Summary and Conclusion
CHAPTER VIII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters, introduction to the study, review of literature, development and description of tools used, methods of research and analysis and interpretation of data were discussed. The present chapter has been devoted to the summary and conclusion of the study. For providing background of the study, a brief description of the objectives of the study, research methods and tools, major findings of study, along with educational implications of the study and suggestions for further research have been presented in the following ways.

❖ INTRODUCTION

In Nepal, the NER in primary education is reported to have reached 89 percent in the year 2007/08. However, there are wide disparities in NER across gender, geographical regions, and social and economic classes of people. Cases of school avoidance are still high among the backward social classes living in disadvantaged circumstances. Therefore, much needs yet to be done to achieve universal primary education. Besides, there are many instances of systemic inefficiency in primary education. The incidence of dropout is high, and, therefore, the proportion of enrolled children completing primary education has remained low.

Control of dropout is a critical factor in the attainment of UPE. Recently, the DOE has announced the liberal promotion policy in primary grades, i.e. to promote all children appearing in the final examination, with effect in grade one in the year 2006 and gradual implementation to cover all primary grades in the next five years. But, this measure will solve only one aspect of inefficiency, and the UPE will not be achieved unless the dropout is controlled. Therefore the goal of UPE needs to be more than just putting the students in the system. It should also check the dropout of the enrolled children, and ensure quality learning and completion of primary schooling by all in a period of five years.

In order to control dropout, it is required to identify the causes of dropout and to draw realistic and result-oriented policies and actions. Therefore, this study has made an attempt to identify social and economic parameters of dropout in primary
Primary education in Nepal is the first stage of formal education, which is of five years' duration and is considered to play a vital role in the promotion of overall development. Primary education is not only considered as the foundation of further education but it is also essential for the quality of life of the people. Deliberate and organized steps for the development of primary education in Nepal started after the country ushered into the democratic era in 1950. The National Education Planning Commission (NEPC), formed in 1954, defined the broad purpose of primary education.

For the last over four decades, the problem of dropout has been recognized as a great hindrance in universal primary education by UNESCO. Likewise, member countries have been aware that dropout has been an obstacle to the achievement of the targets set out by the Karachi conference in 1960. Sattar (1984) defines a dropout child as one who enrolls in a school but fails to complete the relevant level of the educational cycle. At the primary level this means that the drop-out fails to reach the final grade, usually grade V or VI. The term 'school-dropout' has emerged from growing concern in the internal efficiency of education system. According to Castellanos (1988), internal efficiency of education is concerned with the relationship between inputs (teachers, educational materials, curricula) and output (pupils scores on achievement tests) within the education system. The issue of internal efficiency is concerned with the flow of students through the education system, with minimum waste, dropout and repetition. Better the internal efficiency of an education system, higher will be the retention and completion of school education by students enrolled in the system. Roderic (1994) has said that grade repetition may influence school dropout, as high dropout rates are found among students who repeat grades. Grade repetition is, therefore, a great hindrance for efficient education system. Rao (1996) states that retention of students in school may be achieved mainly in two ways: first, by reduction of dropout rates between class I-V, and secondly, by improve school facilities so as to provide quality education.

According to Asharaf (1999), a child who abandons a course of study on which he or she has embarked before its completion is called a dropout. Thus, dropout
refers to those children who are enrolled in school but who fail to complete the relevant level of the educational cycle. In the context of the primary level, this means that a dropout child fails to reach the final grade, usually grade 5.

DOE/MOES (2003) states in their statistical report that the number of students that enters in a certain grade and the number that completes that grade is considered as input and output of the system, respectively. While the promotion demonstrates the efficiency, the dropout and grade repetition show the inefficiency of the education system. The students who leave the system without completing a grade or level are called dropouts. Primary school dropout rate is the percentage of pupils enrolled in given grade or cycle or level of education in a given school year who are not enrolled in any grade in the following school year. Panchmukhi (2004) stated in his article that the term dropout is interlinked with the wastage of education. The phenomenon of wastage at different levels of education brings out the importance of socio-economic factors in education. Wastage, linked with dropping out of children from education before completing a certain duration of an educational course (class, or stage), would amount to wrong use of teacher resources, infrastructure and also time resources of children. Likewise, according to Price (2007), the term dropout refers to an event, such as leaving school before graduating the cycle or without attaining an educational status. As a student leaves a school without completing the set course of the education cycle, he/she is called a dropout.

Mehata (2007) states the concept of retention rate in his study. According to him, retention rate, which is also known as survival rate, is different from the apparent survival rate. The most common and simple method of assessing retaining capacity of the primary education system is to compare the enrolment in grade V in a given year (say 2008) with the enrolment in grade I, four years back (say 2004). If the number of repeaters is not considered in calculation, the rate obtained is known as Gross Retention Rate.

It concludes that dropout is a phenomenon which indicates and perpetuates the inefficiency of education system. Dropout is an alarming factor, as it causes huge wastage of resources and energy. A person who has withdrawn from all courses or grades and who leaves school entirely is known as ‘dropout’.

Prior to the Jomtien Conference (1990), much of the emphasis in Nepal was
placed on quantitative goals such as increasing the number of children enrolled in school. But the post-Jomtien period has witnessed a rising concern in the quality of primary education. It is difficult to precisely define and measure the concept of ‘quality education’. Discussing this problem of defining ‘quality’ in an acceptable manner, Beeby (1979) has suggested that ‘quality’ may be viewed as qualitative change which can further be defined as a simple linear expansion or diminution of current practice, more or less, of what already exists: more buildings, more students and teachers fewer examinations of the present type and standards. According to Fuller (1985), educational quality is defined in terms of the amount of material inputs assigned to schools per student, and the level of efficiency with which a given amount of inputs is organized and administrated in order to improve the students’ learning achievement. This definition emphasizes the aggregate contribution of the school to the academic achievement of the student, independently of pre-school background, community context, and child labour. It is stated that distribution of educational opportunities is to be understood as the allocation of sufficient educational inputs in order to ensure retention, advancement and relevant learning among all the pupils in a given educational system. Quality of education allows for looking at school characteristics and interaction between school and its environment, and to relevant learning outcomes (UNESCO, 1996). According to UNESCO, quality education must be supported by the four pillars of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together (UNESCO, 1996).

