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'Discipline makes the nation great':
Visioning development and the Nepali nation-state through schools[1]

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Morning assembly was already underway and the rhythmic beating of the drum and the militaristic chanting of "Attention … Stand at ease" could be heard even before I turned the corner of the trail and descended the short, steep path to the flat playground area outside the classroom buildings. Above the doorway to the school office was a brightly painted sign which declared 'Discipline makes the nation great'. In the playground, the students of Arun English Boarding School had formed parallel lines in front of a student holding the Nepali flag.[2] Each class grouping was separated from those on either side by an exact arms length – a distance meticulously checked by the male teacher conducting the assembly. Their uniforms of white shirts, maroon trousers or skirts, striped belts and leather shoes were checked for cleanliness and those whose clothing or hands did not pass the inspection were pulled to the front of the group and told to crouch down, holding their ears with their hands. The beating of the drum began again. "Sing the national anthem. Ready. Begin", shouted the Class 5 student given the role of calling instructions. The command was met variously by the enthusiastic chanting of many of the older boys and by the quiet mumbling of the occasional line by the kindergarten students, who shuffled their feet and stole furtive glances around the assembled crowd when the teacher's attention focused elsewhere. Those who were caught daydreaming or considered not to be singing loudly enough were chastised by the teacher, who pulled their ears or rapped them on the back of the leg with a wooden ruler. A girl from Class 4 was summoned to the front to read from an essay she had written on the topic 'Our Country Nepal'. The piece closely followed the script of the

English medium social studies textbooks used in the school, extolling the merits of Nepal's moves towards development and highlighting the involvement of international agencies such as the United Nations in improving the social and educational conditions in the country. After complying with the barked order to 'Clap!' the girl's efforts, the classes marched out of the playground, row by row, in time to the beat of the drum.

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This scene, describing the daily ritual of morning assembly as conducted in an English medium private school in eastern Nepal in autumn 2000, graphically depicts the disciplinary dimensions of schooling and the very visible and at times violent way in which students' behaviour is transformed to comply with the norms of the institution.[3] Such a transformation, in Nepal as in many other contexts, is widely associated with a move away from the traditional lifestyle of the locality or village towards that considered modern, developed and more connected with the nation and, indeed, the world beyond. The school is a site where "children are taught to become citizens" (Wilson 2002: 313) and encouraged to establish a relationship with the nation-state. The school can thus, following Foucault, be considered a paradigmatic disciplinary institution, moulding bodies and minds into particular images through the normalisation of particular relationships and forms of interaction (e.g. 1991: 141ff). The exercise of control and the ordering of lives is achieved both through visible and forceful action by defined individuals and through the more subtle promotion of particular lifestyles and modes of behaviour as more desirable and as garnering greater prestige and opportunity.

The school has emerged as an important social space through which particular representations of Nepal are presented and promoted, a site within which "the image of the 'ideal' citizen for the age of modernity" (Srivastava 1998:2) is manufactured. Participating in schooling is presented in education policy and, frequently, in school

textbooks as a unifying experience. It both provides a space in which to promote a common vision of the nation-state and, in itself, symbolises a shared engagement in personal and societal transformation and development (Wilson 2002, Benei 2001).[4] This perceived link between education and development has, for example, become a widespread basis for justifying the funding of education interventions (e.g. World Bank 1999a). A strong assumption remains that schools offer a route through which to transmit development knowledge to the population and, indeed, participation in schooling is seen as a marker of 'development' in itself (e.g.UNICEF 1999, World Bank 1997, 1999b). The girl's assembly speech highlights the intertwining of global and national projects of social transformation and the centrality of the expansion of education as a feature of this, an interconnection further enhanced through the content of textbooks and the wider involvement of donor agencies in schools across the country.

Yet, if the events of the assembly are explored more closely, a further dimension of the experience of schooling becomes apparent. Far from offering a benign vision of citizenship, development and the Nepali state, a highly partial position is presented through schools which gives only selective recognition of diversity and inequality.[5] The intertwining of visions of the nation and the 'Nepali citizen' with discourses of development and societal progress serves to reinforce and legitimate highly particular constructions of Nepali identity, with the culture and lifestyle of certain groups utilised as the aspirational models for all.

Here the particular meanings imbued in the use of the Nepali term *bikas* [development] requires some introduction. *Bikas* has embedded in it a generic "ideology of modernization" (Pigg 1992: 499), an implicit scale of social progress, which in turn is used by Nepalis to understand their relationships with each other and with the rest of the world. These two dimensions of development are clearly discernible in how people engage with and perceive schooling. Firstly, there is a clear interest in engaging in a process of economic and material transformation. The vision of schooling as a route to

greater mobility, improved economic opportunities and enhanced status is common to both the global rhetoric and the popular perception of schooling at the district and village levels. Having a school in the village was regarded by many interviewees as a positive development as it meant the "end of the farming life", opening up opportunities for individual advancement through access to education. Secondly, *bikas* is used as a marker of mobility and, specifically, a basis for differentiating between groups and places. In this form it is a relational concept, understood in terms of the symbols of development associated with each group, individual or place and the relationship each can establish with 'the external'. Schooling, both in terms of content and the actual proces of attending class, marks and elaborates such relationships.

The school serves as a new marker of inequality — between the educated and uneducated, the developed and less developed. Yet it also entrenches existing hierarchical relations and differentials in influence and opportunity, including those arising from the valuation of ethnic, gender, class and caste-based differences (Bourdieu & Passerson 1977, Althusser 1972, Bowles and Gintis 1976). Visions of the nation and development become intertwined, both legitimating a particular construction of Nepal and masking the inequalities inherent within it. Consequently, the ostensibly unifying and egalitarian rhetoric of development and the nation-state are, somewhat paradoxically, utilised to advance highly particular interests. The school itself emerges as a site for the promotion of inequality, even in "the name of development" and inclusion (Shrestha 1999).

As the signboard above the entrance to the school succinctly declared, "discipline makes the nation great", a motto which further establishes divisions between the ordered, disciplined, modern and 'national' from those practices and people considered 'backward', undisciplined, traditional or confined to the local. The disciplinary practices employed in the school thus attempt to shape and mould students — and indeed teachers and the broader community — into particular versions of modern, developing Nepali

citizens. The school is not simply an institution through which the state advocates and delivers development opportunities to the populace, but a site within which what it means to be 'developed', and what constitutes being 'Nepali', are promoted and contested. Stressing the need for 'discipline' also draws attention to the ongoing process of moulding citizens and maintaining order. This in turns implies the possibility of 'deviance', of 'undiscipline' or non-conformance with the model of citizenship and participation presented in schools. Exploring the communication of ideas about citizenship, development and the state through schools as a process of translation may, therefore, offer a useful framework for understanding interactions between actors in and around the education system. Such a move away from a 'transmission' model (Wilson 2002, following Latour 1986) opens the opportunity to explore the agency of teachers, pupils and parents whilst also acknowledging the boundaries and barriers to possible reinterpretation which remain.

