

The effects of privatisation on girls' access to free, quality public education in Nepal

Country Report





Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

This report shows how the right to education in Nepal is under threat by the rapid growth in private education. The Nepal constitution says: “Every citizen shall have the right to get compulsory and free education up to the basic level and free education up to the secondary level”. However, the low quality of public schools and declining education funding is driving parents towards paying for private education. Private education does not necessarily equate with higher quality and privatisation aggravates existing inequalities and marginalisation of vulnerable groups such as girls and children from poor families. Therefore the government of Nepal, which has the duty to ensure the right to free, public education of good quality for all, needs to uphold its responsibility and ensure funding to free, public quality education for all.

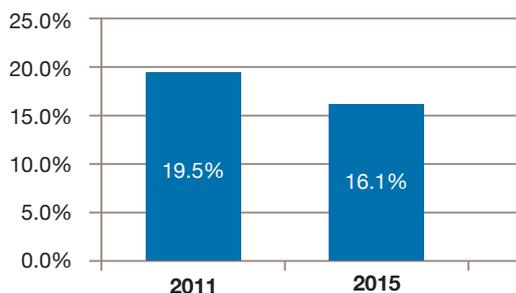
Education is a human right and the responsibility of government of Nepal

The right to free, quality education is established by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*,¹ and reaffirmed with the *Sustainable Development Goals*.² In Nepal, the right to education is enshrined in the Constitution,³ and the government should ensure free education of good quality to all citizens. But this study shows that government does not live up to this, and leaves a large part of its responsibility to the private sector.

The government should ensure funding to free, public quality education for all

Public spending on education in Nepal, as a percentage of the total budget, declined by 3.4 percentage points from 19.5% in 2011 to 16.1% in 2015. At the same time, public spending on education as a share of GDP declined by 0.3% from 4.2% to 3.9% (UNESCO, 2014).⁴

Figure 1: Education budget as a percentage of total public expenditure, Nepal



Source: UNESCO/IIEP-UIS (2016)

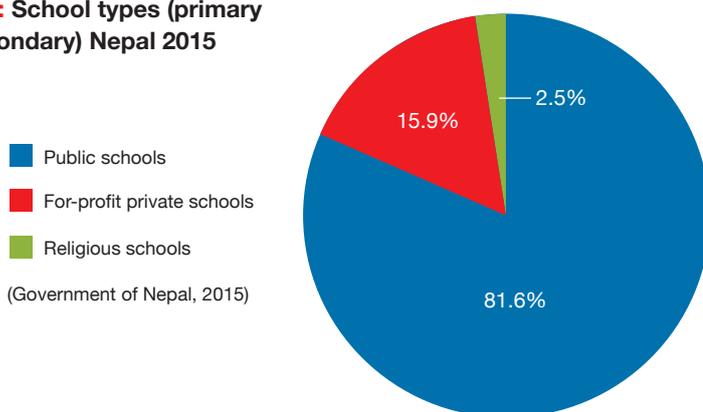
Government funds only 55% of primary and 27% of secondary education, while households, donors and NGOs fund the remaining part. Households are financing 39% of primary and 48% of secondary education, either by contributing to community-run schools or by paying for private education (UNESCO, 2014, pp. 17-18). As these figures show, the government previously accorded a high priority to education, but this has now diminished. The education budget will need to increase to equal at least of 6% of GDP and 20% of total public expenditure to meet international targets for education spending and to improve the quality of public education so that parents do not feel the need to pay for private education. In order

to achieve this, the overall national budget should be expanded through more effective and progressive taxation.⁵ A recent study from Nepal shows that in 2014/15 the country suffered a \$990 million revenue loss (equal to 5% of GDP) as a result of tax incentives provided by the government. This amount could more than double the education budget (ActionAid, 2017, p. 48). The education budget should also be sensitive to promoting the education of marginalised groups such and girls and children from poor families, and Nepal’s civil society should be involved in the scrutiny and monitoring of the budget.

Low quality of public education drives parents to pay for private schools

The quality of education in Nepal needs to improve. Only 11.5% of pupils starting in Grade 1 continue in school until Grade 12 (Government of Nepal, 2016, pp. 125-132). School Leaving Certificate (SLC) pass rates in public schools dropped from 46.6% in 2011 to 33.7% in 2015. Private schools in Nepal are perceived by parents as a ticket to better education. As a result, private education has grown considerably over recent decades, with enrolments doubling between 2005 and 2010 (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 7). From 2011 to 2015 the proportion of for-profit schools increased from 14.7% to 15.9% of all schools,⁶ and enrolment in for-profit schools grew by 17% at primary level and by a remarkable 69% at secondary level, with the total share of enrolments in for-profit private schools reaching 19% - almost one fifth of all school-going children.⁷

Figure 2: School types (primary and secondary) Nepal 2015



(Government of Nepal, 2015)

Private education is not equal to higher quality

While some private schools offer a high quality of education, this is not necessarily the case for all private schools. While quality may be high in expensive schools, it may not be true for the low-fee schools.⁸ The overall pass rate for the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) is higher in private schools, reaching 89.8% in 2015 compared

with only 33.7% in public schools.⁹ Researchers explain this by better infrastructure/equipment and management in private schools. However, another reason for better exam scores is not related to what the private schools offer, but to the fact that parents who send their children to public schools are usually from a higher socio-economic status and better able to support their children,¹⁰ and many also pay for extra classes/ tutoring.¹¹ Furthermore, many teachers in private schools are not trained. In 2015, only 87% of teachers in private primary schools were trained compared to 94% teachers in public primary schools.¹² Our research finds that many private schools focus narrowly on exam results, using rote-learning in order to achieve higher pass rates and attract more students. Informants also said that students in public schools tend to acquire better soft skills in areas such as participation, creativity, social interaction, community engagement and sports. Many parents are therefore misled in terms of the quality that private schools actually offer.

Existing inequalities are aggravated by private education

Private education is a costly burden for parents. The level of fees is supposed to be regulated by the state, but the state doesn't enforce regulation (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 5). Fees can be really high: household expenditure is eight times higher for private primary schools than for public primary schools (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 6). The Nepal Living Standards Survey in 2010/11 shows that the wealthiest families are the main users of private education. Over half of pupils enrolled in private schools belong to the richest 20% of the population (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011, p. 99). So, private education further aggravates existing inequalities between the rich and the poor, and further marginalises underprivileged groups in the population. Private schools do not help to increase availability of schools in underserved areas, since 41.4% of all private schools are concentrated in and around the capital (compared to 26.8% of total schools).¹³ The growth of private schools is creating and entrenching social inequalities. As expressed by one researcher: "A major consequence of private sector growth has been middle class flight, which has left many public schools with a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Private schools have become valuable as a social differentiator, which makes public school stigmatization a long-term concern for education systems." (Joshi, 2016, pp. 6-8)¹⁴

Girls are paying the price and are discriminated by privatisation

Girls are particularly disadvantaged by growing privatisation. While gender parity has been achieved in Nepal reaching a share of girls' enrolment in total for primary and secondary education at 51% in 2015,¹⁵ there is a remarkably lower enrolment of girls in private schools. In the private sector, girls constitute only 43% in primary and 44% in secondary (compared with 52% in primary and 53% in secondary in the public sector).¹⁶

Figure 3: Public primary school enrolment by gender Nepal 2015

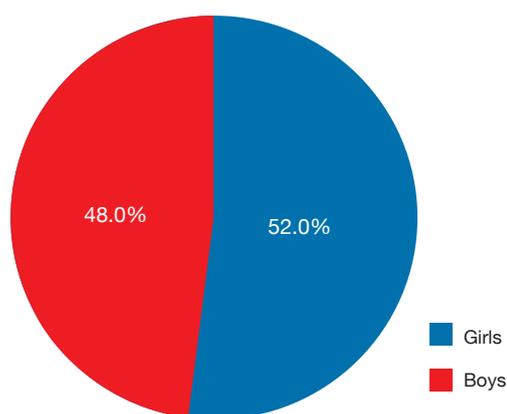
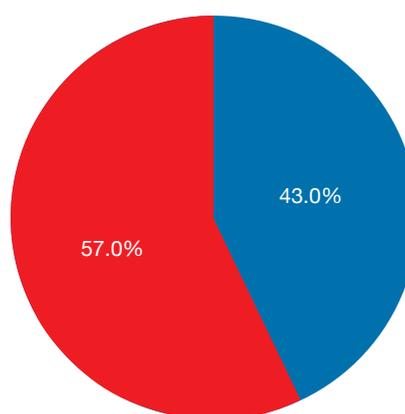


Figure 4: For-profit private primary school enrolment by gender Nepal 2015



Source: (Government of Nepal, 2015)

When parents cannot afford to pay for schooling for all of their children, they choose to send boys to private school. More girls than boys go to public schools. Because of the negative image of public schools, this may affect girls' chances in the job market and of entering higher education. Furthermore, the government's monitoring of private sector school is low, and this constitutes a problem as it is not possible to know if girls' rights are respected in private schools.

Recommendations

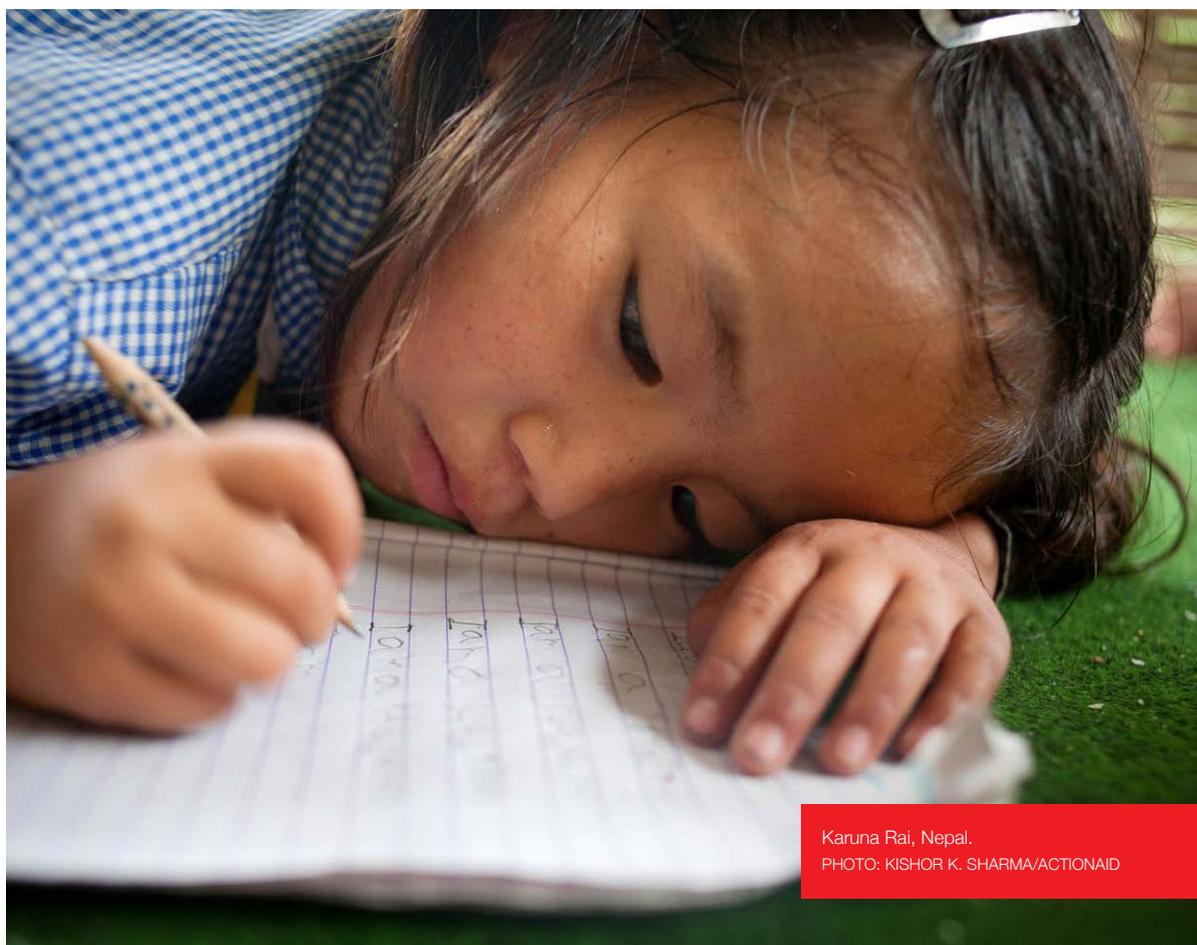
Governments should:

