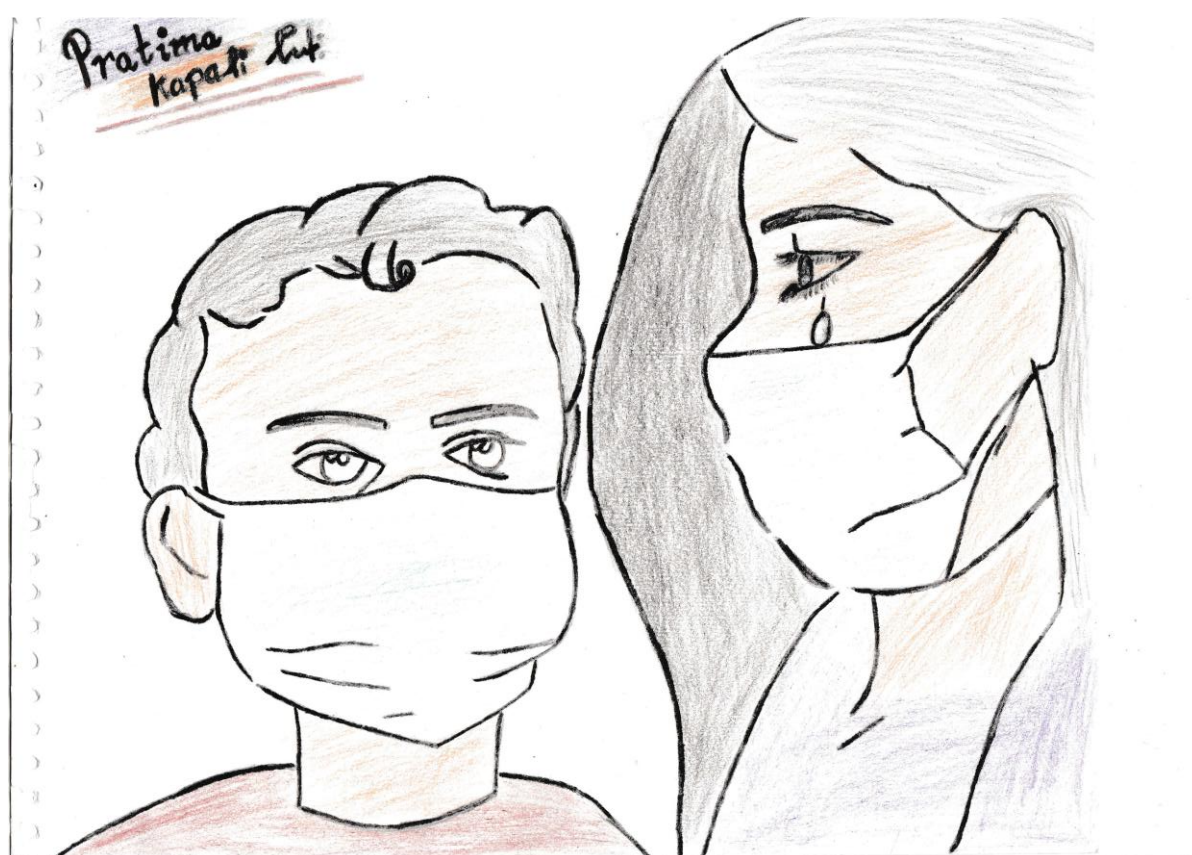


COVID-19 AND SCHOOL EDUCATION IN NEPAL

Research Report

2021



Loo Niva Child Concern Group
And
University of Oxford, UK



This research was conducted by Loo Niva Child Concerned Group, Nepal in collaboration with the University of Oxford. UK

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SECTION I INTRODUCTION

It has been one year since the global COVID-19 pandemic hit the world. Schools in Nepal were closed as soon as the country went into a nationwide lockdown from 24 March 2020 till around January 2021. As Nepal is looking towards second lockdown, with the Government announcing school closures at least for one month starting mid-April 2021, the disruption is likely to continue for an extended period of time and pose challenge to teaching-learning in Nepal. The school closure, while were important to contain the spread of COVID-19 infection, also caused unprecedented levels of disruption to education. During the closure, many schools across the country experimented with remote and online learning, with teachers adopting Zoom classes, door-to-door visits, and television and radio classes. In addition, the education system has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning whereby teaching and learning is undertaken remotely and on digital platforms However, the uneven distribution of the internet connectivity, lack of teaching supervision, many parents losing their livelihood due to the pandemic, and limited learning environment at home continued to affect student learning.

This research was collaboratively conducted by Loo Niva Child Concerned Centre and University of Oxford to understand the impact of the COVID19 in school education. The school-going children in the Khokana area, around Loo Niva's head office, were the target population of the study. This locality was chosen so that research could be conducted through Loo Niva Child Concerned Centre's ongoing work in the locality. The two data collection method i) letters by the children and ii) online survey both were chosen keeping in mind the school closures and the social distancing rules. The research tried to get the experience of children during the school closure, through the letters, and understand the changes after the re-opening of schools, through the survey. Through both these data collection method, the research aimed to understand the everyday lives of children and their educational experiences during the pandemic. The research team worked closely with the student participants to understand their feelings, problems, and perspectives on school education during the pandemic. We wanted to understand what activities were students engaging in for education and what were their challenges. What were the difficulties they were facing? We particularly tried to understand if and how their lives were different that before the pandemic, as well as the new experiences that they might have?

Research Objectives

The main objective of the project is to understand the impact of COVID 19 in school education.

- To understand students' experiences of school education during and after the school closure.
- To assess their problems and difficulties, and ways in which they coped with these challenges.
- To understand their perspectives on educational policies, and their suggestions on how it could be improved.
- To develop an evidence base for the further advocacy and research work.

Research Design

This research project combined qualitative and quantitative research methodology to gain a more nuanced understanding of the situation. The qualitative data was collected through the letters written by the children and quantitative data was collected through an online survey. Data from both techniques have been analysed and presented comparatively throughout this report.

i) Research activity 1: 'Letters from the Pandemic'

Loo Niva invited 30 school-going children from grade 8 to grade 11 in this research. The participants were selected in consultation with the head teachers of the secondary schools and the child club members of Khokana. The team contacted potential participants through schools and/or child clubs. We asked the student participants to write about their education-related experiences and challenges during the COVID19 lockdown. The team explained the children that we are trying to understand what the children did every-day for their studies, both for their school and at home. In their letters, we asked them to pay particular attention to activities that were different during the lockdown. We also asked them to write about their difficulties and new experiences that they might be having. Each student participant wrote about their lives and education in different ways. Some also drew the pictures and wrote poems as well. Each student submitted around 2 letters per week on Monday and Wednesday. The on-site Loo Niva coordinator collected the letters regularly.

Letters written: 7 Sept 2020 – 14 Nov 2020

Total of 427 entries

Grade level: Grade 8 – 10, Grade 9 – 8, Grade 10 – 10, SEE – 9 students

Total participants: 34 (Female: 19, Male: 15)

Type of school: Private school: 22, Government school: 12

ii) Research activity 2: Survey

Loo Niva also conducted a short survey from 10 March – 10 April 2021. Using the Google Form, we collected responses from a total to 427 students in Grade 6-12, though it was open to other groups as well. The research team tried to cover all school-going children in Khokana as far as possible, working together with student leaders, child club members, or other interested groups. The information about the survey was shared through face-to-face communication, Facebook, Messenger, Email, Viber, Loo Niva website, NGO network etc. Loo Niva team members also publicized information about the survey during other Loo Niva programme as well. In the survey, we asked a series of questions regarding students' education experiences and challenges during the COVID19 lockdown. We also asked questions on their suggestions for the school, local government, and parents. The data generated from the google forms was compiled to generate quantitative analysis.

Survey conducted: 10 March – 10 April 2021

Total students who participated in the survey: 426

Grade level: Grade1: 1, Grade5 – 1, Grade6 – 36, Grade7 – 72, Grade 8 -169, Grade 9- 35, Grade10 – 90, Grade11 – 17, Grade12 – 5

Type of school: Private school: 15 (3.5%), Government school: 411 (96.5%)

Ethics

The research followed ethical guideline to ensure that the research respects the dignity, rights and welfare of all participants. The team prepared a short, comprehensive summary of the project using clear, simple language in the information sheet. All the children were explained about the research process, before they agreed to participate in the research. No explicit or implicit pressure was placed on potential respondents to participate in the project. All the young people participating in this study was explained clearly that they can withdraw from the research at any time, and without consequences. No name, address or any other personal information were collected. Every entry was anonymised and numbered for identification. These letters were scanned and uploaded into online drive that was only accessible to the research team. The children and their guardians also signed a consent sheet for the 'Letters from the Pandemic' research. All letter is kept strictly confidential. Only a number was be used to identify the participant. The children were also informed that the research report will be written up as part of this work, and that they answers will be used as direct quotes in the publication. The research was approved by the University of Oxford's Ethics committee, with the ethics approval no:

Research Site

The research was conducted in Khokana, a typical Newar village of Lalitpur Metropolitan City. Khokana is a ward of Lalitpur Metropolitan City, a dense medieval Newari settlement is situated on the south-west part of Lalitpur district almost on the south-west edge of Kathmandu Valley. It is situated at about 6 km from the city area. Total land occupied by the ward is 2.72 square kilometres whereas the ancient settlement covers only about 0.20 square kilometres. The rest is covered by very beautiful setting of agricultural fields with terraced paddy fields in the north and plain mustard seed fields in the south. The altitude of the VDC is 1320 to 1358 meter from mean sea level.

Historically, Khokana was situated on one of the major trade routes of Kathmandu Valley to the Southern economic centers through Bagmati gorge. As the history flew, the importance of this major economic center of medieval time lost its significance through the advent of modern means of transport and technology. At present, Khokana seems a very old ancient settlement lacking modern services and without future promises. If some conservation or planning is not introduced immediately, the traditional look of Khokana will disappear with the introduction of new structures being built randomly and will become a mere village. However, after the establishment of UNESCO Kathmandu Office, the settlement is being proposed as a World Heritage Site and this proposal is raising hopes

Research Learnings: *Best practices*

Here are some lists of best practices of the research in below:

1. Keep participants informed

Research staffs stayed in touch with all children and keep participants informed about the effects of and risk of coronavirus. This kind of communication likely to help protect against dropout or reassuring participants, even during the pandemic. All the participants are orientated on the second phase survey and in all the survey questions.

2. Plan, process and decision making

Time schedule and research questions were given to the participants in this research. This helped to not only helped in the timely collection of data but also in ensuring open communication with the participants. It also to provide guidance the participants and collect the information as per need.

Consultation meetings and regular visit with participants also helped to clear out the confusion and made decision during research.

3. Documentation

The research allowed to write the feelings of children in the method that they feel easy; essay, poem, drawing, story. There were no any standard templates and mandatory. So, it helped the participants to write freely. After collecting the writings from children, research staffs compiled them in electronic form. On other side, the regular communication within the research team also provided the immediate suggestions for proper documentation and reporting.