Taking the everyday interactions and disciplinary practices of the classroom as a focal point, this paper explores how discourses of modernity, citizenship and development and the Nepali state intertwine and intersect in the social space of the school. Exploring the experience of school through such a lens allows the complexity and contested nature of visions of development and the Nepali state to be unpacked and opens conceptual space within which to explore the highly political position of schools within contemporary Nepal. It thus opens space for examining the 'banal' construction of citizenship and the Nepali nation-state and the opportunities which exist for groups and individuals to contest and translate existing dominant visions of 'Nepaliness' (Billig 1996). Drawing on research conducted in English-medium private and Nepali-medium government schools in a hill district in east Nepal, the paper shows how the projects of modernisation and development and the promotion of national "unity amidst diversity" are experienced, understood and contested at the school level. The paper begins with an exploration of how the everyday practices of the school promote a particular vision of

the 'ideal' Nepali citizen. It then turns to an examination of how schools are utilised as key sites for the activities of groups attempting to challenge this hegemonic position. In doing so the paper highlights how the multiple – and frequently conflicting – discourses of development, the Nepali nation and citizenship are reinterpreted and negotiated through the daily activities of the school.

Education policy and citizenship in Nepal: An historical introduction

Since the establishment of the first academic school in Nepal in 1854, the Durbar School in Kathmandu, the development of education policy has been strongly influenced both by external models of schooling and education reform and how the ruling elite wish to represent the relationship between the various groups within the Nepali state. The provision of schooling has historically been strongly intertwined with ideas of development, prestige and social status and, as such, is an important site for political interventions aimed at promoting particular visions of the state, both to the Nepali populace and on the international stage. The education system — and specifically primary schooling — has emerged as one of the state institutions with a particularly significant presence throughout the country and, as such, became a site of political interest for the various post-1950 governments seeking to promote distinct visions of the Nepali nation-state.[6]

Each shift in political regime has been followed by the revision of the education system as the incoming regime attempted to reinforce its vision of the idea of the Nepali nation-state through re-articulating the relationship between the state, schools and 'the people'. The school has been used multifariously by the state. At times education policy has been used to maintain divisions, such as under the Rana oligarchy (1846-1950) when formal schooling was explicitly denied to all but the ruling elite. In contrast, the mushrooming of schools in the decade following the overthrow of the oligarchy was presented as emblematic of the new government's openness and more inclusive vision of

citizenship (e.g. NEPC 1955). At other points it has served to promote national unity, such as through the introduction of the National Education System Plan (1971) and the nationalisation of all schools under the Panchayat system (1962-1990).[7] This continual redefining has led to a feeling of "repeated beginnings" (Onta 1996: 221) as newly-formed governments sought to legitimate their position and promote the interests of their supporters by differentiating themselves from the previous regime.

The relationship between schooling and the state has largely been presented in education policy in terms which secure the position of the predominantly high caste, urban, Hindu elite within the changed social and political context. In the post-1950 period, this can clearly be seen in the presentation of ideas of the 'nation' and of 'development' which, while portrayed as neutral and inclusive, converge with cultural and social traits associated with the ruling groups (Pigg 1992, Burghart 1996: 227, 256-9). Purportedly 'national education' is thus in practice education which promotes a particular vision of the nation — and benefits a specific group within it. Due to the considerable donor involvement in the education sector since the early 1950s (e.g. NEPC 1955, Wood 1965, Reed & Reed 1968, Sellar 1981), the construction of a national education system was also strongly influenced by external visions and representations of 'Nepal' and the wider development aid agenda of agencies involved in the reform process. Burghart's assertion that the Panchayat government legitimated itself "on native terms, but through foreign eyes" (1996: 260) is therefore more widely illuminating in terms of education policy development. Education as a 'national' project thus requires articulation 'on native terms', but the need for foreign funding and support ensures that ideas and forms of organisation must be legible within an international context. After the return to multi-party democracy in 1990, this assertion does, to some extent, still hold. In this context, however, foreign terms — in particular development discourses — are increasingly being utilised to justify actions, articulate relationships and even challenge existing assumptions of what constitutes Nepali citizenship.

Thus, it is not just the 'goods' associated with development that are sought. A connection with donor agencies and with the rhetoric and practices associated with them has itself emerged as a marker of prestige and a source of legitimacy for the actions of a diverse array of groups within Nepal. It is not, then, simply a vision of development as economic advancement and modernisation that is engaged with, but a more complex appropriation of, for example, the languages of 'participation', 'efficiency', 'transparency', 'equality' and 'decentralisation' (Robinson-Pant 1997: 162). Discourses of participation, citizenship, equality and development have thus emerged as key aspects of mainstream and oppositional visions of the state and intra-state relations.

Promoting national development and Nepali citizenship through schools

As was the case throughout the Panchayat era (Pigg 1992), so, too, the contemporary formal school curriculum continues to connect the practice of schooling with both national and global projects of development.[8] The school is utilised as an "extension system" for the promotion of particular messages and the ordering and disciplining of individual and group behaviour, in this case messages which directly link the experience of attending school with a shift in relationship between the individual, the state and processes of development (King 1988: 491). Two distinct, but interlinked, elements of this vision of the relationship between the Nepali state and its citizens are, firstly, citizens as agents of development and, secondly, citizens as having a particular relationship with the nation-state.

Citizenship discipline and development in textbooks

Throughout the five primary grades emphasis is placed on the need for personal cleanliness, care of the environment and working with others in the community to improve facilities in the locality and work towards broader national and global development goals, with textbooks presenting images of those ways of life to which the

educated, developed Nepali should aspire. The Class 1 social studies book, for example, focuses on personal hygiene, with children encouraged to use a toilet, to brush their teeth and to keep their clothes and other belongings tidy, a point reinforced daily through the inspections which take place during assembly. Exercises at this level focus on distinguishing between what is 'right' and 'wrong' by spotting what is unacceptable behaviour in a series of pictures (*Mero Serophero* [My Neighbourhood], Book 1). The distinction is firmly between 'traditional', 'bad' habits and modern, 'good' habits. This position is reinforced in the Class 5 textbook *Mero Desh* [My Country], where teachers are encouraged to discuss with the class the disadvantages people will suffer if they follow old customs and superstitions (*rudhibaddi*), as opposed to adopting more scientific or modern approaches to, for example, health care (*Mero Desh* 5 Teachers' Guide).

This vision of appropriate development priorities is extended as the students progress through the school. By Class 4 they are introduced to broader ideas about societal and developmental 'goods', such as the health risks associated with smoking and drinking in the lesson entitled "Bad Habits Can Take Your Life". Children are asked to write slogans about the negative effects of alcohol and smoking and are instructed to consider how else the money spent on such vices could be used. The importance of working hard and not wasting money is extended in the lesson "Our Income and Expenses", with the story advocating that people should not spend more than they earn and, in particular, large sums should not be spent on festivals and weddings. Rather, students are encouraged to save money in order to be able to afford medicine and to go to school. The frequent use of the word 'Our' throughout the texts is also striking, symbolising the vision of unity around the project of national development promoted through schools. In addition to discussion of 'our' income and expenditure, Class 4 students also learn of the need to prevent deforestation and respect the protected areas

set up by the government in "Our Forest Resources", and the strong connection between economic development and water resource development in "Our Water Resources".

Strong emphasis is also given to the school as a source of authority that should transcend other markers of hierarchical difference in the community, such as age. This educates not only students, but draws parents and communities into the sphere of development. For instance, Class 9 students are expected to undertake a project in which they are instructed to "find someone in your local area who drinks *raksi* (alcohol), ask him why, and tell him why he should stop". A similar project is also set for smoking, with students asked to explain to members of their family why they should not smoke. The school thus not only provides students with knowledge about development activities, but is also envisaged as a site for promoting changes in the behaviour of the community more widely.

