows a changing behavior from structure led behavior of ceiling construction to agency led behavior of decision making.

CHAPTER VII

REFLECTION, CONCLUSION AND WAY FOREWARD

The overall purpose of this research was to understand the out-of-school phenomenon by exploring the major dynamics and the interplay of different contributing factors that cause early school dropout. For this, Chapter IV presented the national scenario of 'who' and 'why' aspects of OOS event in Nepal with the help of statistical analysis of national census and survey data whereas Chapter V examined the OOS phenomenon at micro level with the help of ethnographic cases of school dropouts. Synthesizing these quantitative and qualitative findings, Chapter VI presented a broader and holistic understanding of OOS factors, understanding circumstances of school dropout and the process of dropout decision.

This chapter reflects the research process of addressing the research questions which helps to deriving the conclusion. While presenting the conclusion, I synthesize major insights sequentially based on the research questions. Finally, new knowledge on school dropout with the implications for existing policies and future research are presented.

Reflecting the Emergent Research Process

Initially my professional engagement in the survey research of the OOSC factors pushed me work further to locate the situation of OOSC in Nepal. At a point of my research, I understood that it presented the blanket approach to analyze the OOSC phenomenon. This led me to focus on the ethnographic cases to explore cultural and social aspects of OOS phenomenon. Applying these two approaches, I get two major insights: first, in addition to some other benefits, community people perceived that school education is a tool for getting

employment opportunism. When they experience that do not get employment after getting certain level of education, they leave, school at a certain point (Parajuli, 2015). They do not sense much advantage of going school then after. Thus, the decision to leave or continue in school largely depends on peoples' understanding that is related to their respective perceived relevance of further education. Hence, it is a universal phenomenon that happens in the education system everywhere in world. Only the difference is that it may happen relatively at early grades for some and at later grades for others.

Second, more than the education system, the school dropout phenomenon is an outcome of socio economic structure, family background and the society at large. This social structure construct the individual's perception about education and which ultimately determines at what age and grade a student is going to drop out from school. Thus, the prevalence of school age children remaining out-of-school is higher among certain socioeconomic strata such as among the lowest consumption quintile; certain caste/ethnic groups such as the *Tamang*, Terai *Dalit* and the Muslim; people living in certain geography such as the Terai and rural areas; people with certain educational background such as the illiterate parents; people with certain gender such as the female living in the Terai and western hill region and the male living in urban area and eastern hill region; and population at certain age group.

After all discussions, analyses, and syntheses presented in the earlier sections, the following some major findings related to the out-of-school phenomenon in Nepal emanated from this research are summarized as follows.

The factors responsible for school dropout are common in Nepal as elsewhere. As a bulk of literature has identified globally (Christenson & Thurlow, 2004; DFID, 2001; Hunt, 2008; Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook & Hunt, 2010; Rumberger & Lim, 2008), a number of factors

such as age, gender, caste/ethnicity, marital status, place of residence, poverty, parent's education etc., are also common to the context of Nepal (FBC, 2012; Kushiyait, 2007; MoE, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2016; TESON, 2004)). The factors responsible for forcing children to make out-of-school as reflected in both the quantitative and qualitative survey results are not different from what the literature have identified so far. In other words, the existing literature has sufficiently captured the major factors that increase the possibility of forcing children out-of-school. Hence, rather than further inquiry to the exploration of the contributing factors to school dropout in the country, the inquiry into the success stories of school retention will be more helpful.   .

Statistical analysis yielded some common factors such as age, caste, ethnicity, gender poverty and so on which generalizes situation of OOSC but these statistical explanations hardly presented the complexities of the out-of school factors. It is true that these factors do not explain the dropout phenomenon in isolation or as the predominant cause of the school dropout. Most factors examined in this study were found statistically significant. However, the strength of these factors was found very low in explaining OOS event. Even the strongest factors in combination explained for less than 20 percent of the cause, leaving 80 percent of the cause for something else. I was much curious to know '*something else'* which remains unanswered in many earlier research studies. Despite, the major factors contributing to OOS such as poverty, disadvantaged characteristics, and low level of parental education in the background for all children as deterrents to their schooling, the final decision of leaving the school rests not only on those particular factors but also on the roles of other roles models of the community including school teacher, peers, neighbors and relatives. Thus the school dropout decision, besides being the objectively examined factors, depends more on the subjective judgment of the people

themselves. The specific cases and cultural embodiment of OOSC play important role in understanding the school dropout phenomenon holistically.

Therefore, I selected ethnographic cases to supplement this study which revealed, that different reasons were experienced and thus valued by the participants as the major reasons for their dropout decision. Hence, even they were living in the same community and having a similar socio-economic status, they acknowledge different causes as accountable in their school dropout decision. The general conditions of the society in terms of poverty, low level of education, poor school environment, social practices and question on the relevance of education equally plays the role of demotivating factors for every child in the community as almost everyone shared a similar socio-economic status. These conditions persistently but invisibly remain as deterrents to school education for many children. However, the decisions for drop out in most cases are contingent on a particular event or circumstances that work as triggers. Generally, the decision maker of dropouts counts this specific trigger as the cause of their decision.

Likewise, parents' social status and personal desire in many cases prevail over all these deterrents allowing children to complete certain grades or level of education. In other words, while all the odds against schooling are commonly present in the community for almost every child and their parents, it is their social stigma that prevents many in dropping out from school. However, the stigma functions only up to certain level and for some it stops to work resulting into early drop out than for others. These demotivating variables are so commonly prevailed in the community; it is hard to predict which one really works for each individual at the time of making final decision to leave school.

Especially, females' engagement is limited to household chores and traditional occupation of agriculture and alcohol business. Thus, people never felt the education behind

gaining basic literacy as relevant to the female member of the society. But, some role models in the community who are working in the junior most positions in army/police service, helper in public vehicle, and labor in foreign employment set the criteria of school education for male members. For these roles, grade eight is considered enough to perform those socially accepted area of work. Education beyond this level is neither expected nor is seen as a value addition to the type of occupation that they are aspiring to. Actually, this functional value of education is determinant in the construction of invisible education educational ceiling among people and the ceiling works as guiding principle to attain certain level of education. However, the ceilings are constructed on the basis of their own life experience, level of exposure to the outer world, and their socio-economic context. In addition, the capacity to tolerate the various discomforts faced by individual due to different OOS contributing factors also highly accounts in ultimate decision of dropout. Thud, school dropout possess a subjective phenomenon of interacting with various objective realities of the context, people with similar socio economic background sometimes decide differently regarding continuing school or being out of it.

Despite family and social structure highly inspire an individual for school dropout; the school environment is also significant demotivating factor in some cases. Although children start school on their parent's interest, they also enjoy school in the beginning. But soon after, they realize that the school culture (course work requirements, teacher and peer's behavior) in general, becomes less attractive and more burdensome. This pressure becomes more intense mainly to the weak performer as they gradually upgrade to higher level. The load of household chores further adds burden to them. Still, most children continue further because of parental as well as peer pressure. As the school gradually becomes less attractive and more burdensome, the child always seeks an alternative for his/her engagement. They look for appropriate time for the

decision to leave school. But children's decision doesn't materialize until the parents give green signals or show apathetic behavior to their decision. The parents' apathetic behavior is associated with their own educational ceiling in terms of its relevance to their life.

