



Educational Leadership and Management in Complex and Diverse Situations (A Case Study of Chitwan)

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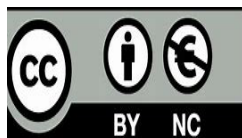
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Abstract

Recruitment and retention of school headteachers are crucial parts of quality education in schools because qualified, experienced, and retained school headteachers can motivate teachers and enhance the educational standard in schools. This study examined the perceptions of the headteachers to understand their attrition causes. This paper tried to identify the causes of headteachers' attrition by conducting qualitative interviews in Chitwan District, Nepal. This paper applied the qualitative approach because it helps understand the deeply rooted experience of headteacher attrition. Using the accounts of the five headteachers, the interviews were conducted concerning their job dissatisfaction factors (e.g., societal support), followed by open-ended interviews by conducting qualitative interviews in Chitwan District (2022).

This study considered three major ethical issues in qualitative research: the researcher's behaviour, questionable information, suggestions, and study guidance. It is argued that due to a lack of technological access and social identity, there is always a problem with recruiting and retaining headteachers in Nepalese schools. This study argues that with respect to the day-to-day work activities required to be a headteacher, the working relationship between teaching and non-teaching staff has changed fundamentally worldwide, including in Nepal. Nepalese schools have been struggling to find stable and highly motivated headteachers. However, the investment outcomes are not as fruitful as they have been in the Nepalese schools. It has been concluded that the lack of technological access, social respect, high political pressure, the lack of motivation and lack of commitment and motivation were the key causes of headteacher attrition in Nepalese schools.

Keywords: *Chitwan District, educational leadership, head teacher attrition, quantitative research, recruitment, retention.*



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Introduction

“School leadership’ is a fundamental determinant factor of school effectiveness. Schools with a firm, stable head teacher or principal are ‘effective’. Headteachers of effective schools receive essential support from the school management committees, especially from the chairperson of the committee” (Subedi, 2008, p108).

Educational leadership and administration is a sensitive phenomenon worldwide because society and other stakeholders have continuously evaluated the school’s activities for a long time (Van Dar Westhuizen & Kitavi, 1997). It is essential to grow awareness of the importance of school principals/headteachers and their unique problems (Barnett & McCormick, 2004; Earleya et al., 2009). Moreover, the school principals/headteachers are the key ingredients for the success of schools and their improvements (Daresh, 2000; Harris, 2002).

Bottery (2004, p. 209), describes as: *‘the kind of leader whose first question is “what can I do for my students, my teachers, my community?” and then makes their betterment and development’.*

Penlington Kington and Day (2008) argue that headteachers play a pivotal role in setting and communicating a strategic vision for school improvement within a strong values framework. They further argue that headteachers have to set the models of boarding involvement, distributing leadership to their teachers, and increasing teaching capacity within the school in order to create a collective commitment, responsibility and accountability for the improvement of students’ outcomes (National Education Commission, 1992). Therefore, headteacher’s retention is a growing concern in Nepalese Schools because headteacher is the backbone of the whole school mechanism (Beale et al., 2003; Charman, 2011).

In the exploration of the school leaders’ challenges and why principles leave their position, Duke (1988) has marked out various factors affecting headteacher turnover, which include the sacrifices in their personal life, stress, fatigue, lack of preparation for the realities of being a principal, and lack of support from the governmental bodies, for example, District Education Office. On the other

hand, headteachers can contribute as a role model and make remarkable improvements in schools if they are retained for a long time (Khathi, 2005). But the quality of education is decreasing day by day in Nepal because of qualified headteacher’s turnover, and all responsible citizens and policy makers are unable to apply an appropriate policy for the recruitment and retention of headship in Nepal (Subedi, 2008; Murphy et al., 2009; Alvarez & Grayson, 2008). Furthermore, headship turnover is a contemporary issue because it has severely affected the national result of the S.L.C exam every year in Nepal (Dhami, 2009; MOES, 2010).

Overview of Educational Leadership in Nepal

“If the pillar is good, the other things become good themselves. If the plowman is efficient, plowing becomes effective. The headmaster can do so” (Subedi, 2008, p107).

The headmaster is the key person who has the bunch of keys to open the doors of the schools for a group of schoolchildren so that the bearing fruit of success will be in the hands of children and parents as well. Therefore, the sole authority to develop a proper educational environment goes to the headteacher directly (Bhatta, 2009). Unfortunately, school leaders in Nepal leave headship due to political pressure and their tough roles and responsibilities, so the performance of students is still poor and criticized in Nepalese society (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2010). Moreover, headteachers are pressured while managing overall school management activities because political leaders are always willing to recruit their supporters in Nepalese schools so that qualified headteachers leave their profession before their retirement in Nepalese schools (Khathi, 2005).

