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## Dynamism of Availability and use of Textbooks: A Hermeneutic Phenomenological Study of School Education in Nepal

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### ABSTRACT

The main aim of this research paper is to explore the dynamism of availability and use of textbooks in school education of Nepal and giving recognition to pedagogical attributes and quality assurance competencies. Textbooks are reliable and trusted supporting materials that provide deeper understanding of critical concepts on the subject matter. The hermeneutic discussion with five secondary teachers and twenty students from community school of Nepal reports the necessity and glory of textbooks in the daily practices in the classrooms which ultimately equipped for knowledge economy and enhancing skill development for the sustainable growth of the nation. The availability of textbooks provides a mental framework for teachers and students on what and how to teach students and what to learn in the classroom. The research was conducted with the purposive sample with 25 participants of community school from urban and rural area of Nepal. The findings of the research made clear that the availability and use of textbooks are not same and the government of Nepal must allocate sufficient budget to provide textbooks to the school going students so that availability and use of textbooks will be creatively enhanced and also develop the culture of using textbooks and sharing with their friends in the classrooms shaping their future and academic success.

## 1. Introduction

Textbooks have long been the most frequently used at all levels as instructional materials in school education of Nepal (NCF, 2007). Students and teachers both get extra resources from the textbooks that enrich and enhance their horizon of knowledge (NASA, 2013). Textbooks are guide for teacher's daily practice and provide the main teaching material that students experience (Harwood, 2017). Textbooks are commonly referred as reliable and trusted supporting materials that

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provide deeper understanding of critical concepts on the subject matter (Knight, 2015).

Textbooks make more significant impact on students' achievement than other inputs (Wongkaew, 2009). It not only gives an outline of the topics to work with, but also direct them to bring them in the right track as a part of learning for both students and teachers (NCF, 2007). The education system in Nepal has basically adopted two levels of school education from the current amendment of education act, 2028 which consists of basic level (1-8) and secondary level,9-12 (NASA, 2013). Before this amendment, the structure of school education was in four levels. Class one to five (1-5) as primary level, six to eight (6-8) as lower secondary level, nine and ten (9-10) as secondary level, and eleven and twelve (11-12) as higher secondary level (NCF, 2005). In today's post-modern world full of technological advancement, teachers have to make themselves more competitive with new pedagogic approach and instructional strategies to reach wider section of the students (Mohammad & Kumari, 2007). There has always been a problem to get the textbooks and other reading materials on time in the context of Nepal (Parajuli & Das, 2013). Therefore, the availability of textbooks remains an issue in terms of their timely printing and distribution in the context of Nepal.

Availability and use of textbooks as a pedagogical attributes have significantly contributed in achieving the set targets despite the expenditure on teaching learning materials like textbooks, capacity development of teachers, library development and computer education are very small in Nepal. It provides a mental framework for teachers on what and how to teach students in the classroom (Nicol & Crespo, 2006). But, the use of textbooks in the classroom differs in their daily teaching (Harwood, 2017). Teachers and students both can use textbooks in and outside the classroom as per their convenience and help them for opportunity to learn (NASA, 2013).

In most countries, teachers use textbooks as a basis for their daily teaching for teaching and learning process (Mullis et.al. 2007). Availability and correct use of TLR (teaching and learning resources) enhances the effectiveness of schools as these resources are the basic elements that can bring about good academic performances in the students. According to DFID (2007), availability of TLR in adequate amount has made the most cost effective in affecting students' performance. Absence or inadequacy of instructional materials like textbooks make teacher handles the subjects in an abstract manner (Sammons, 2006). The shortage of teaching materials hinders instruction and lowers the students' performance (OECD, 2007). Use of text books either in the form of digitalized text (e-books) or in the printed form have been progressively adopted by the educational institutions (Embong et.,al, 2014).

Students reporting to have received textbook at the beginning of the academic session have scored 36% in Math, 49% in Nepali and 42% in Science whereas those who did not receive textbooks even at the end of the academic year have scored 24%, 35% and 34% respectively in the same subject (NASA, 2013).

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Teachers and students get benefits when textbook is used in teaching and learning process (Harmer, 2007). They can look back from previous learning session to continue the next meeting in the textbook.

The use of textbooks are familiar and comfortable (Bouck, Weng, & Satsangi, 2016). The print textbooks can also be used without the need of a special reading device or software. The availability and use of print textbooks are less distracting and easier to read (Millar & Schrier, 2015). The use of textbook in school has been a foundation for the teaching content. Schools have been using textbooks for hundreds of years. Students need to know its importance and value. Teachers must not avoid the use of textbook, but must add value to it (Gulsecen & Kubat, 2006). Textbooks are so fundamental that it provides students with access to knowledge, and students can only learn knowledge and skills that they have access to it.