The earlier studies, especially quantitative research, have portrayed school dropout phenomenon as an output of certain key variables and used a linear input-process-output models to describe it. Opposed to these some prior claims, dropping out of school does not happen as a surprise or as an abrupt event. It involves a lot of considerations around the contexts, concerns, interests and expectations that eventually results over a certain period. Thus, school dropout is not an immediate event but the long consequences of several embodiments of individuals. The role of parents, school teachers, peers, and the community together contribute to this process. Thus this is a long and complicated process. The complexity arises due to its very nature of subjectivity. As human beings are conscious and self-reflexive, depending upon the individual backgrounds and orientations, they shape their own understanding and thus act accordingly to be not to be drop out. So it is unpredictable and difficult to generalize the school dropout phenomenon.

Finally, a trigger plays vital role for materializing the dropout decision where the children remain waiting for a long time to come up this point. Some events or circumstances that appear immediately speed up the final decision of dropout. While, the major factors remain active in the background, the decision makers interact with upcoming individual (such as school teacher, peers, role models or even with parents) or emerging event (new birth or death in the family, marriages, the need for helping hands in home, and migration of family members) creates the movement of school dropout. These events work as trigger for school dropout. These triggers appeared in surface as the primary cause of drop out, but, in fact, they are not. Indeed, the

background of an individual is broadly associated with poverty, school culture, poor performance, and peer pressure together generate an enabling situation in which individuals turn vulnerable to drop out anytime.

Revisiting the Existing Knowledge on Education: Knowledge Contribution

School dropout is considered as a problem in development perspective which assumes that completion of a certain level of formal education brings prosperity to individual, society and state as a whole in terms of economic, social and political development. Thus, the state has provisioned free and compulsory school education in order to encourage its citizens to attend school education which contributes to develop capable human resource to nation building process. In this regard, this study revisits the following four major concerns in educational development of the country: i) how the school is contributing to society?; ii) what is the rationale of free and compulsory secondary level education in connection to school dropout?; iii) despite state's program and policies why all people are not completing school education: is this school factor or non-school factor?; and iv) are those school-leaving children really dropouts?

School as Indifferent Institution

Different philosophical streams consider the role of mass schooling in their own ways. The functionalists believe that formal schooling is not only beneficial to people by preparing them for their adult role but according to them, it is necessary for the survival of society by transferring a shared social norms and values (Feinberg, & Soltis, 1998). In addition to this, the liberal thinkers view that free schooling gives everyone equal opportunities for developing personal capacities and talents (Aronowitz, & Giroux, 2003). So, it helps reducing poverty and inequality. Thus, free schooling has remained a political agenda in many countries and further made compulsory in some countries. Contrary to this, some Marxists view formal education as

the elite's political apparatus to legitimize the inequality and hierarchy in that school reproduces

unequal power relations between the elites and the working class. Moreover, some thinkers like

Evan Illich examine school radically and view that school is a repressive institution which

indoctrinates pupils; kills their creativity and makes them submissive (Motta, 2012).

Looking from these sociological perspectives, the role of school, as experienced by my

research participants is different. There was a mismatch between the objective set by the

curriculum and that of expectations made by the community people from the school education.

The objective of school was making students literate, developing personalities and preparing

them for higher education whoever attended schools. Likewise, the parents had sent their

children to school with a hope that it would help their children to relieve from the present

cumbersome and hard life of agriculture. But it neither helped to prepare the children for their

adult roles by enhancing capability to get employment beyond their traditional occupation nor to

support to enhance the productivity of their traditional occupation. Thus the situation is hardly

aligned with functionalist's view of education.. The school structure, curriculum, timing, medium

of instruction were all designed centrally rather than addressing the context and people specific

expectation. The school's working hour and examination schedule were set irrespective of the

free or busy occupational schedule of the community people. Even though most of the children

speak the *Tamang* language in their home and community, Nepali language was the medium of

instruction. However, the school was not creating or enhancing the existing inequality within the

same community. As the people were from similar socio economic background, the school

system put similar advantage or disadvantage to all community people. Moreover, there was no

significant difference between the people who completed school education or left in terms of

their lifestyle, income and employment. Thus, education system was neither beneficial preparing

children for their adult role as considered by functionalists nor widening inequality within the

community as blamed by Marxist perspective to the school system.

Thus schooling was acting as indifferent institution with its own agenda and system.

Whoever fits in the system, they find schooling relevant and comfortable and the opposite was

true for those whose agenda and circumstances do not match with that of the school. Because of

this, even within the similar socio economic background, the decision of dropping out or

continuing school differs as per the different perception on role of education from simply making

their children literate to making their children to acquire power, prestige and property. The

peoples' action towards school dropout or school continuation was directed by their own value

given to education which again depends on their background. Thus the dropping out

phenomenon was happened as conceived by interactionist view that meanings are reconstructed

by actors in the process of interaction rather than being imposed by the external social system

(Layder, 2005).

Relevancy of Free Secondary Education

Both cohort study done in the research site and national level statistics (MoE, 2016b),

show that more than half of the primary level graduates do not join secondary level education. It

means majority of primary level graduates are not utilizing the facility of free secondary

education provisioned by the state. This scenario suggests two possibilities: either the school

education is not accessible to people or people do not find the secondary level school education

relevant to their life. Interpreting the views of people, I reflect that the ethnic people do not find

the school education fully relevant to their life and livelihood. Except making children literate in

letter and numeracy, school education did not ensure to meet their major aspiration: comfortable

job beyond agriculture and better income. Although secondary education in the country aims in

policy to produce skilled human resources making the students ready for the world of work (MoE, 2009; MoE, 2016a), these people do not experience the school education (general) helpful for providing any job skill. So there is no guarantee of job outside agriculture for school graduates. Although, the secondary level education opens an opportunity to the lowest level job in the government service, the experience of ethnic people shows that it is not possible for those who are lacking social and political network to the power. Even not being able to grasp the economic benefits, social benefit and political empowerment, as discussed theoretically, has remained beyond the scope of school education for the people.

As a result, rather than regretting their decision of school dropout, the dropouts justify their action of dropout decision. They have had live experiences of some visible failure cases of educated person in the community who invested their scarce time, money and energy in education for no additional benefit from it. There was no significant difference between life and livelihood between the school dropouts and the secondary-level-education graduates. Due to this live experience of no significant benefit of education in the line of their aspiration, parents were not ready to invest any more in education after some year of their children's schooling. On contrary to this, the same parents were ready to invest a considerable amount of money to send their children to abroad for employment. The rationale behind this is guided by their experience that the investment in education simply deems hope for in generating income, while investment in foreign employment ensures a confirmed return. Thus, parents have invested to send their children to foreign employment even by taking a high interest loan. It all verifies that the dropout decision in most cases is due to the irrelevancy of schooling to income and livelihoods.

