

SCHOOLING OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY  
OF NEPALI GIRLS

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## DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis is entirely my own work all references cited have been acknowledged and the thesis has not been submitted previously for any other degree.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my late father Shree Lok Jung Bahadur Shah, who has always been the greatest source of inspiration.

## ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study sets out to explore the ‘Schooling of girls with disability’ through the main research question ‘What does it mean to be a girl with disability? I chose this area of research because of my personal and professional interest. The schooling of girls with disability (GWD) is a growing phenomenon in many developing countries throughout the world because of increasing recognition of education as right, gender equality and mainstreaming of marginalised groups on all aspects of social lives. However, little attention has been given to conduct research in this area. Therefore, there is relatively very little literature focusing on the education of GWD in Nepalese context.

The study was designed as a transcendental phenomenology under the broader qualitative research paradigm. This study relates to the subjective and multiple realities of the GWDs as per their schooling experiences. Knowledge can be drawn by collaborating with the participants and spending extended time in the field rigorously.

Twelve GWDs, four from each disability group viz. visual impairment, hearing impairment, and physical impairment participated as key participants from five schools located in municipalities of a district in Kathmandu valley and a hill district outside Kathmandu valley. Research site and participants were sampled on the basis of convenience and purposive sampling methods. The primary sources of information were interviews, written responses (from hearing impaired ones) and observation.

Phenomenological analysis and meaning making were done as suggested by Moustakas. The findings were linked with Giddens’ structure-agency theory and social

justice theories of Rawls and Nozick. While analysing GWDs (agency) - school environment (structure) relationship, school was both opportunity and constraint for GWDs which resulted GWDs experiences both positive and negative.

The results suggested that school culture; the available resources, facilities, and services at school were not accommodating GWDs fully and were unable to acquire knowledge and skills to their full potentials. Nevertheless, the GWDs were found diligent to maintain their educational status in comparison to other peers. Given the structural constraints, they were struggling to ensure their better future and were committed and enthusiastic to go ahead to lead a better life. Thus, as Giddens stressed on human agency's transformative capacity, the GWDs were continuously involved in their active agency roles.

The result from this study has showed light on the reality of school experienced by GWDs. There were findings showing good practices are appreciative but findings indicating negatives demand refinement. GWDs learned skills and tactfulness in adapting in the school environment from the experiences of people's positive attitudes and encountered barriers. Positives of socialisation encouraged GWDs in participating school and social activities. Acceptance and positive attitudes of peers, teachers and community reduced hesitation and inferiority feelings of GWDs. The GWDs felt honoured by getting opportunity to formal schooling and also they were able to socialise with other peers in the school and participated actively as per their interest. Gaining education was ultimate means of safe adulthood for GWDs. However, negatives of socialisation experienced by GWDs like alienation and exclusion systematically in general. Thus, subject-teacher's

attitude compelled them to become passive listeners. GWDs faced similar world of limitation along with gender stereotypes like others in the society.

Formal schooling empowered GWDs to stick with their aim of educational attainment and become self-supportive and ensure their better future. Schooling is therefore equated with change in the lives of girls with disability. However, there is a need of alternative/differentiation curriculum for GWDs/SEN children in providing fair opportunity to right-based education so that appropriate knowledge and skills can be acquired by them.

The findings suggest the following implications; there is a need of redefining educational policies, which will strongly address educational needs of GWDs. There is a need for making the school environment participatory on the basis of equality. The perspectives of rights and social justice also need to be considered while working for disability-friendly school environment.

More than anything else, the impact that I have felt on my own personal and professional development is in fact one of the most rewarding aspects of this study. This study has given me new exposure and skills to use and understand qualitative approach for research, which immensely enriched my knowledge and professional development. The abstract of the thesis of Bishwa Bala Shah Thapa for the *Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education* was presented on November 29, 2012.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder
APA	American Psychological Association
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Programme
BERA	British Educational Research Association
CBR	Community Based Rehabilitation
CHIRAG	Cooperative Hands in Restoration, Advancement and Growth
CRPD	Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DPI	Disabled Persons International
EADSNE	European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education
EFA	Education for All
FAPE	Free and Appropriate Public Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GWD	Girl with disability
HCH	Heaven Children Home
HI	Hearing Impairment
HRDC	Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children
IDEA	Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairment, Disability and Handicap

IEP	Individualised education plan
ILO	International Labour Organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Association
LSGA	Local Self Government Act
LTPA	Leisure Time Physical Activities
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NDBA	Nepal Disabled and Blind Association
NDHRC	Nepal Disabled Human Rights Centre
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NESP	National Education System Plan
NFDH	National Federation of Deaf and Hard of Hearing
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLSS	Nepal Living Standard Survey
NPA	National Plan of Action
NPC	National Planning Commission
NSEP	National Special Education Programme
PI	Physical Impairment
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PWD	Persons with Disability
SEC	Special Education Council
SEN	Special Educational Needs

SEU	Special Education Unit
SNES	Special Needs Education Section
SSNCC	Social Service National Coordination Council
SSRP	School Sector Reform Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Education Fund
UNGEI	United Nations Girls' Education Initiative
UNESCO	United Nations Education Social and Cultural Organisation
UPIAS	Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation
VDC	Village Development Committee
VI	Vision Impairment
WC	Ward Committee
WEP	Women Education Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I have portrayed, the motivation, purpose and the rationale behind this study. The main research question is ‘what does it mean to be a girl student with disability?’ Therefore, the research explores aspects of schooling and school experiences of Girls with Disability (GWD). In this chapter, I first begin with my interest in this study, which I have presented in twofold, my personal and professional interests. Then I go on to discussing the context of the research to present my main argument or central theme that is the GWDs and the school environment. Further it also introduces purpose, rationale and limitation of the study and also the research questions and sub-questions the study has intended to answer. Finally, it describes the structure of this study giving a brief overview of each of the chapters.

#### **Personal and Professional Interests in the Research**

There are a number of imperatives personal and professional which has inspired me to do this study. In my teaching career of more than three decades, I have faced many challenges regarding students’ cognitive, psychological and behavioural issues and also gained lots of experiences in teaching children with different abilities during the period I have also addressed specific problems of children regarding Special Educational Needs (SEN). Though I do not claim to be an expert on cognitive, psychological, and developmental needs of SEN students, I have helped them to resolve their problems by counseling them. While helping them my approach has always been to listen and share

their problems. I am convinced that it is necessary to capture their experiences to make the school a better learning place for them.

I was happy to find that my approach was largely in line with the emerging approach of individualised learning needs of SEN students and planning and delivering accordingly. This was what I learned while doing my postgraduate studies in Special Educational Needs in Europe. When I was there I got the opportunity to visit special, integrated and inclusive schools where every SEN student having different disabilities and learning difficulties getting education on the basis of their Individualised Education Plan (IEP), prepared as per the child's interest and abilities and teaching-learning activities carried out accordingly so that everyone in the class received equal opportunities to learn.

These visits reminded me of the good old days when I was a schoolteacher. I recalled a few students in each class who were back-benchers, labeled naughty, problematic and not interested in their studies and the like. Further, physically impaired students were hardly integrated in the mainstream schools and even those who were integrated were very shy, stayed aloof and also their participation in school activities was almost nil. Now I have realised that those students were suffering from one of the following difficulties: learning difficulties, psychological, motivational and behavioural problems, Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) but their difficulties were neither detected in time nor addressed by both the school authority and their parents. Those with no support would find their study very difficult and thus lose interest and eventually would dropout.



In the past, the above mentioned learning difficulties were invisible in the early ages so the students grew up and then become problematic to both, the school as well as their parents and they would have a broken career. Further, disabilities, like vision impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment and intellectual disabilities are visible however they are neither adequately addressed nor managed in the country though the planned education system has more than five decades history. I was inquisitive to explore the schooling experiences of students with disability because among diverse groups of students in Nepalese schools, children with disabilities are marginalised the most. Thus, I selected this research topic to study the experiences of such students at school and find better options for their well-being in the school.

When I started schooling, my eldest sister, who had low vision, had already stopped schooling. She was admitted to school but was forced to drop out because the school was unable to accommodate her due to lack of resource materials in the school and doctors also suggested that she should not do any work that could strain her eyes. Thus, she had a bitter experience of exclusion in the class and was unable to cope with other peers.

Similarly, a hearing impaired girl in my neighbourhood (in Far-western Terai region of Nepal), was also unable to continue her studies in the neighbourhood school. Her parents also came to know about her impairment only when she got admitted to the neighbourhood school at the age of five. She was confused and embarrassed because she was unable to understand others and was also bullied and her peers called her '*lati*' (dumb). The school was unable to accommodate her any further due to lack of resources

as well as trained personnel to handle a girl with hearing impairment. Further, her parents were also least interested to educate a deaf girl.

Nevertheless, she was admitted to the school for deaf in Kathmandu by a kind hearted person in the village when she was over-aged for class one and she faced lots of sexual harassments by senior students and was also bullied by her peers so she was forced to leave the school. At present, there is drastic change in the society and the number of SEN children in schools is increasing day-by-day. Thus, as a woman I realised that Nepalese society is still struggling for gender equity and girls with disability encounter many challenges. Therefore, my personal interest is to understand exclusively the experiences of girls with disability who have got opportunity to formal schooling.

A second imperative for undertaking this study was professional interest. Being a woman and a teacher educator, my job is to contribute in preparing teachers. Further, due to my exposure to European context of schooling where SEN students were included in mainstream school and perceived as right holders, I was motivated to conduct this research by exploring the experiences of girls with disabilities in their schools.

After 1990, internationally, more attention was focused on the education of marginalised children, equitable access to education from the rights perspective so the governments' efforts are in redefining education and redesigning the schools to accommodate all children without any discrimination. In teaching profession understanding the students' experiences is vital to make the teaching effective. My experience informs me that school environment for all, including SEN students' needs to be conducive. I decided to undertake this study because I was interested to find how girls with disability are experiencing and managing the constraints in their schooling.

### **The Context: Nepalese Societal Belief: Gender and Persons with Disability**

According to Hindu mythology Ramayana, Ashtavakra, which means one having eight bends, was born with deformities. He was a sage and the 'Guru' (teacher) of King Janak of ancient kingdom Mithila, was authored Ashtavakra Gita, which is also known as Ashtavakra Samhita ([En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtavakra\\_Gita](http://En.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashtavakra_Gita)). Dhirtarashtra, king of Hastinapur was blind from birth but a respective figure in another Hindu mythology the Mahabharat epic. Similarly, God Ganesh, son of Lord Shiva, is an ideal example of disability and of corrective surgery (Prasad, 2003) but he is worshipped by millions of Hindus everyday for success in their endeavours. These are some examples, which show the evidences of Persons with Disability (PWD) during Vedic and Puranic periods were knowledgeable, respectable and led good social life despite their disabilities.

Historically, the first significant step taken in Nepal for the services of the PWDs was 'Muluki Ain, (Civil Code) of 1853 promulgated by the government of King Surendra Bikram Shah and the then Prime Minister, Jung Bahadur Rana, the first Rana Prime Minister. In Garib-Kangal (poor-destitute) Mahal (Article)-5 of Muluki Ain, the PWDs were placed under this category. This article, clearly mentions that the PWDs, are unable to work and earn, so they are entitled to receive shelter, food and two pairs of clothes every year from the government under Sadabarta Sidha (the regular ration). At that time disability was seen through the lens of religious model or moral model of disability so serving them was as charity. However, there was no provision for education or health care for general public. Thus, the PWDs were only treated sympathetically and it was considered the responsibility of the state to take care of them. However, only people with positive attitudes towards PWDs believed in helping such people whereas people with

negative attitudes discarded them from the society. As Bhatia & Turin (2004) stressed that such Hindu culture with negative attitudes looks disability as a punishment for sins in the previous life so was the case in the old Christian society of Sparta and Athens and Islam of Today.

Nepalese society is characterised by caste and other forms of stratification like gender, economy, religion, language, culture and location etc. Gender and disability are two separate categories of disadvantaged population. Gender refers to socially constructed phenomenon by which constrained male and female social identities whereas disability is a malfunctioning of a person associated with disease, disorder, injury and other health conditions. Disability may affect anyone regardless of caste/ethnicity, age, sex, and affluent or deprived, and PWD becomes handicapped, marginalised and disadvantaged due to her/his disability and hinders her/his full participation in societal matters. Nevertheless, when gender and disability are combined double disadvantage is inevitable in most of the societies in developed or developing countries. Alur (2007) argues that due to cultural barrier girls are deprived from receiving their due share of education. Values and beliefs underpinning living styles of a society can be invisible barriers to inclusion of PWDs.

Nepalese society is patriarchal and male-dominated with separate domain for male and female, in general. Thus, if there is a girl/woman with disability, she has to be triply discriminated as a woman, as a disable and if she belongs to Dalit, as a so-called low caste person and marginalised. Alur (2007) further stresses that women with disabilities experience many incidence of abuse – physical, emotional and sexual. Their dependence on families exposes them to manifest discrimination outside the home. They

become deprived of their dignity and self-confidence. Furthermore, caste and ethnicity-based hierarchy shapes the social structures of the lifestyle of girls and boys, men and women. Lifestyle is in accordance to their caste or ethnic groups where they are born. Religion, geographical locations and communities affect their life and opportunities. Thus, women are expected to do household chores whereas men go out for jobs and earn money for the family. Almost all societies share a universal attitude that women are subordinate to men, de-legitimize them from human rights and de-value their social status (De Beauvoir, 1949 [1972]) and the Nepalese society is no exception to this attitude. Women are expected to go out for jobs like men however household chores are their sole obligations. Hence, in a society, where women have to do household chores, a girl with disability may face serious problems to do household chores as expected, because a girl with hearing impairment or visually impaired or with intellectual disability cannot work to full potential like a non-disabled.

Although the structure of gender relation varies from one social group to another, generally, men inherit family income and property. Bhatia and Turin (2004) found that even in better off households, a woman's share in household assets and income is far more uncertain than that of men. Disability is a state of decreased functioning associated with disease, disorder, injury or other health conditions, in the context of one's environment, is experienced as impairment, activity limitation or participation restriction. Therefore, disability is the consequence of environmental and attitudinal barriers faced by persons with various impairments. French and Swan (2004) stated that the social expectation, which is based on gender and disabling condition in the society from women with disabilities are lower than from other women. In the Nepalese society the traditional

role of female is to remain dependent on the earnings of males. The general belief in the society is that investment on girls gives little or no return to the family because they leave the home after marriage. Thus, one can imagine the condition of a girl with disability, who neither can contribute at home as expected by the conventional gender norms nor can get easily married. Therefore girls with disability are more likely to be more discriminated and also less importance can be given to their education.

Furthermore, the stereotype of females as passive, emotionally dependent and needing protection is common with person with disabilities (PWDs) also. Moreover, Lansdown (2003) states that in a country where a large population relies on farming for subsistence children are considered economic assets therefore a disabled child will inevitably suffer from low status, rejection and marginalisation (as cited in Bhatia & Turin, 2004). Thus, my query is, how such girls in the schools, are experiencing schooling, coping and struggling to get education.

### **Educational Status of Girls with Disability**

The academic journey of PWDs was started after a decade of planned development in education with the start of first Five-Year Plan. In these five decades, several developmental tasks, political and social changes have been made in Nepal. Nepal has accomplished drastic changes in educational attainment till date. Definitely, the status of educational attainment of PWDs has also changed considerably is improving day-by-day.

The educational status of girls has dramatically improved and in recent years as per the Flash-I Report, 2010-011 (DOE, 2010) and there has been a substantial growth in girls' enrolment at the primary level where the proportion of girls is 50.1% i.e., 50.5% at

primary level, 49.9% at lower-secondary level, 48.8% at secondary level. Similarly, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at primary, lower secondary and secondary levels are 0.98; 0.98; 0.98 respectively however, the gap still exists. 5.5 per cent children are still out of the school and the primary cycle completion rate is 80.4 per cent, which also demand more attention in accommodating all children in schooling. However, the NER tells only about increase in enrolment but nothing regarding their experiences at school.

Furthermore, Department of Education (DOE) (2010) reported that out of the total students 1.2 percent, 1.0 percent and 0.85 percent were students with different kinds of disabilities at primary, lower-secondary and secondary levels respectively. Mainly enrolled students were with physical, vision, hearing, deaf-blind, intellectual and multiple impairments. The statistics of the same report also shows the enrolment rate of girls with disability lag behind boys with disability in each type as well as in higher level of schooling, which reflects the dropout rates of girls.

According to DOE (2011), about 8500 students are studying in special, integrated, resource centres and mainstream schools. These students get scholarships categorically on the basis of their disability and severity. The financial support range from Rs. 500 to Rs. 13,000 and there are seventy-two assessment centres for the identification of students with disabilities and learning difficulties.

In this study, I have focused only GWDs, who have got the opportunity to attend school and explore their experiences in the school environment. Bateman and Bateman (2001) defined the term child with disability as follows:

A child who is evaluated properly and who has mental retardation, a hearing impairment, including deafness, a speech or language impairment, a visual impairment including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, an orthopedic impairment, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, a specific learning disability, deaf blindness or multiple disabilities and who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services (p. 67).

Though the above definition has a wide coverage of disabilities I have included only girls with vision impairment, hearing impairment and physical impairment. Such students are also referred to as SEN students in this study. Thus, my focus is to uncover the experiences of GWDs in their school.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experience of girls with disability regarding their school and also find out how they cope with the constraints in their way to education. In this context I have made the following research question.

### **Main Research Question**

What does it mean to be a girl student with disability?

### **Subsidiary Research Questions**

The following subsidiary questions are formulated to answer the main research question:

1. How do girls with disability perceive their education?
2. How do parents and community perceive education of girls with disability?
3. How do school, community and household influence the schooling of girls with disability?



4. What are the challenges experienced by the girls with disability and how are they coping with those challenges?

I elaborated the overarching research question into these four sub-questions, questions, one and four are directly related to the experiences of GWDs regarding their schooling while questions two and three were included with the purpose of interpreting GWDs experiences better.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Children with different disabilities generally attend segregated, integrated or mainstream regular schools in Nepal as discussed above. Researches carried out so far are more general i.e., surveys of different types of disabilities and hardly any of them has looked at the issue of schooling of PWDs from gender dimension. At best, the government has provided some incentives and opportunities for the education of SEN children, and their needs are taken care through certain educational institutions especially meant for them. Thus, my quest is the schooling of GWDs, which is expected to have a far-reaching impact on sensitizing the issue of disability and inclusion of girls/women with disability. PWDs in Nepal like in many other developed and developing countries also represent the minority group and most often their needs remain unseen, voices unheard, thus depriving them of most basic services as.

Furthermore, the prevalence of ignorance, superstitions, misconceptions, blind support of religious and cultural values, lack of education and extreme poverty in the society have created negative impact about PWDs. Barton and Armstrong (2007) also argue that each situation is shaped by its own historical, cultural, global and contextual influences. In the Nepalese society where discrimination exists in investing in education

of a boy and a girl child, investing on a girl with disability can be bare minimum. Thus, the findings of the research may encourage and help to change the perspectives of people in the education of the disabled girl child and recognise them as equal right holder.

Disability creates further problems in the education and schooling of females who are already disadvantaged. I am inspired to investigate this complex phenomenon, which can surface a new dimension of gender, disability and education by analysing such situation. I did not find any research on the experiences of PWDs or their education, till date, to understand the complex blending of gender and disability in Nepal. I believe that it was necessary to conduct a study on this topic.

The findings of this study can enlighten GWDs' schooling experiences, which can be useful for school authorities in providing further remedies to GWDs. Such knowledge can be useful to academics and researchers who are interested in gender as well as disability issues in the context of education. Policy level people can also benefit from the findings because they can be useful to devise future course in gender equality.

### **Delimitations**

I have delimited the scope of my study on GWDs i.e., vision impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired girls only for the purpose of this research. The investigation is limited to the experiences in the school environment of GWDs. So the study does not cover the budget and financial issues in relation to GWDs' education. The chosen schools were limited to the municipal areas of both sample hill districts of Kathmandu valley and out of Kathmandu valley.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

My thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter One provides the introduction and context of the study. This chapter comprises of the scene of the research with an explanation of my personal and professional interest in conducting this research, the background information on formal schooling of PWDs in international and Nepalese school education system as well as special educational need in current practice. This was followed by the rational for the study, research setting, the purpose, and research questions of the study. Finally, delimitations of the study were also included as a part of this chapter.

Chapter Two contains the related literature that was reviewed for this study. Major issues that emerged from the review include: the disability concept, context and education, gender, disability and education, theoretical construct of the study and conceptual framework of the study. These issues are presented as themes for the purposes of coherence and clarity. The concluding part of the chapter reveals the details of the policy and provision contexts internationally, regionally and nationally towards the education of PWDs.

The methodology is detailed in the Third Chapter. This chapter presents the research paradigm, qualitative research approach, phenomenology, research site and participants, data collection and phenomenological analysis procedures. Issues relating to researcher's role and ethics, methodological and descriptive rigours and the ethical considerations that required consideration are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter Four to Chapter Six revolve around the data analysis and essences of the study. I have argued on the perception of GWDs towards their education and school

experiences in Chapter Four. Some major themes that emerged include: importance of education, school environment, understanding of disability and right etc. Chapter five analyses and interprets the perception of parents and community regarding education of GWDs which comprised: positive and negative responses of parents and community, their initiatives to capacity building and taking care, services and opportunities provided to GWDs and future aspirations etc. Chapter Six entails the analysis of perceived influences of parental understanding of disability and SEN children, challenges faced by GWDs and their coping strategies.

Chapter seven revolves around identified findings from the analysis chapters, Four, Five and Six, discussed in relation to the literature review in Chapter Two. Finally, the chapter concludes the entire study with the summary of findings together with the implications of the study.

### **Chapter Essence**

I started this introductory chapter describing my personal and professional interest in carrying out this research and precede the context of the thesis including Nepalese societal belief regarding disability, educational scenario of GWDs. The chapter further dealt with the purpose and rationale of the study, research questions, delimitation of the study and concluding with the structure of the chapters in the complete thesis.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter one was designated in setting the detailed scene of my venture by discussing my research interests, research questions, country context, rationale and other relevant aspects. The primary focus of this study is investigating the GWDs experiences in their school context and in what situations. Prior to exploring the field context, it is essential to understand the concept of disability and gender and other concerning concepts, which will help in widening my horizon of knowledge, and make it easy to proceed in my exploration.

The first section of the present chapter deals with the related literature, which comprises a set of concepts of social psychology, education, and disability, to explain the overall periphery of my research topic, 'schooling of girls with disability'. I have further provided an overview of the changes over time in the education of children with special educational needs (SEN) like children with disability as well as girls, who are categorically marginalised or deprived groups in the developmental arena of the world.

Most people see major changes in policies and practices in the education of SEN students with disability and other marginalised in general in the last three decades. These changes include various amendments of different Acts. Legislations and obviously the purpose of all these changes, is to improve the facilities provided to these children and their parents. I have discussed the efforts made internationally, regionally and nationally in addressing disability as well as girls' education through suitable policies and

programmes. In discussing so I have included the policies and plan of actions pronounced in the international arena and then the national context.

Then the second section proceeds to reveal the review of empirical studies related to the education of SEN children and girls as well conducted at the national and international contexts. The third section entails the theoretical framework of the study and the fourth and final section constitutes the diagrammatic presentation of the conceptual framework of the study. I begin with some related concepts of the study.

### **Disability Perspectives**

In this section I have discussed the periphery of disability understanding and efforts made to provide education to PWDs globally and nationally.

#### **The Concept of Disability, Impairment and Handicap**

Disability, impairment and handicap are interrelated and in practice people use these terms interchangeably. Thus, it is necessary to discuss about these concepts and their relationship with each other. WHO's (1980) International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) has distinctly defined these terms as, disablement is, a sequence of levels of health experience substantial upon some aspect of morbidity i.e., disease, trauma, mental illness and chronic or age-related conditions. As a result, the initial pathological change, may lead to the abnormalities of body structure, appearance organ or system function. On the other hand, any loss or deformity of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function is impairment.

Similarly, the Disabled Persons International (DPI) (2002) a global network of people with disabilities (PWDs), further pointed out three dimensions of disability as body structure and function and impairment thereof, activity and activity restrictions, and

participation and participation restrictions. The DPI has also fostered the emerging human rights approach to disability. It involves parts of the body or the body systems, which have temporary or permanent differences of structure or function. The impairment affects a person's range of activities adversely and the activities of such persons will be linked, this is called a disability. Thus, disability is defined as 'any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being' (UN Enable, 2005 Para. 3). However, there is no universally acknowledged definition of disability. People use the term disability differently.

Bichenbach et al. (1999), mentioned, impairments and disabilities may disadvantage the individual by preventing the fulfilment of six important survival roles, a) orientation, b) physical independence, c) mobility, d) occupation, e) social integration, and f) economic self-sufficiency. These six survival roles are essential to human beings to lead daily life normally otherwise they will be handicapped societal disadvantage due to impairment and disability.

Generally, most societies value youth, beauty, physical ability, and intellectual excellence because the non-disabled people contribute more in the developmental tasks in the society, so people with disability are disregarded and disparaged. Consequently, PWDs were called deaf, dumb, mute, epileptic, crippled, blind, mentally deficient, and spastic, less fortunate etc. in the past. These naming emphasised on their imperfections but now these terms are replaced by a new term, children with special educational needs (SEN). Professionals and experts of disability movement have different perceptions

regarding disability and manifest mainly four different models of disability discourses such as religious or moral, medical, social and cultural in general.

The religious or moral model and the medical model of disability believed that disability resides within the individual. Thus, disability is seen, as part of the person's fate and sick role of the individual is associated with feelings of guilt for the individual, particularly burdensome and personal tragedy. Peters (2004) argues that medical model of disability emphasises on the PWD who needs fixing either by therapy, medicine, and surgery or special treatment. Subsequently, a person's functional limitations (impairments) are considered to be the main cause of the disadvantages, which directly affects the PWD. Edmonds (2005) and Michailakis (2003) argue that the medical model disregards the role of the environment thus medical model of disability advocates the need of separate institutions to cater to PWDs.

In contrast, the social model of disability represents the paradigm shift by rejecting the medical conception of disability, which emphasises on the society's failure to address the needs of people with disability. Discrimination and social suppression created by the society is seen as a social problem. Prestly (2004) argued, the social model emphasises on the environmental condition where PWDs find themselves and view their conditions according to how the society at large responds to the disability as a human difference. Garland-Thomson (2001) also argues that disability studies needs to study the socio-cultural aspect of society to improve the conditions of the PWDs avoiding labels of deviation.

The European Disability forum (2002) further points out that the social model of disability emphasises on the need of corrective measures to disability-based



discrimination and it is an important factor in the social construct of disability. Therefore, disability can be understood as a result of social, economic, and environmental factor (Roehrer Institute, 1996) rather than the individuals' personal tragedy or fault.

As discussed above the models of disability are the paradigmatic shifts, which can be seen in terms of innovations of epistemic, practical, and ethical knowledge and understanding which varies from community to community and country to country. All models are still prevalent in different societies and cannot be replaced by one another. However people are in favour of improved quality-life in recent years. Therefore, the demands of disability studies activities and people's positive thoughts give impetus to social model and currently cultural model because it is one step ahead of social model which focuses empowerment of the disabled people by innovating new potential in the environment, communication and technology.

### **Disability and Education**

The disability classification system may vary to a great extent from country to country. Some countries have adopted a definition based on need for special education services, and do not label students. European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE) (2003) has mentioned, mainly three approaches that different countries have adopted to special educational need (SEN) services. They are:

- a) One-track approach where policies and practices include almost all pupils within mainstream education,
- b) Two-track approach, two distinct systems are maintained, with SEN usually placed in special schools or special classes and do not follow mainstream curriculum, i.e., segregated special schools and mainstream general education, and

c) Multi-track approach, providing a variety of services between mainstream and special education system, i.e., provision of resource classes as well as integrating SEN pupils in mainstream education.

Among these three approaches of providing services to SEN students, Nepal has followed multi-track and two-track approaches only. For example, some pupils with vision impairment and physical impairment have been integrated to mainstream schools and they are also provided resource classes as per their learning needs (multi-track approach) and there are segregated special schools and rehabilitation centres for children with hearing impairment and children with intellectual disabilities and separate mainstream schools (two-track approach).

Disability may be physical, acquired and developmental; however, the categorisation of PWDs around the world can differ from country to country depending upon the national policy so that the concession and facilities can be provided. The most developed country, the USA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2004), has categorised disability into thirteen types: autism, deaf-blindness, deafness, hearing impairment, mental retardation, multiple disabilities, orthopaedic impairments, other health impairment, emotional disturbance, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury, and visual impairment, including blindness (IDEA, 2004: Yell, 2006), focusing to guarantee that all children with disabilities need be accessible to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE).

The following section portrays the schooling models, which reflect the above discussed models of disability.

### **Models of Schooling: Changing Discourses from Special to Inclusive School**

The following table clearly reflects the changing discourses approach and the school typology in the course of SEN children's education processes. Lloyd (2002) stated that the education of pupils with SEN has been gaining prominence and efforts have been intensified since 1980.

Table 1

#### Schooling Models

Discourse	Approach	Leading to
Special needs as defect (Emerging from charity)	Rectification and controlling	Segregation
Special needs as deficit (Moving from charity to rights)	Compensatory and superiority	Integration
Special needs as diversity (Extending rights discourse)	Dialogue and equality	Inclusion

(Adapted from Jha, 2002: 169)

### **Institutional Special School: A Segregated Model**

SEN facilities to blind and deaf students, was provided first time in Europe in the eighteenth century by establishing residential schools. Then, these schools flourished rapidly during the nineteenth century. However, special schools for those with mobility impairments started only around the twentieth century. North America also followed a similar route later on (Lloyd, 2002). Meanwhile, persons with intellectual impairments were thought uneducable and were largely institutionalised both in North America and Europe. During those days, medical model of disability was accepted and well-

established because SEN provision in North America was driven by professionals who developed diagnosis, interventions and treatment focused on specific impairments. Thus, charitable and religious organisations played a major role to provide services. However, in those days, education of the disabled children and youth was not viewed as a right as other citizens but services were provided in charity. So it can be called charity model also.

Kisanji (1999) mentioned that philanthropists found that it is imperative that PWDs should be given custodial care so the PWDs were kept in asylums where only food and clothing were provided but no education. Renotierova (2003) stated that ‘the aim of special education is to educate a person with special needs in a way that he/she is able to internally overcome his/her disability’ (as cited in Siska & Vann, 2007, p. 59). In other words, special education was seen as a means of up lifting the life world of SEN with care, cure and education but the sociological needs of the SEN were not cured and they were separated from their family and non-disabled peers groups.

Furthermore, Siska & Vann (2007) mention that such a statement ties in with the special education tradition in Czech Republic and also in central and eastern countries in Europe built on the ‘old’ Russian concept of ‘defectology’ (p.59) i.e., defects or impairment, development was focused by the special education in spite of individual difference. The special education system there opened the avenue of formal schooling for PWDs. However, they were looked as a group of people with some defects and these people were educated and cared for in a highly segregated network of special schools having residential provision.

Almost all the countries have special schools but their number depends on the particular country's philosophy and policy regarding the education of children with disabilities. According to Vislie (1995), special claims for the recognition of the needs and rights of the handicapped people were put forward since 1960. Therefore special education led to the formulation of a public policy for the handicapped in most of the countries. Frederickson (2002) states that "putting together groups of children who are thought to have similar needs results in their segregation from other pupils of their age. This can be stigmatizing and can also restrict access to better educational opportunities" (p. 63). Though particular concern for the deprived and disadvantaged population got recognition since 1960s most of the disability rights activists and educationists realised that segregated educational provision separates children from their peers and families and it may also not be cost-effective. UNESCO (2003) also argues that establishing or extending separate provision prevents SEN children from learning in mainstream school and unable to remove barriers so the integration of SEN children in mainstream schools got momentum gradually.

### **Assimilating Children with Disability: An Integration Model**

The early educational opportunities were considered very important to all the children globally. Falvey and Givner (2005) pointed out the weakness of segregated system as "segregated education creates a permanent underclass of students and conveys a strong message to those students that they do not measure up, fit in, or belong" (p.5). The segregated system over time, was deemed to be discriminatory, exclusionary and against basic human rights. Peters (2004) stated that the appearance of family, community, and consumer model of service delivery for SEN children was witnessed

during the World War II and after. Then, the social model began to be developed and parents of children with disabilities wanted deinstitutionalisation in both Europe and in North America. The concept of normalisation was promoted by Wolfensberger in Europe and by the landmark decision of the Board of Education in US. Alur (2002) explains, substantial studies indicate that children with disabilities in integrated groups participated twice as much in social interaction and displayed higher level of play than the children in segregated groups. Further by joining integrated classes SEN children sit together with other non-disabled and get more opportunities and mutual cooperation while segregated children miss such opportunities.

Similarly, in Britain the Warnock Committee Report, 1978 listed essential provisions for children under five and included children with disabilities in top priority because early identification and detection of children ‘at risk’ prevents special needs developing later. Then, the Report distinguished three forms of integration as follows: i) Locational integration – in this integration special units or classes are arranged for SEN children in the mainstream schools located in their community; ii) Social integration – in this integration locational integration as well as social interchange will exist between SEN and other non-disabled peers; and iii) Functional integration – which involves special children join their normal peers in regular classes on a full – or part-time basis. Thus, the British government initiated all these types of integration in schooling. By-and-large, other parts of the globe also followed the United States and Great Britain and started integration of the SEN children in the mainstream schools.

### **Establishing Rights to Education for All: Inclusive Education**

The Salamanca Statement (1994) gave birth to the notion of the accommodation of all children in the mainstream schools. The idea of inclusive education is to provide equal opportunities for education of SEN children in their neighbouring schools where they can study like non-disabled peers. Slee (2001) mentioned that inclusive education has firmly planted itself in education and public discourse in an amazingly short period of time. Education jurisdictions around the world have adopted the vocabulary of inclusive education and invested significant resources the production of policy texts, the development and renewal of capital and human infrastructure, and modified curriculum programmes to make schools and higher education more inclusive (Lindsay, 2003). Inclusive education is challenging and a complex concept. It is more than just placing a child with special educational needs in a regular school.

The supporters of this concept believe that in regular mainstream schools, SEN children will have a better chance for daily interaction with their peers and ultimately their socialisation skills will develop. Peters, Johnstone, and Ferguson (2005) argue that the philosophy behind inclusive education is every individual has equal rights to a quality education in relation to the development of their potentials and respect as a human being.

Disability is no longer internally based on a set of physical or mental restriction; instead, disability has an external source in social attitudes, behaviour and environmental barrier (Clark, Dyson & Millward, 1995). Thus, inclusive education means there is no separate special education placement for any students but all the students are placed full-time in regular classroom and provide appropriate special education support (Glarvan – Pinhas & Schmalkin – Pdhazur, 1989; Kauffman & Hallhan, 1995; Slee, 2000). The

inclusive approach ensures every individual to participate fully in all aspects of life, physical, academic, social and emotional. Thus, inclusive education reflects the concept of a system of values rather than a particular type of educational placement. According to Powers (2002),

Inclusive education is best conceived as a response to student diversity based on principles of equity and acceptance that aim to give all children equal rights to participation in mainstream curricula and communities, as valued, accepted, and fully participating members of those communities, and also rights to achieve as much as they can academically, physically, and in their social-emotional development (p.237).

Thus, basically, the philosophy, theory and practice of inclusive education links international expectations on human rights and the PWDs and how these drive the notion of cultural model of disability. Further, Collins (2003) argues that ‘the notion of social inclusion represents a significant shift in political thought i.e., promising more practical and effective measures towards a fairer society’ (p. 21). All the above interpretations of inclusive education indicate that the marginalised groups need to be included in regular school system.

However, those against inclusion argue that inclusive education will be a hindrance in the progress of non-disabled children. Bateman and Bateman (2001) argue that “full inclusion is not the best placement of all students” (p.3). A severe or profound disability may limit the participation of a student in the class. The feeling of being different from others can lower the self-esteem of a student with disability. Inclusive education is about helping mainstream schools to overcome the barriers to meet the



learning needs of all children. Thus, all the three types of schools provide education to SEN children even though it varies from country to country. The SEN children need different types of educational assistance and educational pedagogy to provide equal access to education and schooling.

### **Adapting Curricula and Instruction Pedagogy for Children with Disability**

In the above section I have discussed about the schooling practices in schools where SEN students are present. The school environment, curriculum and pedagogy should be considered in providing better learning context to the SEN students. Adaptive curriculum (van den Berg, Slegers & Geijsel, 2001) or Differentiation curriculum (Westwood, 2003) and Expanded Core Curriculum (Hatlen, 1996; Corn & Wall, 2002), are different terminologies emphasising educational approaches by which differences between learners can be recognised and used in appropriate teaching strategies for teaching SEN children. In other words, 'teaching things differently according to observed differences among the learners' (Westwood, 2001, p. 5). The alternative strategies can be applied 'to teaching approaches, content of the curriculum, assessment methods, classroom organisation, student grouping, and teachers' interaction with individual students etc.' (Westwood, 2003, p. 145). While providing educational opportunities to SEN children, it is essential to consider both their needs and demand so that they can feel included and respected and find their school a really better place for them. It is important that SEN students view their school as a place where they can develop love for learning and be able to share friendship and support, and a place where they feel safe and secure in the company of their peers and teachers.

In the education of students with vision impairment and low vision special strategies have been developed internationally. The expanded core curriculum, Hatlen, (1996, 2002); Corn & Wall (2002) embraced compensatory or functional academic skills including communication modes; orientation and mobility, which teach learners to be familiar with their surrounding and know where they are. However, a totally blind child may learn to read and write using Braille and audio media.

In fact, the Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is an important educational tool, which is universally recognised and caters to children with SEN. IEP is both process and product. Lee-Tarver (2006) stated that IEP is a process which is developed reviewed and revised reflecting the needs of a particular child, so that the disabilities can be catered appropriately and IEP is also a product because it provides clear cut guidelines and a roadmap especially to the stakeholders (teachers and parents) to monitor the progress of the child in her/his academic performance, development of social skills, and/or adaptive aspects. Further, Tennant (2007) pointed out that with the commencement of the SEN, Code of Practice, 2001 in the UK the British schools also emphasised on the proper use of IEP in educating SEN children. Thus, IEP is popular in the Western World as well as in some developed countries in the east, in ensuring the provision of education to the students with SEN. Thus, my key participants also require the provisions mentioned above.

All the individuals obviously have different needs due to their different characteristics. Meek (1991) has stated that “Talking and listening are so ordinary that we scarcely notice that they are ways of using language in order to learn how the world works and how to accumulate shared understanding about it” (p. 18). Language is one of

the most precise and implicit communication skills for human beings. However, a person who loses hearing in her/his young age or is congenitally deaf gets negatively affected in the development of speech as well as language. As a result, persons with hearing loss will lack communication and interaction skills and this will hinder their participation in both school and society. Moreover, Read (1984) states 'hearing impairment and deafness means all degrees of loss of hearing from minimum to total deafness' (p.1) which leads to many difficulties. Consequently, this impairment deviates from auditory structure or auditory function outside the normal range. Thompson et al. (1993) report that eye contact, listening, and imitative behaviours; following directions and minimal receptive and expressive communication skills are the requisites for a deaf student to interact appropriately in a classroom. A hearing impaired student should be given opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities outside the classroom for social and emotional development. Thus, besides sign language, the teachers should be able to use different types of hearing devices, which the hearing-impaired students use to communicate.

Some hearing impaired students can rely on non-verbal communication like body language and facial expressions while some can be good in lip-reading. Espeso, Owens, and Williams (2006) stressed that hearing loss will interfere with acquisition of spoken language and social development. They further add that even moderate hearing loss will have significant effects on a child's education and social-emotional development. Thus, Underwood (2003) also emphasizes that a teacher should incorporate different communicative strategies in the classroom so that the students can benefit more. Thus, students with hearing impairment need the above mentioned learning strategies in their schools in Nepal and also the resource-teachers should be well equipped so that they

would be able to cater to hearing impaired students as per their needs. It is necessary to discuss about the efforts made at the international and regional level with regards to PWDs' well-beings. Thus, the following section deals with the international and regional endeavours.

