Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

A Research Project: ART6401

Murdoch University

(Source: Om Baral 2013)

I declare that this project is my own account of my own research. Its main content is work which has not been previously submitted for a degree at any university.

Om Bahadur Baral (32375257)
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

**Table of Contents**

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... iv

Abstract ............................................................................................................................. v

Table of Figures ................................................................................................................... vi

List of Acronyms.................................................................................................................. vii

Chapter 1 ............................................................................................................................... 1

1.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................. 1

1.2 Aims of the Research ................................................................................................... 2

1.3 Research Questions and Methodologies ....................................................................... 2

1.4 Significance of Study ................................................................................................... 2

1.5 Organisation of the Research Project ........................................................................... 3

Chapter 2 ............................................................................................................................... 4

2.1 Background of the Study ............................................................................................. 4

2.2 Nepal: A Geographical, Political and Cultural Overview (see Appendix A) ............... 4

2.3 Progress in Education System in Nepal ....................................................................... 5

2.4 Community versus Private Schools in Nepal .............................................................. 6

2.5 Current Status of Girls’ Attainment in Schools ........................................................... 9

Chapter 3 ............................................................................................................................... 11

3.1 Gender in the Nepalese Educational Context ............................................................. 11

3.2 Gender Hierarchies in Nepal ..................................................................................... 11

3.3 Why Sons? .................................................................................................................... 11

3.4 Legal Provision against Gender Discrimination in Nepal ........................................... 12

3.5 Value of Girls’ Education in Social, Cultural, Economic and Family Context .......... 13

Chapter 4 ............................................................................................................................... 15

4.1 An Autobiographical Account .................................................................................... 15

4.2 Memories of my Childhood ....................................................................................... 15

4.3 My Early Home Life and Education .......................................................................... 15
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

4.4 My Career in Private and Community Schools........................................15
4.5 Exploring Kalika Primary School in Khalse: My Experience ..................17
4.6 The Physical Setting of Khalse Village..................................................17
4.7 Socio-economic Situation ..................................................................17
4.8 Kalika Primary School ........................................................................18
4.9 Structure and Number of Children Enrolment .......................................18
4.10 Challenges and Gender Discrimination in School ..................................19
5. Literature Review and Discussion..........................................................22
6. Conclusion.............................................................................................29
Appendix: A (Map of Nepal, Source: Google) .............................................30
Appendix: B (Map of Pokhara Town, Source: Google) .................................30
References ..................................................................................................31
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Lastly, I would also like to extend my thanks to Kalika Primary School family and Stichting Sarangkot Nepal for giving me the opportunity to carry out my work in community schools.

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Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

Abstract
In this research project, I explore the factors which discriminate against girls within the Nepalese formal education system. I explore the level of attainment by girls in community and private schools in two ways: firstly through my personal experience of education as both a male in community schools and then later when employed within the education sector as a teacher and community worker and secondly I turn to the literature, articles and journals.

The value of education for girls is affected by the role of parents, societies, the government, International and National Government Organisations (I/NGOs) and by competition from private schools where boys predominate. While girls have experienced change in their educational participation as a result of the efforts made by the government to implement its educational policies, discrimination against them in education persists. The patriarchal value system and prejudices towards girls’ education are still creating major barriers to opportunities when compared to boys. Girls’ enrolment is improving, with the provision of some facilities. However the gaps in quality education between girls and boys are widening due to the implementation of two kinds of formal education system: private and community schools where private schools are supposed to be imparting quality education.
Table of Figures


Figure 2.2 Structure of School Education in Nepal (Source: DOE Consolidated Report 2011, Table 2.1, p.7)......................................................................................................................6

Figure 2.3 Community School Enrolment (Source: DOE, Nepal Education in Figures 2013: Fig. F, p.7) ..........................................................................................................................7

Figure 2.4 Private School Enrolment (Source: DEO, Nepal Education Figures 2013: Fig.g; p.7).................................................................................................................................9

Figure 2.5 Development Region and Gender Differences (Source: The Kathmandu Post: 4 April 2015) ..........................................................................................................................10

Figure 4.1 New Building of Kalika Primary School (Source: Om Baral 2013).........................18

Figure 4.2 School Administration Record (Source: KPS 2013)................................................19

Figure 4.3 Children of Kalika Primary School (Source: Om Baral 2013).................................19

Figure 4.4 Meeting held with Parents of Kalika Primary School (Source: Om Baral 2013) .20
## List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPEP</td>
<td>Basic and Primary Education Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBS</td>
<td>Central Bureau of Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPN</td>
<td>Communist Party of Nepal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>District Development Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEO</td>
<td>District Education Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERO</td>
<td>Education Review Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIDS</td>
<td>Institute for Integrated Development Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non Government Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOLJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Law and Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NESP</td>
<td>National Education Sector Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non Government Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC</td>
<td>National Planning Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDRC</td>
<td>Social Development and Research Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLC</td>
<td>School Leaving Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMC</td>
<td>School Management Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children’s Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KPS</td>
<td>Kalika Primary School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction
Education is the backbone of socio-economic development. Inclusive education is the prime goal of any state because discrimination in education for boys and girls affects overall social and economic development (DOE 2007). For the harmonious development of any society, gender equality in education is very important. Equal opportunities for both males and females in all aspects of social life, education, health, social position and recognition assist to move societies towards the desired destination. There is a popular Nepalese saying: male and female are the wheels of a cart. If a wheel of a cart is broken, the cart will never be able to move with one wheel to its desired destination. Thus, harmonious development of any society can only be imagined if males and females act like the wheels of a cart.

In the context of Nepal, the status of women in education is still a matter of discussion. Many girls are still illiterate and those who have access to education have not been able to actively participate in development activities. Due to the Nepalese patriarchal family and social structures, discrimination against girls begins at birth. The birth of a girl in a family is still taken as a curse in many communities whereas the birth of a boy is celebrated as a boon. In most cases, the root cause of discrimination includes religious, cultural and traditional beliefs.