Mukhopadhyay (2005) states: “Quality education implies comprehensibly developing individuals to their full potential, unfolding the ‘perfection already in man’ (and women). The challenge of management of quality in education is realizing optimally that perfection already resident in individuals, not only among students but also among teachers, non-teaching staff, and principals. The importance is on the quality of life in institutions where a student is shaped and teachers and others spend the primes of their lives.”

A quality primary school has to meet two important conditions: first, it has to necessarily meet the specifications of inputs and processes set as quality benchmarks, and second, the school should provide a good learning environment through such behavioural factors like motivated teachers and students, high staff morale, school-community relationships, and strong leadership.
❖ OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall purpose of the study was to make an inquiry into Social and Economic Parameters of Dropouts and their Relationship with Retention and Quality of Primary Education in Nepal. The study has been undertaken with following specific objectives:

- To examine the status of class-wise dropout at primary education level in respect of gender, geographical region, and rural/urban location;
- To review government policy and programmes geared to check dropout and enhance systemic efficiency in primary education;
- To identify and analyze the social parameters of primary school dropouts and poor retention across gender, geographical region and rural/urban location;
- To identify and analyze the economic parameters of primary school dropouts and poor retention across gender, geographical region and rural/urban locations;
- To identify the school-related and non-school related causes of primary school dropouts and relate with poor retention and quality of primary education, based on the interviews and discussion with parents, students, teachers and school related functionaries;
- To study academic quality of primary schools of Nepal and its association with dropouts and retention; and
- To suggest suitable measures and actions for reducing dropout and improving retention in primary schools.

❖ METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study is based on an in-depth analysis of 72 selected community primary schools, including 36 rural and 36 urban schools, located in fifteen VDCs and two Municipalities of two districts: Doti, a Hil district, and Rautahat, a Tarai district. The social and economic parameters of dropout children have been examined on the basis of a survey of 430 households of dropout children. This has further been supplemented by observation one class in each of the school surveyed. Besides, this study has also drawn information and opinions from FGD sessions with key stakeholders of the primary school system – teachers and headteachers, SMCs, education officers, and dropout children.
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➢ Research Design

The methods of research adopted by the present study were a combination of Survey and Ethnographic Research. The review of the policy and programme interventions has been made at the macro level through document analysis and consultations with key policy makers. This study was primarily based on the quantitative data and qualitative information collected through micro-level study carried out in two districts of Nepal, involving school survey, household survey, classroom observation, and FGD sessions with teachers, headteachers, SMCs, dropout students, and education officials including school supervisors and Resource Persons.

➢ Sample

This study has covered 72 primary schools and 430 households in rural and urban areas of two districts in Nepal. Major sample of the study are as follows:

● Sample of Districts

The two districts were selected for the study – Doti from among the Hill districts and Rautahat from among the Tarai districts. Doti is situated in the far-western Nepal, and Rautahat is located in the central Tarai. Both the Hill and the Tarai districts were purposively sampled for this study. The Hill district with a municipality and recording the lowest survival rate in primary education among the hill districts and the Tarai district with the lowest survival rate in primary education were selected for the study.

● Sample of VDCs and Municipalities

Both of the sample districts had only one municipality each and there was no question of selection. Dipayal-Silgadhi Municipality of Doti district and Gaur Municipality of Rautahat district were automatically selected. The number of VDCs covered in each district was based on the sampling of schools. The required numbers of rural schools were randomly selected through lottery in both districts. The selected schools covered seven VDCs in Doti, and eight VDCs in Rautahat.

● Sample of Schools

As the urban schools were fewer in number in both districts, all of these schools were selected for study. And, for the sake of maintaining comparability in statistical and logical analysis, an equal number of rural schools were selected from
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among the schools located outside the municipal areas. For this purpose, an equal number of rural schools were selected in each district through random sampling. Therefore, this study has covered a total of 72 schools offering primary grades – 46 schools from Doti district and 26 schools from Rautahat district. This includes 36 rural and 36 urban schools.

- **Sample of Dropout Children**
  For the convenience of tracing out and follow-up, only the dropouts of the preceding year were selected for the study. For this purpose, all the sample schools were surveyed, and the cases of dropout in each grade by gender were enlisted along with the home address of the dropout children, using school records. Twenty-five percent of the dropout boys and girls from all primary grades were randomly sampled for contact and in-depth study.

- **Sample of Households/Parents**
  In order to examine the social and economic parameters of dropout and retention in primary education, this study has carried out a survey of households of the dropout children. For this purpose, a total of 430 households, randomly selected, were visited and surveyed, including 144 households in Doti and 286 households in Rautahat districts. Likewise, out of 430 households, 228 households were selected from the rural areas and 202 households selected from the urban areas. In Doti district, out of 144 households, 93 households were interviewed from rural areas and 51 households were interviewed from urban areas by using structured questionnaire. Likewise, in Rautahat district, out of 286 households 135 households were interviewed from rural areas when 151 households were interviewed from urban areas.

- **Sample of Focus Group Discussion (FGD)**
  For the purpose of generating qualitative information as well as to triangulate the findings of the study obtained otherwise, three types of Focus Group Discussions were held in each study site. These FGD sessions were held with relevant staff of District Education Office (DEO), teachers, head teachers and SMC members, and dropout children. On the whole, 18 FGD sessions were held and a total of 128 persons including 82 men 46 women participated in the FGD sessions.
Tools Used for Data Collection

For the purpose of collecting data different tools of research such as, checklist to identify quality of good primary school (rating scale), school survey form, semi-structured interview schedule for parents, classroom observation sheet, and FGD guidelines were developed, validated and used. These tools were:

- Checklist to Identify Qualities of a Good Primary School
- School Survey Form
- Semi-structure Interview Schedule for Parents
- Classroom Observation Sheet
- Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Guidelines (For Teachers/Headteacher/SMC Members, for Dropout Children, and for Education Officials)

Procedure of the Study

Research method is determined mainly by the nature of investigation. This investigation was a survey and descriptive research. It makes use of a variety of research methods for different components of investigation. Therefore, this study has made use of different techniques that reveal quantitative as well as qualitative data. Development of various study tools, planning of the field visit in selected district, analysis of primary data and information, analysis of secondary data and information, and triangulation of primary data and information through FGD and consultation meetings with key informants at study sites were major steps of procure of the study.