On the other hand, Nepal clearly has a culturally complex and diverse society, which in itself compels headteachers to work in complex and diverse situations so that maintaining the balance between people of complex and diverse society creates high pressure on headteacher and increases headteacher turnover around the world (Priestley & Shah, 2010; Timperley, 2005) which is also a



terrible threat for the recruitment and retention of Headteacher in the Nepalese schools (Subedi, 2008). Moloi and Bush (2007) argue that political pressure, low pay, and unfavourable working conditions are the key implications for the recruitment and retention of headship, threatening the quality of education globally. The same situation remains in Nepalese schools.

Bhatta (2009) argues that Nepalese headteachers do not have sufficient knowledge about the differences in culture, working style, students' thoughts, age, race, gender, job satisfaction factors, and sexual orientation of students and teachers. As a result, overall student performance is poor and debatable in Nepalese society. Blandford and Squire (1999); Lawoti, (2003) argue that it is imperative that school leaders have to be enriched with professional skills, for example, pedagogical skill because professionalism significantly improves head teacher retention, eventually; it undoubtedly improves student performance in Nepalese schools (Bottery, 2004; Ballinger, 2000). Political, economic, professional, governmental, and personal issues may increase head teacher attrition in Nepal because these issues are very much sensitive in Nepalese schools (Khatai, 2005).

In the Nepalese context, headteacher turnover has become an important debate for the teaching profession increasingly because headship turnover has reduced the quality of education in schools and possibly worsened localized headteacher shortage in most parts of the world (Payne, 2005; Ingersoll (2007). In the context of Nepal, public and private schools are established in order to meet the demand for quality education all over the country, where headteachers are the main characters in schools' improvement (Subedi, 2008). Similarly, it is imperative that stable headship in schools can definitely improve the national result of the School Leaving Certificate (S.L.C) in Nepal (Bhatta, 2009; Sancar, 2009; Wallace & Rogers, 2001).

Another issue of headship turnover is headship appointment, where the District Education Office appoints headteachers on the recommendation of SMC. However, SMC is entirely motivated to achieve political objectives and compels headteachers to cooperate with political leaders

rather than teachers, staff, parents, and school students (Shneiderman, 2003). As a result, it creates conflicts among staff so they can leave headship forever (Shneiderman, 2003; Khatai, 2005). Again, the colour of nepotism in the activities of headteachers eventually creates conflicts among teachers, parents, and society; eventually, they leave headship before the expiry date of their contract period (Stanley, 2006; Anderson & Dexter, 2005).

Review of educational leadership on factors affecting the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepal

Theories and practice of leadership

This section mainly focuses on headteacher turnover. In the Nepalese context, the causes of turnover are political interference in the appointment of headteachers, the controlling nature of SMC, the inability of the head teacher to lead his/her staff/maintain student discipline, etc (Subedi, 2009). Sancar (2009) and Adeleke (2008) argue that leadership is a fundamental determinant factor for the effectiveness of schools' improvement because schools with a qualified and stable head teacher receive essential support from the SMC and improve their quality (Wilkinson, 2003; Johnson & Holdaway, 1994). Meanwhile, educational leadership is an interpersonal capability to motivate teachers and staff to maintain a consistent result in the national level exam of a country so that headship is a key element of the whole school mechanism (Earley and Weindling, 2006; Sridevi & Markos, 2010; Kaufman & Ring, 2011).

Likewise, leadership is a crucial phenomenon of the educational system because it influences others' actions to achieve schools' outcomes and objectives (Watson Wyatt Worldwide, 2005; Bush, 2011). Besides, political issues, lack of school resources, and high public concern with schools are other key implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepal (Khatai, 2005). Accordingly, impacts are seen in all concerned sectors; for example, the national result of S.L.C in government schools was only 52% in 2010; however, many other reasons influence students'

results; the stability of headteachers can be regarded as the key factor (MOES, 2010).

Subedi (2008) strongly argues that high pressure of SMC, students' disciplinary issues, limited school resources, high political pressure for recruiting new teachers, negative attitude of the community with headship, lack of co-operation from teachers and staff, frequent change of educational policy, and low pay scale are the key implications for the recruiting and retaining headship in Nepal. Khati (2005) confirms that there is limited information on headteacher retention in the Nepalese context. However, headteacher turnover can be categorized in five different subjects in a global context, which are summarised as departures of headteachers at the school level, movements of headteachers between public and private schools, head teacher's upgrading to district education officers; headteachers leaving the headship to take up other jobs, for example, an advisor, a consultant, and international migration, for example, Nepalese headteachers migrate to USA, Canada, UK and so on (Barnett, 2004; Anderson, 2002). The next section entirely discusses the causes of head teacher turnover in the global and Nepalese context.

