

The National Education in Nepal: Between the ‘Local’ and the ‘Global’

Uma Pradhan

Introduction

Nepal has come a long way since the British historian Daniel Wright (1877) famously remarked that ‘the subject of schools and colleges may be treated as briefly as that of snakes in Ireland. There are none.’ According to the 2014 education statistics of the government of Nepal, there are a total of 34,806 schools in Nepal, of which 29,133 are community schools (state-supported schools) and 5,673 are institutional schools (privately-funded schools). Among them 895 are religious schools, which include 745 *madrasas* (Muslim religious schools), 78 *gumbas* (Buddhist monastic schools) and 72 *ashram* schools (Hindu religious schools). On average, the school – student ratio is 1:179 at the basic level (grades 1–8) and 1:145 at the secondary level (grades 9–12). The net enrolment rate is 87.6 per cent at the basic level and 34.7 per cent at the secondary level.

This rapid expansion of mass education in Nepal notwithstanding, the idea and nature of national education has also served as a key site for instituting varying political and development visions of the Nepali state. Many scholars of education in Nepal have pointed out that the Nepali schools have been used as spaces for promoting monarchy and Hinduism as Nepal’s national identity (Caddell, 2007), institutionalizing Nepali monolingualism as nationalism (Eagle, 1999) and inculcating Nepali nationalism through the construction of a history of valour and bravery (Onta, 1996). These ideas of education, as the scholars point out, privilege a particular idea of ‘national’ through gradual and systemic cultural politics in various institutions of education in Nepal (Onta, 1996). However, many other scholars have noted that while the idea of education and the educated person is envisaged, on the one hand, as that of a ‘good citizen’

embodying the national identity (Skinner and Holland, 1996), on the other hand, the Nepali education system also foregrounds the urbanized and Westernized self as a vision of development (Pigg, 1992) and the idea of education as a process of 'modernizing' the self (Valentin, 2011). As Liechty (1997) points out, 'foreignness' plays an important role in shaping contemporary Nepali identity.

This chapter will analyse education policies in Nepal to explore this dual, and apparently divergent, interest instituted in Nepal's 'national' education system. In the current scholarship on education in Nepal, the ideas of 'local', 'national' and 'global' have received attention as separate dynamics. While this approach allows us to understand each of these phenomena in greater depth, more could be done to understand the interrelation between them. Drawing on the provisions made in different education policies, this chapter will illustrate that the national education system of Nepal has constantly sought to strike a balance between varied conceptions of the 'local' and the 'global', in an attempt to construct the 'national'. First, this chapter highlights the juxtapositioning of the 'local', 'national' and 'global', as it is embodied in school education, and how the ideas were used and directed to the specific political ends. Second, it shows how the meanings of these ideas changed and impacted the way the education system has evolved over the years in Nepal. This chapter also highlights the discursive spaces created during the periods of major education reforms in order to reflect on the ways in which these policies have persistently negotiated diverse influence on the education system.

State, schooling and society

As the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC, 1956, p. 80) stated, 'Education will be national, and there will be only one system of public, government-supported education, an integrated, unitary programme adapted to the needs of our people and society'. The commission proposed that the new education policy be known as National Education Plan, that new schools be known as 'national schools' and the new curriculum as the 'national curriculum'. As an important project of the nation-building effort in the newly 'democratized' political system of 1951, the commission saw the prevalent education system as 'scattered' which needed to be 'merged into a strong national unitary effort' (p. 67). Dr Hugh Wood (1976, p. 155), the education specialist hired to design the education system for newly democratized Nepal, observed:

As an educational program design specialist, I found a unique situation in 1953 when I was asked to assist in the development of an educational system for Nepal. ... An inventory of schools in Nepal in 1952 revealed about a. 50 gompas, b. Sanskrit system including a few primary schools 3 secondary schools, and a college, c. a British system for the Ranas and a few other elite, which included a few primary schools, three high schools, and a college, d. increasing number of perhaps 100 of vernacular schools near the Indian Border (following Indian prototypes of British schools, but in the local language), and e. few basic schools forgoing Gandhi's indigenous schools in India.

The main point of departure for the NNEPC was not that it marked a beginning of any form of education in Nepal, but that it set out to consolidate the existing diverse system of education and establish a national education system as an important part of state project. Various rulers in Nepal, till then, did not perceive education as a primary function of the state. Traditionally, education was imparted as religious training by the priests and monks to a select group of people (Sharma, 1990). In the Rana period (1846–1951), in addition to the continuation of these religious institutions, Durbar School, the first Western-style school, was established in 1854 as a private English institution for the members of the Rana family. By 1892, this school was transformed into a fully functioning educational institution with an objective of preparing ruling elites to engage with the British in India effectively (Aryal, 1977, p. 123). This school was opened to public in 1902 and during this period, the educated middle class could send their children to Durbar School and to various cities in India for higher education (see Chapter 10 of this book).