Research Challenges

Most of the students were busy in online classes and also with their household work during lockdown. So, they had limited time for extra activities. 5 students left from the research due to their work load. More than half percentage children felt hesitation and uncomfortable to write their feelings and about their condition, as they hadn't done this kind of writing previously. Most of the children couldn't share even their feelings and condition in writing form. Due to the lockdown, the research team also faced the challenge of collecting the writings with the children. In such circumstances, the team used Facebook messenger to stay in touch with children. Internet problem and low quality of picture in face book messenger created the problem in the collection of quality documents.

In the second phase survey, it's difficult to reach the target number due to the busy schedule of the students since the regular classes had started. The team also faced problems in filling up the online form because of the limited computer and internet access in school. Most of the students couldn't join in this survey even they have an interest. The survey team had to visit the school many times to meet with students and asked for form fill up through the internet. Many times, the team had to facilitate the survey questions as well.

Limitations of research

The research had certain limitations that affecting the quality of the research findings:

- The research took place only at Khokana, Lalitpur. This impacts negatively on the geographical representation of the research.
- We couldn't achieve the gender and caste balanced in selecting children researchers. There were 82.5% children from Newar community and only 17.5% are from other community. There were 45% male children researchers compared with female researchers 55%. So, it effects on the field reality.
- Almost of the selected researchers were new in the field of research. The research was their first experience in their life. So, this impacted on the depth and rigorousness in their work.
- There was a limited computer devices and internet access in school and knowledge on how to fill up the online form.
- The research has only few days to fill up the forms but targeted more than 400 plus students.
- The survey used only the online form fill up to understand the children's views but there may other many ways to collect their views.

SECTION II

ACCESS TO DEVICE as ACCESS TO EDUCATION

One of the key shifts in education after the COVID-19 lockdown has been the prominence of alternate education provisions. With school closures, the Government of Nepal released Emergency Action Plan for School Education 2020, Student Learning Facilitation Guideline 2020 and Framework for School Operation, 2020. Through these new policies, the government instituted digital and distance learning provisions. The classes were conducted online using Google Meet, Zoom, and other meeting platforms. Remote learning was also encouraged through television, mobile phones, and radio. This has drastically changed the meaning of access to education. *Access to education* now means not just physical access to school and teaching facilities, but also *access to technical devices* such as mobile, laptop, radio, or television. Worldwide, two-thirds of young people aged under 25 do not have access to internet at home. The students with better internet facilities, at school and/or at home, were able to conduct online classes, whereas those without access were left behind. Even for those who had access to devices and internet, the sudden switch in the mode of education was a difficult shift to adjust.

The issue of differential access to education has been clearly acknowledged in the Student Learning Facilitation Guideline 2020. The guideline suggests that the concerned local governments planned on identifying students from their school's current enrolment records, and from the previous enrolment records for those who are not enrolled at present. Based on their status of access to technology, the students were classified as having:

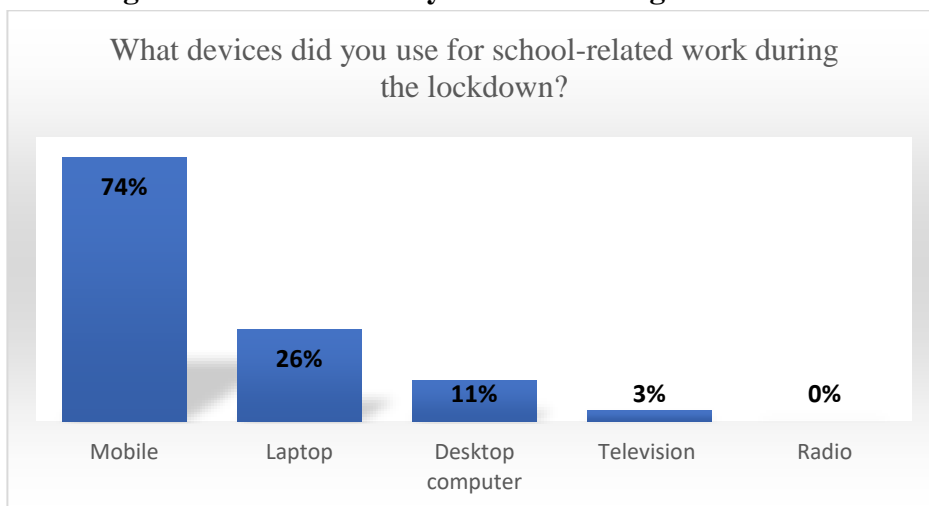
- no access to technological tools and devices
- access to radio, FM
- access to television
- access to computers but no online connectivity
- access to internet and all kinds of information communication technology

As seen in this categorization, the meaning of access to education has dramatically changed after the COVID-19 lockdown. Our research shows that school education and educational experiences of students have been shaped by their access to devices, and the difficulties in maintaining reliable connection has been one of the important challenges faced by the students. In most cases, students continued to learn to some extent through remote education from schools or other organisations and with the help of parents. However, the respondents found difficulty in maintain motivation to learn. Our study shows that the use of internet, which began suddenly after the school closures, continued even after the school reopened in Jan 2021. This new wave of online and digital learning, also has opened up new possibilities of the online platform of learning. The schools, local government, and parents must acknowledge this shift in the school education and find ways to incorporate it in enhancing student learning.

Device use during the lockdown

The letters written by the children, between September – November 2020 i.e., during the first lockdown shows that the children overwhelmingly relied on the mobile phone for their school lessons. 74 percent of children mentioned that they used mobile phone, mainly because of its portability and ease of use. They could also use the data plan to access classes, in the cases where they did not have access to internet at home. The students also kept in touch with the teachers and friends through text-messaging and using Messenger app. Only 23 per cent of the student used laptop and only 10 per cent used desktop computer. Television was used only by 3 percent of the student respondents (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Devices used by students during the lockdown



Most families have also made a sudden change in their use of technology during the lockdown. With the sudden shift to online learning, 40 percent reported that they go new devices – mobile, laptop, or computer. 43 per cent reported that they got a new internet connection, and 9 per cent have got a new data plan (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: New technology

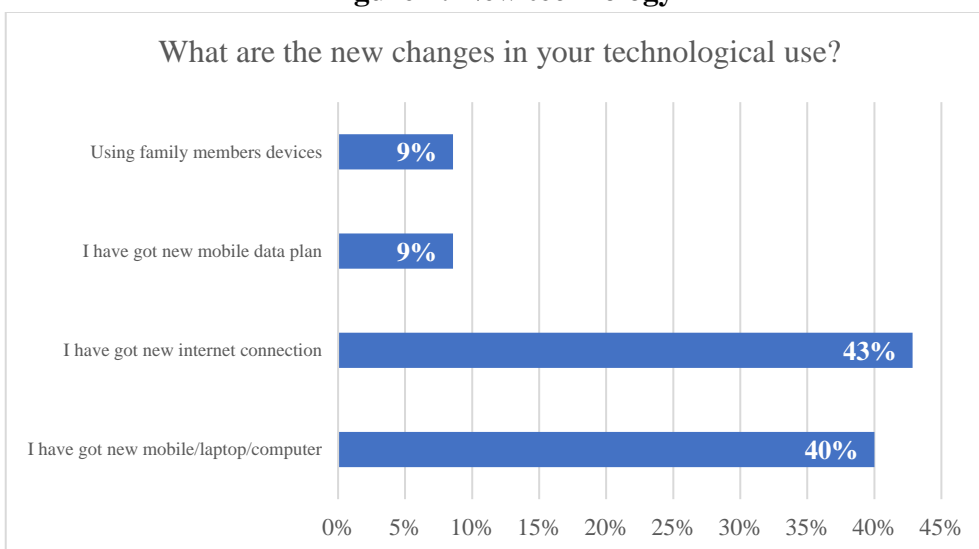
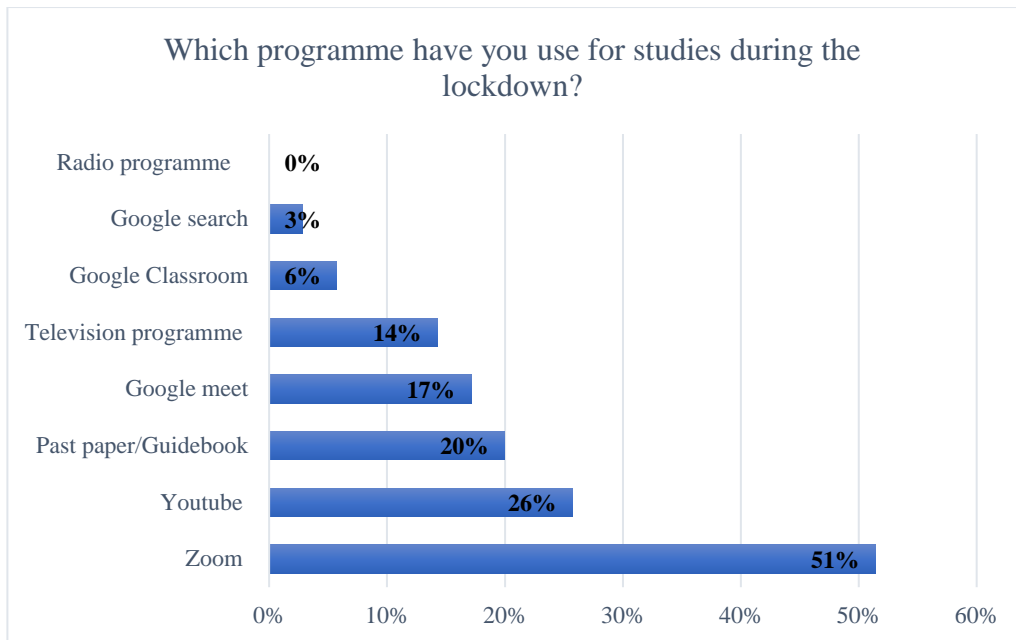


Figure 3: Popular programme

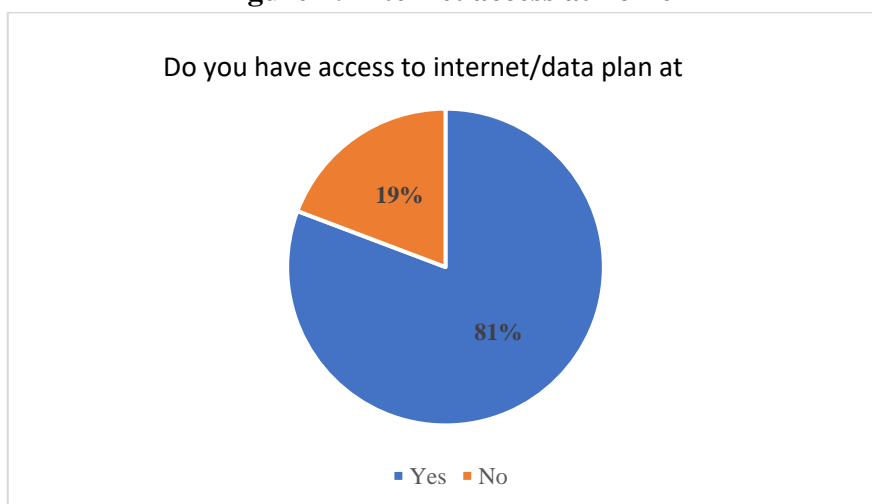


The students had been using a range of programmes to continue their studies during the lockdown. The most popular programme was Zoom, with 51 per cent student using it. Google meet (17%), Google classroom (6%) and Google search (3%) were also found to be used by the students. Radio programme was not used by any respondents at all (See Figure 3).