Causes of head teacher turnover

Turnover in the Nepalese context can be seen through personal reasons, which are death, family sickness, migration, poor health, handling home responsibilities, high rent of the property, problem of pregnancy, change of service, and unsatisfactory working hours (Khati, 2005; Mercher, 1993). Griffith, Griffith, and Day (2004) have focused on another cause of turnover is geographical factors, for example, the long distance between the residential area and the school. Likewise, the next cause of turnover is the condition of the job, for example, contract job, age bar, promotion, demotion, etc. (Bennell, 2006; Smylie et al., 2007; Smerek & Peterson, 2007). Additionally, stressful work, misunderstanding of duties, and general job dissatisfaction factors, such as inadequate salary, inadequate financial package for headship, and employment in other organizations, are significant causes of head teacher turnover (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Hannumy & Sargent, 2005). Ingersoll (2001) and Whitaker (2003) confirm

that some headteachers leave the profession and want to involve themselves in better academic roles, different sorts of business organizations, for example, district education officer. Michael (2004) argues that headteachers compare their earnings with other professions, for example, the earnings of advisors, consultants, and so on; as a result, headteachers leave their headships. Mercher (1997; Yager, Pedersen, and Yager (2010); Borg and Riding (1993) argue that lack of strategic reflection opportunity training, headteachers' professional development, lack of physical facilities and network support, for example, audio and video classroom, computer lab, and so on, long and continuous working hour, and individual health problem are the key causes of head teacher turnover. Draper and McMichael (2002) argue that role conflict, uncertainty of occupation, and high work stress are the causes of head teacher turnover in schools. The following section discusses the literature for recruiting and retaining headteachers in the global and Nepalese context.

Reviews of factors affecting the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepal

Evidence shows that the quality of leadership is the most critical factor under our control in determining the success of a school. Therefore, the decision relating to appointing a head teacher is the most important one you can make (Bush, 2008, p.272).

Recruitment and retention of school leaders are crucial parts of quality education in schools because qualified, experienced, and stable school leaders can enhance the educational standard (Brundrett, Rhodes & Gkolia., 2006). Guarino Santibanez & Daley (2006) and Brown, 2007) have revealed that lack of special financial incentives, for example, signing bonuses, lack of loan facilities, tuition compensation, assistance with relocation and housing expenses, motivational strategy for the headship, and the encouragement package for headship's work are the key causes of head teacher turnover.

Fink and Brayman (2006) and Brooking et al. (2003) confirm that in a diverse society, frequent



changes in the global context of education, micro and macro political issues, complex cultural diversity, and changing trends of stakeholders for the outcomes of education are key implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers. Moreover, Khati (2005) reveals that the frequent changes occurred in national and local educational policies in Nepal is also a crucial factor of headteacher turnover because the central government determines the broad feature of the educational policies, which unavoidably underpins by the political ideologies of the key political parties in Nepal.

Belch and Mueller (2003) claim that there is growing concern at many schools that recruiting and retaining headteachers have become a devastating challenge because the implications of recruitment and retention of headteachers has been defined as a crisis superficial obstacle by high attrition rates for headteachers in many schools. Baker-Doyle (2010) and Bennell (2006) reveal that offering financial incentives, changing entrance requirements for headship, enhancing headteachers' professional development, and developing human resources in schools are challenging jobs to motivate headteachers worldwide.

Furthermore, Kythreotis Pashiardis and Kyriakides (2003) and Loeb and Page (2000) have summarised that job-related stresses and problems of employing qualified teachers for a particular subject, for example, science, maths, and special education, are also the hindering factors for the retention of headteachers because it is a very problematic issue to recruit and retain Maths, Science and Special Education teachers. I argue that the same case mentioned by Kythreotis et al. (2003) may be applied in the Nepalese context as most of the schools announce their vacancies for these subjects' teachers frequently (Subedi, 2008; Ingle & Florida State University., 2011)

Butt and Lance (2005) and Bennel (2004) argue that lack of support from consultancy for headship initiatives; lack of training for change management issues; lack of additional funds to employ additional teaching assistants when requires; lack of the facility of informational technology and budget to

train the school teachers are the key implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers. Literature confirms that lack of accessibility for informal advice to headteachers, communication and listening skills of headteachers skills to encourage staff to feel authorized and trustworthy, and time to provide effective administrative support for their teachers are the main implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers (Hall & Southworth, 1997). Gunn and Holdway (1986) and Pounder and Merrill (2001) claim that lack of qualified teachers and adequate resources, contemporary demands of modern technology, school representatives in governmental initiatives, and contemporary innovative educational policies for school improvement are major problems for the recruitment and retention of headteachers.