In this context, the provision of free and compulsory primary education made by the country for the last six decades (GON, 1956; NPC, 1962, 1965, 1970, 1975) and the provisions

of free education up to the secondary level made my new constitution (SLP, 2015) is less meaningful. In this sense, spending the largest share of its revenue by state in school education to access the school education to the weaker section of the population needs to rethink in its modality. Thus, unless the curriculum of secondary education is revisited based on the socio economic structure of the society, the constitutional and developmental provision of free education up to secondary level does not bring any benefit to economically poor and socially disadvantaged population.

School System Vs Social Structure

The low internal efficiency with the high dropout and repetition rate is the existing feature of school education in Nepal. Globally, most of the literature presents both school related and non- school (socio economic and cultural) related predictors or contributing factors for keeping a child outside school (Hunt, 2008). These various factors are described in literature under different categories such as pull/push factors, demand/supply side factors, internal/external factors, and individual/institutional predictors. However, school related factors, household related factors (socio, economic and cultural) and child/parents related character are the commonly used categories to explain the school dropout phenomenon in Nepal (DoE, WE &; IEES & MOECSW, 1993; Manandhar & Sthapit, 2012; TESON, 2004; UNICEF, 2012). Out of these various factors identified by earlier research, socio economic and cultural factors are more emphasized (DoE, WE & UNICEF, 2012; Karki, Acharya & Baral, 2014; Manandhar & Sthapit, 2012;) however few have revealed the lack of child friendly environment, corporal punishment and lack of quality teaching as some reasons for school dropout (Wagle, 2012). This was valid in case of global studies as well. Battin-Pearsion, et al (2002) claims the structural strains theory as the most appropriate theory to deal the dropout phenomenon. Rumberger, (2008) also focuses the

demographic factors such as gender, race and ethnicity, and family socio economic status as the important factors of dropout.

Most of the research participants in my research site also emphasized more to their own socio economic and cultural context as the main reasons for their school dropout. Even the school structure was irrelevant to the context and their livelihood; they blamed their own context for not being compatible with the existing curriculum. There are two reason reasons for making being socio economic and cultural context more dominant in school dropout phenomenon in Nepal. First, the school related factors were more associated with the children's inconvenience while the inconvenient socio-economic and cultural factors are associated with the parents. Since, the parents are the main decision makers of school dropout, the problems faced by children are undervalued by the parents. Thus, even if a child decides for school dropout in some cases it does not get materialized unless parents sanction it, Neither the children well share their problems to the parents nor their voices are well listened. Thus the school related factors are considered less influential than the socio economic factors. Second, for many poor and rural people in Nepal, engagement in household chores is traditionally accepted culture and school going is optional. So, children's school was impossible unless parents made them free from household. This is totally different from the case of developed society where education is not only free but also compulsory. Thus, only after the school becomes fully accessible to people, the school related issue comes into surface in case of developing country like Nepal. This is why the reason socio-economic and cultural factors are highlighted in case of developing countries (Hunt, 2008).

School Leaver or Dropout?

While reflecting the dropout phenomena, I believe that they are school leavers than the dropouts. The discourse of dropout emerged from the structural exclusion in the developing countries. The word, 'School dropout' is commonly used for the school non-completers whereas the non-completers are termed as school leavers in developed countries. These two words possess two different connotations. The 'school dropouts' are those who are left by the system as they are unable to remain in the system. The word 'school leavers' are those who leave the system on their own decision. They abandon the school system as per their wish.

Children may discontinue school mainly due to three reasons. First, they may not be able to cope with the class room teaching and learning activities. They cannot make satisfactory performance. As a result, they fail the exam and become illegible for further education. Thus, they are pushed out from school. Second, it is equally possible to discontinue school because students or parents can not pay the costs of the schooling. This also compels them to be out of school despite they may be interested to continue it. In these two cases, they cannot remain in the system because of their inability to cope with the system. Thus the system itself drops out them from school. Unlike these situations, there is an equal chance that the children/parents leave school on their own wish as they do not like to continue the schools further. They, therefore, leave school voluntarily. In such case, they are school leavers. As this study revealed, the people were leaving school as soon as they reached to their educational ceiling as they perceived further education as irrelevant to their life. They judged the situation and found that it was loss of time, resources and effort to make investment for further schooling. In such a case, the discontinuing school is the people's choice rather than their compulsion with respect to their background. Thus, 'school leaver' might be more appropriate word to refer them rather than the school dropouts.

Conclusion

In this final section, I have drawn conclusions with each of the research questions applying the holistic perspective of meaning making process of out of school children phenomenon. It is followed by the discussion on the dynamics of school dropout.

The first research question served the status of the out-of-school children to determine its prevalence. Generally in Nepal, the prevalence of out-of-school children is unevenly distributed. The intensity of OOSC is higher among certain groups of population with specific socio economic characters and living in some geographic areas. It is higher among the economically poor and socially disadvantaged section of population. But in terms of gender, the prevalence is higher among girls in Terai and Western Region of the country while it is just opposite in the urban areas and the eastern hilly region. Likewise, the prevalence is more sever among the population residing in the Terai region in comparison to hill and mountain region, and it is higher among rural population than the urban population. Similarly, adolescent age is the potential age for school dropout and at this age group, the school dropout rate increases at galloping rate.

The second research question described the assessment of contributing factors for school dropout. Like most other research conducted in Nepal and elsewhere, this study confirmed the similar factors associated with school dropouts. For example, poverty, parent's education, caste/ethnicity, age, gender and place of residence are all statistically significant to explain out of school event. However, the total contribution of these major factors to the explanation of the OOS event is very little. These results have left almost 80 percent unanswered about the cause of school dropout. Hence, this study has confirmed that the school dropout is not the linear cause of only those identified factors. Supporting the quantitative result, the qualitative findings also showed multiple discomforts experienced by people were responsible to make the decision of

dropout at some point. However, people gave different value to those different circumstances compelling them to take the decision of dropout.

The third research question explored the perceptions of the parents and children on the relevancy of school education and reasons for school dropout. This research concludes that every person perceives formal education as essential to their life in the beginning of the schooling days. They believe that the certain level of school education is essential to run their life. However, every human mind is constructed with the 'educational ceiling' which guides them to complete school education or dropout before completing it. The educational ceiling is different for different individuals and depends on their personal life experience, level of exposure to the outer world, socio-economic context of the community and the level of pain felt by people on various discomforts they face regarding schooling. Thus, the educational ceiling - the major dynamics of school dropout, is subjective in nature. But, during the process of making school dropout decision, the parents also accounts their experienced cost and the expected benefit of further education. Likewise, children weigh between the experienced pain and the anticipated gain of further education. In this perplexing situation, when they find the cost or the pain higher than the benefit or gain at some point, they decide to dropout. Once they get dropout, they always try to justify their decision as a rational choice.