Access to technology

While there might have been a dramatic increase in the use of technology by the students, this has also increased inequality in education in many ways. The survey of 427 children in Khokana district of Lalitpur district shows that 19 per cent students did not have any access to internet at home (See Figure 4). These children relied either on the internet facility outside the house. Even through Khokana is within the capital district of Nepal, it clearly confirms the uneven distribution of connectivity in student population. The reliance on technology has increased inequalities in education in many different ways

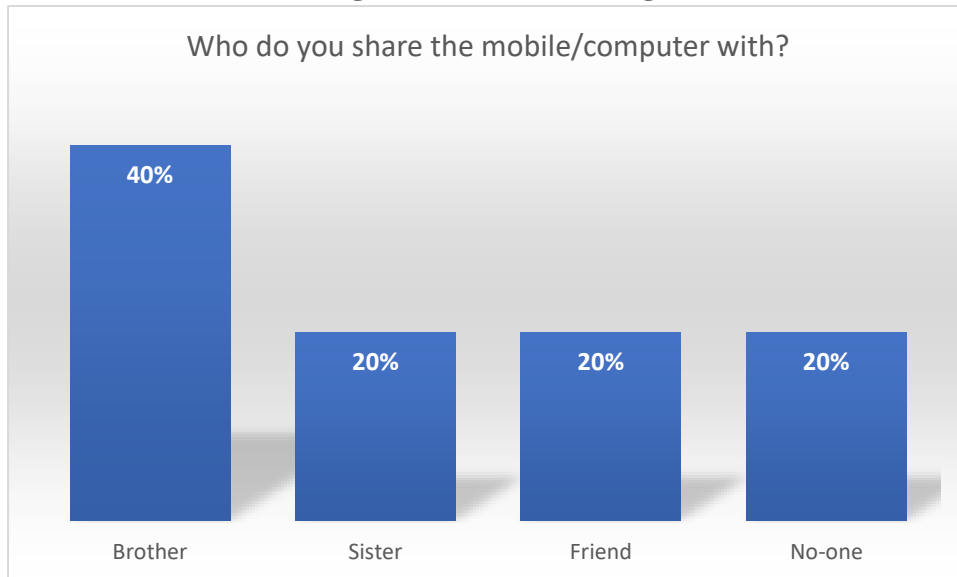
Figure 4: Internet access at home



Participation in online classes was not feasible to all the students. One of the students mentioned that ‘They continuously teaching us that time through online class but I cannot join some classes because

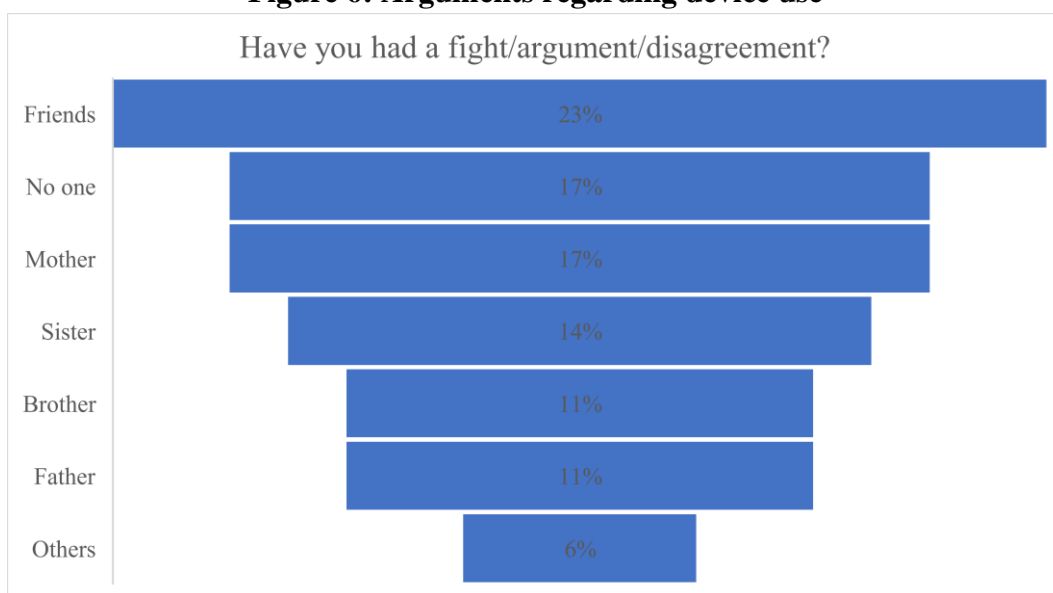
of poor net'. Many students have to share the internet facilities. When the students were asked if they shared their devices, 80 per cent confirmed that they shared either with brother (40%), sister (20%), or friend (20%). This confirms the previous findings that the access is not adequate even if the students have some access to the devices.

Figure 5: Device sharing



The student also confirmed that they have been having arguments with their family members and friends, as they were sharing their devices. 23 per cent of the respondents confirmed that they had arguments with friends. Others had arguments with mother (17%), sisters (14%), brother (11%) and father (11%). The arguments were mainly were related to the use of devices and general arrangements at home regarding the internet use (See Figure 6).

Figure 6: Arguments regarding device use



Internet use after the lockdown

While the use of internet increased rapidly during the school closure, our study shows that the students continued to use the internet and devices even after the lockdown was over. In the survey conducted in March 2021, the 82.7 per cent students reported that they continue to use internet/devices (See Figure 7). The students continued to use the devices for at least 3 hrs on average everyday (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Use of internet after the school reopened

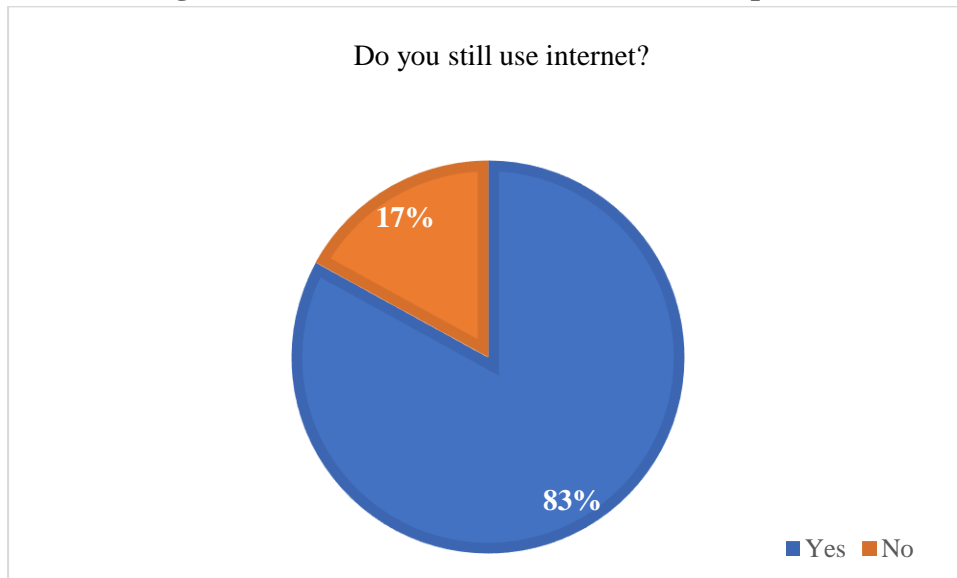


Figure 8: No of hours on internet/devices

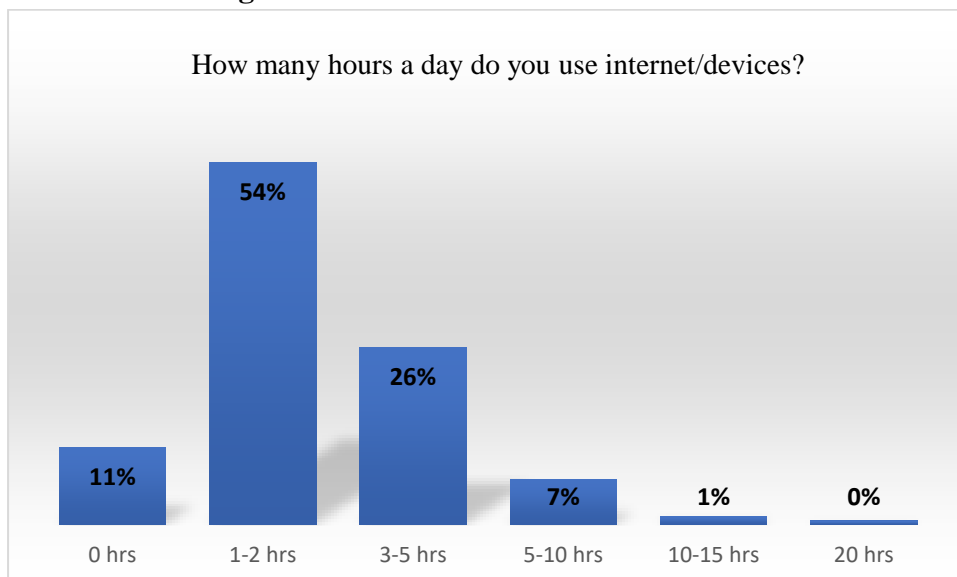
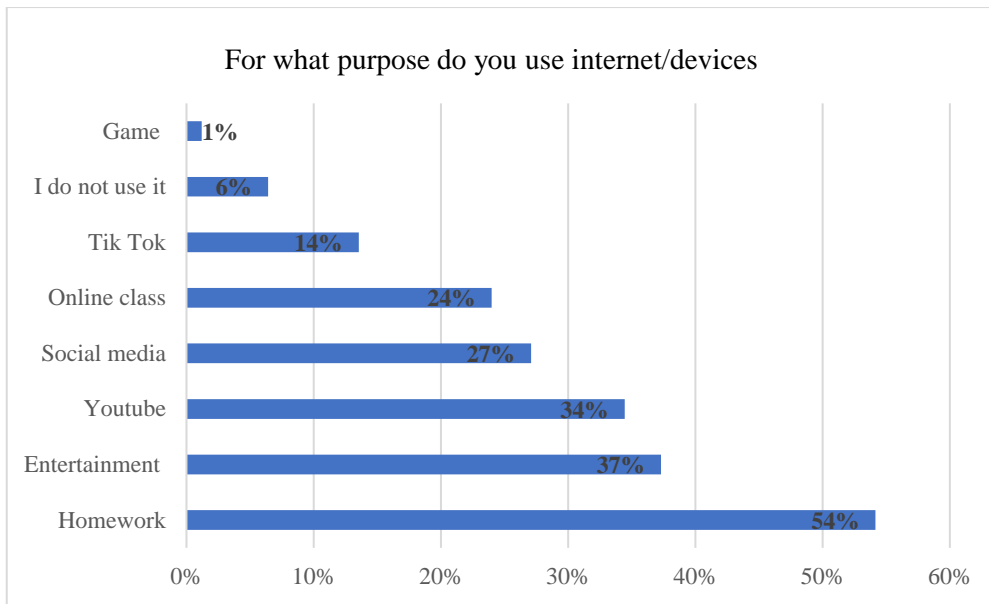
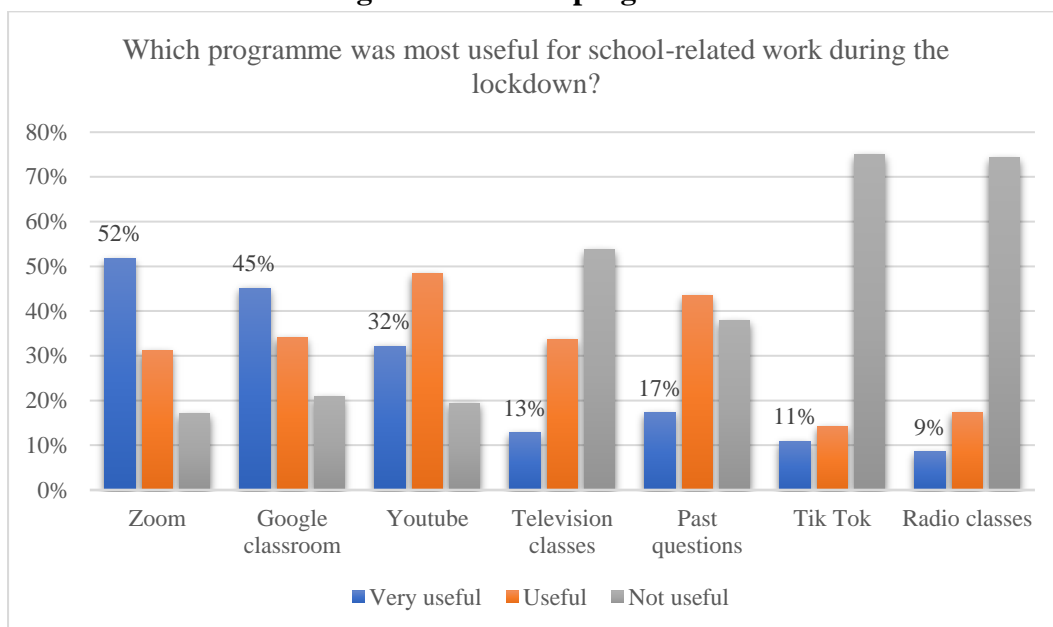