### **International Policy and Provision Context: Education of Persons with Disability**

Since the inception of the United Nations, efforts have been made in the overall development of the Third World with the co-operation of the developed countries and its buddy agencies. Across the world, people with disabilities (PWDs) have poorer health outcomes, lower education achievements, less economic participation and higher rates of poverty than people without disabilities. This is partly because PWDs experience barriers in accessing services that many of us have long taken for granted, including health, education, employment, and transport as well as information (WHO & World Bank, 2011). Though efforts are on the way, PWDs are treated as inactive beneficiary of the society and are supported only with pity and sympathy in most of the societies. Nevertheless, since the civil rights era of 1960s and 1970s various strategies and programmes of action have been projected to shift from policies based on exclusion, with targeted charities toward policies embracing the inclusion of PWDs worldwide (Cook & Burke, 2002). Following this international trend, the developing countries are also making efforts for successful implementation of inclusive policies for PWDs and gender parity. Nepal is also in the process of shifting its position and adopting more inclusive policies towards mainstreaming the marginalised groups including PWDs. This trend began after 1960 and getting more inclusive with the passage of time.

UNICEF (2006) states that education is a basic human right which is imperative to personal and societal development and well being of all children, who deserve quality education founded on rights-based approach and rooted in the concept of gender equality. The gender equality was also stressed at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 and has been included by all the signatory governments in their national policies with the notion that education is a right and not a privilege for all the citizens, whether male or female; able or disabled; young or old. Since then a lot has been changed in the field of educational access and participation though the problem of inequality still exists. In the following section I have discussed on some of the United Nations Declaration and Conventions by which the member countries including Nepal made commitment to address the needs of PWDs education and well-being.

The main declarations and provisions made by UN, which are mandatory to all the member governments, the table (see, Appendix: N) portrays some important decision regarding PWDs. Thus as per the UN Declarations, the right to education is enshrined in the constitutions of all independent nations. All these declarations proclaim the right of every citizen to appropriate education regardless of gender, race, colour or religion. Mujahid-Mukhtar (2008) stresses that education is the basic human right, which is the key to sustainable development, peace and stability within and between the countries and are indispensable means for effective participation in the rapidly globalising societies and economies of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (p.1). However, the education of PWDs depends upon the decisions of the specialists in medical and educational. Then some PWDs get separate education in residential institutions along with their other peers with disability and some are integrated in mainstream schools if they are mildly affected and substantiate inferior

education. Thus, PWDs are dependent and are unable to exercise their rights and deprived of the chance to take decisions for their education.

The purpose of the World Programmes of Action concerning disabled people and PWDs rights was to promote effective measures for the prevention of disability, rehabilitation and realisation of the goals of 'full Participation' of PWDs in social life and development and of 'equality'. The UN, right from establishment, has played a vital role in widening people's outlook towards the status of PWDs. The 1980s were boom years for special educational provision, both inside and outside the mainstream in the global arena.

The then Special UN Rapporteur, Lindqvist (2002a) opines that the Standard Rules address the exclusion of PWDs by stressing individual empowerment for independence and increased structural access. The Rules are devised to guarantee that the children and adults with disabilities can exercise the same rights and responsibilities as other members of their societies without any barriers. However, these rules have no formal binding authority. Furthermore, the declaration of International Disability Day by the UN in 1982 is also a significant step. This is celebrated on 3<sup>rd</sup> December throughout the world with different activity-oriented programmes to arouse public awareness towards the status of PWDs. Nepal has also been celebrating International Disability Day since 1992.

Moreover, the Salamanca Declaration (1994) stresses, on the unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs of each child and that 'those with SEN must have access to regular schools and should be accommodated in a child-centred pedagogy capable of meeting these needs'(para.2). The Jemotien Conference (1990),

Education for All (EFA), 2000 have also focused globally, to provide universal primary education and adult literacy as well as encouraged to improve quality of basic education and to find more cost-effective ways to meet the basic learning needs of different marginalised population groups. Thus, all these EFA goals stipulate quality education to all the children without any discrimination so girls and SEN children are also included. The World Declaration on EFA (2000) adopted by Dakar Framework for Action further leads to the concept of inclusive education by emphasizing to ‘create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environment conducive to excellence in learning, with clearly defined levels of achievement for all’ (p.9). This also established the goal to provide all the children with primary school education by 2015. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) further marked a paradigm shift in attitudes and approaches in viewing persons with disabilities as subjects with rights, who are capable of claiming rights and making decisions for their lives. It came into force in 2008 so all the signatories adopted their commitments through the policies and programmes in their countries.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) propose that children and youth with disabilities should be an integral part of the population by 2015. Although, some of these goals have not been achieved by the said time, they have provided direction for further development. MDGs also reflect the enhancement of the children in equitable manner and also eradicate gender disparity and empower girls/women. Thus, the EFA and MDGs both spell out to develop the educational attainment by all the children without any discrimination and also these goals provide road map for specific strategies and programmes in rising of the education of the marginalised groups.

### **Regional Policy and Provision Context: Education of Persons with Disability**

The UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia and the UN Girls Education Initiative (UNGEI) and other regional organisations, have also been working to encourage equal participation of girls in education to raise their living standards. There are regional commitments also to counter all sorts of discrimination and provide equalisation of education. In the South Asian regional context, also all Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working in this region recognise that handicap and disability are developmental issues.

The UN Decade of Disabled Persons (1993-2002) was followed by Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 1992. The resolution proclaimed the extension for another decade 2003-2012. In response to this, the UNESCAP, World Enable (2003) produced the 'Biwako Millennium Framework for Action: towards inclusive, barrier-free and right-based society for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific'. The meeting welcomed the paradigm shift, from charity-based approach to human right-based approach in the whole concept of disability. According to Biwako Declaration (2003), an *inclusive* society is a society for all, and a *barrier-free* society refers to a society free from institutional, physical and attitudinal barriers, as well as social, economic and cultural barriers. Similarly, a *rights-based* society means a society based on the human rights of all individuals where PWDs are valued and placed at the centre of all decisions affecting them. Thus, it emphasized that more could be, and needed to be, done in terms of enacting and implementing relevant legislation, extending inclusive education for all, improving training and employment, addressing poverty, ensuring early intervention and creating a truly barrier-free and right-based society.



Biwako Millennium Framework has identified the seven priority areas for actions, targets, strategies, timeframes, and supporting/monitoring mechanisms. They are: a) Self-help organisations of persons with disabilities, b) Women with disabilities, c) Early intervention and education, d) Training and employment including self-employment, e) Access to build environment and public transport, f) Access to information and communication, including information and communication technology, and g) Poverty alleviation through capacity building, social security and sustainable livelihood programmes. Thus, in line with the international community the regional entity is also trying its best to raise marginalised groups by providing educational opportunities and efforts are continuous to eliminate poverty, illiteracy and disease.

The above discussion spells out that in the rapidly developing world of the 21<sup>st</sup> century efforts are being made to offer the citizens access to an appropriate education as well as to cope with the unprecedented challenges. Now in the following section, I should discuss the policies and programmes in the Nepalese context will be discussed.

### **Gender, Disability and Education**

Every community has its own way of understanding disability and coping with PWDs in general. However, disability is still a hindrance to individuals to attain full potential of being a human being and it can hit anyone at any age however its resolution has multi-faceted factors. The status of PWDs varies on the basis of socio-economic status of the family, geographic location number of family members and most importantly their attitude towards disability. All these factors play a vital role to determine education and living in the society of the PWDs. Disability in the family can be an impact on labour-market participation and income of non-disabled family members.

In such cases, due to gender predisposition, usually women have to compromise by withdrawing from employment or by shortening their working hours, in order to look after the PWDs. Mostly; women with disabilities bear triple discrimination, marginalization, poverty and impairment. Akinpelu (2007) further stated that this is sometimes multifaceted further by discrimination due to caste and ethnicity. Thus, women have to bear loss in earnings and disrupted career and promotion prospect and have to be dependent upon their husbands and other family members.

Furthermore, the PWDs are marginalised in labour-market or totally discarded. Gender stereotypes are prevailing in most societies, which describe fixed ideas about the natural determination of male and female social characteristics (Praktikum, 2003 as cited in, Kliuchko 2011) and the position of male and female are designated. Social and cultural beliefs, practices and attitudes often hinder a girl more than boys in their pursuit of education. Furthermore, as Shrestha and Hachhethu (2005) argue that unlike men's involvement in visible earning, most Nepalese women devote themselves to domestic activities.

Analysing from policy point of view Kabeer (2006) describes exclusion as a durable form of disadvantage in social identity and reflects the cultural devaluation of people based on who they are. In short, universal human rights, has already defined citizen's civil rights and this is inculcated by our constitution also. Hence, all the citizens are right holders to entertain those rights. Exclusion and inclusion are two sides of a coin in the social phenomenon, where the weak become the victim of exclusion.

The Nepalese people, like other societies, also learn to perform gender roles from generation to generation due to cultural socialisation and blind support of traditions.

Thus, the social position of boys and girls are determined by their caste/ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status of the family, geographic location and so on. Caste-based discrimination and hierarchy is prohibited in the constitution and it is illegal also however discrimination and hierarchy still exist in Nepalese societies. Parajuli and Acharya (2008) reported educational culture in the family is vital regarding girls' access and magnitude of participation in educational processes. The socialisation of girls and boys, shape their understanding of gender roles and worldview. The deep-rooted socio-cultural norms and practices of patriarchal system determine the roles of boys and girls.

The Nepalese education system, despite the efforts, is still at present fundamentally ill equipped to address the needs of children with disabilities. For instance, most of the schools and public buildings do not have ramps so they are not friendly to wheel-chair users, and most of the schools lack trained resource/specialist support teachers, and also do not have adaptive devices, and other resources required in educating children with SEN.

As gender is a social construct, female and male begin their life in a given social static from birth. However, Sen (1999) argued that some individuals and groups of individuals, because of their privileged positions, have active agency in social dynamics. Milbourne (2002) further stated that 'Hard to reach or socially excluded groups are not homogeneous. Individuals come from diverse communities, cultures and language groups, and hold different values in relation to material and familial resources and roles' (p 287). The underrepresented marginalised groups are facing mostly exclusion in the society and are deprived of equitable access to resources and civic political rights.

### **Disability in the Context of Nepal**

By-and-large, Nepal has been experiencing different political changes and as a consequence the social, cultural, economic and political lives of the people has been changing and developing. Consequently, SEN children, including Girls with Disability (GWDs) are also getting their positions gradually more in the scenario of educational progress in recent years though there are still many SEN/GWDs out of schools. Nepal Living Standards Survey- III (NLSS-III) (2011) has reported that Nepal has record a 25.16 percent people under absolute poverty (NLSS-III, 2011). Though the NLSS-III showed the improved living standard of the people in Nepal it has still to combat against gender disparity, inequality, exclusion, marginalisation and disability to reach the targets of EFA goals and MDGs. As this study focuses on a schooling of girls with disability so it is also necessary to analyse the policies regarding PWDs and efforts on education of girls as well.

The pace of government needs to speed up to include all the SEN children and fulfil the commitments of EFA Goals and MDGs. The Nepal Disabled Human Rights Centre (NDHRC) (2006) argues in a policy paper that it is difficult to ascertain precise number of disabled in Nepal. Among nearly thirty million people, five percent people are estimated PWDs (Boyce and Paterson, 2002) and with the WHO estimating a disability prevalence of ten percent in developing countries (Joshi, 2004) very few of them have access to health care and rehabilitation. However, NLSS-III (2011) reports that overall, 3.6 percent of people have some kind of disability. Similarly, the disability rates for males and females are 4.2 percent and 3.0 percent respectively. The National Census Survey, 2011 shows a decrease in the above figure into about 2 percent. Nepal is one of

the poorest countries, and has to face challenges in caring for PWDs, since disability and poverty are inextricably linked (van Kampen, 2008; Shrestha, Shrestha and Deepak, 2009). Still there is neither accurate figure of the total number of PWDs nor the percent of children in-schools and out of school and also the exact number of girls with disability. However, UNESCAP (2010) reported that Nepal has endorsed laws to address disability-inclusiveness such as self-help organisations of PWDs; early detection, intervention and education; training and employment; poverty alleviation through capacity building, social security and sustainable livelihood programmes; and legal assistance etc. Ironically, social domination exists in almost all Nepalese societies. Exclusion, inequality and oppression by the so-called upper class and castes to the lower castes and classes with low economic status are a common practice.

There are mainly three ways of understanding the treatment of PWDs such as medical doctors' view the need of allopathic treatment because disease/disability is bacterial, Ayurveda is in favour of treatment and natural herbal cures for the imbalance of bodily dysfunctions. Furthermore, Dhami-Jhakris (witch-doctors) are in favour of psychotherapy for the treatment of diseases and disabilities. Thus, all these are still in practice in the Nepalese society and PWDs are least bothered for their schooling. However, now-a-days, most people go to doctors and hospitals for the treatment of PWDs and are also conscious about their education. In the following section I have discussed about the policies, plans and provisions in the context of educating PWDs in Nepal.

### **Nepalese Policy and Provision Context: Education of Persons with Disability**

Nepal has been continuously endorsing new policies, reaffirming and amending laws in accordance to the provisions of the conventions and treaties and enacting them through implementation of different policies. In 1951, after the political change in favour of democracy, there was an initiation for planned development as well as social and economic transformation thus, people felt free and gradually became engaged in political, educational and social activities. Since then, the government of Nepal started to take initiatives for girls' education and schooling of children with disabilities, by establishing girls' schools as well as special schools for children with disabilities. Efforts like these have been continuous in providing education and equipping all the citizens with life-skills equally.

The table (See, Appendix: K) reflects some major policies, programmes, and efforts made by the government and also shows the trend of development in catering for the PWDs. Nepal started its planned educational system with the introduction of first Five-Year Plan (1956-1961). In 1964, the education of PWDs was initiated with the intake of 10 blind and visually impaired children in Laboratory Secondary School, Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University, in Kathmandu as an integrated approach and in 1966 a special school, School for Deaf, in Bal Mandir (Orphanage) in Kathmandu was established for deaf and hearing impaired children. Hence, these schools are a milestone in the history of Special Educational Needs (SEN) children's education in Nepal. Providing educational opportunity to vision impaired children encompasses social model of disability as well as the establishment of a separate special school for hearing impaired is an example of medical model of disability.

The Education Act 1971 provides provision of educational facility to SEN children with visual, hearing, intellectual and mental disabilities. Moreover, under the National Education System Plan (NESP), Special Education Council (SEC), authorised body for the educational arrangement of SEN children was established in 1973. This is also a landmark in the history of SEN children's education. Then the government took responsibility of SEN children's educational access like non-disabled children. Under the jurisdiction of Special Education Council (SEC), schools for children with different disabilities were established as special schools later in 1982.

Subsequently, the establishment of Nepal Disabled and Blind Association (NDBA) in 1968 is the evidence in recognising of the welfare of PWDs, which gave birth to institutional framework to unite the PWDs for their rights and social securities. Social Service National Coordination Council (SSNCC) was established in 1977 and made responsible to suggest to the government in formulating necessary policies and programmes regarding PWDs facilities, treatment and concession etc.

Disabled persons' Protection and Welfare Act was introduced in 1982 was the first legislation related specifically to PWDs and made some important provisions to strengthen the lives of the PWDs as right holder citizens of the nation. The Protection and Welfare of the Disabled Persons Rules, 1994 also expanded the provisions and facilities to the PWDs like the stipulations about education, transportation, health services, and social welfare and employment provisions to the beneficiaries. Additionally, in 1993 the Government of Nepal further initiated National Special Education Programme (NSEP) as an integral part of Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP), with the support of

the Danish Government. In 1994, BPEP developed NSEP as its component and is implemented through the school cluster and resource centre structure (CHIRAG, 1999).

The Social Welfare Act 1992 authorised the Social Welfare Council to develop social programmes for PWDs. The Child Protection Act 1992 was introduced to address the issues raised in UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which states that children with disability cannot be discriminated and it is the responsibility of the nation to provide care and appropriate education if it cannot be provided by the family.

Additionally, the Disabled Service National Policy 1996 is intended to provide equal opportunities in all spheres of society by empowering PWDs. The Local Self-government Act (LSGA) 1999 authorises village development committees (VDCs) and Ward Committees (WCs) to help protect disabled and other vulnerable people. It also authorised the Village Development Committees (VDCs) to keep a record of people with disability in their area. The Education Regulation, 2000 authorises the government to develop special rules for PWDs in education.

The Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) includes certain mechanisms and strategies for promoting the rights of PWDs and a National Coordinating Committee, which involves disabled people, has been established to feed the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007). The government is thus, conducting Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) programmes, with special and inclusive schools, scholarships and disability prevention programmes. The governmental machinery and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) or other charitable agencies, through various empowerment initiatives, are making consistent efforts to minimise, if not eliminate the social hindrances and constraints that emerge from different disabilities.



Furthermore, the Special Education Policy (Nepal 2006b) promotes inclusive education through provision of educational material production and distribution, teacher training and integrated education for children with disabilities. Moreover, the National Policy and Action Plan on Disability, 2006 presents the situation of the PWDs in Nepal, and identifies legal basis for them. A national coordination mechanism or National Coordination Committee on Disability was established in the disability focal point in 2000 under the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare “Provided that nothing shall be deemed to prevent the making of special provision by law for the protection, empowerment or advancement of the interests ... the... disabled and those who are physically or mentally incapacitated” (Nepal 2007, part3, art. 13, para.3 as cited in UNESCAP, 2010).

The Legislative Parliament of Nepal has ratified the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (CRPD) 2006. The Article 24 of this convention recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to education. The Three-Year Interim Plan, BS 2064/65-2066/67 (Nepal 2007b) identifies, PWDs as one of the excluded groups that need interventions. The strategies in relation to PWDs include crosscutting interventions with regard to women, inclusive development and economic empowerment etc.

Thus, the long journey paved by the government of Nepal in facilitating the PWDs in education, employment and other social and economic opportunities since its planned development efforts through policy formulation and practice. However, due to the difficult topography, diverse socio-economic and cultural complexities the conditions of PWDs are not the same in all parts of Nepal. Only a few people benefit by the given facilities and also only a small number of PWDs attend school but the school cycle

completion rate is very low as I discussed in Chapter One. Now it is right-based. The policies and programmes till date are encouraging however, there is no authentic statistics of PWDs and their types and their number going to school. There is also no authentic record of different NGOs which are working in the field education and rehabilitation of PWDs thus, there is no accurate data regarding both PWDs as well as those working for their cause. Policies also do not spell out special attention to provide education and other facilities to GWDs in particular.

### **Review of Empirical Studies**

Several studies have been conducted regionally, nationally and internationally in girls' education and children with disabilities from different angles. The efforts have of course been continuous to increase the participation of girls and disadvantaged groups in education and to promote their well-being. However, this study is related to only girl students with disabilities who are attending formal schooling in special needs, integrated, or inclusive schools. Thus, in this section, I have reviewed some studies regarding girls' education conducted in Nepal from different point of view along with other studies related to education of children with disability.

Prasad (2003) reported that in the past only a few surveys like a) National census 1971, b) Sample survey of disabled persons in Nepal 1980, c) National survey of blindness 1981, d) National survey of mental retardation 1989, e) National survey of prevalence of deafness and ear disease to Nepal 1991, f) A disability survey of Kanchanpur district in 1995, g) Survey of persons with disability in Sindhuli district 1998, h) Situation analysis of disability by National Planning Commission (NPC) 2001 have been conducted in Nepal in the disability sector. The surveys and census of PWDs

were initiated since 1970 however there still remains room for doubt because parents still try to hide their disabled child. CHIRAG (1999) observed that the educational provision for children with disabilities did not meet to the aim of Basic and Primary Education Programme/Special Education Unit (BPEP/SEU). The study was basically focused on the evaluation of the programme so it does not mention about the experiences of the students with disability. However, the study highlighted the programme and I learned about resource classes, teachers and different SEN students.

Kafle (2002) presented a detailed and critical evaluation of Special Education Programme in Nepal, in which he highlights the status of the SEN programme, issues and problems of major public concern and he also suggests strategic measures to implement special needs education (SNE) in Nepal successfully. He found that the Special Need Educational Programmes (SNEP), were conducted in all levels of schooling in Nepal by the government as well as NGOs. This study basically provides an overall scenario of the SEN children's education programme in Nepal, which helped me to acquire additional knowledge in this field. However, this study does not give the experiences of SEN girl and boy students in their school environment categorically so the study encouraged me to go more deeply in my study regarding this topic.

Vaidya (2003) reported that the teacher education curriculum does not include special teacher training programme dealing with SEN children and inclusive education. Similarly, UNICEF (2003) reports that most non-disabled people in the society consider PWDs as feeble and a burden to the society. Children with disabilities, especially girls with disabilities from low-caste communities, are more discriminated and marginalized (p. 8). If a family, has a disabled child, the treatment and other expenditure fuels poverty

and poverty in turn aggravates disability because money is essential for necessary treatment. Parents of disabled do not get to work to their potential also because one of them has to stay with the child at home. In this case, the family has to face multiple barriers and inevitably the girl child with disability will be more marginalised. Then the marginalisation will affect her education as well as social life. Thus, female PWDs are doubly marginalised.

Gautam, (2009) through his study entitled 'Mainstreaming People with Disability in the Development of Nepal' assessed the status of people with disability in Nepal and suggested possible action plans in mainstreaming them into national development. He found that the PWDs were socially excluded in Nepal and he also observed that their total dependence upon other family members was the exclusive feature of PWDs in Nepal. Further, he mentioned that the exclusion-inclusion was found as one-dimensional construct related to decision-making, participation and empowerment issues. The family and peer groups were identified as the main stakeholders in social inclusion process. Furthermore, cultural values and education systems were also found to be influential in the process of social exclusion-inclusion of the PWDs. He concludes by saying that good governance and the possible collaborative approaches are essential to deal with mainstreaming of the PWDs in future however the report does not spell about the girls' position in the disability scenario in Nepal.

Lamichhane and Sawada (2009) reported that the estimated rate of returns to education is very high, ranging from 30.4 to 33.2% in their recent study entitled 'Disability and Returns to Education'. The information, were obtained from persons with hearing, physical and visually impairments in Kathmandu, Nepal, using a carefully

structured questionnaire. The coexistence of these high returns to education and the limited years of schooling suggest that there are credit market imperfections as well as supply side constraints in education for PWDs. Policies to eliminate these problems will mitigate poverty among PWDs, the largest minority group in the world.

Further, they explain that education in Nepal has a significant influence on wages, with estimated returns to education for PWDs ranging from 20% to 50%, as reported by Psaharopoulos and Patrinos (2004) is drastically higher estimate than those for non-disabled people in developing countries (as cited in Lamichhane and Sawada, 2009). In spite of extremely high returns to education, Lamichhane and Sawada (2009) confirm that people with hearing impairment have benefited more than people with visual and or physical impairments from significantly fewer years of schooling. In reality, there are significant institutional problems for persons with hearing impairment in Nepalese education system. Moreover, no arrangements have been made to facilitate higher education for hearing-impaired group after the 10 years of schooling. Their findings spell out that a hearing impaired person has shorter years of schooling than a visually impaired on average. Though the study emphasised the return rates of PWDs like vision impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired but it does not tell about the girls' issues.

Furthermore, when people become disabled, when they are grown-ups, it will be difficult for them to adjust at school because they will have difficulty to use Braille and learning different methods of skills such as orientation and mobility. Therefore such people are more likely to drop-out and give up studies. Mehrotra (2004) reported that disabled women thus find impairment in their social position. Women with disabilities in India face double discrimination due to prevalence of traditional gender roles and

expectations. Thomas and Thomas (2002) argued that there are very few studies on education of children with disabilities so it is essential to explore the experiences of SEN children in their schooling (as cited in Mehrotra, 2004). Ansari (2004) says, ‘a reduced hearing perception during infancy and early childhood not only interferes with development of speech and language skills, but also adversely affects the developing auditory nervous system’ (p.83). As a consequence, often the language development of deaf students is delayed and also affects their communication skills as well as socialisation and reading skills. According to Espeso, Owens, and Williams (2006) hearing loss will interfere with acquisition of spoken language and social development. They further, stated that even moderate hearing loss would have significant affects on a child’s education and social-emotional development.

Moreover, Lockwood (2001) argues, “hearing impairment obviously will affect a child’s efforts to acquire and manipulate language normally” (p.110). Children with hearing loss are unable to communicate with others as a result they may lack social and behavioural development. Yoshinaga-Itano and Appuzzo (1998) report that infants whose hearing loss, were identified before six months achieved considerably higher expressive language and comprehension-conceptual sub-tests than those, whose hearing loss are identified after eighteen months. Thus, it is essential to find out any anomaly of hearing at a very early age because early intervention will be crucial for the development of speech-language.

According to Lanfer (2006), early childhood programme will be helpful for the successful integration of children with hearing impairment in regular classrooms. According to Powers (2002), involvement of deaf students in extra-curricular activities

will be helpful to develop leisure interests and social skills. It will also be helpful to increase the interaction among the deaf and non-deaf students. Extracurricular activities allow time for interaction outside the classroom and will be useful for the development of deep and lasting friendships, social skills and self-esteem.

Maher (2007) explored and investigated the beliefs of stakeholders in the education of children with disability, inclusive education and to what extent the educational needs of SEN children were being met in Kwazulu – Natal (KZN), South Africa, a decade after a democracy. The findings of this study revealed that there was little evidence of full inclusion of students with disabilities in regular education. After going through this review I found that although global attention is on inclusive education, developing countries still have a lot to do for full inclusion of SEN children with different disabilities. I came to know that macro and micro factors affecting the SEN students in their academic and social milieu of their school environment from this study and this understanding was helpful in identifying the school milieu of my respondents.

Arms, Bickett, and Graf (2008) examined the lived experiences of girls with disabilities, both identified and unidentified for special education services and found that their experiences are mediated by their gender. Girls who are identified for services face obstacles like sexual harassment a male dominated classroom and also by sex-stereotyped education and training. Furthermore, they reported that girls with learning disabilities are not identified and thus, they are more likely to dropout from school, face teenage pregnancy, and bear lifetime poverty and depend on public assistance. Kratovil and Bailey (1986) stressed that there is evidence to suggest that girls are often more aged when admitted to special education, so they are late starters. Further, Wehmeyer and

Schwartz (2001) reported that girls often get gender biased career counselling and curricular materials and are prepared for sex-stereotyped employments like receptionist or treasurer. Moreover, Madigan (2002) in her qualitative study of Latina students in special education found that girls ‘described the distractions from male peers as threatening and a source of frustration’ (p.96). They have sad experiences of the boys bullying them in the classroom.

Tsai and Fung (2005) conducted research, regarding perceived constraints to participation in Leisure Time Physical Activities (LTPA), on a total of 149 students with severe and profound hearing impairment in Hong Kong. The researchers reported that an uneasy feeling about the attitude of people in the society towards PWDs was most important constraint of the LTPA participation and lack of accessible information also was an important constraint. Constraints like physical discomfort lack of physical coordination, lack of drive, interpersonal constraints and facility constraints were perceived to be not important by the students.

Similarly, in a study, Pfeiffer and Pinguart (2011) reported that in spite of the limitations, the visually impaired adolescents are less advanced than their other peers with good vision, in attaining only two developmental tasks, peers group integration and the formation of romantic relationships. However, there is no difference between them for other nine developmental tasks. This is a quantitative study, which was conducted in two secondary schools for young people with visual impairment and six secondary schools for students with good vision as part of the Marburg Study on Vision Loss in Germany. Further, they identified that the students with visual impairment had higher aspiration than their sighted peers regarding career choices. From these two studies, I



learned about the constraints which hinder the hearing impaired students in participating LTPA and also the developmental tasks which can be done by the visually impaired students in comparison to their sighted peers.

As reported by Brown, et al. (2003), gender, race/ethnicity and placement in special education are all strong factors, which influence students to perceive their school and life in general as alienating. They investigated that students receiving instruction in special education classrooms experienced greater feelings of normlessness, powerlessness and separation than their typically developed peers. Male and female students do not experience same degree of alienation. Though alienation could be a result of persistent social forces beyond school, schools have an obligation to improve school life so that it is conducive to the learning of all students. Furthermore, cultural bias based on gender and disability largely narrows the educational opportunities to girls with disability. Rousso (2003) identified that the GWDs far less bright than their disabled boys or non-disabled girls in the educational milieu. GWDs encounter multiple barriers to gaining access to education and to get an equal participation once they are admitted in school. Moreover, GWDs educational access is affected by their types of disability, the socio-economic status of the family, their ethnicity, and their areas of living, rural or urban and so on. In most cases, attitudinal, transportation, infrastructural barriers are significant for their equitable access to education.

### **The Essence of Empirical Studies**

After going through both national and international studies I identified the gaps in the literature of the PWDs that there is a need of conducting more studies in the sector of disability because the needs of the PWDs are still not addressed adequately. I found that

surveys have been carried out and studied to get more authentic information about the population of PWDs which would add the impetus to accelerate the efforts to provide opportunities and facilities in the education of SEN children as well as the well being of PWDs. However I did not find any study, which revealed the experiences of GWDs in schooling. Though the global inclination is towards inclusive education the teachers are still ignorant of inclusion so curriculum needs to be revised and special education improved. I found the review of these studies very illuminating because it has broadened my knowledge regarding efforts made in the past to find the realities. These reviews provided knowledge and clarified the scenario that schooling experiences of GWDs remained unveiled and the need to explore in assisting to fulfil the goals to EFA and MDGs.

Similarly, I further learned from the essence of literature that women with disability face double discrimination due to the prevalence of traditional gender roles. Some disabilities can be corrected if initially identified and also early intervention is necessary for better adjustments of PWDs. GWDs encounter bully and other abuse more than their boy counterparts with PWDs and other non-disabled girl peers. Girls are prepared for sex-stereotypes employment and the community people's negative feeling towards PWDs was a significant constraint of their participation in different activities in social life. However, PWD adolescents with vision impairment are keen to learn many developmental tasks like their counterparts with good vision. I also learned that GWDs encounter multiple barriers to gain access to education and to get equal participation once they get admitted to the school and also their educational access is affected by their types of disability, the socio-economic status of the family and their ethnicity, areas of their

living in rural or urban and the like. I also learned that the gender, race/ethnicity and placement in special school are all strong factors, which influence students in perceiving their school and life in general alienating. However, only a small number of literature reflected the experience of the GWDs in classroom situation.

Though most PWDs face different barriers in educational opportunities and facilities there are more significant institutional problems for PWDs with hearing impaired than for PWDs with vision impairment and physical impairment in Nepalese education system because in Nepal, there are only two higher secondary schools, one in Kathmandu and the other in Pokhara. Thus, in spite of their desire and capabilities the hearing impaired cannot go further after they complete their high school.

In the following section of this chapter, I shall provide an overview of Giddens' theory of structuration, which explains about the structure and agency. He states that actors' functions affect social structures, which are interrelated. Thus, the next section will explain the theoretical construct of the study, i.e., the interrelation between the agency, the SEN girls and the structure, the academic and the social milieu of school which they are experiencing. Therefore, my theoretical lens is based on Anthony Giddens' structuration theory and also the lens of gender, social justice and inclusion perspective.

### **Theoretical Construct of the Study**

I have studied the experiences of schooling SEN girls with disability from the perspectives of structure and agency. When Dewey (1938) and Freire (1972) focused on the perspective of the learner as focal point to the act of learning, it means that they were in favour of applying different strategies in teaching and providing student-friendly

school environment (structure) to empower the learners (agency). Thus, in exploring school experiences of GWDs means understanding interdependent relationships between human actors and social structures. A deep understanding, which I have explained in this section, is essential for this study.

### **Giddens' Structure-Agency Theory**

According to Giddens (1984) human agency has the 'capacity to make a difference'. It is also known as 'transformative capacity' (p. 14), which is closely linked with power. In practice, human agents almost hold some transformational capacity. Power involves the exploitation of resources. 'Resources are structured properties of social systems, drawn on and reproduced by knowledgeable agents in the course of interaction' (ibid, p.15). Further Giddens mentions two kinds of resources, authoritative resources, which derive from the coordination of the activity of human agents and allocative resources stem from control of material products or aspects of the natural world. Power is not itself a resource. Actions have intended and unintended consequences.

Giddens (1984) defined structure as 'rules and resources recursively implicated in social reproduction. Institutionalised features of social systems have structural properties in the sense that relationships are stabilised across time and space'. Further, according to him, structure can be 'conceptualised abstractly as two aspects of rules like normative elements and codes of signification' (pp. xxxi). Structure is a 'virtual order' of transformative relations which means that social systems as reproduced by social practices, do not have 'structures' but rather exhibit 'structural properties' and that structure exists, as time-space presence, only in its instantiations in such practices and as memory traces orienting the conduct of knowledgeable human agents' (ibid. p. 17).

Structure refers, to ‘the structuring properties, allowing the ‘binding’ of time-space in social systems, the properties which make it possible for discernibly similar social practices to exist across varying spans of time and space and which lend them a ‘systemic’ form in social analysis.

Giddens’ well-established ‘Structuration theory’ was available since the publication of ‘The Constitution of Society’ in 1984 and it has been adopted and adapted by the researchers in the studies of different fields. According to Giddens, structuration means the conditions governing the continuity or transmutation of structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems. Anthony Giddens, in his ‘Structuration Theory’ tries to demonstrate that the social structures and social actions have symbolic relationship and they are dependent on each other but also constrain each other. Thus, social structures and social actions cannot exist independently. Actually, Giddens characterised mainly structure and agency the two schools of sociological inquiry. Rose (1998), like Marx, Parsons, and Levi Strauss, stressed that structuralists and functionalists have greatly emphasised social behaviours in terms of structural forces which constraint people to do things in a particular ways.

Giddens (1984) argues that both, ‘structure’ and ‘agency’ are associated with ‘society’ and the ‘individual’ (p. 162). Giddens’ theory seeks to show that the knowledgeable actions of human agents discursively and recursively form a set of rules and, practices and routines, which over time and space constitute his concept of structure. This process is called structuration.

According to Shilling (1992), structuration is “a new way of looking at the relationship between societal interactions and the reproduction of the major structural

principles in educational settings which characterise society” (p. 72). The educational setting within this study includes the experiences of vision impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired girls integrated in the mainstream community and private boarding schools as well as experiences of deaf and hearing impaired girls in the institutional special schools. In my quest to understand how GWDs influence or are influenced by the school structures so I reviewed Giddens explanation of the interaction of human actors and social structures. Burrige, Carpenter, Cherednichenko and Kruger (2010) acknowledged that Giddens clearly links human actors with social structures in his concept of duality of structure. Human actions and interactions create social structures and those social structures influence the actions and interaction of humans.

Giddens further, explains that the two independent sets of phenomena (dualism) of structure and agency as a ‘duality’ – two concepts, which are dependent upon each other and recursively linked. ‘The structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organised’ (p. 25). Further, Layder (1998) explained Giddens’ duality of structure, which has a dual nature i.e., structure is essentially related to action and vice versa. Therefore, they are two sides of the same coin. Further Giddens stresses that ‘The human activities are recursive. ... They are not brought into being by social actors but continually recreated by them via the very means whereby they express themselves as actors’ (p. 2).

Social structure and human interaction are broken down into three dimensions and the recursive character of these dimensions is illustrated by the linking modalities. Thus, as human actors (GWDs) share, they draw on interpretative schemes to help make sense of interactions and at the same time those interactions reproduce and modify those

interpretative schemes, which are embedded in social structure (school environment) as meaning or signification.

Similarly, the facility to allocate resources (authoritative, i.e., coordination among teachers, head-teacher and GWDs activities as well as distributive i.e., available material products at school) is enacted in the wielding of power and produces and reproduces social structures of domination, and norms help determine what can be sanctioned in human interaction, which iteratively produce structures of legitimating. Therefore, Giddens' Structuration Theory is based on the principle of duality of structure.

Ritzer (2000) mentioned that the core of Giddens' structuration theory focuses on the relationship between agency and structure, which are inextricably interwoven in ongoing human activity or practice. The duality of structure enables agents to tackle the twin issues of social production and reproduction, where social production has to do with the way in which social life is produced or created by the people as engage in the social practices which are the substances of their lives and social experiences.

For Giddens, human beings create meaning and social reality within the social settings and thus social forms such as institutions and structures have no existence without the activities they represent. Social reproduction on the other hand, is concerned with the social life, which becomes patterned and routine. It is also concerned with the social order. Giddens (1984) mentions, 'All structural properties of social systems.....are the medium and outcome of the contingently accomplished activities of situated actors. The reflexive monitoring of, action in situations of co-presence is the main anchoring feature of social integration' (p. 191). The process whereby the duality of structure develops and reproduces over time and space is called structuration where agents by their

actions continually produce and reproduce and develop the social structures, which constrain as well as enable them. Further, structuration is also a process of arranging social relations or 'social practice' (Wheel-Brooks, 2009, p.129). Thus, the structuration theory seeks to identify the relationship between action and structure.

Finally, the core of structuration lies in the idea of structure, system and duality of structure. In other words, Giddens focuses that the agency recreates activities in social dynamics. Adams and Sydie (2001) stressed that for Giddens, individual acts produce structure and these structures facilitate or constraint further action (as cited in Ritzer, 2000). Ritzer (2000) further described that generally, agency refers to micro level individual actors to macro level of collectivises that act in forms of organised groups. Organisations and/or nations shape and reshape the social structures.

To Giddens, power is logically prior to subjectivity because action involves power or the ability to transform the situation. Nonetheless, social actions do not happen randomly but are purposive under social structural constraint. The theoretical framework of this study focuses on the perspectives of Giddens' structuration theory, i.e. how GWD as an agency, struggling for their schooling and how they are experiencing their school environment comprising, academic and non- academic environment as structure and stucturation, as a GWD.

### **Social Justice**

Society, all over the world, is differentiated by hierarchies based on social stratification – the systemic pattern through which such valued objects like property, power, and prestige are distributed unequally within society. The gulf between the rich and the poor, the male and female, the worker and the employer or the young and the old,



are the basic questions of property (the right over goods and services), power (the ability to secure one's way or to achieve one's end even against opposition) and prestige (social honour). There can be two different interpretations of social justice. John Rawls (1972) argues that individual capacity and intelligence should not be a source of unequal reward. Instead, all individual deserve an equal share of the collective surplus resulting from cooperation.

The other extreme, is put forward by Norzick (1974), who states that independent individuals being obliged to share their success with the less fortunate is unjust and unfair. The only basis for helping the less fortunate is through voluntary transfer of goods benefits from the haves to the have-nots. In the distribution of goods and services or providing education and essential services to GWDs, the distribution theories of both theorists are working to some extent. For instance, our government is continuously trying to provide education to marginalised groups in the country through different schemes as well as sponsors, INGOs/NGOs, private organisations and some philanthropists are also continuously making effort to up lift the lives of PWDs are two examples of these two ways of fair distribution as suggested by Rawls (1972) and Norzick (1974). Fraser (1997) also has suggested that there are two kinds of social justice, one concerned with redistribution and the other with recognition (as cited in Bates, 2006). However, the principles of justice mostly depend upon the basic structure of society.

