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Status of ICT Use in Government and Non-Government Schools of Surkhet District

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Abstract

The study investigates the status of ICT (Information and Communication Technology) use in government and non-government secondary schools in Surkhet district, Nepal. Despite efforts to integrate ICT into education policies, significant disparities persist in access, infrastructure and implementation. The research employs a quantitative approach, utilizing surveys and statistical analyses to explore the level of ICT usage among students, factors influencing ICT integration and students' perceptions. Findings reveal moderate positive correlations between ICT use and variables such as access to personal devices, digital literacy, access to school ICT resources and ICT integration in the curriculum. However, students demonstrate low levels of ICT usage at school, contrasting with higher home usage. Gender differences also emerge, with females exhibiting greater confidence in ICT usage. The study underscores the need for tailored strategies to enhance ICT utilization in education, including comprehensive teacher training programs and the development of a structured ICT policy framework.

Key words: *ICT, Integration, Access, Strategies, Usage*

Introduction

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has emerged as a transformative force in the 21st century, reshaping various aspects of human life, including education, communication, governance and commerce. ICT encompasses a wide array of technological tools and resources used to transmit, store, create, share, or exchange information. These include traditional media such as radio and television, as well as more modern technologies like telephones, computers and the internet. The integration of ICT into education has opened up new avenues for teaching and learning, enabling more interactive, engaging and flexible learning environments. In educational settings, ICT serves not only as a means of content

delivery but also as a tool for facilitating communication, collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving among students.

The use of ICT in education helps simplify complex concepts, making it easier for students to understand and apply knowledge to real-life situations. For example, multimedia presentations, simulations and educational software allow students to visualize abstract concepts, making learning more tangible and relatable. Moreover, ICT supports differentiated instruction, enabling teachers to tailor educational experiences to meet the diverse needs and learning styles of students. It also plays a crucial role in fostering student autonomy, encouraging self-paced and self-directed learning, which is essential for lifelong education. UNESCO (2015) emphasizes the importance of ICT in modernizing educational systems, bridging educational divides and reaching out to remote and underserved populations. ICT not only enhances the quality of education but also ensures that learning opportunities are accessible to all, regardless of geographical or socio-economic barriers.

Dhital (2018) further underscores the value of ICT in accelerating the development of basic skills and competencies. He argues that ICT is not merely a supplementary tool but a fundamental component of modern education that prepares students for participation in a globalized and technology-driven world. The adoption of ICT in schools is seen as essential for equipping students with digital literacy, which is now considered a core competency in the 21st-century skillset. As societies increasingly rely on technology for communication, information access and problem-solving, the integration of ICT into education becomes indispensable.

Despite the acknowledged benefits and growing emphasis on ICT integration, the status of ICT use in secondary education in Nepal presents a complex and uneven landscape. While there have been concerted efforts by the government and educational stakeholders to incorporate ICT into teaching and learning practices, significant challenges remain. The implementation of various national initiatives such as the School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) from 2009 to 2015 and the ICT in Education Master Plan (2013-2017) demonstrates the policy-level commitment to promoting ICT in schools. However, the practical realization of these goals has been hindered by several obstacles.

One of the most pressing issues is the disparity in access to ICT infrastructure and resources across different regions and school types. Urban schools, particularly those in private or non-government sectors, are generally better equipped with computers, internet connectivity and trained personnel. In contrast, many rural and government schools struggle with outdated equipment, unreliable power supply and limited internet access. This digital divide creates unequal learning opportunities, exacerbating existing educational inequalities.

Tiwari (2021) highlights the uneven distribution of ICT resources in Nepalese schools and draws attention to the varying levels of teacher preparedness in integrating technology into the classroom. While some teachers have received basic ICT training, many lack the confidence or skills to effectively use digital tools in their pedagogy. The professional development programs that do exist are often short-term, irregular and insufficiently aligned

with teachers' needs. Consequently, even where ICT facilities are available, they are underutilized or misused, diminishing their potential impact on student learning.