Figure 9: Purpose of internet/device use



There were a range of purpose for which the students used the internet/devices. While 54 per cent of the students used the it for homework and 24 per cent used it for online class, the devices were being use also for entertainment (37%), YouTube (34%), social media (27%), TikTok (14%) and gaming (1%) (See Figure 10). This continuation of internet use amongst the students, even after the school reopened, shows the new opportunities that have opened for teaching and learning. With the online platform becoming more popular with the students, these platforms need to be productively utilised for enhancing learning outcomes.

Figure 10: Useful programmes



The survey data shows that the students found Zoom app (52%), Google classroom (45%), and YouTube (32%) to be very useful. The students found Tik Tok (11%) and Radio classes (9%) as least useful for the purpose of school education.

SECTION III

CHANGING NATURE OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

COVID 19 pandemic has dramatically changed the nature of school education. This study shows that there is has been an incredible loss of in-person teaching time. With the unviability of face-to-face teaching in the classrooms, the school education cannot function under tradition model of teaching-learning anymore. During the lockdown, the school education was severely affected due to the closure of classes in school premises. All the students that participated in this study confirmed that their physical movement were severely restricted and the school education stopped completely for several weeks. With a few weeks, however, many schools started remote education, mainly online education, as discussed in the previous section. Students are engaged in more in self-study; there have been reduced examinations; and the frequency of teachers marking classwork/homework has reduced. This points towards the need for overhaul in the education practice with an acknowledgement that of reduction in teacher-student contact time and adjustment in school calendar.

The schools and the local governments need to acknowledge this shift in the nature of school education and make appropriate policy choices. Given that most of the school education is taking place outside the school, we need an education system that is more flexible, self-paced, and the one that encourages self-study. These could be facilitated through digital platform, door-to-door teaching, or through student assignments. These flexible learning models would capitalise on the time that the students at home and on their own as a learning opportunity. So instead of using the digital platform and limited face-to-face time as a way to transmit curriculum in a shallow way, the nature of school education needs rethinking. These self-learning mechanisms is also likely to be more inclusive and incorporate lower-income households, learners with disabilities, and students without adequate access to devices.

School education during the lockdown

Unlike the common perception that after the school closure, the students are spending very little time on school-related work, our study shows that students continued to spend an average of 5 hrs every day (see Figure 11). While the time spent after the lockdown is slightly less compared to time spent during the lockdown, the students still spent a considerable amount of time in school-related work.

Figure 11: Time spent on school-related work

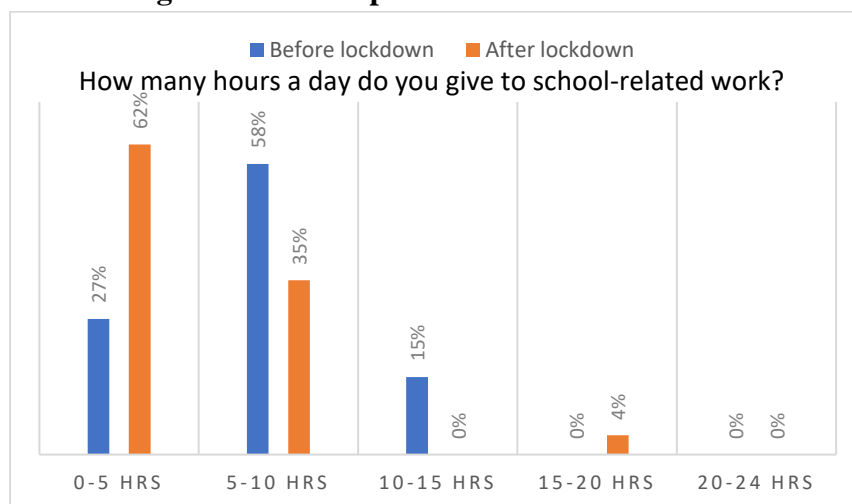
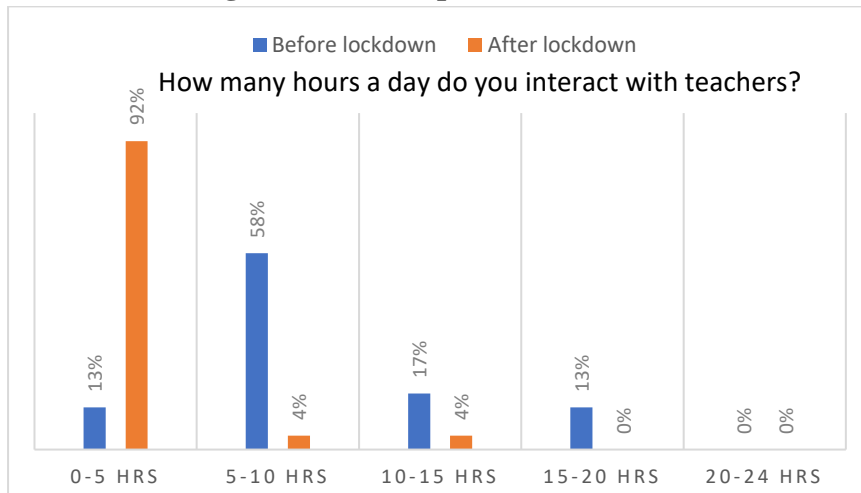


Figure 12: Time spent with teachers



Student respondents had mixed reaction about the schooling experience during the lockdown. 55 per cent of the respondents seemed to like their schooling experience while 45 per cent did not like it (See Figure 13). This shows a huge opportunity for capitalising on student interest to learn even during the lockdown.

Figure 13: School during the lockdown

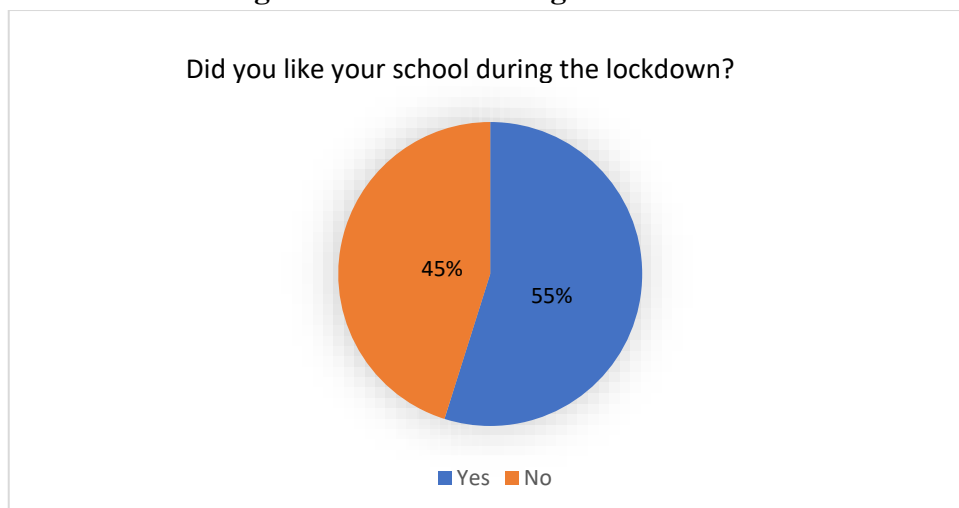
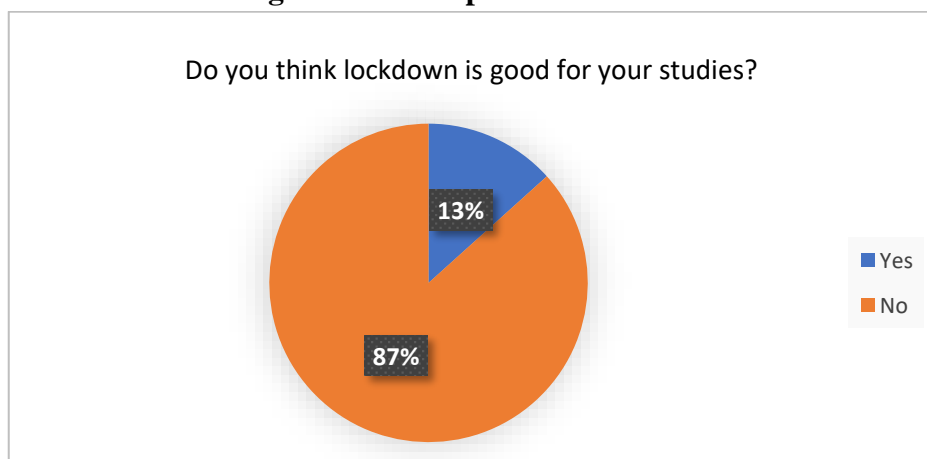


Figure 14: Perception of lockdown



School education after the lockdown

The schools in Nepal gradually re-opened after the January 2021, and the regular classes resumed. In our survey, we asked the student respondents about their experiences. 63 per cent of our respondents mentioned that they found the school better compared to lockdown. However, 12 percent found it to be worse and 25 per cent found it to be similar.

