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Quality Improvement Initiatives and Outcomes: A Study of Public Schools in Ghodaghodi Municipality, Nepal

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Abstract

This study aims to identify the challenges and gaps in providing quality education, examines Ghodaghodi municipality initiatives for improvement, assesses their impacts, and offers recommendations for further improvement. The study sampled 15 public schools out of 49, using stratified random sampling. Respondents included teachers, head teachers, parents, students, school management committee, municipal authorities, policymakers, teachers' union leaders, and political leaders — 10 respondents from each school and 25 from municipal policy making sector altogether 175. Information was gathered through surveys, questionnaires, and document analysis using both primary and secondary sources. Since the last five years, municipal budget/ program has been focusing significantly on the areas of infrastructure, materials, ICT, and teacher management. Different levels of government invest on schools without long term plan and vision. So, the facilities at schools are not sufficient and proper. School mapping and student teacher ratio (STR) is not properly maintained. Teachers participated in professional development activities, but the effectiveness was rated as average. They identified a need for further development in subject matters, special needs education, and ICT skills. School supervision was found to be less effective, below the average. Teachers rated the overall school quality as average. Policymakers faced challenges such as budget constraints, employee indifference, and teacher politics affecting quality improvement programs. Based on the findings and conclusion, the research has recommended some improvements in the areas of restructuring schools, maintaining STR, infrastructural modernization, visionary academic leadership, teacher incentives, TPD opportunities, monitoring and evaluation, and the like.

Keywords: Ghodaghodi municipality, public schools, quality education, quality improvement initiatives, restructuring schools

1. Introduction

In recent years, quality education has become a global priority. Governments and educational institutions are continuously seeking effective strategies and initiatives to improve the quality of education. However, many public schools in developing countries face challenges in providing quality education due to various factors such as limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of trained teachers. Ghodaghodi municipality in Nepal represents one such region where public schools encounter numerous obstacles in delivering quality education.

So many initiatives in the past have been made for socially inclusive schools, gender sensitiveness, child centered learning, mother tongue instruction, school as peace zone, strengthening early childhood development, promote gender equity, education for all and so on. While numerous initiatives have been implemented globally to improve the quality of education, it is essential to evaluate their effectiveness in specific contexts. This study

seeks to measure the outcomes of Ghodaghodi municipality reform initiatives like municipal strong exam system, school merger, mother tongue instruction, model school policy, free school education and so on.

Teachers are strongly seen as political groups. Are they accountable to professionalism and academic career growth? If not how to make them accountable and how their beliefs about teaching learning can be changed is the serious concern. The shift from classroom teaching to individual students is the need of the time for expected quality. The problem of not learning — in central and south Asia 81% (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 2) — massive dropout rate, rigorous national assessment systems are to be considered while making education policy at local level. This research highlights the need to investigate the effectiveness and impact of quality education improvement initiatives implemented in public schools within Ghodaghodi Municipality, with the goal of informing future educational policies and practices.

The areas of problematics demand exploration on the questions like what specific improvement initiatives implemented in public schools in Ghodaghodi municipality; what challenges and barriers are faced by public schools in implementing quality education initiatives; what outcomes/ impacts of the initiatives are witnessed on student learning, school infrastructure, teaching method, and parental involvement; and how the effectiveness of the initiatives can be enhanced for the further improvement of quality education in Ghodaghodi municipality. So, the objectives of this research have been set forth to identify the initiatives implemented by the municipal education authorities; to identify the current challenges and gaps in providing quality education in public schools; to assess the outcomes/ impact of these initiatives on the quality of education; and to provide recommendations for further improvements in education quality based on the findings and conclusion.

2. Literature Review

New constitution of Nepal has brought significant transformation in the area of school education development. It falls under the jurisdiction of municipal government. Municipalities can formulate quality improvement framework, plan, and deliver results with the involvement of local communities. However, Neupane (2020) has pointed out some limitations that local government without strong institutional back up and the lack of “know how, expertise, resources, and regulatory framework” (p. 89). Changed context has also created significant opportunity on the one hand and challenge on the other in one such area where quality education improvement initiatives are crucial for enhancing the educational outcomes of students.