United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF 2006) states that the factors influencing girls’ education are household poverty, caste, religion, traditional attitudes towards girls’ education, parental illiteracy, distance of school from their home, poor physical facilities in school, poor quality of education and so on. However, the Nepalese Government and many national and international government organisations (NGOs and INGOs) have put in place a variety of initiatives and programs for access to education for girls. In relation to that, the government of Nepal has always given priority to the education sector and has invested a large amount of money (around 17% of its total budget every year) with the assistance of different donor organizations and government itself (Parajuli and Das 2013). According to the objectives of the Education Sector of Nepal, under the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007), the accessibility and opportunities for girls in education was prioritised and the Nepalese government has recently reached its deadline by 2015 with the goal to achieve the equal access to basic good quality education (Ministry of Education; MOE 2014). However, the formal report of the Nepalese Government whether it reached its goal to the equal access to basic good quality education is yet to come.
At present, in spite of domestic, economic and social barriers which have influenced girls’ school attendance, the ratio of girls enrolment compared to boys in community schools has increased significantly. In contrast, girls’ enrolment in private schools is quite low in proportion to the enrolment of boys. Even though, on the whole, the girls are outnumbering boys at schools, the discrimination against girls still exists because of dual formal education system: community and private school.

1.2 Aims of the Research
The aim of the research is to explore factors influencing education of girls and discrimination as barrier to gain quality education in Nepal. The specific aims of the study are to:

- Explore the factors influencing education of girls.
- Examine how prevailing gender discourses affect girls receiving quality education.

1.3 Research Questions and Methodologies
I analyse which factors and issues largely influence girls’ participation in community schools. I examine why most parents prefer sending their daughters to community schools rather than private schools and how gender hierarchy, socio-cultural complexities and parents’ attitudes towards the value of girls’ education determines their access to quality education.

How does gender discrimination affect girls’ right to quality education is the main research question followed by the following sub-questions.

- What is the current status of girls’ attainment in community schools?
- How do the parents and society construct the meaning of education for girls?
- Why do most parents prefer to send their daughters to community schools?

The research will be based on available journals, newspaper articles, theses and Nepalese Government reports. I also depend on previous research and literature when drawing on my personal experiences of community schools. My personal experience with community schools, private schools and my own socio-economic background enable me to understand and internalize the problems and the issues in depth to explore the research questions.

1.4 Significance of Study
In general, Nepal seems to have reached its goal to narrow the gender disparity in school education with the numbers of girls attending community schools. At present, girls outnumber the boys in community schools (See Figure: 3). Although the research on
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

discrimination against girls’ education has been done in many areas on the basis of caste, religion, disadvantaged girls and geographical locations, the research on discrimination against girls getting quality education has not been done yet. This research project suggests that simply sending girls to school is not significant for reducing the discrimination against girls in education. It is also important to know whether the girls are attaining quality education similar to boys. In such a case, the attitude of many parents towards the value of education to their daughters needs to be changed.

The study will be helpful for the Nepalese community, the government and policy makers to formulate new programs and policies to equal access to quality education. It will include equal opportunities of enrolment for girls in private schools as for boys and help to diminish the gaps between the level and quality of education in community and private schools.

1.5 Organisation of the Research Project

The project has been structured in 7 chapters. The first chapter introduces the general concept of discrimination against girls attaining to quality education in Nepal. Furthermore, it provides information regarding aims, research questions and significance of the research project. Chapter 2 provides background of the study including a geographical, political and cultural overview of Nepal along with progress in the education system. Moreover, it provides a short comparison between community and private schools, current status of girls’ attainment in schools and value of girls’ education in social, cultural, economic and family contexts. Chapter 3 presents my own autobiographical account and my career in private and community schools. Chapter 4 focuses on gender in the Nepalese educational context which includes gender hierarchies, preference of sons and legal provision against gender discrimination in Nepal. Chapter 5 deals with my working experience as a community worker in Kalika Primary School. Chapter 6 deals with literature review and discussion by answering my research question. Finally, chapter 7 concludes my research project and makes recommendations for further research, policy and practice.
Chapter 2

2.1 Background of the Study
This chapter provides a general idea of progress in the education system in Nepal. I begin the chapter with a brief overview of country’s geographical, political and cultural context. The chapter aims to provide the situation of the community versus private school in the Nepalese educational context. Then I highlight the current status of girls’ enrolment in school along with the value of their education in social, cultural and economic context.

2.2 Nepal: A Geographical, Political and Cultural Overview (see Appendix A)
Nepal is a landlocked country situated in between India and China (Tibet) occupying an area of 147,181 square kilometres. Geographically, Nepal has been divided into three distinct divisions: the Himalayan range in the North, the Terai region in the South and the Hilly region between the Himalayan range and Terai region. The Himalayan range includes the highest peak of the world, Mt Everest. These three regions spread parallel from East to West, mostly bisected by the country’s river systems. These regions are further divided into five developmental regions within the framework of regional development planning. Within these development regions, there are 14 zones and 75 districts. The present government of Nepal has announced the total number of municipalities and Village Development Committees (VDCs) are 130 and 3,633 respectively (The Kathmandu Post 9 May.2014).

Nepal is sovereign nation and became a republic in 2008. Before becoming a republic, Nepal was ruled by monarchs and went through two major historical political changes in 1990 and in 2006. The first established a parliamentary political system under a constitutional monarchy. After that, from 1996 to 2006, the peoples’ war led by Communist Party of Nepal (CPN Maoist) brought civil war, political instability and great confusion. During that time, Nepal witnessed political chaos, destruction of physical infrastructure and the loss of thousands of lives from both the government and Maoist sides. The massive people’s protest for peace and agreement between major political parties and Maoists resulted in peace agreement in 2006. Then, the two major forces (Maoist and major political parties) announced the political movement against the King’s absolute rule and power. Consequently, the people’s movement ousted the monarch from his reign and the newly formed constitutional assembly officially declared Nepal a secular Democratic Republic in 2008.
Nepal is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious country (CBS 2006). It is socio-culturally highly diversified. According to the census 2011, the total number of population is 26,494,504 (See Figure 1) and there are 81.3 percent people who identify as Hindus, 9 percent Buddhists, about 4.4 percent Muslims; about 3.1 percent follow the indigenous Kirant religion, and a very small number are Christians or others (CBS 2012). The population census report 2011 (CBS 2012) illustrates Nepal has 125 different caste and ethnic groups speaking 123 different mother-tongues. However, Nepali is the national and official language spoken by around 44.6 per cent of the population. It is also a lingua-franca among different linguistic groups and communities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Surface Area (Sq Km) :</th>
<th>147,181</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (2011 Census)</td>
<td>26,494,504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>12,849,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13,645,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex ratio ( Male per 100 Female)</td>
<td>94.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Growth Rate (2001-2011)(%)</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pop. Density (Pop./Km2)</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


2.3 Progress in Education System in Nepal
The 1990 people’s movement restored democracy and the newly formed government initiated massive reform in the education sector. To materialize a long term and rigid plan, the National Education Commission (NEC) was formed (MOE 1992). This included free schooling facilities from primary to secondary level, at least one female teacher appointment per primary school, legal provision of primary education for those with their own mother tongue other than Nepali, and encouragement for the private sector to open and be involved in operating schools, colleges and universities (MOE 1992).