Since the last three decades, global attention has been focused on inclusive education, which is more than integration and it also advocates right-based education to all children so it is also favours social justice. The term inclusive education has a deeper connotation and does not only refer to children with disabilities, but also includes all

children who face some kind of barrier to learning. The concept of inclusive education reflected by the guiding principles of Salamanca Declaration (1994) is:

Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups. (p.6)

The definition of inclusion, which is undoubtedly wider than just disability, spells out the above mentioned different categories of children who could be excluded from education. The Salamanca Framework (1994) also recognises the need of paying special attention to the educational needs of girls with disabilities:

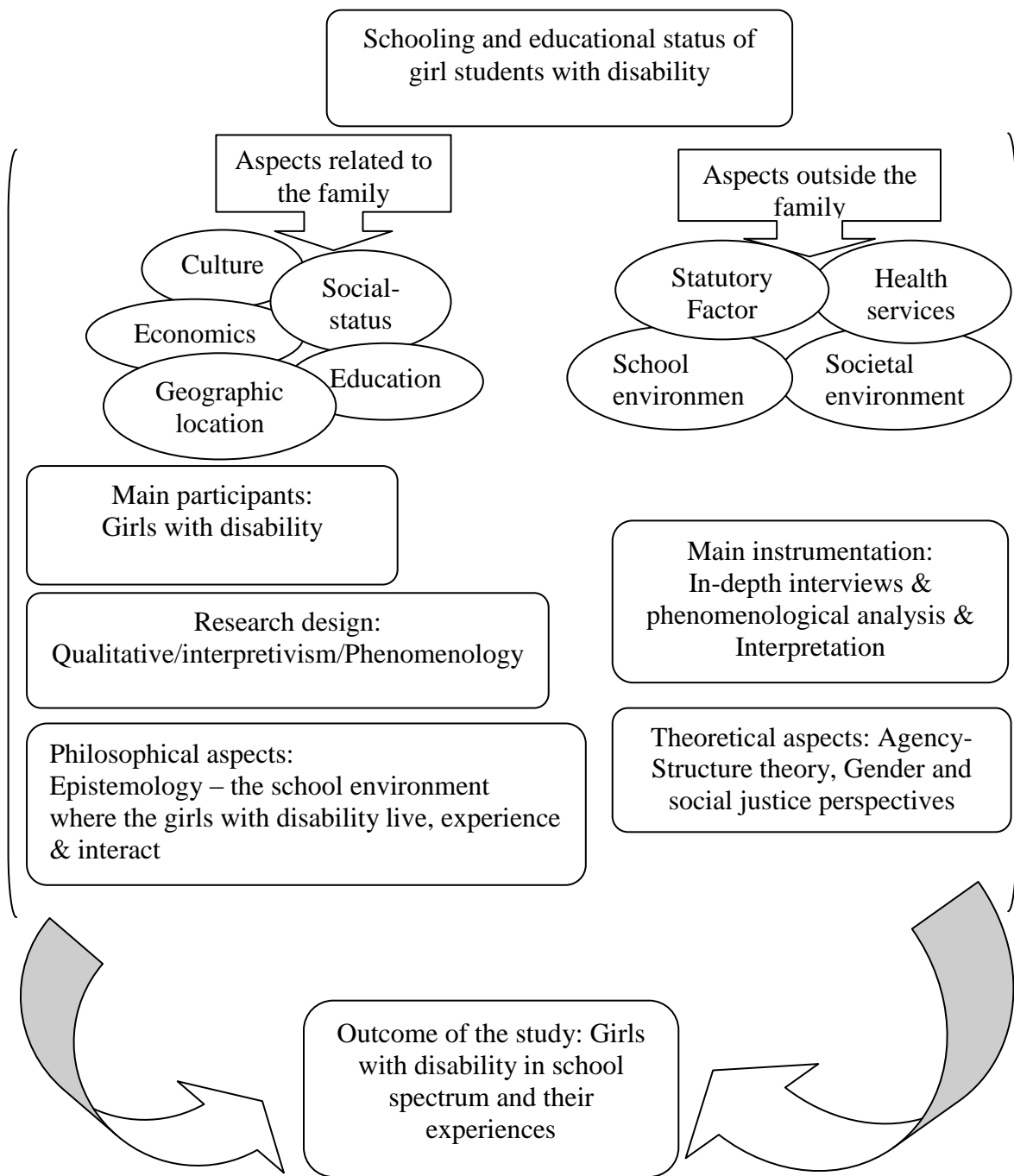
Girls with disabilities are doubly disadvantaged. A special effort is required to provide training and education for girls with special educational needs. In addition to gaining access to school, girls with disabilities should have access to information and guidance as well as to models, which could help them to make realistic choices and participation for their future role as adult women (p.34).

Additionally, in the case of girls with disabilities, care is also important factor, which is associated with nurturing of specific individuals and with concrete conditions in people's lives (Johannesen, 2001; Kohlberg, 1981; Tronto, 1993 as cited in Meina and Buzzaneli, 2004). Thus, specific care is equally important in providing social justice to the girls with disability in imparting education, which can be observed in the school environment.

## Conceptual Framework

The following conceptual framework illuminates the core of this study:

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework includes main aspects of the study process surrounding GWDs schooling experiences.

### **Chapter Essence**

In a nutshell, the review of related literature helped to understand and learn about the efforts made to raise the educational status of the marginalised groups, girl and SEN students. From the overall discussion of policies and programmes in the international and national arena regarding education and improving the status of PWDs and girls, the efforts have been encouraging. PWDs and females have been placed in priority agenda for mainstreaming since more than five decades of planned development in Nepal, however, basically this got impetus since 1990s. Although, from the policy lens these marginalised groups are recognised as right holder citizens, the implementation and monitoring should be strengthened. However, there are no separate policies and programmes to specifically cater to GWDs. Further I also learned about the structure-agency theory, gender and disability also social justice however, still a lot has to be done to reach the targets of just society. Only a very few studies have been conducted but no studies address the experiences of GWDs in school context. Having in mind the research purpose, the next chapter shall talk about the research methodology used to meet my purpose of the study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I have discussed my methodological approach in exploring the answer to my main research question “what does it mean to be a girl student with disability?” A brief critical discussion of the methods of research and two major research paradigms, positivism and interpretivism, have been discussed before driving straight into the research method chosen for answering the research question of this study. The overview of the research paradigms will also clarify where this particular study fits in the overall research paradigm. This will be followed by the discussion of qualitative methodology and phenomenology. Then a research approach selected for this study by some of my own personal justifications supported by a number of scholarly arguments that support phenomenology as a research approach suitable for this type of educational research is discussed. Further, the other processes of research like the type of research participants, research site, data collection, data analysis are also discussed and concluded by mentioning ethical consideration for this study, which is a vital part of any research study.

#### **Research and Research Paradigm**

A research activity carried out systematically and rigorously with a clear intent and purpose leads to more knowledge and solutions in solving problems and obstacles. Thus, my study on schooling of girl students with disability has a clear intent and purpose to gain insight of the way of educating/schooling girls with disability, which I have

conducted through a systematic and rigorous investigation and attempted to concentrate on the challenges in the education of Special Educational Needs (SEN) of girls with disabilities.

Nonetheless, every research is governed by a theoretical framework and underlying assumptions and beliefs, which a researcher has about the social phenomenon and human beings (Kuhn, 1970). Such beliefs and assumptions, which are called research paradigm affects the nature of conducting the study by the researcher. This view is supported by defining research paradigm as a basic set of beliefs that guide action, a way of looking at the world and a worldview (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 1990). I also believe that the research paradigm represents the standpoint in the world or situation, the way to go about investigating it and is concerned with a set of beliefs and assumptions that always guides a researcher during her research. Thus my research also requires a paradigm, a theoretical framework within which I can carry out the study.

Depending on the research purposes and questions, the choice of methodology represents the researcher's view of the world and directs the research design into fixed quantitative or flexible-qualitative models (Robson, 2002). Thus, a researcher should focus on what is to be discovered and which method will best capture the richest data relevant to the inquiry or method to choose in order to provide the most complete picture of the phenomena, which will yield the greatest increase of understanding (Conklin, 2007). My focus is on achieving in-depth understanding of the schooling experience of girls with disability rather than replication or verification. Therefore, in the following

section, I have discussed why I chose qualitative/ interpretive paradigm rather than quantitative/positivist paradigm.

### **Why Qualitative Research?**

Qualitative methods tend to be concerned more with words rather than numbers (Bryman, 2004). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) stated, “the social world can be understood only from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the ongoing action being investigated” (p.9). Of the two research paradigms, thus mentioned interpretivist/constructivist research paradigm, which stresses on the understanding of “the world of human experiences” (Cohen and Manion, 1994, p. 36), appear to suggest that “reality is socially constructed” (Mertens, 2005, p.12; Gray, 2004). However, Mertens (2005) stated that the interpretive/constructivist paradigm opposes the positivists’ beliefs and assumptions, which consider reality as a single entity, detached and quite independent from the researcher and “undermines life and mind” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 17). Unfortunately, the mono-method purist researchers have polarised paradigm-wars as quantitative and qualitative researchers however, now the mixed-method paradigm has emerged as a combination of both the paradigms. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) stated that mixed-methods paradigm’s main quality as “methodological pluralism or eclecticism” (p.14), which recognizes the importance and usefulness of both the qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Furthermore, Silverman (2005) stated that it is difficult to say which of the two research methods qualitative or quantitative is better. It depends on the purpose and the question to be investigated. Silverman (2002) gives a solution that “...the choice between different research methods should depend upon what you are trying to find out” (p. 34).

Thus, my paradigmatic attachment, is more with interpretive/constructivist paradigm because unlike the positivists, the interpretivists recognize multiple realities, constructed socially and understand the subjective world of human experiences which come into existence and of the multiple interpretations by people, on a single situation. For interpretivists, there is no single truth Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2003) has stressed that “interpretivists believe multiple-constructed realities (i.e. relativist) and that multiple interpretations are available from different researchers that are equally valid” (p.4). A positivist researcher is always neutral and objective in her/his stance whereas an interpretive researcher seeking greater depth of knowledge is always intrigued by the subjective world of people.

The ontological assumption of constructivism consists of socially constructed multiple realities and as Creswell, Hanson, Clark and Morales (2007) state, the researcher’s task is to understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge. The nature of reality is seen in the study from the views of participants, which I use directly in the form of quotes and themes provided by the participants/GWDs as multiple perspectives. Qualitative research like mine can never be totally value-free because in this type of research the researcher may carry her own values to the research and the observer and the reality cannot be detached from each other. The relationship between the researcher and the researched also undergoes a slight metamorphosis under this paradigm.

Furthermore, according to Mertens (2005), “the inquirer and the inquired are interlocked in” an “interactive mode of data collection” (p.14). In other words, the researcher is more empathetic in his stance (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Multiple realities in



interpretivism consist of individually constructed realities and inter-subjective realities and according to interpretivism the research is a value-laden exercise. There are numerous research methodologies that can be used for research within the interpretive research paradigm. For example, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) stated that there are “interpretive research methodologies such as the case study, ethnography, participant observation, performance ethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, grounded theory, and action and applied research” (p. 23).

This study particularly seeks to explore deeper into the school experiences of SEN girls such as vision impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired. It is explorative and investigative in nature and emphasises on phenomena of the girl students with disabilities and their experiences regarding the school environment. Avramidis and Smith (1999) stressed that “.... qualitative studies tend to provide more detail than quantitative studies about the uniqueness of the students disabling conditions. Special education which focuses on each student's programme, is designed to be unique in order to satisfy that student's needs” (p. 30). They further stated “..... the objectivist epistemology of positivism appears to be inadequate since it does not take into consideration that SEN is a complex, relative and multifaceted concept” (p.32). In the same line, I chose qualitative approach for this study because I also wanted to portray a deeper understanding of the complex phenomenon of the schooling of girls with disability.

In other words, this study also explores the subjective experiences or meanings given by participants about their experiences (Carspecken, 1996; LeCompte, Pressle, and Tesch, 1993; McLeod and Yates, 2007). Tesch (1990) has classified qualitative methodological tradition into several types on the basis of research interest but my

interest of inquiry was to explore the understanding of the meaning of texts of action of school experiences of girl students with disability. Therefore, I have employed phenomenology, which believes in the social construction of reality as the research approach. Thus, in the next section, I have dealt with my research strategy, i.e., phenomenology.

### **The Research Strategy: Phenomenology and Phenomenological Method**

As mentioned above my query is related to the schooling of girl students with different disability, who are the doubly discriminated group by being a girl with disability. Thus, they are victims of both marginalisation and exclusion. I explored how girls with disability are experiencing the environment in both, segregated special as well as integrated school.

Phenomenology has a long-established tradition in qualitative research and offers inter alia a number of methodological possibilities within the interpretive paradigm. It offers a complex method for understanding complex experience, relying more on “interpretive sensitivity, inventive thoughtfulness, scholarly tact, and writing talent of the human science researcher” (van Manen, 1990, p. 34) than on some arbitrary measure of consistency and uniformity. As a result, a researcher is personally available to the exchange in a way that elucidates the meaning-making process of the phenomenon, reflecting a driving and fundamental curiosity about the phenomenon.

Phenomenology is both a philosophical approach and a research method (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007; Conell, 2003; van Manen, 1990), which originates from the Greek words *phainomenon* meaning appearance and *logos* meaning reason. Moreover, a researcher pertaining phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the

people involved or with the issues of those people, who were involved, is researched (Greene, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996; Maypole & Davies, 2001; and Robinson & Reed, 1998). According to Caelli (2001) phenomenology, as a philosophy is a way to see the world as it is lived rather than as it is constructed (p. 371) and Valle and Halling (1989) argue it as a research method, by emphasising “phenomenology as a ...rigorous and unbiased study of things as they appear so that one might come to an essential understanding of human consciousness and experience....” (p. 6). Phenomenology does not seek for cause-effect relationship nor does it seek to generalise but it is ‘the study of essences’ (Merleau-Ponty, 1962 p. vii). Thus, the purpose of phenomenological approach is to elucidate specific and to identify phenomena as perceived by the actors in the situation. It is concerned with the study of experience from the perspective of the individual, bracketing the taken-for-granted assumptions and usual ways of perceiving.

Phenomenology has strong philosophical component to it and draws heavily on the writings of the German mathematician Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl argued that the life-world is understood as what we experience pre-reflectively, without resorting to categorization or conceptualization, and quite often includes what is taken for granted or those things that are common sense (Husserl, 1970). Some writer like Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty also contributed in elaboration of his views. All these contributors seek to understand the life world or human experience as it lived. The researcher finds the phenomenon and then collects data from the persons who have experienced the phenomenon and develops a composite description of the essence of the experience of all the individuals on what and how they have experienced (Moustakas,

1994). Phenomenology is not only a description but also an interpretive process in which the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences. According to Bentz and Shapiro (1998), phenomenology at its simplest, can be considered to be anything that appears or presents itself to someone or something that becomes visible in itself (Ray, 1994). Furthermore, Roberts (2000) stressed that these phenomena not only encompass perceptions like seeing, hearing, feeling, but also things such as believing, remembering, wishing, deciding, imagining and evaluating.

Currently, there are two main approaches, the hermeneutic phenomenology (van Manen, 1990) and empirical, transcendental, or psychological phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994) to carry out a phenomenological research study in general. Manen (1990) explained hermeneutical phenomenology as a research oriented to lived-experience (phenomenology) and interpreting the “texts” of life (hermeneutic), which reflective interpretation of a text or a study in history to achieve a meaningful understanding. In other words, hermeneutical phenomenology basically stresses that human existence is interpretive. However, meaning is the core of transcendental phenomenology of science, a design for acquiring and collecting data that explicates the essences of human experience (Moustakas, 1994). However, in descriptive phenomenology there are two other types like realistic phenomenology, which emphasises on the search for the universal essences of human action, motives and selves and existential phenomenology, focusing on to use the analysis of human being as a means to a fundamental ontology.

I intended to capture the experiences of school environment of SEN girls with disability thus transcendental phenomenology was chosen as the appropriate

methodology for this study in understanding the meaning of subjective experience of main participant SEN girls, gaining insights of their motivations and actions getting formal education, and cutting through the clutter of taken-for-granted assumptions and usual wisdom. I also considered hermeneutic phenomenology in interpreting and reflecting on the meanings of the phenomena captured from the experiences of the girls. In addition, I used qualitative method in general to gather more information about GWDs experiences from parents, teachers, and community.

### **Moustakas' Phenomenological Analysis Procedures**

Moustakas (1994) mentions that transcendental or psychological phenomenology does not focus so much on the researcher's interpretation as in hermeneutic approach. Rather, the researcher in transcendental phenomenology is concerned more on describing experiences of the participants as well as considers on as Husserl's suggested concepts like epoche, means a suspension or bracketing out own presuppositions and presumptions and prejudices. In this process, the researcher shelves her/his own experiences as much as possible to take a fresh perspective of the phenomenon under examination. The epoche is a way of looking and being an unfettered instance. Moustakas (1990) refers to epoche as "a Greek word, which means to stay away from or abstain" (p. 85). In other words, the researcher listens to the respondents with open mind so that s/he can grasp the reality from the respondents' lens. Hence, transcendental phenomenology is everything perceived freshly through a very new lens, as if for the first time (Moustakas, 1994). However, as Creswell (2009) mentions, we see, that a researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about the phenomenon as described by the participant, bracketing her/his own view means grasping participants' experience and observing the phenomenon

from their lens. Kockelmans (1994) further argues that the term “essence” indicates that which is to be found in the very own being of an individual and tells us “what” it is (p. 58).

After gathering information the researcher then analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements or quotes, which Moustakas (1994) called horizontalization. Then the researcher combines those statements into meaning units or *themes* and then writes a textual description of the experiences of the persons, a structural description of their experiences like the conditions, situations, or context in which they experienced the phenomenon and then a combined statement of textual and structural descriptions to convey the essence of the experience. I have used Moustakas (1994) approach, which has systematic steps in the data analysis procedure and guidelines for assembling the textual and structural descriptions and getting essences of the phenomena. (See Appendix: J)

### **Locating Research Site and Research Participants**

A research site and the participants who have the highest potentials of providing thick, descriptive and valid accounts of the case under study should be chosen so that the aspects like credibility and authenticity of the research can be strengthened. The sampling procedures used in this study were determined by the nature of the population being examined (Wiersma, 1995; Creswell, 2007). Wiersma (1995) stated that a “purposeful sample” (p.297) was required in this study as the research was conducted on a “conveniently accessible group” (Burns 1997, p.86). Thus, the selection of the research participants and the study site depended largely on the availability of the reasonable

number of girl students with disability willing to participate and the availability of the schools in the study districts.

As referred by Patton, 1990; Wiersma, 1995; Welman & Kruger, 1999; Creswell, 2007 I chose purposive sampling, which is the most vital type of non-probability sampling, to identify the primary participants and convenience sampling to identify the site for this study. Wiersma (1995) emphasised that the two preconditions needed for purposeful sampling are to produce “information rich” or “intense descriptions” of the topic being investigated and are sufficient variations in the data to ensure a “comprehensive structural description” (p.298). On the basis of these two criteria, I have selected the main participants, girls with disability as purposeful sampling, who can provide rich information for the study. Similarly the schools selected were also purposive because the schools met the criteria of accommodating a large number of girls with disability and were located in municipalities. However, one district from Kathmandu valley and a hill district adjoining Kathmandu valley with easy access and comfortably managed by my available budget and time were chosen for convenience sampling.

### **Research Site**

Furthermore, I have chosen schools only in urban areas of the selected districts as research site because of the availability of large number of SEN students who concentrate in the urban areas in Nepal as informed by the District Education Offices (DEOs) and national level organisations working for PWDs. I found the list of schools and names of SEN students who get scholarships categorically on the basis of their severity and disability from Educational News Letter (2010) published by DEO and selected my study schools.

Further, I also approached the DEO of another sample district and found the schools where SEN with disability are integrated from the Educational News Bulletin (2010) provided by the office. Moreover, I was also interested in community/public schools which have integrated SEN students so I chose a Higher Secondary school at municipal area (Kathmandu valley), where I found quite a number of vision impaired students. Similarly, I also chose a Higher Secondary school at another municipality (hill district, adjoining Kathmandu), where vision impaired students were integrated. So, my first group of participants were vision-impaired girls from the community schools at both sample districts. Though I was interested in community or public schools I came to know that there was no provision yet in Nepal for integrating or including deaf and hearing-impaired children in mainstream schools. They were educated in segregated institutional schools only. Thus, I gave up the idea of targeting public/community schools in finding hearing impaired participants. Nevertheless, I selected a private segregated special institutional school for deaf listed in the DEO's Educational News Letter (2010), in sample municipality (hill district adjoining Kathmandu). So, my second group of participants were hearing impaired students, from a private institutional school in the municipality of the sample hill district.

Further, I found another higher secondary community school in the municipality of hill district, from the DEO's Educational News Letter where four students with physical impairment were listed. I went there with an appointment but I found only one girl because the other three had already left the school a year ago. Thus, I found the list of the DEO not updated. The girl, however, showed willingness to participate in my research I included her also even she was the only SEN girl in that school. According to



the DEO's list the schools in these districts were scattered in rural areas and had only a couple of students so it was difficult for me to visit different schools for each case.

As I mentioned earlier I focused only on schools, which had a reasonable number of physically impaired students. During an informal conversation with the teachers at the school for deaf, a teacher informed me that on the way to her home in the sample district, there was a private boarding school with a reasonable number of physically impaired children so I, immediately decided, to go to that school and located it. Then I made a telephonic inquiry with the principal and took an appointment for a meeting and I was permitted to conduct my study over there. Thus, girls with physical impairment from that private secondary school in the sample district in Kathmandu valley were the third group of participants. Altogether, I chose four integrated (three community schools and one private boarding school) schools and one segregated special institutional school from a district from Kathmandu valley and a hill district outside Kathmandu valley. Thus, the districts and the municipalities were convenient samples because they were permitted by my budget and time whereas the schools were purposive samples because I was able to get the participants who were able to provide rich information.

### **Research Participants**

The aim in participant selection in transcendental phenomenological research is to select participants who have lived experience which is the focus of the study, who are willing to talk about their experience and who are diverse enough from one another to enhance possibilities of rich and unique stories of the particular experience (Polkinghorne, 1983; van Manen, 1997). Thus, on the basis of criteria and their interest I have selected my research participants and was able to get rich information of their

school experience. As LeCompte and Goetz (1982) emphasised that the participants in this study were selected for their specific qualities and relevance to the research topic. The sample is composed of twenty-two girls with disabilities, like vision impairment and low vision, hearing impairment and physical impairment, between the ages of 10 – 21.

Though Boyd (2001) opines that two to ten participants are sufficient to reach saturation and Creswell (1998) also suggests long interviews with about ten people for a phenomenological study, I chose eight girls with vision impairment and eight girl participants with hearing impairment and six girls with physical impairment from different disability groups for the first round interviews.

Furthermore, to contextualise the SEN girl students' lived experiences and also to supplement their views and experiences, I included their SEN boy peers, their parents and guardians, school principals, resource-teachers and other subject-teachers also as shown in the table below (see Appendix: J). I have changed the real names of my participants and schools to protect their identity and maintaining confidentiality as a researcher. The following table portrays a glimpse of total participants and research sites.

Table 2  
Mapping Research Participants and Research Site

District	School	Types of Disability	Key participants	Other participants				
				SEN G	B	T	HT	P
Inside Kathmandu valley	Amrit	VI	2	2	2	1	1	2
	Swarna	PI	3	2	1	1	1	2
Outside Kathmandu	Satkarma	PI	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Samanta	VI	2	2	2	1	1	2
	Kalpabrikshya	HI	4	4	2	1	1	2
2	5	3	12	10	7	4	4	8

(Note: VI = Vision Impairment, PI = Physical Impairment, HI = Hearing Impairment, G = Girl, B = Boy, T = Teacher, HT = Head-teacher, P = Parent, names of school are pseudonyms)

Marshall and Rossman (1999) remind that the best compromise is to include a sample with a reasonable variation in the phenomenon, setting or people under study. I was able to gather sufficient information from these selected participants in understanding the school experiences of girl students with disability. Basically my target was on girls with disability, who were attending to secondary schools, so the criteria for the selection of participants, was fulfilled to the satisfaction of both the participants and me.

Before proceeding, further it is necessary to get acquainted with my key participants, thus the following table explains briefly my key participants. Table three and table four briefly explain about the key participants on the basis of their school, district inside Kathmandu valley and outside Kathmandu.

Table 3

Key respondents by school: By type of disability (district in Kathmandu valley)

Name	Disability	Ethnicity	Age	Grade	Economic status	School
Samita Khanal	VI	Brahmin	15	VIII	M	Amrit
Suma Chapagain	VI	Brahmin	19	X	M	Amrit
Shubha Bati	PI	Newar	20	VII	M	Swarna
Dina Nepal	PI	Brahmin	16	VI	M	Swarna
Roshana Lama	PI	Tamang	12	III	L	Swarna

(Note: VI = vision impairment, PI = physical impairment, M = middle class, L = low class, all names of girls and schools are pseudonyms and socio-economic class is defined by the researcher on the basis of earning of parents as per their response)

Table 4

Key respondents by school: By type of disability (District outside Kathmandu valley)

Name	Disability	Ethnicity	Age	Grade	Economic status	School
Apanrna Kafle	VI	Brahmin	16	IX	M	Samanta
Asma Sunuwar	VI	Kirat	16	IX	L	Samanta
Dilmaya Ale	PI	Magar	17	X	M	Satkarma
Saru Mahat	HI	Chhetri	18	X	M	Kalpabrikshya
Rama Kiwachhen	HI	Newar	18	VIII	M	Kalpabrikshya
Sitamaya Tamang	HI	Tamang	16	VI	M	Kalpabrikshya
Shrasha Shrestha	HI	Newar	17	VII	M	Kalpabrikshya

(Note: VI = vision impairment, PI = physical impairment, HI = hearing impairment, M = middle class, L = low class, all names of girls and schools are pseudonyms and socio-economic class is defined by the researcher on the basis of earning of parents as per their response)

### **Personal Accounts of Visually Impaired Participants**

Among the participants, only one girl from Kathmandu valley district was a day-scholar while all the others were staying at their respective school hostels. The girls' were aged fourteen to twenty-one years and they were students of class one to class ten. Samita (15) was second child among three siblings. Suma (19) was the youngest child and had two elder brothers. Samita (15) and Suma (19) were two participants from Amrit School and they were studying in grade eight and grade ten respectively. Both Samita and Suma were totally vision impaired. Similarly, Aparna (16), the youngest among her nine sisters and Asma (16), fourth child among five sisters and three brothers were participants from Samanta School. Both these girls were studying in class nine. Aparna had low vision whereas Asma was totally blind/vision impaired. From the lens of ethnic roots, participant girls in the vision impairment group, three girls were Brahmin while one was Kirat. The socio-economic status of all the girls, were middle class Nepali family.

Geographically, the girls were from different ecological regions, Samita belongs to a village of the sample district in Kathmandu valley whereas Suma was from Naubise Dhading, a district adjoining Kathmandu. Aparna and Asma the other participants from Samanta School were from the hilly district Gulmi in west Nepal and the adjoining municipality of the sample hill district outside Kathmandu valley respectively. All the participants were surprisingly better than other non-disabled peers in studies. Their academic position was also above average (within top ten in their classes), which was informed by the teachers on the basis of their performance in the examination.

### **Personal Accounts of Hearing Impaired Participants**

The girls were chosen from class six and above because I assumed that they would be able to respond to my questions appropriately. The age ranges of participants were 16 to 18 and they were students from class six to ten. Among them Saru (18) was studying in grade ten. She was the first child between one brother and two sisters. Rama (18), the youngest between two siblings, was studying in class eight. Similarly, Shrasha (17) was studying in class seven and she had an elder brother whereas Sitamaya (16) was studying in grade six and she was the first child among two brothers and two younger sisters. Ironically, all the girls were day-scholars and they needed twenty minutes to two hours time everyday to come to school. However, Shrasha was lucky because the school was situated close to her home but Saru and Sitamaya came from remote areas of the district, so they had to walk as well as use a local bus for two hours everyday. Rama came from adjoining district and she also needed same time as Saru and Sitamaya.

These girls did not have hostel facility like the vision-impaired students as mentioned earlier. In the absence of hostel facility in the school was unable to take more students. Thus, only a few students from nearby districts came to this school. Moreover, these students will also had to spend more money, time and face difficulties in attending school as compared to my vision impaired participants. Ethnically, there were two Newars whereas there were only one Chhetri and one Tamang. The socio-economic status in the society of all the participants was average. Similarly educational status of all the participants was quite good.

### **Personal Accounts of Physically Impaired Participants**

Among my key participant girls with physical impairment, one was selected from Satkarma School and three girls from Swarna School. As per criteria for the selection of participants, all the participants were between the ages of ten to twenty. Dilu (17), the first child between two other sisters was studying in grade ten in Satkarma School. Her parents had migrated to the municipality from a remote village of the hill to provide education to their children. Now she had to walk only fifteen minutes to reach her school. Her right leg is crippled due to an accident at the age of six months, so she walks with an awkward gait.

Other participants were from Swarna School and they stayed in Heaven Children Home (HCH) (pseudonym), which is at a walking distance from the school. Among them, Shubha Bati (20) was studying in class seven and she had one elder brother. Both her, lower limbs were non-functional, thus she had to use a wheel-chair and she had no control over toileting and she had to use diapers. She needed assistance to change her diapers. Her physical impairment was due to severe illness in her childhood. At the age of six months, Dina Nepal (15) another participant studying in grade six got burnt and her left leg became bent. She was the first child among two younger brothers and two younger sisters. Now after continuous treatment she is become able to walk with a limp.

Another participant, Roshana (12), was the first child and had one brother and one sister. Now she was studying in class two. Her impairment was also congenital. She was born with a lump on her back, which affected the movement of her right leg later. So, she was operated when she was eight years old and she uses a wheel-chair. Further Dilu (17) and Dina (15) were victims of accidents and became handicapped. However, Subha (20)

became disabled because of severe illness and Roshani had congenital impairment with spina bifida, which was corrected by timely operation and treatment, however, she uses a wheel-chair and is unable to control toileting.

Geographically, Shubha came from a village in Kathmandu valley district whereas Dina came from rural Bhojpur and Roshana came from a remote village outside Kathmandu valley. All of them got treatment in the Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC), Banepa. Some of them got in contact with HCH, run by an NGO from HRDC, which has played a vital role in raising and providing education to them free of cost. Though Dina was from Bhojpur (far-east) she does not have to worry because she was living at HCH very near to her school. Looking from the ethnic lens and socio-economic status, these girls were Newar, Brahmin, Tamang, Magar and all come from middle-lower class socio-economic status. However, all these students were financed by HCH. Their educational status was also found quite well. Though they were under medication and they had to go hospital regularly for treatment and had to miss classes then my vision impaired and hearing impaired participants. In the next section I have explained about the details of the instrumentation for the study.

### **The Instrumentation**

A researcher has the choice of selecting research tools based on the nature of the study and the research method. For this particular study, I have used primary information gained from the instruments like interviews, questionnaire (for hearing impaired respondents), school/classroom observations as well as policy documents and other related materials like my respondents' school records and progress reports were also analysed as secondary sources of information.



## **Field Process**

Prior to field study, a preliminary study (June, 2010-July, 2010) was conducted to examine the instruments prepared to collect information from the concerned participants. This preliminary study was conducted in some schools where visually and physically impaired students were integrated in Kathmandu Metropolitan and Lalitpur Sub - metropolitan areas. Then I studied the list of school provided by the Special Education Section of Department of Education, regarding enrolment of SEN students. After that I visited a number of schools in Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts where SEN students were integrated and also segregated institutional schools and spoke to principals, teachers, parents and SEN students to conduct the preliminary study.

In this regard, I interviewed a vision-impaired girl and two physically impaired girls in their respective schools and observed school/classroom activities as well. Then I also interviewed a mother of vision-impaired girl and a teacher, teaching physically impaired children.

After analysing the data from the preliminary study and on the basis of feedback provided by my supervisors, I made some changes in the interview questions and also decided to involve SEN boys also as participants to observe the similarity in their experiences as well.

## **Interviews**

Amongst the different types of interviews, I used phenomenological semi-structured interviews because such interviews enable the interviewee's voice to be focused as much as possible, while still retaining a necessary degree of structure having in place a broad framework of key ideas, themes, and issues which can be covered in

each interview. I developed semi-structured interview schedule for all the selected SEN students as such vision impaired and physically impaired ones (see Appendix: C). My study is largely exploratory involving description and eliciting a range of in-depth information about a phenomenon I prepared separate in-depth interview guidelines for my key participants, SEN girl students (see Appendix: D), their parents (see Appendix: E), resource-teachers/head-teachers/ subject-teachers separately (see Appendix: F).

The in-depth interview schedule allowed participants to give wide ranging and narrative-like (Taylor & Bogdan (1998), Kvale, 1999; Fontana and Frey, 2005; McLeod and Yates, 2006); Stake, 2005, Creswell, 2008) responses about their lived experiences. Thus, to get the best from the interviews with the participants, I have taken note of Robson's (2002) advice to, "...listen more than you speak; put questions in a straightforward, clear and non-threatening way; eliminate cues which lead interviewees to respond in a particular way; and enjoy it" (p. 274).

As conducting face-to-face interview with students with hearing impairment was not possible for me because I didn't know sign language so it was very difficult to communicate with them via interview. Thus, I prepared a separate semi-structured with open-ended questions for them (see Appendix G and Appendix: H). I gave them this form and they wrote their answer in this form.

### **Observation**

I prepared observation form with some necessary guidelines (see Appendix: I) to find out to what extent the SEN girls participating in school related activities as well as their interaction with teachers, other peers and other's behaviour towards them and also observe the school and classroom environment to supplement the data gathered from

interviews and list of questions. Thus, the observation helped me to find out the essence of actual classroom situation and school activities to see whether their statements in the interviews reflected.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected from July 2010 to December 2010. After receiving approval from each school authority to move forward with the study, I began data collection first from the sample school in a municipality of Kathmandu valley district, interviewing the concerned participants as planned. I conducted one-to-one semi-structured interviews with vision impaired and low vision participants (four girls and two boys) in the first round of interview. Each interview lasted about 30-45 minutes. The date, time and venue of interview were determined at the convenience of the participants. Thus, interviews were held in their respective schools when they were free. I took notes during interviews. Then the head-teacher, resource-teacher and subject-teachers were also interviewed in the same manner. At the end of each interview, I read the responses made by them which I had noted and then asked them whether they wanted to add further comment. I also observed the school environment and classroom activities during the school visits.

The second round in-depth interviews were conducted further with two girls only out of the four I found their responses in the earlier interviews more useful. I also interviewed in the same manner, in other sample schools in both districts. My interview questions were “directed to the participant’s experiences, feelings, beliefs, and convictions” (Welman and Kruger (1999) p.196). I focused to obtain the participant’s lived experience. In this way, I obtained data as per the participants ‘think and feel in most direct ways” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p.96) focusing on ‘what goes on within’ the

participants and let them describe the lived experience as far as possible free from the constructs of the intellect and society. This is also one form of bracketing i.e., listening to them and getting their fresh experience without keeping any presuppositions and prejudices about them and their values and feelings in mind. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants because this is highly crucial in any successful interview. Then I transcribed each interview, identified the key words, phrases and statements, which helped to emphasise.

I went there in the given time and after informal conversation I made a schedule for my data collection. I found the teachers in Kalpabrikshya School very interested to help me. They also informed me that I was the first person who visited the school for a research and wished that result of this research might help to improve the environment of the school. During a general conversation with the teachers, I realised, that it would be difficult to conduct interviews with students with hearing impairment because I could not understand sign language. It would be a difficult, time consuming and exhausting task to conduct interview with them.

So, as suggested by the teachers in that same school, I prepared a list of questions deriving from interview guidelines prepared for the students and gave them so that they could write their opinion. Writing sessions were organised for this purpose without hampering their classes. In this process, it was essential to get cooperation from teachers to make the instructions and questions clear to the students. In the first round of information collection, I included eight girls and two boys. All the respondents were gathered in a classroom and were provided the list of questions and papers for the writing purpose. Such writing session continued for four days and each session was about two

hours long. There was ten minutes break for the ease of the respondents. A teacher also translated each question in sign language during the session to make them understand clearly. Due to presence teachers in these writing sessions the respondents looked more comfortable and were not hesitant to ask questions for clarification.

After going through all the responses made by the students I selected four girls whose responses were useful for further in-depth information. I used the same technique and the same time schedule and conducted a second round of writing session for those selected girls, with open-ended questions. It took me three days to complete the second round data collection. I also observed classroom activities and school environment, as well, at the same time.

Further, I also interviewed the head-teacher, a class-teacher and two mothers of the girl students in the school to supplement information regarding the sampled girls' school experiences. After transcribing all the responses I visited the school once again and returned the transcriptions to all the respondents for the member-checks so that if necessary they could confirm, add or correct their answers. In this process, the teachers helped in confirming that all the respondents completed the answers to the questions.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

According to Denscombe (2007), “the rationale behind this stage in qualitative data analysis is that, having become thoroughly familiar with the data, the researcher is in a position to identify appropriate codes that can be applied to them” (p. 291). Subsequent re-readings helped me in looking for implied meanings contained in the data that are significant in terms of the topics of research. All the interviews were read scrutinised and transcribed to reveal their meanings, structure and coherence. As I already mentioned,

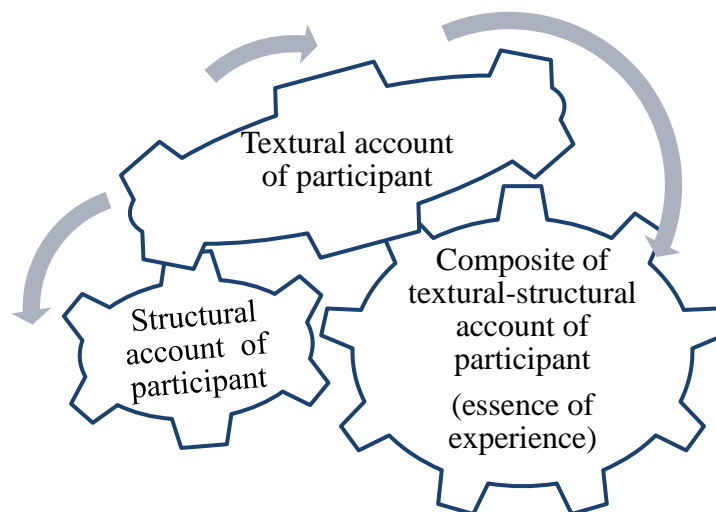
this is a phenomenological research, thus the chosen analysis method is phenomenology guided. In order to describe the essence of the experience of girls with disabilities, I employed Moustakas's (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis (see Appendix K). All those above steps were carried out first at individual level and then at the combined level (across interviews and information from other sources), with collective narratives from all my participants. The above steps were followed with each type of disability and only then combined in collective level as 'essence' of experiences of girls with disabilities in their schooling. It helped me to present my study findings through the synthesis of textural-structural accounts of experience of SEN girls as essence of phenomenon studied.

#### **Analysis of Individual Transcript of Girl with Disability**

Each individual transcript of key participants (vision impaired girls, hearing impaired girls and physically impaired girls) were read and analysed and then each relevant phrases containing meaning unit were written down. Then similar meanings were grouped together in clusters and labelled with the themes of the cluster. In doing so, I followed a process that included reflection on the data, seeking alternative explanations to the meaning, returning to the transcripts in order to verify that all derived meanings were actually contained in verbatim account given by the participants.

Then, for each transcript two descriptive accounts, textural and structural, were written. The themes were used to mention the topic that should be included. The textural account described what happened, that is the texture of the experience, and included verbatim quotations. The structural account described the underlying meaning of the texture.

Figure 2. Analysis of Individual Transcript

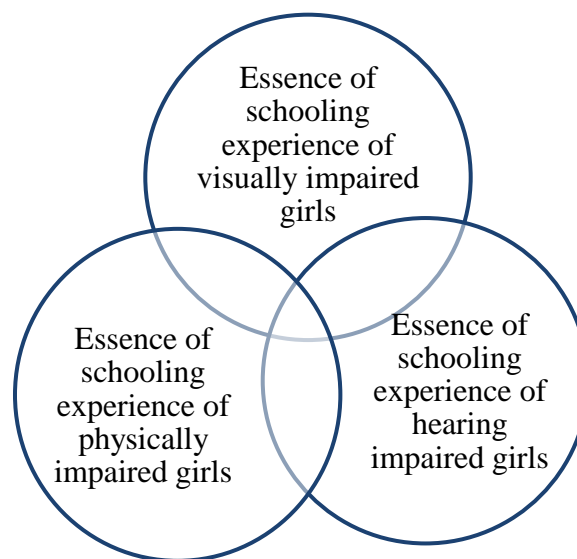


### **Analysis of Combined Transcripts of Girls with Disability**

Furthermore, the clusters and themes, gained from all the participants were then combined by considering re-arrangement of the cluster and themes and extra duplications were discarded. Then, textural and structural accounts were written for the participants as a whole using the process described above. Again, new emerged meanings were verified by checking the verbatim accounts in the transcripts.