Neupane (2017) has made investigation on the barriers in quality education in rural Nepal to be “caste, religion, ethnicity, and gender based diversity” (p. 70). Phyak and Ojha (2019) have also pointed out the need to address the inequalities for quality education. Studies in the past have pointed out the need to address diversity and disparity. It has been treated as a barrier. Now the time has come for paradigm shift in research and way of thinking for bringing about transformation in the area of quality education.

Brinkmann (2018) has prepared a review report for UNICEF’s efforts in improving education quality in South Asia. She has highlighted some recent shifts like children friendly school to children’s access to quality learning, learning outcomes to quality inputs, and child centered to learning centered education. Joshi (2010) has also investigated on the effectiveness of teacher training in Nepal — on the one hand, knowledge and skill accumulated from training is not sufficient, and on the other, transfer of the skills in the field heavily depends on teachers’ attitude, thinking and ideal, affected by internal and external world of the school. Bhattarai (2015) has identified ethics of educational administrators to be the significant factor for forming healthy atmosphere at school. Ethics need to be defined within the school setting coping with local culture and context. Ethics helps in healthy growth and development of an institution.

Itegi (2016) has made investigation on Kenya’s strategic planning of school, practiced as capacity development of education managers, and working as a tool for systemic quality improvement. But what Itegi (2016, p. 952) has observed is something different: “majority of schools have strategic plans in Kenya as formality to meet policy requirement but not to guide their operations”. Hired consultants can make strategic plans on the part of school to meet policy requirements but it lacks the spirit of potential implementation into action. In the case of Nepal also School Improvement Plan (SIP) and its status has to be observed.

3. Quality Education Reviews

Among 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) set by the UN, SDG 4 was added in 2012, which aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning (Government of Canada, 2021). According to the goal, quality education helps reduce inequality, fosters tolerant and peaceful societies. Millions of boys and girls are now in school, which does not necessarily mean that they are learning. Barrett & Tikly (2012) from university of Bristol conducted quality education research program in low-income countries, identified three levels of environment; “policy environment, institutional environment, and home and community environment” that determine the quality of education.

Recent education reformation in Delhi, since 2015, has received considerable critical acclaim. Raghunath (2020)

has reviewed the book written by the reformer and Education Minister of Delhi government; “the success of educational system of any country lies in the hands of its teachers and the training they receive to create inclusive and equitable society, the manner in which they interpret the text book, the way the text books are created” (p. 90). Happiness curriculum, modernization of school infrastructure, and massive increment in education budget are some of the pivotal aspects of the improvement in Delhi. Classrooms have been transformed into resourceful and inspirational. Teachers’ salaries have been increased. Parents, teachers, and students respect the system with deeper involvement.

Directorate of Education (2017) states the outcomes of Delhi education reformation — the pass percentages have been improved from 52 to 57 in 2017 in comparison to 2015. The outcomes have been witnessed as a result of reading campaigns, summer camps for slow learners, happiness curriculum, quality classroom activities, time with happiness period every day, and so on (p. 7). The principals in Delhi schools visited Cambridge University and Finland to understand school education model in the respective countries (p. 12). The government has recruited 200 mentor teachers to look after 5 to 6 schools each.

Barrett et al. (2006) have explored multiple meanings of quality. In some countries, educating people in institutionalized setting itself is the indication of quality. Ideological and socio-political values also affect quality markers. They have reviewed two dominant traditions within quality discourse: economist view of education and progressive humanist tradition (p. 2). The former uses quantitative measurable outputs like enrolment ratio, retention rates, rates of return on investment in terms of earnings and cognitive achievement. The latter is based on what happens in schools and in classrooms — learner centered pedagogy, democratic school governance, and inclusion.

UNICEF (2006) has sought consensus around the basic dimensions of quality education. The learner must be healthy, well nourished, ready to participate and learn, and supported by family and community. The trained teachers are to use child centered approaches in the well-managed classrooms and schools. The outcomes related to knowledge, skill, and attitude to be linked to national goals of education and positive participation in society (p. 4). UNICEF definition of quality education thus focuses on the dimensions like quality learners, learning environment, content, process, and outcomes (p. 5).

Quality education discourse, improvement initiatives in low-income countries, and Delhi education improvement initiatives and positive outcomes suggest that it is a complex process. The countries working on improvement of quality education consider education to be investment rather than expenditure, this sector needs huge increment in budget. Schools and classrooms are to be equipped with technology and materials.