- **Right to education** - Guarantee the right to free quality education for all children as stipulated in the Constitution. Primary and secondary education must be free and compulsory, not only in law but also in reality. The government should not delegate its responsibility for ensuring the right to education to the private sector.
- **Education financing** - Increase the education budget to 20% of the national budget or 6% of GDP; increasing the size of the overall budget by expanding the tax base through progressive and effective taxation; increasing the sensitivity of the budget by allocating more resources to promote equity and increasing scrutiny to ensure that the budget is allocated and utilised efficiently.
- **Cost of education for parents** - Ensure that primary and secondary education is free, not only in law but also in reality. This means abolishing all compulsory direct and indirect costs (e.g. enrolment and exam fees, uniforms and learning materials amongst others) to parents and ensuring that the State education budget adequately covers all these costs.
- **Quality education** - Improve the quality of education by allocating more resources to public schools and to attracting, training and retaining an adequate number of qualified teachers. Allocate sufficient resources to monitoring and supporting the schools, to providing sufficient learning materials and improving school infrastructure such as classrooms, toilets and playgrounds.
- **Regulation and monitoring of schools** - Strengthen the regulatory control of private schools, holding them to account and inspecting them regularly to ensure that they comply with current education standards. Impose sanctions if private schools do not comply with requirements such as teacher salaries and conditions, level of fees, etc. Ensure transparency by reporting accurate and detailed data on private schools (including data on school owners, profits, categories of schools etc.).
- **Gender equity** - Take firm action towards the achievement of gender parity and equality in education by ensuring appropriate policies are funded and implemented in order to tackle persistent barriers to girls' education, including but not limited to: gender-related school-based violence; lack of sanitation facilities; lack of female teachers and gender bias in teaching and learning materials. Engage with communities, civil society and policy-makers to shift deep-seated discrimination against girls at all levels.

Civil society organisations in Nepal should:

- **Right to education** - Raise citizens' awareness and hold the government to account for delivering the right to free, compulsory, quality education. Expose violations of the right to education arising from the privatisation of education.
- **Education financing** - Raise awareness and support citizens to advocate for the government to increase the size of the overall budget to 6% of GDP by expanding the tax base through progressive and effective taxation; increase education's share of the budget to at least 20%, increase the sensitivity of the budget by allocating more resources to promote equity and increase scrutiny to ensure that the budget is allocated and utilised efficiently.

- **Cost of education to parents** - Raise awareness and support citizens to carry out participatory budget monitoring and analysis in order to fully understand what is spent on education by government and by households and to campaign for an end to compulsory direct and indirect costs to parents for public education.
- **Quality education** – Hold government to account for providing quality education for all children, making the case for the financing of sufficient quality trained teachers, improved school infrastructure and learning materials.
- **Regulation and monitoring of schools** – Hold the government to account for ensuring that private schools are properly regulated and regularly inspected to ensure that they comply with national education standards.
- **Gender equity** – Engage with communities and policy makers to raise awareness and shift deep-seated discrimination against girls. Identify, highlight and oppose issues such as violence against girls in schools and child marriage. Promote positive alternatives of quality inclusive and equity-focused education.



Karuna Rai, Nepal.
PHOTO: KISHOR K. SHARMA/ACTIONAID



1. Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the effects of privatisation on girls' right to education in Nepal.

Access to free, quality education is a human right established by the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, adopted in 1948, and by a number of international normative instruments elaborated by the United Nations, including the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education*. However, despite much progress, the obstacles to achieving free public education for all are still numerous. In recent years, the growing trend of privatisation within the education sector has emerged as yet another serious challenge. Some have argued that public education systems have failed to deliver the desired results in some countries and that the private sector would be better at increasing quality through choice and competition. Lately they have promoted low-cost private schools as a way of expanding access to quality education. However, recent studies indicate that this approach creates more challenges than solutions. The analysis and monitoring of privatisation and its effects on the right to education is therefore essential, to enable civil society to better understand this issue and to engage in evidence-based policy dialogue and advocacy in support of free quality public education.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also affirmed the equal rights of both sexes, and the obligation of the State to ensure this was further emphasized by the International Covenant on Political and Civil Rights from 1966. Thanks to the *Education for All (EFA)* agenda, in recent the decades, significant progress has been made in narrowing gender disparities in primary and secondary education. However, in most parts of the world girls and women still lag behind. According to the *Global Education Monitoring (GEM)* report, 53% of children out of school are girls and 47% of those are expected never to enter a classroom (GI-ESCR et al, 2015). 479 million women above the age of 15 are illiterate, compared to only 279 million men, which means that 63% of the adult illiterate population are women. Fewer girls than boys receive a secondary education, and fewer still a higher education.

One of the concerns related to the increased privatisation of education is that it aggravates existing inequalities and marginalisation of vulnerable groups within the education system, as these groups are less able to pay for education, and often private schools have both open and hidden criteria that exclude them. There is also evidence that poor parents who are struggling to find money to pay school fees are likely to prioritise boys over girls, for example. This study seeks to uncover the extent to which current privatisation trends in education promote or hinder progress towards girls' right to education.

The study was prepared for ActionAid International (AAI) by independent consultants, Dr Alberto Begue and Eva Iversen, from January to May 2017. It is part of a larger research initiative that includes country reports on Nepal, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Liberia, as well as a global summary report and policy briefs. It was carried out as part of the "Promoting Quality Education through Progressive Domestic Resource Mobilisation" project, a multi-country education and tax justice project involving six countries (Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Myanmar, and Nepal). Its aim is to ensure that children (especially girls) have improved access to free public education of a high standard, financed through greater government support and increases in fair tax revenue. The project is funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and runs from July 2015 to December 2017.

We hereby wish to thank all the many informants who contributed to this study by providing invaluable information as well as sharing their views and reflections.

Alberto Begue and Eva Iversen





Nepal.
PHOTO: KISHOR K. SHARMA/ACTIONAID

2. Purpose and methodology

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to conduct multi-country research on the education landscape in terms of private providers of education and to analyse the effects of privatisation on girls' access to free, quality public education in those countries, using a human-rights based approach.

Focus of the study: The study focuses on privatisation at the primary and secondary school levels. Privatisation of education can be understood as the process by which a growing proportion of the education system is owned, funded, or operated by non-State actors (Global Campaign for Education, 2016, p. 16). Another, more narrow definition of privatisation is “the transfer of activities, assets and responsibilities from government/public institutions and organizations to private individuals and agencies” (Belfield, 2002). In the present study, privatisation is looked at from both of these perspectives. Non-State or private education includes a vast range of different types of schools, including community schools, faith-based schools, for-profit schools as well as different models, where the public and private provision are mixed, such as public private partnerships (PPP). Private education has existed for many years in the form of community and faith-based schools, but many of these schools have today been taken over by governments. Private education run for-profit has also existed for a long time, but mostly limited to serving well-off elites of society. However, the number of for-profit private schools is growing, especially so-called low-fee private schools aimed at poorer parts of the population. This diversity in the typology of schools is common especially for low- and medium income countries, where the State does not fully ensure the right to education. That is the case in the five countries analysed in this study, though there are significant differences between the countries in terms of the size of the private education sector and the role it plays.

Approach: The research was designed to respond to 16 research questions, and for each question a number of indicators were developed. For each indicator, data was collected from 2010/11 and from 2014/15, respectively. The indicators should serve to compare developments over the last five years in terms of education progress in the public education sector to developments in the private education sector, with a special focus on gender. As such the methodology included a set of indicators comparable across the countries, but a smaller number of country specific indicators were also included when relevant.

Sources: The research is based on a desk study, field visits and interviews with key education stakeholders at the national level, as well as Skype interviews with a few resource people at the international level (including a total of 79 persons for the five countries and at international level). The desk study included relevant secondary sources such as statistical data, academic literature, reports and research done by research institutes, donors, IFI, INGOs and other international organisations, and official documents (e.g. from ministries of education). The analysis also included primary empirical research regarding the prevalence and effects of privatisation on education in four countries: Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal (whereas the Liberia report is based only on desk research). The empirical research included a 5-day mission to each country by one consultant, in February 2017. During the country visits information and views were collected through semi-structured interviews from a wide range of education stakeholders, including ministry of education officials, UN agencies, donors, teachers' unions, civil society organisations, researchers and private education providers. Please see the annex for a list of the literature and of people interviewed.

Limitations: Statistics on education are usually collected with some delay. The aim was to include the most recent data possible, but at the same time to have data that is comparable. Inevitably, then, the data is not always the most recent. In addition, in some countries data collection on the private education sector is almost non-existent or flawed, especially on gender balance and school policies. The consultants strove to obtain statistical data, but also had to rely on more qualitative data such as information based on research or gathered via interviews. It should also be noted that in some cases the data obtained was inaccurate, and that information obtained from informants, research and statistical data is at times conflicting. We have noted these inaccuracies and inconsistencies in the report.



Nepal.
PHOTO: KISHOR K. SHARMA/ACTIONAID



Mothers' group members.
PHOTO: BISHAL RANAMAGAR/ACTIONAID

3. The education landscape and privatisation

The education context in Nepal

Nepal has a diverse population of 28.5 million people consisting of different ethnic groups, castes and religions. For many years ruled as a constitutional Hindu monarchy, Nepal had its first democratic elections in 1991. An armed conflict between the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist and the state broke out in 1995 and went on until 2006, followed by the abolition of the monarchy and establishment of a republic in 2008. The country's latest constitution was ratified in 2015, followed by elections, after a process of conflict and protest by different population groups claiming that the new constitution did not sufficiently redress historical discrimination based on ethnicity, caste, religion and gender.¹⁷

The right to education in Nepal is enshrined in the Constitution of 2015. Education has seen significant progress under the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009-2015 and the Extension Plan 2014/15 -2015/16 led by the Government of Nepal (GON) Ministry of Education (MoE) and supported by a range of donors.¹⁸ Despite the devastating earthquakes that hit Nepal in 2015 and destroyed or damaged nearly 36,000 classrooms, major results have been achieved. Over the period from 2009 to 2016 for example net enrolment rates (NER) for grades 1–8 have risen from 73% to 89%, the primary completion rate has risen from 58 to 81%, and gender parity has been achieved at primary and secondary levels (Global Partnership for Education, 2017). However, 10.6% of children at basic level are still out of school (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 19).