The fourth research question assessed the process of the out-of-school phenomenon qualitatively. Actually, the dropout phenomenon is a long process and the result of various inconveniences experienced by children and parents. The accumulation of various discomforts faced at school, home and community to continue schooling would bring them gradually to a stronger position in favor of taking the decision of dropout. But still the children continue to school until the parents or children encounter with the final event which acts as a trigger to take

the ultimate decision of dropout. This trigger is simply one more discomfort faced by the

decision maker in the series of earlier discomforts. Although this trigger is considered as the

cause of school dropout, all those inconveniences faced regarding schooling equally contribute in

the decision. In this process, the peers, unemployed educated youths and some uneducated-but-

high-income people of the community act as the actors to motivate the parents and children

towards their school dropout decision.

The basic premise of this research was to explore why there are a significant number of

out of school children in the country despite improving the accessibility of school to the people

over years. The analysis of different forms of data and interaction with the stakeholders reveals

that the diminishing relevance of school education to their life and livelihoods after certain grade

is one of the causes of early dropouts. Lacking assurance of educational benefits from higher

grades of school level education such as earning and employment motivates people to take the

school dropout decision. All these depend upon the socio economic background of individual.

Regarding poverty, as considered the major reason for school dropout, this research

reveals that the school dropout decision made by economically poor parents is basically guided

by their position on cost-benefit analysis rather than being financially unable to send their

children to school. It is important to understand that the sacrifice of cost for sending children to

school is relatively higher to the parents who are economically poor than the rich one. Likewise,

due to several disadvantaged characters of an economically poor family, they can not take the

full benefits of education which is possible for a child from rich family. It means, in comparison

to rich family, the poor family need to pay relatively more cost for less benefit. Thus, there is a

higher chance of school dropout from the poor strata of population in comparison to the better

off strata. As they find investing in education is less relevant to them, the poor family becomes ready to invest in other sector where the benefits are confirmed.

Likewise, earlier research studies showed that the lack of awareness among economically poor and socially disadvantaged parents as another major cause of the school dropout decision. Since these groups of parents are generally illiterate or less educated, they are understood as having lack of awareness and do not understand the value of education. But his research does not agree with this earlier understanding. In reality, rather than being the parents unaware as many research studies claim, the decision of school dropout by these groups of parents is based on the judgment about the experienced cost and expected benefit from further schooling. Parents, in fact, are very aware about which level of school education gives them optimum benefits to match their own context and their socio-economic capital. Thus school dropouts in many cases are voluntary decisions. Since this is a subjective judgment made upon the personal worldview and context, the decision may be understood as unique from the perspective of other group of people who are living with different background with different worldview.

Since, school dropout phenomenon is a long process interaction of people with the objective reality they face in school, home and in the society at large, it involves a subjective judgment on the relevancy of education in comparison to make effort against it. In this regards, the experience of pain versus gain or cost versus benefit depends upon their own educational ceiling which again depends upon their life experience, exposure to the outer world and their own socio-economic condition. All these subjective phenomena make the school dropout a complex phenomenon.

Way Forward

The aforementioned finding and discussion shows that it is important to understand the complexity of school dropout phenomenon. Since the out of school issue depends more on socio, economic and cultural context of the people, the blanket approach adopted in education system does not work to achieve its goal for all section of population who are rested on different contexts. The school dropout phenomenon differs from one community to another and it needs to explore the individual dropout story in order to reach to the crux of the problem. Based on the aforementioned reflection and conclusion on school dropout phenomenon, this research puts forward the following three areas to address the OOS phenomenon for future studies:

First, the low value of correlation coefficient reveals a weak relation between the major OOS factors with student's background. This bivariate correlational analysis does not consider the association of all these factors in combination to explain the OOS situation. Thus, rather than simply conducting correlational analysis and the chi square test, a more complex quantitative analysis such as the structural equation modeling or path analysis are needed for the comprehensive explanation of the dropout phenomenon.

Second, the present school level education is not much relevant to certain sections of the population, especially those who are economically poor and socially disadvantaged. Thus, further study is necessary to understand how we can make the enhanced relevance of school level education to those sections of the population.

As the dropout phenomenon depends more upon the overall socio economic structure of the society, it should not be limited or isolation the educational system of the country. Thus the study on how other sectors can also contribute to the educational enhancement of the country is worth exploring.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Major Factors of Dropout/OOSC Identified by Earlier Research Studies

Causes of dropouts/OOSC	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
Household related factors					
• Household poverty and economic hardship	√	√	√	√	√
• Low and insecure incomes (small land, wage)	√	√			
• Inability to afford stationery and books					√
• Not getting meal at time					√

Causes of dropouts/OOSC	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
• Debt to run family	√				
• Engage in household chores, looking cattle, sibling	√	√		√	√
• Staying home and sending parents for wage earning	√		√	√	√
• Child at work/child labor	√	√	√	√	√
• Unfavorable home environment	√				
• Sickness or death of parents			√		
• Large number of children					√
Socio-cultural factors					
• Poor relevancy of education to life			√		
• Uncertain economic return	√				
• First priority – survival not education	√				
• Trade-off between education and work	√				
• Going abroad for job					√
• Gender discrimination					√
• Seasonal migration			√		
Parents related factors					
• Lack of awareness among parents	√			√	√
• Parent's not worried on dropout	√				√
• Parent's negligence/irresponsible bahavior			√		√
• Parents passiveness in children education			√		√
• Parents lower literacy level	√			√	√
• Parent's expectation from child in income		√	√		
• Thinking education not worthy for investment			√		√
Child related characters					
• Lack of interest in study	√	√		√	√
• More interest in play than study					√
• Irregular attendance	√				
• Late entry into school	√				

Causes of dropouts/OOSC	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
• Bad company at school or neighborhood	√		√	√	
• Child's feeling of responsibility to support home		√			
• Disability		√			
• Long illness		√		√	
• Being orphan				√	
• Over age/ under age	√				√
Socio-cultural factor					
• Gender discrimination			√		
• Early child marriage			√	√	√
• Second marriage of parent			√		
• Seasonal migration			√	√	
• Traditional custom, belief and practices					√
• educated unemployment					√
• Conflict			√		
School related					
• Teachers' absenteeism	√				
• Irregular classes / operation of school	√			√	
• Lack of child-friendly environment	√				
• Demotivating school environment	√				√
• Lack of physical facilities (toilet)	√	√			√
• Lack of committed/dynamic head/teacher	√		√		
• Lack of meetings/ interaction with parents	√		√		
• Class repetition/fail				√	√
• School's fixed time table	√				
• Language problem in teaching learning	√				
• School cost (admission, stationery, uniform)	√	√			√
• Punishment (physical, mental)		√		√	√
• High student-teacher ratio		√	√		

Causes of dropouts/OOSC	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5
• Lack of proper pedagogy		√	√		
• Lack of adequate female teacher			√		
• Lack of ideal teacher/ good manner			√		
• Lack of proper classroom management			√		
• School at far distance/geographical remoteness			√	√	√
• Discrimination to low/high caste student			√	√	√
• difficulty in study					√
• Harassment in school					√
• Frequent loss of learning material					√

R1: Kushiyait (2007), R2: Wagle (2012), R3: Groot (2007), R4: FBC (2012), R5: TESON, (2004)

Annex 2: Survey Methodology of Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/2011

NLSS III has followed the Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS) methodology developed and promoted by the World Bank (WB). One of the main features of the methodology is taking a relatively "smaller" sample size compared with the other in-depth household surveys.

