

# *A case study and overview of a community school at Sunkoshi Rural municipality Kalika 3 puranakot.*

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## *Abstract*

This article presents a case study of a community school in Nepal. The school, Shree Janajagriti Secondary School, is located in Puranakot, Sindhupalchok. It was established in 1977 and has been providing education to the community ever since. The school has a total of 15 teachers and staff, and currently has 145 pupils enrolled. The school has a good academic record, with a high success rate in the SEE (Secondary Education Examination). However, the school has been facing a decline in enrollment in recent years. This decline is likely due to a number of factors, including changing demographics, economic conditions, and the availability of alternative educational options. The school is working to address these challenges and to ensure that it continues to provide quality education to the community.

The article is divided into three sections. The first section provides a brief overview of the school's history and current status. The second section analyzes the school's enrollment trends and identifies the factors that may be contributing to the decline. The third section discusses the school's efforts to address these challenges and to ensure its continued success.

The article concludes by highlighting the importance of community schools in Nepal. Community schools play a vital role in providing education to the most vulnerable members of society. Community schools are often the only option. For children from rural areas and low-income families there is no alternative opportunity to obtain appropriate education. The decline in enrollment at Shree Janajagriti Secondary School is a cause for concern, but the school is working to address the challenges and to ensure its continued success.

*Keywords: community school, Nepal, enrollment trends, educational challenges, academic performance.*

## **1. Historical Background of Shree Jana Jagriti secondary School, Kalika.**

Kalika is located in the Sindhupalchok district of Nepal, specifically in Sunakoshi Rural Municipality-3. It is approximately 70 kilometers away from Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. The village is also in close proximity to the China border, requiring a mere 40-kilometer journey. Kalika lies at the midpoint of the Araniko Highway, which serves as a vital link between Kathmandu and the Chinese border. Despite its proximity to the highway, the village is separated from it by the Sunkoshi River, acting as a natural barrier. The local municipality, Sunkoshi, takes its name from this river.

Prior to the devastating earthquake in 2015, traditional houses were predominant in Kalika. However, after the earthquake, modern houses have emerged. While the earthquake caused significant losses in Sindhupalchok, the emergence of modern houses can be viewed as a positive outcome. The population of Kalika village is currently 3,740, with 612 children under the age of 15.<sup>1</sup> (Data Source: Caritas Nepal earthquake recovery program 2016).

Within the village, there are two high schools and three primary schools. The reconstruction efforts following the 2015 earthquake have dramatically transformed the buildings of these schools. Before 2016, the physical structures and classroom management of these public schools were inadequate and improper. The school management system prioritized addressing the physical structure, as they believed it was the primary obstacle to achieving optimal educational outcomes. Although some changes have occurred over time, the improvements have not met expectations. Public schools now face the challenge of declining enrollment. Many of the village's youth seek employment opportunities in urban areas or other countries. When families have the means to invest in education, they prefer to enroll their children in private schools, citing superior quality and proper education. Even government officials and public-school teachers choose private schools for their own children. The situation in Kalika village is representative of the challenges faced by many public schools in the region. Urban areas generally have higher enrollment in private schools compared to public schools. Thus, my concern is to enhance the quality of public schools by activating the role of the School Management Committee (SMC) and reducing the disparity between public and private schools.

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<sup>1</sup> Data Source: Caritas Nepal (Non-governmental origination) earthquake recovery program 2016.

One notable public school in the area is Shree Janajagriti Secondary School, situated in a picturesque location in the north-western part of the ward. The school offers stunning views of the Sunkoshi River, Jugal Mountain, hills, and various green environments. In the past, informal education known as Gurukul education was prevalent, conducted solely in the Sanskrit language. After the advent of democracy in 1950, schools were established throughout the country. The parents, intellectuals, and social workers of the region played a crucial role in initiating the establishment of schools. It is worth noting that education initially took place under the shade of a large tree, referred to as Chautara. (Under the shade of big tree).