Furthermore, systemic issues such as inadequate funding, lack of maintenance and poor monitoring mechanisms hinder the sustainability of ICT initiatives. The absence of a robust support system for schools and teachers limits the scalability and effectiveness of ICT integration. Additionally, the curriculum and assessment practices have not been adequately adapted to reflect ICT-based learning, resulting in a misalignment between teaching methods and evaluation standards.There are also cultural and socio-economic barriers to ICT adoption. In many communities, especially in rural areas, parents and guardians may not recognize the value of digital literacy or may lack the skills themselves to support their children's use of technology. Gender disparities also persist, with female students often facing more obstacles in accessing and using ICT tools due to societal norms and expectations.

Nevertheless, there are positive signs of progress. Some schools, particularly in more resourceful areas, have managed to successfully integrate ICT into their classrooms, demonstrating innovative teaching practices and improved student engagement. These success stories serve as models for broader implementation, showing that with the right support and infrastructure, ICT can significantly enhance the quality of education.

In light of the opportunities and challenges associated with ICT integration in education, this study seeks to explore the status of ICT usage in teaching and learning in government and non-government secondary schools in the Surkhet district of Nepal. By focusing on this specific region, the research aims to provide a localized understanding of how ICT is being implemented, what barriers exist and what practices can be adopted to enhance its effectiveness.The primary objective of this study is to examine the extent to which ICT is used in classrooms and to identify any disparities between government and non-government schools. This involves assessing access to ICT infrastructure, the availability and use of digital tools, the frequency and purpose of ICT use and the level of teacher training and student engagement. The research also aims to investigate students' perceptions and experiences of using ICT, both in school and at home, to gain insights into how technology influences their learning processes.

By identifying the factors that facilitate or hinder effective ICT integration, the study intends to offer evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, educators and school administrators. These insights can help inform future interventions aimed at bridging the digital divide, improving teacher training programs and ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to benefit from digital learning.Ultimately, this research contributes to the broader discourse on educational equity and innovation. As the world becomes increasingly interconnected and reliant on digital technologies, understanding the role of ICT in shaping the future of education is essential. A more inclusive and technologically advanced education system not only improves academic outcomes but also prepares students to thrive in a rapidly evolving global society. Addressing the ICT-related challenges faced by schools in districts like Surkhet is a critical step toward achieving this vision and ensuring that no learner is left behind in the digital age.

Literature Review

The integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into education has become increasingly essential in equipping students with the skills required for participation in a modern, knowledge-driven society. ICT encompasses a wide range of tools and servicesfrom traditional media like radio and television to advanced digital platforms such as computers and the internetserving as both communication aids and vehicles for knowledge construction. Scholars and policymakers alike recognize ICT competence as a fundamental skill, now often placed alongside traditional literacy and numeracy. Its effective integration into the classroom is seen as instrumental in transforming conventional education into more dynamic, interactive and student-centered learning environments (TVN, 2016; Kreps &Kimppa, 2015).

Pedagogical theories such as constructivism and social constructivism provide strong theoretical underpinnings for the use of ICT in classrooms. These frameworks emphasize active, student-centered learning where knowledge is constructed through engagement, experience and collaboration. Rooted in Piagetian philosophy, constructivism promotes autonomy and real-world problem solving, suggesting that ICT tools, particularly multimedia and interactive platforms, can enhance student participation by supporting individualized learning processes and providing scaffolding as needed (Acharya, 2016). Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development further adds a social dimension to ICT use, illustrating how technology can mediate peer and teacher interactions, making learning a more collaborative and guided experience. The ability of ICT to facilitate both independent and social modes of learning underlines its pedagogical relevance beyond mere technical convenience.

Yet, integrating ICT into education is not without its challenges. Studies across various educational levels in Nepal expose a persistent gap between policy and practice. While national education policies advocate for ICT integration, practical barriersincluding inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained personnel and insufficient fundingcontinue to impede implementation. Rana and Rana (2020) reveal that although teacher education policies are aimed at enhancing ICT competency and promoting student-centered pedagogy, these goals are often undermined by unclear strategies and limited resources. Their study of teacher education institutions illustrates that progress depends not only on policy formulation but also on sustained investment and operational support. External funding initiatives have helped mitigate some gaps, but the question of long-term sustainability remains pressing.