This emphasis on a unified effort to move towards positive change in the local and national context is presented in the apparently neutral terms of 'modern vs. traditional'. But it is also accompanied by a fairly explicit valuation of different lifestyles and locales, reminiscent of the hierarchical presentation of different ethnic groups in the Panchayat era textbooks (Pigg 1992). The curriculum emphasises progress and linear development, specifically a movement from the rural and agricultural to the urban and industrial. A section of the social studies curriculum on methods of transport, for example, describes for Class 2 that "In early days people walked. Now-a-days we have faster means of transport like helicopters, aeroplanes, cars, buses" (*Our Social Studies 2*: 30).[9] This vision of linear 'progress' is reinforced in Class 3 where children are presented with a view of development which places different lifestyles in a hierarchical relationship to each other, focusing in this case on technological advancement as a marker of "civilisation":

The invention of the wheel was a wonderful thing indeed. It was one of the most important inventions made by man. It made travelling easier and quicker. It led to many new and more wonderful inventions. The bus which takes you to school is a result of that invention. The cars, jeeps, trucks, tangas all run on wheels. The train also runs on wheels. The tractors which plough our fields also run on wheels.

The invention of the wheel set man on the road to progress. He started taking long strides towards a civilized life. He was not a jungle man, a hunter or a food-gatherer now. He could use his thinking power not only to discover things but to invent new things also (*Our Social Studies 3*: 24-25).

With much of Nepal still inaccessible by road, this image reinforces the idea that certain areas of the country are more 'backward' than others and maintains a strong spatial dimension to the idea of development. Particular places are considered more developed than others, and the ability to move between places is a marker of development in itself. The urban environment of Kathmandu is presented as the apex of development in the country, the destination of travel and a place where more advanced forms of transport ply the streets, a place where people are 'civilized'.

Engagement in schooling is thus strongly connected with participation in the project of development understood and experienced, to a significant extent, in terms of donor-supported reforms and inputs. Indeed, with school buildings, textbooks and teaching materials largely produced and distributed with external assistance, the vision of the school as a site of connection with something 'other' than 'the local' and to 'traditional' practices is strongly evident. Teachers and students are well aware of which donor agencies have contributed to school building, teacher training and curriculum reform initiatives. The pervasiveness of such a relationship is accompanied by a strong

sense that this is a desirable relationship to have, due to the financial benefits and opportunities for mobility and advancement of status which arise from it. Indeed, this awareness is reflected in how parents discussed their aspirations for their children, with getting a job in 'a project', with a donor agency, seen as particularly desirable.

Yet, alongside this sense of unity through engagement in schooling and social reform, textbooks and teaching practices also actively promote a particular vision of cultural diversity within Nepal, a particular perspective on what constitutes 'being Nepali' in the post-1990 period.

Visions of national unity and diversity in textbooks

Haami Sabai Ekai Hau (We Are All One), the title of a chapter in the Class 5 *Mero Desh* textbook, perhaps best conjures up the image of the Nepali nation conveyed through school activities. The multiethnic, multilingual nature of the population is acknowledged within the text, and the different religious beliefs held by people in Nepal receive consideration, with the colourful cultural diversity of Nepal highlighted. School is seen as a site in which these diverse groups can come together and be treated as equal, with that equality based upon their identification with the projects of modernity and national development. The discourse of unity and participation in the ostensibly irrefutably desirable exercise of 'development' does, however, mask social divisions and limit the possibility for action to be taken to address inequality. The construction of the school as a national institution has a similar impact. It draws students and local communities into a relationship with the state beyond the 'local' and shifts allegiance and emotional affiliation to a broader entity. Yet it also sets up an implicit — and at times even explicit — valuation of the different religious, ethnic and caste groups that make up this apparently unified whole.

The picture accompanying the lesson 'We Are All One' clearly depicts the 'difference' which is to be given discursive space within this dominant vision of the

nation [See Figure 1]. The diversity of the population is highlighted by the different attire of the men and women — the different styles of sari, the *dhoti* of the man from the *Terrai*, the Buddhist prayer wheel carried by the Sherpa, the different styles of jewellery worn by the women and the *topi* of the hill people. While they have come together and appear to be engaging in conversation, they are in effect frozen into their cultural differences. Cultural difference is given recognition at the expense of seeing the inter-relationships among them, and the inequalities experienced by particular groups. The possibility of seeing difference *within* each group is also diminished as caricatures of particular places and people are built up and extended throughout the various textbooks. These differences are placed firmly in the realm of the cultural and the traditional.

Figure 1: 'We Are All One'. Illustration from *Mero Desh*, Book 4.

It is also significant that, despite the diversity of the women and men in the picture, two children in the foreground are shown in school uniform, carrying school bags and walking away from the group, symbolising, perhaps, the desired united and

modern future of Nepal, with their ethnicity unidentifiable. Attending school is thus presented as a means of transcending cultural differences, of leaving the constraints of the 'local' and the 'traditional' behind, to engage in the modern project of schooling. Indeed, in the exercises associated with this chapter, children are asked to list the different ethnic groups and religions of the people in their class, but are then told that "Everyone came to fulfil the same objective in class and everyone can do it" (*Mero Desh* 5, Teacher's Guide). Unity as sameness thus becomes an important component of the school experience, marking a transition from a specifically locally embedded cultural identity to an affinity with a national culture and national project of modernisation and development. Some people and places are clearly closer to fulfilling this national 'ideal' than others.

While such representations allow an appreciation of some forms of difference, they do not represent an interest in understanding inequalities between groups such as differentials in status and economic and political power between ethnic and caste groups or the domination of educational and government job opportunities by Brahmin and Chettri elites (Dixit 2001, Bhattachan 2000). Gender inequalities and different economic positions which cross-cut issues of ethnicity are marginalised. Difference is depoliticised, sidelining inequality through a focus on dress, facial features and customs.

Celebrating cultural diversity in such a way thus somewhat double-edged, enhancing a vision of a culturally rich nation whilst legitimating the hegemonic illusion of Nepal's inclusiveness. Making particular aspects of difference visible in turn casts shadows over other, more pernicious aspects of the relationship between various groups and individuals. Indeed, given the teaching-learning relations which pervade teacher training courses and student-teacher interactions, there is little space for questioning or more critically exploring how these relations are experienced or understood by class members. Difference therefore continues to be *selectively* acknowledged, with

inequalities legitimated through recourse to the rhetoric of development and the vision of opportunities for all who wish to pursue this path.

Promoting unity amidst diversity? Understanding the everyday practices of schools

The disjuncture apparent in school textbooks between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reinforcing of inequality is further highlighted through the everyday practices of the classroom. The valuation of particular places, lifestyles and people over others translates, in the context of teaching, into attempts to mould students into particular forms and the belittling of those who cannot attain this image.

Promoting the 'Language of the Nation'[10]

The valuation of the national over the local is particularly evident in relation to the medium of instruction in government schools. Despite the approval of mother-tongue primary education in the 1990 Constitution, Nepali remains the dominant language of schooling. The shifts heralded by the Constitution allow schools to opt to teach wholly in a local language or provide mother-tongue instruction as an optional subject in Classes 1 to 3. However, without government funding or the production of suitable resources, the only schools able to take up this option are privately funded. Even they are few in number, with limited teaching resources available in such languages and the continued preference expressed by parents for English-medium instruction. Teachers in government schools expressed surprise at the idea that instruction could be provided in a language other than Nepali, citing the lack of teachers who speak the local language and the absence of books in the necessary languages.[11] Consequently, despite recognition of diversity in the Constitution, the everyday practices of the school effectively reinforce the relative valuation of particular languages and language speakers.