Mercer (1993) and Nhundu (1999) strongly argue that lack of equal power sharing among colleagues due to the social changes in educational issues, high work burden on headteachers' roles, governmental bureaucratic interference on headships, issues of individual and organisational mismatch, the attitude of motivating towards other professions (for example, a chief executive, an advisor, a consultant) role gap, excessive pressure of governors, micro and macro political issues in schools, the problem of local management of schools, the interpersonal relationship among teaching and non-teaching staff, lack of self-efficacy, the ineffectiveness of headship management, high competition among school (For example, issues of teaching and learning resources, and issues of quality maintain, and issues of physical facilities). Weiss (1999) argues that leading a teaching professional to a chief executive post, insecurity of headship, more time spent on headship, very limited time for personal life, fail to accomplish the school's mission, lack of human and physical resources at schools, professional loneliness, lack of control for full administrative authority, reduction in teaching role are the key causes of head teacher turnover.



Critical analysis of empirical research studies on methodological issues for the recruitment and retention of head-teachers in Nepal

A school becomes 'ineffective' primarily due to a lack of firm and stable leadership. Characteristics of ineffective public schools in Nepal include a headmaster without power and authority, the complete absence of teacher tunability, teachers politically divided and indulging in conflict, indifference to students' performance, bad performance being rewarded, and subsequent burnout and non-performance (Subedi, 2008, pp108-109).

School leaders are the key role players in the guarantee of quality education around the world because they are negotiators, change agents, advisors, and guidelines of the whole society, but headteacher turnover increases when they are given limited authority (Earleya et al., 2009). Research by Fink and Brayman (2006) and Gurr Drysdale and Mulford (2005) have focused on various problems of headteachers and educational leadership; however, their research was conducted in developed countries, but the Nepalese context is completely different from the European, the U.K, and American context so that issues above raised by Fink & Brayman (2006) does not address the Nepalese context because I believe that high political pressure, resource unavailability, and high public concern are the contemporary issues for the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepal which are missed in this research (Khatai, 2005). On the other hand, Fink and Brayman (2006) applied case study research and generalized the findings for the whole population. However, I argue that the research of Fink & Brayman (2006) has suffered from overgeneralization because case study research is very small-scale research and can offer no grounds for establishing the reliability of findings. The intense exposure to the study of the case biases the finding (Stake, 1995).

Research by Guarino et al. (2006) and O'Keefe (1999) has highlighted some implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers; however, the researchers have used questionnaires

as a research instrument in their research, but questionnaires are not an appropriate research instrument known the deeply-rooted feeling of headteachers for the reasons of their turnover because questionnaires may create misunderstanding for headteachers when they require extra information and headteachers have no access with researchers in questionnaire survey method and may not be interested in answering the questions accurately or may not return the dispatched questionnaires (Cooley & Shen, 2000). Therefore, this research needs to be tested again by applying qualitative methods to find valid, deep, and rich data for recruiting and retaining headteachers in the Nepalese context (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003; Harre, 2004; Norton, 1999).

Research of Brundertt et al. (2001) has highlighted the political issues for the recruitment and retention of headteachers, which also addresses the Nepalese context; however, this research has suffered from the methodological description, where the researcher has not only failed to discuss the methodological description but also has taken a tiny size sample population to collect data; however, he has made the over generalization so that this research has suffered from validity and reliability of generalization (Clough & Nutbrown, 2007). Therefore, this research needs further investigation to connect with the Nepalese context.

The argument given by Khatai (2005) is relevant to my research interest; however, there is again the issue of reliability and validity of data because he has only reviewed some outdated books and journals and did not apply qualitative research method to collect his data because qualitative research can definitely ensure the reliability and validity of data and produces the most-up-dated evidence for Nepalese context (Tewksbury, 2009). I strongly argue that only reviewing the secondary data used by other researchers does not address valid and rich data. I may face the problems of using data that were poorly collected, inaccurate, or flawed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, this research also needs to be tested in the Nepalese context.

Likewise, research of Haberman (2005) has focused some relevant factors of head teacher



turnover but this research is again suffered from methodological issues because there is not proper connectivity between research objective and research question because the research questions were about the factors of head teacher turnover but the research objectives are about the teacher management so that I argue there should be perfect connectivity between research objective and research question for the validity of that research finding. Thus, the findings of this research need to be tested again to address the current Nepalese context of head teacher attrition (Cohen et al., 2007).

Moreover, the research of Kelly (2009) and Chaplain (2001) has highlighted some issues of head teacher turnover; however, in the Nepalese context, the sampling method used in this research was systematic sampling. I argue that systematic sampling suffers from hidden patterns in the population; for example, every third property along the street might always be the middle one of a terrace of three (Lee, 1999). As a result, this research has missed the actual respondents for collecting data on headship turnover, so this research has to be tested again in Nepal to know about the Nepalese context.