The absence of a 'public' education system has led to this period being popularly known as a 'dark era' in terms of Nepal's education system. However, it was during the Rana period that Prime Minister Dev Shamsheer declared free and universal primary education for the first time in 1901. As a result, around 200 Nepali-medium schools (*Bhasa Pathshala*) were established across the country (Sharma, 1990; Acharya, 1957). While Durbar School embodied the strong interest to emulate the English system of education, the other parallel education systems in Nepal offered a variety of non-Western education to some of its population. Thus, the Ranas' policy was not so much one of total isolationism but rather, as Liechty (1997) points out, the 'selective exclusion' of particular aspects of 'foreignness'. The British India was an important influence on the Rana state and their vision of governance. On the one hand, the ruling elite were given access to Western education and exposed to Western ideas

AQ: Please note that "this volume" has been changed to "this book" as per house style. Please confirm.

and institutions. This played an important role in the ways in which the Ranas sought to enhance their own position within it and in the region (Caddell, 2007, p. 3). On the other hand, the Ranas ensured that the activists in British India did not 'contaminate' the political sentiments and sensibilities of Nepalis within Nepal (Onta, 1997). Thus, even during the 'stagnant' period of Rana rule, Nepal carefully crafted its education system under diverse influences.

And yet, it was during the Rana period that the need to develop the nationalist education system was first articulated. In a very detailed biography of a well-known literary figure Balakrishna Sama (1909–81), Onta (1997) draws our attention to his *Bintipatra* (petition) to Prime Minister Bhim Shamsher that he be allowed to teach Nepali literature and grammar in the Durbar School. During his trips to Calcutta for the examination, he had been acutely aware of the lack of 'Nepali' literature and history compared to the continued dominance of English language in education and Hindi/Urdu theatre of the elite Ranas. Onta (1997) highlights that Sama lamented that Nepal needs to move on from a habit of copying the 'Islamic civilization and culture' previously and the 'English civilization and culture' at present. He warned that this blind copying of other cultures should not be understood as being 'civilized'. Further in his petition, he requested for Nepali-language-based education, 'the one in which Nepali history, literature and culture would also be taught' (Onta, 1997). Similarly, Chalmers (2003) discusses the key role played by Nepalis living in Banaras and Darjeeling in this process of developing Nepali as a unifying language. These cultural discourses, developed in places like Banaras and Darjeeling by small groups of people, were later adopted by the post-Rana and Panchayat states in Nepal for the development of Nepali nationalism. Through the discovery and rediscovery of cultural icons such as Bhanubhakta Acharya (1814–69) by Moti Ram Bhatta (1866–96), Nepali literature gradually developed due to various literary activities (Chalmers, 2003; Onta, 1996; Hutt, 1988).

After the overthrow of Rana rule in 1950, the new political system (Panchayat Period, 1962–90) provided the much-needed environment of the emergent nationalist sentiments to prosper through education system. The education system during this period sought to replace the existing 'hotchpotch system', as expressed in Wood's quote in the beginning of this section, and 'stir up a wave of national feeling'. The newly formed Ministry of Education and Culture centralized all the education system in the country, introduced Nepali as a medium of instruction and utilized education as an important arena for nation-building (Caddell, 2007). Even during this period of high nationalism, The NNEPC (1956, p. 2) envisaged that 'the education programme to be formulated

should enlighten the very depths of Nepal's soul and enrich it with the scientific knowledge of modern times to make the country self-sufficient'. The education policy that followed this vision, the National Education System Plan (NESP) of 1971, recommended a complete switchover to Nepali as the medium of instruction, of examination and of textbooks in the school system.

And yet, this was also a period when Nepal began to closely associate with the international agencies to support its education system. As Maslak (2002) points out, it shifted the kingdom's status in the scheme of development from 'forbidden kingdom' (isolated from the rest of the world) to a 'developing country' (forward-looking nation aspiring to obtain the results of globalization and modernization). The NNEPC report, which provided the basis for Nepal's first 'national' education system, was thus heavily influenced by the ideas from the outside, while it attempted to coalesce the ideas of Nepali nationalism around the 'triumvirate' of Nepali language, monarchy and Hindu religion as 'uniquely' Nepali. Other scholars (Awasthi, 2004) have also pointed out the parallels between Macaulay's education plan in India and Hugh Wood's education plan for Nepal. The need to engage with the international actors was clearly identified as one of the main challenges of the period.