For example, teachers display little interest in assisting children who arrive at school speaking only their mother-tongue language. Rather they seek to discipline the

students into conforming with the national 'ideal'. Indeed students' inability to speak or understand Nepali in class is frequently ridiculed by teachers, often openly in front of the class. During the 'We Are All One' class I observed, the students were asked if any of them spoke a language other than Nepali. A boy who spoke a Rai language put his hand up and was called to the front of the class by the teacher and asked to say a few words. The teacher started laughing at him and the rest of the students followed suit, calling on him to carry on when he sought to return to his seat. Thus, while teachers often highlighted the language problems faced in the classroom, they generally equated this with the 'backwardness' of the local community. During one interview with a teacher, a boy was summoned out of the classroom to stand in front of me, while the teacher explained that he couldn't understand anything of our conversation (in Nepali) and that he was very stupid.

This valuation of the local has become widely accepted and few parents want their children to be taught in a 'local' language. Most wish them to learn either in Nepali or, preferably, the 'international language' of English as a way of helping them progress and move beyond the perceived constraints of the village – ideally, in many parents views, towards a job with a development agency. Even in an area inhabited almost solely by people from the Athpariya Rai ethnic group, who use their own language as the dominant medium and where many elderly people do not speak any Nepali, there was no interest in having mother-tongue education. "Why should we learn in our own language?" asked one woman, "we can't use it to speak with other Rais, and certainly not with other people." The relationship between mother-tongue and Nepali language thus reinforces the supremacy of a national affiliation over the local and has become a significant marker of potential mobility, education and 'development'.

Promoting uniformity in schools

A further, particularly visible, symbol of enforced unity is school uniform, which is the same for all government schools in the country — white shirt and blue trousers or skirt. This moulds children into a particular style which emphasises the similarity, and hence apparent equality, of all students. It acts as a clear symbol that the act of going to school takes them beyond their local affinities and connects them to a wider community of learners. However, private school students, such as the Arun Boarding School pupils, wear slightly different uniforms from their government school counterparts, with ties, belts and shoes compulsory attire and, frequently, a different colour of skirt and trousers used to distinguish students from each school. This difference in clothing very visibly indicates distinctions between children — the non-school goers, the government school students and those attending private schools — and reinforces the hierarchical relationship between them, with the cleaner, more regimented, more affluent students more distant from the 'tradition' of a 'local', rural lifestyle. In addition, the use of English language in private schools — even if of a very poor level — connects those associated with them to a wider *international* project, thus highlighting a greater potential for mobility than is offered by the government schools.

It is not just the students who are presented as the 'same' across the nation. Government school buildings are constructed and furnished in a uniform manner, making them instantly recognisable. Schools tend to be one of the most prominent buildings in the village area, a very firm and visible symbol of the presence of the (nation) state at the local level. The many images of the nation displayed in the school reinforce this idea. Portraits of the King and Queen are placed in prominent positions above the head teacher's desk in all the government schools in the study area. A small Nepali flag is almost always attached to a pen holder on the desk and posters from donor organisations and from the education authorities cover the walls. One commonly displayed UNICEF poster features images of a school with rubbish bins, vegetable

gardens, children in uniform, girls' and boys' toilets and a female teacher. Another depicts the 'Symbols of the Nation', while others include images of the goddess Saraswati and the kings of Nepal. In contrast, most school classrooms are starkly furnished, often with only a blackboard and a few benches. The equipment and materials in the head teacher's office is rarely used. This is often justified with the explanation that "only the office has sufficient security to prevent items from being stolen", and the concern that "if items are placed in classrooms or used by students they will be damaged" (see also Dyer 2001). It results, however, in the symbolic and material resources provided by, and representing, the nation being located spatially near, and controlled by, the most senior person in the school. Attending school is thus seen as offering a step towards the mobility and 'external' connections required of the modern citizen, yet it also establishes further hierarchies, with certain groups and individuals presented as closer to the ideal model of the 'modern, developed Nepali' than others.

Corporal punishment and the school

The motto "discipline makes the nation great" also explicitly links the pervasive practice of regimentation and the often violent moulding of children into particular modes of behaviour as part of the project of modernisation and development (UNICEF 2001).[12] Hitting children is regarded by teachers as a sign that they are concerned about the children's progress and that they wish them to succeed and move beyond the lifestyle of the 'local' to become educated, developed citizens. Corporal punishment, including the use of sticks, is pervasive in most schools and children of all ages are frequently exposed to beatings, often of quite a serious nature. In one classroom I visited, a young boy appeared to be having an asthma attack and was unable to breathe. The teacher, who had just arrived in the room, was concerned and considered sending another student to run to the health post in the nearby village. However, other students informed him that the child had misbehaved in the previous class and had been beaten by the teacher, and

this had caused the breathing difficulties. The boy was therefore left to recover without any medical assistance. It is significant to note that the most severe beatings appear to take place in private schools, a difference which teachers explained was a result of the greater interest that the private school staff had in ensuring their students succeed. The children, too, appear to have accepted this practice. A British volunteer teacher, who did not use beating to maintain order, recalled how, when a child misbehaved, another student asked "should I get Sir from next door to come and hit him"?

Thus, in the few cases where parents did complain about their children being hit, teachers dismissed this as the response of 'illiterate', 'backward' people who do not realise what is best for their children. A quote from an interview with one Principal highlights an attitude evident in all private schools in the study area:

There are real differences in terms of the types of parents and their attitudes to the school. Not everyone is literate and those who are illiterate and narrow minded give the school harassment about the discipline in the school and complain that children are hit. They also complain if the children are sent home or if the teachers complain that the standard of cleanliness is not good enough. Each day the children's uniform, hair and nails are checked and if there is a problem they are sent away or their parents are called to the school (f/n: 3/3/00).

Another Principal expressed her belief that "we don't beat children unnecessarily", and that complaints from parents showed they were not co-operating with the school in the education of their children:

Parents are very uncooperative. It's time we educated them before we educate the children. There is no co-operation from the parents and they only

complain about the school. Children should be punctual and should be neat and bring their books. Children should enjoy school, but there is a need for discipline. So we punish the children if they are dirty ... One parent came to say to me "Please don't beat my child". But the child had not brought his science book for one week, so the teacher thought it was right to beat him. I agreed with him ... (f/n: 18/4/00).

The values teachers attach to the views and demands of groups and individuals are therefore strongly contingent on their relative degree of education or development. Those considered to be 'backward' are given little chance to express their opinions or have their demands acted upon. Such events clearly do little to encourage students or parents to question the status quo or to attempt to engage with decision-making processes. Indeed, those who do attempt to challenge school practices are likely to be either ignored or further punished. Such daily practices actively reinforce existing hierarchies and relationships of power and influence as people have to seek out more educated or politically-active individuals if they are to push their demands forward.