Several demographic and social changes over the last decades have influenced the education context in the country. Nepal has seen a significant emigration of youth in search of job opportunities, and this has in turn led to high levels of remittances that are increasingly spent on children's education. This has again led to demands from parents for quality education, as well as to increased demand for secondary education, and these two issues have been given high priority in the new School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for 2016–2023, adopted in October 2016. Equity is also emphasised, particularly with the development of a Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in 2014 aiming to reach children in remote areas, children with disabilities, as well as disadvantaged caste and ethnic groups. With regards to gender equality, the new education sector plan has a focus especially on improving learning outcomes for girls and on maintaining girls in the education system at secondary level (Government of Nepal, 2016).

The evolution and landscape of private education in Nepal

Schools in Nepal are officially referred to in the following three categories:

- 1. Community schools:** This category includes public schools and community run-schools supported with public funding. For the purpose of this study all these schools will be called 'public schools'.
- 2. Religious schools:** These include Islamic, Buddhist and Hindu tradition schools, and they receive government grants if they align their curriculum with the formal education system.
- 3. Institutional schools:** These are private schools, in large majority run for profit and they will in the following be called 'for-profit private schools'. Institutional schools are also at times in Nepal referred to as 'boarding schools', though usually they have no boarding facilities.

The Ministry of Education in Nepal systematically reports educational statistics on community and institutional schools in its annual reports. Throughout this report the official statistics from the 2011 and 2015 reports will be used as basis of statistical tables, unless otherwise indicated.¹⁹ The study will focus on primary and secondary education. In Nepal, the education system is divided into 'basic education' covering grades 1 – 8, in the following called 'primary level'. The secondary level in Nepal corresponds to grades 9-12.²⁰

Public school education in Nepal has been historically developed with communities setting up their own schools and only from 1971 did the state take over the running of schools. Whereas today almost all community schools follow the official Education Act (1971), recently amended in 2016) and receive some level of state funding, there is still a large part of community funding involved in running some of these schools.²¹ This represents a form of private, non-profit education. However, the official statistics do not distinguish between purely state funded schools and schools with shared community/public funding. Therefore, in the following all these schools will be referred to under the same category of 'public schools'.

With regards to **religious schools**, these are also privately run, not for-profit schools and most of them receive some level of government funding. In 2015 these constituted only 2.5% of total schools, and no detailed statistics are available on them, apart from number of schools.

Private schools in Nepal are also regulated by the Education Act (1971), whereby private schools are classified into either "company" or "trust". The majority of schools are company schools, and these are for-profit and run based almost exclusively on fee charges. They are required to register with the Company Registrar's Office and pay company taxes. The trust schools are private schools and charge fees, but the profit should be reinvested in the school, and as such is not for-profit. The number of trust schools is small, according to information from the Ministry of Education constituting only about 10% of private schools.²² The official statistics on private schools do not distinguish between these two types of schools. Private schools are by law categorised according to their quality in terms of physical facilities, management, performance and results into four types, A, B, C and D, with A being the highest category. The category determines the level of fees that the schools are allowed to charge.

Category D schools could be seen as a type of low-cost private education, with very minimal facilities, whereas at the other end of the spectre, the A-schools are very exclusive elite schools with high entrance requirements (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 14).²³ There is no overall data available on the number of schools by category, and though all informants agreed that A-schools are very few in number, estimates made by different informants vary too much to be conclusive.²⁴ It was not possible either for this study to find any literature in detail analysing the differences between school categories. Therefore, most information on private schools used in the following does not distinguish between categories, and this poses a serious limitation, as very different school types are treated as one category.

The table below sums up the development in number of different types of schools over the period from 2011 to 2015. It should be noted that the number of private schools may be underestimated, due to the presence of unregistered private schools or schools not providing annual data.²⁵

Table 1: Title

Primary and secondary schools in Nepal	2011 Total	2011 % of total	2015 Total	2015 % of total	Change 2011-2015
Total schools	34,747		35,701		2.7%
Public schools	28,057	80.7%	29,133	81.6%	3.8%
For-profit private schools	5,103	14.7%	5,673	15.9%	11.2%
Religious schools	1,587	4.6%	895	2.5%	-43.6%

According to these statistics, there was a 2.7% increase in the total number of schools in Nepal between 2011 and 2015. Religious schools, which were already small in number, saw a significant reduction from 4.6% to 2.5% of schools. The number of public schools has grown by 3.8% and for-profit private schools by 11.2%, rising from 14.7% to 15.9% of schools. However, if we look at the number of students enrolled (gross enrolment rate), it gives a different picture. The table below shows the changes in the number of students enrolled in public and for-profit private schools at primary and secondary levels. These figures show that there has been an overall reduction in the number of primary school enrolments and an increase at secondary level. Whereas enrolments in public schools have fallen by 11% at primary level and increased only by 6% at secondary, enrolment in for-profit private schools has grown by 17% at primary level and by a remarkable 69% at secondary level. The share of enrolments in for-profit private schools has grown from 12% to 16% at primary level and from 15% to 22% at secondary level, bringing the average share of private school enrolments in primary and secondary to 19%.

Table 2: Title

Students enrolled in primary	2011 Total	2011 % of total	2015 Total	2015 % of total	Change 2011-2015
Total primary	6,651,883		6,170,668		-7%
Public schools	5,832,576	88%	5,209,898	84%	-11%
For-profit private schools	819,307	12%	960,770	16%	17%

Table 3: Title

Students enrolled in secondary	2011 Total	2011 % of total	2015 Total	2015 % of total	Change 2011-2015
Total secondary	1,130,336		1,307,580		16%
Public schools	956,966	85%	1,015,015	78%	6%
For-profit private schools	173,370	15%	292,565	22%	69%

With regards to the distribution of schools, there is a clear tendency for schools to be concentrated in and around the capital (Central District of Nepal, covering Kathmandu and the surrounding district). As shown in the table below, 29.2% of all schools are in the capital area (unchanged over the period). The share of public schools in the capital area out of total public schools has also been quite stable increasing only from 26.4 to 26.8%. The percentage of private schools concentrated in the capital area however is considerably higher at 44.7% in 2011, though this percentage has decreased slightly over the period to 41.4%. As there has been an overall growth in private schools, this means that growth has taken place outside of the capital area. The unequal distribution of private schools is also underlined in research, indicating that private schools are concentrated in urban areas and geographically accessible regions, as well as high income level districts.²⁶

Table 4: Title

School types in capital area (primary and secondary)	2011 % of schools in capital area out of total schools in same category	2015 % of schools in capital area out of total schools in same category	Change 2011-2015
Total schools	29.2%	29.2%	0.0%
Public schools	26.4%	26.8%	0.4%
For-profit private schools	44.7%	41.4%	-3.3%

Legal frameworks and regulation of the private education sector

Private education is regulated by the general Education Act (1971, recently amended in 2016) and a number of directives, such as the Institutional School Criteria and Operation Directives (2012) that regulate the fees that schools are allowed to charge. Private schools are generally required to comply with the same regulations as public schools in terms of, for example, teacher conditions, use of curriculum and textbooks, exams, etc. However, research has found that many schools do not respect these rules. A study carried out in 2011 in 132 private schools (Subedit, S. et al, 2011) concluded that:

- In terms of minimum qualification and training of teachers: Private schools should meet the same standards as public schools but the study found that this was only the case in A and B classified schools, whereas at the lower level school teachers had minimal or no training.
- Regarding salaries and benefits of private school teachers: Only 20% of private- school teachers received government determined salary. In many schools, salaries were 50-60% lower, and there were no promotion opportunities, job security, paid leave or incentives for training.
- The curriculum and textbooks were the same in the private schools, but almost all private schools had additional courses in other subjects (Subedi, 2014, p. 117).

Also, according to research, the regulation of fees charged by private schools is not efficient: “[...] many private schools charge much more than the State-determined fees, due to poor monitoring and regulation by the State – a situation that has been defined as *“tolerated illegality”*. This situation led the Nepali Supreme Court to issue an 11-point verdict on 23 May 2012 ordering private schools to not increase their fees for three years and to not charge any fees without the approval of the government agencies concerned. It also demanded that educational authorities devise reform programmes to better regulate the private school sector [...]. Following this court order, the Ministry of Education enacted the Institutional School Criteria and Operation Directives – 2069 BS, to enforce the court order. However, the Private and Boarding Schools’ Organisation of Nepal (PABSON) announced that it would not obey the guidelines, leading to another court case. These measures have not prevented private school from raising fees illegally.” (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 5) The general impression of low monitoring of private schools in Nepal was also confirmed by all categories of informants interviewed for this study, including interviews with the Ministry of Education and PABSON.

Factors driving the expansion of the private education sector

Private schools have existed for many years in Nepal, but mostly limited to a small elite. In 1971 the Government took over all the country's community-run schools, but found it difficult to ensure proper financing and management, and according to research, this opened the door to the private sector (Subedi, 2014, p. 113). Different governments from the 80's onwards encouraged privatisation, in order to "enhance the quality of education" and to meet "the need for basic education" (Subedi, 2014, p. 117). Private education increased considerably over recent decades, with enrolments in private schools nearly doubling at all levels between 2005 and 2010 (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 7). As illustrated above, the private sector continues to grow.

The privatisation of education does not play a major role in the present government education policy, and the Education Sector Plans of Nepal do not include any analysis of the scope or role played by private schools. The SSRP Extension plan on a few occasions mentions public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a means of improving access to education in remote areas (Government of Nepal, 2014, pp. 7-19). However, the new SSDP does not mention lessons learned from this experience. The new plan mentions PPP in relation to early childhood education, technical and higher education, but not in relation to primary, and there are only a few vague references to PPP strategies in relation to securing secondary education for all.²⁷ In 2016, with an amendment of the Education Act, it is no longer permitted to establish new company schools, but existing schools are allowed to continue to run for profit or they may choose to change status to trust schools. As such, the government has aimed to limit the growth of private schools. However, the remaining for-profit schools are still allowed to operate and also to expand (which means they get a kind of monopoly and may also increase their value as investment objects). Both research and interviews carried out for this study underlines the impression that the government does not have a clear policy in relation to privatisation, and that there is no thorough analysis, strategy or monitoring on the field (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 25).²⁸

With regards to education donors in Nepal, according to the interviews these are all supporting the public sector, and while some of them have suggested to the government during sector planning processes to look into public-private partnerships (PPPs), none of the donors have pushed very much on this issue, nor have they pushed for the government to limit privatisation. The Royal Embassy of Norway, though focusing on supporting the public sector, has commissioned a study to analyse the 'Determinants of Quality Education in Institutional Schools of Nepal' (Upadhyay, 2016).