Figure 15: School after the lockdown

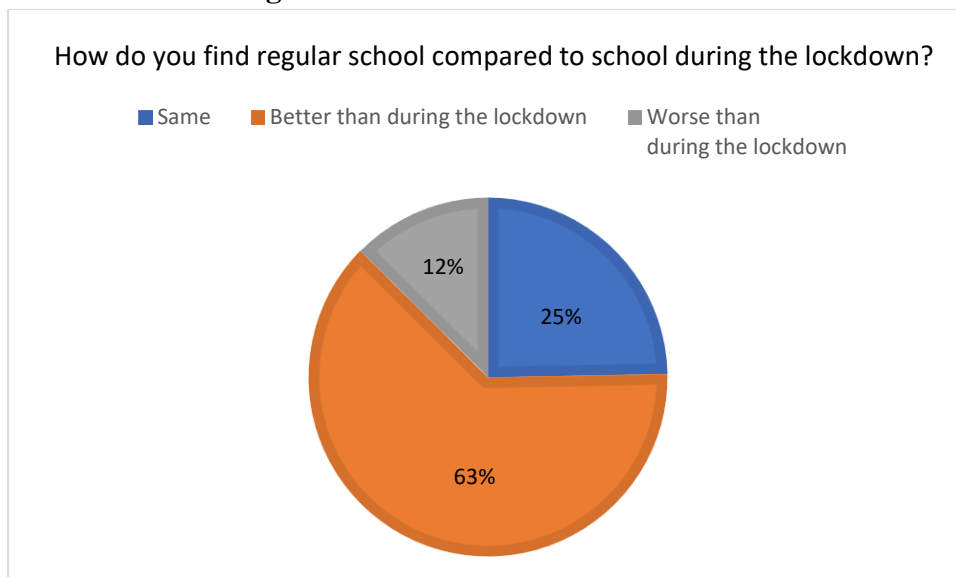
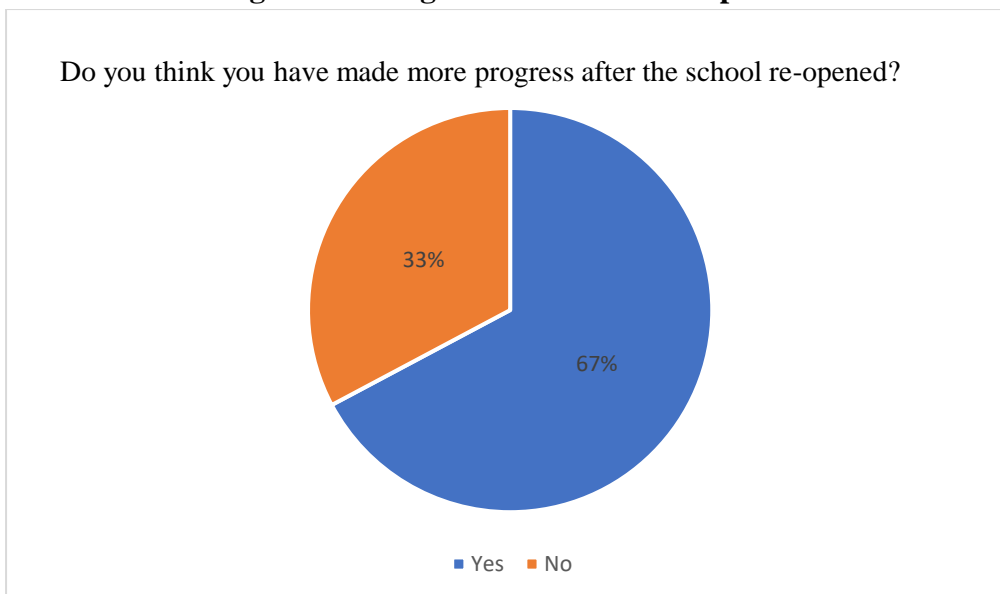
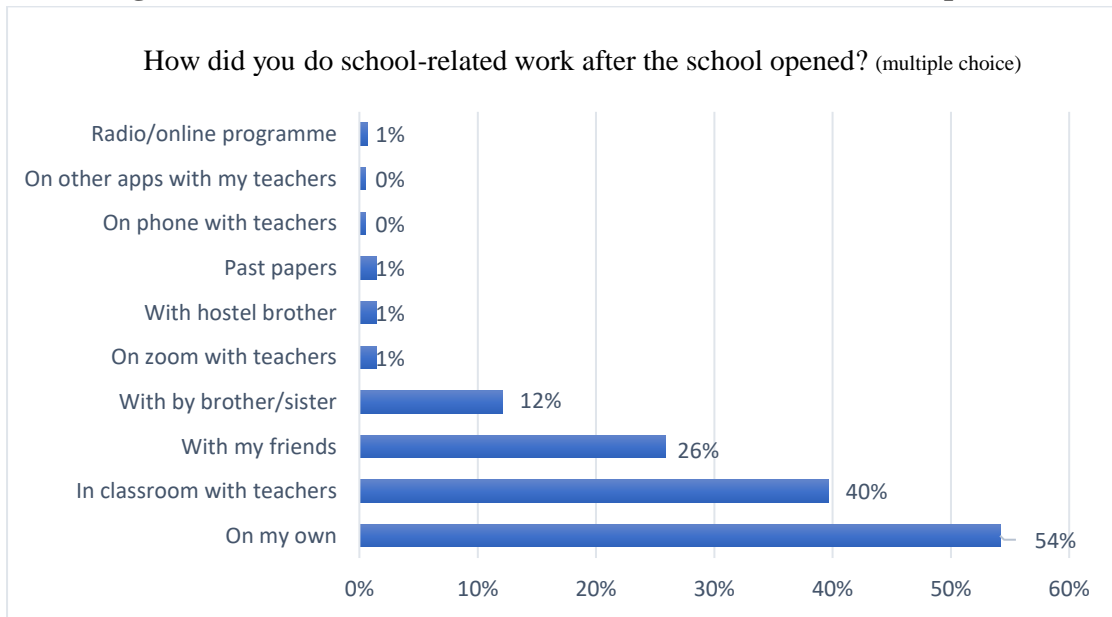


Figure 16: Progress after school re-opened



Similarly, only 67 per cent students felt that they made progress after the school re-opened (See Figure 16). Once the school re-opened, students had been attending classes physically in school with teachers (40%), with friends (26%), and with brothers/sisters (12%). 54 per cent of the students mentioned that they had been doing their school-related work on their own. This reiterates the importance of self-learning (See Figure 17).

Figure 17: Nature of school-related work after the school re-opened



SECTION IV NEW DIFFICULTIES OF LEARNING

The disruption in school education caused by the pandemic has been most visible in the students' learning outcomes. Many countries across the world have reported an overall loss in the learning. enrolled in school even in the most optimistic scenario is expected to be substantial. The World Bank called these losses a '[learning poverty](#)', which have been exacerbated by COVID19 crisis. This kind of learning loss is even more prominent in the children and young people from income-poor families, who have fewer educational opportunities beyond school. Our study shows that there was a substantial level of difficulty faced by the students during and after the lockdown. These difficulties are likely to increase the learning losses that the students are already facing, and are likely to further amplify and accelerate social inequality in learning opportunities. COVID19 has exacerbated the formidable challenge that was already facing education systems, and have increased the student dropout rates.

Difficulties during the lockdown

Our study shows that 51 per cent of students mentioned that they faced problems at least 1-2 times a day. 43 per cent of students mentioned that they faced problems at least 5-10 times a day (Fig 18). On an average, students mentioned they faced school-related difficulties at least five times a day, with Science, Maths, and Nepali being the most difficult subjects (Fig 19)

Figure 18: Problems faced during the lockdown

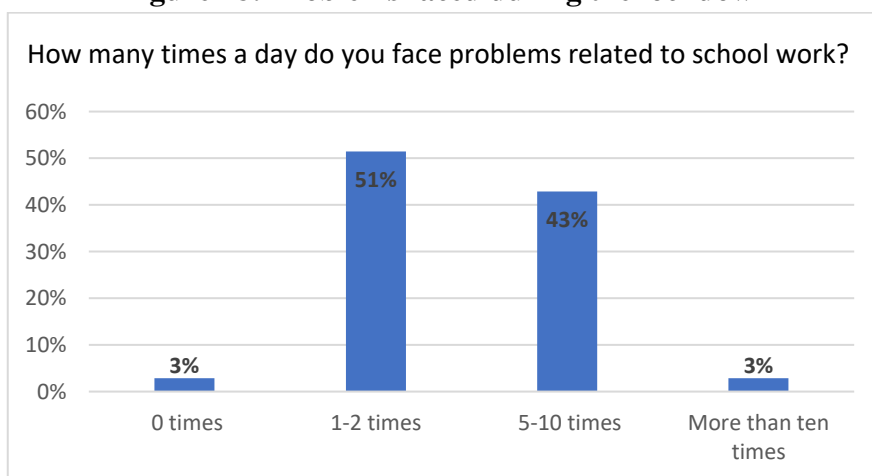
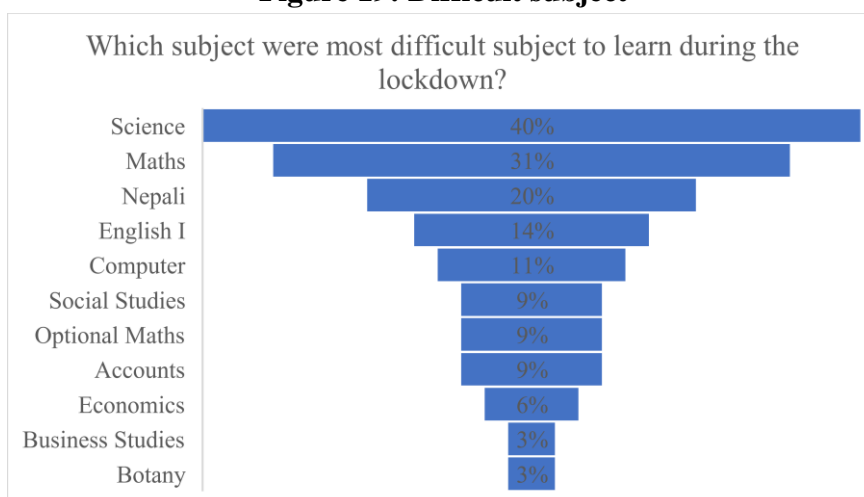
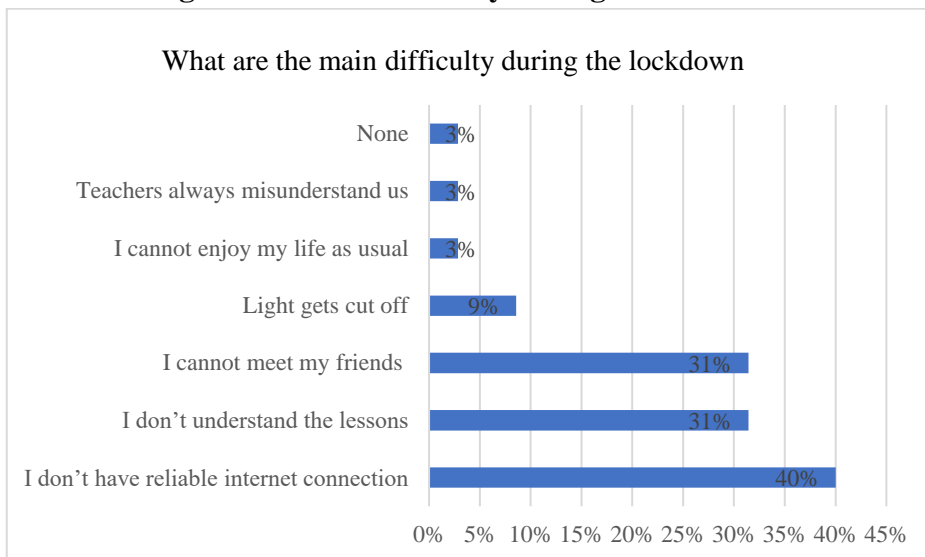