Contested citizenship: Politics and paradoxes in everyday practice

Participating in schooling does not, then, offer a straightforward link with increased 'development' or inclusion in processes of nation-building. Rather, it is a process deeply embedded in relations of inequality with certain lifestyles, people and places privileged over others. The 'other' to which parents and students aspire is not a generalised 'other', but a highly particular 'other'. The construction of the Nepali nation-state presented in schools is one which takes as its specific referent a particular vision of Nepaliness — urban, educated, Hindu (predominantly high caste), connected to external processes and engaged in development activities — but is expanded to act as an aspirational model for all; a process referred to by Mohanty (1991) as "ethnocentric

universality". While the school may, as Wilson notes, be a "state agent of national culture" (2002:313), the vision of the nation presented is specific and exclusive. Thus, while the school is heralded as a potential source of advancement and outward mobility, it also, paradoxically, reinforces divisions. It becomes, in itself, a marker of differentiation between the 'educated' and the 'uneducated' person (Skinner and Holland 1996) and between those who are more and less connected to 'development' and the 'nation'.

The precise nature of such distinctions is, however, open to varying interpretations as individuals seek to enhance their own status and access to resources. Clearly, those carrying out the work of the state possess "some degree of latitude and choice, a capacity to translate – as opposed to transmit – ideas about the state's directives, practices and messages" (Wilson 2002: 317). As the preceding discussion has hinted at, attempts to promote a particular vision of citizenship and the Nepali state through schools have been only partially successful. A combination of the inconsistencies within the vision promoted through policy and teaching materials and the layers of individual interests, opinions and approaches to schooling practice played out daily in educational institutions results in the continual contestation and negotiation of messages. While there are boundaries to possible re-interpretation, teachers, parents and students can, and frequently do, act in ways which run counter to the the dominant or intended interpretation of intra-state relations as characterised in policy and textbooks.

As the examples of the lesson 'We Are All One' and the practice of beating children highlight, diversity is often linked to inequality. Individuals, in these examples the teachers, present themselves as the 'modern', 'developed' citizens in opposition to the more 'backward', locally located parents and students. Similarly, the rhetoric of 'unity amidst diversity' is challenged through everyday actions that directly exclude and lead to the ridicule of particular groups. Dalit groups continue to face discrimination in many contexts, with teachers and students from low-caste families eating and drinking

separately from others. The recognition of 'difference' frequently fosters the entrenchment of inequality due to the valuing of particular characteristics made by key actors and the impact this has on classroom relationships.

In other contexts, however, this same rhetoric of development and modernity is used by people to reshape their position within the local and national community. Interest in private, English-medium schooling was widespread, due to its popular association with greater discipline, modernity and the world beyond the village. Indeed, proprietors of such schools frequently play on these concerns with mobility and development, emphasising that attending their institution will offer the opportunity to become a 'doctor or engineer' and allow children to move away from the village and converse with foreigners. Perhaps not surprisingly, parents from all ethnic and caste backgrounds expressed a wish to send their children to such establishments, with financial constraints the prime reason for not being able to do so. For many, offering their children English-medium instruction was regarded as a way of circumventing inequalities associated with ethnicity or locality, offering a means through which to engage with alternative routes of advancement than offered through more traditional pathways of progression from government school. Instead of government service or a job in the bureaucracy being presented as the most desirable route to mobility and employment stability, English medium instruction was seen as proffering the dream of employment with an international aid agency (work with 'a project') or in the tourist industry.

Further, the attempt by the Ministry of Education to maintain a degree of centralised control and top-down management of schooling is continually renegotiated and challenged by everyday practices. The need for central approval of education plans before funds are released, the power that officials have to intervene in recruitment and staff transfer decisions and the development of textbooks by a team of predominantly high-caste Hindu officials in Kathmandu emphasises the continuing predominance of a

top-down structure. Yet, at the interstices of this framework challenges are made and alternative patterns of influence are asserted.

The contested nature of this relationship between the education administration and the school is particularly evident during inspection visits made by the Resource Person (RP), a district level school supervisor based in the District Education Office. Visits are experienced by schools as a sudden swooping down of the authorities into the space of the school, with normal patterns of behaviour disrupted and quick shifts in the form of performance made in order to comply with the type of discipline and order expected by the authorities. No warning is given about proposed visits. Indeed the timing seems to be largely at the whim of the RP and the frequency of visits is largely dependent on the proximity of the school to the RP's home or to the District Education Office.[13] Yet teachers are also able to use such encounters to their advantage and to use alternative relationships to assert influence and authority in ways not envisaged in the bureaucratic framework.

During my research I accompanied RPs on several visits, observing how they interacted with school staff and how staff changed their behaviour following the arrival of the district official. There was always a strong sense that the RP was there as a representative of a higher authority, there to inspect and report on the conditions in the school. This was interpreted as being both a challenge, requiring a good performance, and an opportunity to communicate any complaints back to the DEO. On one such occasion, we arrived at a school in which none of the classrooms had teachers in them. Many of the children were not in class but were running around outside:

> *In the Head-Sir's room sat two teachers, who looked startled by the intrusion. The female teacher immediately left to tell the children to go into their classrooms. The other teacher produced the school's record and visitor book, which the RP browsed through. There followed a discussion about the*

whereabouts of the Head-Sir, with the two teachers using the opportunity to voice a range of complaints about the poor management, the poor quality of the children and the need to repair the buildings. The RP then went to inspect the classrooms, only to find that the peon and a woman who had been grazing her cattle nearby had been drafted in by the female teacher to maintain order in the classrooms during the visit. When the RP questioned this arrangement, the response came that they thought that she would want to see the children being taught, even if it was by the peon [caretaker]. The RP then went into the Class 1 room, where children were crushed into two rows of benches at the front, with the rest of the room packed with broken tables and chairs. After sitting at the back for a few minutes, the RP asked the teacher to use the 'pocket board' and the attendance chart which had been given to the school as part of the Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP). Eventually, the RP stood up and taught the class herself for a few minutes, before complaining about the dirt in the classroom and then leaving. Following this, comments were written in the visitor book, focusing again on the need to maintain cleanliness in the school and encouraging the Class 1 teacher to make daily use of the materials given to the school. As we left the school the woman went back to her cattle, the peon and the male teacher returned to the school office and the children came back out from the classrooms (f/n: 22/10/00).

This episode highlights the ritualistic nature of the relationship between the school and the district officials, with both parties going through the motions of performing tasks appropriate to the situation. The teachers engaged in classroom activities, using the material that the RP had presented to them, and the RP observed and noted down comments. The teachers demonstrate a clear ability to adapt what could be

considered an invasive supervisory visit to their own advantage, giving the appearance of compliance whilst using the forum as a way to have their own opinions voiced.

This complexity of surveillance exercised over schools, and indeed over all layers of the administration, is further emphasised by the broader political context within which decisions are made. Since the return to a multi-party system in 1990, many aspects of everyday life have become imbued with political interests. The transfer of teachers, for example, is influenced strongly by networks of political allegiance and affiliation (e.g. Hacchetu 2000). A decade after the change in the system, the question of teacher transfer and the political appointments of staff at school and district level remain the pre-eminent concern of many employees. The practice of favouring individuals with personal or political affiliations over those who may have better qualifications or experience continues. As one former District Education Officer explained "I am just like a football being kicked around… I was in [one district] and they didn't like me much so I was kicked to the Regional Office in [another area]". The hierarchical political party structure, combined with the impact that affiliation and involvement could have on the career of an individual, reinforces inequalities and the concern among teachers to at least give the appearance of complying with instructions given to them.