Other studies have explored the lived realities of ICT integration in schools. For instance, Tiwari (2021) examined government schools in Pokhara, applying Vygotsky's theory to evaluate how ICT was being used to promote student-centered learning. While schools have begun to adopt digital tools in alignment with Nepal's aspirations for a skilled and technology-literate population, significant challenges persist. Teachers and students alike face behavioral and perceptual barriers and a lack of infrastructure remains a formidable obstacle. The study illustrates that effective ICT integration is as much a cultural and

attitudinal shift as it is a technological one. Overcoming resistance and fostering digital confidence requires time, support and continuous engagement from stakeholders at all levels.

Similarly, research by Diyal and Pandey (2022) sheds light on ICT use in secondary schools in Kathmandu. Their findings reaffirm the dual nature of ICT in education. It holds the promise of enhancing collaboration and active learning, yet its potential is frequently constrained by practical limitations. Teachers acknowledge ICT's educational value, but their efforts are hindered by inconsistent access to digital tools and insufficient training. What emerges from this study is a recurring theme: while ICT has transformative potential, its success is deeply reliant on the broader educational ecosystemincluding infrastructure, teacher readiness, curriculum alignment and institutional support.

Taken together, these studies suggest that ICT integration in education cannot be treated as a simple technical upgrade. It is an evolving pedagogical shift that requires systemic change. Theoretically, ICT aligns well with progressive educational models that favor active, constructivist learning. Practically, however, there remains a significant implementation gap, especially in developing contexts like Nepal. Policies need to be supported with targeted investment in teacher training, equitable access to resources and community engagement. More importantly, efforts must be tailored to the contextual realities of schools, recognizing that one-size-fits-all solutions are unlikely to succeed.

Ultimately, the literature indicates a shared understanding of ICT's promise in fostering meaningful, student-centered learning. However, realizing this promise depends on how well educational systems address the structural, pedagogical and attitudinal barriers that currently stand in the way. Only by treating ICT not just as a tool but as a catalyst for educational transformation can its full potential be harnessed for equitable and effective learning.

Methodology

This study employs a quantitative approach to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' use of ICT. Guided by specific methodological paradigms, the research is structured around a survey method and relies heavily on quantitative techniques, particularly through the use of questionnaires as the primary data collection tool. The population of the study includes all secondary-level students across 18 schools in the Surkhet district. Data analysis was conducted using statistical techniques such as Correlation Analysis and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), enabling measurement, comparison and deeper insight into patterns of ICT usage among students.

Results

Age Composition

The age composition of the respondents is presented in the following table:

Table 1

Distribution of the Respondents based on Age

Age Composition	Government School		Non-Government School	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Below 12	40	9.43	42	9.91
12-13	125	29.48	131	30.90
14-15	34	8.02	28	6.60
16 and above	13	3.07	11	2.59
Total	**212**	**50.00**	**212**	**50.00**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The age distribution of respondents across government and non-government schools reveals a significant concentration in the 12–13 age group, accounting for nearly one-third of students in both school types. This suggests that the sample primarily represents students in early adolescence, a developmental stage where exposure to technology can be particularly influential in shaping learning habits and digital competencies.The relatively low representation of students aged 14 and above may reflect the grade levels included in the study or broader systemic patterns, such as school dropout rates in later secondary education, especially in some regions. The presence of younger students (below 12) in both school types suggests that ICT usage patterns captured in this study might lean toward early secondary or even upper primary experiences.

The similar distribution across school types implies that age-related variation is not a major differentiator between government and non-government schools in this study, allowing for more equitable comparisons of ICT usage patterns across institutional types. However, the heavy skew toward younger age groups also points to the importance of tailoring ICT integration strategies to early adolescents, who may require more structured guidance and age-appropriate digital content to maximize the benefits of technology in education.