Figure 19: Difficult subject



The main difficulties that students were facing mainly related to internet issues. 40 per cent students mentioned that not having reliable internet connection as the main problem. Many also mentioned not understanding the lesson (31%), not being able to meet friends (31%) and unreliable electricity (9%).

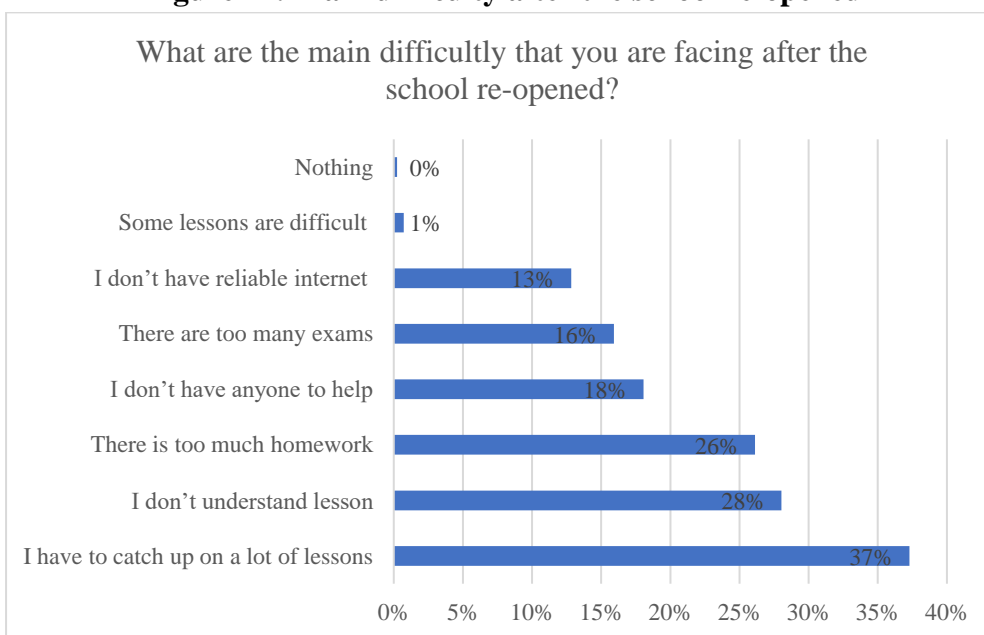
Figure 20: Main difficulty during the lockdown



Difficulties after school re-opened

The difficulties continued to a large extent after the school re-opened. However, the nature of problem changed: students mainly felt that they had a lot to catch up on lessons (37%). They also felt that they did not understand the lesson (28%), too much homework (26%), too many exams (16%), and that some lessons are difficult. However, the problem of unreliable internet (13%) continued even after the school re-opened.

Figure 21: Main difficulty after the school re-opened



Exams during and after the lockdown

One of the main interruptions that the students faced was the discontinuation of exams, and the consequent worry that they have regarding their progress in schooling. While all the schools of Khokana run online classes to mitigate the impact on learning, there were no effective mechanisms for assessment. All sorts of external assessments (including board exams such as the secondary education examination) were postponed and almost all the internal assessments were cancelled. While the student Internal assessments are very important as they indicate student's learning needs and then support learning. This uncertainty creates anxiety in students as they are unable to understand about the progression in the grade/class they studied for a whole year. The lack of exams has Similarly, many students plan to go abroad for studies, which now hangs in the balance as by the time they take final exams and get their certificates, it might be too late for them to apply for the coming academic year in other countries.

Figure 22: Exams during lockdown

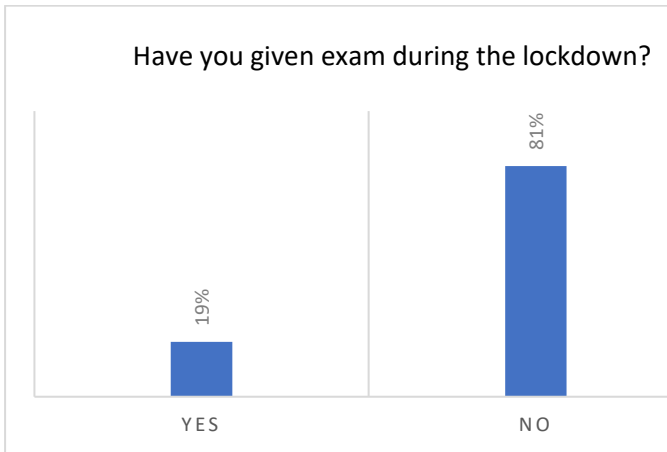


Figure 23: Exams after school re-opened

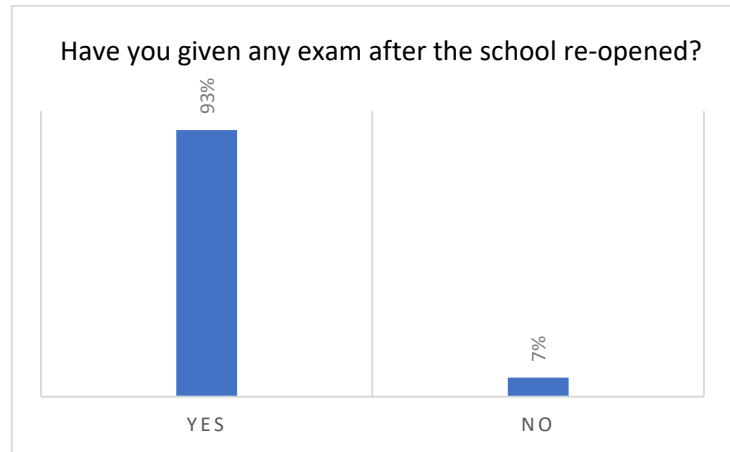
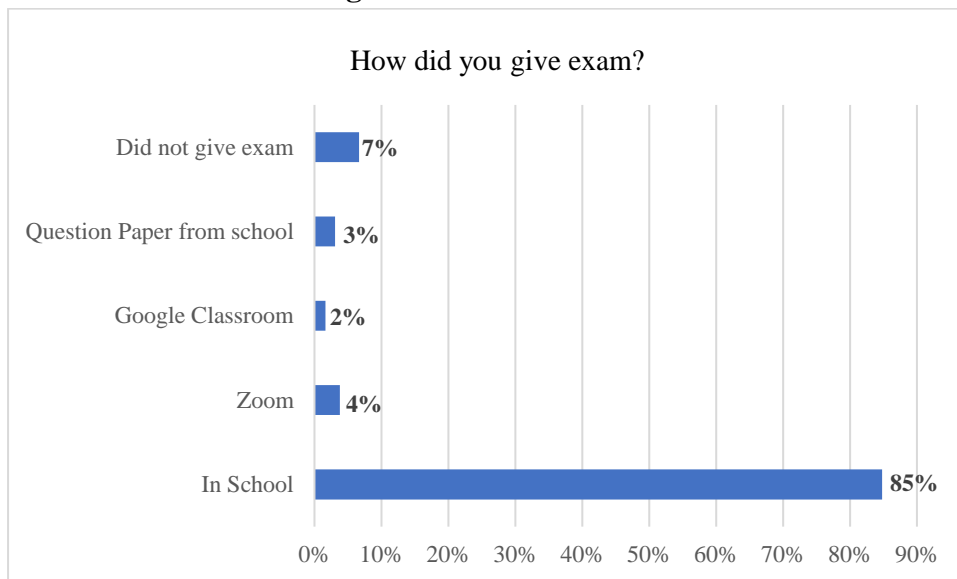


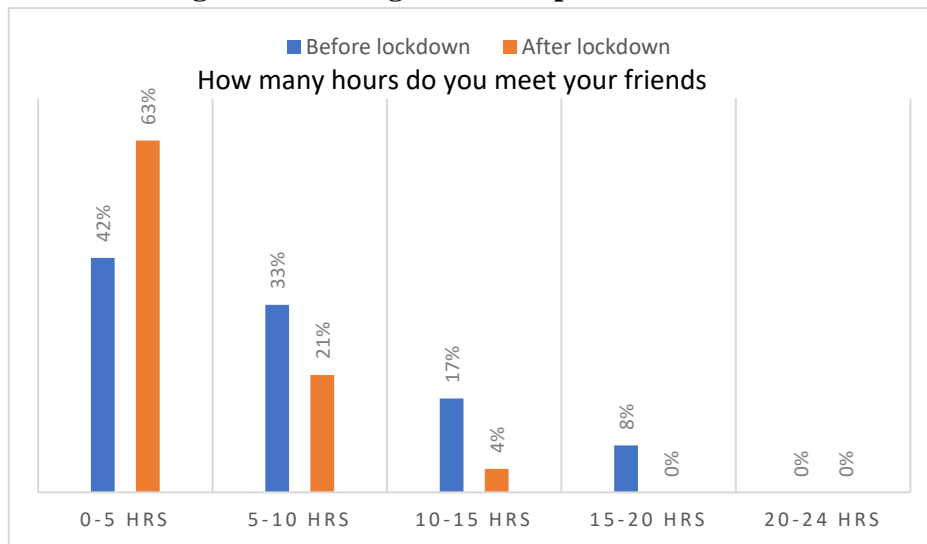
Figure 24: Mode of exam



Social and emotional side of learning

Friendships are an important part of educational experience for students. School is also a site for social interaction, an essential element of learning process for children. Due to the physical closure of the schools, one of the major changes that has affected the students is their time with friends. Compared to the time before the lockdown, student spent at least 5 hours less with their friends. And the time they were spending were mainly in online classes or on phone. Not being able to spend time with friends were reported as one of the main issues by the students.