Analysis of primary data and information obtained through school survey and through interviews/FGD with parents, dropout children, teachers, head-teachers, educationists, policy makers, educational administrators and managers, and other relevant persons at the national and local levels by SPSS and Excel. Households of dropout children were surveyed for determining their socio-economic parameters. The unit of study was their family/household. Likewise, the study of the quality of classroom performance through classroom observation in schools under study was also completed. Furthermore, an enquiry was made regarding the systemic effectiveness of schooling and its relationship with dropout and retention was also carried out. Analysis of secondary data and information obtained from official publications and records of relevant agencies at national and local levels such as NPC, CBS, MOES, DOE, DEO, NGOs, donor agencies and international organizations.
Government educational policy and plan documents in the primary education sector were also reviewed and analyzed. **Triangulation of primary data and information** through FGD and consultation meetings with key informants at study sites (Both Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis). At the end, appropriate statistical techniques were used for the analysis of data.

- **Statistical Techniques Used**
  
  In order to draw meaningful coherence, the collected data were analyzed by using appropriate diagrams and statistical measures. They are given below.
  
  - Diagrammatic and Graphical Representations;
  - Measure of Central Tendency;
  - Nonparametric Tests;
  - Mann-Whitney Test; and
  - Logistic Regression

- **MAJOR FINDINGS**
  
  Key findings of this study are as follows:

  ➢ **SOCIAL PARAMETERS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUTS**

  - **Characteristics of Households of Dropout Children**

    On the whole, boys and girls belonging to the official primary school age-group i.e. 5-9 years old, accounted about 20 percent of the total population, about 19 percent in Doti and 21 percent in Rautahat. Girls accounted 47 percent of the total children belonging to primary school age-group.

  - **Size of Household**

    The average household-size was 6.3, varying from 6.0 in Doti district to 6.7 in Rautahat district, and between a low of 2 (one case) to a high of 18 (one case). The size of household was larger in Tarai than in Hills. Most of the households (92.6%) were male-headed.

  - **Caste/Ethnicity**

    Dropout children of Doti belonged to 17 different caste- and ethnic- groups. However, about 46 percent of them belonged to one single caste group called Chhetri. Five backward caste groups namely Damai, Kami, Bhool, Parki and Chamar lumped together constituted 40.7 percent of the total dropout children. In the case of Rautahat
district, the dropout children belonged to 29 caste and ethnic group. The group commonly called Sah, which includes Teli, Sudi, Kanu, Kalwar, and Bania, constituted more than one fourth (28.7%) of the total dropout children. Six socially backward caste groups namely Paswan, Chamar, Tatma, Dhobi, Dom/Halkhor and Khatbe grouped together accounted for another 28.7 percent of the total dropout children. Muslims accounted for a substantial portion, i.e. 18.2 percent of the total; and Yadav constituted 11.2 percent of the total dropout children. When grouped in three social classes in conformity with the data reporting system of the MOE, the socially and economically deprived castes collectively called ‘dalit’ accounted 26.0 percent of the total dropout children in the surveyed primary schools. The number of dropout children belonging to ‘janjati’ group was 7.5 percent of the total. Other caste groups which do not belong to either of the two classifications – dalit and janajati – accounted for 66.5 percent of the total dropout children.

The study has indirectly indicated that dalit children have a stronger tendency to drop out from school than children of other caste groups. The probability of retention in primary education is clearly weak for the dalit children as compared to their counterparts belonging to other castes or ethnicities.

- **Mother Tongue**

  Nepali was the mother tongue in the case of about 99 percent of the dropout children in Doti district, whereas Bhojpuri was the mother tongue in the case of about 97 percent of the dropout children in Rautahat district. Nepali is the medium of instruction in primary schools of both districts. It is interesting to observe that Rautahat, where only two percent households have Nepali as a mother tongue, records a higher primary school dropout rate than in Doti district where about 99 percent households record Nepali as the mother tongue.

- **Enrolments**

  Enrolments in 72 primary schools covered by the study totalled 17,062, including 8961 boys and 8101 girls. Girls constituted 47.5 percent of the total enrolment. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in student enrolment was 0.9, varying between 0.81 in Tarai (Rautahat) and 1.02 in Hill (Doti) and between 0.89 in rural schools and 0.92 in urban schools. There was tremendous variation in grade-wise enrolment of children in primary schools. As the grade progresses, the proportion of
enrolment in the total was found declining. For instance, about 41 percent of the total children (6966) were enrolled in grade one, whereas the proportion of enrolment in grade five was less than 10 percent (1649) of the total. This is an indication of systemic inefficiency in the primary schools under study.

- **Net Enrolment Rate (NER)**

  Access to primary education is yet low in the areas under study. The NER of primary education in the households under study was found to be 49.7 percent, which is very low as compared to district and national averages. However, the NER was relatively higher in the Hill district (Doti) as compared to Rautahat, a Tarai district. In both districts, NER of girls (40.6%) was found much lower than the NER of boys (58.0%).

- **Dropout Rate**

  A total of 1,713 cases of students’ dropout were recorded in the schools under study, including 885 boys and 828 girls. The overall rate of dropout was 10.4 percent, varying between 10.1 percent for boys and 10.8 percent for girls.

  The rate of dropout widely varied across grades, between districts, between rural and urban schools, and across socio-economic strata of the children. Students’ dropout rate was found relatively higher in grades one, two, and five, and relatively lower in grades two and three. The dropout rate was higher in Tarai schools (13.6%) than in Hill schools (7.1%). Likewise, it was 11.1 percent in the rural schools vis-à-vis 9.7 percent in the urban schools. In general, the tendency to drop out from school was found higher among girls than among boys, higher among rural children as compared to their urban counterparts, and in Terai than in Hill areas.