We have become a part of the world, whether we like it or not. We can no longer remain isolated; the world has come to us. How can we meet this world without education? Must we, who once were the crossroads of civilization – bow our heads in shame to our worldly visitors? (NNEPC, 1956, p. 74)

The end of Panchayat era in 1990 raised several questions on the 'effectiveness' of this national education system. The subsequent education policy, on the one hand, sought to decentralize education through the establishment of various school-level bodies through programmes such as Basic Primary Education Programme (BPEP I, 1992–97) and BPEP II (1997–2002), EFA Programme (2004–2009), Community School Support Project (CSSP, 2003–2007) and School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP, 2009–15). On the other hand, it continued to build on the core components of national education system and efforts to internationalize the contents. Building on the 'Education for All' consensus from Jomtien, the Education Master Plan 1991 outlined a package of improvements to basic and primary education in which 'improved curriculum, textbooks and teaching/learning environments' would 'produce' a 'literate and numerate population ready for further education, but also competent citizens who can deal with problems at home and at work' (MOE, 1991, p. 7). The newly elected Nepali Congress government constituted a National Education Commission (NEC) in

1992 which emphasized the need to 'live in harmony' with the 'modern age' and develop in ways that would not 'jeopardize the identity' and 'national languages, culture, literature, arts and heritage' (Carney and Madsen, 2009; NEC, 1992).

The changing purpose of education

The ways in which various education policies of Nepal negotiated with the ideas of local, national and global also influenced the changing discourse in the purpose of education. During the Rana period (1846–51), as already mentioned in the earlier section, the ruling elite initiated the Western-style education to increase their ability to participate effectively in negotiations with other states, especially British India. The Rana-governed state limited its contacts with external powers because of geographical factors and, most significantly, political restrictions imposed by the Treaty of Sagauli, signed with the East India Company in 1815 (Burghart, 1996, p. 227). The establishment of the Durbar School was therefore an important way in which the Ranas carefully engaged with the external powers. Through the English-inspired education, they tried to make sense of the powerful political force in the neighbouring state while at the same time maintaining the sovereignty by limiting the influence of the external ideas, especially the Indian nationalist and pro-democracy movements. As a response to this, the ruling elites also experimented with sending the youth to Japan where they could learn the 'modern methods of engineering', the one that offered the 'elusive combination of modernization and autocracy in a non-Anglo/European cultural package' (Liechty, 1997, p. 22). The emergent education system was therefore highly limited in its purpose and carefully maintained the image of an 'isolated' country with a 'pure' Hindu identity. The Western-style education, though meant only for the elites exclusively, included British history and English literature but did not seek to develop Nepal's own national history or that of the Indian subcontinent.

With the political change in 1950, the new ideas of engaging effectively with 'democracy' emerged as a new purpose of education. The significance of the NNEPC (1956) was built on the claim that it sought to change the stated 'policy of isolation' that kept Nepal in 'total darkness, uncontaminated by the present-day civilization'. NNEPC saw that education is the 'sine qua non of success of democracy':

In order to make democracy a real success, we have to educate our people within the shortest possible time, especially since universal adult suffrage has already been proclaimed. The danger of dictatorship or civil war due to misuse of the right

to vote must be avoided and this is not possible in a country like ours without proper education. The education programme to be formulated should enlighten the very depths of Nepal's soul and enrich it with the scientific knowledge of modern times to make the country self-sufficient in everyday. (pp. 1–2)

An increased connection with the outside world, as highlighted in the education policy discourse, was also related to the necessity of having a strong national character to the state, with education envisaged as a crucial medium through which this could be disseminated. Writing about the NESP of 1971, Mitchell (1976, pp. 160–1) points out that though the education discourse increasingly used the rhetoric of 'opening up to the world from closed Rana regime', the new education plan was 'clearly slanted towards developing a modern nation with a strong economy relatively unencumbered by foreign commitments' and the development of citizens loyal to the crown. Thus, as envisaged in NESP the new purpose of education was now to 'produce citizens who are loyal to the nation, monarchy and national independence', to 'expand and extend such learning, science, technology, and skill as may be necessary for the development of the country' and to 'preserve, develop and propagate the national language and literature, culture and arts'.

By 1990, the Nepali government was increasingly becoming aware of the limits of the highly centralized education system. With the shift in the political arena to a multiparty democracy (from a single-party political system) the education system opened up to the idea of community participation to inject a 'new sense of social cohesion' (Carney and Madsen, 2009, p. 197). The new purpose of education was now to ensure community accountability to increase access and equity, enhance quality and relevance and improve the management efficiency of primary education (BPEP, 1997, pp. 97–102). Thus, through the projects such as BPEP and CSSP, a 'large-scale transfer to schools to local community stakeholders was done' (Bhatta, 2000). Carney and Madsen (2009, p. 200) identified a new set of semantics such as 'community', 'autonomy', 'responsibility', 'ownership' and 'local' that shaped the national and international discourses on education in Nepal.