Figure 25: Changes in time spent with friends



School dropout

Many student participants also reported that their friends had dropped out of the school. On an average, each student reported that xxx students from their class had dropped out of school during the pandemic. Many studies around the world have shown that the drop-out rates tend to increase as an effect of school closures. Once the student's dropout, they do not usually join the school again. This situation is especially true for student who already come from disadvantaged background. 78 percent of the students, therefore, expressed that they would like lockdown to end immediately.

Figure 25: Dropout after the lockdown

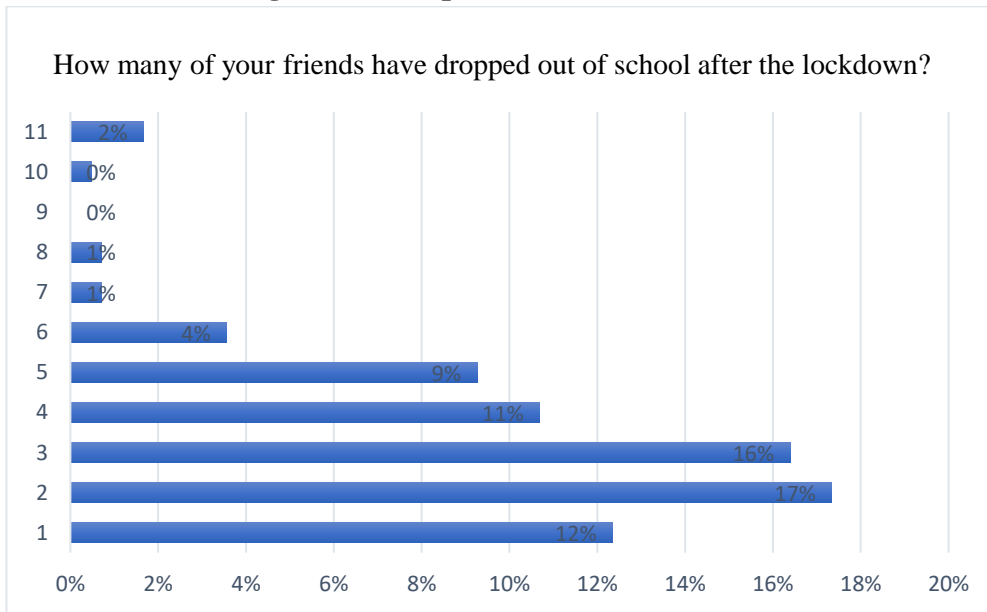
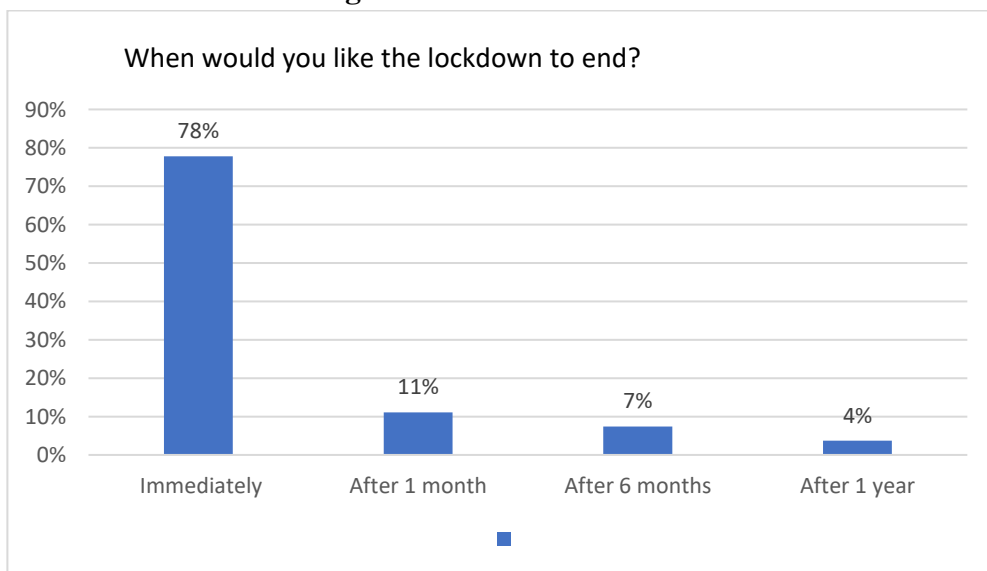


Figure 26: end of lockdown



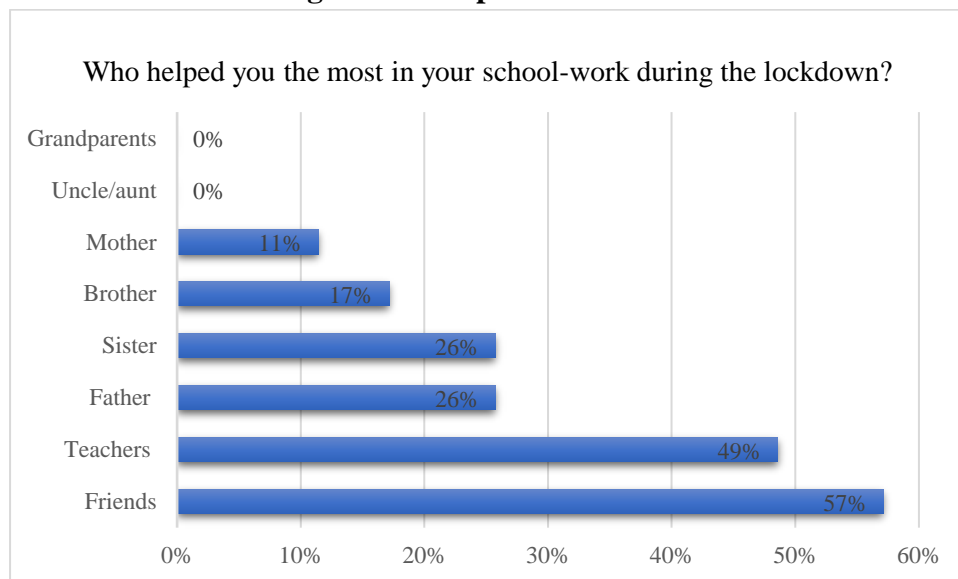
SECTION V HOME AS A SPACE OF LEARNING

The school closures due to the pandemic, while posed difficulties in school education, it also revealed the importance of home as a site of learning. With the closing of schools, the students were forced to spend a lot of time at home. And in this process, many students who participated in the study revealed that they had learnt many skills during their time at home. This situation demands for a *new paradigm of learning*, which can go beyond school as the only site of education. This new situation has also provided opportunities and spaces for thinking about more participatory educational activities during/after pandemic. This new rethinking of education could incorporate more practical and activity-based teaching activities that could take the home environment as an important part of teaching learning process.

Help during the lockdown

While the school continued to remained the main site for studies, a good proportion of students reported that they received help in their school-work from Father (26%), Sister (26%), Brother (17%), and mother (11%). This shows that the home remained an important site of education for the students. It has also helped to develop the good relation between parents and get support in their study.

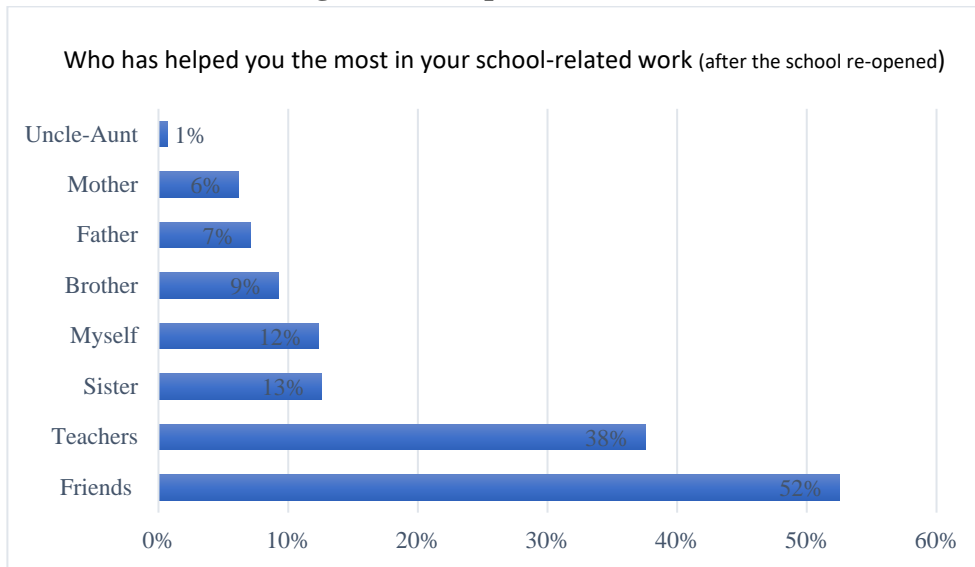
Figure 27: Help in school-work



Help after the school re-opened

As we can see in the figure 28 below, the help received from the family members decreased after the school reopened. The student reported getting help from sister (13%), brother (9%), father (7%) and mother (6%). The teachers (38%) and friends (52%) continued to be the group that helped the students in their school-work.

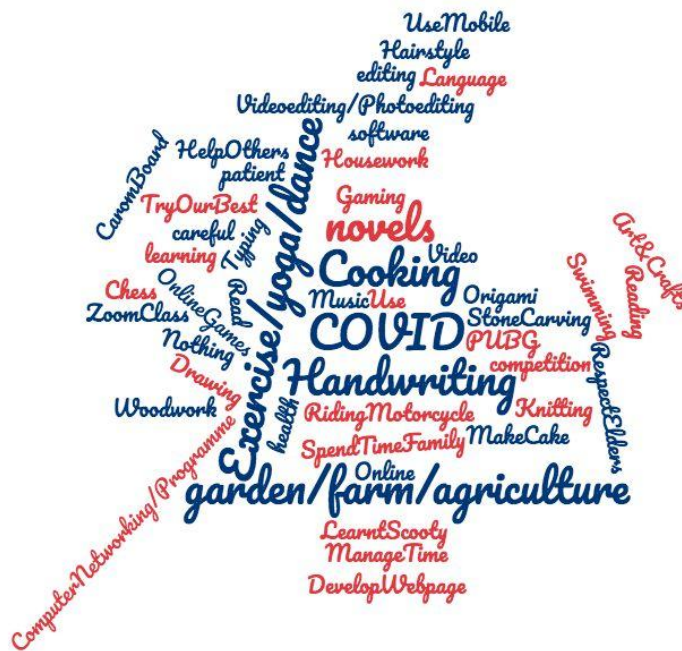
Figure 28: Help in school-work



New skills

The students also reported that they learnt various new skills during the pandemic. The main new skills that the respondents mentioned were: cooking, garden/agriculture work, physical exercise/yoga/dance etc. An important new skill that the students learnt during this process was learning how to operate computer devices, various new programmes such as Zoom, and also different online computer programmes.