Besides, Hall and Southworth (1997), Fredericks, 2001), and Gunn and Holdway (1985) have pointed out some of the current issues of head teacher turnover in the Nepalese context; however, there is a controversial issue of telephone interviews because their research has applied telephone interview survey but it isn't easy to establish rapport with the respondents over the telephone in telephone interview survey (Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, there is no eye contact or body language between researchers and respondents in telephone interviews, so respondents' telephone interviews may be confused with questionnaires. They may hang up anytime and escape from the telephone interview survey (Denniston & Brenner, 2010). Therefore, this research needs to be tested again.

Mercer (1993) has highlighted some relevant problems of head teacher turnover; however, that research was conducted in developed countries, for example, the USA, the UK, and Norway, so that

finding is unacceptable because the evidence for head teacher turnover taken from the developed countries is definitely different from developing countries, like Nepal. After all, working conditions, headteacher responsibilities, headteachers' professional development, roles of governors, and educational standards are incomparable between Nepal and other developed countries (Macdonald, 1999; NCED, 2001). I believe that political factor is the main cause of head teacher turnover in Nepal; however, there are other factors of headship turnover as well. The other factors include work stress, for example, arrangements of schools' physical facilities in schools, preparing annual teaching plans, arrangement of payment, maintaining student discipline, involving himself/herself in social work, and counselling with the community for school reforms (Karmacharya, 2009; Subedi, 2008; Carr, 1994). This paper discusses the qualitative research approach for open-ended interviews in the following section.

Research Approach

This research will highlight the justification of qualitative research methodology for an open-ended interview (Lichtman, 2013; Polkinghorne, 2005). It is known that interviews, observations, and document reviews are major leading qualitative inquiry methods to construct social reality (Holliday, 2007; Goles & Hirschheim, 2000). I also believe that qualitative research is rooted in things to many people and the way people see the world because qualitative methods are subjective and belong to individualism (Tewksbury, 2009).

The critical elements of qualitative research are description, understanding and interpretation, dynamic, inducting thinking, holistic, variety of data settings, less formal, and more personal (Lichtman, 2006, p8-9).

Shah (2004) and Burkard, Christopher and Knox (2009) confirmed that qualitative research emphasises on individualism, small-scale research, non-statistical study, human actions, subjectivity, personal participation of the investigator, and understanding the meaning rather than causes of investigation because qualitative research insists on personal interpretation rather than scientific



facts. Furthermore, qualitative interviews are tremendously effective for low-income minority respondents who do not have telephone facilities or do not respond to mail surveys because a direct and face-to-face relationship between researchers and respondents motivates the participants to answer completely and truthfully and also allows the researchers to continue their interviews in-depth questioning and probing (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). For example, personal interviews can achieve the highest response rate of any qualitative technique, sometimes over 90% (Cohen et al., 2007; Fassinger, 2005; Walford, 2005).

An open-ended interview enhances uniform data and simplifies the analysis because all respondents answer the same questions. This increases the comparability of responses and completes data for each individual on the topics addressed in the interview. It also reduces interviewer effects and biases because researchers conduct an interview with several interviewers (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 353).

An open-ended interview permits decision-makers to see and review the instrumentation used in the evaluation and facilitates researchers to analyze the data (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Patria, 1995). I further believe that a qualitative interview, for example, an open-ended interview, can encourage the participants to improve and communicate their thoughts, feelings, visions, and expectations. In this research, headteachers can interpret their own experiences and feelings for their retention because an open-ended interview gives heads much space to interpret their own feelings without any pressure from the researchers (Beale et al., 2004). This research conducted an open-ended interview with two headteachers, one from a government school and another from a private school in Chitwan District, Nepal, because of this study's time and word limits. This paper discusses the ethical issues for educational research in the following section.

Ethical Issues for Qualitative Research in Education

There are three major ethical issues in qualitative research: the researcher's behaviour, questionable

information, and suggestions and guidance for the research (Lichtman, 20013, p56-57).

Fox and Stutchbury (2009) and Houghton (2010) have summarised three layers of Seedhouse's ethical grid: the ethical issues for educational research (See appendix. F). The diagram which is presented at Appendix "F" has replicated the external cover of ethical issues, for example, the regulation of conducting educational research, codes of practice, and use of resources accessible for the research (Bridges, 2001; Finders, 1992; Pendlebury & Enslin, 2001) and the second one is the consequential layer which boosts the user to think about consequences of possible actions of the researchers for the society. For example, talks about sexuality can be very sensitive in Nepalese society, especially with female respondents (Pendlebury & Enslin, 2001; Fox & Stutchbury, 2009).