The school curriculum

School curriculum and textbooks was one of the areas of education that saw immense changes as the country sought to manage various priorities. In the initial years of formal education in Nepal, the school education was highly

influenced by the English curriculum. The Durbar School curriculum in 1920 included history of India and Britain, English literature such as Wordsworth's *Lucy Grey* and some geography of the world (Liechty, 1997; Onta, 1997). However, there was no attempt to inculcate the 'educated sense of historical and geographical Nepal as a nation' (Onta, 1997, p. 77). Though Prime Minister Dev Shamsher made an effort by introducing the first language primer book *Aksharanka Siksha*, which was published and distributed free by the state, it was later discontinued by Chandra Shamsher (Acharya, 1957). It was not until the cultural activism of intellectuals such as Balakrishna Sama that the Nepali language and literature were introduced into school curriculum.

Even till the 1950s, Hugh Wood (1976), the USAID consultant for NNEPC, reports the central role played by the 'outsiders' in education. He notes that Nepalis have 'traditionally relied on the porters for information from the outside world' (p. 152). Commenting on the formal education, he notes, Ranas used English as the medium of instruction, used English books, adopted English customs and anglicized their trade. However, with the democracy movement in 1950s, the Nepali state sought to reconstruct the idea of Nepal from a country that was closed off from the rest of the world to one that was open to global interaction. The education sector was utilized as a crucial tool by the Panchayat regime. Schools, both as physical spaces and in terms of the curriculum promoted through them, were regarded as a medium through which to propagate a particular vision of the Nepali nation. Onta (1996, p. 214) also traces the making of monolithic historical narrative through 'self-conscious fostering of the Nepali language' and the 'celebration of selective historical icons.' This imagination of the nation and the subsequent idea of identity and modernity had a heavy influence on inter-group and intra-group relations in Nepal. In her study of Panchayat school textbooks, Pigg (1992) shows that the textbooks highlighted the 'backwardness' of ethnic, rural and non-Hindu groups and placed them in an inferior position.

However, it was not until NNEPC (1956) that the school curriculum in Nepal was systematically institutionalized. With the nationalization of education during the 1950s till the 1980s, the government revised the existing school curriculum. The commission noted that in the primary school, language teaching often occupies 40–80 per cent of the curriculum time. It also pointed out that most schools were devoting an unwarranted amount of time for the teaching of languages (foreign, as well as national and mother tongue) and preparing for final examinations (NNEPC, 1956, p. 40). Thus, the commission recommended that

the medium of instruction should be the national language in primary, middle and higher educational institution, because any language which cannot be made

lingua franca and which does not serve legal proceedings in the court should not find a place. ... The use of a national language can bring about equality among all classes of people, can be an anchor-sheet for Nepalese nationality and can be the main instrument for promoting literature. (p. 56)

Gradually, the NNEPC made a complete overhaul of the education system (p. 101). It mandated that English and Hindi should not be offered in primary schools (p. 68). The new primary education curriculum included subjects such as Nepali language, social studies, science, arithmetic, crafts, aesthetic art and personal development in grades 1–3 and introduced English as a subject only in the fourth grade. Moreover, it also advised that 'some of the unemployed educated youth should be put to work translating English, Hindi, Urdu, Sanskrit, Bengali and other materials into Nepali for use as textbooks and other reading material' (p. 70). This emphasis on Nepali language was reiterated by the NESP 1971. Nepali language now had the greatest importance in school curriculum with the total of 300 marks associated with it, followed by 200 marks for arithmetic, 100 for social studies, physical education and hygiene, and 50 for handicrafts and drawing. Following this, Nepali as an official language was gradually mainstreamed through various public institutions such as state-owned media and by making it an essential criterion for citizenship application and for the official records in Nepal.

This overt nationalization of education and disproportionate importance attached to Nepali language was challenged mainly from two quarters. First, English-language teachers also began to raise their voices as the government was planning to introduce Nepali-medium education in universities as well. Malla (1977, p. 2) highlighted that 78 per cent students failed their School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam and most of these failures were due to failure in English. By 1990s, the new political system revised the curriculum and brought English back into primary education. The NEC (1992) recommended the following to respond to the changing context:

The following steps should be taken to enable the individual to live in harmony with the national and international environment without putting his identity at risk: a) To give priority to the teaching of the English language as a subject in view of its importance as an international language; b) To expand the scope for teaching the languages of the neighboring countries and other foreign languages; c) To encourage comparative studies of human behavior, culture, and other aspects of human creativity in the national and international context.