Textbook use does not imply textbook dependence or textbook-driven instruction (Parajuli & Das, 2013). A study conducted by Johnsen (1993), found that the use of textbooks by teachers did not imply that textbooks drove their instruction. Teachers use textbooks to organize their lessons and make content, knowledge, and skills available to students.

Timely availability of textbooks to students and proper use of it has helped Singapore to move from labor-intensive to capital-intensive and then to knowledge-intensive economy (Hilton, 2016). Besides, it also helps in training of teachers to produce students with proper skills and capacity building (ADB & NPC, 2016). Unavailability of textbooks, especially in rural schools, has made students rely on teachers' notes, as they are the only source materials (Joshi, 2018). In such a situation, students from poor economic background are likely to fall behind.

Nepal being a multicultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual country, the influence of globalization process around the world by the development in science and technology, extending urbanization process of the districts and the implementation of high technology in communication media has the negation impact to pursuit the cultural traditions, beliefs, norms and the values of the different parts of the country which results to change the life style and the teaching learning situation of the people (MoE, 2016). But, most of the places and remote areas of Nepal are not access by theses modern facilities (Parajuli & Das, 2013).

Therefore, many of the students still desire to have a print version of textbooks over the digital textbooks in the present context of Nepal. Besides, Millar and Schrier (2015) have mentioned that the main reason behind liking of print textbooks is that students believed the printed textbooks are more convenient and easy to use than the digital textbooks. So, the present study focuses on the dynamism of availability and use of textbooks in school education of Nepal to enhance the teaching and learning activities of the students.

Thus everyday reading activities, in which students engage may, considerably influence their studying skills and subsequent academic performance. There is a

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general sense in which one appreciates the link between good habits of reading and the academic performance of students generally (Issa et al, 2012). This happens only when the students are provided textbooks on time. Nepal can learn and adopt the policies from other countries' policies such as China's universal basic education up to grade 9; India's Ministry of Skills Development, National Skills Development Corporation, and National Skills Development Agency to consolidate and coordinate skills development (ADB & NPC, 2016).

The textbook, in fact, is the heart of the school and teaching learning activities and without the ubiquitous text there would be no schools (Mohammad & Kumari, 2007). The effective use of textbook helps in bringing and achieving the learning outcomes. Textbook gives an outline of the topics to work with for both the students and the teachers (NCF, 2007).

Lokar (2015) states that use of e-textbooks make teachers' work easier, quicker, and provide more options. Textbooks provide extra resources such as chapter tests, worksheets of extra problems, and project support materials (Parajuli & Das, 2013). Furthermore, a teacher's edition of the text can also remind teachers of alternative approaches to a topic, give guidance on sequence and timing, and make it easier to coordinate with other teachers who are teaching the same course (Knight & Horsley, 2013). Textbooks reflect the aims and objectives of the national curriculum. Therefore, the availability and the use of textbooks in the teaching learning process are very much needed.

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Study area**

The aim of present study was to gather information from the teachers and students about the availability and use of textbooks and their perceptions towards using the textbooks in teaching learning activities. The study used hermeneutic methodological approach. The study has greatly focused on exploring dynamism of availability and use of textbooks on students' achievement and academic success. The study site of research was based on the students and teachers of community schools from urban and remote area of Lalitpur district of Nepal.

### **2.2 Sampling proces**

The present study has greatly focused on exploring teachers' and students' perception towards using textbooks and the students' achievement along with the availability and use of textbooks. The study being a qualitative, a purposive sampling method was used to generate the data. Sample size of the study was 25. 20 students from grade 9 and 10 with 5 teachers teaching in grade 9 and 10. The sample size was 25 as data got saturated at this number for the research questions. Theory of saturation was considered to select the sample size. Theory of saturation substantiates the number as the size of the sample should be stopped once the data get saturated (Creswell, 2013). Grade 9 and 10 students were chosen

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as government of Nepal is providing free textbooks up-to grade 10 and believing that the students of these grades are more able to answer the research questions as compared to lower grades. However, the credibility and trustworthiness of the data were sufficient in providing general idea.

