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Exploring Learning Difficulties among the Students in Public Schools in Kirtipur Municipality

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Abstract

This study explores the learning difficulties among students in public secondary schools in Kirtipur municipality. It focuses the availability of instructional materials and the challenges faced by the students while teaching and learning. A quantitative research design was employed, using a structured questionnaire to collect data from 10 secondary-level teachers and 100 students selected through simple random sampling. The findings reveal only 30% of teachers perceive the curriculum is relevant, despite its potential to enhance students' understanding. While 70% of teachers consider the curriculum comprehensive and capable of preparing students for recent challenges, 30% disagree, citing a lack of real-life applicability. Notably, 20% of them believe the curriculum exceeds the capacity of average students. Additionally, 80% highlight the lack of differentiated exercises in textbooks, making it challenging to cater to diverse student abilities. All participants agree that evaluation procedures need improvement to foster student interest in learning. This study underscores the need for resource investment, and increased teacher training to improve the learning difficulties of students in the public secondary schools in Nepal.

Keywords: Learning difficulties, public secondary schools, resource management

Introduction

In the twenty-first century, due to the rapid development of innovative teaching and learning techniques, the schools in Nepal face challenges. Due to this, public school secondary-level teachers faced many challenges and problems during teaching learning activities (Ranjit, 2022). Students are facing the problem of understanding proper concept. Interactive classrooms are not being enough to develop the scientific attitude and skills among the students. Average score of the students in different terminal exams is also below the average (Gautam & Acharya, 2023). To identify the problem and overcome these difficulties the researcher is trying to explore its causes. According to Lamichhane (2022) school teachers face various challenges, obstacles, and problems. Research show that the school education in Nepal is influenced by politics (Regmi, 2021). Inadequate collaboration with local community, idle management systems, inadequate

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funding, and poor communication are some of the factors causing educational policies and programs to remain hypothetical.

The promotion of school education suffers from inadequate institutional arrangements, national standards for qualifications, a scarcity of research opportunities and insufficient qualified teachers. The government has paid little attention to reforming policies and programs aimed at advancing school education in Nepal. The paradigm of teaching learning activities has been altered by advances in school and technology, which also offer new and innovative ways to teach. The development of school and technology has changed the paradigm of teaching and learning activities and provides multiple ways of teaching. However, achievement of students still in below the average. As for example in SEE exam 2078, 50% students are unqualified for grade 11 (Neupane, 2023). Similarly, in 2079 BS, 40% students are unqualified for the same level. For the last two years, SEE result showed that the achievement level of students is very poor. According to Education Review Office (2020), 63% of the students were below average, means they have limited grade-wise knowledge. Chapagain (2021) argued that 72% of students report struggling to understand certain school concepts, 40% of students in class nine and 49% of students in class ten are reluctant to ask questions in class and 31.11% of respondents agrees that scientific notions have no use in day-to-day life activities.

Poor performance of students in school shows not effective educational policies in Nepal. This has prompted the research into teachers and students' perceptions of the problems of effective teaching and learning in secondary schools (Poudel & Choi, 2022). In this regard, school explain a wide range of natural phenomena and is essential to the advancement of technology. It is a driving force behind national prosperity in this century, as well as advancements in economics and technology that enhance both the standard of living for individuals and society as a whole (Paudel, 2021). Similarly, the research argued that school education has become popular all over the world over the past fifty years.

The problems of the students and teachers in school depends on different factors like attitude of teachers and students towards school, learning environment, teaching methods, etc. According to Pal et al. (2021) teachers should support and provide students the chance to gain the skills they should have. Without a question, education is full of facts, ideas, and concepts, but in addition to inspiring students and engaging, teachers need to be able to foster an environment that supports their overall growth. The process of imparting knowledge and skills to students through engaging teaching methods is called instruction. It facilitates the acquisition of worthwhile and productive knowledge (Acharya et al., 2023). Instead of the excess of new technology in teaching learning activities, there is a gap between students learning and classroom

discourse. The central government and the local level provides subject teachers as well as educational fund but the graph of student's achievement in learning is decreasing day by day. School education is not the only subject, it also an integral part of education for developing individual capacities, attitude, opinion and equipping with the skill and power of thought. School education has become an important aspect of our life because of having intellectual value, cultural value and vocational value that are wider applied in our daily life activities.