The 1990 global consensus on ‘Education for All’ (EFA) played a significant role in the improvement and development of education in Nepal (Timsina 2011). The EFA goals and targets were largely incorporated into the country’s Eighth and Ninth Plan (1997-2002). Universal access to, and completion of, primary education were the two most important targets for the achievement of EFA goals in both plans (Timsina 2011). The target of 90 percent enrolment rates in primary education was set in the Eighth Plan. That target was not
achieved but was set again in the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) (Timsina 2011). The Nepalese government then called for multi-donors’ funds and implemented a project called ‘Basic and Primary Education Project’ (BPEP) in two phases. The first was implemented in 40 districts and the second in 35 districts. The main focus of the BPEP was to expand access to primary education by improving the quality of education (MOE 1992). One of the most significant programs set by BPEP was to provide scholarships to girls to encourage them to enrol in primary education (MOE 1996). Similarly, the Tenth Plan envisioned extending the scholarship program to girls from primary level to secondary level by eliminating all forms of discrimination against them (MOES 2003).

Recently, the political scenario has completely changed. The massive 2006 political movement formed the constitutional assembly abolished the monarchy and declared the nation a ‘republic’ in 2008 but it is still in the process of drafting a new constitution. It is still not clear what changes to education will be in future. However, as a Nepalese citizen, and through my experience and knowledge, the people are aspiring for education without discrimination in gender and quality.

2.4 Community versus Private Schools in Nepal
The formal education system in Nepal has been categorized in two types: Community or Public Schools run by the regular government’s grant for the teachers’ salary and other administrative purposes and; Private and Boarding Schools run by certain investors such as businessmen and landlords (Parajuli and Das 2013). The formal structure of the school system constitutes: pre-primary and primary (Grade 1 to 5), lower secondary (Grade 6 to 8), Secondary (Grade 9 to 10) and Higher Secondary (Grade 11 to 12).

![Figure 2.2 Structure of School Education in Nepal (Source: DOE Consolidated Report 2011, Table 2.1, p.7)
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

Formal education in Nepal started with the establishment of the first school in 1853 (Thapa 2011). Before that, the education system was guided mostly by Hindu practices in which students had to go to teachers’ homes. The system was transformed to Gurukul School in which Gurus were superior and would decide what and how to teach.

The main objectives of formal Nepalese education system school were to teach the high class and royals. Schools were formally opened to the public after the establishment of democracy in 1951 (CBS 2003). The National Education Sector Plan (NESP) 1971 attempted to create a single unified system of public education (Thapa 2011). Although the enrolment rate of children increased rapidly in public schools, the quality of education was unsatisfactory. Thus the demand for private schools rose driven by well-off families.

Although there are four times more community schools than private schools (Thapa 2011), community schools are criticized for not performing well in providing quality education (Timsina 2008). The donors and even the local communities have been spending large funds for the betterment of community schools in Nepal (Parajuli and Das 2013). Nevertheless, their poor performance has resulted in the decreasing number of students every year. Even though they are supposed to be less costly (Parajuli and Das 2013), poor performance is appraised by lack of physical infrastructures, textbooks, centralized curriculum, monolingual instruction, lack of constructive and critical pedagogical strategies, poverty and social exclusion (Parajuli and Das 2013). Yet while these community schools are struggling to attract students, the number of female students is increasing compared to the decreasing enrolments of boys.

Level wise community school enrolments by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dev Reg</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Lower Secondary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Higher Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G%</td>
<td>B%</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>G%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>37.2403</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>74.936</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cent</td>
<td>51.1</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>128.1382</td>
<td>51.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KV</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>50.4</td>
<td>69.761</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>57.0999</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MW</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>65.4641</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FW</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>46.3985</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.3 Community School Enrolment (Source: DOE, Nepal Education in Figures 2013: Fig. F, p.7)
The statistics in Figure 2.3 shows that girls’ enrolment at all levels throughout the country outnumber that of the boys’ in 2013. Girls’ enrolment at primary level, lower secondary level and secondary level is around 52 percent whereas at higher secondary level, the percentage of girls’ enrolment is 53.4 percent. The figures clearly indicate that even in different regions, the number of girls is increasing significantly in community schools.

In addition, the interest of parents’ towards English as a medium of instruction which lacks in community school is one of the main reasons for the distraction of community school (Bhattarai and Yadav 2012). English language is thought to be one of the major factors of quality education in Nepal. It is very important to get better jobs and study abroad. Therefore most parents want to send their children to private schools, especially boys because parents prioritise boys’ education over that of girls’.

Some reasons behind the lower quality of community schools are poor school buildings, lack of teaching materials, text books not reaching rural areas in time, hilly or mountainous geography, lack of teachers’ performance and professional support, poverty, language barriers and the lack of good governance in the schools (Mathema 2007). Furthermore, involvement of local members of different political parties with their own political ideologies in the schools’ management system and teachers’ involvement in different political activities rather than teaching activities in school are some significant barriers to improving community schools. The absence of government monitoring and supervising community schools has contributed to making the community schools worse (Mathema 2007). Beside this, in many rural community schools, teaching and learning activities rarely take place and remedial support for students and testing systems are generally very poor.

In contrast, private schools in Nepal are supposed to be imparting quality education on the basis of the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam. Most private schools are well-equipped and better managed with strong leadership. Classes are held regularly and the remedial support for students, regular class tests, regular assignments, feedback and lesson drills are very important criteria of private schools (Mathema 2007). The parents are impressed by the instruction in English, the high pass rate and scores secured by students in the SLC exam. Many private schools are well organised to meet the expectations of parents. Modern
technologies and libraries have been used more in private schools than community schools. There is a good integration and link between the stakeholders and communities.

2.5 Current Status of Girls’ Attainment in Schools
Over the last ten years, the status of girls’ enrolment in schools has been rapidly increasing. The progress in girls’ attainment is due to rigorous efforts of strong social demand for education from the people as well as the government. Moreover, the rapid development of technologies, the political and economic changes and education of parents play significant roles in shaping the positive attitudes towards girls’ education. In developing the educational infrastructures to meet the increased demands, national and international donors have played a crucial role by providing necessary resources.

Nonetheless, while the community schools are criticised for not providing quality education, the available data shows that girls’ enrolment in community schools is more than boys.