### **2.3 Research design and tools for data collection**

The present study is a qualitative research approach with exploratory research design. The objective of research was to explore the perception of students and teachers towards the availability and use of textbooks to enhance the students' academic performance for which data were collected by using primary and secondary sources. The individual questionnaires, in depth interviews, focus group discussion, and interactions with the key informants were used to collect the primary data and the secondary data were collected through desk study and document review. Different relevant articles on school financing published on books, journals, research reports, periodicals, magazines, newspapers and other relevant documents of various organizations available in print version and in the internet were also reviewed for the secondary sources.

### **2.4 Data analysis and interpretation**

The in-depth interview and observational studies have provided a rich descriptions of classrooms to help us understand the context of teachers' and students' on the dynamism of availability and use of textbooks in the classroom activities. The in-depth interviews were approximately 20 minutes in duration and each individual participants responses were aggregated, analyzed and presented as themes from the generated data. Textual and structural analysis of the different themes developed from the generated data through purposive sampling was used. Textual analysis refers to the description of what is expressed by the participants. Structural analysis refers to the interpretation of how it is expressed by the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Textual and structural descriptions provide additional meaning by the development of a synthesis of the meanings and essences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The themes derived from the participants' experiences were then compared to other methods like: observations, field notes, interview, and literature to verify accuracy. In crafting of individual texture, participants' experiences are described and explained using verbatim in a narrative format to facilitate the participants' experiences. Similarly, in construction of individual structural description, imaginative variation was used where researchers imagined how the experience occurred and created the structure. This imaginative variation was followed by construction of composite structural description where structures were added to create structural description. And at the end of the analysis, texture and the structure were synthesized by writing composite narratives by creating meaning units common to all participants to reach to the essence of the experience of the phenomenon.

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## 2.5 Ethical issues

The study followed the Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) adopted by BERA (British Educational Research Association) to ensure that the study did not breach any of the ethics. Three vital issues for ethical considerations were considered as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006). The protection of participants from harm, ensuring of confidentiality of research data, and the question of deception of the subjects. The issues of informed consent (Creswell, 2009) of the participants, confidentiality of data and the anonymity of the research participants were highly considered in this study. The major principles of ethical considerations were maintained as way of respecting the research participants, the research context and to protect the information provided by them (Friensen, 2012).

## 3. Results and Discussion

The study generated different themes from the data revealing the significance of using textbooks, quality of textbooks for quality education, textbooks for generating different skills. These themes were developed after transcription of the narration followed by coding and categorization of the data. The generated data were analyzed for significant statements and coded to identify recurring themes. The guiding theories for this study were Vygotsky's socio-cultural learning theory, theory of constructivism, theory of knowledge, achievement theory and JB Watson's behaviourism theory. Findings of the study support these theories and confirm existing studies on availability and use of textbooks for academic achievement of the students. Themes generated in the study were:

### 3.1 Textbooks for Developing Different Skills

School textbooks are crucial organs in the process of constructing legitimated ideologies and beliefs (NASA, 2013). School textbooks are one of the vehicle through which attempts can be made to disseminate and reinforce dominant cultural forms.

In this connection, the participant science teacher said:

*"It becomes difficult to teach the practical things to the students without textbook. Textbook help in providing the procedure of different practical knowledge that help them to carry out practical in the laboratory and makes the teacher easy to handle the students in the laboratory."*

Similarly, the account teacher said:

*The examples given in the textbook help the students learn more in solving the numerical problems. Without book, it becomes very difficult for teachers to solve the problems as well."*

When teaching and learning is viewed from the constructivist theory/lens, the constructivist like Jean Piaget believed that knowledge is generated through the

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experience (Daft, 2008). Therefore, it can be interpreted that the students need textbook to enhance their learning. Otherwise, in absence of textbook, they found learning is very difficult for them. A constructivist teacher creates a context with the help of textbook. Besides, with the help of textbooks the teacher can guide, encourage the students to work in groups to think about the issues and questions, and support them with encouragement and advice.

### 3.2 Availability and Time Factor

The aim of hermeneutic phenomenology is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world (Friensen, 2012). To analyze the data and derive the meaning from the perspective participants, the audio-visual transcriptions from the twenty five participants' unstructured interviews were carried-out. The transcript of students and teachers of different schools were read and re-read for multiple times. This activities helped to understand and interpret the participants' data in more precise way. This was followed by the emergence of the theme "Availability and the time factor."

The expression the participant Ganga said:

*"We are supposed to get the textbook on time but, we are not getting it on time. Government does not provide all the books that we need free of cost as well. Due to unavailability of textbooks on time, it has hampered our studies. We find very difficult to prepare for the exams."*

In Nepal, government provides basic books free of cost. But, the books the government provides do not reach in the hands of students on time. Some of the Himalayan districts like Manang, Mustang, Humla, Jumla, and Dolpa where the new academic session begins from February never gets textbooks on time. Students of these districts get the books sometimes even after 4/5 months of beginning of the school session. This has really hit hard to students for their academic enhancement.