At the end of this process, these two accounts were synthesised into a composite textural-structural account, where every statement was supported by a passage in each of the transcripts. Some verbatim quotations from individual transcripts were included in order to enhance the vividness of the account. This synthesis is the 'essence' of the experience of participants for this study. Similarly, information gathered from other sources was also analysed and interpreted to draw essence of the study.

**Figure 3. Analysis of Combined Transcripts**



### **Researcher's Role**

In this study, my role was an interpretive researcher, which is the main characteristic of a qualitative researcher because I employed one of the interpretive methodologies i.e., phenomenological approach. I was involved as an inquirer, in sustained and intensive experiences of the participants. In qualitative research, as Patton (2001) reminds, “the researcher is the instrument” (p. 14) and the researcher tries to produce findings arrived from real-world settings where the “phenomenon of interest unfold naturally” (p. 39) and analyses the dilemmas of self (Chesney, 2001) that this involves. I established rapport by making several initial contacts with participants and school personnel by telephone because the quality of qualitative design depends to a great extent on the quality of the researcher. In the whole course of this study, I maintained rigour as the key at all phases of my study during design phase, field-study phase and writing-up phase in making my research credible.



### **The Essentials of Methodological and Descriptive Rigour in the Study**

Qualitative research is not linear but dynamic and interactive thus, while conducting qualitative research maintaining rigour means showing integrity and competence, which is about ethics and politics, regardless of the paradigm. As Morse et al. (2002) suggested I constantly moved back and forth between my research design and implementation. Lincoln (1995) suggested that ‘the standards for quality in interpretive social science are also standards for ethics’ (as cited in Tobin and Begley, 2004). Trustworthiness can be demonstrated through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1994), peer debriefing, and audit-trail, member checks, prolonged engagement, persistent observation (Lincoln 1995), soundness (Marshall & Rossman 1989) and triangulation (Creswell 2009, Tobin & Begley 2002). Credibility addresses the issue of fit between respondents’ views and the researcher’s representation of them (Schwandt, 2001). Goodness becomes an overarching principle of qualitative inquiry as one application of rigour suggested by Smith, 1993; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; and Arminio & Hultgren, 2002 (as cited in Torbin & Begley, 2002) and an interactive process which I considered throughout the study.

As Morse and Richards (2002) suggested by working on study design with a comprehensive background of the study, working inductively, using appropriate methodology and design I maintained rigour in the design phase. In the field-study phase also I maintained rigour by using relevant sampling strategy and being responsive to the appropriateness to the data collection and data processing. Similarly, in the writing-up phase also I maintained rigour by providing an adequate contextualisation and audit trails as well as linking findings to the literature. I used rigorous data gathering procedures,

specifically; I used multiple data collection sources besides GWDs and tools like interviews and observation by which I was able to grasp emergent themes and issues.

### **Prolong Involvement**

I spent relatively prolonged involvement in the field study which helped me to reduce both reactivity and respondent bias because researchers who spend a long time in the setting tend to become accepted and any initial reactivity reduces.

### **Member Check**

At the end of each individual interview held with participants with vision impairment, I read out the notes taken during the interview and gave opportunity to add any further comments. However, the transcripts of interviews and written responses of the participants with hearing impairment and physical impairment were given back for confirmation and to verify their answers to ascertain respondent validation. The participants were requested to read the transcripts and findings after the analysis of data, to ensure they corresponded to the original intention of participant communication which ensured against researcher bias. This process can thus be called a follow-up interview with participants in the study. A final copy of the study will also be provided to the participating schools.

### **Peer Debriefing and Support**

Throughout the duration of the study, I had maintained peer debriefing by discussing with my colleagues, supervisors, critical friends continuously both formally and informally. I discussed with my supervisors and colleagues, initially in topic selection and formulating research question and consequently during corrections and corroborations. Then I derived the final structure of the study. Similarly I had discussed

with my colleagues and supervisors in preparing instruments and then preliminary study was done and constructed instruments was tested in the proposed research context finally I again discussed with my colleagues and used the feedbacks of the colleagues in finalising the instruments.

### **Audi-trail**

Reflexivity is central to the audit trail, in which inquirers keep a self-critical account of the research process, including their internal and external dialogue. Auditing can also be used to authenticate confirmability. Throughout the study I kept a research diary with me to record all the details of my research time-line, research participants and major amendments that I had made in my research designs. I also maintained field notes or as Miles and Huberman (1984) stressed in “memoing” (p. 69), which is an important data source in qualitative research. I maintained three types of field notes, descriptive notes i.e., what happened notes; theoretical notes attempting to derive meaning and reflections on their experiences; and analytical notes i.e., end-of-a-field-day summary or progressive reviews. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggested, I used these to follow up when I felt confused about a potential misunderstanding or was concerned that their participation was inauthentic. These field notes were vital in data analysis.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Any research involving human participants require researchers to observe some essential ethical guidelines stipulated by organizations like British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2004) and American Psychological Association (APA) (2010).

For this study, I referred and followed the Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) adopted by BERA to ensure that the study did not breach

any of the ethics. Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) stated that the term “ethics” refers to questions of right and wrong (p. 54). A conscientious researcher must consider whether there will be any psychological or physical harm to anyone because of his or her research. Somekh and Lewin (2005) defined that ethics are basically concerned with the nature of morality focusing in protecting and empowering the participants against any harm. A researcher should consider three vital issues for ethical considerations as suggested by Fraenkel and Wallen (2006) “The protection of participants from harm, the ensuring of confidentiality of research data, and the question of deception of the subjects” (p. 56). The issues of informed consent (Holloway, 1997; Kvale, 1996; Creswell, 2009) of the participants, confidentiality of data and the anonymity of the participants were considered in this study.

I arranged pre-interview meetings with the participants to explain the motives of my research and how I would like them to participate. I provided a brief introduction and purpose of the study cum consent form each of my participants before the scheduled interview. The consent forms were signed and returned to me during the interview and questionnaire session (Appendix: B). I also prepared a covering letter, which explained my background and research (Appendix: A).

I also assured all participants of their anonymity and confidentiality of the information they provided. I have used pseudonyms for all the participants and schools in order to protect identities and confidentiality of the participants. I treated them with respect and courtesy and also assured them that they could withdraw from the research with any reason at any time. Thus, I as a researcher, maintained to observe the major

principles of ethical considerations as way of respecting the research participants, the research context and to protect the information they provided.

### **Chapter Essence**

This Chapter began with the presentation of my research questions and the Chapter underpins the methodology and research design which I adopted for this study and arguments were also put forth to justify my chosen methodology and methods. The discussion enabled me to describe that this study has to be a qualitative by nature and a phenomenological approach is the best strategy for this research. The collected data will be analysed and interpreted through clusters and themes and refining and integrating the themes. The research process was made explicit, with the description of the participants in the current study provided, including ethical considerations and the role of researcher. The next chapter will focus on analysis of the data collected for this research.

## CHAPTER IV

### PERCEPTION OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITY TOWARDS EDUCATION

This chapter deals with the presentation and analyses of the textural-structural descriptions of school experience of my key participant girl students with disability or with special educational needs (SEN). I explored to get the answer to my main research question, “what does it mean to be a girl student with disability?” In this chapter, I have captured the school experiences of SEN girls i.e., their perceptions towards education, schooling and school environment. In order to contextualise SEN girl students’ views and experiences and also to supplement their views and experiences I have also included their parents and guardians, their SEN boy peers, school principals, resource-teachers and other subject-teachers. As mentioned in Chapter three, I drew meanings, grouped them into clusters and labelled themes. In doing so I started by sketching the responses of my key participants, SEN girls and then moved to discuss aspects of their school experiences.

#### **Perception of Girls: Parents’ Endeavour to Disability Detection**

With the start of First Five-Year Plan (1956-61) the efforts of developmental tasks were in process to provide services and facilities in different sectors of public life like health, education, transportation, communication, electricity and the like. Since then, Nepalese people are acquiring some facilities, services, information and awareness for health care and education. However there is no system for early detection of any difficulty or impairment in the child, at birth of the child if there is no visible deformity,

in general. The perception of GWDs regarding the efforts made by their parents in disability detection and treatment was found positive.

Table 5

## Girls' Perception about the Disability Detection and Treatment

Case Item	Perception of vision impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physically impaired girls
Disability detection and treatment	Parents are compassionate for the care and treatment. But there was no early detection, treatment and intervention facilities and practices	Parents are compassionate for the care and treatment of us. But they delayed for detection and treatment. The reason was that parents were unaware of early detection	Parents tried their level best for the care and treatment

Table 5 shows three different scenarios. The first scenario is that there is no early detection facility in case of congenital disability like vision impaired and hearing impaired. The second scenario is that parents are negligent and/or ignorant in the early detection in case of congenital disability, and the third scenario is that parents tried to detect the problem of their children but failed especially in the case of physical impairment because spine bifida type cases are congenital which can be seen immediately at birth. The table also shows that parents were ready for detection and treatment if the disability is visible. The only problem as the girls perceived is parental awareness of different types of disabilities and facilities for early detecting and treatment. Parents came to know about disability only after seeing the consequences of severe illness and accidents. As a result, congenital cases of vision and hearing were usually identified at

the age of three or above and/or their difficulties identified when they started schooling because of non-availability of any special measures for early detection of different impairments.

Parents saw the body intact and did not care about the deformities or culturally they were not taught for early detection. Even at school they were not taught to do so. They focused more on visible disability, for invisible one they waited for an incidence. Specifically, in many instances, parents were not aware about deafness at birth otherwise early detection could help for timely treatment which could cure the child from deafness. However, in the case of congenital physically impaired participants' disability was identified at birth and medical attention was provided immediately.

In cases of my vision impaired key participants, Suma (19) and Aparna (16) were identified vision impaired and low vision respectively only after they were admitted to the neighbourhood school. However, in the case of Asma (16), she lost her eye-sight at the age of ten, when she got high fever and consequently became blind. Similarly, Samita (16) became blind after suffering from typhoid, when she was nine months old. Thus, Asma and Samita were not congenital blind however the severe illness had made them impaired. Immediately their parents took them to eye hospital for treatment but it was useless. Immediate action of parents showed their compassion and awareness to their siblings. All the four participant girls (three with vision impairment and one with low vision) related their gloomy stories of disability of vision, which was not detected at birth or at early age.

*When we were celebrating Tihar (festival of lights of Hindus) I was walking on the candles and then only my parents knew that I could not see. Before that*



*incident I always looked with my head tilted and my parents thought I did this because of my big head. (Racchu, 13, Grade: VII – Samanta School)*

The above quote shows that due to unawareness, parents waited till the incidence. Similarly, among hearing impaired participants, Sitamaya (16) was identified deaf when she was three years old however, Saru was identified deaf only when she was eight years old. Like Rachhu, these girls were also congenitally deaf but due to the ignorance of parents the identification of their difficulty was delayed and was detected when they were admitted to the neighbourhood schools. Rama and Shresha had their own different stories.

Rama (18) became deaf after high fever at the age of three whereas Shresha (17) fell down from her two-story building when she was just eighteen months old and due to the injury on her forehead she became deaf. In these cases, parents were alert to provide treatment. Saru and Sitamaya also felt that their parents did their level best.

*When I was eight years old, my parents came to know that I was deaf and they took me to different hospitals and doctors for treatment but it was of no use I remained deaf. (Saru Mahat, 18, Grade X – Kalpabrikshya School)*

*When I was three years old, my parents came to know that I was deaf but I was born in a village so my parents took me to a Jhankri (witch-doctor) for treatment but it was useless. (Sitamaya Tamang, 16, grade VI – Kalpabrikshya School)*

In the case of physically impaired GWDs' disability were congenital as well as consequences of severe illness and accidents so their schooling was also affected due to need of frequent medical attention and hospitalised. Among them, Roshana (12) was born with a lump on her back, big head, and legs bent i.e., case of spina bifida. Spina bifida is

a defective closure of the spinal cord which affects the sensation below the defecting portion causing disability movement in that part of the spinal cord and below. Thus, the person has to be treated since birth. However, Dilu's (17) case was different. She was injured at the age of three when the corrugated roof of her house fell on her. Due to ignorance of villagers and her parents, she was not brought to Kathmandu for treatment but treated with local herbs at the village. Dilu regretted that the ignorance of villagers was the cause of her disability. Another participant, Dina (15) got burnt when she was only six months old and the treatment took a long time before she recovered but her left leg became a little bent and this makes walking difficult for her. Shubha (20) was alright in her elementary classes but when she was in class six, she had severe illness and lost mobility. Dilu related her accident as follows:

*My father wanted to take me to Kathmandu for treatment but the villagers told him that if he went to a big hospital for my treatment the doctors would amputate my leg and I would be lame forever. Thus, I was treated in the village using local herbs. Thus, my injured right leg became short after recovery. Since then I have difficulty in walking along slopes and staircase. Due to my odd walking (effect of injury) my peers calling me 'fyalti' (a girl walking with a limp). (Dilu, 17, Grade: X – Swarna School)*

By-and-large, all the participants got immediate treatment with local herbal medicine, Aurvedic medicine, treatment from 'Jhakris' (Witch-doctors) and were also taken to different hospitals for modern medical treatments. Though their impairments were identified late all the parents took initiative for immediate treatment after recognising the disability. This shows the parents' great effort to treat their child with

disability with all available treatment. Their parents were keen to raise them as per their capabilities, however, they were unable to provide treatment at the early stage because of unawareness, remoteness and inaccessibility to medical facilities. This undoubtedly showed their readiness towards caring of their children although initially they were not aware of their child's difficulty. There was no discrimination between girls and boys in the family regarding early treatment after the recognition of their visual impairment.

### **Perception of Girls: Volatility in Formal Schooling**

All the GWDs had common problem of getting a school which caters to them appropriately thus they perceived uncertainty in their schooling and had to move from one school to another in search of appropriate accommodation in nearby schools. Parents having children with disability, have to face lots of difficulties in finding schools in comparison to non-disabled ones. Thus, they have to go from one school to another seeing suitable option. Although, parents now continuously look for good options for their child's education, most schools cannot enrol students with impairments like vision, hearing, physical due to limited resources, available infrastructure, teachers and staff at their schools and their attitudes towards SEN students. So these children although interested to go to school and their parents were also eager to send them to school have to stay at home under compulsion.

My participants expressed their bitter experiences in getting a school. They had joined and left at least, three to four schools before joining their present schools. They found that their parents made continuous effort to find a better school for their education. This clearly shows the parents' affection towards their siblings as well as their worry for their siblings' future.

Table 6

## Volatility in formal schooling

Case Item	Perception of vision impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physical impaired girls
constant search for stability schooling	Parents wish to educate but schools lack appropriate facility, which created puzzlement to them	Parents are helpless and worried for education due to inability of integration	Need of Medicalisation and inappropriate infrastructure and services caused problem

The above table 6 shows different situations. The first situation spells about the willingness of parents to educate their GWDs. The second situation shows the helplessness of both parents and schools. In one hand all the schools in Nepalese context are unable to cater to SEN pupils with the available infrastructure and facilities in their school on the other hand parents were helpless because they could not find schools for GWDs. Thus parents were worried and puzzled about where to go and what to do in finding a school where GWDs get admitted. The GWDs also started schooling like other non-disabled children at the age of three/four years from pre-school or at six from class one. My participants with vision impairment Suma (19) first went to a boarding school then to a public school before joining 'Amrit School'. Samita (15) and other girls had also joined a neighbourhood boarding school before going to a public school, and altogether they changed three schools before coming to the present school. Similarly, Aparna (16) went to two different schools before joining 'Samanta School' and she was

disgusted because that she had lost time doing nothing though her parents were eager to support but were helpless.

*I was admitted to a school in the neighbourhood at the age of five. However, they didn't teach me because I could not see. My parents requested the school authority but they didn't help. My parents didn't know what to do so I stayed at home, and wasted 4 years. (Aparna Kafle, 16, Grade: IX – Samanta School)*

Aparna's parents were worried in the beginning to enroll their daughter who could not see properly. She was rejected by the school after a few days of enrolment because school was also unable to provide the necessary facilities to her.

In similar vein, GWDs with hearing impairment were also initially admitted to mainstream school in their neighbourhood. When these students could not cope with the peers in mainstream schools they changed the school because these GWDs were just integrated in the school without providing any facility to them. However, when they were not accepted by the mainstream schools then only their parents started to look for a suitable school and found this school. Saru (18), Sitamaya (16), Rama (18), and Shrasha (17), all went to at least three different schools then only they came to their present school which is a special school for deaf children. All girls, Saru, Sitamaya, Shrasha and Rama went to public or boarding school first where they did no special facility was available to address their difficulties and then only to the school run by Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) where other SEN were integrated and also to a public school where hearing impaired children were integrated. However, their difficulties were not addressed and they were unable to show any improvement there so when they came to know about this school they joined this school. Now they were satisfied at their present

school. Sitamaya also joined ten months sign language training conducted by National Federation of Deaf and Hard of hearing (NFDH) before coming to this school. This obviously shows her parent's desire to educate her.

*I was first admitted in CBR, which had classes up to class four only so I shifted to Jagriti Higher Secondary School. Over there I had problem in understanding lessons with other hearing peers. Thus, I joined this school (Rama Kibachhen, 18 Grade: VIII – Kalpabrikshya School)*

*First I was admitted in Kali Devi Secondary School, a regular (mainstream) school when I was six years old. I left the school because I was the only one with having hearing problem. (Sitamaya Tamang, 16, Grade:VI – Kalpabrikshya School).*

In the cases of GWDs with physical impairment, Shubha (20), Dina (15), Roshana (12) and Dilu (17) also changed schools frequently due because they had to be hospitalised for a long period when their defects aggravated. However, they got the opportunity to get admission to both Heaven Children Home (HCH) a private institutional home run by NGO and 'Swarna School' where they are now enjoying their schooling.

*My parents admitted me to Shree Janakalyan Primary School in my village when I was five years old and studied there up to class five. The difficulty in walking increased day by day so my parents admitted me to HRDC Banepa where my left leg was operated and I had to stay there for a whole year. When I returned to my village after treatment I was admitted to Shree Devithan Higher Secondary School in class six. I studied there up to class seven but again my leg started*

*bending so it had to be operated again, so I was again admitted in HRDC for treatment. I stayed there for three months this time. Only after this treatment only I got admitted to Heaven Children Home and Swarna School. (Dina Nepali, 15, Grade VI – Swarna School)*

The above instances spell out that the access to school is not easy to all the SEN students because the schools are neither well equipped to accommodate all the pupils nor do they have sufficient human resources in facilitating them. As mentioned above, the participants with physical impairment changed schools because they had to be admitted to Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC) frequently for a long period and they also had to stay under medication. Thus, the GWDs with vision impairment and hearing impairment needed extra resources to accommodate which are not available in all the schools in Nepal. The participants with physical impairment were also very irregular in class because they had to undergo through medication while a wheel-chair user needed spacious class as well.

### **Perception of Girls: Knowledge and Importance of Education**

All the GWDs were in favour of formal education so that they could acquire knowledge, skills and be capable to lead a good life in their future. They perceived the importance of education to make their future safe and independent. Mostly they defined education similarly. They defined education means of empowerment, knowledge, eradication of ignorance, enhancement of necessary life-skills, change agent of society, ability to distinguish right from wrong, cultivate capabilities and creative thinking to make them more intelligent. They further felt that formal schooling transformed an ignorant person into knowledgeable human resource for the society.

Table 7

Education is empowerment

Case Item	Perception of vision impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physical impaired girls
Education	Education is: to gain knowledge Better opportunities for job-market Route to independence and Become wise	Education is: acquiring ability to distinguish right and wrong, Become self-supportive Become change agent Road to dignity and respect	Education is: get knowledge for right things to do, Empowerment, Become learned, and preparing for better adulthood

Table 7 shows two scenarios, one is the clarity of GWDs' understanding regarding education and the other is how they find importance of education for leading dignified, independent and secure future for them. Further, they perceived that hard work is necessary for their education which can help them in minimising or overcoming their impairments.

*...If we are educated our brains can work even though our body is weak. (Shubha Bati, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

Shubha (20) uses wheel-chair so she finds education most important to become independent. Then only they could get better status in the society because the well educated are respected in the society. The perception regarding education was mostly the same between girls and boys, because all of them realised that education enhances capabilities for the betterment of each person's life. The participants with vision impairment like Samita (15) stressed that she needs education for the enhancement of expertise by which she will be able to become independent. However, Asma (16)



emphasized that education is the means of fulfilling aim of life and with the help of education one can serve others.

They further opined that education prepares them for their adulthood to be a self-supportive person and they do not have to feel inferior in the society because of their impairment. They expressed their perceptions like this:

*For me.... it empowers me ..... I can make my own decisions by distinguishing what is right for my better future and also I can got a job and earn my living and become self standing. I am here, far away from my village to study and be educated. (Aparna Kafle, 16, Grade: XI – Samanta School)*

*Education takes us out from dark to light. It makes life like the sunrays and makes our life golden. We do not have to depend on others. We can lead our life on our own. Education is very important for me especially because I should make myself able to stand on my own. If we get proper education with sign language we can be as capable as the hearing ones. (Rama Kibachhen, 18, Grade VIII – Kalpabrikshya School)*

*...Without education we can't do any significant or prestigious work in life.*

*Education helps us in entrepreneurship and to earn also. (Shrasha, 17, Grade VII – Kalpabrikshya School)*

*.....Education enhances people's capabilities to speak and produce skilled human resources like pilots, doctors, engineers, teachers managers, who are all nation builders.(Dilu Ale, 17, Grade: X – Satkarma School)*

All the GWDs seem to have a good understanding about education and its importance in life. Basically they opined that education is a must for them because it

enhances their capabilities and creative thinking so that they can be independent and self-directed in the future.

In this way, they expressed mainly two importance of education in life. First, with proper and quality education, they are able to get better jobs and earn their living in the future. Second, they opined that with quality education they will be able to become an entrepreneur and run a business of their interest. In other words, they expressed that good education will enable them to go for a job or do one's own business. Thus, GWDs perceived that education opens avenues to one for multiple options so that they do not have to be dependent. Thus, the above discussion portrayed on education's utility on one's life as well as it benefits to the society by producing required human resource for the nation.

### **Perception of Girls: School Environment**

The school environment comprises two major aspects, academic and non-academic environment. In academic environment, I have focused on students' participation in learning activities inside and outside the classroom, including co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. However, the non-academic environment involves both physical and social environment. Physical environment includes total physical facilities and infrastructure of the school which is accessible and useful to impaired girls whereas social environment embraces the interaction between teachers and students, and staff with SEN students and vice versa. In this regard, the socialisation, attitudes and behaviour of the SEN students towards others and vice-versa were focused in general. The participants found school as a secondary institution of socialisation where

students acquire purposive education as well as enhance attitudes, values and actions appropriate to them as member of a particular culture.

Thus, school is a platform, where along with academics students interact with peers, teachers and other staff and learn various roles progressively. As I have already mentioned earlier, the vision impaired girls had hostel facilities whereas physically impaired ones were living in Heaven Children Home (HCH) close to their school. However, Dilu (17) and the girls with hearing impairment did not have any hostel facility. Furthermore, all GWDs expressed concern about academic standards, challenges in academic, social and physical facilities in which they had to adjust accordingly because the schools did not have facilities essential to them.

### **Physical Environment**

Both Samanta School and Amrit School, integrating vision impaired students are renowned public schools in their respective districts and had satisfactory infrastructure and physical facilities, GWDs said that they had to compromise with the very limited basic facilities available to them. Therefore, they enjoyed only limited facilities over there. They feel neglected in both the class as well as in participation in other activities in their schools.

I found both the schools clean and well managed however 'Samanta' school was more resourceful than 'Amrit' school. All the vision impaired students were seated in the front row in the classroom in both the schools. After the establishment of 'Blind Section' more than two decades ago, a resource teacher was employed in the schools and the vision impaired students were integrated.

Table 8  
Physical environment the in school

Case Item	Perception of vision impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physical impaired girls
Inadequate and inappropriate infrastructure and facilities	The available facilities are: inaccessible, insufficient and neglected resource, Hostel is for name sake make them alienated and excluded	The available facilities are: insufficient, resources infrastructure and furniture creates helplessness	The available facilities are insufficient infrastructure, no ramps, nothing special for them but availability of helpers make them accepted and included

The table 8 above shows different scenarios. The first scenario is similar to all the GWDs i.e., the available infrastructure and physical facilities are bare-minimum. The second scenario is available hostel condition is poor. The third scenario is the available service portrayals of helpers, which is compensating the non-availability of ramps for the physically impaired. Aparna opined about Amrit School as follows,

*The school has a big spacious compound and a huge building to accommodate all the students. It has a library, science laboratory, computer laboratory, different sports materials, separate toilets for boys and girls, drinking water facilities etc. but we are unable to entertain all these activities because they are not suitable to us and we can not use them. For example, sometimes I go to the library with my friends but there are neither books in Braille nor books in larger print. We have only compulsory course books in Braille and only CDs of optional subject course are available for us. (Aparna Kafle, 16, a girl with low vision; Grade: IX – Samanta School)*

*.... There is only a small courtyard where all the students play during break. However, we (vision impaired ones) hardly get a chance to play because there are no materials of our interests. Our daily routine is just to attend classes and return to the hostel. We have nothing to play and we also have to do self-study because there is no one to guide or supervise us. (Samita Khanal, 15, Grade: VIII – Amrit School)*

They are staying at the hostel under compulsion because the main aim is to get education which was not possible at home so their keen desire to get education has motivated them to stay at the hostel.

*... However, the hostel is just for name sake. The rooms are congested and there is no warden to look after us. The school has just provided rooms for boarding and the Blind Welfare Organisation is financing for the food. We have meals but they are tasteless and monotonous. Meals and Tiffin are served according to the whim of the care-taker (cook). There is no fixed time for meals. The cook serves according to her time. There are no books compatible to us and we rarely participate in school activities. When I first joined this school in grade six, our principal gave me Rupees 3000 as scholarship and also provided the school dress. After that I have not got any scholarship from the school. Thus, there is no fixed rule regarding provision of scholarship and other materials. However, the resource teacher provides some stationary to us. (Suma Chapagain, 19, Grade: X – Amrit School)*

The above mentioned experiences of Aparna (16), Samita (15) and Suma (19) clearly indicate the helplessness of these students for not being able to enjoy the available

facilities in the school because the schools were negligent to provide the essential resource materials for them. However, some sympathetic friends help them by reading out the books for them. The GWDs in ‘Samanta School’ were satisfied with the hostel facility because it saved their time and money spent in daily transportation. I observed that their stay at the hostel was comparatively better than Amrit School.

*Hostel scenario at Samanta School:*

*I reached the hostel at 8:00 am during their lunch-time. I began observation from the kitchen and dining room. All the 15 students of the hostel were sitting around the dining tables and the cook was serving Dal-Bhat (Rice and lentil), and curry (Potato and green beans). Though the kitchen was dark and narrow it was clean and the students were enjoying the food. They were joking and talking to each other while the cook was serving. When I inquired about the menu and cooking services they told me that the Aaya (the care-taker lady) cooks in the morning and the Peon (helper) cooks in the evening. Generally, dal-bhat (Rice and lentil) and seasonal vegetables are served for meals. They also told that they get enough food in time. Both, the staff members take care of them as instructed by the resource teacher.*

*Then I went to the girls’ room at the first floor accommodated well at the hostel. I found the beds neat and clean and the room was also quite tidy and spacious. All of them had their own bed and trunks to keep their belongings. There were tables to keep their books and school bags. Similarly, the room of the boys was in the ground floor, and it was similar to the room of the girls. However, their bed covers were dirty. They were not washed regularly. (Field observation, Hostel, Samanta School – 3/9/2010)*

This scenario reflected that the SEN students were well looked after by the staff at hostel. During informal conversation they said that they were accustomed with the surrounding so they were able to go anywhere in the school compound and also could go out on their own if needed. Furthermore, in Samanta School the girls’ room was tidier

than that of the boys'. I also met a tutor, who was recently appointed by the school to help the vision impaired students in their homework and any difficulties, which was an added facility to them.

However, as pointed by Samita and Suma unlike the hostel at Samanta School I found the hostel at Amrit School very disappointing.

*Hostel Scenario at Amrit School*

*.... I was shocked to see six girls accommodated in that congested dark room which was suitable for only one person and had space for only two beds at the most. The Aaya's daughter, who took care of these girls at night also stayed with them. The room was very untidy and the beds were also poorly kept, was not covered by bed sheets and the quilts also did not have any covers. The room looked like an asylum where they had to live with bare minimum facility. Further there was a room in the courtyard temporarily partitioned by ply used for boys' hostel. However, in comparison to the girls' room it was well ventilated however, I could not imagine how hard it would be to stay there in winter. This room was also not sufficient for all the boys living there. However, it had the same number of boys as in girls' room. The Aaya's son always stayed with them to help them at night. The hostel is like this from the beginning. During the informal conversation with them I found out that no one (principal and resource teacher) took responsibility further and there were no set rules and regulations to follow. They were staying thereby shows them feeling and helping each other. On that day the students had Tiffin at 5:30 pm because the Aaya prepared their Tiffin then. She takes her own time to prepare and serves meals. All were living with bare minimum facility just for the enhancement of education by compromising. (Field observation, Hostel, Amrit School – 4/8/2010)*

GWDs described that the hostel was just for name sake in Amrit School. They expressed their helplessness. They were compelled to stay there because they had no other alternative and also no one was there to listen to them. However, the principal tried

to escape from her responsibility by saying that the caring of vision impaired students was the responsibility of the resource teacher and that department of education should monitor regularly.

The above scenarios spelled out that the hostel management was far better in Samanta School and the students were happy and satisfied staying there. Unlike Samanta School, Amrit School is located in the centre of the municipality and also does not have sufficient playground. However, classrooms and other facilities were satisfactory. Water container and a jug was placed in-front of every class and classes were well ventilated, spacious and well organised, and the students with visual impairment were seated in the front rows of the classes. However, their perceptions about available facilities in their schools were same as GWDs from Samanta School. There was a library which had books in Braille and large print materials were not available only a few audio CDs were available in the blind section. Thus, the GWDs find themselves helpless and their needs are not addressed at school.

Hearing impaired students attend segregated special school in Nepal where only hearing impaired children cared so interaction with other peers of their age is limited. However, my GWDs with hearing impairment found their school as primary socialising institution because all the members in school knew sign language and this made them more comfortable than the environment at home. Thus, all GWDS enjoyed coming to school and wanted to spend more time at school. After joining this school they felt that this was the appropriate place for them. Though the school building was two storied having a few classrooms it was not enough to run separate classes from nursery to class ten. So as the number of students was small, some classes were combined. I found the



school compound and classrooms clean and well managed and there was a classroom for vocational education also. However, there was no library, science laboratory or canteen but there was a small play ground. Similar to Saru, Rama, Sitamaya, and Shrasha expressed that the school did not have enough classrooms and lacked other facilities.

*We are altogether forty-eight students in total so classes are manageable by the teachers. We don't have a playground but some sports materials are available. Furthermore, there is no library and not enough books to read and there is also no science laboratory and we do not have any demonstration classes as well.*  
(Saru Mahat, 18, Grade X – Kalpabrikshya School)

*..... Textbooks are inappropriate to us. ....no sufficient books in sign language available. .... We do not have sufficient furniture and those that we have are also in a poor condition. Thus the government should include the hearing impaired within the national curriculum and resolve our difficulties. If textbooks are prepared focusing on us then we can understand easily and enhance our knowledge and be able to lead our life on our own and our future will be safe.*  
(Rama Kibachhen, 18, Grade VIII – Kalpabrikshya School)

*I can't say that our school has good physical environment.... Nevertheless, the school provides tea at Tiffin time.* (Sitamaya Tamang, 16, Grade VI  
Kalpabrikshya School)

The insufficient resources were hindering the appropriate learning of GWDS with hearing impairment. Although, 'Satkarma School' had only one girl with physical impairment 'Swarna School' (a private school) had integrated sixteen students with physical impairment and a girl with low vision without any physical infrastructure to

cater these to students. The school buildings did not have ramps which is a must for wheel-chair users. In Dilu's case, she had problem with her right leg and her class was at the top (third) floor of the building so the school building was not conducive for her eventhough the government of Nepal committed to make the schools child friendly. Thus, I observed that the schools did not have any facility for the physically impaired children and they had to adapt with the available facilities.

Nevertheless, there were reasonable numbers of students at 'Swarna School'. All the participants were found to be very happy to attend the school because even though the school building was not conducive to them the school environment was very caring. The views of participants regarding the physical, social and academic environment of their school were both positive as well as negative.

*Though the infrastructure of the school is quite good .... the school building has no ramp which is essential for a student like me but my friends help me to go to my classroom which is in the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.(Dilu Ale, 17, Grade: X – Satkarma School)*

*The physical environment of the school is good but as I use wheel-chair two Aaya Didis (helpers) have to carry me. My classroom was in the ground floor in the first year both me and my wheel-chair had to be carried to the classroom. My classroom has now been shifted upstairs since two years so now I can take my wheel-chair to my class directly. It is difficult to take the wheel-chair around to computer laboratory; library etc. but the helpers help me. However, there is no ramp and this makes it little difficult for us. (Shubha Bati, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

Dilu finds that the school authority least responsive to Dilu's disablement and do not bother to provide even minimum facility to her. Every day she has to take help from friends to go to her class at the third floor of the building. Dilu's experience portrays the double standard of the government because they do not do what they say. There are no disability friendly school buildings yet. The 'Satkarma School' and even community schools do not have ramps to facilitate wheel-chair users. There are no extra remedial provisions for her so her needs are neglected. However, her friends help her along the staircases.

In Swarna School, there was a small library with book racks and a big table in the middle and there were also three showcases with some apparatuses and materials for science teaching in one side. However, there was no separate science laboratory. Furthermore, there was a small play ground in either side of the school and there was also a big public play ground in front of the first block of the school so the school had enough space for sports. It was a small boarding school in a rented building with basic facilities and accommodated some physically impaired students. Though the school did not have any ramps the staffs were ever ready to help wheel-chair users to help such students to go from one block to another and also to help the diapers users which showed the school authority's positive reinforcement to the GWDs so they were satisfied with the facilities available to them.

As I mentioned earlier, all GWDs with physical impairments, were staying in Heaven Children Home (HCH), which was nearby so I also observed it. It was just five minutes walk from the school. HCH was run in a rented house which was well suited for other children but not conducive to the wheel-chair users. Though the Home was

congested and had no ramps for the wheel-chair users it was quite clean and well managed. The wheel-chair users were carried to their rooms, which was in the second floor of the building by the helpers.

The experiences of GWDs with physical impairment revealed that the school did not have ramp, alternative measures to support them were provided which was appreciable.

*Shubha's class at Swarna School*

*Shubha's classroom was spacious and was in the first building block of the school so Shubha or any other wheel-chair user did not face any problem because they could go to the class directly on their wheelchair. I found Shubha was sitting on her wheelchair in the front of the class. (Field observation, Class VII: Swarna School – 24/9/2010)*

Therefore, from the overall expressions of the GWDs, it was quite clear that the infrastructures of their present school were sufficient but not conducive to SEN pupils. The hostel facility was better in 'Samanta School' whereas the hostel at 'Amrit School' was just name sake. The GWDs at Kalpabrikshya School were motivated to come to school because sign language was used at Kalpabrikshya School and at Swarna School the GWDs were provided helpers.

**Academic Environment**

The experiences portrayed about by most GWDs with vision impairment and hearing impairment showed the same problems about their academics. They were compelled to follow the national curriculum which had no consideration for their differences and difficulties. Dilu had no complaint about the academic environment of

Satkarma School because the teachers were experienced and teaching was good and homework was also checked in time with good feedback.

The teachers listened to her queries. Similarly, other GWDs with physical impairment like Shubha, Dina, and Roshana were also quite satisfied with the academic environment at Swarna School because they were heard and responded with good feedback. The GWDs with physical impairment were able to adapt with the school curriculum and the school authority was considerate to them. In other words, it can be said that the participants were well integrated in their academic ground.

Both schools, Samanta and Amrit were higher secondary schools so there were quite a large numbers of students including a reasonable number of vision impaired students. Both schools had separate Blind Sections with qualified and fairly experienced resource teacher since more than two decades. Thus, these schools were integrating vision impaired students till date.

Table 9

Curriculum and pedagogy

Case Item	Perception of vision impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physically impaired girls
Incompatible curriculum contents and pedagogy	Curriculum and pedagogy are: excluding in nature, outlying due to scarcity of books in Braille and other resources difficulty in assessment and getting feedback and Problematic exams and writers	Curriculum and pedagogy are: excluding in nature due to small amount of vocabularies, but participative classes, vocational and extra activities	No problem with curriculum and pedagogy, participative pedagogy and extra activities, regular assessment and feedbacks

Table 9 shows varied scenes. The first scenario is about the exclusionary pattern of the government prescribed curriculum for the vision and hearing impaired ones. The second scenario is the instructional pedagogy and assessment processes are neglecting the vision impaired ones in their respective schools. The third scenario is physically impaired ones are included fairly well in academics. The resource teachers' responsibilities were to teach Braille script to a new comer, translate textbooks and examination papers into Braille as well as translate students' answer-sheets and homework into formal medium of languages (English or Nepali). Moreover, from class eight and above, schools provided writers and other essential materials to students with low vision. Besides catering to vision impaired students, the resource teachers' have to take other classes too as per routine.

However, the school had no special remedial classes for these students and also no specific attention was given to them in the class. These students, who needed extra support, had only Braille script class. I found the classes running smoothly like in other mainstream schools. The vision impaired students were kept in the front rows in the classes and the peers sitting beside them were instructed to help them by dictating the lessons written in the blackboard. Further I observed that the teachers took initiatives only if the student asked questions. Though the subject teachers sympathised with them (vision impaired ones) there was no provision of separate/extra options for them.

All the GWDs with vision impairment from both Amrit School and Samanta School said that they found mathematics, science, social studies and English difficult due to diagrams and figures, which were major constraints in conceptualising for them and also unavailability of some textbooks in Braille.

*We follow the national curriculum even with our problems. Some subjects are easy for me but some are difficult. Nepali is easy but mathematics is difficult. I am unable to grasp mathematics in class so I'm very weak in mathematics. .... especially geometry because no special teaching method in teaching mathematics. Some Science lessons are also difficult to understand because of figures..... civic education and English grammar books are not available in Braille but our teacher has prepared those in Braille for us. (Sumita Khanal, 15, Grade: VIII – Amrit School)*

*.... I need books with big letters which are not easily available in the school to understand ... nobody takes care to resolve this problem. The class teachers do not give attention to us in the class but they teach focusing the sighted ones only. However, recently, the school has hired a teacher who helps in our difficulties. Examination system is not favourable to us because the questions with diagrams and figures in science and mathematics (Geometry) are very difficult for us. There is no substitute to these questions. So I never attempt all the questions in science and mathematics as a result there is no chance to get high scores in these subjects. Geometrical figures and set lessons are hard to understand because I cannot draw figures. So whatever my friend copies from the blackboard I practice but that is not enough to make the concepts clear. Sometimes my friends help me by reading out the lessons written on the blackboard. The subject-teacher (English) helps by copying all the notes in my exercise book or tells other students to copy for me. So some methods of the school are very good though we, visually*

*impaired students have to cope with the friends for better understanding the lessons. (Racchu, 13, Grade: VII – Samanta School)*

The Students with vision impairment have been facing challenges in academics such as in teaching-learning activities; appearing in exams, getting writers, translation problem and also the insufficiency of reading materials in Braille or other compatible learning materials. The first problem was that the curricular contents in different subjects such as science; mathematics, especially geometry; social studies and English were difficult to them because of figures, pictures and diagrams. Efforts were not made to teach the concept of figures, so they lagged behind in lessons where more figures and diagrams were used. They were not taught geometry as well as all the lessons where pictures were used. Moreover, the examination questions were also not selective to them so they could never attempt questions from geometry so they could never get good marks in geometry. These students were never taught geometry but they had to appear in the examination without any knowledge and they feel this to be unfair to them.