However, the power of political affiliations does not operate in a strictly top-down manner, but influences actions through more complex networks of relationships. Specifically, political party affiliation opens alternative forms of allegiance and influence to the bureaucratic structure of the education administration. In a number of schools, students and teachers had been recruited into political parties and these groupings were able to assert influence both within the institution and more widely. Some schools reported that, in the post 1990 period, secondary-level pupils had sought the removal of teachers from opposing political groups from the institution, with stand-offs occasionally resulting in direct physical attacks on teachers. Such demands were made, according to the students, in the spirit of 'democracy', with the freedom afforded

citizens in the constitution invoked to justify their actions. A decade on, political parties and associated teacher and student unions continue to play an active role in influencing decision-making both within the institutions and within the community more broadly.

Tensions in the intertwining of the rhetoric of citizenship, development and the nation are, therefore, continually negotiated and utilised by those involved in schooling. While the language of opportunity, meritocracy, inclusion and engagement in a global process is used to promote a vision of national 'unity amidst diversity', with people coming together to engage in projects of national development, the lived experience of many contradicts this ideal. However, the dominance that the developed-undeveloped, educated-uneducated divide has assumed (Pigg 1992, Skinner and Holland 1996) ensures that these remain pivotal dimensions of the positions put forward by groups seeking to challenge the dominant visions of the Nepali state. Space is opened for groups and individuals to seek alternative relations with 'the external' and processes of development and consequently reconfigure and revalue alternative ways of 'being Nepali'.

Alternative disciplinary practices, alternative visions of 'citizenship?

In this final section of the paper I wish to highlight more overt challenges being made to the state and the dominant vision of the 'ideal' citizen through schools by a wide spectrum of groups. Groups such as religious organisations, ethnic activists and political movements seek to challenge dominant visions of the Nepali state through challenging or re-appropriating aspects of school life and attempting to introduce alternative disciplinary practices. As Covaleskie notes "the school becomes a site of resistance and outright rebellion precisely because it is a site of sovereign power" (1993:4). In highlighting how their actions challenge particular dimensions of the Nepali state I do not, however, argue that they are offering straightforward opposition to the status quo. Indeed, in many respects it is the continuity with the dominant vision and the issues

which are left unchallenged which offer a particularly interesting twist to this story, and which further help elucidate the significance of the school in this particular social and historical contexts.

Challenging the Hindu state through schools

The idea of Nepal as an explicitly Hindu nation-state is a particularly strongly reinforced dimension of the vision of the state presented in schools, with a number of extra-curricular activities reinforcing this dimension of 'Nepaliness'. The contradictions inherent in the constitution — the recognition of the multicultural, multiethnic make-up of the Nepali populace, while still preserving the supremacy of the Hindu-based social system, religion and values (Kramer 2000: 2) — are reflected in how visions of Nepal are presented in schools. Only Hindu festivals are celebrated in schools, the use of mother-tongue languages is devalued and ethnic groups are openly dismissed as 'backward' by some school staff. The disjuncture between the inclusive rhetoric and the divisive practices of the school does, however, open space within which previously excluded groups can attempt to challenge the existing order and promote alternative visions of 'Nepaliness'. Discourses of development and connections with the 'external' are utilised to advance the position of previously marginalised or excluded groups. As such, schools become a key site through which to promote these interests, a point clearly evident in the current promotion of Christianity in the Hindu Kingdom.

The links to modernity offered by Christianity are expressed in opposition to the practices of Hinduism, which are presented as backward and swathed in superstition, with alternative visions of what constitutes the most appropriate path to modernity and a 'developed' way of life being promoted.[14] During festivals such as Saraswati Puja Day, during which students and teachers present offerings to the goddess of knowledge, Christian children do not attend school as they neither wish to worship statues nor eat any food that has been offered to the statues. Superstition is thus contrasted with

modernity as a way of establishing Christians in a position of greater discipline and development, thereby promoting and validating the lifestyle of this particular group while directly resisting attempts to mould students into model modern Hindu, Nepali citizens.

Attempts to integrate visions of Christianity with those of development and the Nepali nation were further emphasised through the use of schools as sites through which to promote religious belief. During one school visit, my interview with the Head-Sir was cut short by the arrival of four young American missionaries and their Nepali guide. The group proceeded to gather the children and staff together in the playground and presented a play about the life of Jesus. Bracelets of coloured beads – "White is for good", we heard one of the men say. "Black is to remind you of evil and red is for sacrifice" - and small food packages were then distributed (f/n: 21/4/00). In their presentation, the missionaries offered an alternative construction of what it means to be 'backward' or 'developed' that allowed those previously placed in a lower position in this hierarchy to see themselves in a different light. For example, they offer an alternative vision of social hierarchy and modernity, both rejecting the caste structure and then contrasting the 'modernity' and 'equality' of Christianity with the 'backwardness' of Hindu practices such as animal sacrifice. Similarly, they establish an alternative route through which individuals can develop a connection with the 'external' and an alternative, apparently benevolent, provider and 'sovereign'. Indeed, in this respect these missionaries had proved successful since, when I returned to the school five weeks later, many of the students and even the female teacher continued to wear the beaded bracelets and the Head-Sir discussed the possibility of trying to contact the Americans in order to ask for more financial help.

Similarly, a number of ethnic activist groups in the study district are seeking to promote an alternative valuation of intra-national diversity through attempts to reform school practices. In this case attention focused primarily on the promotion of ethnic

language teaching in schools and attempts to change teachers attitudes towards children from ethnic groups. For example, the NGO Kirat Yakthung Chumlung, which seeks to promote the rights and culture of the Limbu people, has attempted to distribute Class 1 Limbu books and promote their use by providing training for teachers in targeted schools.[15] Emphasis is placed on the need to highlight the educational success of Limbu students, with felicitation programmes organised both in Kathmandu and in the districts for Limbus who pass their School Leaving Certificate, with an award given to the student scoring the highest mark. Four Limbus who have been awarded PhDs are helping to encourage students to work hard in their educational careers and combat "the psychological pressure put on students who are told that they are slow, and that they can't read and write" (f/n: 1/12/00). Scholarship programmes have also been introduced by both the Kirat Rai Yakokkha and Chumlung, mirroring those developed by international NGOs, to help children from the respective ethnic groups to attend school and thus help combat the perception of such peoples as 'backward' and uneducated by increasing their association with the modern institution of the school. Thus, while such groups are challenging homogeneity as a basis for Nepali identity, they maintain a focus on development as a key marker of identity and, significantly, a need for external validation of that identity. Connecting particular interests with concepts which have gained strong support within the community — in this case education and development — makes it possible for groups to engage wider popular interest in their activities. Schooling thus becomes a promotional activity for the wider agenda of the interest group, be that a religious organisation or ethnically-based movements.