- **Educational Characteristics**

  The schooling pattern of the children belonging to the official primary school age group revealed some interesting features. The number of children aged 5-9 years was 540, including 286 boys and 254 girls. Less than half of them (49.8%) were ‘currently attending school’ during the time of survey. The proportion of currently school-going children was 58.0 percent in the case of boys and 40.6 percent in the case of girls. While 21.9 percent of them (16.1% boys and 28.3% girls) had never
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been to a school, 28.3 percent of them (25.9% in the case of boys and 31.1% in the case of girls) had been once to school just to drop out. The proportion of dropout children was more than 28 percent of the total. There was wide disparity in schooling pattern of primary school age-group children between the two districts. It was clearly observed that the Tarai district lagged considerably behind the Hill district in all aspects under consideration of the schooling pattern of primary school age children. The NER for Doti is 62.3 percent, whereas it is only 44.6 percent in Rautahat.

Gender disparity in schooling pattern was alarming in both districts. Girls lagged behind boys in getting a place in school by 17 percentage points. Likewise, the tendency of school avoidance was much higher among the girls than among the boys. The incidence of dropout, though terribly high among both boys and girls, had again afflicted a larger proportion of girls than boys.

There was disparity in schooling pattern of primary school age-group children between the rural and the urban areas. The overall NER for the rural areas is 52.3 percent, nearly 5 percent above the urban NER of 47.5 percent. About 52 percent of the total primary school age children were found currently attending school in rural households whereas the corresponding proportion for the urban households was less than 48 percent. Likewise, the proportion of dropout children in rural households was about 25 percent, whereas it was about 32 percent in the urban households. The proportion of children never attending school was 21 percent in urban households vis-à-vis nearly 23 percent in the rural households.

The analysis of the schooling pattern of the primary school age-group children in the survey households made above shows that there are still areas and classes in Nepal which are very far from the cherished national goal of Education for All. To begin with, more than one-half of the boys and girls, nearly two-fifths of the total in the case of girls, who are supposed to be at some grade in a primary school, are still staying outside the school premises. A large number of these children, accounting for more than one-fourth of the total number of boys and nearly one-third of the girls, had already dropped out from school. More than one-fifth of them, even more than a quarter in the case of girls, have never been enrolled in a school. Under the
circumstances, universal primary education is a distant goal for children of these unfortunate households afflicted by economic hardships and social backwardness. While the poor and the backward children have no or limited access to primary education, their chances of dropout is very high or their retention probability is very low – no matter, be it in the Hills or the Tarai, or in the rural or the urban areas. This is not comfortable news for the government or for any of those who are fighting the case of Education for All in Nepal.

- **Literacy**

  More than 70 percent of the population aged 15 years and above were found illiterate, varying between 59.3 percent in Doti and 75.3 percent in Rautahat. More than 86 percent of the female population of this age group was illiterate as compared to 55 percent in the case of male population. In both cases of male and female adult literacy, Doti district fared better than Rautahat.

- **Education of Mother and Father**

  It is said that educating a mother is educating many children. But 87.4 percent of the mothers in the households under study were themselves illiterate - 80.8 percent in Doti and 90.6 percent in Rautahat, whereas 9 percent of them were just literate – 14.6 percent in Doti and 6.4 percent in Rautahat. It follows that illiteracy or poor education of mother is a critical factor behind high dropout and low retention of children in the households. This point is further substantiated by the higher incidence of dropout in Rautahat district than in Doti where the illiteracy of mother is relatively higher.

  Illiteracy and educational backwardness of father was again linked with high dropout low retention of children. For instance, Doti district which had a relatively better educational status of father than Rautahat had recorded a comparatively lower rate of dropout in primary education. It thus follows that parental literacy and education have a convincing relationship with the likelihood of children to retain in or dropout from primary school.

- **Parental Concerns in Children's Education**

  Parents in poor households are busy in diverse ways to earn the source of
livelihood. The only time they use with their children is the dining-time. But only 44 percent of them said that they used to eat meals with their children, and many of them (71%) said that they were not used to talking with their children even at the dining time. Thus it is seen that parents talk very less about the school their children attend and the problems they face. This happens so both in hill and tarai and in rural and urban households. This indicates a lesser degree of parental concern in the education of their children. Therefore, it seems that the attitude of indifference among the parents regarding what happens with their children in school and with their study is also a factor behind low retention and high dropout in primary education.

- **Distance to School**

  Distance to school – both physical and time distance – was not a hurdle for most of the households in accessing a primary school. However, some children, particularly in Doti, had to cross different types of natural hurdles such as river and steep slopes on the way to school which made their travel to school very uncomfortable particularly during rainy season. Such difficulty caused irregularity in attending school, leading to poor performance, low motivation, and finally dropout from school.

- **Willingness of Parents- A Social Parameters of Primary School Dropout**

  The analysis of the social characteristics of the households of the primary school dropout children has revealed certain social parameters of dropout in primary education. It was observed that children dropout belong to parents who are themselves illiterate or are devoid of school education and who have no or little concern in what happens to child in school and study. Many of the children belong to socially backward caste or ethnic communities. Most parents of the dropout children were not aware of the value of educating children and it was not surprising that a good number of these parents were not interested in sending back their children to school. Unwillingness to send back dropout child to school was expressed relatively more in the case of girl child as compared to boys. Gender disparity exists in this case also.

  The observations regarding social characteristics of households of dropout children are further substantiated by the social characteristics of the households with multiple
cases of primary school dropout. It is found that the incidence of primary school dropout occurs and re-occurs in such households where the mothers and fathers are illiterate or devoid of school education. Dropout from school happens and re-happens more among socially backward caste groups or ethnic communities. The chances of dropout are higher when parents do not care about what happens with their child in school and in study. Once, a child dropout from school, majority of the parents do not bother about sending him or her back to school.