Next issue is deontological consideration, which covers the subjects of my responsibility and consideration of possible actions (Barnett & Valentine, 2004; Ensign, 2003). Furthermore, deontological consideration is the method of completing things rather than knowing the consequences of conducting the possible actions for this research, for example, in my case, issue of my language, questioning style, my politeness and dealing behaviour with headteachers directly affect to conduct an interview so that meaning of my research for interviewees will be more importance rather than the effects of my research to them (Bridges, 2001; Casey, 2004). Telling the truth and minimising risk for my respondents are crucial issues of deontological consideration because these two considerations will absolutely increase the harmonic relationship between me and my respondents (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009; Golafshani, 2003).

The final layer of the above figure is the inner part, which covers the core reasoning of research importance and includes issues of respect and autonomy for the interviewees (Small, 2001; Pyett, 2003). Reliability, validity, and generalisability of qualitative research are sensitive and crucial ethical considerations for my research because these three central themes ensure worthiness and truthfulness



for the positive outcomes of my research findings (Finlay, 2006; Curtin and Clarke, 2005).

British Educational Research Association (2011) has confirmed that all educational researches have to be conducted within the ethical criteria of BERA, for example, the person (protection of interviewees), knowledge (outcome of research), democratic values (Participants' right to make any decisions of undertaking interviews), the quality of educational research (appropriate for publication), and academic freedom (freedom of inquiry by participants and other relevant authority) are the principles of underpinnings guidelines of educational researches (British Educational Research Association, 2011). The next section discusses the ethical issues for academic research.

Data Analysis of Qualitative Interview

This analysis began with content analysis, collecting evidence through open-ended interviews. Below, it highlights and discusses key issues of recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepalese schools.

Political pressure

The headteacher from government school talked about the political pressure, and insisted on the effects of it to manage and improve his school, and further assured, SMC members, different political parties, and district student unions always pressurize him to recruit their supporters in his school. He clearly expressed his implications that he had made his decision on the favour of political parties to recruit new teachers because sometimes he was given threat of physical violence at the time of recruiting new teachers. He finally expressed his frustration that if there is continuous excessive political pressure in future, he can even resigns from the headship. Similar to as the head teacher from government school, private school head teacher also agreed that political pressure is a key challenge to manage and improve his school. However, he expressed that political pressure given by political parties was dominant for the financial donation to spend for political purpose. He clearly expressed that he would not be able to continue headship if this situation continued in his school. Political pressure is one of the common obstacles

to the improvement of private and government schools. However, the nature of political pressure is completely different between private and government schools because headteachers from government schools have been pressurized to recruit their supporters, but the headteachers from private schools have been pressurized for financial donations. Comparing the evidence given by two headteachers, I argue that pressure on headteachers in public schools is more challenging and painful than private schools because political pressure severely affects the recruitment and retention of headteachers for a long time in public schools rather than private schools because donating cash to different political parties is a short-term tension. Therefore, political implications have increased mental pressure among headteachers and forced them to leave their headship in Nepalese schools.

On the other hand, district education office (DEO) appoints headteachers on the recommendation of SMC which has increased nepotism and favouritism in educational sector because SMC members recommend those headteachers who have same political ideology with them. I argue that a new educational policy, for example, free competition, is emerged to recruit and retain headteachers in Nepalese schools because headteachers who are selected by free competition will be more up-to-date, highly qualified, hold contemporary demands of education and equipped with professional skills, for example, high vision, and instructional skill. As a result, they can be retained for a long time in Nepalese schools because they feel easy to do their job.

Technological demand

The emergence of technology as a critical education component has given rural districts an invaluable tool for overcoming the problems created by sparse and remote populations (Parham & Gordon, 2011, p.20).

The first headteacher insisted on technological challenges for improving his school and argued that his first challenge was the contemporary demand for educational technology. He believes that schools need technological improvement, for example, audio-video classes and well-equipped



science and computer labs. He strongly believes that it is a time of high global competition, which requires technological improvements in all schools. Without technological advancement, one school cannot compete with other schools; as a result, schools are recognized as poor performers. When schools are regarded as poor performers, no one is interested in applying for the post of headteacher when an advertisement is published for school vacancies.

New challenges such as modernization, the revaluation of technology, and increases in accountability impose a great deal of pressure upon headteachers (Alzaidi, 2008, p.163).

The first headteacher further argues that educational technology is one of the key challenges for recruiting and retaining headteachers in Nepalese schools. He insisted on the requirement of a large amount of money to fulfill the demands of contemporary educational technology in Nepalese schools. I argue that there is a lack of educational technology in Nepalese schools; firstly, no headteachers want to join those schools that are excluded from the facility of educational technology because of the lack of educational technology, it is very difficult to manage classrooms so it can increase tension among headteachers. Eventually, they choose other professions to minimize their mental pressure. Secondly, schools without educational technology facilities are categorized as low performers, so no teachers and new candidates want to join those low-performer schools as headteachers. Therefore, recruitment and retention of headship in Nepalese schools is threatened by limited technological facilities.

