

**Article History:** Received: 15 February 2021; Revised: 18 March 2021; Accepted: 24 March 2021

### ***PhD Thesis Abstract***

## **Exploring Out-of-School Phenomenon in Nepal**

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*PhD Thesis, 2018, Kathmandu University School of Education, Lalitpur, Nepal*

Out-of-School Children (OOSC) is an alarming educational issue, not only in Nepal but globally and especially at a time when global agenda like Sustainable Development Goals have many challenges to face. It questions the existence of a large number of OOSC that poses even greater challenge to the country in the context of ensuring free and compulsory education as a fundamental right envisioned by the constitution. Though the issue of OOSC is generally raised from development perspectives as right-based issue in developing countries like Nepal, this research is intended to understand the complexities of Out-of-School (OOS) phenomenon and its major dynamics. Applying pragmatic research paradigm with a sequential explanatory mixed methods research, a holistic understanding has been made by merging both quantitative and qualitative findings. The quantitative part was focused on generalizing the relationship between different socio economic factors and OOS event while the qualitative part intended to explore the dynamics of those factors in OOS phenomenon.

This study first assessed the prevalence, distribution and contributing factors of out-of-school situation quantitatively at macro level based on the National Population and Housing Census 2011 (CBS, 2012) and Nepal Living Standard Survey 2010/11 (CBS, 2011) data. While doing so, the descriptive and inferential statistical analysis such as correlation, chi square test, and logistic regression models were used which provided the background and framework for qualitative enquiry to uncover the complexities of

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ISSN: 2091-0118 (Print) / 2091-2560 (Online)

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Journal homepages: <sup>1</sup><http://www.kusoed.edu.np/journal/index.php/je>

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OOS issue. Then six ethnographic cases were selected purposefully from one ethnic (Tamang) community residing in a northern bordering village of Kathmandu valley to understand the process and dynamics of out-of-school phenomenon.

The study derived four major findings on OOSC issue. First, the prevalence of OOSC in the country was distributed unevenly with more concentration to specific groups of people. The OOS phenomenon was more prevalent among disadvantage group who had poor economic background.

Second, the OOS event has statistically significant association with multiple factors relating to household school and socio-cultural aspects of people. However, the contribution of many of these factors in combination was less than twenty percent. This result signified that the phenomenon of OOS is largely a subjective phenomenon, more than the linear input-output model of cause and effect.

Third, from the ethnographic cases, I perceived that the school dropout decision was the result of multiple inconveniences and complexities that parents/children faced in school, in household and in the community for a long time. However, some events would appear as a trigger at the time of decision making.

Finally, I gained an insight of ‘educational ceiling’ as a major dynamics of school dropout phenomenon. The educational ceiling seems to be the mental disposition constructed in children’s/parents’ mind about minimum level of formal education that is perceived essential and relevant to their life and livelihood.

Based on the findings, I conclude that rather than a simple linear model of input-output of cause and effect, the school dropout phenomenon is a complex subjective phenomenon interwoven with personal background, socioeconomic and cultural context, and people perceived educational values. In this regard, Bourdieu’s theory of practice and Gramsci’s concept of hegemony appeared theoretically more appropriate in explaining the schooling phenomenon from entry to early exit from school.

**Keywords:** *Out-of-School Children, sequential explanatory mixed methods, multiple inconveniences and complexities, educational ceiling, hegemony*