4. Methodology

In order to achieve the goal of this research, Ghodaghodi municipality plan, policies, programs since last five years have been analyzed in the light of quality education discourse. Tools include survey, questionnaires, and document analysis. A representative sample of public schools within Ghodaghodi municipality was selected using stratified random sampling. The sample included a diverse range of schools in terms of type, location, size, and performance. The schools were divided into four clusters according to their level: schools with classes 1-12, 1-10, 1-8, and 1-5, their total numbers being 8, 10, 19, and 12 respectively. Fifteen schools were selected (choosing 2, 3, 6, and 4 samples respectively from schools with classes 1-12, 1-10, 1-8, and 1-5) so as to ensure proportional representation from each cluster. Ten respondents from each school were selected comprising teachers, students, guardians, management committee members, and head teacher. Moreover, municipal authority, policy makers, teachers’ union leaders, political leaders altogether 25 respondents were included in the sample. In this way sample size for the study in total was 175.

Primary data like condition of infrastructure, technology, and teaching materials have been obtained from observation of sample schools. Questionnaire containing rating scale, closed ended, and open ended questions to sample school respondents have been used to collect primary data. Survey sheets for schools, questionnaires for municipal authorities at policy level have also been used for collecting primary data. Quantitative data have been analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data are subjected to thematic analysis.

5. Presentation and Discussion

5.1 Municipal Initiatives for Improvement of Quality

There are eight big secondary schools with classes 1-12, ten secondary schools with classes 1-10, nineteen basic schools with classes 1-8, and twelve primary schools with classes 1-5. The table below shows the number of schools that receive allocated budget under different topics by the municipality in the last five years, among all 49 total numbers of public schools.

5.1.1 Budget Allocation for Educational Reformation in Public Schools of Ghodaghodi Municipality

Among eight big secondary schools in the municipality, the biggest three in terms of student numbers (Kanti,

Taranagar, and Sukhad with 1854, 1514, and 1451 students respectively) have received both model school and big school status grants. One more school (Dashrath with student numbers 1142) has received the central government model school grants. Two more such types of schools, Harinagar and Ganeshpur, with student numbers 1157 and 734 respectively, have received big school status. Student numbers in these six schools range from 734 to 1854. Remaining two schools (Ambasa and Birat with student numbers 634 and 223 respectively) have not received the grant in the topic of model school or big school so far. All of eight schools have Science laboratory, ICT, and library established within the stated five years or before that. All of the eight schools have sufficient numbers of buildings, classrooms, toilet, and drinking water; however, all the infrastructures are crowded, traditional, and less spacious, constructed without any long-term master plan. One model school selected in central government list has master plan of construction. Among all four clusters of schools, a massive amount of municipal budget is being allocated to teacher management.

Among 10 secondary schools (classes 1-10), the biggest three in terms of student numbers (Belar, Dipnagar, and Rampur with numbers 721, 704, and 614 respectively) have received ICT, Science laboratory, and library grants from municipality or upper level of government. Rampur, Sundarpur, and Nakfodua with student numbers 614, 571, and 350 respectively have received municipal model school grants so far. Among ten schools under this cluster nine have received one or two benefits from ICT, Science laboratory, and library. One school has received all of them and one school has received none of them. All the schools in the cluster are satisfactory in physical infrastructure but here also the quality of them is not proper.

Table 1. The number of schools receiving grants in the stated topics in the last five years

Budget allocation topics	Fiscal Year BS				
	2075-76	**2076-77**	**2077-78**	**2078-79**	**2079-80**
			1-12 Big schools		
Science laboratory	-	-	2	2	-
Library	1	-	2	-	-
ICT	2	-	3	3	-
Building	-	4	3	2	1
Toilet	1	-	2	-	-
Water	-	1	-	-	-
Teacher management	-	-	5	1	-
Model school	3	-	4	1	-
Big School	-	-	4	1	-
Special school	-	-	1	1	-
			1-10 Medium schools		
Science laboratory	2	1	-	2	2
Library	2	-	1	-	2
ICT	1	3	-	3	1
Building	1	1	6	2	1
Toilet	-	2	-	-	-
Water	-	3	-	-	-
Teacher management	-	1	9	9	-
Model school	3	-	1	-	-
Wall	-	1	3	-	-
Ground	-	2	2	-	-
Teaching materials	2	-	-	-	-

Source: Adapted from Ghodaghodi Municipality annual educational status report 2079-80 BS.