Financial issues

Both respondents clearly expressed that limited finance is another major obstacle to improving their schools. The headteacher from a government school explored his experience: "I have to construct a new building for the science lab, but I have a very limited budget. I do not know how I will be able to arrange finance to construct a new property."

The headteacher of the private school said, "I need a qualified science teacher for the secondary level,

but I am afraid that I have a very limited budget, and *science teachers are very expensive to hire.*"

Evidence proved that both headteachers are suffering from a financial crisis for the improvement of their schools. Based on my experience from the Nepalese context, I argue that headteachers cannot reform their schools due to the financial crisis. As a result, school stakeholders blame them for not managing their administration, and they need to quit their headships. The instability of headteachers results in poor national performance in Nepalese schools, which directly affects the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepal.

The social challenges

The headteacher from a government school clearly mentioned that maintaining a harmonious relationship between his school and community is daunting. He further explains, "*My school has to address many community issues, for example, the demand of disabled students, demands of different ethnic groups, employment quota for disabled demography.*" The community has a profusion of demands that the school alone cannot fulfill. My experience also confirms that there is always a contradictory relationship between a school and a community. The school alone can never fulfill the demands of the community. As a result, there is always an adverse relationship between these two sectors. Eventually, the excessive conflict between school and the community compels a headteacher to leave their job before retirement.

Then again, the head teacher of a private school strongly states his views: "Maintaining social coordination with my school is the key challenge for me, for example, addressing the demands of different political parties, pressure groups, social organizations, governmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations."

He feels that it is very difficult to have harmonic relationships with different groups of his society because there are various people with different interests in the same society. He said, "*I am really having a problem in cooperating with my community because community people come to me with different demands, for example, the demand of scholarships for the ethnic community;*



my school has a limited number of students, so I cannot grant them full scholarship though they force me to do so.” Therefore, my experience as a head teacher also suggests social issues is also a challenging factor for headteacher turnover in Nepal because all organizations exist in the society so as schools. Due to the weak relationship with the society, retention of headteachers in Nepal is weakened. Furthermore, I argue that conflicts between school administration and society convey negative messages in society; as a result, potential candidates will be demotivated and will not apply for the headship when the advertisement is published in local and national Media.

Co-operation amongst the school staff

However, their relationship with the educational administration is overwhelmed by the huge administrative issues, which influenced how they operate in terms of complicated routines, procedures and bureaucracy (Alzaidi, 2008, p.170).

Another issue of the headteacher’s challenge is the administrative issue, where lack of teaching and non-teaching staff, lack of support from SMC members, and lack of support from the district education office are connected with administrative issues. In the context of Nepal, I argue that headteachers from government schools suffer more from administrative issues because teaching and non-teaching staff do not cooperate with them. As a result, headteachers are pressured by workload and leave their profession, which threatens headteacher retention in Nepalese schools.

The headteacher of a government school clarified his views: “I am struggling with my teachers because they never cooperate with me when there are leisure periods and routine problems.” He further says, “My non-teaching staff never cooperate with me when I am under high work pressure, for example, paperwork.”

The headteacher of a government school clearly signifies that he suffers from a lack of administrative support—to draft routines, prepare paperwork, and engage in leisure periods when some teachers are absent from his school.

On the other hand, headteacher from private

school mainly mentioned the lack of teachers’ support when he needs some extra periods to cover leisure classes. He further said, “*I never feel the support from my colleagues when I am fully engaged with the community meeting regarding school’s reform*”.

Evidence given by two headteachers are not similar. The headteacher from government school has mainly focused on lack of support from both teaching and non-teaching staffs. On the contrary, headteacher from private school has focused only on the lack of support from teaching staffs. I can argue that headteachers from government schools are more pressurized than private schools because they do not get any support from both teaching and non-teaching staffs (headteachers from private schools lack support from only teaching staff), and as a result, headteacher turnover in government schools will probably be higher than private schools. When headteachers lack support from their staff, they suffer from high work pressure. Due to the high workload in government schools, qualified candidates will be motivated to apply for the headship in private schools rather than in government schools in Nepal, which eventually affects the recruitment of headteachers in government schools.

Motivational factors

Evidence highlighted by administrators of government schools for the implications on recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepal are summarised as high stress, lack of financial incentives, lack of government support, lack of community support, poor school performance, lack of teachers’ support, lack of harmonic relationship between teachers and headteachers, and lack of positive morale support to headteachers. These adverse factors increase tension and frustration among headteachers; as a result, they quit their administrative work forever.