Sampling Frame

The survey constructed a frame based on the data set with basic information (number of households, total population, and male and female population) at the ward level. This data set was used to construct the frame for the selection of primary sampling units (PSUs). A group of wards was considered as single PSU, to ensure that each unit continued at least 30 households. A list of all households was prepared in all the wards selected for the survey. Selection of households was carried out from these listings using systematic sampling with a random start. Before the listing, an intensive cartographic work was undertaken (in the urban areas and some of the rural areas) to form appropriate enumeration block having around 200 households.

Stratification

The NLSS-III divided the whole country into 14 strata: mountains, urban areas of the Kathmandu valley, other urban areas in the hills, rural eastern hills, rural central hills, rural western hills, rural mid-western hills, rural far-western hills, urban Tarai, rural eastern Tarai, rural central Tarai, rural western Tarai, rural mid-western Tarai, and rural far-western Tarai.

Sample Design: Panel and Cross-sectional

Two independent samples were selected: the first was a cross sectional sample and the second was a panel. The panel sample consisted of PSUs and households previously enumerated in one or both of the past two rounds of the NLSS survey. A total of 500 household were selected as cross-section sample and that of panel sample was 100 households. An additional 6

households were selected in each PSU, to be used as replacement household for non-response among the 12 originally selected households.

Sample Size

The sample size for the survey was estimated at 7200 households in 600 PSUs. Among them, 100 PSUs with 1200 households interviewed in the NLSS-I or NLSS-II were selected for re-interviewing in the NLSS-III. And, 500 PSUs with 6000 households were selected as the cross section sample. The PSUs were selected with probability proportional to size, the measure of size being the number of households in each ward. As mentioned earlier, twelve households were selected for the enumeration from each of the selected PSU. However in total 7020 households were enumerated.

	Eastern	Central	Western	Mid western	Far western	Nepal
Distribution of PSUs by belt and region, 2010/11						
Nepal	**129**	**230**	**116**	**73**	**52**	**600**
Mountain	13	16	1	6	9	45
Hill	42	145	72	37	21	317
Terai	74	69	43	30	22	238
Distribution of Sample households by belt and region, 2010/11						
Nepal	**1,548**	**2,760**	**1,392**	**876**	**624**	**7,200**
Mountain	156	192	12	72	108	540
Hill	504	1,740	864	444	252	3,804
Terai	888	828	516	360	264	2,856

Survey Questionnaires

NLSS-III used two types of questionnaires: household questionnaire and community questionnaire. There are two separate community questionnaires one each for rural and urban communities. First, draft questionnaires were developed were pre-tested several times to assess

their use under actual field conditions. Pretests were conducted in each of the Kanchanpur, Doti, Banke, Rupendehi, Kaski, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Nuwakot, Dolakha, Dhanusha, Dhankuta, Jhapa and Panchthar districts. Following the experience of the pre-tests and the feedback obtained from potential data users, the questionnaires to be used for the actual survey were finalized.

In line with the project's objective of improving linkages between data users and the data collecting agency, the data needs and priorities identified by the project's Steering and Technical Committees were given special consideration while finalizing the questionnaires. An 80-paged household questionnaire with 21 sections and 9 appendices was administered. In section 7, education related information was enumerated. From households the information of 28670 respondents were surveyed on education information. The following table gives the education related variable included in the survey. In addition to this the group of income level the respondents belong.

The education related variables measured in the NLSS III survey

Sex	Type of school/college
Age	Class currently attending
Marital status	No. of days attending school
Caste/ethnic	No. of days supposed to go school
Father living in home?	Reason for absenting from school
Father: highest degree completed	Mode of transport
Mother living in home?	Time taken to go to school
Mother: highest degree completed	Take any private tuition
Can read a letter?	Tuition teacher from own school?
Can write a letter?	Expenditure on education
Where did person learn?	: monthly tuition fee (rs)
Ever been refused admission	: on other fee (rs)
Reason to refuse admission	: on uniform (rs)
Types of school/college refused	: on textbook/supplies (rs)

Educational background	: on transportation (rs)
Reason for never attending school	: on private tuition (rs)
Type of school/college	: on others (rs)
Highest level completed	Receive scholarship?
Years to complete primary level (1-5)	Value of scholarship (rs)
Years takes to complete class 10	Form of scholarship
Times the SLC exam was given	Types of scholarship
Age when left school	Class attending in last academic year
Last attending before leaving school	Years to complete primary level excluding ECD
Reason for leaving school	

Field Teams

In the NLSS-III, data were collected by 20 field teams. Each team consisted of one supervisor, three interviewers (including at least two female interviewers) and one specially trained data entry operator. Each team was equipped with a laptop computer, solar panel power box, GPS device, and other necessary other logistics required in the field. Among the team members, supervisor was responsible for coordinating, supervising, and monitoring the field work. Besides, supervisor was responsible to complete the community questionnaires. Other responsibilities included checking the filled-in questionnaires and doing real time corrections, and supervising data entry activities.

Selection of Field Staff and Training

All together 100 field workers were assigned in the main enumeration of the survey. Majority of the field workers were mobilized from the regular staffs of the CBS and the Branch Statistics Offices (BSOs). In addition to the regular staff, 40 female interviewers were newly recruited for the purposes mentioned earlier - to conduct interviews related to women and to work as an anthropo-metrician.

The training of the field workers (supervisors, interviewers, and data entry operators) was the main training for the survey. The training commenced on January 17, 2010 and concluded on February 14, 2010 covering 25 working days in total. Different methods of training were adopted. The methods used included study of the questionnaire and the reference manual, classroom sessions, class exercise sessions, mock interviews and field practices and discussions.

Data Collection and Supervision

Data collection was carried out over a period of 12 months to cover a complete cycle in agricultural activities and to capture seasonal variations in other variables. Fieldwork took place in four subsequent phases.

During the survey period, the field work was constantly supervised and monitored by the core team members. Besides the core team members, at times central supervisions were carried out by the Director General and Deputy Director General of the Bureau. The core team members prepared a list of instructions based on the observations of the central supervision. A supervision form was developed for the purpose of field supervision.

Data Entry and Management

As in the previous two rounds of the survey, a distinctive feature of the NLSS-III was the use of personal computer in the field. A data entry program developed specifically for the survey was installed on each computer provided to the field teams. The data entry program enabled the data entry operator as well as the team supervisor to find out mistakes and missing data (if any) and to perform inconsistency checks. When problems or errors were found, the interviewers returned to the households to correct the errors. The field supervision from the CBS included the real time check and verification of data entry work in the field. This process of real time entering, checking and correcting data in the field helped to enhance the quality of data collected.

It also reduced the time lag between data collection and data processing. This also helped to make data available for processing shortly after the completion of the collection phase.