With the assistance of parents, four classrooms were constructed, using leaves and branches as the building's roof. The school's establishment was led by individuals such as Nil Prasad Bhandari, Krishna Bahadur Karki, Dilli Prasad Neupane, Hira Bahadur Thapa Magar, Bal Bahadur Maji, Govinda Prasad Neupane, Vishnu Bahadur Thapa Magar, and Purushottam Payakurel. Due to the successful efforts of the local community, the school was named Janajagriti (meaning "awareness of the people") to signify the people's consciousness.<sup>2</sup>

Recognizing the necessity of education in the area, intellectuals and social workers-initiated discussions with other parents, leading to the establishment of formal education. On February 24, 1977, the school received formal approval to commence classes for Grade 1. Subsequently, on February 8, 1978, permission was granted to offer Grade 2, and on December 27, 1979, permission was obtained for Grade 3. It took a few more years to introduce Grades 4 and 5, which occurred in 1983 and 1984, respectively. Despite having five classes, only three teachers were appointed. After running as a primary school for 22 years, on October 9, 2006, the District Education Office granted permission to operate Grade 6. Consequently, secondary-level education commenced at the school in 2010, and pupils have been participating in the SLC exam since 2011.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Face to face interaction was done with parents, Teachers, Head teachers, School management committee and the local leaders.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from the record of Shree Jana Jagriti Secondary School.

## 2. Background

Shree Janajagriti Secondary School is a community school located in Puranakot, Sindhupalchok. It was established in 1977 AD, with a strenuous effort and a good co-operation of the social activists, intellectuals, and local leaders. Before the establishment of the school, the education was provided to people through “Gurukul System”, the system in which the teacher was surrounded by the disciples under the tree or a small hut. After launching the school in a hut, initially, it ran only grade-one and extended it up to grade-three by 1979AD, and upgraded to grade 4 and 5 in 1980 and 1981 respectively. The school was run in a poor building those days; however, after the massive earthquake in 2015, well-structured and sophisticated buildings with resourceful library, computer lab and science lab have been built. After the need analysis, the school received the legacy to run Lower Secondary class (from grade 6 to 8) in 2006 AD, and has been running classes from elementary level to class 10 since 2011 AD. Since 2011, around two hundred and 94 pupils have passed the School Education Examination so far.<sup>4</sup>



*(Janajagriti school before earthquake.)*



*(Renovated Janajagriti school after earthquake)*

## 3. Current Educational Status of the School.

There are 15 teachers and staffs in total to handle the classes and to maintain the school environment. The school possesses an ECD Facilitator, 5 primary, 3 Lower-secondary and the same number of Secondary teachers. The school has three staffs to facilitate the administration and overall maintenance of sanitation and hygiene. At present, there are one hundred and forty-five pupils enrolled in the school. Though it is a secondary school, it lacks the manpower necessary for secondary level due to the insufficient teachers’

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<sup>4</sup> Taken from the record of Shree Jana Jagriti Secondary school.

quota. So, even the primary teachers are bound to teach at secondary level. Despite the short of personnel, the school has been providing service covering a wide geographical area.<sup>5</sup>

Despite various challenges and problems, the school has been able to make contribution in the field of education. The following number of pupils have passed in the respective years:

There were 306 pupils participated in SLC (School Leaving Certificate) or SEE (Secondary Education Examination) from the year 2011 to 2021. The following table describes the number of participated pupils and their result.

*Table No. 3.1 (Number of the pupils who passed SLC or SEE from the year 2011 to 2021.)<sup>6</sup>*

Years	Participated pupils' number	Passed	Failed
2011	31	29	2
2012	21	21	0
2013	32	28	4
2014	32	28	4
2015	28	28	0
2016	36	36	0
2017	36	35	1
2018	31	30	1
2019	17	17	0
2020	17	17	0
2021	25	25	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>12</b>

The School Education Examination has consistently demonstrated a high degree of success among the pupils who have taken the exam in different years. This indicates that a significant number of pupils who participated in the exam were able to achieve positive outcomes and perform well academically. The results of the examination reflect the effectiveness of the education system in preparing pupils for the test and ensuring their success.

However, it is important to note that there has been a notable fluctuation in the number

<sup>5</sup> Taken from Shree Jana Jagriti Secondary School's Annual Record 2021.