Secondly, the headteacher from a private school expressed his experience and belief that low student results, financial crisis, weak physical infrastructure in school, lack of community support, lack of parents’ support, political pressure, limited availability of science and maths



teachers, weak relationship between teachers and head teacher, lack of professional development of headteachers, and unavailability of technological facilities in schools are major influencing factors for the head teacher turnover in Nepalese schools. When these issues are scarce, headteachers are demotivated to work and divert their minds to join other professions, like advisors, consultants, and chief executives, and threats to head teacher retention in Nepal.

Herzberg's motivation and Hygiene theory (Oplaka & Mimon, 2008) is relevant here in the retention of headteachers in Nepalese schools. Oplaka and Mimon (2008) argue that motivators refer to intrinsic factors. Hygiene refers to extrinsic factors and motivational factors that deal with job content and lead to job satisfaction, such as growth, work itself, responsibility, advancement, and recognition (House & Wigdor, 2010). Similarly, hygiene factors deal with job context and lead to job dissatisfaction, such as company policies and administration, supervision, interpersonal relations, status, working conditions, security, and salary. Evidence strongly supports Herzberg's motivation and Hygiene theory that moving headteachers from dissatisfaction to satisfaction requires intrinsic factors, which I believe will be the key strategy for retaining headteachers in Nepalese schools. First, head teachers from government schools clearly expressed that headteachers in Nepal would be retained when they achieve good social identity and community support.

My personal experience even suggests that headteachers still lack social identity, achievement, advancement, and social respect as an intrinsic factor. On the other hand, a lack of extrinsic factors, such as high salary, bonus, and compensation for sick leave, can cause job dissatisfaction. I argue that intrinsic factors are not fulfilled for headteachers in Nepalese schools, so head teacher turnover is mounting. If these issues are rationally addressed, head teacher retention can be boosted in Nepalese schools (Alzaidi, 2008). Therefore, the policymakers and the Ministry of Education have to think seriously about how these unfulfilled intrinsic factors can be minimized for the

betterment of Nepalese schools in the forthcoming years in Nepalese schools (Whitaker, 1996). The headteacher from a private school expressed that the most influencing factor in motivating him to be a head teacher in his current school is "Social Identity."

Discussion and concluding observations

Educational leadership is a key issue for quality education in every country. Moreover, the school principals/headteachers are the key ingredients for the success of schools and their improvements. The headmaster is the key person who has the bunch of keys to open the doors of the schools for a group of school children so that the bearing fruit of success will be in the hands of children and parents as well. Nepalese schools have been struggling for stable headteachers, and district education offices and the Department of Education Ministry have spent a large amount of the national budget for quality education in Nepal; however, the investment outcomes are not seen as fruitful as they should be. More importantly, educational leadership is an interpersonal capability that motivates teachers and staff to maintain a consistent result in the national level exam of a country, so headship is a key element of the whole school mechanism. Mainly, lack of educational technology; social identity, contemporary and updated educational policy, community support, support from teaching and non-teaching staff, satisfactory salary, good working conditions, professional development, and student discipline are the key causes of headteacher turnover in a secondary school in a global context including Nepal. My research is based on the qualitative research method because the major ethical issues are the researcher's behaviour, questionable information, and suggestions and guidance for my research. After all, a direct and face-to-face relationship between researchers and respondents motivates the participants to answer completely and truthfully and also allows me to continue my interviews with in-depth questioning and probing (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982; Center for Educational Research and Social Development, Kathmandu, 2006; Hammersley-Fletcher & Strain, 2011).



The British Educational Research Association (2011) also discusses ethical issues briefly. On the other hand, my qualitative research on factors affecting the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Chitwan district has focused mainly on three aspects. The first one is factors affecting head teacher turnover; secondly, motivational factors for applying headship; and finally, factors affecting the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Chitwan District. This research has summarised that high stress, lack of financial incentives, lack of government support, lack of community support, poor school performance, lack of teachers' support, and lack of technology are the main causes of headteacher turnover in Nepal. Similarly, social identity and prestige are the factors most influencing the decision to become a Nepalese school head teacher. Finally, this research has concluded that intrinsic factors like social identity and extrinsic factors like financial packages are key motivational factors for retaining headteachers in Nepal. This research was conducted in Ratnanagar Municipality, Chitwan; however, findings cannot be generalized for all schools running in Ratnanagar municipality because it is small-scale research, covering only two secondary schools as its sample. Based on the evidence given by two administrators, I can argue that political pressure, educational technology demand, and community support are the key implications for the recruitment and retention of headteachers in Nepal. Again, evidence has supported that social identity is the main factor motivating for applying headteacher candidates in Nepalese schools. Moreover, I believe that this research is limited and cannot be generalized in all schools of Chitwan District; however, the findings are unique because no one has researched this particular topic before in the Nepalese context.

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