Promoting political interests in schools

Further, and particularly violent, challenges to the dominant vision of the Nepali nation-state presented in schools are currently being made as part of the 'People's War' declared by the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). Since 1990, the CPN (Maoist) has

been demanding that the country be declared a republic, a position more vociferously and violently pursued since February 1996, when the party began waging an underground, guerrilla-style war. The scale of attacks and reprisals escalated dramatically following the declaration of a state of emergency by the government in November 2001.[16] The Maoists appear to view schools both as a site for gaining support for their activities and – as a particularly salient symbol of the state and the abuse of state power – a legitimate target of insurgency activities. Schools are also considered an important recruiting ground for the movement, a site where disaffected young educated people can be targeted and persuaded of the importance of the Maoists' activities and disciplined into the order and practices of the movement. Indeed, in his pronouncements on education, Comrade Prachanda, one of the key strategists of the movement, recognised students "as the 'reserve force' in a future 'mass uprising'" (*Nepali Times* 18/5/2001).

Over the course of my research I was told of a significant number of attacks being made on teachers who refused to give support to the Maoists. Initially, fairly amicable approaches were made. A number of Head-Sirs reported that the Maoists had come to the school to discuss their position, explain their goals and ask for teachers' support. However in private schools or government schools where fees had been taken from students, demands for financial donations to the Maoists were made, often accompanied by threats of physical violence.[17] Countless examples of such activities have been reported from across the country, with schools a significant focus of activity as the Maoists move into new villages and districts.

There is, of course, a strong populist dimension to the Maoists' choice of schools as a site for promoting their position and challenging the state, highlighting the movement's ability to pick up on interests of the local community that are not being effectively addressed by other organisations. This ability to address popular concerns has lead to widespread support for many of the Maoist demands, albeit with strong

reservations about the violent tactics adopted. For example, demands to end the practice of government schools collecting additional fees from parents appear designed to gain popular support and to situate the movement firmly on the side of 'the people' in opposition to the elitist 'state'. Similarly, demands to end the teaching of Sanskrit and the reduction of private school charges have also met with broad support. Thus, while the threat of violence is a significant factor in the growing strength of the insurgency movement, consideration must also be given to the support that exists for many of the demands being made. Indeed, as Thapa notes, the potential exists for the Maoists to use the strength of their nationwide organisation to significant gain in the domain of above-ground politics, with clear political space "ready for them in the left-end of the political spectrum" (2002: 96).

A particularly potent symbol of the Maoists' opposition to the existing model of the Nepali nation-state is the concerted effort they are making to end the practice of singing the national anthem as part of school assemblies. As a leader of the All Nepal National Free Students Union (Revolutionary) (ANNFSU(R)) argues, "It is shameful to have a national anthem which heralds some people like gods and others like devotees, and which has no mention of national pride or the natural beauty of the country" (Parajuli 2000, my translation from the Nepali). They demand instead that the anthem be replaced with patriotic songs which present more appropriate and inclusive visions of 'Nepaliness'. Significantly, school students recruited into the ANNFSU(R) in the study district were encouraged to inform on those teachers who do not comply with such demands, effectively ensuring a high degree of self-regulation by teachers fearful of reprisals.

One of the most effective uses of schools as a tool for expanding understanding of the Maoist agenda and for highlighting the growing power of the movement has been the instigation of a series of school strikes. Some have been focused on specific locales or on specific types of institution, such as the closure of private schools. Others have

been country-wide displays of Maoist power and their ability to shape and mould the actions of the population at large, such as the week-long shut down of all schools in December 2000, the closure of private schools in May 2001. A further shutdown was called in March 2002, to coincide with the School Leaving Certificate exams. The timing of this action demonstrated the growing strength of the Maoists and their ability to disrupt national events, despite a State of Emergency being in place.

In part, shutdowns are a means of highlighting concerns specifically related to schooling and the failure of the government to address the inadequate state of education in the country. For example, in response to claims that the December 2000 shutdown was wrong and would harm children, the ANNFSU(R) retorted that "in reality even this useless education isn't being given to the students, and those who are able to be educated then find themselves unemployed. Will they say that if we had not called this one-week strike then their future would have been bright?" (Parajuli 2000, my translation from the Nepali). In addition, he claims, the strike was also designed to highlight wider inadequacies of the state, in particular its inability to provide security to its citizens. During the shutdowns, the government promised to ensure the safety of students and teachers, a claim which did not lessen the widespread fear of violence and schools remained closed. Indeed, in my research area, parents too were directly threatened and warned not to send their children to school on strike days. This threat was later extended to a more generalised call to stop sending children to private school, specifically those with Indian proprietors,[18] a move which caused a number of private school Principals to reconsider their positions as enrolment and attendance numbers dwindled. This overlapping of school specific and broader political demands was also evident during the 'indefinite' school *bandh* called by the Maoist affiliated student union in December 2002. The list of demands ranged from those specifically related to schooling, including the reduction of private school fees, to broader political concerns including the removal

of the 'terrorist' label and the lifting of the ban on the union's activities which had been in place since October 2001.[19]

Through their activities in and around schools, the Maoist are thus seeking to re-order relations and encourage a shift in allegiances through the promotion of disciplinary practices in line with the movement's interests. Direct challenges to the practices of the state are accompanied by attempts to promote more direct models of participation in decision-making and visions of development and citizenship which reflect an alternative construction of inter and intra-state relations.[20] The use of connections with the 'external' as a source of legitimacy for actions has taken a further intriguing twist in the current context of the Maoist insurgency. The Maoist movement itself is engaging with the rhetoric of inclusion in development processes, claiming to offer direct opportunities for previously marginalised groups to become involved in development efforts. Here, however, the end vision of development is somewhat different than that presented in the agency texts, involving a more comprehensive overhaul of the political and social landscape of Nepal. Nonetheless, there is an explicit engagement with a discourse of participation and caste and gender equality, with the Maoists presented as more able to deliver on these claims than the existing donor-oriented participatory projects (Marsden 2002).

Concluding remarks: Understanding schools as sites of conflict

In the post-Panchayat era, the school has emerged as a space within which disparate groups can attempt to mobilise public support and gain broad based legitimacy for their viewpoints, providing an opportunity to dominate the state by "acquiring legitimacy through claiming the focal role in societal progress" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999: 49). Certain dimensions of the existing vision of the Nepali nation-state as promoted through schools are challenged. Other dimensions of the hegemonic position — such as its claims to modernity — are utilised and even turned back upon the existing order by those promoting an alternative route to social change. In much the same way as we saw

the construction and consolidation of the "prevailing political culture, shaped by the Hindu elite" (Pfaff-Czarnecka 1999: 81) aided by recourse to ideas of modernity and the use of schools as instruments of social change, schools have also become key sources of legitimacy for groups seeking to advance alternative visions of 'Nepaliness'. Activities in this institution provide a useful 'jumping off' point for populist campaigns to promote particular interests, with groups able to play on the widespread concern of the populace to provide educational opportunities to children. The ability to combine the particular goals of the group with popular interest in modernity and development, as epitomised in the institution of schooling, helps give their cause greater appeal and salience in the current context.

Historically, educational institutions have played a significant role in the political struggles over the shaping of the Nepali state and citizenship. Student groups, for example, influenced the course of events in 1951, 1980 and 1990. This is partly a consequence of the presence of large groups of educated young people in a context where they are able to communicate and mobilise — a situation which continues to make schools and colleges desirable recruiting grounds for support. But the significance of the school goes beyond this. Its political value is integrally linked to the widespread perception of the school as an institution connected to places and ideas considered to be 'developed'. The school thus acts as an arena in which differing models of development and intra-state relations are presented, as groups compete to win the support and confidence of the populace. As Gellner has noted, "The state's prime method of legitimating itself is through development … Development involves the state trying to mobilize people and imposing new rules" (Gellner 2001: 7). Here he is referring particularly to development as externally-supported aid, a vision which is used by groups such as the ethnic activists to help legitimate their position. Others, such as the Maoists, also use the ideas of development, but to mean rather different forms of social change from those offered by reform-oriented (as opposed to revolutionary) groups.