Second problem was regarding the writers in the examination. As a rule the vision impaired students from class eight onwards get one person to write exam papers for them. This person has to be one grade junior than the visually impaired student for whom s/he is writing exam papers. However, not only finding a writer is a problem on the other hand if the writer is good she/he will write as dictated by the student but if the writer is slow then it can affect the completion of the examination papers and on their scores. This problem was pointed by Sama, (subject-teacher – Samanta School) she said that due to the poor performance of the writer her bright student got poor marks in Nepali. However, during my visit to Amrit School I saw the teacher herself writing the answer paper for



Radha, (a student in Grade X). This was of course not ethical and against the rules and regulations. I questioned in this regards and she replied:

*...it is very difficult to find writers. However, earlier, there was a rule that the teachers will be writers turn by turn but some male teachers harassed the student and they didn't give time to think, since then whenever I'm free I become a writer for them. From IX, X and in SLC exam, they get a writer, junior to them.*

*(Purnima, Resource teacher - Amrit School)*

However, in my visit to Samanta School, the first term examinations were going on and I found the examination management quite good there. However, the writers for these students are vital because her/his expertise, speed and performance is more necessary than the knowledge and understanding also of the visually impaired students.

The excerpt of my field observation portrayal is given below:

*Examination hall in Samanta School*

*All the fifteen vision impaired students (seven girls and eight boys) were sitting around the big oval shaped table. I found three types of examinees. They were 1) students with low vision, who were writing on their own like other students with good vision; 2) visually impaired were using Braille script; and 3) class VIII, XI, and X students, who were waiting for writers who were coming from another school. Due to a sudden change of the time to begin the examination they were late. Actually the writers had to be asked to come at 11:30 while the time schedule started at 11:00. However, after a while the writers came and then examination started. The resource teacher was helping students who had difficulty in reading the questions. All the students were busy with their writing. I saw the writers reading the questions repeatedly to their visually impaired peers and waiting for their answers which they would write as dictated. There were altogether 20 students but the exam was quite systematic.*

*( Field Observation, Examination scenario in Samanta School – 20/8/2010)*

The third problem was the inability of the subject-teacher to check homework of the vision impaired students because they were ignorant of Braille script. The fourth problem was that reading materials helpful to them were not enough. Thus, I found that the students were assimilated only just for name sake without adequate measures for their accommodation. I observed classes but I did not find any participation of vision impaired students and the teacher also did not try to make the vision impaired students understand the lesson. They were just passive listeners. Thus, the classroom scenario portrays that the SEN students were just integrated to mainstream schools as per the provision of education policy but did not address their needs and the teacher also does not bother to know whether they understand the lesson or not. Due to all above problems, mentioned above, the vision impaired students find the curriculum and pedagogy exclusionary for them. An excerpt reflects classroom scenario:

*Classroom scenario at Amrit School*

It was Grade six (17 girls and 11 boys including 2 visually impaired students) where the teacher was teaching 'construction of angles ( $60^{\circ}$ ,  $30^{\circ}$ ,  $90^{\circ}$  and  $120^{\circ}$ ) using compass. I was really interested to observe the class because I was interested to see how these visually impaired students will construct the angles as demonstrated by the teacher and what will be the alternative if they are not able to do same like other sighted ones. The teacher showed on the blackboard how to construct each of these angles and the students also did the same as constructed by the teacher. The teacher checked the work done by the students by going to them. However, the two students, with visual impairment, were sitting quietly and were not taking part in the teaching-learning activities though they were sitting in the front and the teacher did not go to them. The class was interactive because the students were interested to construct the angles and show the construction to the teacher. The teacher concluded the classroom activities without including those visually impaired students in the classroom activities. They were just passive listeners in

the class and didn't try to do the work as directed by the teacher. (*Field Observation, Scenario of a geometry lesson in Grade VI in Amrit School – 3/8/2010*)

The classroom teaching did not integrate the vision impaired pupils so they feel alienated.

The teachers at Kalpabrikshya School were capable to teach their students due to their knowledge of sign language. Normally the teachers teach their specialised course but sometimes a grade-teacher has to teach all the subjects in the lower classes. All participants were very also happy because besides course contents they got chance to take part in extra-curricular activities also. However, Saru, Shrasha, Sitamaya and Rama found science, Mathematics, Social Studies and English difficult. There were only 3000-5000 vocabulary in sign language and this was not sufficient to understand lessons of different subjects fully. They get involved in different activities in the classroom and were outside and encouraged for improvement.

They liked subjects like Nepali, Moral Education, Health, Environment and Population Education and also enjoyed vocational classes and extra-curricular activities. They were satisfied with teaching-learning activities like regular classes, frequent homework checks and getting feed-back etc. However, due to compulsion to follow national curriculum, inadequate vocabulary in sign language and insufficient modern educational materials these students in general had difficulty. Their experiences,

*Curriculum is difficult for me because there are only a few words in sign language. Learning is very difficult because teaching materials and books in sign language are not available. Maths, English and Social Studies are mainly difficult to understand because there is very little vocabulary in sign language. Thus,*

*without much vocabulary understanding becomes very poor. In social studies there are several exercises which have to be consulted with the community people but due to lack of communication we are behind in these exercises. (Rama Kibachhen 18, Grade VIII – Kalpabriksya School)*

*..... Some of the contents are related to common social behaviours in our daily life therefore, most of the contents from the above mentioned subjects are so tough that I have to ask others. However, they do not know sign language so there is communication gap which is another problem to us but Nepali, Moral Education and Health and Population Education are easy because they have enough vocabulary in sign language. (Sitamaya Tamang, 16, Grade VI – Kalpabriksya School)*

Furthermore, the GWDs with physical impairment were happy in this school because they were active participants and the teacher gave homework regularly and also checked them on time. Though the school did not have a science laboratory the teacher explained the lesson by demonstration and a few practical classes were also performed. Most participants expressed that subjects like mathematics and science were difficult but no remedial classes were conducted for those subjects.

The participants also said that they frequently participate in extra-curricular activities like quiz contest, poem recitation, essay competitions and cultural programmes in the school and also participate in programmes organised by other schools and organisations. However, the participants had remedial classes in HCH.

*... The social studies teacher organises field trip and gives project work and group work and gives prizes to the best performance. Home-work is checked in*

*time. My queries are regularly answered and feedbacks of our progress after each exam are also provided. Moreover, our school organises sports and other extra-curricular activities like quiz-contest, oratory, debate/discussion, cultural programmes, parents'-day, Dashain-Tihar programme and some in-door games too. I participate in games like chess and carom. (Dilu Ale, 17, Grade: X – Satkarma School)*

*It is easy to appear in the examination and I understand most of the lessons taught by the teachers. They repeat if we do not understand. If I stay quiet the teachers come up to me to ask if I have any problem. I find Nepali easy and understand it but all the other subjects are difficult. I consult the teachers and they help me in these subjects. In science the teacher teaches in class with demonstration so I have no problem to do practical. I am very happy joining this school. I have no time to think about my disability. .... I participate in extra-curricular activities like poem writing, recitation, and quiz contests organised by the school. (Shubha Bati, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

With the available overall academic environment for SEN pupils with vision impairment I found that they were not wholly integrated in their respective schools. Samanta School provides better facilities than Amrit School but GWDs had to manage on their own to understand lessons and solve problems, however, the hearing impaired ones had good support from the school. Physically impaired ones had no significant problem in academics.

## Social Environment

With time and context, education has become an inevitable means for the enhancement of knowledge and skills for the betterment of an individual. Most Nepalese emphasise on their children's good education thus, the number of SEN students in schools has been increasing day by day so the attitude towards people with disabilities (PWDs) changed from negligence and disgust to charity-based approach and from the late nineteenth century it has been emphasised more as right-based approach. However, the GWDs had perceived both positive and negative experiences regarding social environment of their schools. Some of them had bitter experiences of bullying and misbehaving previous schools. No special measures were implemented for them in the school.

Table 10

### Socialisation

Case Item	Perception of vision impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physically impaired girls
Socialisation: acceptance and alienation	The social environment is perceived as: both - Acceptance and helpful and cooperation from peers; alienation, bullying and in- cooperation	The social environment is perceived as: both Acceptance, included and participative; Bullying and in-cooperation	The social environment is perceived as: Acceptance Cooperation participative

The above table portrays mainly two scenes one is about acceptance and another is alienation. The GWDs with vision impairment from both Amrit School and Samanta

School perceived mixed experiences about their social environment in their schools. They found peers the best source for confirming correct answers and good support. They were satisfied because they found their teachers supportive, positive and eager to help them. However, they found some teachers and peer negative because they would underestimate and harass them and were also not helpful. Suma and others had these experiences:

*..... In the school and the teachers teach quite well. However, some teachers lecture so fast that I cannot follow. Some teachers write on the blackboard without explaining. They seem to forget that we the vision impaired are also in the class. So in this situation I find difficulty to catch but with the help of peers I manage somehow. Sometimes when the school organises quiz, literary competition I participate but I don't take part in sports.*

*.... My friends are very supportive and read out lessons to me and also dictate those written on the blackboard. My friends help me on the road also besides helping in academics. I really work hard for my studies. (Suma Chapagain, 19, Grade: X – Amrit School)*

*..Most of the friends are ever ready to help us by telling the notes written on the board and sometimes they even copy the notes from the blackboard for us.(Aparna, 16, Grade: IX – Samanta School)*

*.... There is no direct discrimination by them, but sighted-peers do not intermingle with us much. Some teachers think that we can do nothing without support from others. (Subas, 19, Grade: X – Samanta School)*

*....Some classmates bully me. I have some sad experiences while walking along the road when they have quietly left me alone because I can't see them.*

*Sometimes friends do not talk to me and also refuse to respond. So some peers are in-cooperative at times. (Samita, 15, Grade: VIII – Amrit School)*

*..... Handicapped people are not looked up by the society. I know of one case where parents are hiding their lame boy.... person cannot do all the things as desired independently. (Prayas, 18, Grade: VIII – Samanta School)*

Aparna and Suma expressed some positive experiences also. Some students also experienced that the sighted ones do not want to intermingle with them. I found that all the SEN students in their respective school hostels live like a family. They share their happiness and co-operate. The juniors are cared by the seniors and they are helped in homework and other study-related difficulties in the hostel.

The social environment in Kalpabrikshya School was quite conducive for hearing impaired girls because they were not discriminated and the hearing impaired students become very intimate if people know sign language and feel easy where communication can be done in sign language. They find the school homely where sign language is used to communicate with each other. All of them found their teachers, staff and peers very cooperative because they could share their feelings, difficulties and problems with them without any hesitation. The school environment was just like a family environment.

*Our school is a small family where all the teachers and students have cordial relationships and all intermingle with each other. The school environment is very conducive to us because our teachers are very caring. They support us in all the activities. ‘mamharule hamilai chhaya bhayer saghaunu bhayeko chha’ (the teachers are behind us like a shadow to help us).(Sitamaya Tamang, 16, Grade VI – Kalpabrikshya School)*



*Sometimes necessary stationeries are provided when we need them. All the teachers are ever ready to co-operate. (Rama, 18, Grade: VIII – Kalpabrikshya School)*

All the students in Kalpabrikshya School were happy to attend school because of the caring environment over there. They feel that they are accepted. So the parents were also quite satisfied with the school even though it was not well equipped with all the necessary resources and infrastructure. The teachers and head-teacher were also doing their best to make the school environment conducive to the students.

Along with classroom activities I also observed a 'quiz-contest' programme conducted by the students on the occasion of 'Children's Day'. It was really well organised and I observed equal participation of both boys and girls. Similarly, another day there was an inauguration of child-club 'Asal Bahira Bal Club' (A Good Club of Hearing Impaired Students), which was established for the welfare of students and also to organise different extra and co-curricular programmes in the school and exchange programme with other schools and organisations. The committee members were selected by themselves maintaining gender parity. I found there was no discrimination between girls and boys. All the students were very smart and active. On this occasion the newly selected committee members gave speech and a teacher was the interpreter. This scenario was really interesting and it also reflected that these students with hearing impairment who created the required platform to grow and develop their intelligence were quite intelligent. I really enjoyed the programme because the social environment was very cordial and all the teachers kept in touch with their students and were ever ready to help and clarify their queries. I was really impressed. There was a friendly relationship

between the students where the senior students were helpful and co-operative with the juniors.

The social environment of ‘Satkarma School’ was found satisfactory. Dilu has never experienced any harassment or misbehaviour in the school however she has faced verbal insult, bullying and alienation in her previous school.

*I have never found any misbehaviour and bullying from any one in spite of my disability but rather my peers and teachers help and encourage me. In my previous school, I felt segregated by the peers. They didn't like to be my friend and behaved badly because of my impairment. I felt very bad, sad and hurt to hear the verbal abuses and wanted to fight. However, with my age I have realised and started to tolerate these abuses. Now I don't mind verbal abuses. (Dilu Ale, 17, Grade: X – Satkarma School)*

Here the teachers and peers were supportive and helped in her need. Similarly, the participant girls with physical impairment of ‘Swarna School’ also said that their social environment was very cordial. The head-teacher, other teachers, staff and peers were supportive. I observed the school and classroom activities and found the environment very interactive. The SEN students were also included in the activities. The head-teacher said that before accommodation of SEN students’ he had organised an orientation class for all the teachers and staff to make them aware of disability to cooperate and be comfortable with them. This created a very positive impact in the teachers as well as to the non-disabled students. All of them have supportive feelings towards the SEN children. This was an initiation of the head-teacher to make the social environment

comfortable for SEN students. I found this conducive to them and the participants also mentioned the same.

*I am the oldest in the class so I hesitate to ask the teacher when I do not understand. However, the teachers know this so they come to my table and help me. All my friends love me and help me in the class. If I have to go somewhere they help me with my wheel-chair. I had never imagined coming to school and getting education like this. I am now encouraged here. When I miss class the teachers tell me about the lessons the next day. I was sick for one month and could not go to school but there was exam. However, sir arranged for me to give exams at home and this was very helpful to me. I got the chance to appear in the exam and I passed also. All the sirs and madams also came to see me at Home. They are not only my teachers but also my guardian. (Shubha Bati, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

*Senior students are cooperative and Didi (the helper) also supports me. My peers help me to do my lessons and I also play with them. However, some peers do not include me while they are playing and some bully by calling me disabled. (Roshana, 12, Grade: II – Swarna School)*

Though most of the participants with physical impairment described the social environment very encouraging in Swarna School, Roshana had some bitter experiences of bullying and exclusionary behaviour from her peers.

Furthermore, the GWDs participants stayed at HCH so they also related about the social environment at HCH. Thus, I find it necessary to describe about HCH also. The main purpose of this Home was to support, counsel and advocate to the betterment of the

children with disabilities. Seventeen physically impaired children were getting residential facility free of cost and all of them were attending mainstream school. Through informal conversation, I came to know that all the children perform most of their daily living on their own. Helpers only cleaned the room, washed the clothes and did the cooking. Physiotherapist and teachers were available for therapy and remedial classes as per need.

Shubha was reenergised to join school and get education when she was admitted to the HCH. She said:

*I saw many children like me over here and felt very happy. I had stopped my studies but seeing them studying, I also wanted to study again because I felt that they would love me. I was always worried about my weakness before and thought that my life was useless. Now I am encouraged to study and live. .... There are seven staff members including 1 cook, 2 help in cleaning and washing, which we can not do. Two teachers teach in our day-care section and 2 physiotherapists are also available to us. A teacher comes to help us to do our homework and also takes remedial classes from 4:30 – 6:30 pm daily. I am very happy here because I get all the facilities in a homely environment. I am very happy after coming to this school and I have no time to think about my disability. My friends staying with me at Children Home as well as other friends help me a lot when I am homesick. Sometimes the teachers encourage me while friends joke and make the atmosphere lively. (Shubha, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

Shubha got encouragement from the social environment of the HCH and Swarna School and this aroused her desire to live and was boosted up to fulfil her aim. From the above mentioned experiences of my participants regarding their overall school

environment, I found that they have both positive and negative experiences. However, they expressed their great pleasure to have the opportunity to attend school, so that they were able to get education, acquire knowledge and skills for their development. Parents are more excited to find better facilities and opportunities to educate their SEN child whether a boy or a girl. I found that the GWDs also perceived that their parents are now more aware to educate their girl child and due to their great effort these girls got the opportunity to go to school.

### **Knowledge on Rights**

Human right is freedom to enjoy rights to live as declared by the United Nations. However, child right and disability rights explain about the rights to get education, nutrition, health care, and security etc. for the well-being of child and PWDs.

Table 11

#### Knowledge of rights

Case Item	Perception of vision impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physically impaired girls
Knowledge on rights: Human, Child and Disability rights	The Participants were aware of rights but no clarity about different rights	The Participants had clarity among different rights	The Participants had not clear idea of different rights

Table 11 shows two scenarios, one scenario is participants are knowledgeable about their different rights whereas the other scenario is some participants do not know about their different rights. Though these schools conduct awareness programmes regarding rights and the curriculum also include lessons explaining universal human

rights declared by the United Nations and constitutional rights of the citizens, most of the participants had very little knowledge regarding human rights. However Dilu, Shubha, and Dina had vague knowledge of different rights while Roshana was ignorant about rights.

*I don't know much about these different rights however, child right is the right of every child to get proper education, security, food, shelter and clothes for his/her well-being and also get opportunity to foster his/her interests. The youths under seventeen should not be abused by enforcing in the labour market. (Aparna, 16, Grade: IX – Samanta School)*

*Human rights, means all are equal without discriminating with regards to gender, sex, disability, caste, class, religion etc. (Suma 19, Grade: X – Amrit School)*

*... Furthermore, disability rights advocate the rights of PWDs that they should get to live and entertain their human rights like non-disabled ones and lead a dignified life. (Saru 18, Grade: VIII – Kalpabrikshya School)*

Among all the participants, I found my hearing impaired participants quite knowledgeable and smart. They had quite a good understanding of the above mentioned rights. As I mentioned earlier, they were actively organising different activities in their school and they were also conduct awareness programmes.

### **Disability: Meaning and Its Effect**

All the GWDs, in general, defined disability, impairment and handicap interchangeably and they showed concern about disability and expressed that the SEN students with impairment should be provided appropriate education as per their

capabilities. They had clear understanding of disability which hampers the life of the affected person so the PWDs should be provided facilities and opportunities.

Table 12

Defining disability: meaning and its effect

Case Item	Perception of visually impaired girls	Perception of hearing impaired girls	Perception of physically impaired girls
Meaning and effects of disability	Disability is: dysfunction of body organ Causes: Congenital, accident, chronic illness Impairment results disability, handicap, effects: bullying, naming	Disability is: dysfunction of bodily organ; Causes: Congenital, accident, chronic illness, malnourishment Effects: harassment, negative attitude	Disability is: Deformity of body Causes: Congenitally, accident, chronic illness, which handicaps and effects: disability bully, naming

Table 12 spells three distinct scenarios. The first scenario is the meaning and causes of disability. The second scenario is about the effects of disability and the third scenario is the interrelationship between disability, handicap and impairment. All the GWDs had a quite clear picture of disability as they defined it as some deficit in body organ (s) which cannot function in a proper way and it hampers the person in her/his everyday life. I found the hearing impaired students were smarter than other SEN students because they had better understanding about the cause and types of disability and were more observant because they could see and make concepts clear. Some excerpts reflected by SEN students' definition regarding disability,

*Any kind of impairment causes disability and it affects in our daily living. For example, I'm a vision impaired girl and my impairment handicaps in my walking, studying and also other daily activities. I am unable to do all my daily tasks like sighted peers. (Samita, 15, Grade: VIII – Amrit School)*

*.... Despite my hearing problem I am not depressed because of good cooperation from others I also feel lucky that I am going to school and getting education.*

*There are different types of disabilities like visual impairment and low vision, hearing impairment and deafness, intellectual disability and learning difficulty, physical impairment, multiple disabilities (more than one disability) and autism and many other unidentified disabilities. Those who have hearing impairment cannot communicate properly so they are handicapped in life. Other PWDs also face differentiation and difficulty in their daily living. (Sitamaya Tamang, 16, Grade: VI – Kalpabrikshya School)*

*....When a disabled person is walking along the road some people gaze at them, while others abuse them calling langdo, andho, and lato (crippled, blind and dumb) etc. I have many problems however I do all my daily work myself.*

*Sometimes I feel inferior when I go to new places. However, I immediately realise that I am not the only person with impairment. There are many others with severe disability. Then, I become optimistic and think of going ahead to reach my ultimate destination. (Dina Nepal, 15, Grade: VI – Swarna School)*

They also expressed that disability hampers one to one's participation in social activities and also they had very clear understanding about disability which handicaps a person to their social, economic and cultural environment. Participants like Suma



Sitamaya faced harassment and negligence from the family members and others in the society. Some parents even feel ashamed when they have a disabled child and want to hide them from others. Suma told her story with tears in her eyes, and added that I cannot forget this incident forever:

*Suma encountered harassment*

*The hostel is just for the name sake. It lacks proper infrastructure and management. At night the school compound is closed thus nothing to worry and we are safe however in the daytime there is no restriction and anyone can come and go. I have one bitter experience, which happened a few months ago. Once a person attempted sexual assault during the Tiffin time but luckily I was able to escape. This incident was really scary for me. I try to solve some constraints on my own. (Suma 19, Grade: X – Amrit School)*

Sitamaya also expressed her bitter experience similar to Suma is, she was also sexually harassed in the neighbourhood because she was a disabled with hearing impairment.

*Sitamaya's cannot forget this sad story*

*I will never forget, a recent incident, which occurred while returning from school. One of my neighbours and his friends tried to harass me and my friend sexually but both of us attacked them by stones and escaped. Some people in a nearby shop saw us running and they came to our rescue. Then, after coming to know about the incident, they punished the culprits by smearing black-soot on their faces and they also put garlands of shoes around their necks and then took them to the police. This type of incident discourages me and I hate people like that. I feel insecure. I become sad when I cannot communicate easily and it hurts me when people call me Lati (dumb). (Sitamaya, 16, Grade VI – Kalpabrikshya School)*

Thus, both Suma and Sitamaya perceived that due to their impairment some people think that PWDs are inferior and try to exploit them. Shubha was bullied by peers in her neighbourhood thus she provided the meaning of disability in a wider perspective by saying:

*Shubha encountered positive and negative attitudes:*

*.... not having some organs which affects bodily functioning is of course disability but now if the person is also not literate then that is a bigger disability. Sometimes I have to do something but I cannot do it and this creates a problem. I have a bitter experience of my disability when I returned after a long stay at the hospital. My brothers wanted to admit me to my old school but even friends, from my previous school, living nearby would not talk to me. So I thought if they don't even talk to me here then what will they do at school. I wept bitterly and said that I would not go to school. I did not even want to live. When I returned home my sister-in-law taught me how to knit caps and socks so that I can keep myself busy. However, staying at home made me very depressed.*  
(Shubha, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)

Shubha's friends did not talk with Shubha because her friends perceived disability as contagious and keeping a distance from her would keep them safe. However her sister-in-law was positive to her and had sympathy seeing her and wanted to teach her some skills and empower her so that she could keep herself busy and become positive in life. Ajeet had a different story than Suma, Sitamaya and Shubha. He was, frequently, despised by his own mother, which made him sad. Ajeet made a sour face by remembering his mother's words, which reminds him frequently that he is unable and on the other hand he realises that he has a responsibility towards his parents. Being a son in the Nepalese society he should be able to earn and take care of them in their old age. Thus, he said that sometimes he takes his mother's words positively and becomes

encouraged and works hard for his studies and wants to become self-supportive as early as possible.

*Ajeet takes mother's remarks positively*

*My mother always says that other boys of my age are working and earning money however I am unable to earn. This makes me feel very bad. My mother always taunts me by making such remarks. However, my father loves me. That is why I want to work hard and stay in this hostel for my studies even though the conditions are difficult. Some friends in my village tease me by leaving me when I walk with them in the street. (Ajeet, 17, Grade: VIII – Amrit School)*

Ajeet's mother's remark revealed her worry of having a son with disability, because in general sons are supposed to take care of his parents in their old age. Ajeet also showed concerns about his responsibility towards his parents in the future.

### **Chapter Essence**

This Chapter dealt with the GWDs perception on education and schooling environment, where I discussed on the knowledge and education perceived by the GWDs as well as their look out to the importance of education. Furthermore, I discussed the GWDs perception towards school environment available to them in their current schools as well as other experiences regarding disability and their knowledge on rights. All the GWDs were very enthusiastic about their education though the school environment at their respective schools were not adequately facilitating to them. The following chapter revolves around perception of parents, community and teachers towards education of GWDs.

## CHAPTER V

### PERCEPTION OF PARENTS, TEACHERS AND COMMUNITY: EDUCATION OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITY

The previous Chapter has analysed the perception of girls with disability (GWD) regarding their education and schooling. It has revealed GWDs' understanding of education and its importance to them and how they see their school environment. In other words, I explored the textural-structural descriptions of their experiences at school and captured the essence of their experiences. This Chapter will continue dealing with the analyses and interpretations of how the parents, teachers and community people perceive disability and the education of GWDs. The chapter will also discuss about how GWDs were cared by the parents and community with respect to capacity building, opportunities and service provided to them.

#### **Disability: Meaning and its Effects**

The consulted participants clearly defined disability as difficulty, dysfunction of bodily part, or defect in an organ of the body which hampered the persons with disability (PWDs) in performing their usual daily living like other non-disabled persons and also described its causes as congenital effect of accident or severe illness, or both. Further they were quite aware of the fact that necessary education of SEN children was a must to make them able to lead life on their own.

However, Priya, the head-teacher of Kalpabrikshya School stressed that if the functions of other organs developed then the PWDs could do better than any other

persons in the society. She also stressed on income generating quality education to SEN children as per their aptitude. However, Sundar and Achal emphasised on equal rights to education for all:

*Disability is bodily dysfunction which may hamper in daily living. However, I think SEN children are also part of the community and they have equal rights. They should not be treated differently. (Sundar, Guardian – Heaven Children Home)*

*Disability is a kind of weakness caused due to dysfunction of any or some parts of one's body which hampers daily life of the affected person. However, SEN students should get opportunity so that they can develop their ability. (Achal, head-teacher – Swarna School)*

All the head-teachers and guardians were in favour of providing opportunities for quality education to SEN children so that their disability can be minimised to make them self-supportive. They emphasised on SEN students rights to education as well.

### **Education of Girls with Disability**

Although most of the people have become conscious to educate their children in Nepalese society people still have negative attitudes. People in general discriminate in educating their sons and daughters. The boy is sent to a boarding school whereas the girl is sent to a public school. Further they take more interest in the education of a non-disabled child than to of a SEN child in our society.

Table 13

## Perception towards educating girls with disability

Case Item	Perceptions are found: positive as well as negative and discriminatory; The education of GWDs perceived as: family's responsibility, government's and I/NGOs' responsibility
Educating GWDs	

Table 13 distinctly illustrates two scenes. The first is that there are two dichotomies of attitudes, positive and negative of parents and others towards education of GWDs. The second scene is that the SEN children's education is seen as the responsibility of I/NGOs and the government in general.

Obviously, the entire respondent, parents or guardians, school principals and teachers, were all in favour of SEN girls' education however, the male dominated society still prefers to educate a boy more than a girl. If a person is disabled in the family, the family obviously needs extra expenditure so, SEN children's parents sometimes see them as a burden and most of them feel that the government or I/NGOs should take the education cost of their SEN child and try to escape from their responsibility. Sabi pointed out that:

*In our society, most of the parents of SEN children whether boys or girls, think their children should be educated by government or donors or NGOs etc. They are all 'Sansthamukhi' (dependent on organisations). They think that their non-disabled children are their responsibility whereas the children with disability are the responsibility of NGOs, INGOs and the government. Thus, parents discriminate between their non-disabled and SEN children. (Sabi – Aparna's sister/guardian)*

I found that Sabi, an M.A. (Nepali), student at Nepalese University, who herself is a low vision girl takes initiative to educate her youngest sister who is also suffering from low vision like her, which reflects her own bitter experience of having low vision so she was enthusiastic to make her sister's future secure by providing good education. She disclosed the reality of our society that most parents are interested to educate but if they have SEN girl child then they look at her as a burden and do not want to spend much on her education and seek help from I/NGOs or government whereas the resource teacher was of the opinion that, they want to admit their SEN boy in a boarding school for better education, Puman says:

*They have a feeling that these children should also be loved and cared and get equal opportunities in every aspects of life. However, some of them feel that their SEN children are a burden to them. They also think that the non-disabled child should be educated in a boarding school at any cost. I have realised from my long experience that these children can perform like other non-disabled children if they get the opportunity. The number of SEN in schools is surprisingly increasing in recent years. (Punam, Resource-teacher, Samanta School)*

However, Chandra, a mother of a vision impaired girl strongly argued that girls should be educated more and this was supported by Sama, a subject teacher and Dev, a head-teacher because nowadays girls are also going to job-market equally as boys. They further pointed out the value of an educated mother, who can cater to the family responsibly.

.... *I think daughters should be educated more so that they will be able to compete with others and be able raise their voice for their rights. (Chandra – Radha’s Mother)*

..... *Girls should be educated more because they have to go to another home after marriage. However, in rural areas people are still not aware of education and disability. Most of the teachers think that God has been cruel to them so we should be kind and helpful to them, in their needs. (Sama, Subject-teacher – Samanta School)*

.....*girls are more serious towards their studies and responsibilities than boys. However, both SEN boys and girls are very hard working and disciplined. These SEN children are also good in oratory, quiz, music and poem competitions. ... Girls should be educated more because if educated, after marriage. She will be able to manage the home well and the family will be happy. If the family is happy then the society, nation and ultimately the world will be happy. Thus obviously SEN girls should be educated because they are also equal right holder of the society. (Dev, Head-teacher – Samanta School)*

Dev pointed out that besides education the aptitude of the SEN pupils’ should also be realised and given opportunities to them.

..... *In recent times, people are convinced that the SEN children should be given opportunity to be educated and should also be taught social skills because they have proved that if they are encouraged and get favourable environment they can perform like the non-disabled. (Vibha, Head-teacher – Amrit School)*



From the above mentioned excerpts I found that Sama showed her compassion to SEN girls whereas Chandra stressed on girls' right to education and their empowerment. Moreover, Dev and Vibha viewed the importance of girls' education and were in favour of providing equal opportunity in education and other sectors in life. Now-a-days, people have both positive and negative attitudes toward SEN children at home and in the community. Priya, the principal of Kalpabrikshya School, argued that some parents are worried about who will take care of their SEN child after they pass away. Still some parents discriminate their children with disability and non-disabled, girls and boys. Some parents still do not want to send their hearing impaired daughter to school which is far away from their home due to security reason, while some parents do not want to spend much money on their education because they think its worthless spending on a SEN girl;

*Priya perceived parents' attitude regarding their daughters' education:*

*Among disabled ones also, boys got preference to girls in the past. Some parents send their daughter to the school only for a while saying that a little knowledge is enough for them to be able to do household chores. Another reason is that some parents do not want to spend on a daughter's education because a SEN girl can do nothing so it is useless spending on them. For example, there was a girl (deaf) who was very intelligent and sharp in her studies but unfortunately they (her parents) stopped sending her to school because it was expensive to come to school by bus and also she was insecure on the long way and the helper (conductor) of the bus bullied her. Some parents do not want to spend any money for them. I used to collect Rs. 25 per month from each student for their Tiffin a few years ago but the parents were very reluctant to pay so I stopped collecting money from the students and started provide tea only free of cost at break time. Parents' attention is more focused on boys SEN students. (Priya, Head-teacher – Kalpabrikshya School)*

Though parents are affectionate to their SEN child the teachers and head-teachers say that parents' wanted everything free of cost while some even do not bother to send a SEN daughter for further education. Sabi opined parents are 'Sansthamukhi'. Priya views that parents, in general, expect that their impaired child be educated by NGOs or government and want to shift their responsibility to others. Further to avoid the burden of their disabled child, as far as possible, some parents would prefer to keep their SEN children in a hostel away from home. Priya indicated that there is much discrimination between son and daughter in the Nepalese society and the situation is even harsher if the disabled is a girl child even if these GWDs were very eager to learn and were intelligent. From the above arguments of participants, parents, head-teacher and class-teacher, it is clear that community people are conscious to educate and take care of their SEN children. There was disparity between boys and girls in the past and most parents would admit their sons to boarding schools while daughters to public schools but SEN children were not admitted even to public schools.

Mixed opinions were received from the respondents regarding education of SEN children however now-a-days people want to educate their SEN child also. They think that SEN children can also study like the non-disabled children so they should be given equal opportunity. We should not treat them differently. In recent times, this matter is being taken positively. However, there are still people who are against educating girl and SEN children. Both Sundar, Guardian – HCH and Achal, the head-teacher – Swarna School were in favour of inclusive education and education of marginalised group and girls. They expressed their views as follows:

*In the beginning, I felt a bit uncomfortable to integrate SEN children with non-disabled children, especially in the lower classes because some students could be disturbed to see a disabled. If SEN students are segregated then they could feel inferior to others. However, I decided to include these SEN children in classes where they fit and admitted them because they should get the opportunity to grow as per their capabilities. They are doing very well. However, in recent times, most parents have also realised that SEN children should be educated as far as possible. Thus, SEN student should be educated. (Achal, Head-teacher – Samanta School)*

*..... Still most parents have soft corner for a son. If a son is disabled the parents try to do the best whereas in the case of a daughter they are negligent. They usually want to keep a daughter in some organisation and they hardly go to see her when admitted. It is also quite difficult for girls with disability to get married. Parents spend more money and time in the treatment of boys than girls. There is still discrimination between a son and a daughter. There are some parents who think, it is useless to educate a daughter because she will ultimately get married and go to another house, whereas some parents are still superstitious and ignorant so they don't care to educate their girl child and they also don't bother to educate a disabled girl child. Only a few girls get a chance for treatment. These ignorant parents do not get right information too. If the parents get good counselling, they can be convinced. There is a need for awareness and counselling to the parents who have SEN children so that interventions can be carried out in time. (Sundar, Guardian – Heaven Children Home)*

Sunder, further opined that there is a need of awareness programmes for rural people so that they get necessary information and initiate early and timely diagnosis and early interventions. However, a mother of SEN child emphasises that SEN children, whether a girl or a boy should get affection, care and education so that they will be self-standing and earn in the future. If these SEN students are provided proper education then no one will dare to look at them as inferior to non-disabled.

### **Capacity Building and Taking Care: At Home, School and Community**

Normally, learning starts from the home and the parents are the first teachers for a child. I found that mostly mothers took care of their SEN children at home. As mentioned earlier, unavailability of diagnosis and intervention is a serious problem in our country though the parents are interested to look after their SEN child. After diagnosis, most of them have tried their best in rearing and educating their child.

Table 14

#### Capacity building and taking care

Case Item	In family	At school	In community
Way of taking care	Parents initiatives towards: learning sign/Braille language, teaching daily living skills to GWDs and more affectionate to SEN children	School's initiatives towards: providing helper writer, scholarship, hostel facility, Empowering	Community's initiatives towards: running awareness programmes and providing facilities

Table 14 shows different scenarios at different levels. The first scenario is that the caring mothers prepare themselves as per the child's need. The second scenario is that

there are different agencies like the government, I/NGOs and other sponsors or donors and school, itself funding and facilitating SEN students. The third scenario reflects programmes cultivating positive attitudes towards SEN children and disabilities.

Interestingly, Lali, mother of a deaf girl learned sign language to guide her daughter in completing homework at home. Similarly, during preliminary research in the field study, I came across a dedicated mother of Ashu (a vision impaired girl), who had learned Braille script to assist her daughter in studies. She joined Braille training programme in her district which was actually only for resource teachers only by convincing the authority she completed successfully. Now she can guide her daughter in homework and other difficulties.

*Ultimately Indu got Braille training:*

*I was also worried about her education so in 2003 I joined a-month long Braille script training which was only for the government teachers. I struggled for this training, I requested for it but initially they were not ready but I told them that it is necessary to involve parents also in these types of training if they are interested. Ultimately I got this opportunity and since then I am able to help her in homework. .... half doors are dangerous for visually impaired ones because they are unable to judge the height and width of it and they down fall so I have made them conducive to her. While walking along the street I describe things to her and I also translate her writings because she is interested in writing and frequently she takes part in different programmes organised by schools and other organisations and wins prizes (Indu, Ashu's mother)*

The parents/guardians teach life skills, send their impaired child to schools and provide essential materials to their vision impaired children without any discrimination. The vision impaired children are informed and are made aware of the surrounding of their home and usual routes to school and nearby community by the family members. Sabi

(sister of Aparna), a low vision girl opines that while taking care of SEN children, the parents should teach them to do their daily living skills. She further related her own experience, that at home her mother did her daily tasks but when she left home for higher education, she realised that by doing all her work her mother had made her handicapped and dependent. She learned all the household chores and other necessary skills slowly and developed her confidence and now she is independent and also teaching her sister to become independent by learning essential skills. She expressed that:

*Some parents love and take care of their SEN children by doing most of their daily work and do not encourage them to do their work themselves. This makes SEN children very dependent. .... I try to make her conscious of her rights..... I help and fulfil her needs because I don't want her to be deprived of anything like me in the past. Moreover, I let her do whatever she can do.... When I went to see her in the hostel I found that the bulbs used there were not suitable for visually impaired children so I requested the In-charge to change the tube light. I encourage her also to study hard because I had also worked hard for my studies. (Sabi, Apsara's Sister/Guardian, she is also a low vision girl)*

Now-a-days, parents also try to make their SEN child self-supportive by teaching daily living skills and they also save some money for them. Lali, Neha's mother told that,

*We have saved some money for her and I have also made her able to perform independently. Now she can go and buy if I write them in a chit and I have also cultivated habits regarding daily living skills. She can clean her room put things in their proper places. She can do most of her work and also go around the neighbourhood. I have cultivated knowledge of mutual understanding,*

*cooperation, health and hygiene. I have also taught her to wash her hands before and after meals, proper use of toilet, and correct use of spoon while eating. She can also change her clothes and comb her hair now. I help her to do her homework and also try to learn and understand sign language. I have borrowed a dictionary of sign language from the school which has made it easy to understand my daughter. (Lali, Neha's mother)*

Lali has also saved money for her daughter to make her future safe and she is also making her daughter self-supportive by teaching different skills while Hira said her family's migration to urban area gave her better opportunities for good treatment and to her daughter Roshana (physically impaired with spina bifida). Before getting admitted to HCH and 'Swarna School', she went to two schools to get her daughter enrolled but the school authority refused to admit the girl because she had no control on urine and stool. Schools had very limited facilities so they were not able to cater to the girl. She expressed,

*At home, in my village, I carry her on my back and do her entire work but now she can wear clothes, comb hair and wash dishes. She uses a wheel-chair and does all the tasks that she can do. Since she is at Children Home all the responsibilities are taken by the Home. My daughter gets logistics, health care and schooling free of cost here. No other organisation has provided financial aid for her. (Hira, Roshana's mother)*

From the above excerpts we can see the willingness of the parents to make their child self-supportive and do not want to see them handicapped. Further, the parents added that there should be awareness programmes for parents, guardians, community members

and school staff frequently so that necessary information can be obtained by the non-disabled people in the community to be more positive. Vision impaired children get only residential facility while other essential materials had to be provided by the family. Now-a-days parents take care of their SEN children but it is not sufficient.

However, the school provides education free of cost to students with hearing impairment but they have no hostel facility. Together with curriculum contents, these hearing impaired students are also taught different daily life skills such as how to deal and behave with other people in the community. The teachers and the head-teacher also motivate students to interact and also help community people to develop positive attitude towards these deaf students.

Further I found that Kalpabrikshya School organises different activities and visits to different places for the socialisation of the students so that they can learn to interact with others and learn more by observing through direct participations. Community people also provide opportunities to these hearing impaired students for voluntary service during festive times like 'Makar-Mela' (a Hindu festival) and because of their good performance they were highly appreciated and were called in programmes organised by the municipality. This made them feel respected and accepted by the community people. These students also participated in district, regional, and national level cultural programmes as well as special sports.