Level wise private school enrolment by region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dev Reg</th>
<th>Primary</th>
<th>Lower Secondary</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>Higher Secondary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>G%</td>
<td>B%</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>G%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>677737</td>
<td>43.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>101836</td>
<td>42.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cent</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>274600</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KV</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>53.6</td>
<td>187585</td>
<td>46.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>192882</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MW</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>74013</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FW</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>34406</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2.4 Private School Enrolment (Source: DEO, Nepal Education Figures 2013: Fig.g; p.7)

In contrast, Figure 2.4 clearly illustrates that the number of boys’ enrolled is larger than that for girls in private schools at all levels throughout the country. Girls’ enrolment is around 43 percent and boys’ enrolment is around 57 percent. This clearly suggests that the parents mostly prefer to send their sons to private schools. As mentioned earlier, private schools are costly and out of reach for people from low-economic background. However, all private schools are not equally expensive; cost depends on the facilities they provide. The increasing number of boys in private schools can be because of parents working in foreign countries like Malaysia, Hong Kong, England, America and some Gulf countries and sending the
remittance for their children’s education in Nepal. Moreover, private schools with reasonable costs targeting the middle-economic class are accessible in villages too.

Despite the significant progress of girls’ attainment in community schools, the recent study carried out by Education Review Office (ERO) under the Ministry of Education Nepal confirms that the achievement level of learning by male students is significantly higher than females (The Kathmandu Post 2015).

The assessment score of girls and boys by region shows that the average male-female achievement differences in which boys’ achievement in all regions is higher than girls’ (See Figure 2.5). This study was held in three different subjects (Nepali, Mathematics and Science), among 44,067 students from 1,119 community and private schools in 28 sample districts (The Kathmandu Post 2015). The findings of the study among girl and boy students in the subject of Nepali was the same but in mathematics and science, the performance of girl students is lower than boy students (The Kathmandu Post 2015).

The Nepalese educationist, Dr Man Prasad Wagle, concluded that the tendency of parents to engage their daughters in household chores more than their sons is one of the reasons behind the difference in learning achievement. The other reason is parents enrolling their daughters in community schools and sons in private schools (The Kathmandu Post 2015). In the study, most of the girls were from the community schools. To bring out the best performance of girls students, Dr Wagle, stresses equal treatment in their homes as well.
Chapter 3

3.1 Gender in the Nepalese Educational Context
This chapter highlights the gender hierarchies that exist widely in the Nepalese societies which shape and influence the parents’ and societies’ actions and behaviours, ultimately determining the girls’ educational opportunities. Similarly, it includes the preference of sons and the legal provision against gender discrimination in the Nepalese societies.

3.2 Gender Hierarchies in Nepal
Nepali society is highly patriarchal; the father is the head of the family in most communities. This cultural and traditional value powerfully favours males over females and women are mostly not involved in decision making in traditional families. In various castes, cultural, religious and ethnic groups, women are treated as inferior to male family members. “Women are still confined within traditionally prescribed and socially accepted domestic roles and deprived culturally, legally, politically and educationally” (Thapaliya 2001:15). However, at present, many changes in women’s status have been felt due to increased accessibility of education and social mobility. The parental and social attitudes toward their daughters are gradually changing. However, the positive change and attitudes to daughters have mostly not taken place in rural and uneducated families. Women still have limited access to resources, education and information and suffer from domination, discrimination and exploitation by their male counterparts (Timsina 2011). The degree of discrimination varies on the basis of caste, religion and community. Despite caste, religion and culture, positive changes for women have significantly occurred in educated families and Indigenous (Janajati) women are less-restricted in terms of social mobility, marriage and remarriage options, and income generating opportunities compared to Indo-Aryan Hindu women (Asian Development Bank 1999: xxi). Nonetheless, sons remain highly valued.

3.3 Why Sons?
Highly patriarchal and predominantly Hindus, Nepalese societies value males. Son preference is reflected in many aspects of cultural practice. Even after the death of parents, the ritual and funeral procedures are permitted to males only because it is believed that sons open the door to heaven for their parents after death. The mother of a son is highly praised by her family and relatives and a mother of daughters continue bearing children until she has a son. Nanda et al. (2012) revealed that the birth of son is celebrated informing relatives and neighbours as soon as possible whereas the birth of girl is not made public for some weeks. If a woman not able to bear a child, she might be forced to arrange a co-wife as well as be excluded from
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

many cultural practices. There are many Nepalese sayings reflecting the preference of sons. Some of these are: let it be late but let it be born a son; daughters are others’ property; daughters are guests for a few days; a party of mutton goes on a son’s birth but a pumpkin on that of a daughter’s (Bhusal, 2008: 144). The above sayings regarding sons exhibit the attitudes of Nepalese societies and parents towards their male and female children.

In most Nepalese societies, girls are viewed as a financial burden for their parents (Gittelsohn et al. 1997). Most parents believe that investment in girls’ education becomes meaningless since they leave their parents’ homes after their marriage and it creates a financial burden in their marriage with the provision of dowry. The dowry system in cash or items and ornaments is still in existence. The poor family suffer the economic hardship in daughter’s marriage (Basnet 2013). In contrast, the boys’ families benefit from such dowries.

In physical work, women are taken as inferior to men and paid lower wages in many in remote areas of Nepal. Women are not allowed to plough farm land on the grounds of religion and physical weakness. In temples, there are only male priests and most of the religious ceremonies are conducted by men only.

Legally, the properties of parents are inherited by sons by birth in Nepalese societies whereas the girls are not permitted to inherit their parents’ property unless they are unmarried. Boys are destined to live with, love and take care of their parents till old age. Thus, sons are desired in Nepalese societies.

3.4 Legal Provision against Gender Discrimination in Nepal
Discrimination against girls and women in different forms, due to its religious and cultural beliefs, had been in existence for long time in Nepal. Different forms in which women are discriminated against include employment, education, health reproductive rights, marriage and family, legal and court proceedings, rights to nationality and citizenship, and trafficking and sexual abuse (Basnet 2013). Over the course of time, Nepal has gone through the changes and transformation regarding the rights of women and implemented significant legislations to fight against any forms of discrimination. The major legislation states “no discrimination shall be made against any citizen in the application of general laws on the grounds of religion, race, sex, caste, tribe or ideological conviction or any of these” (Ministry of Law and Justice, 1999, Section 2 of Article 11). Moreover, the other significant move to
strengthen women’s and children’s rights was to establish the ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MWCSW) in 1995 focussing on mainstreaming gender into national development policies and programs, advocating women’s empowerment and gender equality’ (Basnet 2013: 20). In addition, Nepal approved and implemented the Children’s Act in 1992 and Children’s Rules in 1995, following the United Convention on the Rights of Child in November 1990 (Basnet 2013). Similarly, the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS 2004) clarified some remarkable legislative steps and programs of Children’s Act of 1992. The programs and legislative steps include equal opportunities to girls reducing their work burden and improving access to school and health facilities. Some other programs included were extra-curricular education, early childhood development and, water and sanitation in rural areas. In addition, primary education in mother tongue and scholarship for Dalit children and girls were significant efforts and steps of the Nepalese government.