A learning difficulty exists in any situation where a student fails to grasp a concept as the result of the following factors: (a) The inadequacy of ideas or knowledge in relation to the concept to be acquired; (b) The demand and complexity of a learning task in terms of information processing, compared with the student's information-handling capacity; (c) Communication problems arising from language use and (d) A mismatch between instructional approaches used by the teacher and the student's preferred learning style. The aim of this study is to investigate whether teaching at secondary level in government schools in Kirtipur is easy or not. Further, the study focused on the nature of problems faced by students during teaching and learning. Looking back at the past results, the achievement of students is poor all over Nepal and the performance of the students in the Secondary Education Examination in is not satisfactory. In my own experience of decades of teacher educator at Sanothimi Campus, I faced many problems in the course of teaching. The past result of SEE was low; students' understanding level was also low. The SEE result showed that most of the unsuccessful students have failed in different subjects. It shows there is a low achievement of students in learning. It establishes an important and essential relationship between students and the environment. Besides, school is perhaps the best way to contribute to the betterment of an individual's life or to the lives of other human beings. Thus, school should form an essential part of the curriculum, as it is the only subject, which affords knowledge of certain facts and laws and helps in achieving the main goal of education. Students have to pass in the school subjects for getting promotion to the next higher grade. Therefore, the schools as well as the school teacher have a responsibility in bringing about the growth in the knowledge of school. However, the learning achievement of the students in school is not satisfactory.

Methodology

This research employed a quantitative research design to explore an understanding of teaching and learning difficulties in school at the secondary level schools in Nepal. The quantitative data was gathered through a survey research design using a structured questionnaire to describe characteristics of the study population. The study area focused on public secondary schools in Kirtipur municipality, Bagmati Province, Nepal. A total of 10 secondary-level school teachers and 100 students from public secondary schools were selected as the

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sample for this study. Due to time constraints and other limitations, the sample size was limited to this manageable group. The sampling strategy employed was simple random sampling, allowing the researcher to intentionally select schools and participants that aligned with the aim of the study.

The primary data sources included responses from the selected teachers and students, gathered through validated tools. The questionnaire was developed based on an extensive literature and empirical review, feedback from experts. Data collection was carried out systematically. The researcher visited the selected schools, consulted with head teachers and other subject teachers, and explained the purpose of the study. After obtaining permission, the questionnaires were distributed and guidance was provided on how to fill them out. Language-related challenges faced by participants were addressed by the researcher to ensure clarity and accuracy. Quantitative data were analyzed using Excel, employing statistical techniques like percentages to evaluate teachers' and students' responses.

Result

The analysis reveals that all sampled teachers have received training in teaching school, reflecting a baseline professional qualification among the group (Table 1). However, only 30% of teachers express satisfaction with their training, suggesting significant gaps in its effectiveness or relevance to their teaching needs.

Table 1

General Information about Teachers

S.N.	Questions	Yes	%, Yes
1	Have you received training in the teaching?	10	100%
2	Are you satisfied with the training that you have received?	3	30%
3	Do you feel that there is requirement for more training and enrichment programs in your field?	8	80%

Table 1 shows that all the teachers had taken training to teach in the school. 30% percent teachers are happy with the training they have received, while 70% percent not. However, the majority of them (80%) feel that more training and enrichment programs are necessary in order to gain practical knowledge and skills. Only 20% of the teachers place little value on the teacher training programs.

Table 2

Teacher's Response on Implementation of the Prescribed Curriculum

SN	Questions	Yes	%, Yes
1	Do you think that school curriculum is relevant?	3	30%
2	Is the school curriculum cater the level of average students?	2	20%
3	Is the school curriculum comprehensive to provide knowledge?	7	70%
4	Is the school curriculum rigid?	2	20%
5	Is the school curriculum well-balanced?	6	60%
6	Does the textbook help in attainment of all instructional objectives as stated in the curriculum?	6	60%
7	Is it possible to perform the activities and experiments?	1	10%
8	Are the exercises graded to meet the needs of diverse students?	2	20%
9	Do you feel that the evaluation procedure in school should be improved?	10	100%
10	Is the course completed within the assigned time?	5	50%