Interestingly, the hearing impaired students were well prepared by the school to participate in specific programmes in the community where they were used to work as volunteers. The school also organised some awareness programmes such as sign language training for the community people, especially parents of hearing impaired children, to



motivate in their perceptions towards hearing impaired ones to deal with them appropriately. Similarly, the school provided awareness programmes about disability rights, human rights and child rights and also provided leadership training. However, there were very few words in sign language and sufficient textbooks were also not available in the market so these students were not fluent in writing (both Nepali and English) like other children.

I found, the students with hearing impairment disciplined and carrying out their responsibilities perfectly. The school also prepared the hearing impaired students to intermingle with the community as well as raise acceptance capacity of community people towards hearing impaired ones. Though the parents/guardians wanted to educate their hearing impaired child some parents would not send their child to school properly dressed this showing their negligence towards these SEN students. Devi mentioned,

*In recent years many SEN children have joined school however still there are many children who have not got a chance to go to school. There are many parents who send their children to a good boarding school whereas they are reluctant to provide even proper dress to their SEN children. They send them to school without proper dress and shoes. Sometimes they even come in tattered clothes and we have to stitch them. (Devi, Grade-teacher – Kalpabrikshya School)*

The hearing impaired girls were found more diligent and serious in their studies and also more helpful in household chores. Thus, it showed that the girls were more focused and also compelled to perform gender roles. Priya explained like this,

*If any programme is held in this district now-a-days our students are called for volunteer services. Sometimes our students participate in cultural programmes*

*and perform very well and get prize also. People are surprised to see these students dancing without hearing any music. These students learn by observing and participating in different social activities. Thus, I encourage them to intermingle with others in the community. (Priya, Head-teacher – Kalpabrikshya School)*

These students (hearing impaired) were also found capable of performing different activities if they were trained and given opportunities and they can be as good as non-disabled ones because with minimum infrastructure and facilities they are quite active in academics as well as other extra- curricular activities and social work. Thus, they proved that if they are given opportunities they can perform their responsibilities well. They were also hard working in class.

From my observation and interviews with key participants at Swarna School, I found helpers or co-workers for wheel-chair users. They helped the wheel-chair users as per the need because the school building was not disability friendly. Further, the helpers also took care of those SEN girls who had no control on urine and stool. There were also arrangements of suitable classes for wheel-chair users so that they could go to the classroom on their own. The school also arranged educational tours including SEN students also. This motivated and encouraged them.

*The head-teacher was enthusiastic to provide services to SEN pupils,*

*The students who use wheel-chair here are carried by care takers, peers and even teachers when they need to move from one block to another. Two students do not have control of urine and stool so they use diapers, so there is no problem regarding SEN students. If they need to change their diapers the care takers do it for them. They are all encouraged to participate in school activities and normally they participate as per their interest. They participate in field-trip also. Last year we included a student using wheel-chair. She really enjoyed the trip and was thrilled because the school had provided chance to a wheel-chair user also. After that she has really improved in her studies. Some teachers were against this because traffic jam could create a problem for her but there was no problem. Teachers pulled her wheel-chair turn-by-turn along the slopes. In this way we provide equal opportunity and access to SEN students in different activities. We even provide extra time to SEN students during examination depending on their condition. A girl with low vision will be kept in the first row in the class. We encourage SEN students to participate in different activities like 'eco-club' and 'scout'. We have provided equal opportunity to girl students. (Achal, Head-teacher – Swarna School)*

Additionally, the guardian of HCH also explained about the measures taken to cater to SEN children there. They provided sufficient care, treatment and support in raising these SEN children. At HCH the children were also taught different daily living skills. There were regular remedial classes to solve difficulties. Genuine cases of physical impairment were selected by the authority of the Home. I also observed staff from HCH coming daily to reach and fetch students using wheel-chair. Thus once SEN children get admitted to the Home all the responsibilities were taken by the HCH free of cost. Sundar opined,

*Both public and private school are unwilling to accept SEN children. They are positive in words but not in action. 80% of disability sector is running through*

*personal intuitive and social motive. There is no special arrangement for girls so the parents are disheartened. Now-a-days NGOs are focusing on girls but they lack necessary monitoring. So due to the lack of necessary monitoring NGOs who are doing well are also not encouraged. (Sundar, Guardian – Heaven Children Home)*

Shubha also mentioned that her family members were very supportive to raise her and encourages her to get education so she got the chance to get admission at HCH.

However, Dilu had no facilities for education and she was fully dependent on her parents.

*I have not got any support from any organisation, community, district committee or school. My parents are solely supporting me, till date. The admission fees and the exam fees are paid by me but tuition fees need not be paid. (Dilu, 17, Grade: X – Satkarma School)*

Thus, in the case of children who are day scholars and who are also getting no financial support from any agencies the parents have to pay. The parents of Dilu were interested to send their daughter with disability to school so they came to the city from their village.

### **Opportunities and Services/Facilities**

From the interviews with teachers and principals I learnt about the different facilities and financial support provided to all the GWDs in their school. The government has provided some scholarships through the Special and Inclusive education (SIE) unit of Department of Education (DOE), the Ministry of Education (MOE) but not sufficiently. Some sponsors from developed countries and I/NGOs also support financially and provide material and expert support in general. The government has categorised disability

into four types a, b, c, and d ranging from profound to mild disability and on the basis of disability the scholarship are provided since the inception of SIE but the stipend is not fixed.

Table 15

Opportunities and services to special educational needs students

Case Item	Government	I/NGOs/ Sponsors/Donors
Facilities to SEN students	SEN pupils get: Scholarships, educational materials: in sign and Braille, concession, services, facilities	SEN pupils get: funding, services, medical assistance, treatment, voluntary services and boarding facilities

Two different pictures can be observed in the above table. The first picture is that there are scholarships, educational materials medical treatment and boarding facilities to assist SEN students. The second picture is that there are different agencies, individual personnel and government to help SEN students. The vision impaired children get financial support from Blind Welfare Association (Andha Kalyan Sangh). Rupees 1200 per student for ten months is provided by the Blind Welfare Association (BWA) to the students in those school hostels that I visited and the textbooks of compulsory subjects in Braille are provided by the DOE. However textbooks are not available in Braille for other optional subjects and English medium compulsory subjects. Therefore, the resource teacher has to translate all the important lessons. The vision impaired students were provided short-term vocational training in some schools in the past but as such training hampered their studies it has been stopped now. Further, they also participate in various extra-curricular activities of their interests. Sometimes, these SEN students with vision

impairment are provided leadership training also. These students were also included in educational tours and excursions to different regions of the country, in the past but these visits were discontinued during the insurgency period.

Similarly, I found the mother of a six year old blind girl also living in the hostel at Samanta School to take care of her while she also provided voluntary service at the hostel because the school authority cannot keep such a small child in the hostel without someone to look after of her. Thus, her voluntary service helped her daughter as well as other students in the hostel. This showed mutual understanding of the school authority and the girl's mother from which both parties benefited.

However, most of the peers with good vision, especially those sitting near the vision impaired ones, help in dictating lessons from the blackboard and also sometimes read the lessons from books and help in note writing so mutual understanding exists among the students. Chandra told that her daughter's friends help on the way to school and also care at school. Vibha, the Head-teacher (Amrit School) opined that learning Braille script is essential to all the vision impaired and low vision students and they should be allowed to write their exams by themselves so that they can write as per their knowledge. Indu and Lali suggest that the visually impaired students be taught Braille and use it in their examinations and the questions be translated by the resource teacher so that they can write in their own words.

Further, Samanta School organised free health check-up. Doctors came to Samanta School regularly as part of their study and examined the students. Dev, the principal informed that a teacher (visually impaired) has been hired for primary section, recently and this will also definitely help the SEN students. A few spectacles and eye-

glasses, for low-vision students, and sticks for the blind were also available in the school. The principal said that there were enough audio cassettes for reference whereas students had not received them. When I inquired I found that there were very few audio cassettes.

In the case of hearing impaired girls, I learned that there was no special donation for girls however people gave donations to deaf students. As I have mentioned earlier the land was provided by a Buddhist monastery while the school building was constructed with the cooperation of Japanese volunteers, the Municipality and District Development Committee (DDC). Recently, four students have got scholarship from the volunteers from the Netherlands. American Rotary Club has also provided a few computers and some kitchen utensils to the school. Some volunteers provided money and the school authority used it to buy school dress for those students who are not economically sound. All the students were provided dictionary (Sign language words) by the school and Special Educational Needs Programme has also provided financial aid and scholarships to these children. The Government has provided some scholarships to the SEN children whereas there are no special facilities to girls except the 50% scholarship. Thus, the students attending the school get education and facilities as per the school resource and services free of cost. However, as Priya, expressed her dissatisfaction over the government's policies and people's attitudes:

*At present, there are assessment centres also in 63 districts which diagnose SEN children in schools however monitoring by the government is very poor. As a matter of fact there is no monitoring. The government just implements programmes. There are many people who do not think that deaf are also SEN students because they think only those who are physically impaired or disability*

*which is directly visible is disabled. The deaf have good body structure so they are not considered disable. (Priya, Head-teacher – Kalpabrikshya School)*

Priya pointed out that the government implements different policies and programme but they are not monitored timely and properly so only a handful of hearing impaired children or SEN children have been getting education, with minimum facilities while a large number were still outside the school.

In the case of physically impaired, Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR), Jaycees, and Scout are some organisations which support disability sector in the district. Further, two years ago, Achal, (the head-teacher) had opened a day-care centre for PWDs with the aid of Bangladesh Scouts. District Development Committee (DDC) had subsidised HCH with Rs. 25,000 for two years. However, there is no especial facility for girls with disabilities.

From the above discussion, I learned that the SEN students were getting education in their respective schools with some financial support and education materials from the SIE unit of DOE, I/NGOs and from the support of some philanthropic persons in the country and sponsors from developed countries.

### **Girls with Disability: Educational Status and Future Aspirations**

The educational status of all participant GWDs was quite sound. They were hardworking and serious in their studies.



Table 16

## Educational status and future aspirations

Case Item	The GWDs are: Sound in studies, excellent in music and singing, Hardworking, responsible, participate in community activities and better aspiration for future
Educational status and future aspirations	

The above table portrays two types of pictures, the first is sound educational status of GWDs which reflects their better future despite limited resources at schools and the second picture is that besides education they have different interests which they perform well. The educational status of all the vision impaired participants was found satisfactory.

In Samanta School I found that all the vision impaired students ranking within the top ten while in 'Amrit School' ranking was average. Girls were found more diligent and serious in studies. Besides studies some of them were interested in art and music and wanted to be an artist or a singer. The visually impaired students were excellent in music and singing so they performed stage programmes with their peers with good vision. The principal and teachers from both the schools expressed that these students are very hard working and are doing very well in their studies so they hope for their bright future. Some students who did very well in SLC have completed higher studies and are doing well now. Thus, if these students get opportunity they can also do very well.

*Sita and Nirmala (visually impaired) are doing very well. They have contacts with Rotary Clubs all over the world and they are always eager to help the visually impaired. Environment affects the growth and development in every aspect of the child's life. (Dev, Head-teacher – Samanta School)*

*Kamal secured 1<sup>st</sup> division in SLC and has now completed Ph.D. from Japan. He is now working in Japan and comes here regularly to help the blind and visually impaired. Thus I think if opportunity to education and employment are given to them they can do well as per their capabilities. (Punam, Resource-teacher – Amrit School)*

*These students work very hard, so I think they will be successful in life. Most of our ex-students have become teachers, while some are anchors in F.M. radio, and one is a receptionist in Model Hospital. .... they are very reluctant to make friends and intermingle with their peers. They interact only with peers who sit close to them. In my long experience I have never seen anyone bullying them. (Sama, Subject teacher – Samanta School)*

I found my vision impaired participants had great desire to do well, to be able to become self-standing. However, Priya, head-teacher and Sama, subject-teacher stressed more on encouraging them to write their exams on their own. They were against the practice of providing a writer in the exams because if they write themselves they would be able to express their feelings and ability clearly. However, they pointed out that the extra time given to them should be increased. Sometimes they get very good writers so they secure high marks and some sighted students complain about this. Further the evaluation of the knowledge of the visually impaired may not be correct because they depend upon the writers.

*Recently, in the term exam, students from class IX and X secured poor marks because the writers could not write as dictated to them. Though they were very bright and know the answers they secured poor marks. I think they should be*

*encouraged to write in Braille so that we can evaluate them accurately. If they write by themselves they will be able to express their views more correctly which will be real also. I always encourage them to study hard. In my experience, these visually impaired students are very laborious so they should be given appropriate facilities and more opportunities. In my experience, the visually impaired students are more intelligent than the sighted ones. They have good memory and also listen carefully and make detailed notes when we teach. They concentrate in their studies more than sighted students because the sighted students can get distracted easily by looking around. Thus, in my opinion we must provide appropriate opportunities and more attention to these students in the class so that they can study easily. (Sama, Subject-teacher, Samanta School)*

Thus, the participant head-teachers as well as subject teachers were in favour of compulsory Braille skill to all vision impaired students and also for its use in the examination. Then only the vision impaired students can show their knowledge, understanding and skills by themselves and they do not have to depend on the writers. This will also solve the problem of writers and the students can perform on their own and actual evaluation can also be attained. In this way the vision impaired students will become more independent. However, the resource teacher's coordination is vital.

The relationship between teachers and students was very cordial so the students solved their problems without any hesitation. Thus, I found the educational status of my participants with hearing impairment satisfactory and all the participants were interested to study hard and go for higher studies. Saru wants to be a teacher whereas Rama wants to become a beautician and Sitamaya wants to become either a computer technician or a

fashion designer. The head-teacher and teachers and parents have high expectations of these hearing impaired students' future. They expressed as follows

*They are capable to become teacher and they can also go for income generating work like bakery or some other small business. (Priya, head-teacher – Kalpabrikshya School)*

*I think she will lead her life successfully and be self-supportive. She learns all that is taught at school quickly so I think she will do well in her future. (Bina, Neha's mother)*

*Most of them have intermingled in the society and have used their skills to lead their life further. Girls are more diligent and serious in their studies and they also help household chores more. (Devi, class-teacher – Kalpabrikshya School)*

Due to frequent health problem most of the participants with physical impairment were not regular in their classes however, they were all found to be very diligent. All of them were very serious in their studies and had high aims for their future. Shubha and Roshana want to be a teacher after finishing their higher education while Dina and Dilu want to be a nurse. Both the guardian of SEN students at Heaven Children Home and the head-teacher were quite positive about the future of SEN students because all were good in their studies in spite of their physical impairment. Dilu said that there are no other SEN girls in my school but my educational status is good.

*All the children in HCH are doing quite well so I think they will be self-standing in the future. The teachers help to develop SEN students' skills and behaviour. (Sundar, guardian – Children Home)*

*I think these SEN students will do well in the future because they are mentally sound. Some of them can be teachers. (Achal, head-teacher – Swarna School)*

*I feel that I can do something by the good treatment of sir, madam, sisters and friends..... Now I am determined to do something after completing my education.*

*I want to gain knowledge and learn new things and reach my goal and fulfil my parents dream. My parents would like me to be self-standing and be a teacher.*

*(Shubha, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

*I did so well in class two that I was promoted to class V and again this year I did very well in class V and I got promotion to class VII and got admitted to this school. Most of us are doing very well and we secure good position in terminal*

*examinations. .... I want to be a teacher and do some business for my living and*

*also want to serve the disabled in my district. (Narendra, 16, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

I found all the key participants were encouraged by their education because the teachers and the peers in the school were all very cooperative to SEN children. All of them desired to become self-supportive in the future so they feel it is essential to work hard to attain their goal.

### **Chapter Essence**

This chapter revealed the perceptions of parents, teachers and community people regarding disability, GWDs education, support services and priorities provided to GWDs and most responses were in favour of GWDs education and their well-being. Further the chapter included GWDs educational status and aspiration for their future. The next

chapter proceeds analysis of perceived influence, challenge and coping strategies of GWDs.

## CHAPTER VI

### PERCEIVED INFLUENCE, CHALLENGES AND COPING STRATEGIES: THE EXPERIENCE OF GIRLS WITH DISABILITY

The previous Chapter made an analysis of understanding how parents, teachers, and community people perceive disability and also how they understand the education of girls with disability (GWD) or special educational needs (SEN) girls. The chapter also incorporated what opportunities and facilities are available to raise the education and capabilities of GWDs. In this Chapter I intend to discuss how the perceptions of parents and community influence the schooling of GWDs. This, the Chapter begins with the analysis of how parental understanding and attitude towards disability and their socio-economic and cultural backgrounds influence the schooling of GWDs. Furthermore, the discussion proceeds to analyse the school culture and the self perception of the GWDs influence in their schooling. In the later part of this chapter I will discuss about the challenges faced by the GWDs due to: the degree of disability; family's socio-economic status, cultural and educational status; and the school environment and I will also discuss about the mechanisms implemented by them to cope with those constraints.

#### **Perceived Influence of Parental Understanding of Disability and Special**

#### **Educational Needs Children**

Siblings whether they are SEN or not are affectionate to almost all the parents in the world. As discussed in the Chapter five and six most parents were clear about disability of their children though the diagnosis of disability was delayed. However, after

the diagnosis cure, care and educational opportunities were provided to them. In this regard the school, government and some philanthropic persons and I/NGOs are supporting SEN children's schooling.

Table 17

Perceived influence of parental understanding of disability and SEN children

Case Item	Parents perceived both:
Parental understanding of disability and SEN children	positive influence – SEN children can be educated and learn skills, support and facilitate, and negative influence – observe as punishment of sin, superstitions, good for nothing, neglect, burden

Table 17 enlightens two distinct pictures. The first picture is about the positive influence whereas the second picture is about the other side of the coin, i.e., negative influence. Like Lali, there are parents who love their disabled child more than a non-disabled one. The GWDs expressed that not only parents of SEN children other community people also have positive attitude and do not despise them rather they cooperate and help them. This clearly shows people's positive thinking towards SEN children. This is all due to education, media, advanced information technology, mobility and accessibility. However, some have negative thinking and are also superstitious and are uncooperative. I found, some mothers, like Bina, Lali, Hira and Indu positive towards their daughters' education and were very considerate regarding their bright future. The following excerpts reflect their feelings:

*.....However, the SEN children are very sensitive and eager to learn. I think we should provide equal opportunities to SEN girls for education. My daughter learns much from observation and experience. Now-a-days people's attitude has*



*changed and they are in favour of educating their daughters too. (Bina, Shrasha's mother)*

*...I love this daughter most because she can't move around and cannot eat by herself. I think, SEN children whether a girl or boy must be educated. Education is a must because if they get proper education they can be self-standing in the future. (Hira, Roshana's mother)*

*... The principal has also promised to arrange a training programme for parents. I consult her teachers and the principal regularly to inquire about her progress and also learn about new signs learnt by my daughter as well as their meaning. (Lali, Sneha's mother)*

Due to positive influence of media and awareness programmes now the GWDs do not hesitate and parents also do not feel ashamed of having a disabled child. Devi the class-teacher mentioned that parents take their disabled sibling to social gatherings frequently now-a-days, however, in the past they would hide them. Shrasha and Shubha expressed the following:

*Now they don't laugh at us but help in our need. Now-a-days people have become more aware due to developed communication and media. Now people are also well educated so their attitudes regarding disability have changed. People have realised that PWDs can also do well if they get opportunities. Government and other non-governmental organisations are doing their best to provide opportunities to PWDs in their education and income generation raising ability. I do all the household chores in my leisure. My parents also provide essential things to me. (Shrasha, 18, Grade: VIII – Kalpabrikshya School)*

*.... People are starting to understand. When we go for outing some people would laugh at us before and we would feel bad. However, when some are ready to help us this makes us happy. Some pretend to be ignorant. However when educated people also laugh at us we feel that they are pretending to be ignorant but when uneducated people come to help us we feel that they are more changed than the educated. Changes have come through various media like T.V., radio, newspapers etc. There is a positive change and I pray for even more changes. It will be easy for us if more people understand about disability. (Shubha, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

Although the GWDS and other participants observed some positive changes in the community people, however, as there are different types of people in the society their perceptions also vary. Some family members and friends are very supportive and cooperative while some are not. Some people differentiate PWDs and think that they are not as capable as the non-disabled. Moreover, there are still misconceptions that disability is a contagious disease and a punishment for sin committed in previous life, so SEN children are looked upon negatively. Similarly, in the past people thought that the PWDs can't work, but now people have become more understanding and have become aware to educate the PWDs. Thus, one can see many SEN children going to school and taking up jobs as per their capabilities, now.

Though the above excerpts show positive attitudes, however, the teachers and principals were unhappy and complained that some parents did not come to see their children after admission. They never come to see their children, girl or boy. Priya, the head-teacher pointed out that there is no gender discrimination in the early stages of child

but as they grow we can see disparity between girls and boys. She further added that there are instances of a deaf man marrying a non-deaf girl to make her do household chores but no one will be ready to marry a deaf girl. This is the reality of our society. Thus you can easily see the gender discrimination among disabled ones. Dev, the head-teacher of Samanta School also had the same experience as Priya, the head-teacher of Kalpabrikshya School.

Once they admit their children, they seem to feel released from the burden of their vision impaired child. Dev, the principal expressed:

*... I feel very bad. It's a pity that the parents don't come to fetch their children in festivals like Dashain. Sometimes, I have to even send them on my own cost. (Dev, the head-teacher – Samanta School)*

*There are still people who are negative towards us. They think disability is contagious and don't want to sit with us. Some people are superstitious and they believe that disabled child is a punishment for the sin committed by the parents in previous life. However, there are many people with positive attitudes towards us and think that this is not a punishment for a sin. Now you can see the number of SEN students increasing in the schools. When people see a blind or physically impaired person crossing the road they help them. In the past preference was given to boys but now most parents treat all their children equally. This change is due to awareness, development of media and networking around the world. (Dina, 15, Grade: VI – Swarna School)*

..... *The principal of my sister's school showed his negative attitude towards visually impaired students in that school by saying 'What will the school benefit by educating these children'. (Sabi – Aparna's sister/guardian)*

Though the head-teachers and teachers blame parents for the negative attitudes, head-teachers also sometimes see SEN pupils as burden and good for nothing. Thus, even educated people and parents of SEN have negative attitudes toward SEN children.

...*However, some parents feel that their SEN children are a burden to them. They also think that the non-disabled child should be educated in a boarding school at any cost. I have realised from my long experience that these children can perform like other non-disabled children if they get the opportunity. The number of SEN in schools is surprisingly increasing in recent years. (Punam, Resource-teacher, Samanta School)*

Additionally, Vibha also expressed the poor management of the hostel in her school was due to the negligence of the resource teacher. She also pointed out that some parent want to get rid of their SEN child which shows their negative attitude and once they get their siblings admitted to the hostel they feel relieved.

*Some parents do not come to see their children once they get admitted to the hostel but such parents should come and see their children so that they can share their problems with their parents. Then only hostel management can be improved. Children hesitate to share their difficulties with the teachers and the head-teacher, so if the parents visit regularly and talk to the teachers about the difficulties at the hostel, we can improve the hostel. The resource teacher is fully responsible to take care of the SEN students. The Government provides some*

*scholarships but providing money only is not sufficient. There should be regular monitoring regarding the running of the hostel the problems faced by the students there and the performance of resource teacher etc. for improvement. (Vibha, the principal – Amrit School)*

Some students, from nearby areas of the districts, go home every weekend and parents fulfil their needs. The perception of the people in the community was also positive towards SEN children but still they see them as charitable rather than right holders. In the past, people believed disability to be a punishment for some sin and the disabled should not be sent to school but now all the parents want to educate their child even if they are disabled. People use to call dumb children ‘lata’ or ‘lati’ to and thought they were uneducable in the past, now there is a drastic change in the people’s attitude and they send SEN children also to schools. People’s old perception that disability is God’s punishment for evil doing has changed. Most people are now in favour of educating their children whether they are SEN girls or boys.

Though there were mixed attitudes toward disability and SEN children now there is positive thinking due to change in global context, education, access and development in science and technologies. Positive attitude influences the education and the well-beings of GWDs.

### **Perceived Influence of Parents’ Socio-economic and Culture: Schooling of Girls**

#### **Disability**

I have already discussed in Chapter Five about familial socio-economic and cultural background and geographic locations of the GWDs, which influence the education of these girls directly. As I explained earlier, all the participants belong to

socio- economically middle class families, their parents searched for suitable schools for their siblings and came in contact with the school and HCH. Thus, the GWDs with vision impairment and physical impairment got the opportunity to be accommodated at school hostels and HCH. This provided the opportunity to GWDs for free education as well as boarding facility and saved the expenses of their parents. Further, this also solved their problem because there were no schools for GWDs nearby. On the other hand, GWDs with hearing impairment do not have hostel facility in their school so they have to spend lots of time and money to come to school every day and sometimes, they are even harassed and bullied on the way. The parents of these girls would be anxious about the safety and will also have to spend more on them.

As I have already discussed above that most parents have positive attitude towards GWDs and are aware that they have to educate their children however, due to their socio-economic background and geographic locations the GWDS are staying in hostel (Amrit School) with bare-minimum facilities and others are also staying far away from home.

Devi, a teacher (Kalpabrikshya School) expressed that there has been a drastic change in the attitudes of people towards SEN children which influenced positively and people are more interested to educate them now. The SEN children were neglected by the people in the past but now you can see them in schools and public places. She also related two incidents which spell out the other side of the coin which portrayals that some of these SEN children have to work hard for their living.

*People's perceived negative influence of the disability*

I still remember a sad story about a boy in our school, who had to work in the morning and evening to support his family. One day, while he was collecting garbage a bomb exploded suddenly and he was killed instantly. This shows that some parents still discriminate children with disability. Similarly, I remember another incident of a student (deaf boy), who was given alcohol because he was very naughty. We went to them and brought the boy and put him in our school. After coming to school he started actively to learn textbook lessons and different skills actively. He also learned how to behave with different people in the community. (Devi, class-teacher – Kalpabrikshya School)

The above incidents show that most SEN children, girl or boy face problems sometimes. All the consulted participants, parents, teachers and students with impairments, expressed that the positive change in the attitudes of the people was the result of awareness programmes in TV, radio and exposure to media, different medium of communication and education.

**Influence of School Culture and Self Perception of Girls with Disability**

The school culture comprises schools' elements like school rules, schedules, curriculum, demographics, policies and the social interactions that occur within those structures and give the school its look and feel friendly, scholarly, competitive, cordial, and inclusive. With the school culture children develop and grow. People learn about their rights and responsibilities through education. The GWDs can also do better if given opportunities like non-disabled. The hearing impaired GWDs are getting good social environment in the school so they are happy and encouraged to study even with the insufficient physical facilities. On the other hand, the visually impaired students are also helped by their peers in the studies which make it easy for them even though they do not

have good hostel facilities. In the case of physically impaired girls, they also do not encounter too much problem in spite of insufficient physical facilities. So all the GWDs seem to have understood their capabilities and disabilities they feel that they can study like the non-disabled and are thus determined to study.

The GWDs with vision impairment like Aparna, Asma, Suma and Samita had to work hard to maintain their academics because the classroom teaching was not inclusive in both Amrit and Samanta schools. Similarly, the available educational materials were not enough so that they lagged behind in academic and they could not follow lessons from the prescribed curriculum. Co-curricular activities were also not entertained by them due to limited access to participate in different activities in the school. For example, they never participated in science laboratory activities. Some of the problems like the writers, translation, difficult curriculum content in different subjects and teaching pedagogy, question paper, accommodation etc. constraints due to non-conducive academic environment of their schools. However, the social environment was good because of positive and supportive peers, teachers, and head-teachers in their schools.

Though the school's infrastructure lacked many facilities, the GWDs with hearing impairment had a very supportive school culture because the teachers and head-teacher were always ready to help them in their studies and also solve any problem they face with their peers and any other behavioural problems.

Though the school infrastructure was not conducive to the GWDs with physical impairment they had no problem with academics and other facilities because they were helped by helpers and teachers. Nevertheless, most of the GWDs perceived themselves empowered and got exposure through formal schooling. However, they had mixed



perceptions regarding their school culture which is vital in cultivating knowledge, skills and socialisation skills. In the following section I will be arguing about the challenges faced by GWDs in their schools and their coping mechanisms.

### **Challenges and Mechanisms to Cope with the Constraints**

Though the GWDs expressed that they had faced no major problem after joining their current schools they encountered problems regarding classroom teaching pedagogy, lesson contents from different subjects, socialisation and physical facilities available in the school.

Table 18

Challenges and coping mechanisms

Case Item	Challenges	Coping Mechanisms
Challenges and ways of coping them	School environment: challenges regarding academics: Lesson difficulties and assessment Challenges regarding physical facilities and resources and services Challenges regarding socialisation, cooperation and Other challenges: socio-economic	Individual level: self study and minor problems of lesson, misunderstanding with peers, fulfilling material needs in peers group: solving lesson problems and homework checks, misunderstanding support from teachers and head-teacher: supply of materials, problems with peers support from parents: supply materials

Table 18 shows different scenarios of challenges. The first scenario is that the challenges related to the school environment i.e., academic, social and physical. The second scenario is related with the degree of disability for which support and services are challenges and the third scenario is related to the socio-economic status of GWDs.

Similarly, on the other hand, the table shows different scenarios of mechanisms to cope these constraints.

The first scenario is that the GWDs solve their problem individually. The second scenario is that they solve their problems with the help of peers. The third and final scenario is that they go to the teachers, head-teacher or parents to solve their problem. In other words, the challenges in the school environment were like bullying, sexual harassment, ignorant subject-teachers, who do not care in the classroom, and teachers' inability to deal with them in their academics, schoolyard cliques, and poor peer interactions. Generally, they try to resolve on their own at first then in their friend circle then only they go to the resource-teacher. However, if the problem is severe they go to the head-teacher. Most of the important reading materials are translated by the resource-teacher as requested by them.

Subas, from a remote area, manages his essential materials on his own. Radha and other SEN students resolve their problems of class lessons with the help of their friend while Suma had solved her problem of sexual harassment on her own. Radha told that her best friend is class topper who is always ready to help her in note making. She reads out the answers of her homework and also dictates lessons from the board.

*I do my homework regularly but due to Braille language the home work is not checked so I have to ask and discuss with my friends to check for the right answers. My best friend is very intelligent and she stands first in the class. No teachers care for us while teaching. They just lecture and write on the blackboard neglecting our presence however, my friend supports and help by dictating lessons written on the blackboard. (Radha, 20, Grade: X – Amrit School)*

In the case of hearing impaired participants, they expressed that they do not have to face any major problem regarding studies because the teachers were very supportive and caring. The vocabulary in sign language is small so this is big constraint for them because this creates problem to understand some subjects. Teachers are ever ready to explain if we do not understand when others communicate. Nevertheless, first they try to solve any problem on their own and then only seek help from their peers. However, if the problem is serious then they go to parents, teachers or head-teacher. Most participants faced problem of bullying. They were called ‘Lata’ or ‘Lati’ (dumb), which was most irritating to them. A conductor harassed and misbehaved with Saru in the bus. However, she resolved the problem by complaining to the Traffic police.

*Sometimes I face a problem when I cannot communicate due to my disability. I have a bitter experience in the bus while coming to school. The bus-conductor misbehaved. I showed him my student identity card (ID card of disability) but he refused to provide concession. Then I came to school and went to the police with my friends and then only the conductor realised. (Rama Kibachhen, 18, Grade: VIII – Kalpabrikshya School)*

In this case the conductor’s misbehavior was corrected with the help of her teachers. The GWDs with hearing impairment faced problems because they have to use public transport and most people do not find them disabled because deafness is not visible at sight.

*Now-a-days I don’t feel ashamed of being deaf because I’m confident that if I get opportunity I can also perform very well. Of course! I enjoy seeing people talking to each other and wish to speak like them. In the past I was afraid of bullying*

*when I met people on the way to school but now I am comfortable because we also have our own language and can communicate with our peers. (Saru Mahat, 18, Grade: X – Kalpabrikshya School)*

The above excerpts show the big constraint was degree of disability i.e., communication gap and if GWDs were not able to solve then only they go to their seniors. The participants with hearing impairment did not find major constraints in the school because the teachers treat them very well without any discrimination and all the students are hearing impaired so they get along well and help each other. They get opportunities to participate in many co-curricular and extra-curricular activities and programmes. However, they were bullied, harassed and had to tolerate the misbehaviour of by some people and also of the family members sometimes. These hearing impaired students were very smart in lip-reading, understanding facial and verbal expressions and gestures and were quite good observers. So they did not feel happy when those who could hear talk only between themselves and ignore them but they try to understand the context.

The hearing impaired students had to come to school from faraway places due to no hostel facility. This kept them close to their parents but they had difficulty in everyday transportation. Due to small number of students in each class the students got more attention so there is mutual cooperation among peer groups and the student teacher relationship is cordial so they solve their problems. All the participants were found hardworking and were determined to continue their education as far as possible and become self-standing in the future. Most participants were adapted to their daily lives. Dilu stated that she solves most of her problems regarding academics or other needs by

herself whereas her friends help her along the road, stairways. Her parents also support and encourage in her studies always.

*I consult my friends whenever I am confused in my home-work. When I saw new people on the road I would get nervous due to my condition. I would feel that people were gazing at my leg. Now-a-days, I walk confidently and I don't feel that I'm weak. Both my parents and friends always encourage me and I'm also determined to continue my studies in order to be self-reliant in future. (Dilu, 17, class: X – Satkarma School)*

However, Shubha solves her problem with the help of her family members, friends and helpers at school and HCH. Though she has no control over urine and stool she has fixed time for this.

*When I have problem during period (menstruation) my brothers also tell me to stay neat and clean and my sisters-in-law are also very considerate at home and take care of me. I also help in various household chores. When I cannot do something by myself I seek help from others. My biggest problem is my toileting sense, which is weak so I use diaper. I can urinate only after pressing my belle. I have solved this problem myself by fixing exact time. (Shubha, 20, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

Physically impaired girls have problems during menstruation so they are helped by the helpers at school and by family members at home. Dina had bitter experience of alienation in her village however in this school and at Heaven Children Home her friends, class-teacher and staff help her whenever she needs help. She related her experience as follows,

*I remember those days when I was studying in my village and in the rainy season I had no umbrella and I was also unable to run but my friends ran fast leaving me alone. They also bullied me by saying that ‘why has her mother given birth to this crippled girl?’ Such insults made very sad and I didn’t want to live whereas the friends here are very helpful. If I need any help I ask my peers or go to the class teacher and if needed the head teacher is also ready to help. ... I do all the possible daily work at Home while those tasks which I can’t do myself are done by the Home staff. All the necessary materials are provided by sir and miss. I solve my problems with the help of peers, teachers and care takers. (Dina, 15, Grade: VII – Swarna School)*

The above expressions, portrays, the physically impaired participants try to solve their problems by themselves first but if they cannot solve then they go to friends, and then finally to teachers, guardians or head-teacher. Further as these physically impaired ones were living in HCH they were very attached to the staff and the relation was very cordial. All the essential materials were provided by them so parents had little worry regarding their SEN children.

### **Chapter Essence**

In this chapter, I have discussed the perceived influence of parents, teachers and others by the GWDs were primarily positive. The chapter also explained the challenges faced by the GWDs which were mainly academic, socialisation and physical facilities. These challenges were solved by the GWDs on their own first, among peers and finally in severe cases the head-teacher was contacted. In the next chapter, the main findings will be the focus for a discussion with regards to the theoretical construct.

## CHAPTER VII

### DISCUSSION, REFLECTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study sets out to explore the overarching research question, what does it mean to be a girl student with disability? I divided it into four sub-research questions (see, Chapter One) to make it easy in addressing the main purpose of the study. In the preceding chapters, Four, five and Six, I dealt with the analysis of experiences of girls with disability (GWDs) at school; perceptions of parents, teachers and community people towards education of GWDs and perceived influence, challenges and coping strategies of GWDs. In this final chapter, I shall illustrate the overall summary of this study progression by restating the nature of research question together with the context of the study. I embrace further a succinct outline of methodology used in choosing the study site, gathering information and analysis. This chapter further revolves around the discussion of the findings which I explained in the preceding chapters, together with reference to literature review and the review of policy analysis. Then the chapter will provide major findings and their implications drawn from the study. The final section spells out my learning and also makes recommendations for further research.

#### **Overview and Reflections**

Initially my research voyage started right after the completion of my dissertation on ‘Perceptions of Secondary School Students towards Inclusive Education: Voice of Teenagers’ for the fulfilment of my postgraduate degree in Special Education Needs

which inspired me to choose a topic related to SEN children. So I started to collect relevant information from the journals and articles of national and international research. I went through many journals, articles, and books but initially it was very confusing and challenging to start writing. Further I reviewed literature in the relevant field, facilitated the development and refinement of the research question and ultimately I decided to study on the schooling of GWDs. After the selection of the topic the research question confirmed. Then I prepared my roadmap of the research in the form of proposal, and finally I presented my proposal in front of the Research Committee of the University. The Research Committee gave some advices and approved my proposal. Given these advices, I revised my proposal once again. After preparing my research tools, I carried out a preliminary study in secondary schools where vision impaired and physically impaired students were integrated in Kathmandu and Lalitpur districts. The preliminary study was conducted with GWDs of Grade seven to ten. This preliminary work gave me important insights in my design and I made some improvements particularly in my tools and the criteria and procedures for participants' choice. I also decided to involve SEN boy participants from the sample schools in understanding whether the schooling experiences were similar to GWDs or not. After the approval of my research proposal, I focused on elaborating my research design, preparing tools, planning for the fieldwork etc.

This is a new topic in the arena of educational research in Nepal because there is almost no literature regarding GWDs in Nepal. This topic has sought to utilise the introduction of the schooling of GWDs agenda as a lens through which GWDs' perceptions of schooling experience can be explored.



Now I turn to the reflection on my theoretical approach which I consecutively used in my research to understand and interpret the complex experiences of participant girls with different disabilities in the environment of their school. As a point of departure, I started with the theoretical framework of Giddens' structure-agency theory because his work is specially worth in understanding the structure and agency relationships. He has explained different concepts like structure, agency, and the duality of structure or structuration in how agency influences structure and vice versa. Since the beginning of planned development in the education system in Nepal, the government has looked upon marginalised groups' education as a prime importance. By and large, disability categorisation and providing education to girls and PWDs was the core of the plans, policies and programmes which resulted increase in the school attendance of these group of students. Through the agency-structure framework Giddens emphasised on the recognition of the agency of the actor and in looking the societal structures both facilitating and constraining. The agency-structure framework was very useful in understanding the different contexts of interaction between the GWDs and the environment of their school.

Another analytical tool I have used is social justice theory of two polarising philosophies of John Rawls and Robert Nozick. Rawls favoured maximising the improvement of the least advantaged group (girls with disability) in society in providing fair equity of opportunity to services and goods (education). However, Nozick argued on the reliance of private charity. In providing educational opportunities to the PWDs both of these concepts are working since the initiation of mass education. Furthermore, I used inclusive education and gender perspective as analysing tools which are the buzz words

in global scenario. By adopting these theoretical constructs, I have focused in contextualising the schooling of girls with disability with their everyday life-world, school culture and understanding of disability.

Now I turn to the reflection of my methodological approach. By relying most importantly on qualitative research approaches, especially on transcendental phenomenology I was able to access and understand the schooling context of GWDs in the special institutional and integrated community schools in the municipal cities of a district the inside Kathmandu Valley and outside Kathmandu, where GWDs were studying, selected as convenience and purposively. By adopting the qualitative method I was able to capture the essences of experiences of GWDs as well as glean the structural environment of the school and community and also be able to analyse perceptions of parents and community people towards GWDs' education.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Now I turn to make a brief reflection on my research questions. The research question that this study addressed was: 'what does it mean to be a girl student with disability?' I expanded this overarching main research question into four operational questions around which my rigorous attempt was revolved.