Private education in Nepal is much debated. According to some research: "At present, we can observe at least three responses to private education in Nepal: a (vociferous) radical leftist view that calls for a blatant nationalization of all private schools; a (not so prominent) rightist view that calls for an unhindered and unregulated proliferation of private schooling based on a democratic "right to choose;" and a more centrist view that advocates for a respectable yet better regulated place for private schooling (a view also supported by successive governments)." Some radical left groups have even gone as far as carrying out violent attacks on private schools (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 7). Towards the end of the civil war, Maoist threats to private schools caused a drop in enrolments, but enrolments had increased again by the end of the war in 2006 (Subedi, 2014, pp. 120-121). As recently as September 2016, ten schools in Kathmandu were bombed, allegedly by fugitive Maoist extorting money from schools, and punishing schools for not paying (Sharma, 2016). On the other hand, research and informants interviewed all point to a strong preference by parents from all social layers in Nepal for private education, and this demand has led to the provision of private schools in different price ranges. Researchers and informants explained this preference is a result of parents' perception of private schools as having higher quality, the poor quality of the public sector and the fact that private schools use English as medium of instruction, whereas most public schools use Nepali (the official language of the country, though not the mother-tongue of all). For parents, paying for education is seen as an investment. They expect a return in the form of their children getting good jobs and providing for the family, and they believe that private schools can offer a pathway to that.²⁹

Private schools seek to attract students through advertising, door-to-door-campaigns, pamphlets and open days, and they particularly sell the private schools through the image of better quality and the opportunity to learn in English (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013).³⁰ There is no publicly available data on the owners of private schools in Nepal. According to research and informants interviewed, the owners are private individuals or small groups of individuals, who set up single schools. There are not (as prevalent in other countries) large companies in charge of running schools. However, setting up and ensuring the running of a school will require a certain start-up capital to invest.³¹ As such, the private education sector in Nepal may be characterised as a small scale, entrepreneurial sector. According to many interviews, private school owners have strong political ties and a number of Members of Parliament are private school owners, who openly seek to advance private education. Private schools are associated since 1990 in the umbrella organisation Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation (PABSON) - later split into two with the creation of the smaller National Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation (N-PABSON).³² PABSON generally advocates for higher independence from the state, and wishes to operate purely under private company conditions, not regulated by the Education Act.³³



Pupils returning home.
PHOTO: BISHAL RANAMAGAR/ACTIONAID



Nepal Sindapalchok.
PHOTO: JO HARRISON/ACTIONAID

4. The financing of public and private education

Public education financing

A comprehensive analysis of education financing in Nepal was published in 2016 by UNESCO/IIEP-UIS, titled National Education Accounts in Nepal. Expenditure for education 2009-2015 (UNESCO, 2014). According to this data, public spending on education in Nepal declined by 3.4 percentage points over the five-year period from 19.5% to 16.1%, and public spending as a share of GDP declined by 0.3% from 4.2 to 3.9%, as shown in the table below:

Table 5: Title

Public spending on education	2010/11	2014/15	2015 Total
Public spending on education as a % of GDP ³⁵	4.2%	3.9%	-0.3
Public spending on education as % of total public expenditure	956,966	85%	-3.4

(UNESCO, 2014)

These figures indicate a previously high priority accorded to education, that has now diminished, and the country falls short of meeting the internationally recognized targets for public spending on education at a minimum of 6% of GDP and 20% of the total public expenditure. According to information obtained from the MoE, the major part of public spending on education goes to public schools, with very minimal funding to private schools in terms of scholarships to marginalised groups, and a small part going to the few religious schools. According to the UNESCO/IIEP-UIS study 2014/15 data, government funds only 55% of primary education and 27% of secondary education, while households, donors and NGOs fund the remaining part (UNESCO, 2014, pp. 17-18).

Financing of the private education sector

Private schools run almost uniquely on user fees, and receive no government subsidies apart from the funding of scholarships for some marginalised groups. The level of fees is in principle regulated by the state, and depends on the classification of the school, as explained above. According to research the schools are allowed to charge as follows: “In Kathmandu, ‘C’ schools are authorised to charge a maximum of Rs 1,100 Rupees (\$11) at the primary level, Rs 1,250 (\$12) at the lower secondary level and Rs 1,700 (\$16) at the higher secondary level. ‘B’ schools can charge up to Rs 1,375 (\$13) at the primary level, and ‘A’ schools up to Rs 1,600 (\$15).” (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 4) However, according to the ca;417 [...], equal to approximately Rs 3,700 per month – without taking into account the inscription and other annual fixed fees. These figures are common for this type of school. As a comparison, the monthly minimum wage in Nepal, which is “barely sufficient to meet subsistence needs”, is Rs 8,000 (approx. \$80 USD).” (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 5) However, school fees are not the only costs related to children’s education: “In addition to tuition fees, households have to cover other expenses, such as transportation, lunch or uniforms, which are also considerably higher in private schools as compared to public schools. These costs are essential to take into account as private schools hide the true cost of education by lowering tuition fees but increasing other fees like admission fees. They force parents to buy expensive books and uniforms for which the school gets a commission. Taken together, household expenditure is eight times higher for attendance to private primary schools compared to public primary schools (respectively Rs 11,164 and 1,332 per year).” (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 6)

The Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) from in 2010/11 clearly shows that the wealthiest families were the main users of private education. The following shows the type of school attended by individuals in school according to their income quintile (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011, p. 99):

Table 6: Title

Consumption Quintile	Community / government schools / colleges	Institutional / private schools / colleges	Other schools / colleges
Poorest 20%	92.7	6.4	0.9
Second	85.5	11.2	2.3
Third	79.1	19.8	1.1
Fourth	64.3	34.7	1.0
Richest 20%	39.0	60.1	0.9
Average	71.9	26.8	1.2

Over half of the pupils enrolled in private schools belong to the 20% richest quintile of the population, while 50% of the pupils enrolled in government schools belong to the two poorest quintiles of the population. This indicates that in 2010/11, the level of user fees would not have allowed for poorer households to send their children to private schools. However, no similar data exists for 2014/15 and as we do not know to what extent the growth in private schools has been on the low-fee school end, we cannot see if this picture is still the same today.

Household education expenditure

Complete national level data on the real cost of education comparing private to public sector is difficult to find. According to the UNESCO study, households are financing 39% of primary and 48% of secondary education either via contribution to community run schools or via paying for-profit private education (though not specifying

how much of this goes to private and how much to public sector education).³⁷ Another study from 2013 by the World Bank Office in Kathmandu covering 7,796 households, gives the following overview of household expenditure at primary level including both types of schools:

Table 7: Annual cost of sending a child to primary school by expenditure item and ecological region, NRs

Expenditure Item	Community	Private	Community	Private	Community	Private	Community	Private
Tuition	51	4,970	87	5,273	124	7,467	94	6,397
Transport	0	181	2	319	0	678	1	490
Admission	8	897	19	777	51	867	27	842
Examination	15	156	31	215	50	266	34	233
Textbooks	18	690	26	728	41	1,033	29	885
Uniforms	890	1,248	762	985	527	1,091	708	1,079
Private tuition	39	330	25	24	145	283	61	207
Stationary	605	725	479	715	415	632	474	672
Other	56	54	18	40	16	25	22	34
Total annual cost	1,682	9,251	1,448	9,074	1,370	12,342	1,451	10,841

Source: New ERA Household Survey 2012

Note: NR = Not Reported. No estimate is reported because the number of cases was less than 25.

(World Bank, Kathmandu Office, 2013, p. 61)³⁸

This data shows an overall difference in cost of more than seven times between the public and the private school, at Rs 1,451 (\$14) in the public sector compared to Rs 10,841 (\$104) in the private sector, with all types of cost being higher in the private schools.

In principle, public education in Nepal should be free at both primary and secondary level as established with the interim constitution of 2017 (UNICEF, 2016, p. 4). Public schools do not charge fees in grades 1–10, but there is still a monthly fee for grade 11–12, according to the MoE making it “often difficult for poorer students to pursue further studies at secondary schools”, and the aim in the new education sector plan is to eliminate these fees (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 13). In addition, even though public education at lower levels in principle does not charge fees, parents pay for a number of the other types of cost listed above, and in community run schools, the parents also pay indirectly via the community funding to schools. Furthermore, some schools also charge unofficial/illegal fees (Shrestha, 2016).³⁹ This may be an additional factor in explaining parents’ preference for the private sector based on the thinking, that if they have to pay for education anyway, they may just as well pay for private schooling.



Girl in class.
PHOTO: BISHAL RAMAMAGAR/ACTIONAID

5. Education quality in public and private schools

Privatisation affects the attainment of the right to quality education for all in various ways. Fees and other costs limits access to private education for the poorer parts of the population. Public and private schools differ in terms of quality of education, teacher conditions and other aspects. Furthermore, private education also influences public education provision in different ways.

Education quality

Education quality is a complex issue that depends on a range of factors, such as teacher training, conditions and supervision; infrastructure; teaching materials; languages used in education; and school management. The data on these parameters in private schools is generally scarce, and data is not disaggregated for the different types of schools in the very heterogeneous private education sector. A 2014 comprehensive review by DFID included an assessment of the extent to which private schools offer better quality than public schools (Day Ashley, 2014, p. 24).⁴⁰ So did another recent review of research on private education by Global Campaign for Education in 2016 (Global Campaign for Education, 2016).⁴¹ Both studies underline the difficulty in assessing the quality of education, which is too narrowly assessed only in terms of exam pass rates.

Another complication highlighted in both reviews, is that results in terms of learning outcomes and exam scores are also highly dependent on the family background of students, the level of parents' education and their resources, and research that control for bias in terms of parents' socio-economic background is rare. However, given all these caveats, the overall conclusion from both reports is that there is insufficient evidence to conclude that

private schools have higher quality than public schools.⁴² Nevertheless, the issue of quality holds a central place in debates around privatisation of education, and the belief that private schools offer better quality is one of the main reasons for parents to aspire to send their children to private schools. This is also supported by research, further underlining that this is also linked to dissatisfaction with public schools (Day Ashley, 2014, p. 30).