In the same way, both types of schools, basic and primary, are seen to be supported with similar grants titles. Among 19 basic schools, 10 schools under basic cluster have received model school grants by the municipality

two times. Out of the total under this cluster 17 schools have received ICT and / or teaching materials grants. In the same way considerable numbers of schools have received wall and ground. The schools under primary school cluster also follow similar tendency. The physical and teaching-learning infrastructural support to schools by different levels of government shows that schools have access to necessary facilities in the area but not sufficient and proper.

5.2 Description of Principals

Principals are the academic leaders for schools. They are to be highly ethical, qualified, responsible, and accountable. They are responsible for developing schools as a centre of excellence. Ghodaghodi municipality 49 public school principals are described in the following table:

Table 2. Description of principals in schools

	Description	School type			
		Secondary 1-12	Secondary 1-10	Basic 1-8	Primary
Qualification of principals	School level	0	2	7	1
	Bachelors'	1	5	8	10
	Masters'	7	3	4	1
	Higher secondary	0	0	-	-
Level of service	Secondary	6	0	-	-
	Lower secondary	2	1	4	-
	Primary	0	9	15	12
Type of service	Permanent	5	5	6	2
	Temporary	3	5	13	10

Source: Municipal data on principals of public schools, 2080 BS.

In terms of qualification, seven principals among eight big secondary schools have required qualification for the level. Among eight principals six are found to be employed for secondary level and two for lower secondary level. In terms of the type of service also five principals are permanent and three are temporary for the job of teaching. Schools in the second cluster also portray even serious picture. Only three principals out of ten have required qualification for the level. None of the principals under second cluster are qualified in terms of the level of service, since nine of them belong to primary level and one of them is in lower secondary level.

Description of principals in 19 basic schools also depicts the same picture as above. According to the data 36% of the principals in basic schools do not have required qualification for the post. More than 78% of the principals in the same clusters are found to have appointed in the primary level. The only data that looks satisfactory in terms of the stated topics is about the primary school principals.

5.3 Description of Teachers

Job security is essential for employee satisfaction from work. Job satisfaction affects in performance as well. Isn't it a matter of shame for a country that its employees are working in the status of relief post or any sort of temporary status throughout their life? They get low salary to comparable government jobs. When they get out of the job in retirement, they receive nothing.

Table 3. Teachers posts in municipality public schools

Level	Types of teachers' posts				
	Permanent	Relief post	Municipal grant	Central grant	Total posts
Primary 1-5	75	118	23	-	216
Basic 6-8	20	51	45	12	128
Secondary 9-10	10	30	13	16	69
Secondary 11-12	-	21	-	-	21

Total	105	220	81	28	434

Source: Adapted from Ghodaghodi municipality annual educational status report 2079-80 BS.

The above table shows that among the total of 434 teachers, 76% are different sorts of temporary teachers. Relief teachers do not get benefits like grade incentives, leave facilities, promotion opportunities, and the like. It is human tendency that without job security or hope for the future growth of the post, they are unwilling to perform with higher level of energy. Municipality allocates its large portion of education budget on teacher management every year. But the salary the teachers on municipal grants get is shameful, far below even the teachers on relief posts. Since teachers are the drivers for the implementation of quality education initiatives, best people must be attracted to the profession. In Delhi, for example, as reviewed earlier, the major part of transformation has been observed in the areas of teachers, their attractive salaries, training, about tenfold increment in education budget, and so on.

5.4 Student Data in the Year 2080 in Public Schools of Ghodaghodi Municipality

Table 4. Student teacher ratio

Description	Student numbers	Teachers for the level	Student teacher ratio
Classes 1-5	6624	216	31:1
Classes 6-8	5599	128	44:1
Classes 9-10	4270	69	62:1
Classes 11-12	2227	21	106:1
Total	18720	434	43:1

Source: Adapted from municipal data on students and teachers, 2080 BS.

Student teacher ratio, as a whole, has been observed to be tolerable but the observation of individual schools reveals that it has drawbacks. There is not fair distribution of number of teachers and students. In primary level the ratio is seen lower in comparison to the higher levels. The ratio has been observed highest in classes 11-12. Classes 1-5 are in all of 49 schools; classes 1-8 in 37 schools; classes 1-10 are in 18 schools; and classes 1-12 are in 8 schools only. So, the ratio also appears unequal. For maintaining equal ratio at all levels, classes 1-5 can be withdrawn from both 1-10 and 1-12 big schools. Three types of schools can be developed, namely, 1-5, 6-8, and 9-12, on the basis of proper mapping. When many schools are merged, even 1-5 types of schools can be big schools with transportation and other sorts of facilities.