Table 2 shows that only 30% of the teachers think that school curriculum is relevant which is useful while 70% do not think so. It is also found that 20% of the teachers state that school curriculum is above the mental level of an average student which becomes difficult for them to understand. It is also found that 70% of the teachers agree that school curriculum is quite comprehensive and rich to provide knowledge to the students whereas 30% disagreed. However, very few percentage (20%) of the teachers said that school curriculum is rigid, whereas majority of them, that is, 80% said that it is not rigid. The result shows that the majority of the teachers, responded that the textbook help in attainment of all instructional objectives. However, 90% of the teachers responded that it is not possible to perform the activities.

Similarly, 50% of the teachers responded that they could complete the course within a normal time whereas 50% of the teachers responded that time allotment for school is not sufficient. It becomes difficult for them to complete the course within a normal time. It is also found that 40% of the teachers responded that they have complain about the time allotment for school subjects as they face difficulty in completing the course in a specified time.

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Table 3

Learning Difficulties Associated with Infrastructure

SN	Questions	Yes	%, Yes
1	Do you use any kind of teaching aids while teaching?	8	80%
2	Does the school provide internet facilities?	5	50%
3	Does the school provide subject-wise laboratory?	2	20%
4	Do you think that separate laboratory needed to engage students in activities?	10	100%
5	Are you satisfied with the materials available in the school?	2	20%

Table 3 shows that 80% of the teachers said that they use teaching aids while teaching because it helps the students to understand the concept properly, whereas 20% do not. It is also found that 50% of the teachers provides internet facilities to search for new information about school subjects, while 50% not. However, the majority of the school teachers (80%) responded that they do not have a laboratory and 20% said that they have a separate laboratory. It is also found that 20% of the teachers are satisfied with the apparatus available in the laboratory, whereas 80% are not satisfied because they mayn't have enough laboratory materials.

Table 4

Teacher's Response on Problems Faced in the School

SN	Questions	Yes	%, Yes
1	Do you prepare lesson plan for taking class?	10	100%
2	Do you get sufficient teaching-learning materials?	4	40%
3	Do you encounter any problem with the students?	6	60%
4	Do you find any difficulties in teaching and learning through the prescribed textbooks?	2	20%

Table 4 shows that 100% teachers prepare their lesson plan before going to the classroom. It is also found that 40% of the teachers get sufficient teaching materials from school to teach the school curriculum, whereas 60% do not. It is also found that 60% of the teachers said that they encounter some problem with students while 40% said that they do not. The result shows 20% of the teachers find difficulty in teaching through the prescribed textbooks while 80% do not.

Table 5

Teacher's Response on Problems of Students in relation to Learn

S.N.	Questions	Yes	%, Yes
1.	Do your students find difficulty in learning?	9	90%
2.	Do you explain the meaning of the difficult terms?	8	80%
3.	Do your students discouraged when they fail to answer certain questions?	7	70%
4.	Do you clarify the difficult points and terms in simple language to the students whenever needed?	10	100%
5.	Do you allow the students to perform their own experiment on a given topic?	2	20%

Table 5 shows that 90% of the teachers agree that student find difficulty in learning school whereas 10% disagree to it. In the same line, 80% of teachers said that they explain the meaning of the difficult terms so that it will help the students to understand the concepts properly and will help them to score well in their examination. In the same line, 70% of the teachers said that a students get discouraged when they fails to answer certain questions in school while 30% of them do not think so. However, all the teachers (100%) said that they clarify the difficult points and terms in simple language to the students whenever needed. On the other hand only 20% of the teachers said that they allow the students to perform their own experiment on a given topic while 80% of them said that they do not.