<sup>6</sup> Compiling the recorded data of the school from the year 2011 to 2021.

of pupils attending the exam over time. Specifically, there has been a decrease in the number of pupils in class 10, which is typically associated with taking the exam. This decline in class 10 pupil numbers could be influenced by various factors. It could be a result of changing demographics, where there is a smaller cohort of pupils in that age group, or it might be influenced by factors such as increased dropout rates, alternative educational paths chosen by pupils, or shifts in educational policies and practices. A thorough analysis is required to understand the specific reasons behind this decline and its potential implications for the success rates observed in the School Education Examination.

### 3.1 Analysis of pupils' number.

Table no 3.1.1 (Total Number of pupils who were enrolled) <sup>7</sup>

Year	Pupils' Number		Total	Remarks
	Boy	Girl		
2018	81	99	179	
2019	76	95	171	
2020	70	92	162	
2021	64	89	153	
2022	59	86	145	

The table highlights the enrollment statistics of a particular school, indicating a total of 179 pupils, with 81 boys and 99 girls. However, a deeper analysis reveals a consistent decline in student numbers over the years. The subsequent years show a steady decrease, with enrollments of 171 in 2019, 162 in 2020, 153 in 2021, and 145 in 2022. This

<sup>7</sup> Compiling the recorded data of the school from the year 2018 to 2022.

downward trend in enrollment raises concerns and calls for further investigation into the underlying factors contributing to this decline.

Several potential causes could be influencing the diminishing enrollment. One possible factor is the impact of socioeconomic conditions on the community. Economic changes or better livelihood opportunities elsewhere may be prompting families to relocate, resulting in a smaller pool of potential pupils for the school. Additionally, the availability of alternative educational options, such as private schools or schools in nearby urban areas, may be drawing pupils away from the public school system. These external factors need to be thoroughly examined to understand their influence on enrollment.

Another aspect to consider is the perception of the school's educational quality. If there is a prevailing belief among parents and community members that private schools or schools in urban areas provide superior educational opportunities, it could lead to a preference for those options over the local public school. Such a preference could contribute to the decrease in student enrollment as families choose to invest in private education or seek educational opportunities elsewhere. Addressing these perceptions and improving the public school's reputation by enhancing educational standards, facilities, and extracurricular activities may help attract more pupils and reverse the declining enrollment trend.

The declining enrollment in the school necessitates a comprehensive investigation into the factors causing this trend. External socioeconomic factors, demographic changes, and perceptions of educational quality are potential drivers behind the decreasing numbers. By conducting a detailed study and implementing appropriate strategies, it is possible to reverse the declining enrollment, revitalize the public school system, and ensure access to quality education for the children in the community.

### **3.2 Analysis of Academic Achievement.**

*Table no. 3.2.1 (Pupils' gender and level wise number.)*<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Compiling Annual record, class record and social audit record taken from Shree Jana Jagriti Secondary School 2018 to 2021.

Level of the school	2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys
ECD(Early child development)	—	—	6	7	4	4	4	4
Primary (class 1 to 5)	12	10	9	10	12	14	12	14
Lower secondary (class 6 to 8)	50	36	46	36	38	30	38	30
Secondary (class 9 and 10)	34	22	33	23	33	18	33	18
Total	96	68	95	76	87	66	87	66
Total	164		171		153		153	

The number of pupils enrolled in primary level was too low. The fact was bound not only with the school but also with the community under its service area. The followings were the major reasons behind the low enrollment in primary level:

1) There were two primary schools in the distance not more than half an hour-walk next to this school.

2) The youth of new generation and of average age (20 to 25 years old) mostly migrated to the capital city where they can get employment and sophisticated life style.

3) The parents, nowadays, do not give birth to more than two children. Rather, most of the parents prefer to have single child.

4) There were no English-medium-based schools in Kalika and the parents desire their children to have a good command of English language. So, they prefer private schools to community school.

5) The teachers at primary level in community schools have low academic qualifications to teach in the child-centered way with Montessori methods, and most of them are less proficient in English than their counterpart in private school.