Gender Composition

The gender composition is as follows:

Table 2

Distribution of the Respondents based on Gender

Gender Composition	Government School		Non-Government School	
	No.	Percent	No.	Percent
Male	115	27.12	125	29.48
Female	97	22.88	87	20.52
Total	**212**	**50.00**	**212**	**50.00**

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The gender distribution of respondents across government and non-government schools shows a slight predominance of male students in both settings. While the overall numbers are relatively balanced, males make up a slightly higher proportion in both government (27.12%) and non-government schools (29.48%), compared to females (22.88% and 20.52%, respectively).This slight gender imbalance may reflect broader enrollment trends or social factors that influence access to education. In some contexts, boys may have more consistent school attendance or access to certain resources, including technology, which could affect their ICT exposure and usage patterns.

However, the presence of a substantial proportion of female respondents also indicates that the study captures perspectives across genders, making it possible to examine any gender-based differences in ICT use, confidence and learning outcomes. The data further underscores the importance of ensuring equitable access to ICT tools and training for both male and female students, especially considering that technology is increasingly essential for academic success and future opportunities.

ICT Use in Secondary Schools

The situation of ICT use in schools is presented in the following table:

Table 3

Status of ICT Use in Schools

S.N.	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA	$\bar{X}$	SD
1.	ICT resources are readily available for my academic tasks.	27	19	65	241	69	3.73	1.00
2.	Using technology makes learning more interesting and engaging for me.	26	27	45	197	124	3.87	1.10
3.	I feel confident in my ability to use ICT tools for schoolwork.	28	28	62	204	99	3.76	1.09
4.	ICT integration enhances my understanding of complex subjects.	29	36	92	190	74	3.58	1.09
5.	Access to digital resources improves my academic performance.	30	21	82	197	91	3.71	1.08
6.	Teachers effectively incorporate technology into our daily lessons.	48	92	129	110	41	3.01	1.15
7.	I believe ICT skills are essential for my future success.	38	52	99	176	56	3.38	1.14
8.	Overall, I am satisfied with the level of ICT use in our school.	24	28	71	212	85	3.73	1.04
9.	ICT use positively impacts my learning experience in secondary school.	22	47	107	177	68	3.53	1.05

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data on the status of ICT use in schools reveals generally positive perceptions among students, particularly regarding the availability and usefulness of ICT in their academic experience. Students largely agree that technology enhances engagement and learning, with high mean scores for statements such as ICT making learning more interesting (3.87) and boosting confidence in using ICT tools (3.76). These responses suggest that students see clear benefits in integrating ICT into their educational journey.

However, the relatively lower mean score (3.01) for teachers' effective incorporation of technology in daily lessons indicates a potential gap between student expectations and instructional practices. This could point to a need for better teacher training and pedagogical strategies for ICT integration. Additionally, although students acknowledge the value of ICT for future success (3.38), the moderate agreement suggests that this connection may not be fully realized. Overall, the findings highlight ICT's positive role in student learning while also identifying areas for improvement in implementation and instructional support.

Inferential Analysis

The table below shows the correlation between dependent variable and independent variables. On the table, X1=APD=Access to Personal Device, X2= DL= Digital Literacy, X3=ASIR=Access to School IT Resources, X4=IIC=ICT Integration in Curriculum. Here, Y=IU=ICT Use which is a dependent variable.

Table 4

Correlation Analysis

Variables	EI	APD	DL	ASIR	IIC
IU	1				
APD	.537**	1			
DL	.402**	.351**	1		
ASIR	.475**	.580**	.372**	1	
IIC	.376**	.319**	.441**	.422**	1

** is significance of the idea under 1% level of significance.

The correlation analysis highlights meaningful positive relationships among key factors influencing ICT use in schools. Access to personal devices (APD) shows the strongest association with ICT use (IU) at 0.537, indicating that availability of personal technology significantly enhances usage. Digital literacy (DL), access to school ICT resources (ASIR) and ICT integration in the curriculum (IIC) also positively correlate with ICT use, reflecting their collective importance. The strong link between access to personal devices and both digital literacy and school resources suggests that these elements mutually reinforce one another. Overall, these interconnections emphasize that improving access, skills and curriculum integration together fosters more effective ICT use.

