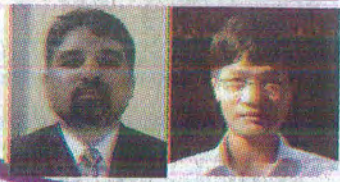


Regulating Private Schools



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FREQUENT strikes at education institutions have given rise to the debate about existence of institutional schools. It has gone against the spirit of Peace Zone of Education and has abysmally affected the learning psychology of tens and hundreds millions of innocent school children in the nation. It has led to an intense public discussion again. Historically, all the community initiated schools were nationalised in 1971 by the then party-less Panchayat system. But, as the then government could not resist people's pressure for education, private schools began to operate in early 1980s. The private schools proliferated rapidly in the subsequent years. The Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) had vehemently called for shutting down, and nationalising private schools during the insurgency period, but that demand of the rebels turned out to be irrelevant.

Until 1980s, most of the public or government schools were the centre for educational excellence for all walks of life. Nonetheless, the standard of education in public schools started deteriorating sharply after 1990s. In fact, the government could not make any serious effort to enhance the standard mainly because of the infiltration of political parties and their cadres in the education sector.

The poor state of public schools that used to cover over ninety percent of student enrollment turned out to be fertile ground for the emergence of private schools gradually with a huge investment. Now, it also crossed the boundary of stipulation of stakeholders as a few of institutional schools are found to be exorbitant for not only the common citizens, but also for the middle classed people. In the meantime, performances of private schools have grown much better than public ones in the national examinations- the SLC now called as Secondary Education Examination

(SEE). This very fact has been again unquestionably verified in the results of the SEE this year, too. Over the years, parents, guardians and students have lost their trust in public schools, and have relied more on private education provisions.

The Contributions

The role of private schools needs

Besides teachers, other staffs such as accountant, administrative and ancillary staffs, warden, librarian, guard, etc. are employed in the private schools. As there is scarcity of jobs in the market, this is undeniably a big contribution by the privately operated schools for the country. However, most of the private schools are blatantly criticised for not providing

and semi-urban locations. While debating about the private schools, one should notice that there are significant proportions of such schools that charge nominal fees as per the capacity of parents. Moreover, private schools should provide ten percent scholarships to the needy ones from the marginalized groups as per the policy provisions.

revise fee-provisions of various categories of institutional schools observing their real status, facilities, and services by forming the probe committee comprising with morally valued education policy makers, and local government representatives.

Potential Consequences

Before advocating for the shutting

point that needs to be pondered over is the future of students. What future does it hold for them? In fact, it is their rights to have an opportunity to study in schools of their choice in order to exercise and safeguard the rights of citizens as proclaimed by the constitution of Nepal.

In the past, parents used to send their children to Indian private schools when there was no private education institution in the country. Parents may be forced to do the same again as there are still significant proportions of parents who want to educate children in proper private schools.

Thirdly, it is estimated that Rs. 150 billion has been invested in private schools. In case, such schools are shut down, will owners of these schools be compensated? Will government think to pay this huge budget and lose the tax that private schools are paying it? Considering these aspects, it seems almost impossible to negate the existence of private schools for the next few decades or till the governments serve with trustable alternatives.

The Way Forward

The way forward is to enhance better regulation and monitoring of private schools with reformed policy. In particular, governments should be able to enforce tax as provisioned in the policy strictly and should monitor fee-ceiling as envisaged. Similarly, it is imperative to improve the current education system increasing education budget up to twenty percent as promised in the election manifestos of political parties, and utilize it transparently. This will in turn garner the trust of parents, and will demotivate them to enroll children in private schools- giving inferior position towards them. The government will not have to put up hard efforts to shut down the private schools. This has been proved in some other parts of the world as well. In this way, improving the quality of current state of public schools is a must for the better prospect of Nepal's education sector.



Students of a private boarding school in Kathmandu take part in school prayer

to be assessed critically- that it has some positive contributions for the education sector. First, it has created employment opportunities for people. In about 62000 private schools, more than 82000 teachers are currently working, out of which 75000 teachers are well-trained either on their own or supported by employers.

appointment letter to the employees, and they do not offer government salary scale, and other facilities as per the education policies encoded in Education Act and Regulation, which needs to be improved immediately.

In most cases, private schools cater to the poor people, especially in the rural

However, it is not always transparent in most cases as such scholarships are also manipulated and reserved for the kids of members from monitoring committee. Therefore, in the name of a handful number of schools that charge maximum fees, it is not justifiable to blame all the schools as a single category. But, it is also essential to

down of the private schools, it is necessary to foresee the consequences. First of all, it will have a direct impact on those who are employed in the institutions. What plan do governments have to address this situation? Will those working in private schools have to go to gulf countries in search of employment? Secondly, the next