**Many pupils dropped out when they went from lower secondary to secondary level missing between each level. The followings are the reasons that contributed to pupils' drop out:**

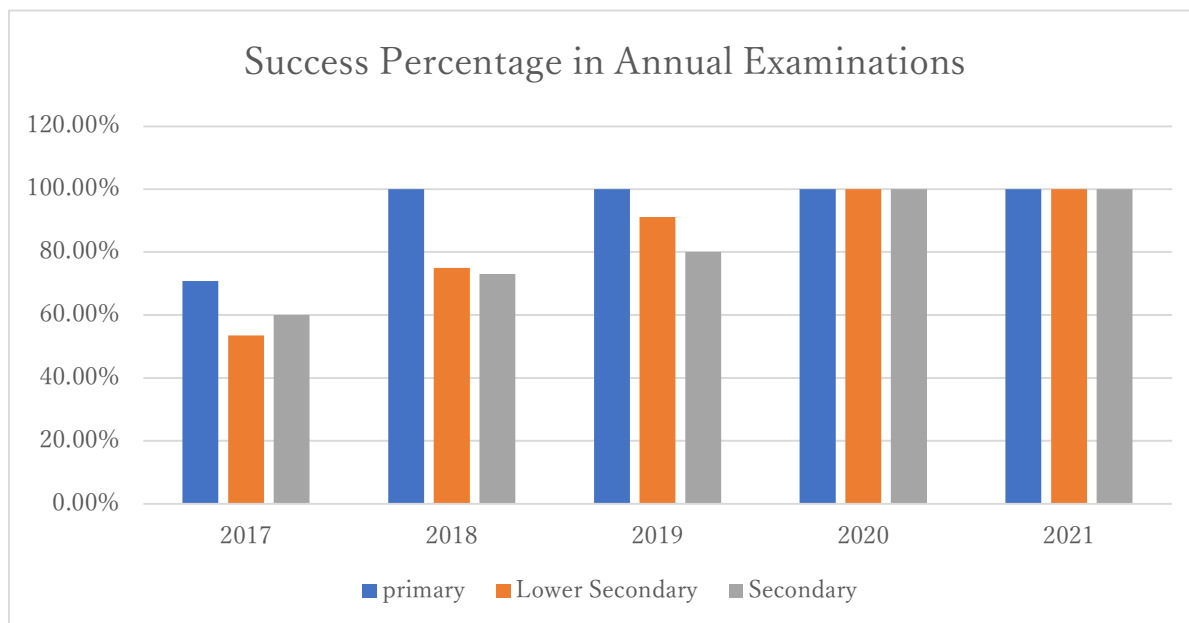
1) The parents believed that this was the age group that need to do some work for their bread and butter. And the children were engaged in the farm work. So, the children of this age quitted their study.

2) Similarly, the pupils in at Kalika went through various financial shortage, and they, themselves, were engaged to the work to earn money. At this age, they felt like having little more independent.

3) When the pupils jumped from lower secondary level to secondary level, the subjects become more difficult. They lost their hope due to their former performances and decide to leave the school.

4) lack of consciousness on the parents' sides as well as pupils side also play vital role in increasing early drop outs.

*Chart No. 3.2.2* The achievement of the pupils in teaching/learning in last five years is as follows:<sup>9</sup>



The provided bar chart illustrated the academic performance of the school from 2017 to 2021, reflecting the achievements of the pupils in their annual examinations. Notably, there was a progressive improvement in the overall performance of the pupils

<sup>9</sup> Compiling the academic records of the school from the year 2017 to 2021.

over the years. The data revealed a steady increase in the percentage of pupils who successfully passed the final examination. This positive trend signified the effectiveness of the school's educational programs and the pupils' dedication to their studies.

Upon further analysis of the bar chart, it was evident that the progress in the upper levels of the school was relatively slower compared to the lower levels. However, despite this initial disparity, the final achievement of the school reached an impressive 100 percent pass rate. This significant accomplishment was a testament to the efforts made by both the pupils and the teachers in striving for academic excellence. It showcased the commitment of the school in providing a conducive learning environment and the pupils' perseverance in their studies.

The consistent improvement in the pupils' academic performance demonstrated the success of the school in delivering quality education and preparing the pupils for their final examinations. This positive outcome reflected positively on the teaching methodologies employed by the school and the overall effectiveness of the curriculum. It was a testament to the dedication and hard work of the teaching staff, as well as the support and motivation provided to the pupils throughout their academic journey. The achievement of a 100 percent pass rate in the final examination showcased the school's commitment to nurturing and developing the intellectual capabilities of its pupils.