Figure 29: Word cloud of new skills learnt during the pandemic



SECTION VI RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the set of suggestions that the student respondents provided during our survey. In the survey, at the end, we students' questions regarding their suggestions for different stakeholders. The answers were open ended, where students were free to write their own responses. The free responses given by the students have been compiled together into thematic groups.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO CONTINUE EDUCATION DURING THE PANDEMIC?

Remote education

- The studies could be conducted online classes through Google and Zoom. Since all the students do not have reliable internet connection, this should not be the only way to continue school education during the pandemic.

Creative learning options

- There should be more creative remote learning options. Multi-modal remote learning delivery using television, radio, online and mobile phones. digital content based remote learning may not be a feasible option for children from the poorest families who generally do not have access to television, radio and internet. In these cases, other methods may be employed including use of physical learning packages delivered to students' home, mobile-based lessons or face-to-face classes maintaining social distance and protocols for small groups. To make remote learning effective, more engagement between teachers and students, either in person maintaining physical distance, or virtually is also necessary.

Self-study

- There should be provision for self-study. This will enable more interesting way of learning at home, when the schools are closed. This will also help the students with no mobile phones and internet connection.

Sanitation facilities

- The schools should provide safe school and sanitation facilities so that the students can learn in safe environment. The schools need to provide facilities such as mask, sanitizer, soaps etc at school and at home. These facilities should be provided for free so that the students can be protected, regardless of economic background of the students.

Free classes and free vaccinations

- The government should provide free class for all students.
- All the students should be provided vaccinations so that when the schools open up, all the students are safe.

WHAT ARE YOUR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT?

Support families with financial hardships

- The local government should provide support programmes for families that are facing economic hardships
- Many students are likely to drop out of school because of financial difficulties, making it difficult for the students and families to continue education. It is, therefore, important that the government should provide free education in order to support their education.
- The government should provide scholarship to the students who are already facing difficulty, so that they do not drop out of school. Stipends will continue to play an important role to bring back and retain children from poorer families.

Free internet and training

- Free internet must be available for students as well as teachers. If free internet is not possible, the students could be provided with data package so that they can access school.
- The government also need to focus on providing trainings and classes on computer and how to operate devices such as laptop. Some may not have laptop so there should be some provision to distribute laptop to all students.
- Government should check the quality of education and type of teachers in every school and should even try to manage better training courses. It is important to provide well-educated teacher in all schools.

Safe schools

- School's re-opening must ensure critical safety and health facilities and protocols are in place, and school and local education administration's capacity to monitor and manage schools safely are enhanced.
- The government should also provide facilities for to ensure safety and sanitation. The school and communities need water tank to wash hand, sanitisers in public places, and masks to protect each other. All crowded public area needs dustbins.

Involve parents

- Involving parents and communities will be important to build confidence and improve school re-opening process. Communication campaigns through different mediums will be important to ensure learning continues while schools are closed as well as when they re-open.
- Effective partnerships between government, non-government, private sector and civil society engaged in education service delivery is important now more than ever. It will be important to continue to collaborate and bring expertise together in finding solutions to ensure learning continues for the poorest children, prepare teachers for post-pandemic classrooms, develop effective remedial education model as well as bring much-needed additional resources to build back better and support the infrastructures for a resilient education system.

WHAT ARE YOUR SUGGESTIONS TO YOUR SCHOOL?

Online classes are not sufficient

- The provision of online class is not enough for school education. First, the teachers need to use creative methods to make online class interesting, so that the students want to attend the classes rather than feel forced to study. New techniques or programmes could be used to make online class more effective and interesting. Teacher should be trained to use laptop and modern technology properly.
- Second, the online class when school re-open coupled with preparing teachers to teach at right level. To ensure this, the first step is to assess student learning when they return to classrooms and identify learning loss.

Self-study instead of Homework

- There should be more opportunities for self-study instead of homework. This will help students to understand the content and without worrying only about workload. Students gave suggestions to 'practical than theoretical knowledges to provided and don't give pressure'.
- The teachers need to check homework regularly, when they assign them, so that they can understand the mistakes and improve on them.

Support for different learning abilities

- The school should have inclusive policy for student with different learning abilities, especially during the closure where the students are facing difficulties. Students gave suggestions that 'Don't discriminate between talented and dumb one', 'Do not discriminate students based on their educational level. Treat everyone on same level', 'Give focus to the weak students.
- School should be a friendly environment where more attention is given to student learning. Students gave suggestions to 'make school a friendly environment'. 'Teachers should encourage them to show their capacity', 'give opportunity and teach very nicely and carefully'.

Creative pedagogy

- The teachers should use creative, funny ways to teach. Especially in this difficult situation, studying is difficult for the students. Teachers should use more interesting ways and innovative technologies to teach the students.
- The teacher should provide 'test and simple exams after completing a lesson' to ensure that the learning objectives are met.

Support during the hardships

- School should also be supportive to students' home situation. Students gave suggestions to 'try to understand about your all student's family situation cause of corona', 'practical knowledge should be provided'

Safety and cleaning facilities

- The students also made suggestions on the provision of hand sanitiser, clean classrooms, and proper washrooms in schools. Students gave suggestions that: 'Every student and teachers should be provided hand sanitizer and good health service inside school area', 'Teacher should

teach good hygiene practice to their student and follow themselves too’, ‘Cleanliness is required at school premises’.

Extra-curricular activities

- The students noted that the extra activities have become more important. Students' suggestions included Sport ground, Art classes and dance classes, extra activities and extra class, give change activities like sport dance etc.

WHAT ARE YOUR SUGGESTIONS TO YOUR PARENTS?

Emotional Support at home for the studies

- Many students acknowledged the importance of home environment in the situation of crisis. They pointed towards the need for ‘cooperation and love’, ‘providing sufficient time to their children for study’, ‘maintain peaceful environment at home’, ‘always support me’, ‘give a better place to study and less work’.
- Some student also requested the parents to not ‘compare your children with other’, ‘don't scold me when i make mistake’, ‘I'm sorry I can't make feel you proud’, ‘don't give me pressure’, ‘give enough time and know children problems’,

Encouraging children and giving them time

- Students also gave important suggestions in supporting learning at home: ‘Giving them story books and reading them in front of them’, ‘family should encourage the children to study hard’, ‘elder should teach their brother and sister’
- The online class requires a lot of self-studies. The student mentioned they need time to ‘discuss with family members’, ‘required time, no one is there to help in homework’, ‘

Provisions for study

- The students also requested for help through enough provisions for study – ‘give copy, pen etc’, ‘give better place to study’, ‘provide books’, ‘provide internet’, ‘give enough time for your children’

Provisions for online class

- One of the important requests that the students made were asking for help for online classes. Some of them mentioned that ‘every parent should provide necessary equipment’, ‘there should be online classes and students can learn more from parents, they also provide extra knowledge outside from the book by themselves’.

Facilities and knowledge to stay safe at home

- Some students made an important point about staying safe at home: ‘Stay at home, use sanitizer, wash hand’, ‘Separate yourself from other members in your household’, ‘Avoid sharing household items’, ‘Wearing mask and using sanitizer’.

Teaching them different skills

- Since the school is closed, the students also mentioned that this should be taken as an opportunity to ‘make their children learn new and useful things like cooking and try to build the child’s character more than anything else’.

CONCLUSION

Our study shows that the pandemic has changed the meaning of access to education. With the school closures, many schools are instituting mechanisms for remote learning. This is changing the definition of access to education: access to devices has become a new form of access to education. Unfortunately, this has created different kinds of inequalities. First, not all children have easy access to devices (19%). Second, those who have access to devices also have to share them with family and friends. This has created different kinds of problems and arguments within the family and friends. This needs to be taken into consideration while planning education programmes.

The alternate and remote learning has been understood only as online learning. There are many other possibilities of remote learning that the school are not implementing adequately. In some places, there have been successful implementation of [door-to-door](#) learning. These creative practices can be scaled up to ensure learning outcomes, and are likely to be helpful to students even without access to internet connections.

At the same time, our study also shows that students use of internet is here to stay. Even after the schools reopened, the students continued to use their devices. While most use it for school-related work, quite a good proportion of students used it for other purposes as well. Students are deciding to use devices in their own ways for gaming, entertainment, and YouTube. This should be used as seen an opportunity for a different kind of approach to education.

This requires a radical rethinking in education provisions regarding school education. With the school closures and uncertainty, the traditional model of education with teaching passing on information to student and learning outcomes assessed through annual examination cannot work. Home has emerged as a main site of learning; school education needs to take this into consideration. The new model of education, therefore, needs to be more focussed on self-study and assignments, using the home environment for education, and expanding the definition of school education beyond just books and exams.

ANNEX I

Survey Questions

Thank you very much for your time for this survey. This survey is being conducted collaboratively by Loo Niva Child Concern Group and the University of Oxford. The main objective of the survey is to understand school-going children's education-related experiences and challenges during the COVID19.

We would like to invite you to be part of this study. We request you to give honest answers based on your experiences. This survey will take around 10-15 mins. All the information that you provide will remain anonymous. The findings of this survey will be used to inform better educational policies.

If you need more information about this survey, please feel free to get in touch with Loo Niva Child Concern Group, Lalitpur Metropolitan City-25, Lalitpur, Nepal (Email: info@loonivachild.org.np. Website: <https://loonivachild.org.np/>)

Are you happy to take part in this survey?

Yes

No

Your surname

Age

Country

Province Name

Metropolitan city/ Municipality/ Rural Municipality/ Ward

School's name

School type

Grade/Class

Do you have access to the internet/data plan at home?

Yes

No

Have you started attending school/classes in person (i.e. physically attending in school premises)?

Yes

No

Has your school started the normal regular routine?

Yes

No

How many days a week do you go to school?

How have you been doing school-work at the moment?

- In the classroom with teachers/friends
- On my own
- With my friends
- On Zoom with my teacher
- With my sister/brother/cousins
- On phone-call with my teacher
- On other apps with my teacher
- Television/Radio/Online programme
- Worksheets/ past question paper

How do you find regular school compared to school during lockdown?

- Same
- Better than during lockdown
- Worse than during lockdown

Did your teachers check your homework during the lockdown?

Yes

No

Do you still use internet/devices?

Yes

No

For what purpose do you use internet/devices?

- For homework support
- Online class
- Social Media
- YouTube
- Entertainment
- I do not use it
- Tik Tok

How many hours a day do you use the internet/devices?

How many times a day do you find yourself facing problems related to your schoolwork?

What is the main difficulty that you are facing for schoolwork?

- I don't understand the lessons
- I need to catch up on a lot of lessons/coursework
- There is too much homework
- I don't have people who can help me
- There are too many tests/exams

- I don't have reliable internet connection

Who has helped you the most in your school-work?

- Friends
- Teachers
- Father
- Mother
- Sister
- Brother
- Uncle-Aunt
- Grandfather-Grandmother
- No One

Do you think you have made more progress in school after the lockdown?

Yes

No

Did you like your school during lockdown?

Yes

No

What are the new things you learnt during the lockdown?

Which programme was most useful for school-related work during the lockdown?

Have you any given any exam in the last 6 months?

If yes, how did you give exam?

How many of your friends have dropped out of school after the lockdown