After the completion of the field work, the data diskettes were sent back to the CBS from the field. Data processing and analysis was done in the CBS using STATA statistical software package.

Annex 3: Quality Measures Adopted in National Population and Housing Census, 2011

- Utmost attention was laid for quality in the whole census operation, from designing of the questionnaires and manuals to standardization of the training of enumerators, monitoring of the field work, processing operation and tabulation as well. Continuity of form-1 and form-2 has been maintained in the design which was helpful in simultaneous data entry and also in tracing the common identification of both forms.

- Wide range of consultation and roundtable workshops with various stakeholders and data users were carried out both in the center and districts to collect the suggestions/feedbacks before finalizing the census tools (questionnaires and manuals). Also, the questionnaires and manuals were revised and peer-reviewed by the subject matter specialist and (gender and social inclusion) GESI experts to make the tools more user and GESI friendly.

- The ratio of supervisor to enumerators has been improved to 1:4 as compared to 1:5 in 2001. The work load on an average stands at 828 persons per enumerator against 1135 in 2001.

- None of the wards or VDC or any part of the country is missed in the census which could not happen in 2001 due to the conflict.

- Wide range of mass media and publicity materials (in various local languages) including individual SMS messages were used to pre-inform the respondents about the contents and methodologies of the census. An official census website and a dedicated toll-free hotline were used to receive suggestions/complaints of any omission/duplication of households throughout the field operation period to ensure the wide participation of the respondents.

- There was independent monitoring and observation of the census field work in all 75 districts by the civil societies and their feedback was encouraging in terms of the coverage and dedication of the census staff.

Annex 4: Literate Population (%) Aged 5 Years and Above by Educational Attainment

	Population that have completed the educational level of			
	Primary (1-5)	L. Secondary (6-8)	Secondary (9-10)	SLC
National	26.3	13.7	7.8	6.8
Male	29.1	15.3	9.0	8.1
Female	23.6	12.1	6.6	5.7
Rural – Urban				
Urban	21.0	14.3	10.3	12.3
Rural	27.4	13.5	7.2	5.7
Ecological belt				
Mountain	29.4	12.4	6.0	4.7
Hill	27.0	14.5	8.3	7.9
Terai	25.2	13.1	7.5	6.2
Development Region				
EDR	26.1	14.3	9.0	8.0
CDR	23.1	12.0	7.1	7.3
WDR	28.5	15.7	8.7	7.1
MWDR	30.0	14.1	6.6	4.9
FWDR	29.5	13.8	7.2	4.4

(CBS, 2012)

Annex 5: Net Enrollment and Dropout Status over the Period

Level/Year		% of School Age Children		
		2007/08	**2010/11**	**2014/15**
Primary	NER	89.1	94.5	96.2
	Drop out	16.0	6.0	4.2
Lower secondary	NER	52.9	69.3	74.6
	Drop out	7.1	6.4	5.3
Secondary	NER	35.3	46.5	56.1
	Drop out	5.0	8.7	5.3

Source: Nepal education in figures: At a glance (DOE, 2008, 2011 and 2015)

Annex 6: OOSC in Total Population and Share of Never/ever Attended in OOSC

Age	% of School attending and school not attending children		% of Never attended and ever attended children among OOSC	
	Attending	Not attending (OOSC)	Never attended	Ever attended (dropout)
Age 5	77.2	22.8	99.1	0.9
Age 6	89	11	100	0
Age 7	94.3	5.7	97.4	2.6
Age 8	96.2	3.8	96	4
Age 9	97.2	2.8	89.1	10.9
Age 10	95.8	4.2	87.9	12.1
Age 11	96.5	3.5	65.8	34.2
Age 12	93.2	6.8	47.4	52.6
Age 13	93.5	6.5	56.2	43.8
Age 14	87.8	12.2	41.2	58.8
Total	92.2	7.8	79.0	21.0

(CBS, 2011)

Annex 7: Result of Multinomial Logistic Regression on OOSC and its factors

Omnibus Tests of Model Coefficients

		Chi-square	Df	Sig.
	Step	570.424	23	.000
Step 1	Block	570.424	23	.000
	Model	570.424	23	.000

Model Summary

Step	-2 Log likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
1	3354.344[a]	.076	.181

a. Estimation terminated at iteration number 7 because parameter estimates changed by less than .001.

Classification Table[a]

	Observed		Predicted		
			7.08 education background		Percentage Correct
			ISC	OOSC	
Step 1	7.08 education background	ISC	6624	12	99.8
		OOSC	537	21	3.8
	Overall Percentage				92.4

Variables in the Equation

		B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1[a]	v01_03_SEX(1)	.131	.094	1.940	1	.164	1.139
	v01_03_AGE	-.070	.017	17.255	1	.000	.932
	v01_06_MARITAL_STATUS_RE_RE(1)	2.871	.611	22.080	1	.000	17.650
	v01_08_CASTE_Cate4			41.785	3	.000	
	v01_08_CASTE_Cate4(1)	-.501	.130	14.903	1	.000	.606
	v01_08_CASTE_Cate4(2)	-.515	.135	14.468	1	.000	.598
	v01_08_CASTE_Cate4(3)	.335	.172	3.770	1	.052	1.397
	v01_11_FATHER_L_HOME			4.191	2	.123	
	v01_11_FATHER_L_HOME(1)	-.222	.120	3.423	1	.064	.801
	v01_11_FATHER_L_HOME(2)	-.348	.302	1.329	1	.249	.706

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	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
v01_14_MOTHER_L_HOME			29.188	2	.000	
v01_14_MOTHER_L_HOME(1)	.612	.211	8.451	1	.004	1.845
v01_14_MOTHER_L_HOME(2)	1.229	.260	22.379	1	.000	3.417
belt_ECOLOGICAL			56.822	2	.000	
belt_ECOLOGICAL(1)	-.787	.214	13.469	1	.000	.455
belt_ECOLOGICAL(2)	-.795	.110	51.974	1	.000	.451
region_DEVELOPMENT_M			77.338	4	.000	
region_DEVELOPMENT_M(1)	-1.478	.207	50.862	1	.000	.228
region_DEVELOPMENT_M(2)	-.727	.147	24.470	1	.000	.483
region_DEVELOPMENT_M(3)	-.676	.134	25.357	1	.000	.509
region_DEVELOPMENT_M(4)	-.727	.129	31.759	1	.000	.484
urbrur(1)	.071	.139	.259	1	.611	1.073
POOR(1)	.156	.187	.697	1	.404	1.169
Quantile_7			66.334	4	.000	
Quantile_7(1)	-.354	.177	4.000	1	.046	.702
Quantile_7(2)	-1.021	.232	19.368	1	.000	.360
Quantile_7(3)	-1.588	.266	35.631	1	.000	.204
Quantile_7(4)	-1.915	.309	38.347	1	.000	.147
HHsize_D(1)	.192	.108	3.148	1	.076	1.211
Constant	-.253	.334	.573	1	.449	.776

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: v01_03_SEX, v01_03_AGE, v01_06_MARITAL_STATUS_RE_RE, v01_08_CASTE_Cate4, v01_11_FATHER_L_HOME, v01_14_MOTHER_L_HOME, belt_ECOLOGICAL, region_DEVELOPMENT_M, urbrur, POOR, Quantile_7, HHsize_D.