One of the girl students from class ten said:

*"My home is very far, it takes me one hour to reach to school and we do not have stationary shops in our village to buy the books and if the books are sufficiently made available in the library, it becomes easy for us to read and write."*

The strong association regarding the timeliness in textbook availability and student achievement. Students reporting to have received textbook at the beginning of the academic session have scored 36% in Math, 49% in Nepali and 42% in Science whereas those who did not receive textbooks even at the end of the academic year have scored 24%, 35% and 34% respectively in the same subject (NASA, 2013). Both Tallvid (2016) and Holmberg (2016) found that use of textbooks either in the form of print or digital in the classroom greatly affects in learning and achievement of the students' in their academic performance.

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It has become clear that textbooks should be made available on time to enhance the students learning activities and when it is viewed from the J.B. Watson's behaviorism lens, it can be understood that students learning activities become passive when they do not get textbooks on time as behavior theorist define learning as nothing more than the acquisition of new behavior and viewed the students as a passive learner who responds to the stimuli (Harwood, 2017).

### **3.3 Simultaneous Act of Availability and Use of Textbook**

If availability of textbook is on time but the use of it becomes poor then, the value of textbooks becomes worthless (MoE, 2016). Therefore, availability and its use should go hand in hand. The participant Pushpa said:

*"It is compulsory for us to bring textbook in the class regularly. Teacher and we student both use textbook in the classroom. Teacher does not allow us to sit in the class without textbook."*

The use of textbook helps to develop passion of learning among the students and this passion ultimately helps in developing learning habits and improves the academic performance of the students. In this regard the respondent Sita said:

*"If we have only textbooks, but do not use them properly, then, it is useless and meaningless to have textbooks with the students. We have books so that we can read at any time convenient to us."*

From her perspective, it is interpreted that availability of textbooks and use of textbooks should go hand in hand for the effective result of the students in their academic life and personal life. It was found from the observation that teachers selected different kinds of tasks from the textbooks. Some teachers assign their students a list of exercises from a section in the book to work individually, others assigned more elaborated activities for students to work in groups (Knight, 2015). While teachers used tasks that required different levels of student engagement and difficulty and organized their classes differently, teachers were included in this category if their primary use of the textbook was for their students to work on tasks from the textbook posed with little modification.

### **3.4 Frequency of Textbooks Use in the Classroom**

The same phenomenological process of analysis of Moustaka's was used to get the essence of the study. Students should bring the textbook in the class regularly. They must be encouraged to use the textbook in the class for the understanding the text and to do the exercise given in the textbook. It helped them to know what is where. As per Wongkaew (2009), there are at least two steps in using textbook. First is to understand the textbooks before beginning the class critically and recognizing their advantaged and disadvantages. And second is to evaluate the nature of instructional task in textbooks. Teachers and students get benefits when textbook is used in teaching and learning process (Harmer, 2007).

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Shree Ram of grade 9 said that:

*“We use textbooks all the time in classrooms as we were told to bring textbooks daily .If we forget to bring, teachers do not allow us to sit in the classroom.”*

Similarly, Krisna Maya of grade 10 also had the same statement regarding the use of textbook in the classrooms. She said that:

*“Our teacher do not allow us in the classroom without textbooks. It is compulsory for us to bring textbooks daily in the classrooms.”*

When asked about the frequency of using textbook in the classroom, the math teacher said:

*“It is imperative to bring textbooks in the classroom by the students. It is very difficult for the teachers to make them follow the questions and answers without textbooks.”*

From the three sources of data, it came to understand that the textbooks should be frequently use by the students in the classrooms so that it makes the students and teachers both easy for teaching and learning activities. They can look back from previous learning session to continue the next meeting in the textbook.

When the above theme is linked with the theory of transfer, it can be interpreted that knowledge can be transferred to the students when the students are continuously given the topic. This act not only reminds them about subject matter but also help in transferring the knowledge in a concrete manner. The theory of transfer helps students and teachers to transfer positive and negative outcomes. The positive transfer helps to learn and enhances the context in other different context, whereas the negative transfer helps to learn the error in teach (Harmer, 2007).

### **3.5 Textbook Use as an Indicator for School Academic Achievement**

The availability of textbook in the school library or by person is one of the indicators of school academic achievement. Literature suggests that the study of school effectiveness relies very much on the minimum threshold of educational and physical resources available in schools.