Second, the ethnic groups launched the linguistic movement of 1965 against the cancellation of news broadcasting in different languages in Radio Nepal. By

the 1980s, there were several researches that indicated the 'systemic exclusion' experienced by ethnolinguistic groups. These studies primarily criticized the highly centralized and top-down mechanisms in the education system that undermined local realities. As Dastidar (2007) notes Muslim organizations such as All Nepal Anjuman Islah also filed a petition to the Department of Education in 1958 that the Muslim community be allowed to opt for elementary Urdu and Persian instead of elementary Sanskrit in their SLC exam. Ragsdale (1989), discussing the third-grade test in the Tarai region, demonstrated that the school curriculum and examination had an inherent cultural content. He asserted, 'Nepal's small, elitist system of education had been expanded without regard for its suitability to the country's needs, leading to its functioning as a mere psychosocial adornment' (p. 15). Similarly, Webster (1994) conducted a study on Nepali proficiency in rural Nepal using the Nepali Sentence Repetition Test. He concluded that 'those who are uneducated and illiterate are nowhere near as proficient in Nepali as those who are educated and literate' (p. 45).

With the Constitution changes in 1990, the languages spoken as a mother tongue within Nepal were given the status of 'national languages' (*rastrīya bhāsa*) and Nepali in the Devanagari script retained its position as the 'language of the nation' (*rastra bhāsa*) and the official language of government. The Constitution also guaranteed the right to operate schools up to the primary level in mother tongues. The earlier vehement refusal to even consider allowing diverse languages in the public sphere was now reduced, but by no means eliminated. Radio Nepal started airing five-minute news bulletins in eighteen different languages from different parts of the country. MOE (2003, p. 47) announced a three-language policy to remove the language barrier in education and address the rapid language shift among the younger generation of many ethnic groups. This was further taken up by the School Sector Reform Plan 2009–15, which placed a target of 7,500 schools using mother tongues in grades 1–3. Similarly, NNPoA highlighted the objective to develop new policies or reorient the existing ones on inclusion of ethnic, minority, Dalit and females on the development and use of local languages and on cultural flexibility (p. 47).

Education for all?

As the country interacted with the global institutions on ensuring universal education, the uneven distribution of education services became even more stark. As discussed in the previous section, the select inclusion in education

was not new in the context of Nepal. The 'foreign teachers' in Kathmandu and education in 'foreign lands' were exclusively meant only for the elites during the Rana period, who were disproportionately from the high-caste group. Though some of the population attended *Bhasa Pathshalas* established across the country, the access to public education continued to remain abysmal (Acharya, 1957). Moreover, the onus for any education provision was placed on the community. Any community that could gather up to twenty-four children and arrange a place could request the government to supply a teacher. Thus, the public spaces such as *patis* (roadside shelters for the travellers) generally doubled up as schools. However, as Education Ordinance of 1939 required the school management committees to raise funds above the grant of 1,200 per annum, sustaining public education became even less financially viable.

Moreover, the schools also emerged as a location where the social and economic power relations became overtly visible. Despite the expansion of education services and a gradual increase in the number of children attending school, Stash and Hannum (2001, p. 376) shows that caste, ethnicity and gender stratification continued to 'strongly condition entry into schooling' and attrition from primary school. Reed and Reed's (1968, p. 82) observation on the education in a rural village reveals the deep-rooted bias in education:

There are the children, who by birth into certain families can profit from education, and then there are other, low caste, children. Education is not needed by these latter, and indeed in the opinion of some Nepalis, education carries dangerous potentialities, such as ruining the lower caste children for their role in life or rousing them to active dissatisfaction.

It is not surprising that when the National Education Planning Commission started its preparatory work in 1951, the literacy rate was less than 9.5 per cent (male: 17.8 per cent and female: 1.3 per cent). The report noted that '98 percent of the people are illiterate; only about 300 complete high school each year in all of Nepal and only about 100 complete college' (NNEPC, 1956, p. 23). As the government of Nepal opened up to the idea of modernizing education system with the help of international experts, the concern over the universal reach of education increased. As a response, NNEPC mandated the local-level bodies to actively increase the number of students. 'Education must be universal' and 'compulsory', so that it is not 'reserved only for the minorities' (p. 75). This active interest in making education universal did show some positive effects. By 1970 the literacy rate had climbed to what was optimistically reported as 32 per cent. And yet, as Mitchell (1976, p. 160) points out, the 'balance tips in favor of those

who live in Kathmandu valley or near the larger towns such as Pokhara'. With the Education Act of 1971, the government launched a national-level reform of the education sector where all the public schools would be free, and the school facilities, teachers and other education-related materials were provided by the government through the Ministry of Education.

However, as mentioned in the earlier section, the centralization of education was highly criticized for maintaining the dominant group's advantage that resulted in a huge disparity in access to education. Through projects such as BPEP I and II, the Nepali government did make an attempt to fulfil the Education for All commitments, and the literacy rates of Nepal had increased to 49 per cent in 2001 (from 2 per cent in the 1950s), but the education statistics also reveal huge gaps between various social groups. According to the 2001 Census, literacy rates among some lower castes were as low as 10 per cent, whereas among high-status Brahmins the rate was over 70 per cent. Yadava (2007) cites school-level educational statistics compiled in Nepal in 2005, and shows that the dropout rate for ethnic minority children in the first grade was 50 per cent, which made them significantly more at risk of academic underachievement. Similarly, Muslims also had a very low literacy rate of 34.72 per cent in comparison to the national literacy rate of 53.7 per cent (Census, 2001).