5.5 Ward Wise Description of Schools in Ghodaghodi Municipality

Table 5. Ward-wise description of schools in Ghodaghodi municipality

Ward Numbers	Type/numbers of schools and per school student ratio (Sc-St)							
	1-5	(St-Sc) Ratio	1-8	(St-Sc) Ratio	1-10	(St-Sc) Ratio	1-12	(St-Sc) Ratio
1	2	76:1	-	-	2	614:1	2	814:1
2	1	88:1	1	233:1	-	-	1	1044:1
3	-	-	4	212:1	-	-	-	-
4	2	78:1	3	236:1	1	584:1	1	693:1
5	1	42:1	2	267:1	1	368:1	1	1116:1
6	-	-	1	431:1	1	404:1	-	-
7	-	-	2	209:1	-	-	-	-
8	3	100:1	2	494:1	1	670:1	1	1505:1
9	1	71:1	1	173:1	2	300:1	-	-
10	-	-	2	196:1	1	322:1	1	1800:1
11	1	74:1	1	174:1	-	-	1	609:1
12	1	21:1	-	-	1	327:1	-	-

Total	12	75:1	19	258:1	10	450:1	8	1049:1

Source: Adapted from 2080 BS municipal data on schools and the number of students in them.

Table 5 shows even amazing picture of student school ratio in different types of schools in all wards of the municipality. The picture of primary schools is compelling. Per school student numbers in these schools has been observed from 21 to 100 which is total waste of resources. Either the policy is to help increase the number of students in such schools or to collapse the school altogether.

5.6 Students' Response on Quality of Public Schools

5.6.1 Available Technologies and Infrastructure at School

For our study we selected 15 sample schools. From each school there were three student respondents. One of the responses in the questionnaire was about the availability of different facilities and learning infrastructures at school. The following table shows the responses from the students:

Table 6. Available technologies and infrastructure at school

Facilities	Excellent	Good	Mediate	Bad	Very Bad	Mean	S.D	N
Science lab	6	8	13	4	14	2.73	1.4	45
Computer lab	5	10	19	5	6	3.07	1.14	45
Library	11	7	14	2	6	3.38	1.34	40
Sports	22	13	6	4	-	4.14	0.97	45
ECA	19	10	8	2	3	3.95	1.21	42
Toilet	23	10	10	1	1	4.18	1.0	45
Safe drinking water	20	11	14	-	-	4.13	0.86	45
Sanitary pad	23	11	3	1	-	4.47	0.75	38

Source: Primary data collection by the researchers.

In the above table, there are five different scales for respondents to rate. Students responded higher than average in all facilities available at school except the facility of science lab with standard deviation of 1.4, indicating the higher variability in response. The table depicts sports, toilet, drinking water and sanitary pad facilities are likely to be available at schools and the standard deviation is lower regarding the availability of those facilities.

5.6.2 Club Activities and Satisfaction Level

In the study, we included a question about the availability of club activities, Scout, and Red Cross at school, and students' satisfaction on the activities. The responses showed 80.8% having Red Cross, 48.8% eco-club, 46.6% scout, and 44.4% child club in their schools. The level of satisfaction on existing institutions seems more than average on the activities of scout and child club with standard deviation of 1.03 and 0.97 respectively. Having the high availability of Red Cross, i.e., mean value of satisfaction on its activities is 2.46 with standard deviation 1.26.

5.6.3 Use of Teaching Materials in Classroom

One of the affecting factors of quality learning is the proper use of teaching materials in the classroom. In this study, students were asked about the use of different teaching materials, and the responses were recorded in a four point rating scale. Majority of the schools use traditional teaching, more than average schools (mean value of 3.8) use white board and black board in teaching with standard deviation of 0.54 in responses, and other materials (computer, projector, audio-visual, digital board, photo, newspaper, word card, sentence card, and demonstration) are used below the average with lower standard deviation in responses. This shows that most of the schools are not ready to adapt with new technology and innovative teaching.