Discussion

The study provides an insightful analysis of the various challenges faced by teachers and students in the school education system in Nepal. The data presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 highlight key issues related to teacher training, curriculum relevance, teaching resources, and classroom practices. The analysis reveals that all teachers in the sample have received training in teaching school, but only one-third are satisfied with the training they received. This dissatisfaction among two-third of teachers might stem from the perceived inadequacy of the training programs in addressing practical classroom challenges. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of context-specific teacher training programs tailored to local needs (Matsko et al., 2024; Yadav, 2024). In Nepal, school teachers often face difficulties in making abstract concepts understandable due to a lack of hands-on training and pedagogical skills (Douglas-Gardner & Callender, 2023). The finding that majority of teachers believe more training and enrichment

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programs are necessary aligns with research suggesting that continuous professional development is crucial for teacher effectiveness (Acharya, 2024).

The data indicate mixed perceptions regarding the relevance and comprehensibility of the school curriculum. While majority of teachers agree that the curriculum is comprehensive and equips students with the knowledge to face global challenges, only one-third believed its relevancy. This discrepancy highlights a significant gap in contextualizing the curriculum to reflect issues and knowledge, as emphasized by the National Curriculum Framework (Shrestha, 2023). Moreover, one-fifth of teachers believe the curriculum is above the mental level of average students, which is consistent with findings from Kunwar et al. (2023), who argued complex curricula can discourage students' engagement. The study identifies a severe lack of teaching resources and laboratory facilities as a major challenge. Majority of teachers believed that separate laboratories for school education are essential, only one-fifth reported having access to such facilities. This limitation significantly hampers the practical learning experiences of students, as practical work is integral to understanding scientific concepts (Haydn & Stephen, 2021). Furthermore, maximum number of teachers report that they cannot perform all suggested activities and experiments due to limited resources and time. This finding underscores the urgent need for investment in infrastructure and resource allocation to improve school education (UNESCO, 2022).

The study shows that high percentage of teachers use teaching materials to enhance teaching and learning, while less number of teachers do not. Teaching aids play a vital role in simplifying complex scientific concepts and making learning more interactive (Hoidn & Klemencic, 2021). However, only half of teachers have access to internet facilities, which limits their ability to incorporate modern teaching tools and access up-to-date scientific information. Schools must prioritize providing internet access and training teachers to integrate digital tools into their teaching practices (Haydn & Stephen, 2021). The findings reveal that more than average of teachers believe the school textbook helps achieve instructional objectives, while nearly half disagree. Additionally, maximum of teachers feel that the exercises in textbooks are not graded to meet the needs of students with varying abilities. Textbooks should be designed to cater to diverse learning needs by including differentiated exercises and scaffolding techniques (Acharya & Rijal, 2021; Devkota & Timilsena, 2023). Ensuring that instructional materials align with learning objectives can significantly enhance students' achievement (Acharya et al., 2023).

All teachers agreed that the evaluation procedure in school needs improvement to increase students' interest in the subject. Effective assessment strategies are critical for identifying learning gaps and fostering a deeper understanding of scientific concepts (Marougkas et al., 2023). Moreover, half of

teachers report insufficient time allotment for school, which hinders course completion and the performance of experiments. This challenge can be addressed by restructuring the school schedule to provide adequate time for school instruction (Basnyat, 2023; Hoidn & Klemencic, 2021). The study highlights that maximum teachers believe students find it difficult to understand scientific concepts, possibly due to inadequate explanations or lack of practical exposure. Encouragingly, maximum number of teachers explain difficult terms to students, and all teachers clarify points in simple language whenever needed. However, very less students to perform their own experiments, which limits opportunities for hands-on learning and critical thinking. Active learning strategies, such as inquiry-based learning, have been shown to significantly improve student engagement and understanding (Closs et al., 2022).

Conclusion and Implication

This study provides an insights into the teaching-learning difficulties in public schools in Nepal. Addressing these challenges requires a collaborative effort from policymakers, educators, and school administrators. By focusing on teacher training, curriculum relevance, resource allocation, and innovative teaching practices, it is possible to enhance students' achievement in school and prepare them for the challenges of the 21st century. The findings of this study have several policy implications. First, teacher training programs must be implemented to include practical pedagogical skills and context-specific content. Second, the curriculum should be revised to incorporate local relevance and cater to diverse learning needs. Third, significant investment in laboratory facilities, teaching resources, and internet access is essential. Fourth, textbooks should be redesigned to include differentiated exercises and align more closely with instructional objectives. Finally, evaluation procedures should be improved to foster a deeper interest in school among students.

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