3.5 Value of Girls’ Education in Social, Cultural, Economic and Family Context
In the socio-cultural context of Nepal I noted earlier that girls are viewed as inferior to boys in many aspects. Discriminatory values of girls’ education are still deep-rooted in Nepali society and culture. Although the enrolment rate in schools is improving, there are numerous other social and cultural barriers which obstruct their access to quality education. Girls’ are often taken as others’ property in societies and there is no meaning in investing in education since they will soon become wives and go to husbands’ houses. Most parents think that their ultimate responsibility to the daughters is marriage. After marriage, they feel as if they get rid of the responsibilities to their daughters and they don’t see any values of education to girls. Similarly, in their future roles as daughters-in-law, wives and mothers do not require education at all because their roles demand only tolerance and physical strength. As a result, girls are taught to learn their domestic duties and responsibilities and to become loyal, hard working and modest from an early age (UNICEF 2006). In contrast, parents’ investment in boys helps them in the long-term because boys support them in their old age.

Nepal is an agricultural and developing country and most families in rural areas depend on agriculture. In rural areas, many poor families and Dalits are not able to afford exam fees, cost of uniforms and note books for their children. As a result, many girls are kept at home as domestic labour to support their parents (Thapaliya 2001; see cover page). Amidst these social, cultural, economic and family barriers, at present, the reasons behind the increasing girls’ enrolment may be due to accessibility of community schools and the support given by
the Nepalese government. For example, scholarships are provided and there is an emphasis on female teachers, various supports such as teaching materials, uniforms, building toilets for girls, and organizing educational awareness programs promoting the value of girls’ education by different NGOs/INGOs such as Save the Children, UNICEF, Care Nepal, and Room to Read. These have brought a significant change in most communities regarding values of girls’ education (Timsina 2011).
Chapter 4

4.1 An Autobiographical Account
The aim of self-exploration is to reflect upon my personal experiences, knowledge and my own conception about the research project. By reflecting upon my experiences during my childhood days and working life, the chapter aims to explain my viewpoint about the research problem.

4.2 Memories of my Childhood
I was born in Assam in India. I don’t remember much about my birth place but what I do clearly remember is going to Nepal with my uncle, leaving my parents when I was six. I still remember the travel from India to Nepal by train and bus. I was brought up with my grandmother in Pumdi-Bhumdi Village in Western Nepal.

4.3 My Early Home Life and Education
Born into a peasant family I am the eldest and have one brother and one sister. My father was literate but not involved in any jobs and government services. Most of the time, he would drink alcohol and often quarrel with my mother. Along with the repetitious domestic chores my illiterate mother worked hard on the farm without my father’s assistance to provide two daily meals for us. Father sold vegetables, milk and made decisions of what to and how to manage house. Mother worked hard to pay my tuition fees in secondary school and I still remember when I was expelled from my exam hall in class 7 because my tuition fees had not been paid. Although I had to assist her in house chores when I was free, my mother never compromised when it came to my education.

I started my schooling in my village. My first primary school was situated about half an hour’s walk from my house. I walked to the school by crossing a small river called Phursekhola. My grandmother had to keep me company going to the school and took good care of me. I reunited with my parents who lived in India when I was studying in class 4. When I completed my primary school of class 5, I was admitted to the secondary school in Pokhara city which was at a distance of around one hour by walking from my house. Both of the schools were community schools.

4.4 My Career in Private and Community Schools
After completing secondary school, I was admitted to a government college. I wanted to study physics but it was very expensive and my parents could not afford the tuition fees. So,
mother suggested I try for admission into the government college because the tuition fees for education were less. I completed Intermediate level in Education majoring in English with a good mark. Immediately after, I began my career as an English teacher in a private school. By then, private schools were mushrooming in cities. In 1990, the country underwent the second massive political change in Nepalese history. The people’s movement reinstalled democracy by overthrowing the King’s autocratic Panchayat System. The newly formed government initiated a fundamental reform in the education sector. One of the major reforms was to encourage the private sector to be involved in operating schools and colleges (MOE 1992). The private institutions then started instruction in English, acknowledging the desires of people.

Before the 1990 restoration of democracy, the autocratic Panchayat system was completely not supportive of privatising education. Instruction in English language attracted many parents to send their children to private schools. Private schools were expensive whereas community schools were within the economic reach of common people. The democratic government of Nepal stressed the importance of education and made school level education accessible to all. The dual system of private and community schools created a gap between the rich and the poor. As a private school teacher, I realised that there was not only class discrimination where rich parents who were mostly businessmen, officers of the British and Indian military or government and civil servants would send their children to private schools, but also gender discrimination. The number of boys was larger than girls in private schools.

I completed my Bachelor’s Degree in Education and Master of Arts in English Literature by continuing my career in teaching. After working around a decade in different private schools, I was looking for something new and challenging in the education field. My decision to work in community schools was because I had seen many poor, disadvantaged and so-called lower caste children in my village enrolled in community schools. Along with that I had found the community schools were mostly attended by the girls.

After meeting two social workers from the Netherlands working for community schools in the villages (Sarangkot, Pumdi-bhumdi and Chapakot), I joined an INGO to support the poor and so-called Dalit (lower-caste) children with educational materials and encourage them to go to school. I would conduct training sessions for the teachers regarding teaching learning activities and extra-curricular activities such as quiz-contests, dancing, singing, drawing and
many more programs in schools so as to encourage and support students’ inner talents. In addition to those activities, I arranged meetings with the parents, many of whom were Dalits, to encourage them in sending their children to school. Some of the parents who were from the middle class admitted their sons to private schools and daughters to community schools. The number of girls in schools was almost double the number of boys. In some classes, even all the students were girls. This experience has led to my concerns regarding gendered disparities.