Private schools in Nepal are largely perceived by parents as a ticket to higher quality education, and this is cited as one of the major reasons for parents' private sector preferences. Overall school dropout rates are high, with the completion rate to grade 8 only at 69.6%, a GER in secondary education at 57.7% and a survival rate to grade 12 at only 11.5% (Government of Nepal, 2016, pp. 125-132). One measure of quality is the School Leaving Certificate (SLC), the exam after secondary school - a common reference used for education quality in Nepal. According to official statistics, the overall SLC pass rate declined by 12.9% over the five years from 2011 - 2015. The pass rate is considerably higher in private schools, in 2015 reaching 89.8%, compared to only 33.7% in public schools. Furthermore, whereas pass rates have increased by 19.5% in private schools, they have fallen by 30.3% in public schools. The following table compares pass rates in public and private schools:

Table 8: Title

Slc pass rates	2011 Number of students passing	2011 % pass rate	2015 Total	2015 % pass rate	Change 2011-2015
Total students	220,766	55.5%	192,353	61.8%	-12.9%
Public schools	143,400	46.6%	99,900	33.7%	-30.3%
For-profit private schools	77,366	85.8%	92,453	89.8%	19.5%

A number of researchers explain the better exam results in private schools by the following factors: a) better infrastructure, equipment and availability of school books; b) stronger ownership by the School Management Committees (SMCs) and accountability to the users; c) a close monitoring of teachers by the school; d) higher teacher motivation and attendance; e) frequent interaction between parents and teachers; student supervision, parents paying for extra classes/private tutoring.⁴³ The MoE in Nepal clearly acknowledges low exam scores as a problem and is aware of the challenge from the private schools on this point.⁴⁴

Another factor, mentioned by both interviews and research, is the background and motivation of parents. Parents who send their children to private schools are usually better off and more highly educated: "The percentage of students going to institutional Schools is 52% for parents whose head of household education is above grade 11. The corresponding figure for those households whose head of household have not been to school is around 16% (NLSS III). The education of head of households is correlated with poverty status. For example, the poverty rate of households whose head of household education is above grade 11 is 7.1% and the poverty rate of households to those households whose head of households who are illiterate is 33.5% (NLSS III). Individual and home characteristics also influence learning outcomes for students."⁴⁵ It is also mentioned that students who get more support from home and whose parents have invested more also make a bigger effort. International research comparing private and public education to a large extent confirms that once the socio-economic background of parents is factored in, there is no significant difference in terms of learning achievements.

However, exam scores are only one way to assess quality. According to interviews carried out for this study, exams in Nepal are very textbook based, and do not give a full picture of the skills, cognitive and social development of students. A large number of informants pointed out, that students in public schools acquire better skills in for example participation, creativity, social interaction, community engagement and sports.⁴⁷ A number of the informants also drew attention to the fact that private schools are very exam focused in order to show good results and be able to attract more students. This implies using rote learning and putting students under psychological pressure and stress in order to obtain results. The interview with PABSON also revealed

that there has been a more frequent use of physical punishment in private schools, and this was explained by the lack of training by teachers.⁴⁸ A study from 2016 looked into physical punishment in a large private school in Kathmandu, and concluded that “most teachers as well as parents thought, the best way to discipline children is punishment because it creates fear in them and this prevents misbehaviour, promotes obedience and help to perform high academically. Teachers and administrators were found ignoring the rights of child and about the principles of child psychology and development” (Khanal & Sae-Hoon, 2016, pp. 53-54).⁴⁹ It was not possible to find in-depth research on overall differences between public and private schools from this broader and more holistic understanding of education quality.

Languages in education

The other main reason for parents to prefer private schooling is the use of English as medium of instruction. Nepal has 123 different languages, and Nepali is the official language, as well as the main language of instruction in public schools.⁵⁰ This represents a challenge for the education system as such, and has severe implications for student’s performance. Recent research shows, that whereas many children are not acquiring adequate literacy skills in the early grades of schooling, the proportion of non-Nepali speaking grade 3 students who scored zero on reading comprehension was 70% higher than for the Nepali speaking grade 3 students (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 30). The new SSDP outlines a strategy aiming to teach in mother tongue up to grade 3, and at the same time strengthening both Nepali and English. Almost all private schools use English as the medium of instruction from grade one, and most private schools also offer pre-primary education in English.

Parents’ preference for English language was explained by informants by the fact that parents believe it will give children better job opportunities, both in Nepal and abroad. Students can choose to take the SLC in English, and pass rates indicate that they manage well. Informants gave different explanations for this, including the fact that children start with English from pre-primary, but also because the use of English is strictly enforced in schools. It was also observed, that even though the schools advertise the use of English as medium, teachers in reality use a mix of more languages. Other informants raised questions as to whether the full cognitive development of children is taking place with the use of a foreign language from early age and also if proficiency in Nepali is sufficiently developed for both work and further studies. Research was carried out on the implications of language policies and practices in Nepal in 2015, but it only included 3 private schools out of a total of 21 schools, and as such did not aim to compare the private/public sector (AASSO, 2015). It makes the following conclusion on the use of English as medium of instruction (Mol) – related mainly to the public schools: “The transition of many schools to English Mol seems to have been largely as a response to parent’s demands and the need to keep enrolment numbers high. The lack of books and materials, or even of teachers who speak English, does not seem to have cautioned schools away from embarking on the change. In reality, most ‘English medium’ schools would seem to be using Nepali quite extensively alongside English, but without the benefits of a planned approach to bilingual teaching. Training and resourcing for English falls vastly short of what is required, even to achieve effective teaching of English as a subject.” (AASSO, 2015, p. xii)

Teachers

Good quality is usually associated with good teachers.⁵¹ However the conditions of teachers in private schools are significantly inferior to those in the public sector. According to a study by Subedi (2014) carried out in 132 private schools, only 20% of private school teachers received the government determined salary. In many school’s salaries were 50-60% lower, and there were no promotion opportunities, job security, paid leave or incentives for training (Subedi, 2014, p. 117). These less attractive conditions of teachers in the private sector were confirmed also by informants for this study.⁵² In 2015 public primary schools had a significantly higher level of trained teachers than private schools, at 94% compared with only 87% in private schools, as shown in the table below:

Table 9: Title

Trained teachers in primary	2011 Total	2011 % of total	2015 Total	2015 % of total	Change 2011-2015
Total trained teachers in primary	167,216	81%	225,116	95%	34.6%
Public schools	126,551	83%	165,645	94%	30.9%
For-profit private schools	40,665	74%	55,006	87%	35.3%

As stated by one researcher: “Experiences of Institutional Schools show that salary of teachers, trained teachers, job security of teachers, and good physical infrastructures do not translate into quality learning outcomes for students.” (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 23) He explains this by the fact, that the close monitoring and supervision of teachers in the private schools prevents absenteeism, and heightens effectivity: “Teachers are always under pressure to perform better as someone is constantly watching them. In contrast, there is very little supervision of teachers in Community Schools.” (Upadhyay, 2016, pp. 13-14) Though the assessment of which type of school has the better quality is not straight forward, most informants interviewed for this study agreed with the description of public school teachers as being less accountable. Most teachers in the public system are on permanent positions and are rarely fired regardless of their performance, whereas teachers in the private sector are on fixed term contracts. However, public teachers may be obliged to work in remote or less attractive areas as the positions opened are based on need. Still, informants also explained that teaching positions in the public sector are generally more attractive, due to better pay and conditions, and that those who chose the private schools may do this to avoid moving to other areas, because they have no other job, or have insufficient training to be accepted for employment in the public schools. Another factor is that obtaining employment in the public sector, according to informants, usually requires affiliation with a political party.⁵³

The effect of privatisation on public schools

The privatisation process in Nepal is on the part of parents mostly motivated by a quest for higher quality than the public sector is perceived to offer. As there is almost universal enrolment, we can assume that most pupils entering private schools are not out-of-school children, but children who would otherwise be attending public schools, and this has the effect of draining students from the public sector. Though the government in its policies remains committed to ensuring good quality education, the declining share of the education budget out of total public spending (from 19.5% in 2011 to 16.1% in 2015) indicates otherwise. Although there is no official policy from the MoE in reaction to the privatisation process, it can be observed, that a number of public schools seek to attract students by introducing some of the same features as the private schools, as for example the use of English as medium of instruction and also some of the methods in terms of teacher supervision, cooperation with parents etc. The use of English as medium of instruction however gives rise to a number of different challenges in terms of competences of teachers, availability of curriculum etc.⁵⁴

A major concern is that the privatisation trend is weakening the public system: “As the most advantaged parents gravitate to private schools, *“public school officials have to work with an increasing concentration of highly disadvantaged and vulnerable populations that are not able to dedicate as much effort to schooling.”* As public schools have to educate the most disadvantaged children, they also become *“stigmatised”*. Over time, many private school parents believe public schools’ lack of user fees automatically in itself devalue them in comparison to private schools. As a parent explained: *We feel embarrassed to send them to the government school... let’s say things as they are... people who are of lower status than us—even poor people—are going hungry and sending their children to private schooling.”* (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 11)

Privatisation and social segregation

Private schools exist in different price ranges targeting different social groups, and those groups who cannot afford private education will have no choice but to attend public schools. Many researchers express their concern about this: “A major consequence of private sector growth has been middle class flight, which has left many public schools with a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Private schools have become valuable as a social differentiator, which makes public school stigmatization a long-term concern for education systems.” (Joshi, 2016, pp. 6-8) And: “The argument that the existence of a dual education system (consisting of private schools for the rich and public schools for the poor) is leading to a gradual pauperization of public schools (not in the sense that public schools are actually getting poorer but rather that they are becoming places where the poor study) is becoming more and more common-sense knowledge in Nepal.” (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 23)

As mentioned earlier, much research on privatisation of education in Nepal does not distinguish between different categories of schools, from the low and high-fee end. Furthermore, the most often cited data on household spending on private education and the profile of these households is based on the NLSS from 2010/11, clearly indicating that the private school users belong to the richest part of the population. Furthermore, the image of private schools as being of higher quality is often reinforced by research. This portrait however may not be entirely correct, if more recent and detailed data was available, together with a more thorough analysis on quality differences. Nevertheless, the general popular perception of private vs. public school in Nepal implies a stigmatisation of public school and students attending, which may in itself be contributing to segregation.

There are many warnings, to the Nepalese government, that social segregation threatens the fragile stability of the country, and that the inequality in the education system is a contributing factor. According to researchers: “There are also allegations that participation of different classes in different types of educational institutions has and will further lead to decreasing interactions among the different classes in their everyday lives and will further polarize society.” (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 24) According to some NGOs, “the current organisation of education system in Nepal, in particular a high level of unregulated private involvement in education, is creating and entrenching segregation in education. As pointed out recently by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “such segregation in itself constitutes a human rights violation and needs to be ended. [...] This situation is extremely problematic due to the immediate human rights violations it is causing, but also because the injustices it generates contribute to threatening the fragile social cohesion and peace that exist in Nepal. If the situation remains the same, experience shows that the education system is bound to generate instability and protests in an already unstable country that is slowly trying to recover from conflict.” (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 1)



Schoolgirl
PHOTO: BISHAL_RANAMAGAR/ACTIONAID

6. The effects of privatisation on girls' education

Gender equality and education in Nepal

Gender inequality in Nepal is widespread, and the country ranks only 110th out of 145 countries on the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index report for 2015 (World Economic Forum, 2015). A study carried out on gender and education in Nepal in 2015 by T. Stenbäck for the Royal Norwegian Embassy made the conclusion on the contextual gender analysis, cited here below. These findings were also largely confirmed by the informants interviewed for this study.