These disparities came into spotlight even more with the declaration of People's War by the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist in 1996. During the 'People's War', the Maoists routinely attacked school buildings, not only as symbols of state institutions, but also as icons of ethnic subjugation and discrimination (Pherali, 2011). The interconnection of educational issues with political issues became quite evident in the grievances articulated by the Maoists. Before declaring the People's War, the Maoists presented a list of forty demands that included issues such as universal education, mother-tongue education and closure of non-profit education (Pherali, 2011; Shields and Rappleye, 2008). Thapa and Sijapati (2004) also point out that approximately 3,000 teachers were displaced and this drove the student – teacher ratio up to 70:1 in some areas. In order to address this issue of education disparity, the decentralization of education was seen as an important strategy, not only as a response to long-standing challenges to education but also 'to enable schools themselves to address ... equity, efficiency and quality' (World Bank, 2001, p. 27). Scrutinizing this trend on decentralization, Carney, Bista and Agergaard (2006) report that these programmes have been motivated by the rhetoric of empowerment rather than by a genuine commitment to greater inclusion and therefore have remained highly ineffective.

Moreover, the emergence of private education has given rise to another dimension of inequality in education. International donors, such as the World Bank, have been prompting private schools to increase enrolment in schools. However, other authors have noted that private schools have been key in reproducing class and geographical inequalities. English-medium instruction, usually offered by private schools, is fast emerging as a key dimension of 'the selling of dreams' (Caddell, 2006). Schools, through their medium of instruction, are implicated in the reproduction and production of advantage in society. Schools that offer access to a high-status language are seen as offering better life chances for those who can take that language. Burnett's (2012) study of different schools in Kathmandu has also highlighted the perceived role of English for greater chance of success. Bhatta and Budakothi (2013), in their study on privatization of education in Nepal, concur that use of English in the schools is one of the important factors in their popularity. English proficiency is simultaneously seen as 'the key to a better future, an index of social capital, and a ticket out of Nepal' (Liechty, 2003, p. 213). Therefore, the socially and economically advantaged groups increasingly prefer to send their children to private schools. Though the education statistics show a gradual progress in the education statistics, the disparities in education continue in different forms.

Managing education

As the idea and practice of public education began to assume importance, the Nepali state also initiated various institutional arrangements to manage educational provisions. The main concern of the ruling elite during this period was to contain any influence of the nationalist movement in India while ensuring that the ruling elite received a Western education. The function of the central educational institutions was therefore to maintain state control over the educational provisions at the local level while carefully guarding them against any foreign influence. The Department of Education was established by Jung Bahadur Rana in 1858 is one of the earliest records of an attempt towards a systematic management of Western education delivered in Nepal. He appointed one of his sons, General Babbar Singh, as the director and was entrusted to oversee the Durbar School. However, as more Nepali educational programmes such as *Bhasa Pathshala* were established, several attempts were made by the Nepali state to centrally manage the disparate educational services provided

in Nepal. The early records of national and global education were attempted by Chandra Shamsher in 1902 through *Bandobasta Adda* (the Controller's Office). The office had the responsibility of ensuring quality control under two sections: the *Nagari Phant* (Nepali Section) and the *Angrezi Phant* (English Section). Later the *Siksha Istihar* (Education Ordinance) of 1939 decreed that all the schools seek permission from the government, all the school headmasters and officials register with the civil service and the headmasters report all the decisions regarding the school management to the Department of Education, thus bringing both administration and finance under the purview of the state. Therefore, the main function of the Office of Inspector of Schools was to report on any political activities (Sharma, 1990).

After the overthrow of the Rana rulers, the new government continued with the centralized management of education while sharing some administrative functions with the local bodies. The Nepal National Education Commission of 1956 saw the Ministry of Education as the 'organizing force' to provide 'uniformity' and ensure 'minimum standards' but it also mandated that 'each village must take the major responsibility for education in its area.' Each village was required to have an Education Committee to 'organize and supervise education in general' (p. 84). Several tax measures were also suggested to cover the cost of education from the internal revenues and through the funds raised at the local level. With the adoption of NESP in 1971, the government established a comprehensive framework for universal education and centralized all the community-based schools. Mitchell (1976) commenting on this education policy notes that NESP created a 'paradoxical situation.' The emergent education management system, on the one hand, recommended decentralization through the Education Directorates at five development regions and seventy-five district education offices. But, on the other hand, it also launched a 'centralized top-down management' in the place of community-oriented management for education reforms' (p. 167). Increasingly, all educational institutions and educational services were gradually brought within the central government's control to ensure a 'national' character to all the educational provisions.