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

The analysis of variance (ANOVA) performance was tested to check whether there was a linear relationship between the variables in the regression. The analysis of variance

examines the importance of the F Statistic and its corresponding meaning to determine how well the regression equation matches the results.

Table 5

Analysis of Variance

ANOVA[b]						
Model		**Sum of Squares**	**df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Regression	103.293	4	25.823	60.629	.000[b]
	Residual	174.628	410	0.426		
	Total	277.922	414			

a. Dependent Variable: ICT Use

b. Predictors: APD (Access to Personal Device), DL (Digital Literacy), ASIR (Access to School IT Resources), IIC (ICT Integration in Curriculum)

The ANOVA results for the regression model predicting "ICT Use" indicate a highly significant relationship ($p < 0.001$). The model, comprising predictors including access to personal devices, digital literacy, access to school IT resources and ICT integration in the curriculum, explains a considerable portion of the variability in ICT Use ($F = 60.629$). Specifically, the regression analysis shows that the predictors collectively account for a significant amount of variability in explaining ICT Use.

Students' Use of ICT at School

The use of ICT at school by the students is presented in the following table:

Table 7

Students Use of ICT at School

S.N.	Statements	Mean	SD	Rank	Mode
1	I design websites	2.66	2.04	1	1
2	I browse the Internet for fun	2.42	2.113	2	1
3	I use computer for writing	2.32	1.873	3	1
4	I download music files or software from the Web	2.21	2.11	4	1
5	I send and receive emails	2.15	2.035	5	1
6	I play games on the computer	2.15	2.007	5	1
7	I use / create pictures and animations.	2.08	1.716	6	1
8	I watch DVDs/videos on the computer	1.94	1.908	7	1
9	I watch TV/listen to radio/music on the Internet	1.54	1.886	8	1
10	I program the computer	1.45	1.678	9	1

11	I use educational software to learn some lessons.	1.35	1.525	10	1
12	I use the Internet to revise for exams.	1.27	1.57	11	1
13	I make/design things on the computer (like posters, invites)	1.24	1.706	12	1
14	I shop on the Internet	1.24	1.706	12	1
15	I look up for information on hard disk and compact discs (CD ROMs)	0.96	1.346	13	1
16	I create/record sound files on the computer.	0.93	1.542	14	1
17	I organize the computer settings such as files/memory/system	0.92	1.336	15	1
18	I use some spreadsheets	0.87	1.351	16	1
19	I use the Internet to look up information.	0.78	1.298	17	1
20	I make films/animations on the computer.	0.76	1.464	18	1
Average		1.56	1.023		-

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The data on students' ICT use at school reveals generally low engagement across a variety of activities, with an overall average mean score of 1.56. The highest reported activity is designing websites (mean = 2.66), indicating some interest in creative and technical ICT tasks. However, the wide standard deviations suggest significant variation among students, with many rarely or never engaging in these activities. Activities such as using the internet for information retrieval or revision scored very low, highlighting underutilization of ICT for academic purposes. The predominance of the mode "1" (likely indicating "never") across all activities reinforces this trend. Overall, while some students engage in ICT creatively, most students show limited or inconsistent use, indicating a need for enhanced motivation, training and resources to foster more regular and productive ICT use in schools.