#### **Perception of Girls with Disability towards Education**

My first question was: How do girls with disability perceive their education? In addressing this question, I analysed the experiences perceived by the participants regarding benefits of formal schooling as well as information about participants live experiences in the school environment, which were divided into academic and non-

academic environments. I also analysed their understanding regarding disability and rights.

The discussions of the perception of GWDs towards their education (see, Chapter four) provided vivid prose accounts of my key participants' essences of experience of schooling as findings of the study.

### **Disability Detection: Compassion and Ignorance**

A person usually reflects her/his behaviour patterns knowingly or unknowingly according to circumstances, individual knowledge and understanding and attitudes. In discussing parents' endeavour regarding their siblings, disability detection, they were compassionate about the care and treatment of their GWDs, however, they were ignorant of congenital disability like visually impaired and hearing impaired, which caused delay in detection, treatment and intervention. Reflecting on their ignorance, I found, there were two compelling causes of their ignorance. First, unavailability of early detection facility in the locality or even in the capital city of Nepal and another is the prevalence of taken-for-granted attitude of carelessness among most people in our society.

Parents' unawareness is the result of societal culture. Even educated couple, do not care to know about the condition of sensory system of the new born, if there is no visible defect. However, if the disability is visible at birth they [parents] try their best, for instance, Roshna, the physically impaired girl with spina bifida got immediate treatment because she was born with a big head and her lower limbs were paralysed. If the case of disability detection is compared to structuration theory of Giddens (1984) which says that the social structures (societal norms, values, and taken-for granted culture) and social

actions (parents' unawareness and carelessness) have symbolic relationship and are dependent on each other and sometimes constrain each other.

The unavailability of resources and facilities hindered GWDs parents to become aware of their children's disability at early stages. In this case, structures are constraint to parents (agencies) in identifying their children's disability because as Giddens further stressed, structuration is also a process of arranging social relations or 'social practice' (Wheel-Brooks, 2009, p.129). Thus due to social practices in Nepal early identification of invisible congenital disabilities are not looked upon seriously. However, if the case is detected after an accident or after severe illness then the parents are eager to provide treatment, cure and try their best without discriminating any child. Thus, if seen through the gender lens, both boys and girls were treated equally. However, the ignorance of the parents delayed the diagnosis and eventually affected the schooling of GWDs. As a result, the GWDs have to bear the problem for the rest of their life. However, if their disability is detected early it could be cured also. According to Yoshinaga-Itano and Appuzzo (1998), if hearing loss is identified within six months of age a child can acquire considerably higher expressive language.

### **Instability in Schooling: Puzzlement and Worry**

The common problem of all the GWDs was getting schools, which could cater to them properly, in the neighbourhood before joining their present schools. The puzzlement and helplessness of the parents were reflected by all the GWDs because they had to change schools frequently. Parents' continuous effort in finding a better school which would accommodate their GWDs was really praiseworthy and showed their inherent desire to make their children's future safe and self-supportive. Their efforts proved that

the family and peer groups were main stakeholders in social inclusion as Gautam (2009) identified. Here, we can observe that parents (agency) were continuously making effort to put their GWDs in school which is a step to socialisation of their GWDs. Furthermore, parents' puzzlement and helplessness have interrelated effect of disability to both the school (structure) as well as the GWDs (agency) as Giddens' (1984) duality of structure refers.

In other words, special educational assistance is a must to GWDs but it is beyond the capacity of the schools, in general, because almost all the schools in Nepal are ill equipped and cannot cater to SEN students with different disabilities. On the other hand, without assistance GWDs cannot cope in those schools like the non-disabled peers. Almost all the schools are normally designed and resources made available keeping in mind only non-disabled students. I found that the delayed detection of disability, need of treatment and frequent change of school made the GWDs late starters and/or also caused disturbance during schooling. I found most GWDs were more older when they were admitted to current school; this is similar to the findings of Kratovil and Bailey (1986) who reported that girls are often more older when they get admitted to special education, so they are late starters.

Giddens' (1984) duality of structure interprets structures (schools) have constrictive influence on individual action (coping by GWDs). The schools were unable to accommodate GWDs (agency) due to lack of resources and infrastructure. Similarly, GWDs' individual capacity hindered them to cope with the available resource and infrastructure at school (structure). As a result, the parents were worried for their ward's education.

### **Education is Empowerment**

All the GWDs were concerned to get education and had good understanding about the importance and benefits of education, which was basically expressed as the source of empowerment. The efforts of the parents to educate them, observing other educated person, exposure of science and technology and variety of media, the schooling opportunities to the GWDs, different facilities, scholarships and funding provided by the government, I/NGOs and sponsors and their innate drive to subsidise own disability are some contributing factors in broadening GWDs perspectives towards the importance of education to them. I found all the GWDs perceived education as a process of preparing them effectively for the future. Their desire to secure safe future either by getting a good job or by becoming an entrepreneur of their own business led them to get quality education, so all the GWDs see education is a must for them. Their intuitive motive to education can be seen as the result of the positives of structures (school and familial support) and also the agency (micro level) their own individual level efforts which shapes and reshapes the social structures as Ritzer (2000) emphasised. Due to the agency's (GWDs) strong drive to get education the structural barriers did not hinder.

### **Physical Environment as Barriers**

Many negative comments about institutional structures and physical facilities regarding their schools were commonly found among all the GWDs. For example, Dilu had everyday's problem because of staircase and her class was in the third floor of the school building which was inaccessible for her. Though the government policy is in providing student-friendly school infrastructure but no school have disability-friendly school building with ramps and other essential facilities and this hindered their movement

and felt helpless. The GWDs with vision impairment and hearing impairment perceived alienation, exclusion and helplessness because of inadequate, inappropriate, inaccessible and neglected resources in their schools.

The schooling history of vision and hearing impaired is more than five decades, and each developmental plan has shown accelerating the concern of SEN children's education every year after the civil rights era of 1960s. Further, the schools in Nepal are suffering from inadequate and non-friendly infrastructure to PWDs because Nepal government's statutory obligations towards the commitments made as a member of United Nations is not put into action sufficiently as in the paper. There is no specific provision of facilities for GWDs thus they are categorically marginalised and are compelled to fit in with the available physical facilities at schools. As I found, due to intense desire to get education vision impaired students were staying at hostel with bear minimum physical facilities and they showed strong negative attitudes towards hostel management.

### **Curricula as Constraint**

The academic environment was more problematic to both, vision impaired and hearing impaired participants, however, the participants with physical impairment were fairly included. As expressed by the vision impaired GWDs, the curriculum and instructional pedagogy were found excluding in nature and unjust for visually impaired students due to scarcity of textbooks in Braille and other resource materials and classroom teaching was neglecting them. Adaptive curriculum (van den Berg, Steegers & Geijsel, 2001), differentiation curriculum (Westwood, 2003) and expanded core curriculum (Hatlen, 1996; Corn & Wall, 2002) are some examples of alternative

strategies termed differently but the purpose is to facilitate SEN children in accordance to observed differences among the learners. As suggested by Westwood (2003), a number of alternative strategies which can be applied to multiple dimensions of curriculum are: to teaching contents of curriculum, assessment methods, classroom organisation, student grouping, and teachers' interaction with individual students. However, the field study showed very low instances of applying such strategies as suggested by Westwood, 2003; Hatlen, 1998; Corn and Wall, 2002 in Nepalese school contexts.

First constraint faced by GWDs was the issue of curricular contents. There is no system of alternative/optional contents in the curriculum of mathematics, science and social studies specially geometry. Subsequently, lessons including figures and diagrams in subjects like science, mathematics (geometry) and social studies are never learnt by the visually impaired students and there also are no alternative questions in examination paper. As a result, the students do not attempt questions which are not learnt. Due to this institutional barrier (structural constraint) the students fail to achieve their best.

Second constraint faced by GWDs was the issue of examination system. Both the teachers and GWDs were found to be dissatisfied with the current assessment system because in this system PWDs were facing systemic injustice. They were in favour of writing their examination by themselves using Braille script which could prove the authenticity of their original thoughts and they would be able to write at their own pace. Moreover, there would be no problem of dictating, pace of writer, finding writers and their actual evaluation could also be determined. The third constraint faced by GWDs was the issue of translation. Further, the vision impaired students have been facing



translation problem in their homework and other examination papers. Homework checks and getting feedback from the subject-teachers were also hidden institutional barriers.

Finally constraint faced by GWDs was the issue of instructional pedagogy. The classroom organisation is maintained only by keeping visually impaired students in the front, however, in the classroom teaching the GWDs are not taken care by the subject-teachers. They are just passive listeners in the class. Though the vision impaired students are integrated in some schools there is no evidence of the use of IEP which is an important tool and used widely in western world and also in the developed countries in the east. Lee-Tarver (2006) argues IEP is a process as well as product. The main purpose of integration is locational, social and functional integration as Warnock (1978) reported and IDEA (2004) emphasised on free appropriate public education (FAPE) for all the SEN pupils however these provisions were found to be exercised very little in the Nepalese education system.

Similarly, due to the small number of vocabulary in sign language, hearing impaired students also face difficulties in communication and understanding the curricular contents so national curriculum was found a constraint for these students also. Thus, hearing impaired students also found difficulty in science, English and social studies. Underwood (2003) has suggested different communicative strategies which can be incorporated in classroom teaching but I did not find any other strategy except sign language in teaching. There are different devices like digital hearing aids, radio hearing aids, cochlear implants and FM systems besides sign language for the hearing impaired. Thus, the teachers should be able to use these hearing devices however in the field study none of the GWDs were found using these devices. The teaching learning focused only in

sign language as the only strategy. Due to insufficient number of vocabulary, I found the GWDs' writing were not fluent as to their hearing peers. So the hearing impaired students are also facing systemic injustice in their academic environment.

The visually impaired students are integrated in mainstream schools following multi-track approach without providing adequate flexible curricula and pedagogy in responding their diverse needs. If their integration was made fully participative then later inclusive education will be enhance as per the demand of global attention. The GWDs with hearing impairment were compelled to attend special school with minimum resources and also they do not get opportunity to attend mainstream school and intermingle with other colleagues. The rigid curricula and pedagogy is a hindrance in the GWDs' pace of learning.

### **Socialisation Positives: Participation and Acceptance**

Regarding social environment of the schools, GWDs perceived both positive and negative experiences i.e., participation and acceptance as well as alienation and exclusion respectively. As observed, visually impaired girls found that their peers were the best source for confirming their answers and were also good support in the class because they help to dictate whatever is written on the board. This observation is similar to Alur (2002) reported, these SEN students who were integrated performed twice as much in social integration and displayed higher level of play than that the SEN students in segregated group because the integrated students get more opportunities and mutual cooperation while segregated children miss such opportunities.

Furthermore, as Thompson et al. (1993) reported that eye contact, listening, and imitative behaviours, following directions and minimal receptive and expressive

communication skills are the requisites for a deaf student to interact appropriately in the classroom, I found that Kalpabrikshya School was giving opportunities to hearing impaired students to participate in different activities inside the school and in the community for social and emotional development and in spite of their deafness the GWDs were found to grasp quickly whatever they observed. The scenario in the school of GWDs with hearing impaired also confirms the findings of Lamichhane and Sawada (2009) that hearing impaired have benefited more than PWDs with vision impaired and physically impaired, because they were found to learn quickly have high return to education and are also significant observers.

Thus, hearing impaired participants benefitted more in the sense that though they get admitted late but significantly learn in fewer years of schooling because school also provided them opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities which are helpful to develop leisure interests and social skills (Powers, 2002) and these activities are useful to interact and develop self-esteem and eventually helps in academic soundness. I found the social environment in the school quite conducive although the school was a special segregated school and the students did not socialise with other peers of their age. However, students were found very active, to organise programmes on their own and also had opened 'Asal Bahira Bal Club' through which they participate and keep in touch with the community.

In the schools where physically impaired GWDs were integrated, the teachers, peers and staff were found supportive and caring. Though there were no ramps wheelchair users were supported by helpers and peers in their need so the GWDs integration

was locational, social and functional as suggested (Warnock, 1978). Thus, the school infrastructure needs re-structured so that SEN students can be integrated well.

### **Socialisation Negatives: Alienation and Exclusion**

GWDs with vision impairment were never asked by the subject-teacher whether they have done the homework or not, so homework was optional for them but they had to consult with their supportive peers. Though the vision impaired students presence showed their integration in the classroom teaching, the ignoring behaviour of subject-teachers reflected the PWDs were socially excluded and alienated as Gatuum (2009) reported. The resource-teacher is so busy that every visually impaired student's homework translating cannot be done by her so they have to consult and discuss with their peers. Though the subject-teachers do not give special attention to the vision impaired students in the class GWDs however, found them quite supportive and positive outside the class sometimes. This seems contradictory and dual character of the subject-teachers. The reasons behind subject-teachers' duality of character were the large number of students in the class; the urgency to finish the assigned course on time and their ignorance of Braille script. So the teachers do not give much attention to them. Thus, the GWDs have to depend on either their supportive peers or work hard by themselves. In these schools alternative measures of pedagogy were not implemented while teaching so use of Individual Educational Programme (IEP) cannot be imagined.

Some teachers and peers of GWDs were found negative, unsupportive and they underestimated and harassed the GWDs with physical impairment. Some sighted-peers did not want to intermingle with them which show their negative attitudes towards GWDs.

### **Knowledge on Rights**

The GWDs with hearing impairment were more knowledgeable regarding different rights than GWDs with vision impairment however GWDs with physical impairment were the least knowledgeable. Their understanding regarding different rights was acquired due to curriculum contents, exposure to media and awareness programmes.

### **Disability: Meaning and Its Effects**

The GWDs' had good knowledge of disability, understood it quite well. The hearing impaired understood disability quite well like the knowledge of different rights. As defined by WHO ICIDH (1980) and also ICIDH-2 (1997) they were clear about disability, handicap and impairment. For instance, some GWDs gave example of how their impairment made them handicapped which caused their disability to communicate with others who do not know sign-language.

Two girls (vision impaired and hearing impaired) who encountered sexual harassment perceived it as an effect of their impairment. Further they perceived that most people under-estimate/doubt that they are unable to do anything and were weak so they cannot retaliate against harassment. However, both of them managed to escape and proved that they were not weak. Nevertheless, instances of GWDs experience of bullying, sexual harassment and other such abuses confirmed the findings Arms, Bickett and Graf (2008) that their experiences are mediated by gender and mostly GWDs are more likely to drop-out from the school. This can also be seen in the enrolment ratios of PWDs 1.2%, 1.0% and 0.85% in the primary, lower-secondary and secondary school respectively (Flash-Report I, 2010). Similarly, a girl with physical impairment was

bullied by peers in her neighbourhood took it positively and this encouraged her to study further.

Similarly, a boy with vision impairment also told the story of his mother despising him. He took it positively and was encouraged to work hard and study to become self-standing in the future and take care of his parents in their old-age. Here I found PWDs sincere thinking of gender role as assumed by the society. Girls wanted to learn social/household skills whereas a boy with vision impairment was worried about his responsibilities to his parents in spite of his disability. As Kliuchko (2011) stresses male and female both perceive gender stereotypes and characterise accordingly. The participants PWDs also reflected their gender stereotypes in the above mentioned cases. So the PWDs also wish to perform gender roles and their parents also expected the same.

The findings demonstrated the circumstances of Nepalese schools where GWDs continuously struggling for their education with the prescribed curriculum and schooling structure. I present major findings as following.

The invisible congenital disability of SEN children with vision impaired and hearing impaired created great problems later in schooling and everyday life due to unavailability of detection facility at the early stage and ignorance of their parents. Thus, SEN children faced difficulty to get into regular mainstream schools. Thus, parents had to change schools one after another because the child would not fit in the school environment. With the available infrastructure, resources and human resource, the mainstream schools were also found unable to retain SEN children in the school.

I found all the GWDs highly enthusiastic about getting education as it had great importance in their lives. They found education as a means of becoming self-supportive

to get ready for better future. They perceived that quality education would provide mainly two things in the future, a good job or a good business entrepreneur. So I concluded that the ultimate aim of GWDs was to work hard for education to be able to earn their living.

GWDs perceived both positives and negatives of school environment. I found more negatives rather than positives regarding physical environment of their schools. Some positives of physical environment in their schools entertained by the GWDs with vision impairment were: free hostel facility; availability of free textbooks in Braille for compulsory subjects; separate blind section to facilitate their educational needs, including a resource teacher; providing seats for them in the front row in classrooms; providing writers in the examinations to students above grade eight and providing half an hour extra time than their peers with good vision in the examination. Similarly, some positives of physical environment available at school for GWDs with hearing impairment were: availability of free textbooks and dictionary in sign language, free education and scholarships. However, the school building was not found disability-friendly as per the need of GWDs with physical impairment at their schools. As I mentioned earlier, among four key participant GWDs with physical impairment, three of them stay at HCH (run by a NGO) which bears total expenses of education and boarding. However, the HCH building was also not found disability-friendly.

The negatives of physical environment perceived by GWDs were alienation, and helplessness due to insufficient, inaccessible and neglected resources at their schools. The school authority and DOE were not monitoring and providing adequate services to the hostel so the vision impaired students were staying there under compulsion because they had no option. They were attending school with inadequate facilities so their locational

and functional integration is just name sake. GWDs with hearing impairment were also compelled to attend school from distant places because of no provision of hostel for them and school had inadequate infrastructure.

Positives of academic environment at schools were the GWDs got opportunities of formal schooling and were able to come out from homes and attend school. The negatives regarding academic environment were found more problematic for vision impaired and hearing impaired rather than physically impaired GWDs. They were: a) the national curriculum and instructional pedagogy were excluding GWDs due to non availability of sufficient educational materials (books in Braille, large print books and eye-glass for low vision students, CDs and Cassettes of text materials, limited vocabularies in sign language etc.) well as no practice of providing alternative contents and approaches in curriculum delivery as adaptive/differentiation or extended core curriculum suggested for SEN children's education and not using IEPs for their education; b) due to translation problem homework checks (even subject-teachers do not ask them whether they did homework or not) homework is not obligatory for them as if they are not part of classroom teaching and getting feedback from subject-teacher were beyond GWDs with vision impairment reach; c) understanding classroom by GWDs depended on subject-teachers' consideration, whether s/he gives importance to the presence of GWDs in the class; d) there was no system of substitute questions for unlearned contents for visually impaired students, as a result they were compelled to leave such questions and unable to attempt all questions and score high; e) the vision impaired had writers problem which causes fluctuation on their scores; and both vision impaired and hearing impaired students never got chance to participate in practical



classes in subjects like physics, chemistry and biology like their non-disabled peers due to not convincing pedagogies for them.

The positives of social environment as perceived by the GWDs were: participation and acceptance. Peers were found best source of confirming correct answers of homework, library consultation (reading lessons from reference materials) and note taking in the class (dictating lesson written on the blackboard) for GWDs with vision impairment. Furthermore, GWDs with vision impairment and physical impairment got opportunities of social integration where they were benefited to the locational integration as well as social interchange existed between them and their non-disabled peer. The wheel-chair users' movement was possible due to the support of staff and peers. But the hearing impaired GWDs had home environment at school and liked to spend more time at school due to the use of sign language and supportive teachers. Though the school was segregated special school, they were taught social skill congruence to community and given chance regularly to participate in community affairs like local festivals and were encouraged to socialise. The negatives of social environment perceived by GWDs were alienation and exclusion. Some non-disabled peers harassed, bullied and were at times in-cooperative to these GWDs. Subject-teachers' neglecting behaviour in the class led vision impaired girls to alienation and exclusion.

The hearing impaired girls were found more knowledgeable than vision impaired and physically impaired girls about human rights, child right and disability rights due to their small number and more concentrated extra activities.

All the GWDs were found having good understanding of disability, impairment and handicap. Encountering sexual harassment, abuse and bullying were the

consequences of their disability and also being a girl still most people under-estimate or see them inferior and useless. Both girls and boys with disability were found conscious to earn and learn skills as per the societies expected gender roles.

### **Perception of Parents and Community towards Education of Girls with Disability**

Relating to the parents' concern towards the schooling of GWDs, my second question was: How do parents and community perceive education of GWDs? I analysed the attitude and understanding of parents, teachers and community towards disability and SEN children and GWDs education. Further I analysed opportunities, services provided to educate SEN children and measures taken to capacity building and taking care of GWDs. I also emphasised on the analysis of national and international efforts made to address GWD/SEN students' education.

In discussing perception of parents and community towards education of GWDs I found important points from their views as major finding (see, Chapter Six). Teachers, parents and community were mostly found positive to GWDs education as well as in providing necessary facilities to them.

### **Meaning of Disability**

As I discussed in Chapter Six, the teachers, head-teachers and parents who were consulted were also found to have quite good understanding about the causes and its effect of disability. A head-teacher emphasised on the education of SEN students as per their aptitude so that they could acquire competence in a specific area. She further pointed out that the SEN students need vocational education. Another head-teacher also emphasised on providing opportunities to SEN students to enhance their ability. All these viewpoints were similar to social model of disability as suggested by Barnes (1991, 2002

& 2007), Oliver (1990, 1996) and Vic Finkelstein (1980, 1981). So, these viewpoints show the society's positives shifting from medical/moral model of disability to social model and cultural model more emphasising on right-based approach to education.

### **Perception towards Education of Girls with Disability**

The entire participant teachers and parents were found in favour of GWDs' education however they further emphasised that there are many people in the community also who discriminate between son and daughter due to male dominated society. Mostly PWDs' education is seen as the responsibility of the government or I/NGOs. One of the guardians, who, was herself a low vision person argued that people have become 'Sansthamukhi' (Organisation-oriented) for education and care of their children with disability. If someone has a girl child with SEN the child is looked as a burden and parents do not want to spend much on her education and seek help from others whereas sons were admitted to a boarding school. Such attitudes are deep-rooted in the Nepalese society which is a result of patriarchy which is also a perspective of socialist feminism as Ritzer (2000) emphasised. Similarly, mother of a vision impaired girl also focused more on GWDs education. All the efforts made by parents for capacity building and taking care of GWDs are similar to the expanded core curriculum (Hatlen, 1996; and Corn & Wall, 2002) embraced compensatory or functional academic skills which included different communication, orientation and mobility, career education, social interaction skills.

However, head-teachers and teachers of Kalpabrikshya School still found some community people's negative attitudes towards GWDs' from their behaviour. Even parents do not want to spend on them. They related several instances, when they asked

parents for some charges for their child they refused to pay. There were also cases where girls were taken out of the school after passing grades two-three because the parents think that this is sufficient education for a deaf to do household chores. Though policies and programmes were implemented by the government still people's attitudes were not changed. It shows the gap between policies written and practices. Seeing GWDs as a burden and cutting off expenses for them shows negative attitude to the education of GWDs. However, there were some parents who wanted to educate their GWDs as much as possible.

### **Capacity Building and Taking Care**

Parents interest to admit their daughters to a suitable school, their desire to learn sign and Braille language are some positive steps towards capacity building and taking care of GWDs at family level. Furthermore, Dilu's parents migrated to urban area from their remote village, to provide good education and opportunity to their daughter. I found these examples of the parents' commitments to raise their daughters well and contribute to their well-being very encouraging. Similarly, providing writers to vision impaired students, hostel facility, scholarships and free distribution of textbooks and other educational materials and empowering PWDs by providing training awareness programmes, rights education and organising visits and educational tours to different places, are some examples of capacity building and taking care of GWDs at school level.

However, I did not find any separate specific facilities provided to GWDs whereas their needs are different. Running awareness programmes on disability for non-disabled ones and providing opportunities to GWDs in participating community activities were found to be positives of the community also. As Bichenbach et al. (1999) explained

essential survival roles like such physical independence, mobility and social interaction are taught to the GWDs in different levels. All these tasks showed the positives of family, school and community which are the results of statutory state policies and programmes implemented by the government and also the effect of changes in contemporary global arena. I further found that besides family members, some philanthropic people help from national and international, community and government are the main factors in up lifting these GWDs.

Thus noticeably there is improvement in the educational status of GWDs. However providing capacity building and taking care depend on the positive feelings of school head-teachers, care-givers and the society. As such, I found GWDs with hearing impaired more participative and smart than other GWDs. Currently, the social and cultural models of disability are gaining importance in Nepalese society which is the impact of awareness and education of the people in the community and the parents of the SEN children.

### **Opportunities and Services/Facilities**

On the basis of the Disabled Persons' Protection Act (1982) and the Protection and Welfare Act of the Disabled Persons Rules (1994) expanded facilities and provisions (see, Chapter two) can be exercised by a very few GWDs who are able to attend school. The government, through the special and inclusive education unit of (DOE), and I/NGOs are working in providing educational and residential facilities to SEN students. I found disability scholarship as per the categorisation; free textbooks and hostel facility are provided by the government. Similarly, some I/NGOs, sponsors and disability organisations provide facilities to GWDs. In line to Rawls and Nozick, the persons with

disabilities were provided educational facilities and care to some extent in their school context as well as their well-being. However there are no specific facilities specifically to girls and the opportunities and services are not sufficient to these GWDs. The stipend, available hostel facility and management are just name sake which demands lots of improvement. The distribution system is also not found systematic. As in the case of a girl with physical impairment in Satkarma School, she has not got any additional facility from the government or any other organisation.

Her parents were supporting her fully however if this case is looked through the lens of social justice as Rawls (1972) suggested, it is unjust distribution of facility and this is a routine oppression to her. This also shows that policies and programmes have not addressed the distribution of scholarship appropriately and also there is poor monitoring. The authority of Samanta School has employed a teacher to assist SEN students in remedial classes and also hired a lady at the hostel to look after her blind girl (six years old) and other girls in the hostel. In this case, both the GWDs and the woman were benefited. The SEN students also got routine free medical check-ups.

In the case of hearing impaired girls, they were just getting free education and some stipend provided by the DEO but due to not availability of hostel they had to come from far away and face harassments too. Although, after Salamanca Statement (1994), drastic change emerged in the education of SEN children all over the world and in Nepal also inclusive education got impetus. However, real inclusive education practice has not succeeded yet.

### **Girls with Disability: Educational Status and Future Aspirations**

Despite their disability and bear minimum facilities all the GWDs' educational status were found very encouraging. All the girls were found hardworking and participating in extra-curricular activities provided by the school. All the consulted teachers, head-teachers and parents see their future bright. In the next section I have discussed on the influence of parental understanding on disability and SEN children.

The findings reflected the following:

Teachers and head-teachers were found supporting social model of disability more because all the participants were in favour of education as per the SEN children's aptitude and also education needs to be more vocational and income generating which leads to independence in the adulthood.

Furthermore, all the participant teachers, head-teachers and parents were found positive to GWDs education and were against any type of discrimination of GWDs but they perceived that some community people still discriminate girls and boys as well as PWDs and non-disabled. Still there are some people who think GWDs as a burden and do not want to spend on them and they are seen as the responsibility of government and I/NGOs. GWDs parents were more Sansthamukhi (dependent of Government and I/NGOs).

Migrating from the remote villages to urban areas for the education of GWDs, learning sign and Braille languages by the mothers to assist their GWDs, teaching social life skills to GWDs were examples of committed parents who took initiative in capacity building and taking care of their GWDs. I found these schools also took initiative to provide awareness programmes of disability for community people, sign language

training for parents of deaf children, free health services were provided for PWDs at school and encouraged SEN children to participate in programmes organised by the school, community and other institutions which were also some positive aspects in capacity building of these students.

All the available facilities like scholarships, hostel, free education, textbooks and other educational materials are not specific to GWDs. Thus, the facilities of GWDs are the same as other PWDs. However, the available facilities were not found sufficient for them and distribution was also biased.

The educational status of all GWDs was found amazingly sound despite inadequate facilities. This was the result of their innate desire to get education and here the agency (GWD) had to struggle hard due to rigidity of structure.

### **Influence of the Perception of Parents and Community: Education of Girls with Disability**

My third question was: How do school, community and household influence the schooling of girls with disability? In addressing this question I explored the educational implications of school infrastructure and available facilities. Further, I explored parental attitudes about disability, their socio-cultural background, educational status of GWDs and future aspirations and school culture. The discussion on influences of perception of parents and community and challenges faced by the GWDs and the coping strategies reflected major finding revealed in Chapter Six.

### **Influence of Parental Understanding: Disability and Special Educational Needs**

Both positive and negative influences of parental understanding of disability and SEN children were observed. The GWDs observed that not only SEN children's parents



most of the community people have also changed attitudes due to the exposure to media, science and technology, networking, education etc. Thus, there are positive influences regarding disability and SEN children. Most parents tried their best to educate their siblings with disability and some were even found to love these SEN children more than the other children. Now parents do not hide their SEN Child but try to educate them as far as possible.

However, still there are some who take disability as a punishment of some sin committed in the previous life and they believe that disability is contagious and do not want to intermingle with SEN children. There are still people, who find disability as moral/religious and medical model. Further, they think educating SEN children is not fruitful because they cannot do anything. Head-teachers and guardians of children at HCH expressed that there are some parents who never come to school and HCH to see their child after getting admitted to school and HCH. This shows the negative influence of understanding disability and shifting their responsibility to others. However, the increased number of SEN students shows the awareness of community people towards education.

### **Influence of School Culture and Self-perception on Schooling**

As discussed in previous chapters, the vision impaired and physically impaired GWDs were integrated though there were limited physical facilities and the GWDs had both helpful and alienating cultures in the school. However hearing impaired to have to bear minimum physical facilities but as the social environment is favourable to they like to spend more time at school rather than at home. Despite their disability all GWDs were found enthusiastic to education and they perceive themselves equally capable as their

non-disabled counterparts. I also analysed GWDs' self-perception and concluded the following findings:

Due to the exposure to media, information technology, internationalisation, global net-working, not only PWDs parents but other people in the community also have positive attitudes toward PWDs. At present government policies are more targeted to the inclusion of SEN and some parents were found doing their best in educating GWDs. However, superstitions still exists and misconceptions regarding disability like disability are contagious and the consequences of sin committed in the past still have negative influences in the Nepalese society.

The school culture influenced GWDs both positively and negatively as per the socialisation among non-disabled peers and teachers' behaviour, available facilities and opportunities in participating in different activities in their school. Due to the influence of school culture, some GWDs with vision impairment had more pressure in coping with academics and socialisation in comparison to GWDs with physical impairment though both were integrated to mainstream schools. Due to harmony among the school family, the GWDs with hearing impairment enjoyed their segregated special school. The available inadequate facilities did not matter in GWDs education due to their determination to get education and desire to become self-supportive in the future.

### **Challenges and Coping Mechanism**

My final question was: What are the challenges faced by the GWDs? How are they coping with those challenges? In identifying constraints by GWDs encountered in schooling and coping mechanism I analysed the degree of disability of GWDs, their school environment, and educational and socio-economic status.

As discussed in previous chapter, the GWDs have challenges regarding their available physical facilities, resource materials, services, classroom teaching pedagogy and curricular materials etc. which GWDs coped at individual level, with peers and with the teachers, head-teachers and their parents. The GWDs consult at different levels on the basis of the severity of the problem. Major Findings were:

Challenges regarding academics, social interactions, and supply of necessary things were solved by the GWDs by consulting at different levels. Minor problems are solved personally, then at friends circle but if the problem is severe then only they go to the resource-teacher, head-teacher or their parents (if possible).

### **Conclusion**

This study has mainly explored the experiences of GWDs' schooling and their school environment. The schooling experiences were discussed from both special and integrated schools as per the GWDs experienced because hearing impaired ones attended special school whereas vision impaired and physically impaired were integrated to mainstream private and community schools. On the basis of overall discussion and findings, I drew the following concluding remarks highlighting GWDs experiences in both types of school environments:

1. Compassion of the parents to the child (girl or boy) with disability has direct relation with disability detection, treatment and education. Compassion of parents comes first in searching means of detection and then possible treatment of the child with disability despite their ignorance or level of education, rugged topography or remoteness and limited facilities at the door steps. In search of providing treatment/medication and appropriate schools for

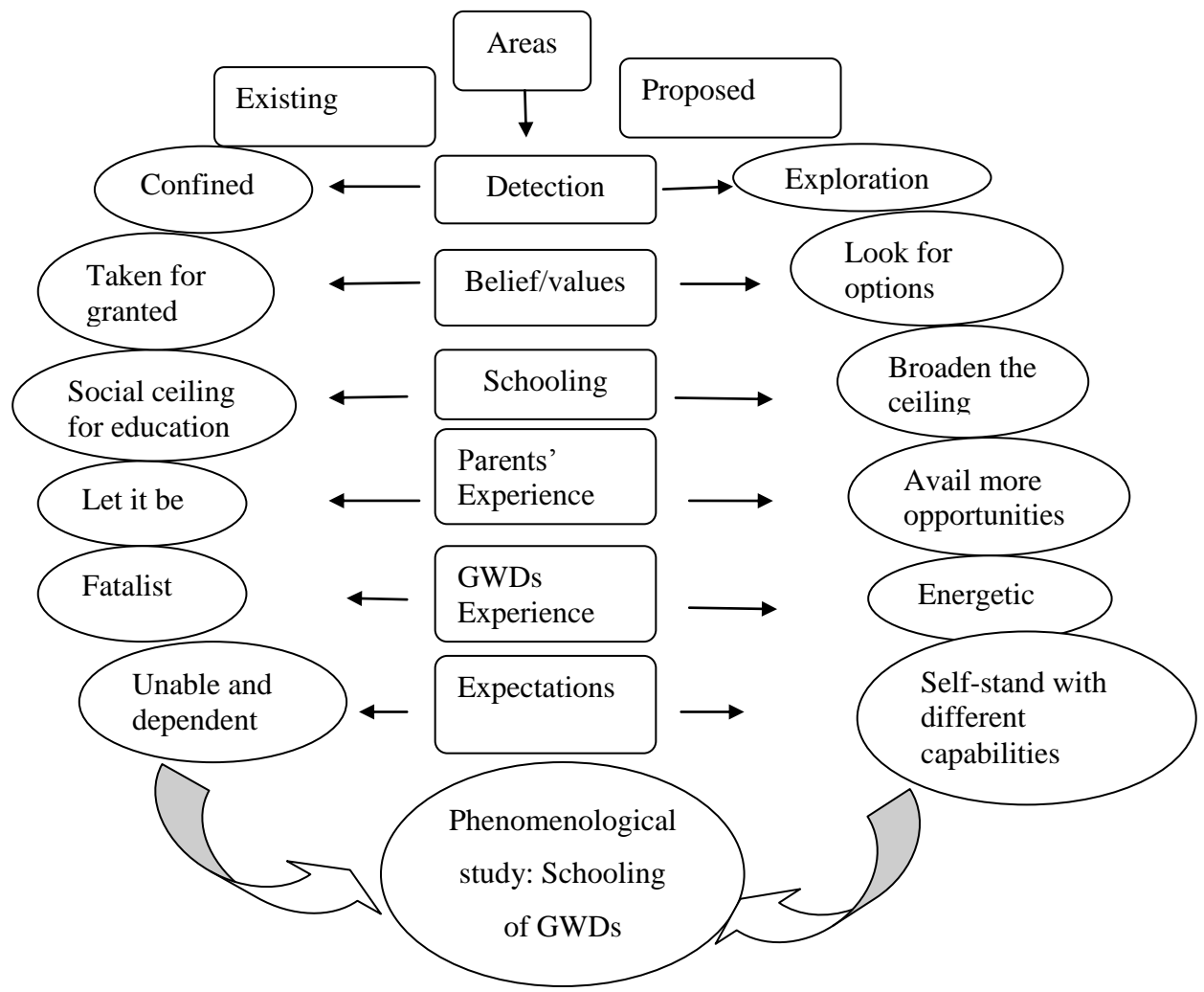
their child with disability, the compassionate parents even migrated to the urban areas of the country.

2. Acceptance and positive attitudes of peers, teachers and community reduced hesitation and inferiority feeling of GWDs. Their disability does not limit their participation in different social activities of their level. However, harassment, bullying and abuse compelled them to be alienated and excluded. GWDs faced similar world of limitation along with gender stereotypes like others in the society.
3. Formal school empowered GWDs to stick with their aim of educational attainment and become self-supportive and ensure their better future. Teachers' positive attitudes to GWDs supported them to be more attentive and focused to the studies.
4. Hardworking and self-determination were the GWDs' strategies to cope with problems at the individual level. Visually impaired girls chose non-disabled friends who perform quite well in their academics and are cooperative to them. But hearing impaired girls were more close to their peers, teachers and head-teacher rather than family members in tackling their problems because communicative school environment encourages them to solve problems collectively due to the use of sign language. Physically impaired girls solve their problems by getting help from their peers, though they did not have disability-friendly school building, in general.

5. Curriculum, pedagogical and school culture and environment are not supportive to girls with disability so the girls were active and harder working to compete with other non-disabled peers.
6. Though right to education, social justice and caring of girls with disability are responsibility of by the government through policies and facilities and the stakeholders in the community I/NGOs working in the field of disability, the girls are not in the position of getting full honour and participation.
7. Given their active agency girls are able to cope with the problems encountering the way to their education. They have innate drive to become self-supportive.
8. Finally, I conclude that a new model is essential to study GWDs school experience holistically. Herein below is the proposed model.

### Model for Studying Girls with Disability

Figure 4. Model for Studying Girls with Disability



The results from this study has shed light on the reality of school environment experienced by the GWDs, such as vision impaired, hearing impaired and physically impaired. There were findings which showed good practices are appreciative but the findings indicating negatives demand refinement.

#### The findings suggest the following implications:

The following are some implications:

**For Policy and Good Governance**

The findings of the study showed that the schools were unable to address GWDs educational needs in the integrated schools as well as in special schools. The government is continuously providing scholarships to different marginalised groups like PWDs and girls however the GWDs are doubly marginalised and there is no specific stipend for them. The available facilities and services demand better provision and improvement and additional supports need to be provided. Thus, there is a need of redefining educational policies that will strongly address educational needs of GWDs. Furthermore the poor management of hostel and blind section at integrated schools demand good governance and strong monitoring system so that the GWDs can be benefited from integration. The assessment centres are working for the assessing of disability however, the diagnosis is beyond the reach of PWDs in remote areas so this area needs to be expanded and not limiting to the school only.

Similarly, there is a need of revised curriculum, pedagogy and assessment system or implementation of adaptive curriculum and differentiation of strategies by which the PWDs can get justifiable education because inadequately provided services and facilities limit GWDs educational opportunities. In addressing the educational needs of GWDs, it is essential to focus building teacher capacity so that the GWDs in mainstream schools become more accepted and respected.

**For Disability-friendly School Environment**

The findings reflected the integration of PWDs with vision impaired and physical impaired students were lacking disability-friendly infrastructure, availability of resource materials and negative attitudes needs to be reformed. There is a need for making the

school environment participatory on the basis of equality and in the sense of real integration. The perspectives of rights and social justice also need to be considered while working for disability-friendly school environment. The teachers should be prepared to cater PWDs in providing conducive social environment in the school.

### **For Parents and Community Concern**

The findings showed that some parents and community people had negative attitudes so more awareness and training programmes regarding disability is essential so that positive attitude can be cultivated by the non-disabled people. Diagnosing disability, treatment and interventions needs to be made more systematic. Parents and community should be involved in all aspects of educational needs of PWDs.

### **Further Research**

In the light of the findings of the current research, the following suggestions are made for further research:

- The coverage area can be expanded for the GWDs schooling experiences because this study has investigated in municipalities of two districts only.
- The current study identified gaps in curriculum planning, implementation and practices at school so the study should be done further to identify the extent to which the resource teachers perform their professional responsibilities in the schools where the PWDs are integrated and also similar research can be done in the special segregated schools.
- This study has found inaccessible, inadequate resources and limited physical facilities to the PWDs and no specific facilities for GWDs. Thus, future research



should look at how school culture can be disability-friendly and made accessible to all the students.

- In this study I did not find participants from inclusive schools, so a new dimension would be gained if the beliefs of non-disabled peers about disability and inclusive education were investigated.
- The experience of schooling was largely similar among the girls and boys in this study. Further research can be conducted on the experiences of girls and boys at school comparatively.

There are ample evidence to be resolved in the education of PWDs but the above suggested research areas for further research are only a few. School environment is a complex phenomenon for investigation as identified by the experience of GWDs in this study. Future research can make an attempt to study by using different methodologies.