By 1990s, there was a general disenchantment with the centralized education system. The NEC of 1992 thus identified the Ministry of Education as the potential impediment to the goal of Education for All. The NEC recommended that the ministry's role be 'limited' to the national-level tasks such as drawing up policies and ensuring the regular assessments of the programme. The local-

level bodies were entrusted with the implementation of the programme (p. 15). The BPEP I and II embarked on the project of strengthening the capacity of MoE to plan, manage and monitor education programmes, while at the same time emphasizing on building the institutional or managerial capacity at the school, cluster and district levels for the promotion of efficient and quality basic and primary education. The need for increased decentralization of education became even more paramount due to the 'high degree of mismatch between the people's growing aspiration and the government's available resources for education' (Khanal, 2013, p. 60). Since BPEP, the Ministry of Education has continued to emphasize on the transfer of administrative functions to district education offices and of monitoring functions to the locally elected bodies. This has been reiterated in National Plan of Action (2003) and School Sector Reform Programme (2009–15).

While BPEP I and II were the major programmes to formally institute the centrality of 'local' in the management of education, they were also the ones that attracted a high level of donor funding. Thus, during this period the government also introduced the unified financial system 'to channel donor support' and a single set of monitoring, reporting, financial tracking instruments 'so as to ease the coordination by the Nepali government' (BPEP, 1999, p. 52). As the education sector continues to attract highest donor funding, the Ministry of Education (2009) continues to facilitate interagency collaboration through its Foreign Aid Coordination Section.

AQ: Please provide the closing quote for the corresponding opening quote "and 'a single set of monitoring..."

Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the various education policies in Nepal to argue that Nepal's education system 'is a response to multiple realities' (MoE, 2009, p. ii). On the one hand, the emerging social and political changes inside the country have underpinned the agendas for transformation and development in education. On the other hand, the international contexts and commitment to global education goals have equally influenced the process of change. Nepal's education system thus embodies the challenge of promoting a particular vision of national identity, while managing the inclusion of its diverse population and responding to the varied donor interests simultaneously.

References

- Acharya, B. (1957). 'Nepalma Sikshako Bikashkram. Navin Siksha', 1(4), Kathmandu, Nepal: Bureau of Publications, College of Education.
- Aryal, K. R. (1977). 'Education During Rana Regime'. *Nepal Digest: Nepal Education Special 1977*, (1), 121–30.
- Awasthi, L. D. (2004). 'Exploring Monolingual School Practices in Multilingual Nepal'. *PhD Thesis*. Copenhagen: Danmarks Pædagogiske Universitet/Danish University of Education.
- Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP) (1997). *Basic and Primary Education Master Plan 1997–2002*. Kathmandu: His Majesty's Government, Basic and Primary Education Program.
- Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP) (1999). *Program Implementation Plan (Main Report)*. Kathmandu: His Majesty's Government, Basic and Primary Education Program.
- Bhatta, P. (2000). 'Community Mobilisation in Primary Education', *Studies in Nepali History and Society* 5(2), 201–216.
- Bhatta, P. and Budakothi, S. B. (2013). 'Understanding Private Education(s) in Nepal'. The Privatisation in Education Research Initiative (PERI) Working Paper, Open Society Foundation.
- Burghart, R., (1996). *The Conditions of Listening: Essays on Religion, History and Politics in South Asia*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Burnett, R. G. (2012). 'Mother Tongue Education: Nepal's Educational Dilemma'. Dissertation submitted to Special Studies for Honors, Franklin and Marshall College, USA.
- Caddell, M. (2006). 'Private Schools as Battlefields: Contested Visions of Learning and Livelihood in Nepal'. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 36(4), 463–79.
- Caddell, M. (2007). 'Education and Change: A Historical Perspective on Schooling, Development and the Nepali Nation-state'. In K. Krishna and J. Oesterheld (eds), *Education and Social Change in South Asia*, 251–84. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Carney, S. and Madsen, U. A. (2009). 'A Place of one's Own: Schooling and the Formation of Identities in Modern Nepal'. *Globalisation, Comparative Education and Policy Research*, 3, 171–87.
- Carney, S., Bista, M. and Agergaard, J. (2006). "'Empowering" the "local" through Education? Exploring Community-managed Schooling in Nepal'. *Oxford Review of Education*, 33, 611–28.
- Chalmers, R. (2003). 'Language, literature, and the formation of a Nepali public sphere in India, 1914–1940'. PhD Dissertation. School of Oriental and Asian Studies (SOAS), University of London.
- Dastidar, M. (2007). *Understanding Nepal: Muslims in a Plural Society*. New Delhi: Har Anand Publication.