- **ECONOMIC PARAMETERS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL DROPOUT**

  Though public primary education is declared “free” in Nepal, there are many direct and indirect costs involved in education, which have to be borne by the parents of the children, enrolled in school. So, in practice, primary education is not a free good. The costs of schooling not only create a barrier against the enrolment of poor children in school but also weaken the prospect of their retention in school. Therefore, the economic situation of household is one of the major determinants of dropout and retention of children in primary education.

- **Household Income**

  On an average, the level of household income in the households under study amounted to Rs. 43,651 per annum, which varied between a low of Rs. 6,000 to a high of Rs. 139,000 per annum. The average annual income in rural households was Rs. 40,004 as compared to Rs. 47,768 in the case of urban households. It was Rs. 38,047 in Doti, lower by Rs. 8,426 than in Rautahat district.

- **Household Income Per Capita**

  Per capita income is said to be a better indicator of household economic situation than the household income. On an average, the level of per capita income in the households amounted to Rs. 7,107 which varied between a low of Rs. 857 to a high of Rs. 25,250 per annum. Rural-urban disparity was evident in the per capita level of income. The average per capita income in rural households was Rs. 6,632 as compared to Rs. 7,643 in the case of urban households. The average per capita income per year in Doti district was Rs. 6,449 as compared to Rs. 6,632 in Rautahat district. In terms of per capita income of both rural and urban households, Doti, a hill district, look poorer than the households of Rautahat, a Tarai district.
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- **Sources of Household Income**
  The main sources of income in the households under study were wage labour, agriculture, livestock raising, service, small shops and petty trading, tradition-based cottage crafts and trades, and income from remittances.

- **Incidence of Poverty**
  The incidence of poverty among the households of the primary school dropout children was alarmingly high; 71.2 percent of the households under study (306 out of 430) were found to subsist below the poverty line income. The proportion of poor households was 77.1 percent in Doti and 68.2 percent in Rautahat. Likewise, the incidence of poverty in the rural households was higher than in the urban households. Rural-urban difference in poverty was more pronounced in Doti district, where the proportion of the poor households was about 84 percent of the total in the rural areas as compared to about 65 percent in the case of urban households.

- **Household Indebtedness**
  Poverty had compelled a large number of poor families to borrow even to meet their survival needs. Two-thirds of the total households had taken loans from different sources. The average size of loan taken by the households was Rs. 16,519 per household, which varied from a low of Rs. 5000 or less (13 cases) to a high of more than Rs. 50,000 (5 cases).

  The households have borrowed money to meet their daily needs for survival, for social customs, and medical treatment. About 20 percent of the households had also borrowed loan for the education of their children. The magnitude and purposes of household borrowing also substantiate the existence of poverty in the surveyed households.

- **Pattern of Household Expenditure**
  The largest chunk of household expenditure was spent on food item - in both districts and in both rural and urban households. On the whole, spending on food constituted 63.4 percent of the total expenditure, which varied between 62.4 percent in the urban and 64.4 percent in the rural households, and between 62.6 percent in Doti and 63.8 percent in Rautahat. It is found that about 7 percent of the total
household expenditure was spent on clothing and an almost equal proportion of expenditure on health purposes. It is interesting that households’ spending on festivals and social customs as percentage of total expenditure exceeded the amount spent on clothing or health by about one percent. While basic needs such as food take away a large chunk of expenditures only about 3 percent of the household expenditure is spent on education - 2.3 percent in Rautahat and 3.9 percent in Doti. Meanwhile, a significant proportion of expenditure is made on alcohol/tobacco – about 6 percent of the total expenditure in both rural and urban and both hill and tarai households.

- **Education Expenditure**

  On an average, annual household education expenditure amounted to Rs. 2,527 per household, which varied between a low of Rs. 500 to a high of Rs. 10,000 per annum.

  The average education expenditure in rural households was Rs. 2,376 as compared to Rs. 2,713 in the case of urban households. There was a clear disparity in the levels of household education expenditure between the two districts. The average education expenditure per year in Rautahat district was Rs. 2,419, which was lower than the average expenditure of Rs. 2,692 in Doti district.

- **Per Student Education Expenditure**

  On an average, the level of per student education expenditure amounted to Rs. 1,786 which varies between a low of Rs. 175 to a high of Rs. 9,600 per annum. The average per student education expenditure in rural households was Rs. 1,791 as compared to Rs. 1,780 in the case of urban households. The average per student education expenditure per year in Rautahat district was Rs. 1,733, lower than Rs 1,868 in Doti district.

  The average education expenditure as a percentage of total household expenditure both in rural and urban households is over 3 percent of the total households. There was a clear disparity in the education expenditure as a percentage of total household expenditure between the two districts. The average education expenditure as a percentage of total household expenditure per year in Rautahat district was 2.7 percent, which was lower than that of Doti district (4.8%). In terms of
education expenditure as a percentage of total household expenditure of Rautahat, a tarai district, look poorer than the households of Doti, a hill district.

Education Expenditure Per School Going Child

On an average, the level of educational expenditure per primary school going child amounted to Rs. 1,828 which varied between a low of Rs. 250 to a high of Rs. 1,828 per annum. The average educational expenditure per primary school going children per year in Rautahat district was Rs. 1816, lower than that of Doti district (Rs. 1,846).

Situation of gender disparity in household spending on education is informed by status of educational expenditure per primary school going girls and boys. On the whole, average spending per girl child at primary level was N Rs. 1,827 per annum as compared to Rs. 2022 spent per primary-school-going boy. There existed a strong evidence of gender disparity in educational expenditure per primary school going children between the Hill and the Tarai district.

Many of the dropout children were found economically active, supporting their poor parents. This establishes that economic hardship of the households is a very important cause of dropout in primary school. Household economic status has a strong say in dropout and retention in primary education.

QUALITY STATUS OF SCHOOLS UNDER STUDY

This study also attempted to examine the relationship of primary school dropout and retention with the quality of school in terms of selected criteria relating to physical facilities, quality of teachers and headteachers, use of teaching learning materials, learning environment at school, student, teacher and school support system, school management, and parent-school relationship.