### **My learning**

More than anything else, the impact that I have felt on my own personal and professional development is in fact the most rewarding aspect of this study. This study has given me new exposure and skills to use and understand qualitative approach for research which immensely enriched my knowledge and professional development. I gained a deep understanding regarding the opportunities and services provided in the school system to the PWDs and there was nothing special to GWDs. Thus, due to unresponsive structure (available school facilities) the GWDs (agency) are struggling in their schools and are found hard-working. The GWDs were unable to go further to higher education because of structural and attitudinal barriers. The study also reflected that only a few number of PWDs were receiving facilities provided by the government and other

facility providers because of remoteness of the topography and inefficiency in programme implementation. Specially, hearing impaired students have no option for higher education because there are no colleges which can accommodate them.

Mainstream schools are not fully integrating visually impaired and physically impaired students due to attitudinal and environmental barriers though the global demand is in inclusive education which is more participative and right-based approach. In the field of educating GWDs, we have to reaffirm the policies as well as implement the programmes with strong monitoring.

This study has given me a synergy to work and facilitate for the education of PWDs, especially girl students, arrange awareness programmes for disability and educational needs of PWDs to make positive change in the community besides my own profession.

### **Summary Encapsulated in the Words of a Girl with Vision Impairment**

I have discussed about the GWDs school experiences in general. Some of the anxieties discussed in this study were compellingly expressed in a poem written by a girl who was attending a mainstream school, and took part in the preliminary study of this current study. These few words from the girl reflect her perception of being oppressed as a girl with disability. She had started writing since her age of eight. She was 16 when she wrote this poem and studying in grade seven. It is appropriate that final words of this thesis are those of a girl with disability.

*Differently able person*

*Never look down upon differently able*

*Ever help them and encourage them*

*Differently able too can work like able*

*Country's outlook can change*

*If all give them help*

*So let us not look down upon them*

*They too are the citizen of this nation*

*Though differently able*

*There is nothing that they can't do*

*Being differently able is not fault of theirs*

*There is nothing more pious*

*Then service to humankind!*

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## APPENDICES

**Appendix A**

## Letter of permission (school)

Date.....

The Principal

(Name of school)

Address .....

.....

.....

Dear.....

Re: Permission to conduct research work in your school

I am currently a Ph. D. student at the Kathmandu University, School of Education and preparing to write my dissertation on ‘Schooling of girls with disability’. The purpose of the study is to explore the school experiences of girls with disability.

The research design I am using is a qualitative approach by which I am in search of ample of descriptions of students’ experience regarding their schooling. Thus, I hope to shed light on and answer my research question: What does it mean to be a girl student with disability?

Please feel free to ask me, if you have any further questions before signing the release form.

With kind regards,

Bishwa Bala Shah Thapa

The researcher

## Appendix B

### Letter to Research Participants

#### Information Statement

*Participation in this research project is voluntary. Participants can withdraw from the research project at any time and do not have to give any reason of withdrawing.*

Date: .....

Address: .....

Dear .....

Thank You for being willing to take part in this discussion. I would like to assure you that all our discussions would remain confidential and you would remain anonymous and responses treated in the strictest confidence.

The research design I am using is a qualitative one by which I am in search of ample descriptions of your experience regarding your schooling. Thus, I hope to shed light on and answer my research question: What does it mean to be a girl student with disability?

I hope to understand the phenomenon as it reveals itself in your experience, through your participation in this research. You will be asked about your everyday lived experiences that how do you perceive.

Your participation is worthwhile in this research and thank you for the commitment of time, energy, and effort. Please feel free to ask me, if you have any further questions before signing the release form.

With kind regards,

Bishwa Bala Shah Thapa

The researcher

## Appendix C

### Interview Schedule 1: Interview with students with disability (Visually impaired and physically impaired)

Thank you for being willing to take part in this interview. I would like to assure you that all our discussions would remain confidential and you would remain anonymous and responses treated in the strictest confidence.

#### *General information*

---

Date: ..... Venue: .....

Interviewee's name: ..... Age: .....

Kind of disability:

School:

Class:

*Parents' name:*

Father's name: ..... Age: .....

Education: ..... Occupation: Primary..... Secondary.....

Mother's name: ..... Age: .....

Education: ..... Occupation: Primary..... Secondary.....

*Family Feature:*

Nuclear/Joint ..... Number of family members: ..... Brothers/sisters: .....

Other members (if any):

Position of the SEN student in the family:

Other disable member in the family:

Distance from home to school:

Hostel (If any):

Address: Permanent..... Temporary.....

*Guiding questions:*

---

1. Tell me when, how and where you started your education.
2. What do you understand by education?
3. To what extent do you think education is important in your life?
4. How do you like life at this school?
5. Do you enjoy coming to school? Why?
6. Would you like to explain about the physical environment of your school? (school infrastructure necessary to persons with disability)
7. Tell me, if you have any sad experiences in the school.
8. How do you see the academic environment of your school? (curriculum, pedagogy, teaching aids)
9. How do you find the social environment of your school? (Interaction among peers, teachers and other staff and outside the school etc.)
10. What do you do when you need help or have a problem at school? In what kind of problems do you need help and with whom do you go for help you?
11. What measures do you implement to overcome the constraints that you face in everyday life?
12. What do you mean by disability? What affects it make in your daily life?
13. How do you see the socio-economic and cultural background of your family?
14. What is the educational status of children with disability in your school?
15. Do you find any change in people's behaviour towards persons with disability?  
How do they see schooling of girls with disability?
16. Do you have any idea about human rights and rights to education and about child right?
17. What is your further plan and aspirations after completion of your studies?
18. Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

*Thank you and I feel honoured and privileged for this interview.*

## Appendix D

Interview Schedule No. 2: In-depth interview with girls with disability (visually impaired and physically impaired: Key participants)

---

Date:

Venue:

Interviewee's name: ...

Age:

Class:

### INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

- a) Educational history
- b) Perception towards education
- c) Physical environment of the school [Classroom arrangements, School compound, Facilities: toilets, drinking water, playground, library, laboratory, sports materials and other support systems etc.]
- d) Academic environment of the school [Teaching pedagogy and instructional materials, Suitability of curriculum, Subjects: likes/dislikes, important/unimportant, useful/un-useful etc., Classroom activities: magnitude of participation, group work, individual work, Teachers' support in the classroom activities: Paying Individual attention, Homework check and feedback etc.]
- e) Social environment of the school [School culture: rules and regulations, sharing, caring, cooperation, support/negative attitudes among staff, teachers, students etc., Head-teacher's inter-personal skills, Teachers' interpersonal skills, Teachers' positive/negative behaviour towards: non-disabled ones, boys and SEN girls, Interaction with students with disability and without disability]
- f) Knowledge on rights: [Human rights, child rights and rights of persons with disability]
- g) Perception towards disability [meaning, kind, degree]
- h) Socio-economic status and cultural background of the family
- i) Educational status of the SEN girl

- j) Strategy coping with the constraints: [enrolling in the school, attending the school, taking part in school activities: classroom and extra/co-curricular activities, gaining essential things at home, doing homework and participating household chores etc.]
- k) Self perception: [overcoming on shyness, inferior feeling, self confidence, enthusiasm, encouragement etc.]
- l) Parents/other community members perception towards SEN girl
- m) Support system from family and community:[ help, cooperation from parents, relatives and community]
- n) Change in people's behaviour:[ behaviour towards children with disability and perception regarding education/schooling of girls with disability]
- o) Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

*Thank you and I feel honoured and privileged for this interview.*

## Appendix E

### Interview Schedule No. 3: In-depth interview with parents' of SEN Students

---

Date:

Interview venue:

Interviewee's name.....

Child's (SEN) name:

Kind of disability:

## INTERVIEW GUIDELINES:

- a) Perception towards disability
- b) Attitude towards SEN girl and other children
- c) Perception towards education of SEN children
- d) Measures of taking care of SEN children
- e) Capacity:
  - Knowledge on rights of persons with disability
  - Physical infrastructure at home
- f) Opportunities provided to SEN girls in relation to education
- g) Other services/facilities to SEN girl
- h) Interaction with and behaviour towards SEN girl
- i) Future aspiration for SEN girl
- j) Perception towards school culture: [rules and regulations, sharing, caring, cooperation, support/negative attitudes among staff, teachers, students etc., Head-teacher's inter-personal skills, Teachers' interpersonal skills, Teachers' positive/negative behaviour towards: non-disabled ones, boys and SEN girls, Interaction with students with disability and without disability]
- k) Change in perception: Direction of change, what/who contributed to change
- l) Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

*Thank you and I feel honoured and privileged for this interview.*



## Appendix F

Interview Schedule No. 4: In-depth interview with Head-teachers/Teachers/Resource Teacher

---

Date: ..... Interview venue: ..... Interviewee: .....

Qualification/experience: ..... Responsibilities: .....

District: ..... VDC/MP..... Locality.....

### INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

- a) Perception towards disability
- b) Attitude towards SEN girl and other children
- c) Perception towards education of SEN children
- d) Measures of taking care of SEN children
- e) Capacity: knowledge on rights of persons with disability, physical infrastructure at home
- f) Opportunities provided to SEN girls in relation to education:[school/government policies and facilities]
- g) Other services/facilities to SEN girl: [gained incentives and facilities from NGOs and other donor agencies]
- h) Interaction with and behaviour towards SEN girl: [peers/teachers behaviour]
- i) Future aspiration for SEN girl:
- m) Perception towards school culture: [rules and regulations, sharing, caring, cooperation, support/negative attitudes among staff, teachers, students etc., Head-teacher's inter-personal skills, Teachers' interpersonal skills, Teachers' positive/negative behaviour towards: non-disabled ones, boys and SEN girls, Interaction with students with disability and without disability]
- j) Change in perception: direction of change, what/who contributed to change
- k) Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

*Thank you and I feel honoured and privileged for this interview.*

## Appendix G

### List of questions: For hearing impaired participants

#### Part I

##### *General information*

---

Date: ..... Venue: .....

Interviewee's name: ..... Age: .....

Kind of disability:

School:

Class:

*Parents' name:*

Father's name: ..... Age: .....

Education: ..... Occupation: Primary.....

Secondary.....

Mother's name: ..... Age: .....

Education: ..... Occupation: Primary.....

Secondary.....

*Family Feature:*

Nuclear/Joint ..... Number of family members: ..... Brothers/sisters:

Other members (if any):

Position of the SEN student in the family:

Other disable member in the family:

Distance from home to school:

Hostel (If any):

Address: Permanent..... Temporary.....

*Answer all the questions in detail as far as possible.*

---

1. When, how and where you started your education? Write in detail.
2. What do you understand by education?
3. To what extent do you think education is important in your life? Write with examples.

4. How do you like life at this school?
5. Do you enjoy coming to school? If yes, why? If no, why?

#### Part II

6. Would you like to explain about the physical environment of your school?  
(school infrastructure necessary to persons with disability)
7. If you have any sad experiences in the school, please write.
8. How do you see the academic environment of your school? (curriculum, pedagogy, teaching aids)
9. How do you find the social environment of your school? (Interaction among peers, teachers and other staff and outside the school etc.)
10. What do you do when you need help or have a problem at school? In what kind of problems do you need help and with whom do you go for help you?

#### Part III

11. What measures do you implement to overcome the constraints that you face in everyday life?
12. What do you mean by disability? What affects it make in your daily life?
13. How do you see the socio-economic and cultural background of your family?
14. What is the educational status of children with disability in your school?
15. Do you find any change in people's behaviour towards persons with disability? How do they see schooling of girls with disability?
16. Do you have any idea about human rights and rights to education and about child right?
17. What is your further plan and aspirations after completion of your studies?
18. Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

*Thank you and I feel honoured and privileged for this interview.*

## Appendix H

List of questions: For hearing impaired key participants only

### Part I

*Please write in detail as far as possible.*

---

- a) Please write in detail about your educational history.
- b) What do you mean by education?
- c) Explain: physical environment of your school [Classroom arrangements, School compound, Facilities: toilets, drinking water, playground, library, laboratory, sports materials and other support systems etc.]
- d) Explain: academic environment of your school [Teaching pedagogy and instructional materials, Suitability of curriculum, Subjects: likes/dislikes, important/unimportant, useful/un-useful etc., Classroom activities: magnitude of participation, group work, individual work, Teachers' support in the classroom activities: Paying Individual attention, Homework check and feedback etc.]

### Part II

- e) Explain: social environment of your school [School culture: rules and regulations, sharing, caring, cooperation, support/negative attitudes among staff, teachers, students etc., Head-teacher's inter-personal skills, Teachers' interpersonal skills, Teachers' positive/negative behaviour towards: non-disabled ones, boys and SEN girls, Interaction with students with disability and without disability]
- f) How do you define your Rights: [Human rights, child rights and rights of persons with disability]
- g) How do you define disability? [meaning, kind, degree]
- h) How do you define socio-economic status and cultural background of your family?
- i) Mention about the educational status of you and other SEN girl.

### Part III

- j) What strategies you apply in coping the constraints: [enrolling in the school, attending the school, taking part in school activities: classroom and

extra/co-curricular activities, gaining essential things at home, doing homework and participating household chores etc.]?

- k) How do you perceive yourself [overcoming on shyness, inferior feeling, self confidence, enthusiasm, encouragement etc.] ?
- l) How do your parents and other community members perceive you and other SEN girl?
- m) What types of support you get from family and community [help, cooperation from parents, relatives and community]?
- n) Is there any change in people's behaviour [behaviour towards children with disability and perception regarding education/schooling of girls with disability]?
- o) Is there anything you would like to say in closing?

**Appendix: I***Observation form*

---

School:

Municipality/VDC:

- a) School environment – physical, academic, and social environment etc.
- b) Classroom arrangement – classroom settings
- c) Interaction:
  - Between teacher and students, especially girls with disability
  - Interaction among peers
  - Peers behaviour towards girls with disability
- d) Participation of girls with disability:
  - In the classroom
  - Co-curricular
  - Extra-curricular activities etc.

Descriptive note:

Reflective note:

Thematic note:

## Appendix J

### Participants' accounts

Participants with *visual impairment* from Amrit Higher Secondary School

(All the names of schools and participants are pseudonyms)

#### Girls

1. \*Samita Khanal (15) – studying in class VIII, stays at school hostel, father and mother both are literate & farming is main occupation, among three children, she is the 2<sup>nd</sup> child, only a disabled member in the family, permanent resident of rural, Bhaktapur.
2. Radha Shrestha (20) – studying in class X, day-scholar (school is in walking distance, only ten minutes to reach), both parents are literate, farming is main occupation, youngest among two siblings, permanent resident of municipal area of Bhaktapur.
3. \*Suma Chapagain (19) – SLC appeared, stays at school hostel, both the parents are literate & farming is main occupation, youngest among three siblings, permanent resident of rural market, Dhading.
4. Srina Nepali (14) with low vision – studying in class I, stays at school hostel; parents are illiterate and labourers, third child among five siblings, permanent resident of rural, Bhaktapur.

#### Boys

5. Sun Thapa Magar (15) with low vision – studying in class VI, stays at school hostel, parents died, but youngest among four siblings, permanent resident of rural Ramechhap.
6. Ajeet Tamang, (17) with low vision: can't see in the bright daylight & at night – studying in class VIII, stays at school hostel, both parents are illiterate and farmers, 2<sup>nd</sup> child among three siblings, elder sister is also deaf, permanent resident of rural Ramechhap.

#### Others

1. Vibha Chitrakar: Principal
2. Purnima Shrestha: Resource teacher
3. Chandra Shrestha: Radha's (vision Impaired girl) Mother
4. Ananda Bhattarai: Subject-teacher

Participants with *physical impairment* from Swarna Secondary Bording School

Girls

1. \*Shubha Bati (20) both lower limbs are non-functional and also not control in toileting, needs to sue diapers – studying in class VII, stays at Children Home (15 minutes walking distance), both parents are illiterate and farmers, 3<sup>rd</sup> child among four siblings, youngest brother is also speechless, permanent resident of rural Bhaktapur.
2. \*Dina Nepal (15) left leg is affected – studying in class VI, stays at Children Home (15 minutes walking distance), both parents are literate and farmers, 1<sup>st</sup> child among six siblings, permanent resident of rural Bhojpur.
3. Paru Pyakurel (10) right leg affected – studying in class IV, stays at Children Home (15 minutes walking distance), both parents are 10+2 graduates, Father runs shop and mother works as physiotherapist, 1<sup>st</sup> child among two siblings, permanent resident of rural Kavre.
4. \*Roshana Lama (12) – studying in class II, stays at Children Home, Born with a lump on her back, was unable to move her right leg, her father is a micro-bus driver & mother serves as a helper at the same Children Home where she lives, the parents migrated for the treatment & education of children from rural Kavre to urban Bhaktapur.
5. Jaya Pariyar (10) – studying in class III, stays at Children Home (15 minutes walking distance), both parents are literate, father is a tailor and mother is a farmer, 2<sup>nd</sup> child among two siblings, permanent resident of rural Sindhupalchowk, parents live at urban Bhaktapur temporarily.

Boys

1. Narendra Bhattarai (16) no right upper limb – studying in class VII, stays at Children Home (15 minutes walking distance), father passed away, mother is illiterate, 3<sup>rd</sup> child among six siblings, permanent resident of Bhatgaon, Pokhara – 7, Dadheldhura.

Others

1. Achal Praajapati: Head-teacher
2. Subject teacher
3. Sundar Shrestha: Gardian – Children Home (physical impairment)
4. Hira Maya Tamang: Roshana's (physical impaired girl) Mother



Participants with *visual impairment* from Samata Higher Secondary School

Girls

1. \*Aparna Kafle (16) with low vision – studying in class IX, stays at school hostel (within school compound), both parents are literate, father is pensioner (Indian Army), mother is farmer, youngest among 9 siblings (all girls among them three others are also low vision), permanent resident of rural Gulmi.
2. Racchu Parajuli (13) – studying in class VII, stays at school hostel (within school compound), both parents are literate, father is security guard and mother is a helper in a private organisation, permanent resident of urban Hetauda, Makawanpur.
3. Sara Bolakhe, Jaisi (14) – studying in class VI, stays at school hostel (within school compound), father is an army man, and mother is a farmer, both are literate, 2<sup>nd</sup> child among five siblings, permanent resident of rural Panauti, Kavre.
4. \*Asma Sunuwar (16) – studying in class XI, stays at school hostel (within school compound), father is literate whereas mother is illiterate, both are farmers, 4<sup>th</sup> child among eight siblings, permanent resident of rural Panauti, Kavre.

Boys

5. Prayas B.K. (18) – studying in class VIII, stays at school hostel (within school compound), both parents are illiterate and farmers, 2<sup>nd</sup> child among two siblings, rural Kavre.
6. Subas Rai (19) –studying in class X, stays at school hostel (within school compound), father is literate and works as contractor in building construction, mother is illiterate and a farmer, 1<sup>st</sup> child among four siblings, permanent resident of rural Solukhumbu.

Others

1. Dev Koju: Principal
2. Sama Ranjit: Subject Teacher
3. Punam Shrestha: Resource teacher
4. Sabi Kafle: Guardian (sister) – Aparna's
5. Rama Parajuli: Rachhu's (vision impaired girl) Mother

Participants with *physical impairment* from Satkarma higher Secondary School

1. \*Dilu Ale, Magar (17) – studying in class X, a day-scholar student, 1<sup>st</sup> child among two daughter, both the parents are literate, father is SLC graduate and runs a grocery shop and mother is a social-worker, permanent resident of Ghartichhap, kavre, migrated to Banepa for the education of children.

Participants with *hearing impairment* from Kalpabrikshya Secondary School

Girls

1. Kaushalya Acharya (17) – studying in class X, She comes to school both on foot and by bus and it takes an hour to reach. Her father is literate, a mason and her mother is illiterate and is a farmer. She is eldest daughter among two siblings, permanent resident of Khawa, Kavre, temporarily stays at her maternal uncle's home in Banepa.
2. \*Saru Mahat (18) –studying in class X, She comes to school by bus. It takes an hour to reach school, her father is literate and mother is illiterate, both are farmers, she is 1<sup>st</sup> child among four siblings, permanent resident of Patikharka – 12, Kavre.
3. \*Rama Kibachhen (18) – studying in class VIII, She comes to school partly by bus and partly on foot. It takes her an hour to reach school, her father is high school graduate and is a service holder, her mother is literate and a farmer, and she is the 2<sup>nd</sup> child among two siblings, permanent resident of Katunje, Bhaktapur.
4. Mina Rajchal (18) – studying in class VIII, she comes to school partly by bus and partly on foot. It takes one and a half hour to reach school, her father is high school graduate and is a bus driver, her mother is literate and a housewife, she is the 1<sup>st</sup> child among two siblings, and permanent resident of Byasi, Bhaktapur.
5. Suna Shrestha (18) – studying in class VIII, she comes to school by local bus, and it takes one and a half hour to reach school, her father is illiterate and a farmer, her mother is a housewife. She is the 1<sup>st</sup> child among three siblings, permanent resident of Madhyapur Thimi, Bhaktapur.
6. \*Sitamaya Tamang (16) – studying in class VI, she comes to school partly by bus and partly on foot. It takes her one and a half hours to reach school, her

father is literate and he is a meson, her mother is illiterate and she is a farmer, she is the 1<sup>st</sup> child among four siblings, permanent resident of Patlekhet, Dhadagaon, Kavre.

7. Sabu Koirala (15) – studying in class VI, she comes to school by local transport, it takes an hour to reach the school, her father is a farmer, her mother is a housewife, she is the eldest child among four siblings, permanent resident of rural Kavre.
8. \*Shresha Shrestha (17) – Studying in class VII, comes to school from her home (20 minutes walking distance), her father is a policeman and mother is a teacher in a boarding school, permanent resident of Banepa.

#### Boys

1. Chandan Manadhar (21) – studying in class X, he comes to school on foot and takes 20 to reach school, his father is a farmer, his mother is a housewife and also helps in agriculture, he is the 3<sup>rd</sup> child among seven siblings, He is permanent resident of Banepa – 8, Kavre.
2. Udaya Adhikari (18) – Studying in class VIII, he comes to school by local bus and it takes 1hour, his father is literate farmer but his mother is no more, he is the youngest among four siblings, he is permanent resident of Badalgaon, Kavre.

#### Others

1. Priya Nakarmi: Principal
2. Devi Manandhar: Resource teacher
3. Binu Shrestha: Shrasa's (Hearing impaired girl) Mother
4. Lali Shrestha: Neha's (hearing impaired girl) Mother

Note: \*conducted in-depth interviews with these respondents.

## Appendix K

### Phenomenological Analysis

#### Steps suggested by Moustakas

During analysis, I employed Moustakas's (1994) steps in the following way:

- a. All relevant statements were recorded and each non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements were listed from the verbatim transcripts;
- b. The meaning units were related and clustered into themes;
- c. The meaning units and themes were synthesised into a description of the textures of the experiences using verbatim examples;
- d. A structural description was constructed; and
- e. A textual-structural description of the meanings and essences of the participants' were constructed.

The analysis procedure:

#### *Analysis of individual transcripts of SEN girls*

All the transcripts of the key participants were analysed manually using a phenomenological framework as mentioned above. The whole transcript was read, and then each relevant phrases containing meaning (meaning unit – MU) was written down. Then the meaning contained within each MU was explicated as a formulated meaning (FM). Then, similar meanings were grouped together in clusters and labelled with the themes of the cluster. There followed a process that included reflection on the data, experimenting with alternative explanations to test meaning, and frequently returning to the transcripts in order to verify that all the derived meanings were actually contained in the verbatim account given by the participant. As a result some clusters and themes were changed. For each transcript two prose accounts, textural and structural, were written. The themes were used to dictate the topics that should be

included. The textural account described what happened that is texture of the experience and included verbatim quotations. The structural account described the underlying meaning of the texture.

*Analysis of combined transcripts of SEN girls*

The clusters and themes gained from all the participants were then combined. This entailed considerable re-arrangement of clusters and themes. Extra duplicates of formulated units (FMs) were discarded. Textural and structural accounts were then written for the participants as a whole using the process described above. As new meanings emerged these were verified by checking the verbatim accounts in the transcripts. Finally these two accounts were synthesized into a composite textural-structural account, where every statement was supported by a passage in each of the transcripts. Some verbatim quotations from individual transcripts were included in order to enhance the vividness of the account. This synthesis is the 'essence' of the experience of participants for this study.

*Phenomenological reduction.* Achieving the state of what Husserl (1977) calls *epoche* where the phenomenon is available, free of the tacit lenses that encumber daily life, is an admirable challenge and one worthy of significant effort and consideration. Here, a researcher attempts to put in abeyance presuppositions and prejudices she may carry with her into the field.

*Horizons.* Horizons intend the continuous, new, and fresh perspectives of a phenomenon with each successive perception. There are unlimited potential horizons of the moment that approaches saturation through the act of writing the description of the phenomenon. Each fresh perspective yields greater depth and fullness of the experience, providing the textural material from which the description is created.

*Textural Description.* In writing the individual textural description, the researcher returns to the horizontal statements “in a state of openness and freedom, [which] facilitates clear seeing, makes possible identity, and encourages the looking again and again that leads to deeper layers of meaning” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). Here, the researcher knits together the various thematic horizons into a description that represents the integration of the participant’s experience and the conscious experience of the researcher.

*Composite Textural Description.* The last step in the phenomenological reduction is the creation of the composite textural description. This represents the constituents across all participants reflect the central and most thematic elements contained in the experience under investigation.

*Imaginative Variation.* Once the individual and composite textural descriptions have been completed, the researcher engages in imaginative variation as a means of arriving at “the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98). Here, the researcher varies the possible meanings of the statements of the experience through the use of imagination and free association. Reliance on intuition and open receptivity to whatever may show up on the scene is at the heart of this practice.

*Structural Description.* The next step in imaginative variation is the recursive process of identifying the invariant structures from the participants’ transcripts. This step returns us to the data in a way that completes the circle of inquiry and contributes to the development of a structural description of the phenomenon for each participant. This description emerges from an understanding and appreciation of the identified structural themes of the experience, the bedrock on which the textural elements rest.

The question we seek to answer in this step is, “How did the experience of the phenomenon come to be what it is” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 98)?

*Composite Structural Description.* Once structural descriptions have been written for all participants, a composite is written, similar to that created for the textural descriptions. The individual structural descriptions are woven into a composite structural description that represents the timeless themes that inhere in the experience of these participants. The themes, united in the composite, represent the core, most fundamental and essential structures shared by the participants and that have explanatory power for what has been experienced. When this step is complete, the researcher will have two final composite statements. One is the composite textural description and the other is the composite structural description.

*Synthesis.* The final step in the process involves creating an integrated description of the experiences, meanings, and essences by combining the composite textural and composite structural descriptions. It should reflect the experience of all of the participants and can be viewed as the foundational expression of what is timeless in the experience under investigation. In this effort, the researcher cycles back and forth between the two composite descriptions, finding the common threads that are woven into the final document. This step integrates the real, felt, concrete experience with what has become the high, airy, and abstract interpretation and aids in anchoring the final description. (Adopted from Conklin, T.A. (2007).

## Appendix L

### A SAMPLE

#### A PARTICIPANT'S TEXTUAL AND STRUCTURAL ACCOUNT

##### *Shubha's (Name changed) (20) individual textual description*

Shubha (20) is a girl with physical impairment due to severe sickness and both lower limbs are non-functional, so she uses wheel-chair. She is an inhabitant of a village, in a district of Kathmandu Valley, where her parents and two elder brothers and a younger brother (speechless) and their siblings live however she lives at Heaven Children Home and studies in a private boarding school nearby.

As she was the only daughter, was admitted to a school nearby. She joined to Shree Bardayini School and studied from class 2-6. While studying in class 6 she started getting headaches and also felt giddy. Her parents took this easy and her mother just made her rest giving her some medicines. After a while, she started getting severe headaches and fever also. Her parents, being illiterate, took this to be a simple case and took her to a "Baidya" (Aurvedic Practitioner) for treatment and she stopped going to school. However, still she did not become well and her brother took her to a nearby medical shop and got her examined. She was given medicine for typhoid there. However, even after this, her headaches became more severe and she felt giddy also. Eventually, one day, she fainted and when she got back her consciousness her legs started pain and legs were numb and her vision was also so poor that she could not recognize people nearby. When she said that the disease was getting more serious they took her to a "Jhankri" (Witch doctor). However her condition did not change. Finally she was admitted to Bhaktapur Hospital. Over there she was given injections and saline and they suggested taking her to another hospital. Then one day she could not move her entire body and the next day her urine was also



blocked. She was admitted to Patan Hospital where she fainted again. She got conscious only after 8 days and she felt a little better but her hands were numb. After physiotherapy she was able to move her hands. She returned home after three months. Her brothers wanted to admit her to my old school. However, even friends, from her previous school, living nearby would not talk to her. So she thought if they don't even talk to her here then what will they do at school. She wept bitterly and said that she would not go to school. She did not even want to live. Furthermore, at home, she started getting sores on her legs and she was admitted to Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children (HRDC) for treatment. She spent 70 days over there. When she returned home her sister-in-law taught her how to knit caps and socks so that she can keep herself busy. However, staying at home made her very depressed. Then, her mother thought of keeping her in some organisation for disabled and told her brother to inquire about such organisation. Her brother got in contact with Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) and he brought Director and a Dutch Volunteer to their home. They talked to her and then called her to Heaven Children Home (HCH). She saw many children like her over there and felt very happy. She had stopped her studies but seeing them studying, she also wanted to study again because she felt that they would love her. Then the head-teacher admitted her to class five at Swarg School and she felt that she would be able to do something by the good treatment of sir, madam, sisters and friends.

She viewed that education is very important in a person's life. If we are educated our brains can work even though our body is weak. Education is valuable. In this age we can do nothing without education. If she gets educated she could do computer work in an office even though she would not be able to do physical work like others. Thus education is very important for her. She was very happy after

coming to this school. She had no time to think about her disability. Now she is determined to do something after completing her education. She was always worried about her weakness before and thought that her life is useless. Now she is encouraged to study and live. She wants to gain knowledge and learn new things and reach her goal and fulfil her parents dream. Her parents would like her to be self-standing and be a teacher.

The physical environment of the school is good but as she uses wheel-chair two of the Aaya didis (helpers) have to carry her. Her classroom was down stairs in the first year so both her and her wheel-chair had to be carried to the classroom. Her classroom has been shifted upstairs since two years so now she can take her wheel-chair to her class directly. It is difficult to take the wheel-chair around to computer laboratory; library etc. but the helpers help her. They also help her to go to the toilet. She participates in extra-curricular activities like poem writing and recitation, and quiz contests organised by the school. She lives in HCH so she desired to tell something about the Home. There are 5 staff members (including 1 cook, 2 help in cleaning and washing, which ever we could not do ourselves, 2 teachers teach in our day-care section) and 2 physiotherapists are serving us. A teacher comes to help in our home work and provide remedial classes from 4:30 – 6:30 pm everyday. She was very happy here because she gets all the facilities in a homely environment. However, there is no ramp and this makes it little difficult for us.

She has no sad experience in this school. It is easy to appear examination. She understands most of the lessons taught by the teachers. They repeat if they ask them. If she stays quiet the teachers come up to her to ask if there is any problem. She finds Nepali easy to read and understand but all the other subjects are difficult. She consults the teachers and they help her in these subjects. In science the teacher teaches in class

with demonstration so she has no problem to do practical. She is the oldest in the class so she hesitates to ask the teacher when she does not understand. However, the teachers know this so they come to her table and help her. All her friends love her and help her in class if she has to go somewhere they help her with my wheel-chair. She had never imagined to come to school and study like this in life but she has been encouraged here. When she is absent also the teachers tell her about the lessons the next day. She was sick for one month and could not go to school but there was exam immediately. However, sir arranged to sit for exam at home and this was very practical for her. She appeared in the exam and passed also. All the sirs and madams also came to see her. They are not only her teachers but also fulfil her guardian's role. Her friends staying with her at Home as well as other friends help her a lot when she was homesick. Sometimes the teachers encourage her while other friends joke and make the atmosphere lively. She wants to be a nurse.

When she had problem during period (menstruation) her brothers even also told her remain neat and clean and her sisters-in-laws are also very considerate and take care of her at home. She also helps in various household chores. Anything that she can't do herself she seeks help from others. The biggest problem is her toileting sense, which is weak so she uses diaper. She can urinate only after pressing her belle. She has solved this problem herself by fixed routine.

Generally people think of not having some organs not functioning is disability. Now if the person is also not literate then that is a bigger disability. Sometimes she has to do something once but she cannot do it and this creates a problem. There is good cooperation in her family. When she was sick her parents had to take a heavy loan but her brother and sister-in-laws were ready to pay. Even though her grandma scolds her brother and in-laws, they do not mind and they are providing all her

necessities. During festivals they buy new clothes for her. Thus she was satisfied with her family status. She is weaker than Narendra and Dina who are good in studies. It is better now. People are starting to understand. When they are taken for outing before some people would laugh at them and they would feel bad. However, some are ready to help them also and this makes them happy. Some pretend to be ignorant. However when educated people also laugh at them, they feel that they are pretending to be ignorant. But when uneducated people come to help them, they feel that they are changing more than the educated. Changes have come through various media like T.V., radio, newspapers etc. There is a positive change and she prays for even more changes. It will be easy for them if more people understand about disability. So she knows something about disabled person's rights, child rights and human rights etc.

*Shubha's individual structural description*

The descriptive structure of Shubha's experience spells about overall academic and non-academic environment of her school and Home where she got inspiration to study and live. She was born normal but she acquired disability because of severe illness. During her treatment the family cared as far as possible they could which showed caring parenting towards a girl child. However, after returning from hospital, staying at home doing nothing she felt helpless and vulnerable and became depressed even though her in-laws helped her by teaching knitting to make her engaged and also her parents tried their best for her schooling. Eventually, she got chance to get admitted at HCH and Swarg School.

Though the school infrastructure is not disability friendly Shubha found the school environment is conducive because the school authority has hired helpers to assist her in need and for other students with disability. Shubha found her peers and teachers, all are very helpful and she actively participates in classroom activities as

well as extra-curricular activities. After joining HCH and coming to this school the desire to live and study aroused to her. Now she finds her as other normal students because she is able to do her most of the daily living. So she wants to study hard and become a teacher and wants fulfil her parents' wish because they want to see her self-standing.

## Appendix M

### Models of Disability: Disability discourses

Models	Key features	When and who pioneered or named	Why?	Remark, e.g. what are the gaps?
Religious or moral	Associated with Sin, a punishment from God and shame, based in religious belief socially constructed excluded and discriminated	Historically oldest, David Pfeiffer (1998); Tregaskis (2002), Barnes & Mercer (2001)	Feeling of guilt, particularly burdensome, Objects of charity, pity and passive recipients of welfare, and dependent	PWDs unwelcomed and stigmatised, individual tragedy
Medical or Pathognomic or Psycho-medical	Seen as personal tragedy, biological determinism individual	Liz Crow, Tom Shakespeare, and Mike Oliver (1996), Clark, Dyson, Milward & Skidmore (1995)	Some deficit in PWDs, needs fixing either by therapy, medicine, and surgery or special treatment	needs medication special care inter-linked with religious model
Social	a strategy of barrier removal, education to remove prejudice, with the goal of inclusion	Developed in the 1970s by activists in the UPIAS, Vic Finkelstein (1980, 1981), Colin Barnes (1991, 2002, and 2007), Mike Oliver (1990, 1996).	PWDs are oppressed social group: needs identification of political strategy for disabling barrier removal and correcting them	Environment is disabling and can be adapted, impairment need not be as disabling
Cultural or bio- psychosocial	Focuses on: transform societal perception and behaviour towards PWDs and their right-based participation in the societal affairs	Devlieger, Rusch and Pfeiffer (2003), Patrick J. Devlieger (2005)	Each dimension of disablement needs to be addressed: both PWDs needs and the social and physical environment	a synthesis of the medical and social approaches to disablement

## Appendix N

### International Disability Context: Policy and Provision

Internationals scenario			
Timeline	Major events	Key decisions/ provisions.....	remark
1948	UN, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26	Recognition of undeniable equal rights of all to appropriate education	
1966	UN, the International Covenants	Civil and Political Rights Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	
1975	UN Declaration of Rights to Persons with disabilities	Promoting the political and civil rights of persons with disabilities	
1979	UN, Declaration of Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women	To abolish all form of discrimination against women	
1982	UN Declaration of World Programme of Action,	To promote effective measures for the full participation of PWDs in social life and development and of equality	1983-92 as the UN Decade of Disabled Persons
1989	UN Convention of Child Rights, Article 6 Article 28	Right to life survival, optimal development Right to education for the style of schooling with dignity	
1990	UNESCO, World Conference on Education for All, Jomtien Thailand	A global movement, aiming to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015	Goal 1: Universal access to learning  Goal 2: A focus on equity
1993	UN Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for PWDs	To ensure that PWDs can exercise the same rights and obligations as others without obstacle	22 rules
1994	UN Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action	World Conference on Special Educational Needs: Access and Quality, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all	Inclusive education

2000	UNESCO, The Dakar Framework for Action, EFA: Meeting our Collective Commitments  Millennium Development Goals	Free, compulsory and quality education for all by 2015, eliminating gender disparities in school level  Commitment through eight distinct quantifiable and time-bound targets to readdress the world's poverty and improve the lives of the people	Goal 2: Provide free and compulsory primary education for all Goal 5: Achieve gender parity by 2005, gender equality by 2015 Goal 6: Improve the quality of education  Goal 2: Achieving Universal Primary Education Goal 3: promote Gender, Equality and Empower Women
2006	Convention on PWDs rights	PWDs are capable of enjoying rights & make decisions	
Regional policy context			
1997	Dhaka Declaration	Recognised that handicap and disability are developmental issues	
1993-2002	UNESCAP, Decade of Disabled People	Explicitly incorporates the MGDs and their relevant targets to ensure that concerns relating to PWDs	Full participation and equality of PWDs
2003-2012	Extension of UNESCAP, Decade of Disabled People	Biwako Millennium Framework for Action	Towards inclusive, barrier-free and right-based society for PWDs in Asia Pacific



## Appendix O

### National Disability Context: Policies and Provisions

National policy context			
Timeline/Date	Major policies/ programmes	Key contents or provisions	remark if any
1964		Establishment of school for blind	Formal school Laboratory school of Faculty of Education, TU.
1966		Establishment of School for deaf	Balmandir (Orphanage) Section - Separate
1968		Establishment of National Disabled and Blind Association (NDBA)	Recognition of PWDs association nationally
1971	Education Act	Provides special educational needs (SEN) for children with visual, hearing, intellectual or mental disabilities	
1973	NESP	Establishment of Special Education Council (SEC)	
1977	Under social protection	Establishment of SSNCC To suggest the government in formulating necessary policies and programmes	regarding PWDs facilities, treatment and concession etc.
1982	The Disabled Persons' Act	Right to equality, Provision for health and medical treatment, Training and employment etc. Establishment of special school for children with mental retardation	Defining disability as per ICIDH-WHO's definition and five categorisations, concessions in public services, provision for health, medical treatment, arrangement of education and training facilities

1992	Child Right Protection Act Social Welfare Act	Under provision of UN CRC (1989) Establishment of Social Welfare Council	To address the issues raised in CRC (1989)
1993		National Special Education Programme under BPEP	
1996	Disability Service National Policy	Intended to provide equal opportunities in all spheres of society by empowering PWDs	
1997-2002 (Ninth Five-year Plan) 1999	Local Self-government Act	Authorised VDCs and WCs to help protect disabled and vulnerable people	Identification of PWD, ID Card distribution
2000	Education Act National Coordination Committee on Disability under the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare	Developed special rules for PWDs in education Special provision for disabled	
2002-2007 (Tenth Five-year Plan) 2004		Special provision for disabled	CBR programmes with special and inclusive schools, scholarships
2006	The National Education Policy and Action Plan on Disability	Presents the situation of PWDs in Nepal and identifies legal basis for them Promote Inclusive Education	educational material, production and distribution, teacher training and integration of PWDs
2007/10-2010/13	Three-year Interim Plan	Disability-friendly programmes	