5.6.4 Teaching Methods in Classroom

During the study, students were asked about the methods used by teacher in the teaching learning process. The responses were recorded in the 5 point Likert scale with the mean value of 3. Among 45 respondents (students), more than average number responded that their teachers used discussion, self-study and lecture methods with mean value of 3.2, 3.0 and 2.9 respectively with the standard deviation with 0.9, 0.83 and 0.95. It was found that majority of the teachers used discussion methods. Role play, demonstration, lab work seem to be rarely used

methods in teaching.

5.6.5 Subject Wise Understanding Level

To identify the subject wise understanding or satisfaction level of students, they were asked to provide their responses in five-point Likert scale. It was found that students' satisfaction level in all subjects to be above the mean value with lower standard deviation. According to the responses, the highest level of satisfaction was recorded in Nepali with an average value of 3.84 and standard deviation 0.42 followed by mathematics and science with mean value 3.62 and 3.47 and the standard deviation of 0.53 and 0.65 respectively. The lowest mean value was found for English (3.22) with standard deviation 0.76.

5.7 Teachers' Response

Teachers are considered as the drivers for quality enhancement in schools. Altogether 45 teachers including head teachers participated from the selected 15 schools for this study. Their responses were recorded in Likert scales.

5.7.1 Involvement in Teachers' Professional Development in Last 2 Years

Majority of participants took part in course dissemination (62.79%), indicating that it is the most accessible or frequently offered activity. But its effectiveness was rated to be average. Workshop and subject teacher network both have participation rates of 51.22%. The lowest participation rate is in additional degree (32.35%). Mean values of effectiveness for workshop (3.08) and subject teacher network (3.09) are also perceived more than average (2.5). Other school visit (2.88) and supervision/ peer observation (2.89) have lower effectiveness scores in comparison, indicating mixed or less favorable experiences.

5.7.2 Need of Teachers' Professional Development

According to the 4-point Likert scale responses, ICT Skill has the highest mean score of need (3.51). This reflects the increasing importance of technology in education. Special need students' pedagogy (mean value 3.43), subject matter and presentation (3.22), and students' counseling (3.18) also show high perceived needs. Teaching in multilingual context (3.16) and school management/ administration (3.10) reflect the need for skills in diverse teaching environments and administrative capabilities. Classroom management has the lowest mean score (2.82), Instructional Practice (2.98) and knowledge/ understanding of subject (3.00) show moderate needs.

5.7.3 Supervision, Evaluation, Feedback and Reward to the Teacher

This response was also recorded in a four-point Likert scale. The scales recorded for supervision were monthly, quarterly, annually, and never by the head teachers, SMC, parents, and school inspector. Most frequent supervision by head teachers is monthly (53.57%), with a mean score of 2.0 indicates that they are moderately involved in supervision, evaluation, feedback, and reward activities. The mean score for SMC was observed 2.41. Quarterly supervision by PTA is the most frequent (31.71%), with a mean score of 2.54 which reflects their higher perceived involvement in evaluation processes. The highest percentage falls under "Never" (43.18%), but there is significant annual involvement (34.09%), with a mean score of 2.43. The analysis of this part shows diverse involvement by different responsible parties. Head teachers and SMC are more regular in their interactions, whereas guardians and school inspectors provide less frequent supervision and feedback. Policy makers also responded that there was doubt in the effectiveness of inspection and supervision.

5.7.4 Self-Assessment of Existing Quality of School

For the self-assessment of existing quality by the teachers 5-point Likert scale was used to record the response. The assessment showed the higher mean scores in teachers' regularity (4.21), human resource (3.56), ECA/ students' participation (3.82), and physical infrastructure (3.51). Parents' education received the lowest mean score (1.91), suggesting a need for enhanced parental involvement and support. Teachers' workload and ICT also received relatively lower mean scores 2.88 and 3.0 respectively, indicating potential areas for improvement in workload management and integration of technology. The self-assessment reveals both strengths and areas for improvement. While aspects like teachers' regularity and human resource are perceived positively, there is room for enhancement in areas such as parents' education, teachers' workload, and ICT integration.

Majority of teachers perceive the quality of education in their own school as "Average" (59.09%). A significant portion also perceives it as "Good" (29.55%), while very few rate it as "Poor" (9.09%). None rated the quality as "Very Poor". The mean score of 3.23 in a 5-point Likert scale indicates that teachers rate the quality of education in their school slightly above average, leaning towards good.