Though all schools had their own building, about 35 percent schools did not have adequate number of classrooms. About 39 percent schools had no play ground, while about 51 percent of these schools had no compound at all. About 53 percent schools lacked adequate desk/bench or other good sitting arrangements for students. About 31 percent of the schools lacked drinking water facilities. About 14 percent schools had no toilet facilities, whereas about 38 percent schools had no separate
About 60 percent of the schools faced the problem of teacher inadequacy. On the whole, teacher attendance in school was less than 90 percent in the schools. Most of the teachers (90.3%) were not used to preparing a lesson plan for classroom teaching. Only 37.5 percent schools were fully staffed by fully trained teachers. There was not even a single female teacher in six schools.

About 24 percent headteachers were untrained; about 49 percent headteachers had no training in primary school management. Only 22 percent of them were used to preparing a work plan for school. The proportion of headteachers having a clear vision regarding how to lead the school ahead was only about 69 percent of the total. On the whole, about 76 percent headteachers were found to have maintained school records properly.

Unavailability of textbooks in time was a great problem in schools under study, afflicting 61 percent of the schools. About 36 percent of the schools did not have a copy of the primary school curriculum, and about 60 percent of them did not possess teachers’ manual. Understandably, 68 percent schools were not used to using supplementary books and reading materials. However, many of these schools had regular instructional materials such as black board, charts, globes, maps, etc. But, about 7 percent schools did not have a blackboard in each classroom, and 60 percent of the schools did not have a school calendar. Only about 7 percent of the surveyed schools were found used to using local teaching materials.

Child friendly teaching methods help to enhance the learning capacity of the student. But, it was used only in about 17 percent schools, in about 24 percent schools in Doti and 4 percent schools in Rautahat. Continuous Assessment System (CAS) was found prevalent only in 25 percent schools. All surveyed schools used Nepali as a medium of instruction. On the whole, about 37 percent of the schools under study recorded a students’ pass rate of 90 percent or above.

In schools of both districts, the conditions of games, sports, dance and music were found to be poor. On the whole, only about 49 percent schools have provision of games and sport, whereas only about 29 percent schools have organized dance and
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music competition. In both activities, schools of Rautahat district fare poorer than those of Doti district.

Relationship between school and community is a critical factor in the development of an effective school system. But, only in 36 percent of the schools under study, parents were found frequently visiting school and discussing their wards' performance with teachers. Though about 83 percent schools had parent-teacher association (PTA), they were not functional in most cases.

Student support system was found weak in schools of both districts under study. Only about 14 percent schools had made provision of extra coaching for weaker students. Likewise, individual attentions paid to students and students’ attendance of 90 percent and above were found only in 21 percent and 13 percent of the schools, respectively.

Teacher support system is found weak in schools of both districts. School-based refresher training was found to be at place only in about 14 percent schools. However, 75 percent schools reported that they were professionally supported by school supervisors, resource persons and head teachers.

About 46 percent schools reported that they had been regularly supervised by District Education Office (DEO), but about 47 percent schools were found disturbed by lack of the release of the school budget in time.

Good management is the foundation of a ‘quality school’; and this is the idea behind the mandatory formation of SMC in each school. Above 97 percent of the schools under study had formed SMC, but only about 53 percent schools arranged SMC meeting at least once a month. Meanwhile, about 36 percent SMC members were not familiar with their roles and responsibilities.

School Size

On an average, there were 237 children enrolled in a primary school covered by this study, with not much variation between a rural (240 students) and an urban (234 students) school. But there existed a wide difference in school size between the primary schools of the Hill and the Tarai district. The average number of children enrolled per school in Doti was 173, which was less than one half of 350 children
enrolled per school in Rautahat. The difference in enrollment was tremendous among the individual sample schools. The size of enrollment per school varied from a low of 52 to a high of 673.

**Teachers**

The total number of teachers in the schools under study was 327, including 129 female (39.4%) teachers. There was not even a single female teacher in six schools, four in Doti and two in Rautahat. Almost all teachers of surveyed schools (326 out of 327) were found qualified. The proportion of trained teachers (teachers completing training required to be qualified as fully-trained teacher) accounted about 72.2 percent of the total. However, the gender disparity in the proportion of trained teachers was evident. Among 72 schools under study, only 22 schools were fully staffed by fully trained teachers, while 4 schools did not have even a single fully trained teacher. There was not even a single trained teacher in eight schools.

**Student Teacher Ratio (STR)**

The overall STR in schools under study was 52.2: 1, which was slightly lower in comparison to the national average of 54.7: 1. However, STR varied across geographical regions, across rural and urban areas, and across schools. For instance, the STR in Doti (hill) was 45.5, which was lower than 59.9 in Rautahat (tarai). Likewise, the STR in an urban school was 49.0 vis-à-vis 55.7 in a rural school. More strikingly, the STR in individual schools under study varied between a low of 13 (Hill school) to a high of 121 (Tarai school).

**Student-Class Ratio (SCR)**

On an average, there were 49.6 students per class in the primary schools under study. The SCR in Doti (Hill) was 38.6, which was tremendously lower than 65.9 in Rautahat (Tarai). However, the SCR did not vary much widely between a rural (48.8) and an urban (50.4) school.

**Relationship between School Quality and Student Dropout**

In order to see the relationship between dropout rate and some indicators that possibly are the causes of dropout, all the 72 sample schools were ranked low, middle and high according to the rate of dropout, and for this purpose quartiles were used.
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The set of 18 schools among the total samples of 72 that has the lowest dropout rate were considered ‘Low’. Similarly the 18 schools with highest dropout rate were considered ‘High’. The remaining 36 schools with dropout rate at the middle were considered ‘Moderate’. Computing this quartile based dropout rates, a comparison was made with other characteristics of the schools so graded. A number of interesting interrelationships were observed. For example, it was found that above 70 percent of the low dropout schools had adequate classrooms, whereas only about 60 percent of the high dropout schools had inadequate classrooms. Likewise, above 80 percent low dropout schools had comfortable sitting arrangement in classrooms, whereas less than 60 percent of high dropout schools had comfortable sitting arrangements.