Annex 8: Research Site

One of the *Tamang* communities located not very far from Kathmandu metropolis was purposefully selected with a three-fold rationale: First, the *Tamang* community, the fifth largest ethnic group in Nepal with a population of roughly 1.5 million according to 2011 census. This is one of the deprived ethnic groups in Nepal with a comparatively low human development index (???) and a low literacy rate (???). Second, located just 15 kilometers from the heart of Kathmandu, reaching this community was an entirely different experience of remoteness, low living standards, and a typical hill village of Nepal due to its geographic location and economic infrastructure. The third reason of selecting this community was the high intensity of school dropouts. A cohort study conducted in the schools in this community showed that only 10 percent of students (2 out of 20 students enrolled in grade one in 2005 were able to reach grade ten in 2014 without any grade repetition; 6 of them had reached grade nine with one grade repetition in their school life; and the rest of the students had permanently dropped out from the system. Many of those dropouts had already married and some of them even had their own children.

Geographically, this community located on a hilly landscape, was no less than any remote village of Nepal. Despite having a dirt road, people needed to walk about one to two hours from their homes through a dense forest to access public transport. More than ninety percent of the families in this community were *Tamang*, and most of them communicated in their own mother tongue. Marriage at the age of 15 or 16 was common in the area. Despite low income of people, there was a practice of high spending, even taking loans from the market for various rites and rituals. Generally, the 'Ghewa' (death rites) was the most expensive event for them. When someone died in the family, it was necessarily pushing the family into debt.

Agriculture was the main occupation for many households keeping them engaged the whole year. Maize and millet were the main crops which they either sold directly or used for brewing alcohol to sell and buy rice for their daily consumption. People had no interest in this occupation as it was a hardlife and it was not benefitting them at all. But still, they were accustomed with this occupation and had not been able to give it up. To sustain agriculture, animal husbandry (either cows or goats) was essential, which was even more cumbersome and time-consuming keeping the people busy every day. Few of the families were employed in the Nepal military services and some youth had been to Malaysia and Gulf countries for foreign-employment. Brewing alcohol at home and selling it in the market was the major side business for many families as it was a reliable source of income to meet their daily expenses. One could find plenty of marijuana plants in their fields as many youth of Kathmandu came to buy these plants. This was another source of income for some families. People were aware that engagement in both of these works, selling alcohol and marijuana, was illegal but this was their only alternate source of viable income.

Historically, residing inside the jungle, cutting trees and selling firewood at the market were their subsidiary occupation to meet their daily expenses. Likewise, they would go to the surrounding areas in the plain lands and work as agricultural laborers during the cropping and harvesting seasons. These were the secondary occupations for them. Now a day cutting trees is prohibited as the nearby forests have been converted to a national park. But still, the surrounding forest has an important value in their livelihood. They continue to collect various products for household use while evading the national park security personnel.

The daily life of children would start in the early morning. Going to the jungle to collect *sottar* and *syaula* (fodder and)for their cattle and fertilizer for farming was their daily routine

requiring about three hours of work in the morning. Then they would eat their morning meal in a hurry and go to school. After school, they needed to cut and gather at least one *doko* (bamboo basket) of grass. But in case of some children, they would spend same amount of time going to market and selling the alcohol brewed by their parents. During the time of cropping and harvesting, a child would be engaged even more in the fields making them irregular at school. Their parents had given more emphasis to household work than their school attendance. They had perceived that going to school could be done when there was no work at home.
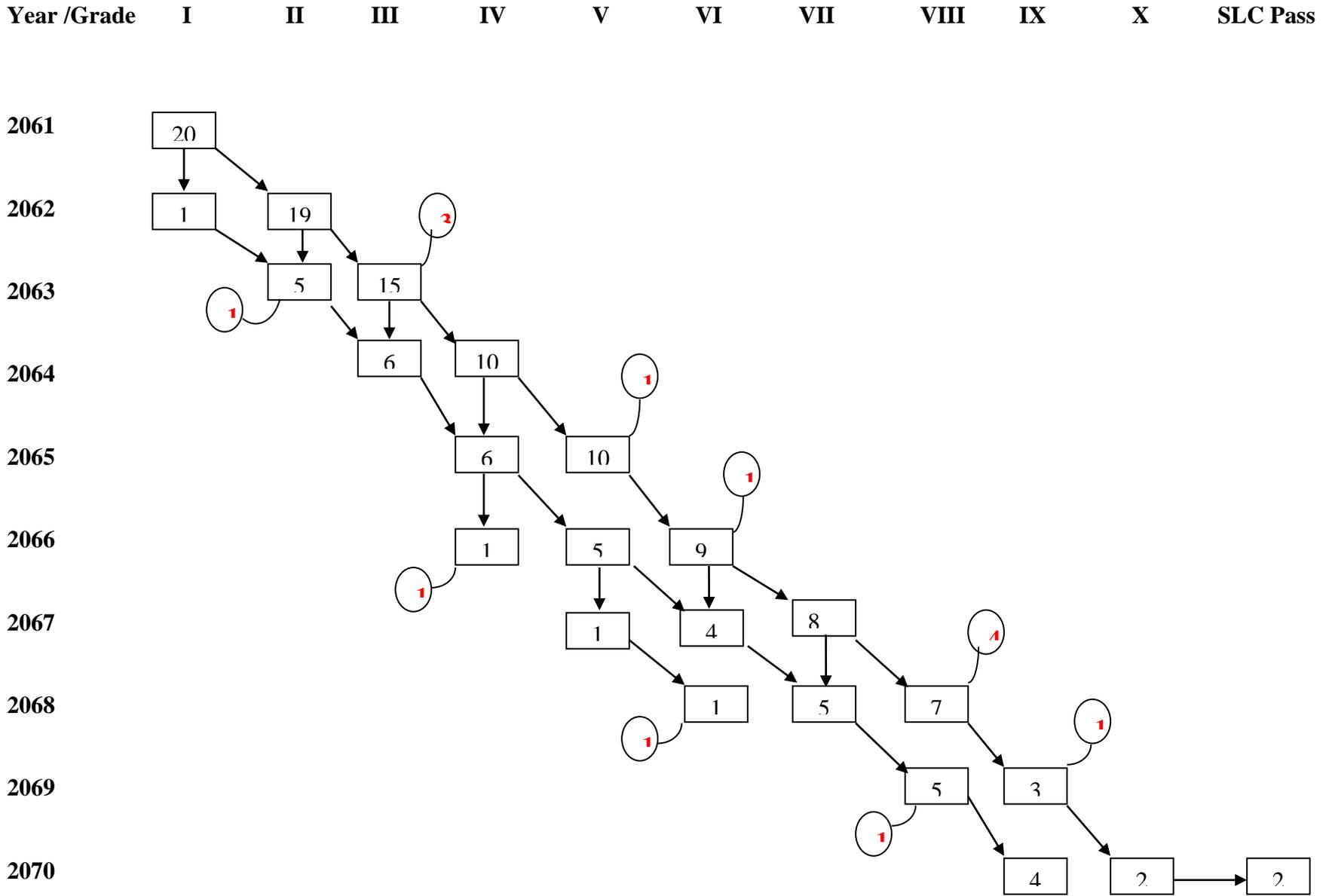
There was one lower secondary school in the community (ECD-grade 8) and the children had to walk one to two hours down to the valleys for secondary level education. Records from few years ago showed that there was a tradition of joining school at an older age than the official age. As a result, in general, they would be at least 15 or 16 years - or even older – when they completed the lower secondary level schooling. On the other hand, it was the right age for their marriage. If one looked at the trend of the past few years, many children were found leaving school after grade 5 as the school was only up to primary level. Now, this level has been raised to grade 8. However, in recent years, the trend has changed and there has been a significant improvement in children starting school around the right age.