To record the response under challenges in quality education, 4-point Likert scale was used. Inadequate budget has the highest mean score (3.12), indicating it is perceived as the most significant challenge by teachers. Lack of physical facilities (2.67) and weak government policies (2.59) also have relatively high mean scores. Weak leadership of school has the lowest mean score (1.88), suggesting it is perceived as a lesser challenge in comparison to other factors. The data suggests that the most significant challenges perceived by teachers are

inadequate budget, lack of physical facilities, and weak government policies.

5.8 Policy Makers' Perspective

To collect responses from policy makers, we prepared questionnaire for the respondents comprised of Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Ward Chairpersons from all 12 wards of Ghodaghodi municipality, municipal Chief Executive Officer, two officials from municipal education unit, four political parties' leadership representing the municipality, and four teachers' union leaders.

5.8.1 Challenges Faced in Implementation of Program

The policy makers were asked what challenges they faced in the implementation of the policies. The response was represented in 5-point Likert scale. Majority of them responded lack of budget as the main challenges in implementation of the policy. More than average (4.12) found the budget factor as the challenge of policy implementation with standard deviation 0.83. Lack of visionary policy (3.73), indifferences of employees (3.4), and teacher politics (3.24) were also pointed out as obstacles of policy implementation, whereas the cause of weak academic leadership (2.9) and obstacles by political parties (2.25) in the implementation of policy was responded by below average respondents.

5.8.2 Evaluation Check List of Quality Indicators at School

Policy makers were asked to evaluate the existing aspects based on a checklist in a 5-point Likert scale with average mean value of 3. The evaluation checklist consisted of 10 different indicators related to quality education. Out of 10, only two indicators, i.e., school merger needs/ student teacher ratio adjustment (4.12) and sufficient teaching manpower (3.18) are seen to have responded higher than mean value. All other indicators (ICT literacy of teachers, teacher regularity and quality classroom time, teaching plan/ teaching materials use, parent participation, appropriate policy and implementation, complaint address and student support, teachers' professional satisfaction, and parent education) are found to have responded with less than average rating. The indicators like parent education (1.59) and complain address and student support (1.88) are found to have rated with very low scales. The responses seem to be found most scattered in the indicators school merger/ student teacher ratio adjustment and teachers' professional satisfaction, however, the responses are seen to be least scattered in the indicators parent education and complaint address/ student support.

5.8.3 Satisfaction Level of Respondents with the Outcomes

Policy makers were asked to rate their satisfaction, in a 5 point Likert scale, on the outcomes of efforts made for the quality improvement of schools. The result showed policy makers were not very much satisfied with the outcomes of the efforts for educational quality of schools. Out of total respondents, 59 percent chose the third rating category and 41 percent chose the second rating category, with overall mean value of satisfaction 3.8 which is more than average.

6. Findings and Conclusion

Some wards in the municipality have multiple schools located close to each other with declining student numbers. The current setup results in inefficient resource utilization, especially in primary schools where student numbers range from 21 to 100 per school, indicating a potential waste of resources. This uneven distribution leads to unequal student-teacher ratios across different school levels. While the overall student-teacher ratio is tolerable, individual school observations show significant imbalances. Number of students in primary level (1-5) is 35% of the total students in 49 public schools in the municipality. Whereas in 6-8, it is 29%, in 9-10, 22%, and in 11-12, it is 11%. But the primary level face scarcity of students and classes 11-12 are most crowded. The reason behind this uneven distribution of students is that classes 1-5 are in all 49 schools, 6-8 in 37 schools, 9-10 in 18 schools, and 11-12 in 8 schools. Student teacher ratio is seen appropriate in classes 6-8 only.

Students rated most facilities above average, except for science labs. Facilities such as sports, toilets, drinking water, and sanitary pads are widely available. Physical infrastructure across the schools is generally adequate but not modernized, indicating a need for improvements in building design and space utilization. Basic and primary schools have received grants for ICT, teaching materials, and infrastructure improvements. Despite these efforts, the facilities provided are not sufficient or properly maintained, indicating a gap between the allocation of resources and their effective utilization.

Principals must be ethical, qualified, responsible, and accountable. They are responsible for developing school as centre of excellence. But in Ghodaghodi municipality, among 49 principals, only 33 have required qualification for level of school, only 18 principals are permanent teachers for the job, and 27 are appointed to the lower levels than the level of school they lead. When a principal lacks required qualification, (s)he does not gain authority for the proper exercise of power.