- "Girls still have a lower status than boys in families, particularly among disadvantaged groups in society, resulting in higher levels of dropout and lower levels of attendance;
- Girls suffer from many harmful practices (e.g. early marriage and child birth, seclusion during menstruation, domestic violence and sexual harassment) which prevent them from active participation in education. These factors have a negative impact on their school achievement; and
- Families value boys more than girls, and thus prefer sending them to private schools if they have to make a choice. This phenomenon distorts the equal enrolment figures (expressed through the gender parity index), because more boys attend private schools." (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 3)

Enrolment and progress of girls in the education system

Overall in the Nepalese education system, gender parity has been achieved in terms of enrolment at both primary and secondary level, reaching a share of girls' enrolment in total at 51% in 2015 (developing from 48% in 2008, to 50.1% in 2011). When we look at the progress of girls in the education system overall, in 2015, the completion rates for primary education (up to grade 8) were actually slightly higher for girls, namely 70.5% compared to

68.8% for boys, and the gross enrolment rate in secondary is almost equal with 56.6% for girls and 56.8% for boys. Even though the overall survival rate to the end of secondary (grade 12), is very low, namely 11.5%, the number of girls and boys appearing for the SLC at the end of secondary are very close to equal, namely 202,225 boys and 203,223 girls (Government of Nepal, 2016, pp. 125-132). With regards to learning achievements, there are no major differences between girls and boys (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 23).⁵⁶

However, the disparities among boys and girls vary from one population group to another. In some districts of the country, the boys are at higher risk of drop out, as they leave school for work. Whereas there is no significantly higher share of girls in the total number of out-of-school children at primary level (10.4% girls and 10.8% boys), girls are more disadvantaged in the most marginalised caste and ethnic groups (Government of Nepal, 2016, pp. 125-132). Discrimination based on caste has been forbidden in Nepal by law since 1963, but is still widespread, also within education (UNICEF, 2016, p. 56). The Dalit (divided into Hill Dalits and Madhesi Dalits), range lowest among the castes, and they are the most underprivileged group, both in terms of wealth and education. The term Janajati signifies different ethnic groups that are also disadvantaged.⁵⁷ According to Stenbäck: “Girls form the majority of the out-of-school children among the disadvantaged groups in society, e.g. 25.5 per cent in Janajati, 41.5 per cent among Dalits and 48.3 per cent among other disadvantaged at the age of 16 years are not in school.” (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 30)⁵⁸ There is also a higher tendency to drop out for girls in these groups: “The story is different in deprived districts. For example, an interview with a PhD student on her thesis on Madhesi girls in Terai, Siraha district, revealed that 50% of Madhesi girls did not continue their education after grade 8. Dowry system and early marriages, illiterate parents and patriarchal system were the main socio-cultural reasons, combined with poverty. Also, the medium of instruction formed a barrier to education as the girls did not understand Nepali. At secondary level, the girls felt that lack of female teachers and irrelevant curricula were barriers to their learning and reasons to drop out. Thus, there is a complexity of issues behind the drop-out and promotion.” (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 22)

When we compare the public and private sector, there are some remarkable differences in terms of gender. In the public sector in 2015 there is a slight overweight of girls, namely 52% in primary and 53% in secondary. In the private sector, the girls constitute only 43% in primary and 44% in secondary (both levels almost unchanged since 2011). The following table gives an overview on enrolment by gender:

Table 10: Title

Students enrolled in primary by gender	2011 Total	2011 % girls	2015 Total	2015 % girls	Change 2011-2015
Total primary	6,651,883	50.2%	6,170,668	51.0%	0.8%
Public schools	5,832,576	51.2%	5,209,898	52.0%	0.8%
For-profit private schools	819,307	43.3%	960,770	43.0%	-0.3%

Table 11: Title

Students enrolled in secondary by gender	2011 Total	2011 % f	2015 Total	2015 % f	Change 2011-2015
Total secondary	1,130,336	49.3%	1,307,580	51.0%	1.7%
Public schools	956,966	50.3%	1,015,015	53.0%	2.7%
For-profit private schools	173,370	43.9%	292,565	44.0%	0.1%

The percentage of girls passing the SLC is consistently lower than that of boys, ranging between 41% and 45% over the five years and over different types of schools, though the public schools have a slightly higher percentage of girls passing than the private schools (which may be a reflection of the fact, that girls are more numerous in public schools). If, however, we look at how at the percentage of girls who pass the exam out of girls sitting for the exam, there is quite a different picture. In the public school the percentage of girls passing in 2011 was 43%, but in 2015 this was reduced to 28%. In the private schools, the girls do significantly better at exams, with 84% out of girls appearing passed the exam in 2011, and 90% who did so in 2015. This indicates, that the general trend we have seen earlier, that private schools produces significantly higher pass rates, is also the case for girls attending these schools.

Comparing government and private sector gender policies

The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009-2015 and the extension plan until 2016 did not have clear goals or strategies laid out for achieving gender equality. Nevertheless, significant progress was made during the implementation period in terms of attaining gender parity in public sector enrolment. This success was obtained through a number of approaches including girls' scholarships, the construction of more school toilets, awareness-raising towards parents, promotion of female teachers and a number of other initiatives (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 27).⁵⁹ A Gender Audit was carried out in 2012 as part of the education sector plan mid-term review, and it pointed out a number of successful approaches being implemented and also made recommendations to revise the system for girl's scholarship; to develop policies to address gender based violence in schools; to increase the number of female members of SMCs; to revise gender based budgeting and disaggregate objectives and targets. However, according to Stenbäck, most of these were not fully implemented (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 4). The recently adopted School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for 2016–2023, does not have a strong gender focus, but includes a number of objectives related to obtaining gender equality, in particular with regards to improving learning outcomes for girls and maintaining girls in the education system at secondary level (Government of Nepal, 2016, pp. 40-48). Gender equality is also part of the 'Child Friendly Schools' framework and mechanisms aimed at protecting children's rights in schools.

Private schools are by law obliged to follow the same rules and regulations as the public schools, but do not as such have any kind of policies to promote gender equality. It was not possible for this study to find any data or research on gender approaches in the private sector. With the exception of PABSON, the informants interviewed for this study generally had little knowledge about gender policies in private schools, and when asked whether there were any differences between public and private sector gender approaches, the views differed too much to deliver any conclusive assessment.

Providing financial support for girls' education

Providing scholarships to disadvantaged groups, including girls, has been a strategy in the previous education strategies and is also part of the strategy of the new SSDP. It is highlighted by informants as one of the successful strategies to improving girls' education, though some claim, that the scholarships are quite limited in terms of covering real education costs. A mixed review of scholarships is presented in the study carried out by Stenbäck, "Interviews with officials at the MoE, DEO and schools indicated that this "blanket" approach in distributing scholarships widely has not been successful. Firstly, the amounts of money given have not been sufficient to cater for the needs (average 200-500 RS/year). Secondly, the schools preferred the support to be given in kind rather than in cash. Provision of school uniforms and stationary for girls would have had a greater impact than the money. In many cases, according to anecdotal evidence, the parents spent the money on household items rather than on their daughter's education [...]. It can be concluded that financial support for girls is needed for increased attendance and decreased drop outs. However, that scholarships should be targeted to the most

needy girls was an opinion shared by all interviewees.” (Stenbäck, 2015, pp. 23-24) According to the regulations for private schools, they are required to provide 10% scholarships to marginalised groups, including girls. It was not possible to obtain any data on this, and while PABSON said that scholarships were given to girls, a number of other informants said that this requirement was not met by private schools.

Sensitising parents on gender equality in education

As mentioned above, creating awareness among parents and advocating for girls’ education has been one of the strategies to increase enrolments. With regards to private schools, there was broad agreement among informants, including PABSON, that they do not have any special policies or initiatives to attract girl students to their schools, and as shown above, the percentage of girls is considerably lower. Many challenges remain in terms of maintaining girls in school, especially at secondary level. One of the reasons cited by many informants is the tradition for early marriage, also mentioned in the SSPD: “In Nepal, married girls are 11 times more likely to be out of school compared to their unmarried peers and early marriage is cited as the second most common reason for school drop-out for girls aged 15-17.” (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 13) In 2016, the Government of Nepal launched a national strategy to end early marriage by 2030. According to the study by Stenbäck, early marriage frequency varies a lot according to different groups: “Marriage was the main reason for dropping out of school among the relatively advantaged Janajati (47%), upper caste groups (40%), disadvantaged non-Dalit Terai caste group (38%) and Dalits (32%). Only around 15% of religious minorities reported marriage as the main reason for dropping out.” (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 11). It is worth noting, that early marriage is not only an issue for the more disadvantaged groups.

Promoting gender balance among teachers

Female teachers play an important role when it comes to promoting girls’ education, and to increase the number of female teachers, the SSDP intends to ensure: “[...] reservation quotas for strengthening equitable representation of female teachers and teachers from ethnic groups.” (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 42) The table below shows the total number of teachers and percentage of female teachers in 2015:

Table 12: Title

Female teachers in primary school	2015 Total	2011 % f
Total primary	240,032	43%
Public schools	176,693	30%
For-profit private schools	63,339	55%
Female teachers in secondary school	2015 Total	2015 % f
Total secondary	58,037	17%
Public schools	39,245	15%
For-profit private schools	18,792	18%

At primary level overall, there is a higher number of female teachers; 43% compared with only 17% at secondary level. There is a considerable difference at primary level, where public schools have only 30% female teachers, whereas private schools have 55%. The difference at secondary level is minimal, with 15% female teachers in public and 18% in private. Informants gave different explanations for the higher level of female teachers in the private sector. One may be that there are fewer trained female teachers (a requirement for hiring in the public sector), and that they are willing to work for lower wages. Another reason cited was that women are less inclined to be posted to other regions (as is often necessary in the public sector). Yet another explanation would be that

women are less engaged in politics, and as such fewer of them would have the political affiliations unofficially needed for employment in the public schools. Finally, some informants were of the opinion that female teachers were more subordinate and would more easily accept the less attractive working conditions and close supervision taking place in private schools. PABSON explained the larger number of female teachers in private schools by the fact that they are often prioritised for employment over male teachers especially at primary level, because they are perceived as being more loving towards the children, more reliable and honest.

Ensuring curriculum/textbooks free from gender biases

According to the 2012 Gender Audit, the curriculum and textbooks are free from gender bias. However, this was disputed by a number of informants for this study, who gave examples of pictures in primary school books depicting women and girls carrying out traditional household chores, while men are shown in different professions. The curriculum and textbooks used in the private schools are the same as in the public sector, so on this point there is no difference.