4.5 Exploring Kalika Primary School in Khalse: My Experience
Now, I explore my own experience as a community worker in Kalika Primary School (KPS) from 2011 to 2013. I begin this with a brief description of KPS along with its village physical setting. Then I explain the socio-economic, cultural and educational practices I personally observed.

4.6 The Physical Setting of Khalse Village
Khalse is situated in Pumdi-Bumdi Village Development Committee (VDC) about 12 kilometres South of Pokhara city. In 2014, the Government of Nepal declared this VDC as one of the newly joined wards of Pokhara city however the village Khalse is still not linked by any modern sealed road to Pokhara city. People mostly walk and some travel by mini-bus or motorbikes along a narrow hilly road to Khalse. Khalse is surrounded by other small villages of Saiswara, Khadka Gaon, Simaltari, Badahare, Dobate and Chisapani. In Khalse, near Kalika Primary School, there is a small tea shop where the villagers gather for meetings. There is only one primary school accessible to all these villages.

4.7 Socio-economic Situation
Khalse along with its surrounding villages are dominated by the Hindu religion and mostly high caste Bramhin and Chhetri with some Dalits and Indigenous people such as Kami, Damai, Gururng, Magar. The main occupations of the villagers are farming, herding cows, buffalos and goats for milk and meat and growing rice, wheat and vegetables. Most of the farmers rely on selling milk and vegetables in Pokhara city for their livelihoods. However some of the villagers are employed in public services such as the police, army and civil service. The economic condition of lower class farmers compared to the people involved in public services is not good because the food and vegetables they grow are not enough to eat for the whole year. However, the middle-class farmers, to some extent, are able to sell their vegetables and fruits for their economic livelihoods.
4.8 Kalika Primary School
Kalika Primary School is was established in 1974 with the involvement of local people in Khalse. Until 2000, the physical infrastructure was very poor. There was not even a good school building and the children had to study either under trees or inside the poorly-thatched roof hut sitting on a dusty floor with little furniture. The local people eventually took initiatives in co-ordination to collect funds together with the District Education Office (DEO) and District Development Committee (DDC) in Kaski district. After 26 years since its establishment, in the year 2000, the school finally got a new building and separate toilets for boys and girls. However, the school is still facing the problem of providing adequate teaching materials, a library and therefore quality education.

![Figure 4.1 New Building of Kalika Primary School (Source: Om Baral 2013)](image)

4.9 Structure and Number of Children Enrolment
Kalika Primary School teaches from Nursery to Grade Five (3 to 9 years of age). In 2013, the school had a total number of 82 students. However, there are only 75 students in the school and 7 students were dropouts according to the school’s students’ enrolment record of 2013. The admission record of the school shows the children in each class accordingly.
Figure 4.2 clarifies that the number of girls’ enrolment in Kalika Primary School is far larger than that of boys’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Se. No.</th>
<th>Class Level</th>
<th>Number of Girls</th>
<th>Number of Boys</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nursery</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Grade One</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Grade Two</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Grade Three</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Grade Four</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Grade Five</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>56</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.2 School Administration Record (Source: KPS 2013)

4.10 Challenges and Gender Discrimination in School

Kalika Primary School has a number of challenges to improving the quality of education. It has insufficient teaching aids and materials. Community schools use instruction of teaching and text books in Nepali language. However, KPS has prescribed English textbooks and adopted instruction in English from 2013 on request of parents. This has however helped, to
some extent, to compete with private school and attract the number of children. As mentioned earlier, one of the attractions of parents to private school is its instruction and textbooks in English. From my experience and interaction with students, I found that the students were poor in English and the teachers were not trained and qualified in teaching English. There were four permanent teachers officially selected by the Nepalese government and two more were recruited by the School Management Committee. The permanent teachers in KPS have been teaching more than two decades but were unable to teach in English and the two new teachers were inexperienced and untrained. From my own experience working as a community worker and a trainer in the 2013 academic year, I realised that the teachers needed regular training and guidance to improve the learning activities. Moreover, many children and even the teachers did not regularly attend the classes. The regular extra-curricular activities were rarely conducted in school. The supervision by the government and School Management Committee (SMC) was hardly held to improve the school’s overall situation.

Figure 4.4 Meeting held with Parents of Kalika Primary School (Source: Om Baral 2013)

Most of the children were either from middle or low-economic background with illiterate parents. Although they were uneducated, most parents wanted to send their children to school. In my discussions and meetings with parents (See Figure 4.4), I learnt that those who had low-income had no other options except to send their children to KPS. Parents from low-middle class background admitted their sons to private schools and girls to KPS. Although they seemed to be aware of the girls’ education when I asked them about discrimination, they
wanted their sons to have quality education to be able to get good jobs in future and be able to look after their parents in comfort in their old age.

As mentioned earlier, sons are the treasure of a Nepalese family. In contrast, girls are eventually ‘other’s property’ because they go to their husband’s house. The main crux of sending daughters at least to community school is preparing them to be a literate suitable bride to handle minor household chores after their marriage but will not enable them to become socially and economically independent. For this reason, they send their daughters to KPS. Parents who have daughters as well as sons send their sons to private schools in Pokhara. In my interaction with parents, they were guided by the value of education more for boys than girls. Although it is costly, they were happy to send their sons to private school by saving some amount of money from selling vegetables and milk, while sending daughters to KPS is almost free.
5. Literature Review and Discussion
Hierarchies and inequalities may take different forms, but gender hierarchies are common to all societies (UNESCO 2003). The discrimination in education against girls is still prevalent in Nepalese societies. However it has been evolving in a different form in Nepal. Looking at the support and encouragement of Nepalese government, INGOs’ and NGOs’ and even many indigenous groups, Dalits and rural societies of Nepal, it is obvious that girls’ educational enrolment in schools is increasing significantly. However the access to quality education and attitudes to girls’ education continue to be major concerns in Nepal.

Timsina (2011) in Educational Participation of Girls in Nepal: an Ethnographic Study of Girls’ Education in a Rural Village explores the areas in which girls are disadvantaged in the education system. She selected a group of Dalit (lower caste) and higher castes boys and girls studying in a rural community school of Nepal. The writer tries to find out the barriers to and opportunities for girls in the formal education system. It is revealed that the Nepalese government, local NGOs, INGOs and family members have influenced the girls to attend the schools. In her study, she finds there are high aspirations for education not only in high caste but also in low caste and for both males and females, while the value of education for girls is still affected by competition from private schools.