The major indicator of quality of education is the level of students' achievement. Assessment of student achievement always need not be as labeling students as a success or failure, pass or fail, or comparing with others in the group (Harmer, 2007). Assessment will be more useful if learning of a student is assessed with the main the main intention to improve his/her learning. This can be achieved through the use and availability of quality textbooks. Textbooks were not used by either teachers or pupils in most of the lessons observed. Sometimes the teachers brought them to the classrooms but kept them on their tables; they copied material from the textbook onto the board for students to recite.

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When this theme is seen from the lens of McClelland's Achievement Motivation Theory, it can be interpreted that students get motivated for academic achievement when textbooks are made easily available and students are encouraged to use it properly as "Achievement Motivation Theory attempts to explain and predict behavior and performance based on a person's need for achievement, power, and affiliation" (Bashir & Matto, 2012). According to Lussier and Achua (2007), "the need for achievement is the unconscious concern for excellence in accomplishments through individual efforts". Similarly, Daft (2008) stated the need for Achievement is "the desire to accomplish something difficult, attain a high standard of success, master complex tasks, and surpass others." Teachers can follow the instruction given in the textbook to impart knowledge to the students and teach accordingly.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The quality of education system entirely depends on the quality interaction between teachers and students through the use of textbooks in the classroom. Textbooks reflect the aims and objectives of the national curriculum (Jung & Heaps, 2017). Therefore, the availability and the use of textbooks in the teaching learning process are very important. Unavailability of textbooks, especially in rural schools, has made students rely on teachers' notes, as they are the only source materials. In such a situation, students from poor economic background are likely to fall behind. Unavailability of textbooks and lack of creative skills ultimately lead to poor learning, which has greatly affected the quality of education of community schools. Practical subjects like science need textbooks that not only give instructions but also explain the procedures for experiments.

The purpose of this study was to describe availability and use of textbooks in school education of Nepal. Use of textbooks in school is perceived to have fostered academic success by students and teachers. Discussion has come up with the findings in relationship with the theoretical basis for this study and the empirical literature in using the textbooks in classroom activities (Clinton, 2018). However, the hermeneutical research design was discussed that allowed for interpretation as part of the analysis process by looking beyond the descriptions provided in the interviews. Patton (2002) states, "Interpretation involves explaining the findings, answering 'why' questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into an analytic framework".

The discussion of the research was based on four research questions that tried to fulfill the research objectives. The first objective of the research was to explore the attitude and perception of teachers and students in using of textbooks in classroom activities in school education of Nepal. The descriptions given by the participant were consistent and they were in the view that they have positive attitude towards using textbooks in the classrooms for the academic excellence. Each of the participants gave a window from which to view their perceptions toward using textbooks in the class and its availability and culture of using

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textbooks and sharing of books with their friends in the classrooms and the value of the textbooks in shaping their future and academic success.

The second objective of the research was to examine the role of textbooks and its relevance, suitability and quality at different stages of learning. In this also, the participants put their views to have quality textbooks as quality textbooks always enhances quality learning for the academic success of the students (Griggs & Jackson, 2017). The third objective was to identify the problems of unavailability of textbooks by the students on time. Participants described that the textbooks should be made available on time as it hinders their academic growth and knowledge enhancement. Most of the participants argued that the most prevalent problem the teachers and students face is the unavailability of textbooks on time. Even they get the textbooks, they are not sufficient. Mountainous region like Humla, Jumla students do not even get the textbooks for 3/4 months.

The final research objective was to examine the influence of textbooks in the student's achievement. The participant used the textbook as one of the important educational tools in teaching and learning activities in and outside the school. Textbooks were written on the basis of curriculum and tried to cover the syllabus. It is also written on the basis of assumptions that teachers and students need textbook in order to carry-out the teaching and learning activities. From this research study, it was found that the respondent teachers and students both need textbooks to enhance their academic performance.

Thus, it is evident from the discussion that availability of textbooks are utmost important in a country like Nepal and textbooks should be made available on time. In the context of Nepal, where teachers are not much qualified, where the students come from the low-income background or underprivileged areas and do not have access to other resources, textbook play a pivotal and important role. Students are in the need of textbooks for academic and life skills development. Therefore, whether students' need are recognized and addressed or not is the key for each and every student. However, in this study, teachers or school professionals were unable to recognize the special need of textbooks to the students and were unable to provide appropriate program and services to the students regarding availability of textbook on time to the students.

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