The presented bar chart showcased the progressive improvement in the academic performance of the school over the years. The increase in the percentage of pupils passing the final examination, culminating in a 100 percent pass rate, highlighted the success of the school in delivering a quality education. The chart reflected the dedication of the pupils and teachers, as well as the effectiveness of the educational programs implemented by the school. This achievement signified the school's commitment to academic excellence and the preparation of pupils for future success.

#### **4. Findings**

Following a comprehensive study, it was discovered that the school had made significant improvements in its physical infrastructure in the aftermath of the devastating earthquake. These improvements aimed at creating a more conducive

learning environment for the pupils. Despite the commendable efforts to enhance the school's facilities, a noteworthy issue that persisted was the inadequacy in the number of teaching personnel required to adequately facilitate classroom instruction. The shortage of teachers posed a significant challenge to delivering quality education.

However, despite the insufficiency of teachers, the school managed to achieve favorable academic outcomes. This accomplishment highlights the remarkable resilience and dedication displayed by both the pupils and the available teaching staff. Despite the challenges they faced, they remained committed to their education and worked hard to excel academically.

It is important to note that during the transition from lower secondary to secondary level, many pupils dropped out, resulting in a significant decrease in student enrollment between each level. This dropout phenomenon has been a concerning issue that may have contributed to the declining number of pupils in class 10, as mentioned earlier. Addressing the factors contributing to student dropout rates and implementing strategies to ensure continuity in education between different levels would be crucial in maintaining a consistent student population and maximizing the potential for academic success.

## **5. Conclusion**

After the study, it is possible to conclude that though the school was able to deliver 100 percent passing in the final examination, the number of pupils had declined continuously in the recent years. These two facts are showing contradictory phenomenon. So, it demanded the further study and comprehensive analysis of the relationship between number of enrollment and the need of the parents. Its endeavors and the needs of the parents.

The pupils had made a progress in the annual examinations and have achieved a good result. For this improvisation in the result, the teachers, parents, and pupils have made a joint venture. The teachers have frequently kept the parents in touch though many of them are out of touch due to the communication related barriers. Similarly, the administration had facilitated the teachers in providing the opportunities for retraining and professional workshop. Likewise, the administration helped the teachers and parents get in touch with each other.

Although the teachers, administrations and parents had played great role in improving the result in annual examination, it was not enough to meet the demand of the present modern and technological world. To solve these problems, all the stake-holders should help the school and teachers to provide the time-relevant education or modern knowledge to their pupils.

Despite the numerical achievement in final examination, the number of pupils' increase in the drop out at secondary level needs further analysis. These two facts are quite opposite to one-another.

**Some of the reason behind the continuous fall in the number of pupils in the school have been discussed below:**

**1) Lack of modern education:** Due to the lack of modern technological education and stream, the pupils were enrolled in the school with rich source of teaching and learning sources and materials.

**2) Hunt for English medium school:** As English has been internationally significant language, parents are interested to enroll their kids in English-medium schools. Thus, they migrate to the distant schools, especially in city areas.

**3) Urbanization:** This was also one of the major problems that almost all the youths have gone to the city either for employment or for the higher education. Most of the jobs and higher education were available in the urban areas so people shifted to the towns from the villages.

**4) Shortage of teachers proficient in English at basic level in community schools:** Generally, the recruitment of the teachers is influenced either by political power or by the shortage of qualified teachers.

Though the school is literally successful in delivering the result, the number of pupils is showing continuous decline. To meet the parents' needs, community schools have to make effort to teach using English as medium. Thus lack of teacher, who can teach in English- disadvantageous point compared with private schools was successfully removed with the initiative and continuous effort of headmaster.

## **References**

- Data Source: Caritas Nepal (Non-governmental origination) earthquake recovery program 2016.
- Face to face interaction was done with parents, Teachers, Head teachers, School management committee and the local leaders.
- Taken from the record of Shree Janajagriti Secondary School.
- Taken from Shree Janajagriti Secondary School's Annual Record 2021.
- Compiling the recorded data of the school from the year 2011 to 2021.
- Compiling the recorded data of the school from the year 2018 to 2022
- Compiling Annual record, class record and social audit record taken from Shree Janajagriti Secondary School 2018 to 2021.
- Compiling the academic records of the school from the year 2017 to 2021

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