A significant proportion of teachers (76%) are employed in various temporary types of job. This indicates the prevalence of job insecurity, lower salaries, and lack of benefits (leave facility, provident fund, grade facility, job

promotion, retirement fund, and pension) compared to permanent positions. The high rate of temporary employment affects teacher morale and performance, ultimately impacting the quality of education. The municipality allocates a large portion of its education budget to teacher management, but the funding is insufficient to ensure quality education. Teachers are the drivers for the implementation of quality education initiatives. Best people must be attracted to the profession by bringing about transformation in the areas of attractive salary, training, and other benefits.

ICT skills and special needs pedagogy are the highest priority areas for teacher development. Subject matter expertise, counseling, and multilingual teaching also show significant needs, reflecting the multifaceted nature of teaching competencies required in modern education. Traditional teaching methods dominate, with most schools using whiteboards and blackboards. More demanding teaching methods like role play, demonstration, project work, and lab work are underutilized. Discussion, self-study, and lecture methods are used more frequently.

SMC, PTA, representatives, and school inspectors must provide frequent and impactful supervision and feedback. Most respondents favored regular inspection and supervision although some were skeptic about the effectiveness of these measures.

The overall quality of education is compromised due to insufficient resources, inadequate infrastructure, lack of qualified principals, and a high percentage of temporary teaching staff. Inadequate budget has been perceived as the most significant challenge. Lack of physical facilities and vague government policies also posit considerable obstacles. A significant majority of policymakers identified the lack of budget as the primary challenge in policy implementation. Additional challenges include the lack of visionary policies, employee indifference, and teacher politics. There are notable challenges in parents' ability to guide their children's learning.

7. Recommendations

1) **School merger**, **restructuring school levels, STR maintenance**: Conduct proper mapping to identify optimal locations for schools, ensuring sufficient number of students. Consider merging smaller schools, to create larger, more resource-efficient institutions. Implement a restructuring of school levels to create three school types: 1-5, 6-8, and 9-12, three big schools in each ward of the municipality, at most 36 schools in 12 wards of the municipality for the available student number at present. This can help balance the student-teacher ratio across all levels, if some teachers' posts are added to the 9-12 level.

2) **Develop long-term infrastructural modernization plan for all schools**: Different levels of government support physical and teaching learning infrastructure, but the investment is not proper and sufficient. So, it is suggested to formulate and implement long-term master plans for all schools, similar to the central government model school, to ensure sustainable and well-planned development of school infrastructure, including transportation or residential facilities.

3) **Enhance principal qualifications and employment status**: Implement policies to ensure school principals meet the required qualifications and are employed permanently to enhance leadership ethics, accountability, plan, and vision. Provide professional development and training programs for principals to improve their leadership skills and educational management capabilities.

4) **Job security, TPD opportunities, and benefits for teachers**: Convert temporary teaching positions to permanent ones to improve job security and morale among teachers. Increase teacher salaries and provide benefits comparable to other government jobs to attract and retain quality educators. Invest in TPD, to improve their knowledge and skills, to deliver high quality education, and to help teachers stay updated with the latest educational practices and technologies.

5) **Continuous monitoring and evaluation**: Establish a robust system for monitoring and evaluation whether the quality improvement initiatives are well implemented, or the resources are effectively utilized. Establish a system for continuous monitoring and evaluation of student-teacher ratios and resource allocation to ensure ongoing improvements and adjustments as needed. Engage with stakeholders, including teachers, parents, and community members, in the monitoring process to ensure transparency and responsiveness to community needs.

6) **Improve home learning environment**: Ensure that all students have access to basic learning facilities. Provide additional support and resources to parents to enhance their ability to guide their children's learning at home. Develop programs to increase parent-teacher interactions, emphasizing the importance of regular communication between parents and educators.

7) **Clubs and extracurricular activities**: Encourage the establishment of Eco clubs, scout, Red Cross, and child clubs in all schools to enhance engagement and personality development of the students. Provide ECA opportunities and resources.

8) **School is an ideal place**: School is also to be dedicated to enhance ethics, morality, and good practices.

Teachers are people with high morale, role models for students to be imitated. Students store the memories related to school in their mind and remember their ideals throughout their life, wherever they go or whatever they may do.

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