In low dropout schools, textbooks were made available in time, and these schools also were found using more of the local teaching/learning materials as compared to high dropout schools. It was also observed that the chances of dropout were low in schools having a school calendar and using child-friendly teaching methods. Likewise, lower dropout schools give individual attention to students, and applied CAS. Students’ attendance was found higher in low dropout schools. It was also observed that the chances of dropout were lower when there was regular school supervision by District Education Officer. High dropout schools were the ones which were less supervised by DEO. Likewise, the chances of dropout were lower when parent teacher associations (PTA) were active and when parental support to school was evident. The chances of dropout were low when teachers took class regularly. Lower dropout schools were the ones where teachers took class regularly (about 100%). On the other hand, only in about 65 percent of the high dropout schools, teachers were found taking class regularly.

In consideration of the nature of data collected in this study, nonparametric statistical tests, namely Mann-Whitney U test and Binary Logistic Regression were carried out to examine the relationship between dropout and other categorical variables. As shown by these two tests, the significant indicators of student dropout were: toilet for girls, adequate number of teachers, professional commitment and motivation of teachers, availability of primary school curriculum in school, use of local teaching materials, 90 percent or higher pass rate of students, parental support to
school, 90 percent or more attendance rate of students, and regular school supervision by DEO. These indicators are found statistically significant with regard to the dropout rate as groping variables.

The dropout rate diminishes with increases of above indicators like toilets for girls, adequate teachers, students with full textbooks, primary school curriculum, continuous assessment system (CAS), and 90 percent and above student attendance. The above results show that toilet for girls (separate toilet) decreases the dropout rate about 2.5 times or in other words it can retain the students about 2.5 times higher. Similarly, adequate teachers (5 teachers or more) can improve the retention of student about 2.7 times higher or can reduce dropout to about 2.7 times higher and 90 percent and above attendance rate of student can reduce dropout to about 2.7 times higher or improve the retention of student about 2.7 times higher.

What forces children to dropout from school?

Although the causes of dropout pointed out by different types of respondents were more or less similar, there were clear differences in the emphasis laid on these causes. For instance, the causes of dropout more recurrently cited by parents were either related with household poverty that either made them unable to meet educational expenses or compelled them to keep children at home either for gainful work or for other house-works releasing the earning members of the households to engage in earning activities. Parents have also pointed out the ineffectiveness of school as a reason for student dropout. On the other hand, dropout children very frequently said that they were not comfortable at school, nor were they able to learn at school. Teachers were found frequently finding the main reasons for dropout in parental demotivation, household environment, and disinterestedness of students. Likewise, education officers pointed to parental negligence, lack of parent-teacher relationship, children being needed more at home for earning or other housework, poor attention of teachers as the causes of dropout. Thus, it seems that the reasons for student dropout in primary education lie in three major areas – household poverty and parental negligence, ineffective and unattractive school environment, and lack of interaction and relationship between parents and teachers. Students’ disinterestedness
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is the outcome of the interplay of these three factors, and their dropout from school is the unfortunate outcome.

❖ EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The educational implications of this study are as follows:

A large number of primary school-age children in Nepal, belonging to poor families and backward communities, have a poor access to primary education. More than 50 percent of these children still remain out of school. The NER of these children lags much behind the national NER which has crossed 89 percent. Gender, social, and geographical inequities in primary education are wide. This poses a formidable challenge to the achievement of the goal of Education for All.

The magnitude of dropout in community primary schools of the districts covered by the study – Doti and Rautahat – is alarming. The incidence of dropout is spectacularly high among the poor and disadvantaged children. If the current rate of dropout is not checked, the attainment of the goal of UPE and EFA would not be anything more than a ‘wishful thinking’.

There exists disparity in dropout across gender, grades, and social and economic strata of dropout children. Girls and children of the poor and disadvantaged families are more victimized by the tendency of dropout. If unchecked, such a disparity will mock the philosophy of social transformation through education. This will rather speckle the prospects of socio-economic equality and harmony.

The causes of student dropout are many and diverse. There are many economic and social reasons compelling students to drop out from school. Meanwhile, there are also a number of school-related, family-related and student-related causes of dropout.

Major school-related factors such as teachers’ absenteeism, irregular operation of school, lack of child-friendly environment in school and demotivating school environment as the causes of driving students away from school. It is seen that there exists convincing relationship between the quality of school and the magnitude of dropout or retention in primary education. Dropout was found low in good quality schools where physical facilities were relatively better, which had more trained,
motivated and committed teachers, where the proportion of female teachers was high, where the school was lead by a committed, motivated and dynamic headteacher, where students were taught in child-friendly ways and using local teaching materials, where the school was well managed with frequent meetings and interaction with parents, and where the schools have been backed by regular supervision of the DEO, active PTA, and regular parental supports.

It is also observed that household poverty and economic hardships are important reasons behind the high dropout and low retention of children in primary education. The economic characteristics of the households of dropout children clearly show that those unfortunate children hail from poor families. The parents of dropout children are either landless or are very small farmers. Their incomes are low and insecure; their sources of livelihood are a mix of irregular activities, consisting mostly of tilling small plots of land, working as wage labourers at home and abroad, and, to some extent, as lowly paid employees or petty traders. A large majority of them have to borrow even to meet the bare needs of survival. Treatment of illness and celebration of social rituals are almost impossible to be done without falling in new debts, further worsening the economic hardships. Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that the amount of money spent on the education of children is quite low. But, for meeting even such meager education expenditures, many families have to resort to borrowing.