The school had followed the national calendar and the national curriculum where the subject 'English language' was taught under the provision of local curriculum. The Census 2011 reported that among the children of age 5-16 in the whole VDC, 80 percent of male and 76 percent of female children were attending school education. The field visit showed that there was not a single school-age child at present in the researched site who had never stepped in school, except for one physically disabled child. However, there were many youth, and adults (in the age of 40 - 50 years or above) in the village who had never attended school. In
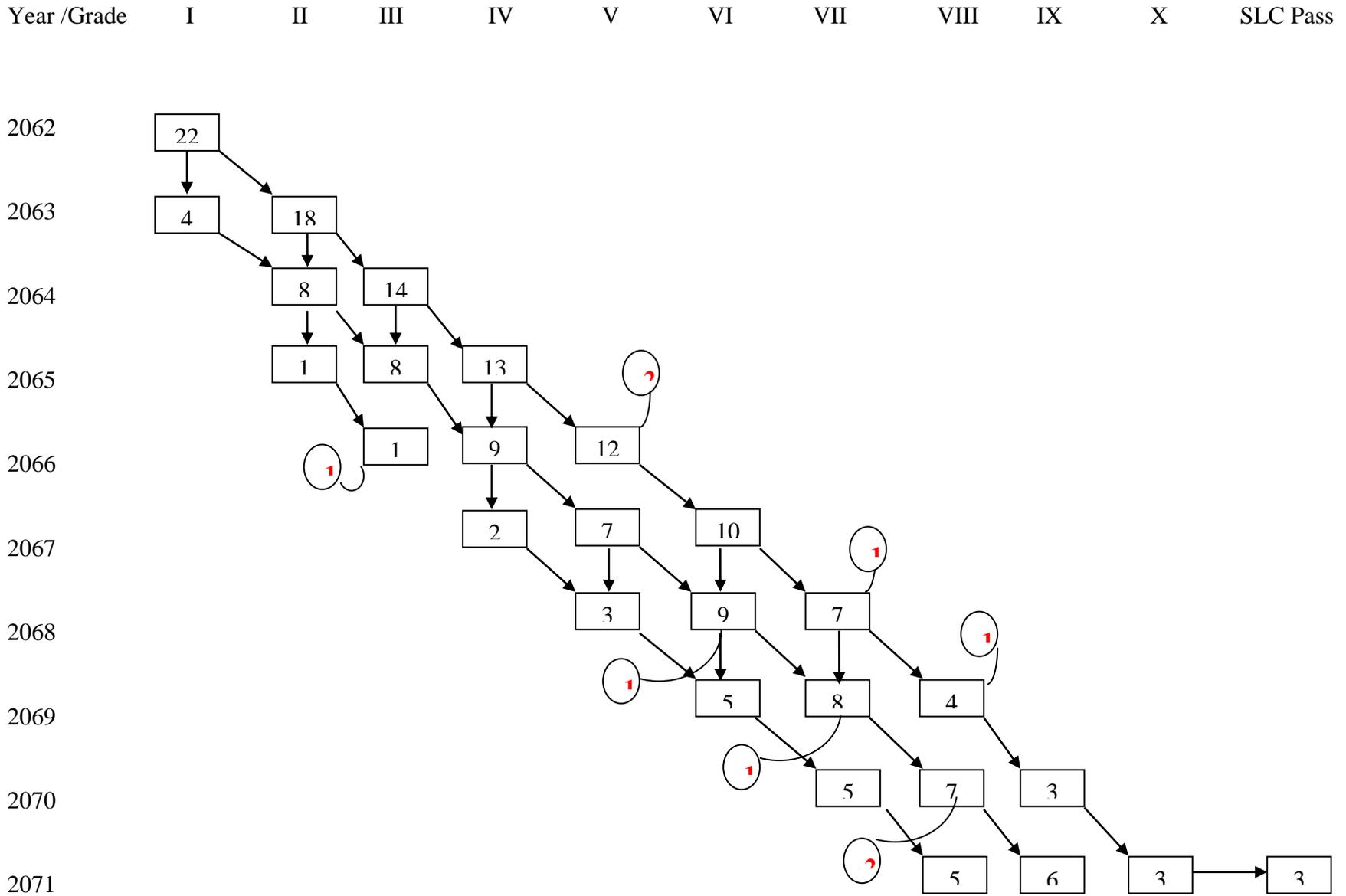
comparison to the last generation, attending formal school and studying for at least a few years had already become a social norm in the community.

Many girls were found to have been married and left school while studying in grade 7 or 8. In some cases, the girls were found to have dropped out of school after completing grade 7 or 8 and then to have gotten married within the next one or two years. Moreover, love-marriage by their own decisions among school age children was found to be in an increasing trend. Parents were found accepting easily their children's decision regarding their marriage. One could find many girls in the village who had become mothers at the age of 16 or 17. Most of them were dropouts from school before completing secondary level education. In case of boys, there was a great attraction toward joining the military sector. Hence, many boys were found trying to enter the Nepal army soon after they completed grade 8. If they did not succeed, then they would get a passport and try to go abroad for work. The young were found to have no attraction to their traditional occupation. They would engage in their traditional occupation only if no other alternatives were possible.

Annex 9: Cohort of the Students Enrolled in 2061 BS

Year /Grade	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	SLC Pass
2061	20										
2062	1	19	*2*								
2063	*1*	5	15								
2064			6	10	*1*						
2065				6	10	*1*					
2066			*1*	1	5	9					
2067					1	4	8	*1*			
2068				*1*		1	5	7	*1*		
2069							*1*	5	3		
2070								4	2	2	

Annex 10: Cohort of the Students Enrolled in 2062 BS

Year /Grade	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	SLC Pass
2062	22										
2063	4	18									
2064		8	14								
2065		1	8	13							
2066			1	9	12						
2067				2	7	10					
2068					3	9	7				
2069						5	8	4			
2070							5	7	3		
2071								5	6	3	3

Annex 11: Cohort of the Students Enrolled in 2063 BS

Year /Grade	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	SLC Pass