Despite some changes such as positive attitude to girls’ enrolment, especially in community schools, the patriarchal value system and prejudices towards girls’ education are still creating crucial barriers. Furthermore, Timsina (2011) in her study reveals that admitting the boys in private schools is one of the major factors creating discrimination between boys and girls. Parents prefer to send their sons to private schools and daughters to community schools. Moreover, if the parents have a son and a daughter and have the financial difficulties to admit both of them to private schools and have a choice to admit a child to the private school, the priority usually is given to the son. As a result, the discrimination against the daughters is still in existence in many communities in Nepal. In spite of this, the discrimination against girls’ education differs in terms of caste, religion, economic condition of parents and geographical locations in Nepal. Mostly, the Dalit children, children from low economic background and rural areas of Nepal, boys as well as girls, do not have access to schools.

To the extent that patriarchal social relations predominate in Nepal, parents’ preference of sons is reflected in social-cultural practices in relation to status, economic opportunities and access to quality education. Basnet (2013) in ‘Gender Discrimination and Children’s Right to
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

Education in Nepal: Perspectives of Parents and Children 2013’ further illustrates that girls are more disadvantaged in comparison to boys within households in rural societies. His main focus of study was the impact of gender discrimination in rights to education or schooling and found that girls mainly lack not only rights to education but are also discriminated against in the quality of education they receive. It was found that a large number of girls were enrolled in a community school of Sarlahi district in Nepal whereas the number of boys was quite less.

As early as 1985, Ashby (1985) in Equity and Discrimination among Children: Schooling Decisions in Rural Nepal identifies three main factors for investment in the education for daughters in Nepal relative to sons. They are: (1) girls leave their parents’ houses after marriage, (2) they are required to work in the farm more than boys and (3) non-farm work is perceived more appropriate and realistic for men. Rather than poverty, the main reason behind the girl’s education in community school was the parents’ attitudes and cultural practice for the priority of the boys. He explores discrimination against girls affected by the burden of household work where girls are destined to house chores such as cooking, dish-washing and washing clothes. The attitudes of most parents calculate that the return on investment in education for girls will not bear any fruit since they have to go to their husband’s house after marriage. In spite of this, the parents send their daughters to community schools because community schools are free of costs.

In contrast, the investment in sons’ education is long-term because they live with their parents till their old age and become helping-hands and bread-winners. Thus most of the parents are influenced by the quality of education for the boys because if their sons are not able to get quality education, they will not be able to get better jobs and the parents will be affected. As a consequence they prefer sending their sons to private schools. Basnet (2013) concludes that although both boys and girls are attending schools, the discrimination is magnified on the basis of the schools in which they enrol and the quality of education they receive. In this case, it seems that parents of girls may not be discriminating against their daughters but it is an indirect way of discriminating the girls within the education system in Nepal.

system is discriminatory against girls. In reality, the private schools are expensive and many parents are not able to afford tuition fees. If they have a son and daughter and able to afford the tuition fees of one child, the parents tend to send their son to private school and daughter to community school because they give more importance to boys’ than girls’ education.

Social Development and Research Centre (SDRC), Department of Education, Nepal (2007), in *A Study on the Status of Gender Equality in School* states that the enrolment ratio of girls in community based schools is comparatively better. In contrast, in the private and boarding schools the ratio of girls’ enrolment is less than 40 percent in the findings for Gaindakot, Nawalparasi district in Nepal. It clarifies that the parents’ psychological attitude towards their sons and daughters gives priority to admit their sons to the private and boarding schools as the standard of community schools is lower and the teaching and learning activity is poor.

Despite the increasing number of girls in community schools in Nepal, it cannot be ascertained if the disparity between the girls and boys attainment in schools has reduced. In the recent news of The Kathmandu Post (17 March 2015) on *Increase in the Number of Girls Appearing SLC is Heartening, but Problems Remain* reveals that in the history of the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam which began in 1933 in Nepal, for the first time in 2014, the number of girls sitting the exam outnumbered the boys by 50.14 percent. The SLC is the final exam of secondary schools in Nepal. And after completion of the SLC, students may be admitted to colleges. The Nepalese Government as stated in the Kathmandu Post (17 March 2015) confirmed that the reason behind the increasing numbers of girls in the SLC exam can be the scholarship available to all female students from marginalized communities, increased numbers of female teachers and separate toilets for girls in schools and it proudly concluded that education for girls has finally paid off.

In contrast, the reality is still behind the curtain in terms of quality education and it is not as pleasant as it appears. The Kathmandu Post (17 March 2015) notes that the enrolment of girls in community schools increased from 3,113,556 in 2013 to 3,119,862 in 2014 while the enrolment of boys in community schools decreased from 2,899,716 to 2,875,853. This elucidates that parents tend to enrol their sons in private schools because the last year’s (2013 SLC) pass result of community schools was 28 percent whereas the pass result of private school was 93 percent. Every year in the SLC exam, large numbers of girls still fail in
comparison to boys because the large number of girls appeared in the SLC exam from community schools which have the pass result significantly low.

Now, the following paragraphs summarise and explore the research questions by linking the available literature and my experience in KPS. Furthermore it includes the policy of the Nepalese government, the roles of NGOs and INGOs and practices that created discrimination in the quality of education against girls instead of diminishing gaps.

Access to education irrespective of caste, ethnicity, gender as well as economic and social status has widely been recognized as a basic human right over recent decades. The education of girls in Nepal is a persistent progress for better opportunities and social and economic empowerment. However, son preference in Nepalese societies has created a barrier to girls to their right of quality education. In a patriarchal society, parents prioritise sons resulting in biases that affect girls’ educational rights, welfare, health and survival (Matthews 1998). In most patriarchal societies, parents are the main responsible factor in gender discrimination because they decide the welfare, health, education and survival of their children. My personal experience and study in KPS revealed that most parents wanted their sons to have quality education to be able to get good jobs in future and be able to look after their parents in comfort in their old age. They regard son as breadwinners and treasure in families. In addition, sons are the long term contributor to the household economy because they stay with their parents until old age (Basnet 2011). In contrast, my personal experience in discussion with parents of KPS, most parents were found with the mentality that girls’ eventually go to their husband’s house after marriage. There will be less contribution from daughters to their parents after their marriage. For that reason, most parents were unwilling to invest in their daughters’ education since the economic return on their daughters’ education would go to their husbands’ households (Raynor 2005). Thus the parents prioritized sons’ education and sent them to private school and daughters to KPS.