The economic hardships of the families have made it difficult for them to meet expenditures associated with the schooling of children. This affects the quality of learning on the one hand and motivation of children on the other. Both of these effects lead to poor performance irregular attendance at school and, eventually, to dropout from school. Moreover, children are more needed at home to assist their parents in income generation activities or to take over the charge of housework for freeing them to go in for earning than at school, the economic return of which, as viewed by many parents, is uncertain and, if there is any, not immediate. Survival is always the first priority; and schooling always loses in trade-off between education and work. This is evident in the existence of child labour in an enormous scale. Many of the dropout children were also found engaged somehow or other in earning for healing the
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poverty of their parents. The legislation against child labour has not worked much. It cannot work either as long as there is the threat to the very survival of life. Poor families always tend to prefer a bird in hand to two in the bush. Many of the parents were not found worried at the dropout of their wards from school, nor are the children afflicted by it. It is only the teachers and education officers who were found unanimously anxious about the problem of dropout in primary education. It appears that the problem of primary school dropout and retention has been able to attract the attention of the supply side of the equation. But, the demand side – the children and their parents – have not yet been either able to afford to release their children totally from household chores due to economic hardships or are not yet fully aware to be more committed towards the enrolment and retention of their children at school.

There are also child-related reasons for dropout such as lack of interest in study, irregular attendance, late entry into school, etc. Children’s association with bad company at school or neighbourhood is also a responsible factor in student dropout in primary education. But, most of the child-related causes of dropout are either related with the quality of school or with the environment at home.

If the problem of dropout in primary education is to be solved, remedial actions are needed that address and also involve all stakeholders of the primary education system. The wisdom is to act in concerted spirit by all – parents, teachers, head teachers, SMCs, and education officers and the government. The children and the community should also be made aware of the afflictions caused in family and community by student dropout in primary education.

The following measures are suggested to address the problem of high dropout and low retention in primary education. For clarity and convenience, these suggestions are stated in terms of actions to be undertaken by different stakeholders of the primary education system.

Suggestions for Government (MOE/DOE)

On the basis of field observations the following actions are suggested for the Government (MOE/DOE):
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- Make provision for full scholarships (covering all school-related expenses) to the poor and disadvantaged children;
- Additional funding for ensuring the supply of basic physical facilities and educational materials in school;
- Enhance teacher quality through recurrent school-based training in child-friendly teaching methods;
- Regular school monitoring & academic supervision by DEO;
- Provide incentives to poor and disadvantaged parents for the retention of their children in school;
- Introduce compulsory primary education scheme;
- Introduce flexible school schedule & hours;
- Provide textbooks on time;
- Introduce alternative education provisions for dropout children;
- Train headteachers in effective primary school management;
- Provision of using two languages (including mother tongue) as medium of instruction;
- Enhance responsible parenthood through awareness programmes;
- Strengthen the mechanism of school supervision and of teacher support through supervisors and Resource Persons;
- Review teacher recruitment policy to encourage recruitment of local and female teachers.

Suggestions for School Management Committee (SMC)/Schools

On the basis of field observations the following actions are suggested for the School Management Committee/Schools:

- Establish a system of regular teacher-parent interaction;
- Introduce the follow-up of dropout children and parental counseling;
- Establish annual awards for good teachers;
- Supply stationery free of cost to poor children;
- Make school uniform optional for children;
- Ensure regular classes at school;
- Ensure the provision of basic physical and educational facilities in school;
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- Introduce child-friendly teaching method;
- Maintain discipline at school;
- Remove admission fee;
- Provide parental incentives for enrolled children;
- Give social recognition to parents sacrificing for children's education;
- Pay individual attention to student performance;
- Make provision of extra-curricular activities in school;
- Depoliticize school environment;
- Maintain violence-free school environment;
- Make Provision of midday meal/Tiffin for poor students;
- Provide extra coaching for weak students;
- Make provision of awards for regular students;
- Introduce flexible school hours according to the need of the community;
- Monitor school activities, teacher performance and behaviour by SMC.

Suggestions for Parents

On the basis of field observations the following actions are suggested for parents:

- Exercise responsible parenthood;
- Pay adequate attention to children both at home and school;
- Contribute to improve school environment;
- Participate in school activities;
- Reduce involvement of children in housework and earning activities;
- Ensure admission of children in school at the correct age;
- Reduce spending on unproductive and unhealthy consumptions.

Suggestions for Community

On the basis of field observations the following actions are suggested for the community:

- Enhance community support to school for controlling dropouts;
- Extend support to poor families for retaining their children in school;
- Organize awareness raising programmes for parents;
- Monitor school activities, teacher performance and behavior;
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- Assist to conduct literacy campaigns and ECD classes;
- Take interest in school activities.

Suggestions for Local Governing Bodies (VDC/Municipality)

On the basis of field observations the following actions are suggested for the Local Governing Bodies (VDC/Municipality):

- Create child-care centers in the vicinity of schools;
- Promote income generation activities (IGA) for poor parents;
- Provide resources to community schools for school-based short-term teacher training, student support, school improvement, etc;
- Regularly allocate funds for quality enhancement of community primary schools in the VDC/municipality;
- Establish an endowment fund to support students of community primary schools who are at the "risk of dropout due to economic reasons;"
- Develop and implement VDC/municipal primary education reform plan.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The researcher is quite aware of the limitations under which the present study was conducted and therefore that no sweeping generalizations could be made. The findings are only indicative of trends and hence are to be viewed in light of following limitations.

- The sample was limited to only two districts.
- The sample of the dropout children was drawn only from public school.
- In-depth analysis of quality of primary schools and magnitude of dropout children are based on 72 selected primary schools, including 36 rural and 36 urban schools, in two selected districts for study.
- Socio-economic parameters of dropout and retention have been based on the household situation of 430 dropout children sampled for the study.
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The investigator, by virtue of his experience in the field of study humbly offers the following suggestions for further research that could be taken by the perspective investigators.

- A comparative study of student dropout and retention and their relationship with school quality in public and private primary schools of Nepal.
- A study on cost-sharing in primary education among three key stakeholders: Government, Parents and Community with reference to public and private primary schools in Nepal.
- A social inquiry into the determinants of student retention and education quality in rural and urban primary schools of Nepal.
- A study of the effectiveness of selected measures taken by Government of Nepal to control dropout in the primary schools of Nepal.
- A Performance Review of Education For All policies and programmes with special reference to the EFA experiences in Nepal.