Analysisby Genderusing Combined Variables

Table 8

Combined Measures for Students by Gender

	Gender	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Std. Error Mean**
Student school and home use combined	Male	240	1.8750	0.7556	0.0613
	Female	184	1.8436	0.8080	0.0647
Student confidence combined	Male	240	3.8398	0.8789	0.0713
	Female	184	4.0151	0.8740	0.0700
Student ICT in learning combined	Male	240	3.8273	0.9842	0.0798
	Female	184	3.8606	0.9830	0.0787

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The combined data on ICT use and confidence by gender shows subtle differences. Males slightly surpass females in combined school and home ICT use (mean = 1.88 vs. 1.84), suggesting marginally higher overall engagement. However, females exhibit greater confidence in using ICT (mean = 4.02 compared to males' 3.84), indicating stronger self-assurance in their skills. Additionally, females perceive ICT as slightly more beneficial for learning (mean = 3.86 vs. 3.83). These findings suggest that while males may use ICT more frequently, females tend to feel more confident and positive about ICT's role in learning, highlighting gender nuances in technology interaction among students.

Discussion

This study offers a comprehensive understanding of ICT use in Nepalese secondary schools by examining student demographics, access, usage patterns and institutional factors influencing effective integration. Consistent with prior research, it highlights that access to personal devices, digital literacy, school IT infrastructure and curricular integration are key determinants of ICT engagement (Diyal&Pandey, 2022; Rana&Rana, 2020). Correlation analyses reveal significant associations between these factors and ICT use, emphasizing that access and competence are foundational to meaningful technology adoption. However, despite positive attitudes, student usage remains low for academically productive tasks, with a tendency toward entertainment-focused activities, suggesting a gap between ICT availability and pedagogical use (Tiwari, 2021). Gender data reveal males slightly lead in ICT use, but females report greater confidence and perceive higher learning benefits, indicating evolving gender dynamics. Overall, the findings stress that successful ICT integration requires a systemic approachcombining infrastructure, curriculum, teacher training and student-centered strategiesto foster meaningful digital learning experiences.

Conclusions

The conclusion aligns closely with the study's findings, reinforcing the gap between students' positive perceptions of ICT and their actual, limited use, especially in academic contexts. While students report more ICT use at home than at school, the lower engagement with educational software and information-seeking tasks reflects this disparity. The surprising trend of higher ICT use in public schools, coupled with less favorable attitudes compared to private schools, points to potential differences in teaching quality and resource effectiveness, as suggested in the results. Furthermore, the greater confidence among female students challenges traditional assumptions, indicating shifting gender dynamics in digital literacy. Overall, the study's conclusion emphasizes the multifaceted challenges in ICT integration highlighted by the data and underscores the need for targeted, context-sensitive strategies to ensure both equitable access and meaningful ICT utilization across diverse school settings.

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Appendix A

A. Demographic Features of the Respondents

Age: a. Below 12 b. 12-13 c. 14-15 d. 16 and above

Gender: a. Male b. Female

B. Use of ICT

Please provide your agreement/disagreement on the status of ICT use in government and non-government organizations (SD-Strongly Disagree, D-Disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly Agree).

Code	Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
IU1	ICT resources are readily available for my academic tasks.					
IU2	Using technology makes learning more interesting and engaging for me.					
IU3	I feel confident in my ability to use ICT tools for schoolwork.					
IU4	ICT integration enhances my understanding of complex subjects.					
IU5	Access to digital resources improves my academic performance.					
IU6	Teachers effectively incorporate technology into our daily lessons.					
IU7	I believe ICT skills are essential for my future success.					
IU8	Overall, I am satisfied with the level of ICT use in our school.					
IU9	ICT use positively impacts my learning experience in secondary school.					

APPENDIX B

StudentUseof ICTatSchool

S.N.	Statements
1	I design websites
2	I browse the Internet for fun
3	I use computer for writing
4	I download music files or software from the Web
5	I send and receive emails
6	I play games on the computer
7	I use / create pictures and animations.
8	I watch DVDs/videos on the computer
9	I watch TV/listen to radio/music on the Internet
10	I program the computer
11	I use educational software to learn some lessons.
12	I use the Internet to revise for exams.
13	I make/design things on the computer (like posters, invites)
14	I shop on the Internet
15	I look up for information on hard disk and compact discs (CD ROMs)
16	I create/record sound files on the computer.
17	I organize the computer settings such as files/memory/system
18	I use some spreadsheets
19	I use the Internet to look up information.
20	I make films/animations on the computer.