Another important factor that affects the girls’ education is poverty. Poverty affects schooling for girls more than boys (Barr et al 2007). When parents of children are poor and have limited economic resources, the children are directly influenced in getting quality education. In some cases, if economic resources are limited and parents have to choose between sending a son or daughter to school, especially in lower middle-class families they choose a son (UNICEF 2006). In a study at national level, UNICEF (2006) reveals the fact that poor families often use different strategies to educate their sons and daughters. In such case, girls are mostly sent
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

to community schools and non-formal education classes. In most cases, if the parents have no options, only then they send their sons to community schools. I also experienced most parents in KPS with similar strategy. They mostly preferred private schools to educate their sons and sent their daughters to KPS. Sending sons to private schools is not only a trend in Nepalese societies. Bandyopadhyay and Subramanian (2008) also found a similar situation to Nepal and reports that even in India there was over-representation of girls in state-funded schools. The only reason for this was parents’ preference of sons going to private schools for quality education. In KPS, the parents were found with the similar attitudes towards private schools because most of them were looking for better education for their sons. In contrast, the reasons most girls were attended to KPS were either the government’s encouraging policy of sending girls to school or through the support of NGOs and INGOs.

As stated before, The Nepalese Government (Kathmandu Post 2015) proudly concluded that education for girls has finally paid off by looking at the increasing number of girls in the SLC exam. The Nepalese Government confirms that main reasons for girls’ enrolment in schools are the scholarships available to all female students, the increased number of female teachers and separate toilets in schools. In addition to these, Timilsina (2011) puts forward that incentives such as free textbooks, school uniform, lunch and even hostel facilities have been provided to girls for their participation in education since the 1970s and for Dalits since 2001. These strategies were in practice in community schools to minimize the poor enrolment and high dropouts (Acharya and Luitel 2006). In my study in Kalika Primary School, despite the government’s scholarship to girls, some NGOs were providing schools bags, textbooks, notebooks, pencils and some sports materials to students. As I found, the amount of a scholarship was not enough to meet the minimum educational requirements for a girl student. As my personal experience from KPS, the girls would get the total amount of Nepali rupees 400 (around AUS $5) annually and even the amount distributed would be delayed until the end of academic year. In the name of scholarship, the amount could be handed over to the parents of girls and even some parents could spend the money either for domestic purposes or buying alcohol and cigarettes. Moreover, it was also found that some parents would give the school bags and stationeries provided for their daughters by NGOs to their sons who went to private schools. In some cases, looking at the enrolment record of school, some girls were dropouts. According to my personal experience in KPS, the reason for girls’ dropout was usually when NGOs and INGOs discontinued their aids to them.
Despite the scholarship to girls, one of the significant policies of the Nepalese government is ‘decentralization of the education system’ and offering the management responsibility to local people. This policy was implemented by the Decentralization Act (1982) and Local Self Governance Act (1999) (Timilsina 2011). The aim of this policy was to give more authority in decision-making to the School Management Committee (SMC) and District Education Office (DEO). Moreover, this policy is intended to make parents and local stakeholders more decisive in the good governance of schools. In my personal experience while attending some meetings with the SMC members and parents, I found that almost all members of the SMC were illiterate, inefficient and unclear in planning and decision-making as well as overall management of school. Very often, the SMC members would hardly participate in school’s programs. One of the pivotal roles of the chairperson of the SMC was to inspect and observe the learning activities and regularity of teachers in school. However, what I found in KPS was that neither the chairperson would inspect the school regularly nor was he qualified enough to guide and lead the school teachers. As a result, the headmaster himself was not regular in his classes.

According to Timsina (2011) as stated before, she discovered gender discrimination in education was mainly due to the caste and Hindu religious system in Nepal. She concluded that discrimination against girls’ education differs from one caste to another and high-caste girls were privileged over low-caste. However, as a community worker in some community schools, I learnt that there was not only low-caste girls enrolled in community schools. Moreover, the girls enrolled in community schools were from both high-caste and low caste but comparatively, the number of low-caste girls was more than that of high-caste. Thus the social, parental and economic factors play the main roles for sending the girls to community schools. Beside these, the Nepalese government policy itself discriminates against girls regarding quality education. The education policy in Nepal intends to include every section of society in the mainstream education system (NPC 2002). Superficially, the policy seems to offer education for all and eliminate social inequalities and educational discrimination but it reveals the educational opportunity has created the margins (Shields and Rappleye 2008). Moreover, the Nepalese educational policies are largely influenced by the interest and expectations of donor agencies (Caddell 2007). Consequently, the Nepalese government along with NGOs and INGOs are preoccupied with the idea of increasing the number of girls in schools, without questioning the nature and quality of education (Timsina 2011). As a consequence, this led to increasing the number of girls in community schools without
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

changing the traditional and cultural mindset of Nepalese parents and societies towards girls’ education. Although the girls’ enrolment in schools is significantly increasing, the discrimination against quality education for girls still exists.
6. Conclusion
Discrimination against girls in Nepal is still in existence despite some changes in attitudes towards them. Still, women are underprivileged in social mobility and social position, education and politics. Women are regarded as inferior to men in physical, social and even intellectual aspects. They are bound to household chores, having responsibility to bear and take care of children. Undoubtedly, girls are discriminated against from birth. However it seems that Nepalese societies are in the process of positive transformation and change in terms of discrimination against girls. People are raising the voices of women in societies and families seem to have taken girls’ education positively. The government of Nepal and a number of social organisations have made an effort to uplift and empower women in social, educational, economic and political aspects. There is no doubt that the increasing number of girls’ enrolment in school is a good initiation.

It is important that education is the backbone of any society. In the present competitive world, quality education plays significant role in social recognition and status, economic, health, and political development. The main challenges of present world are not just getting involved in formal education and earning a degree but getting quality education which eventually assists in shaping one’s career and future. Creating two kinds of formal education system (community and private school) in Nepal has created more gaps between girls and boys in getting quality education. There are three options to diminish this gap. Firstly the government of Nepal should establish only one kind of formal schooling system for boys and girls. Secondly, parents should be encouraged to be send girls to the same schools where boys are educated. Thirdly, community schools should be redeveloped, well equipped and well managed to compete with private schools. If the same system of dual formal education continues, girls will always lag in comparison to boys.
Appendix: A (Map of Nepal, Source: Google)

Appendix: B (Map of Pokhara Town, Source: Google).

Location of Kalika Primary School
Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal

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Factors Influencing the Education of Girls: A Study of Community Schools in Nepal


the Global Initiatives for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Sciences Po Law School Clinic, and Partners on the occasion of Universal Periodic Review of Nepal during the 23rd Session.