Training of teachers on gender equality

With regards to training of teachers on gender equality, the Stenbäck study mentions a 5-day training programme for teachers, including a gender module, and a gender package on the NCED website (Stenbäck, 2015, p. 36): Interview with the MoE also confirmed that training on gender equality was part of teacher training. With regards to the private schools, there is no training on this. The interview with MoE mentioned that follow-up training for teachers organised in the public system was also open for private school teachers. The interview with PABSON however, claimed this was not the case.⁶²

Ensuring a school environment conducive to gender balance

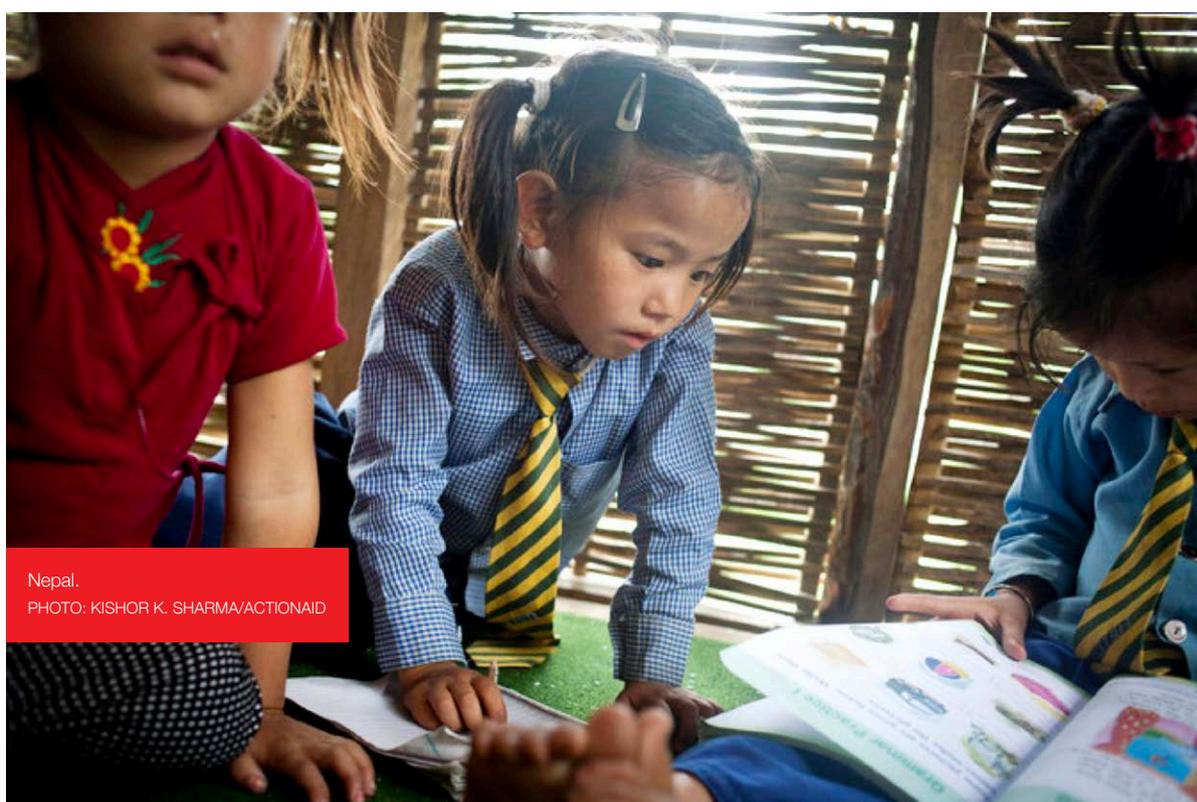
According to the SSDP, the MoE intends to: “Ensure gender-sensitive learning environments and district and school-based support structures, including strengthening the national gender education and gender focal point network to address gender-based violence in schools in order to increase girls’ participation and their completion of basic education.” (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 40) The construction of separate girls’ toilets has been a priority for the MoE over the years, as also highlighted in the Gender Audit. It was not possible to ascertain to what extent private schools have separate and appropriate water, sanitation and health (WASH) facilities, as there are no statistics available on this and informants gave inconclusive information. The same was the case with regards to cases of gender based violence.

The effects of privatisation on girl's education

The most clearly demonstrated difference between the public and the private sector with regards to girls is the significantly lower enrolment of girls in private schools. This is explained mainly by the fact that parents, when needing to prioritise for financial reasons, will chose to pay for boys’ rather than girls’ education. This means, that there is a higher proportion of girls going to public schools. As the share of private enrolment in Nepal constitute about one fifth of total enrolments, and private schools do not take on any responsibility to attract girls to schools, it may be said that this burden rests solely on the public sector and that gender promotion initiatives are funded only by public means. There are no major differences overall in terms of enrolment and progress in the education system for boys and girls. However, in the most marginalised groups (ethnic and socio-economic), girls are less likely to enrol and more likely to drop out. Those same marginalised groups are also the least likely to send their children to private schools.

Once in school, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent girls have the same favourable conditions in the public and in the private sector in terms of, for example, gender-sensitive pedagogies, protection from gender based violence, appropriate WASH facilities etc., as there was no data found comparing this, and most informants had very little knowledge on conditions in the private schools. Both research and informants interviewed for this study state that government monitoring of private sector school is low, and this constitutes a problem in itself as it is not possible to know if girls' rights are respected in private schools. A positive side to private schools in terms of promoting gender equality is the higher share of female teachers, and all informants agree that this may in fact play a positive role in supporting girls' education. Unfortunately, however, the female teachers do not seem to be employed in private schools for this reason, but rather they are there because they have lesser choice between public and private employment, and because they are preferred by private school employers for being more 'reliable'. In terms of exam pass rates, the girls in private schools do as well as their male peers, and that means considerably better than students in the public schools. The explanation for these higher pass rates depends on a number of factors such as socioeconomic background of the children going to each school, parental involvement, as well as differences in teacher management, different pedagogic approaches and a high focus on passing exams, as well as the more resourceful background of parents and high expectations of students to perform.

As shown earlier, the public school in Nepal has become in some way stigmatised with an image of poor performance and quality, a perception that - whether true or not - seems to be very strong among the general population and parents. Given that higher numbers of girls go to public schools (in common with other less well off or marginalised groups), this poses a problem in terms of gender equality. The girls graduating from public schools (together with other marginalised groups) are generally perceived as getting an education of lesser quality. This may affect their chances in the job market and possibilities of entering into higher education.





Nepal Jyoti Lower Secondary school.
PHOTO: KISHOR K. SHARMA/ACTIONAID

7. Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to conduct a research on the education landscape in terms of private providers of education and to analyse the effects of privatisation on girls' access to free, quality public education. Private education in Nepal has grown considerably over recent decades as private school enrolments nearly doubled from 2005 to 2010, and from 2011 to 2015 the for-profit schools increased by 11.2 % rising from 14.7% to 15.9% out of total schools. Public primary school enrolment fell by 11% and increased by 6% at secondary level. For-profit school enrolment grew by 17% at primary level and by a remarkable 69% at secondary level, with the total share of enrolments in for-profit private schools reaching 19%. Private schools in Nepal are perceived by parents as a ticket to higher quality education, and the pass rate for the school leaving exam overall is higher in private schools, in 2015 reaching 89.8%, compared to only 33.7% in public schools. However, while some private schools may offer a better quality, this is not always the case and reasons for better exam scores are not only related to what the private schools offer, but to a large degree to the fact that parents, who send their children to public schools are usually better off and higher educated and able to support their children.

The right to free, public education is enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal. Even so there is still a fee for grade 11–12, and parents also pay for costs such as books, uniforms, lunch, transportation etc. Households are financing 39% of primary and 48% of secondary education either as contribution to community run schools or by paying for private education. In the private schools, the level of fees is in principle regulated by the state, but with lack of enforcement; private school fees can be very high. The Nepal Living Standards Survey from in 2010/11 shows that the wealthiest families are the main users of private education. The public spending on education in Nepal declined over the five-year period from 19.5% to 16.1%, and the public spending as a share of GDP has declined by 0.3% from 4.2 to 3.9%. These figures indicate a previously high priority accorded to education that has diminished. The share of the education budget will need to be increased to meet international targets at a minimum of 6 % of GDP and 20 % of the total public expenditure in order to provide education of a sufficient quality, so that parents do not feel the need to pay for private education in the hope of good exam results.

One of the vulnerable groups seriously affected by the growing privatisation is girls. While gender parity has been achieved in Nepal reaching a share of girls' enrolment in total at 51% in 2015, there is a remarkably lower enrolment of girls in the private schools. In the private sector, the girls constitute only 43 % in primary and 44 % in secondary (as compared to the public sector with a slight overweight of girls, 52% in primary and 53 % in secondary). According to research the significantly lower level of girls in private schools is due to the fact, that many parents cannot afford to pay for schooling for all of their children, and if they are to prioritise between boys and girls, they chose to send the boys to private school. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent girls have the same favourable conditions in the public and in the private sector in terms of for example gender sensitive pedagogics, protection from gender based violence, appropriate WASH facilities etc., Government monitoring of private sector school is low, and this constitutes a problem in itself as it is not possible to know if girls' right are respected in private schools. Given that higher number of girls goes to the public schools – as well as does other less well off or marginalised groups, this poses a problem in terms of gender equality. The girls graduating from public schools (together with other marginalised groups) are generally perceived as getting an education of lesser quality. This may affect their chances in the job market and possibilities of entering into higher education.

8. Recommendations

The Government of Nepal should:

- **Right to education** - Guarantee the right to free quality education for all children as stipulated in the Constitution. Primary and secondary education must be free and compulsory, not only in law but also in reality. The government should not delegate its responsibility for ensuring the right to education to the private sector.
- **Education financing** - Increase the education budget to 20% of the national budget or 6% of GDP; increasing the size of the overall budget by expanding the tax base through progressive and effective taxation; increasing the sensitivity of the budget by allocating more resources to promote equity and increasing scrutiny to ensure that the budget is allocated and utilised efficiently.
- **Cost of education for parents** - Ensure that primary and secondary education is free, not only in law but also in reality. This means abolishing all compulsory direct and indirect costs (e.g. enrolment and exam fees, uniforms and learning materials amongst others) to parents and ensuring that the State education budget adequately covers all these costs.
- **Quality education** - Improve the quality of education by allocating more resources to public schools and to attracting, training and retaining an adequate number of qualified teachers. Allocate sufficient resources to monitoring and supporting the schools, to providing sufficient learning materials and improving school infrastructure such as classrooms, toilets and playgrounds.
- **Regulation and monitoring of schools** - Strengthen the regulatory control of private schools, holding them to account and inspecting them regularly to ensure that they comply with current education standards. Impose sanctions if private schools do not comply with requirements such as teacher salaries and conditions, level of fees, etc. Ensure transparency by reporting accurate and detailed data on private schools (including data on school owners, profits, categories of schools etc.).
- **Gender equity** - Take firm action towards the achievement of gender parity and equality in education by ensuring appropriate policies are funded and implemented in order to tackle persistent barriers to girls' education, including but not limited to: gender-related school-based violence; lack of sanitation facilities; lack of female teachers and gender bias in teaching and learning materials. Engage with communities, civil society and policy-makers to shift deep-seated discrimination against girls at all levels.

Civil society organisations in Nepal should:

- **Right to education** - Raise citizens' awareness and hold the government to account for delivering the right to free, compulsory, quality education. Expose violations of the right to education arising from the privatisation of education.
- **Education financing** - Raise awareness and support citizens to advocate for the government to increase the size of the overall budget to 6% of GDP by expanding the tax base through progressive and effective taxation; increase education's share of the budget to at least 20%, increase the sensitivity of the budget by allocating more resources to promote equity and increase scrutiny to ensure that the budget is allocated and utilised efficiently.
- **Cost of education to parents** - Raise awareness and support citizens to carry out participatory budget monitoring and analysis in order to fully understand what is spent on education by government and by households and to campaign for an end to compulsory direct and indirect costs to parents for public education.
- **Quality education** – Hold government to account for providing quality education for all children, making the case for the financing of sufficient quality trained teachers, improved school infrastructure and learning materials.
- **Regulation and monitoring of schools** – Hold the government to account for ensuring that private schools are properly regulated and regularly inspected to ensure that they comply with national education standards.
- **Gender equity** – Engage with communities and policy makers to raise awareness and shift deep-seated discrimination against girls. Identify, highlight and oppose issues such as violence against girls in schools and child marriage. Promote positive alternatives of quality inclusive and equity-focused education.