- Eagle, S. (1999). 'The Language Situation in Nepal'. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 20(4-5), 272-327.
- Hutt, M. (1988). *Nepali: A national language and its literature*. New Delhi and London: Sterling Publishers and School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Khanal, P. (2013). 'Centralization and Decentralization Reform in School Education in Nepal: Tracing the Swing of the Pendulum'. *International Journal of Research Studies in Management*, 2(2), 53-66.
- Liechty, M. (1997). 'Selective Exclusion: Foreigners, Foreign Goods, and Foreignness in Modern Nepali History'. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 2(1), 5-68.
- Liechty, M. (2003). *Suitably Modern: Making Middle-Class Culture in Kathmandu*. Kathmandu: Martin Chautari.
- Malla, K. P. (1977). *English in Nepalese Education*. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak Bhandar.
- Maslak, M. A. (2002). 'The "SWAP": One Financial Strategy for Educational Development in Nepal'. *Current Issues in Comparative Education* 3(2): 89-98.
- Ministry of Education (MoE) (1956). *The Five Year Plan for Education in Nepal*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Bureau of Publications, College of Education.
- Ministry of Education (MoE) (1971). *The National Education System Plan for 1971-76*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education (MoE) (1991). *Basic and Primary Education Program Master Plan*. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education.
- Ministry of Education (MoE) (2003). *Education for All 2004-2009: Core Document*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education (MoE) (2003). *National Plan of Action (NPoA)*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education (MoE) (2009). *School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Government of Nepal.
- Ministry of Education (MoE) (2015). *Education for All: National Review Report*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Government of Nepal.
- Mitchell, E. (1976). 'The New Education Plan in Nepal: Balancing Conflicting Values for National Survival'. In C. J. Calhoun and F. A. Janni (eds), *The Anthropological Study of Education*, 159-72. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.
- National Education Commission (NEC) (1992). *Report of the National Education Commission*. Kathmandu, Nepal: National Education Commission.
- Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) (1956). *Education in Nepal: Report of the Nepal Education Planning Commission*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Government of Nepal.
- Onta, P. (1996). 'Ambivalence Denied: The Making of Rastriya Itihas in Panchayat Era Textbooks'. *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 23(1), 213-54.
- Onta, P. (1997). 'Activities in a "Fossil State": Balkrishna Sama and the Improvisation of Nepali Identity'. *Studies in Nepali History and Society*, 2(1), 69-102.
- Pherali, T. J. (2011). 'Education and Conflict in Nepal: Possibilities for Reconstruction'. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(1), 135-54.

- Pigg, S. L. (1992). 'Inventing Social Categories through Place: Social Representation and Development in Nepal'. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 34(3), 491–513.
- Ragsdale, T. A. (1989). *Once a Hermit Kingdom: Ethnicity, Education and National Integration in Nepal*. New Delhi: Monohar Publications.
- Reed, H. B. and Reed, M. J. (1968). 'Nepal in Transition: Educational Innovation'. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Sharma, G. N. (1990). 'The Impact of Education During the Rana Period in Nepal, Himalaya'. *The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*, 10(2), Article 6.
- Shields, R. and Rapple, J. (2008). 'Uneven Terrain: Educational Policy and Equity in Nepal'. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(3), 265–76.
- Skinner, D. and Holland, D. (1996). 'Schools and the Cultural Production of the Educated Person in a Nepalese Hill Community'. In B. Levinson, D. Foley and D. Holland (eds), *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person: Critical Ethnographies of Schooling and Local Practice*, 273–99. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- Stash, S. and Hannum, E. (2001). 'Who goes to School? Educational Stratification by Gender, Caste, and Ethnicity in Nepal'. *Comparative Education Review*, 45(3), 354–78.
- Thapa, D. and Sijapati, S. (2004). *Kingdom under Siege: Nepal's Maoist Insurgency, 1996–2003*. London: Zed Books.
- Valentin, K. (2011). 'Modernity, Education and Its Alternatives: Schooling among the Urban Poor in Kathmandu'. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 9(1), 99–113.
- Webster, J. (1994). 'Nepali Proficiency in Rural Nepal'. *Nepalese Linguistics*, 11, 43–5.
- Wood, H. (1976). 'The Agents of Education and Development in Nepal'. In C. J. Calhoun and F. A. Janni (eds), *The Anthropological Study of Education*, 147–58. The Hague: Mouton Publishers.
- World Bank (2001). *Nepal: Priorities and Strategies for Education Reform. Report No. 22065-NEP*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
- Wright, D. (1877). *History of Nepal*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Yadava, Y. P. (2007). 'Linguistic Diversity in Nepal: Perspectives on Language Policy', International Seminar on Constitutionalism and Diversity in Nepal CNAS, 22–4 August 2007.