9. Annexes

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List of people interviewed

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
Ram Gaire	Program Manager	National Campaign for Education Nepal
Shubhendra Man Shrestha	Education, Youth and Governance Coordinator	ActionAid Nepal
Prem Aryal	Learning Coordinator	Plan Nepal
Raj Kumar Gandharba	Global Policy and Advocacy Advisor	VSO
Laxman Sharma	General Secretary	Nepal National Teachers Association
Wendy Fisher	Education Advisor	European Union
Purushottam Acharya	Education Specialist	UNICEF
Aagat Awasthi	Programme Coordinator	UNESCO
Kamla Bisht	Political and Social Development Senior Advisor	Royal Embassy of Norway
Phamod Bhatta	General Secretary	Martin Chautari Research Institute
Dinesh Thapa	Kitini College	Kathmandu University
Hari Lamsal	Joint Secretary	Ministry of Education
Ananda Poudel	Under Secretary	Ministry of Education
Bhawa Raj Koirala	Under Secretary	National Examinations Board
Lakshya Bhadur KC	Former President	Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation

Notes

- United Nations, 1948, Article 26
- Where the international community committed itself to: "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all United Nations , 2015, Goal 4: Education
- The Constitution of Nepal (2015). Article 31: Right relating to education: (1) Every citizen shall have the right of access to basic education. (2) Every citizen shall have the right to get compulsory and free education up to the basic level and free education up to the secondary level from the State.
- Data from this study varies slightly from Ministry of Education data due to different methods of calculation. For example the UNESCO/IIEP-UIS study includes funding from more ministries in the total public spending on education.
- In fact, "The Education for All Global Monitoring Report has documented that if governments in 67 low and middle income countries modestly increased their tax-raising efforts and devoted a fifth of their budget to education, they could have raised an additional US\$153 billion for education spending in 2015, increasing the average share of GDP spent on education from 3 to 6% by 2015. (ActionAid, 2017, p. 41)
- (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015). It should be noted, that number of private schools may be underestimated, due to the presence of unregistered private schools or schools not providing annual data. (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 2) and (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 6)
- (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015). In Nepal the education system is divided into 'basic education' covering grades 1 – 8, here called 'primary level'. The secondary level corresponds to grades 9-12. Basic education was previously divided into the levels called 'primary' and 'lower secondary, whereas the secondary level consisted of the levels called 'secondary' and 'higher secondary'. The way that statistics is reported varies with regards to different indicators, and they are sometimes reported according to the new division, and sometimes according to the old division. For the sake of consistency and the possibility of comparison with other countries, here is consistently used the new division of levels, and when necessary data have been added up to correspond to this.
- (Subedi, 2014), (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 23), (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 17).
- (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015)
- The percentage of students going to Institutional Schools is 52% for parents whose head of household education is above grade 11. The corresponding figure for those households whose head of household have not been to schools is around 16 % (NLSS III). The education of head of households is correlated with poverty status. For example, the poverty rate of households whose head of household education is above grade 11 is 7.1% and the poverty rate of households to those households whose head of households who are illiterate is 33.5% (NLSS III). Individual and Home characteristics also influence learning outcomes for students (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 16). It should be noted here again, that the data used is from the NLSS from 2010/12, and therefore may not take into account a possible growth in low-fee schools with a different profile of parents and students.

11. (Subedi, 2014), (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 23), (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 17). International research comparing private and public education largely confirms that once data is weighed in terms of socio-economic background of parents, there is no significant difference in terms of learning achievements. (Global Campaign for Education, 2016, p. 23) and (Day Ashley, 2014, p. 15).
12. (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015)
13. (Government of Nepal, 2015). Central District of Nepal, covering Kathmandu and the surrounding district . The unequal distribution of private schools is also underlined in research, indicating that private schools are concentrated in urban areas, geographically accessible regions as well as high income level districts. (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 13), (Subedi, 2014, p. 119), (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 11)
14. Also expressed by (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 23): “The argument that the existence of a dual education system (consisting of private schools for the rich and public schools for the poor) is leading to a gradual pauperization of public schools (not in the sense that public schools are actually getting poorer but rather that they are becoming places where the poor study) is becoming more and more common-sense knowledge in Nepal
15. (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015).
16. (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015).
17. (World Bank, 2017), (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2017), (International Crisis Group, 2016, pp. 1-2)
18. The major ones being the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the World Bank (WB), the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the European Commission (EC) and the Government of Norway. (Government of Nepal, 2014, pp. 36-37)
19. (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015). According to interview with the Private and Boarding Schools’ Organisation (PABSON), this organisation does not have any additional statistical data available.
20. Basic education in Nepal was previously divided into the levels called ‘primary’ and ‘lower secondary, whereas the secondary level consisted of the levels called ‘secondary’ and ‘higher secondary’. The way that statistics is reported varies with regards to different indicators, and they are sometimes reported according to the new division, and sometimes according to the old division. For the sake of consistency and the possibility of comparison with other countries, this study consistently uses the new division of levels, and when necessary data have been added up to correspond to this.
21. It has not been possible to find exact statistics on the number of these schools, but some aspects of the share of household funding will be analysed in a later chapter.
22. Interview with Ministry of Education, February 2017. It was not possible to find exact statistics on the number of trust schools, but several other informants confirm that they are very few.
23. Also information from informants, including the Ministry of Education, February 2017.
24. Interview with the Ministry of Education and with PABSON both informed that this data is available only at district, not national level.
25. (GI-ESCR et al, 2015, p. 2) and (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 6): The difference could have arisen because of the fact that all private schools do not submit educational statistics. For example, in the Academic Year 2015/16, 2,700 schools did not submit education data to Department of Education. The reliability of statistical data was also questioned by several informants interviewed for this study.
26. (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 13), (Subedi, 2014, p. 119), (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 11)
27. Mentioned under strategies for education financing: “Provisions will be made to strengthen private and public partnerships in secondary education, and to ensure adequate access to education for disadvantaged and excluded populations”, and: “Public-private partnerships will focus on secondary and tertiary levels of education. Strengthen resource sharing with I/ NGOs and community based organisations” (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 107).
28. Confirmed also by informants across all types of education actors in interviews, February 2017
29. (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, pp. 16-17), (Joshi, 2016, p. 15), (Subedi, 2014, p. 125), (Upadhyay, 2016, pp. 6-7). The same was also the common understanding among all interviewees for this study carried out February 2017.
30. The same qualities of the private schools were also highlighted in the interview with PABSON.
31. Most informants characterized private school owners as businessmen, whereas the interview with PABSON the owners were reportedly mostly former teachers.
32. The Secretary General of PABSON was interviewed for this study (on the day after the PABSON General Assembly, when he had just terminated 3 years in this position). Please refer also to list of people interviewed.
33. Interview with PABSON, February 2017.
34. Data from this study varies slightly from Ministry of Education data on certain points due to different methods of calculation. For example the UNESCO/IIEP-UIS study includes funding from more Ministries in the total public spending on education.
35. UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2017.
36. Interview with Ministry of Education, February 2017
37. Calculated average percentages based on (UNESCO, 2014, pp. 17-18).
38. The report also has data on secondary level household spending, but for many items in the private schools there is no reported data, so the table for secondary education is not included here.
39. According to information from ActionAid Nepal based on a study carried out in 20 schools in the Kailali district, parents pay at least 16200 NRP to send children to public school at the primary level. E-mail communication, May 2017.
40. The assessment of different dimensions of private schooling is based on case studies, for each dimension ranging between 4 up to 20 studies. It should be noted, that there is an overweight of studies from India, often making up app. half of studies reviewed.
41. The review mainly has a focus on for-profit schools, but also includes information more broadly on private schools. It data from the DFID review as well as large OECD and PISA reviews and an range of country case studies and research.

42. "There is insufficient evidence that the quality of education a child receives in a low-fee private school will necessarily be better than in a government school. Once student characteristics that bias outcomes in favour of fee-paying schools, such as socio-economic status of their parents, are taken into account, low-fee private schools frequently demonstrate outcomes that are no better than those of public schools" (Global Campaign for Education, 2016, p. 23). "Pupils attending private school tend to achieve better learning outcomes than pupils in State schools. However, it is important to note that most studies did not adequately account for social background differences of pupils, making it difficult to ascertain whether the achievement advantage may be attributed to the private schools or the social background of pupils. Two of the studies in the review, both in India, do rigorously control for social background differences and find an appreciable private school effect. However, it is important to note that many children may not be achieving basic competencies even in private schools." Day Ashley, L. et al., 2014, p. 15.
43. (Subedi, 2014), (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 23), (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 17). The interview with PABSON also underlined a number of the same points. It should be noted, that though some of the points made in relation to management could be true for all categories of schools, it is unlikely that the low-fee schools have better infrastructure and school material.
44. This was also confirmed at the interview with the Ministry of Education. The SSDP also points out the quality issue in a rare mentioning of the private sector: "The basic and secondary education survival rate and grade 10 exam scores are low, with large disparities between public and institutional (private) schools. Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 10.
45. (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 16). It should be noted here again, that the data used is from the NLSS from 2010/12, and therefore may not take into account a possible growth in low-fee schools with a different profile of parents and students.
46. (Upadhyay, 2016, p. 16) and (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, p. 17).
47. There was broad agreement on this point among informants interviewed (with the exception of PABSON), February 2017
48. According to the interview with PABSON, cases of physical punishment were mentioned in the press, and the schools have now taken action to start training teachers to avoid this, February 2017
49. According to this article, physical punishment in schools is not totally forbidden in Nepal (though in violation with international human rights): "Article 7 of the Children Act (1992) states: "No child shall be subjected to torture or cruel treatment," but also exempts: "the act of scolding and minor beating to the child by his father, mother, member of the family, guardian or teacher for the interests of the child."
50. (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, pp. 16-17, 20); (Joshi, 2016, pp. 15-17) and (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 29)
51. See for example the very comprehensive review of education quality and the role of teachers: (UNESCO, 2014).
52. Informants interviewed for this study, including the Ministry of Education, Teachers Union and PABSON.
53. Interviews with donors, teachers union and civil society organisations, February 2017
54. (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013, pp. 16-17, 20); (Joshi, 2016, pp. 15-17) and (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 29)
55. (Government of Nepal, 2011) and (Government of Nepal, 2015)
56. Information based on the National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA).
57. (UNICEF, 2016, pp. 55-56) and (Government of Nepal, 2016, p. 158)
58. The same tendency is also confirmed by informants interviewed for this study.
59. Also confirmed by informants from civil society, donors and Ministry of Education, February 2017
60. This was confirmed by various informants, also by PABSON, February 2017
61. Interviews with civil society organisations and donors, February 2017
62. Interview with Ministry of Education and interview with PABSON, February 2017

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ActionAid is a global movement of people working together to achieve greater human rights for all and defeat poverty. We believe people in poverty have the power within them to create change for themselves, their families and communities. ActionAid is a catalyst for that change.

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