The use of schools by groups opposed to particular aspects of the state focuses attention on the complex relationship between those offering 'resistance' and that which they seek to oppose. Even approaches that reject the dominant vision of Nepal and development have to engage directly with the key features which help define that vision. The ethnic activists and religious organisations therefore emphasise that they are 'not Hindu', an identifier which becomes salient as a "counter narrative of nationalism" (Bhabba 1990). A dominant cultural form, such as the current vision of the Nepali state, "at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture" (Williams 1977: 114). Groups have to engage with those issues that reinforce the dominant vision in order to offer alternatives. Thus, it is very difficult for either reform or revolutionary-oriented groups to avoid engaging with the dominance of the Nepali language, the centrality of schooling to perceptions of progress, identity and intra-state relations, the connection of the state with development, and the existence of the entity 'Nepal'. Thus, in examining the images of citizenship which are proffered in the space of the school, what emerges is not a straightforward model of transmission of, or resistance to, a dominant vision. A more complex interplay between the different dimensions of the state — political, national and developmentalist – can be observed as groups seek to promote their own vision of 'Nepaliness' and enhance the legitimacy of this perspective. One cannot, then, simply view the school as a site where students – and teachers – are shaped and 'disciplined' into a particular mould of the 'ideal' Nepali citizen. Rather, the school can be considered a "contradictory resource" (Levinson & Holland 1996: 1) in which groups and individuals seek to assert their influence, enhance their status and gain access to resources through association with an institution which has come to symbolise modernity, development and the geographical and political reach of the Nepali state.

Notes:

[1] The PhD research this paper derives from was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Further support for writing and dissemination of material was provided through an ESRC Post-Doctoral Fellowship. Fieldwork was conducted between September 1999 and December 2000. Earlier versions of this paper were presented to the South Asian Anthropologist Group and at the European Modern South Asian Studies Conference in 2002.

[2] Names of schools have been changed throughout. The term 'English boarding school' is widely used in Nepal to refer to private, English-medium institutions. In many cases they do not offer boarding facilities for students. In this case, two students lodged with the school Principal during term time. Official statistics on the percentage of students enrolled in non-government schools are rather vague as they include only officially registered schools. According to the MOE figures, 13% of enrolled students are in private or trust-run schools (MOE 2001). The Private and Boarding School Organisation Nepal (PABSON) estimate that a third of students are educated in private institutions (f/n: 21/1/03).

[3] Similar daily assemblies also take place in government schools, with the national anthem, military-style exercises and readings by students common features. In these schools, however, the medium of instruction is Nepali and uniforms are blue and white. Inspections for cleanliness take place, but are less rigorous than in the private schools and failure does not incur the same level of physical punishment.

[4] Indeed, in his classic construction of three elements of citizenship, T.H. Marshall notes that educational institutions are key organisations associated with the promotion of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship (Marshall 1950). He discusses this primarily in relation to 'social' citizenship but, as this paper explores, schools also play a significant role in promoting and contesting civil and political dimensions of citizenship.

[5] See Preece 2002, Jarvis 2002 for discussion of debates relating to citizenship and inequality.

[6] Burghart (1996) provides an overview of the development of the Nepali nation-state and the shifts in construction of intra-national relations in the post-1950 period. A process of translation and transformation of the concept of citizenship and the nation-state is evident, particularly during the Panchayat era. A highly particular construction of 'Nepaliness' and of the unity of the Nepali nation-state emerges based on a particular construction of the cultural uniqueness of the state. Yet, this construction is articulated by the regime in terms which are intelligible to the wider international community. This in turn offers a degree of legitimacy and recognition which in turn reinforces the position of the ruling elite (1996: 256-9).

[7] Under 'Partyless Panchayat Democracy' "active leadership" was provided by the King with the assistance of Zonal, district and village level committees (Whelpton 1997:47).

[8] The school system is divided into primary (Class 1-5), lower secondary (Class 7-8), Secondary (Class 9-10) and Higher Secondary (Class 11-12). School leaving certificate exams are taken at the end of Class 10.

[9] The *Our Social Studies* series is utilised in many English-medium schools. Its content closely follows that of the *Mero Desh* / *Mero Serophero* books used in government schools.

[10] The Constitution of Nepal (1991) recognises Nepali as the 'language of the nation' (*rastra bhasa*) and the official language of the state and government. In contrast, other languages spoken as mother-tongues were considered to be 'national languages' (*rastriya bhasa*) .

[11] The ethnic rights NGO Kirat Yakhtung Chumlung, which was active in the study area has worked with the Curriculum Development Centre to produce textbooks for Limbu as a Class 1 optional subject. The uptake of this opportunity was, however, extremely limited. In several schools I visited the books were still wrapped up in their packaging, gathering dust in the Head-Sir's office.

[12] UNICEF highlights the existence of strong social hierarchies and unequal power relations as factors contributing to the practice of, and lack of opposition to, corporal punishment in schools (2001: 15-16). N addition, such disciplining is frequently seen as a necessary part of the schooling process, ensuring students comply with norms of the institution.

[13] A similar process is documented in relation to monitoring of child-care centres in Uttar Pradesh (Gupta 2002).

[14] Church-goers often contrasted their lifestyle with the Hindu culture around them, which they saw as involving "drinking, gambling, killing animals and worshipping statues". Religion, they felt, should not involve the worship of statues or photos, as the Buddhists and Hindus do, as these are man-made. Rather the focus should be on prayer and leading a simple life.

[15] However, when teachers from one school in the district were invited to a training programme designed to orient them to the new textbooks, no teachers were interested and the school's peon was sent instead.

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[16] Maharjan (2000) and Thapa (2002) provide insights into the history of the movement and discusses the government responses to the 'People's War'.

[17] In the study district, the life of a school Principal was threatened. A gun battle between police and Maoists was reported in another government secondary school accused of charging fees. In Hetauda, a large town in the central *terrai*, rebels threatened to cut off the hand of a head teacher who refused their demands. In Kathmandu threats turned into direct action with a school principal being 'black-faced' and cars and buildings set on fire in cases where funds had not been returned.

[18] Challenges are being made in particular to Indian influence in aspects of Nepali life, from national politics to schooling. In addition, foreign involvement in schooling is challenged more widely, with foreign volunteers requested to leave their posts and schools considered to be receiving significant external support targetted.

[19] The strike was postponed after a two week shut down as a result of any agreement by the Private and Boarding School Organisation Nepal to request members to reduce their fees to an agreed level. The resumption of the strike planned for February was cancelled after a ceasefire was declared and the label 'terrorist' was lifted from Maoist groups in late January 2003.

[20] The exact nature of the Maoists alternative vision of the Nepali nation and development is not, however, clear, with their actions continuing to emphasise the destructive as opposed to constructive interests of the movement. In areas of west Nepal the Maoists have reportedly established parallel state structures, to replace those of the government. 'People's courts' decide on the appropriate punishments to be given to people considered to have committed crimes and taxes are collected. There have also been press reports of 'people's elections' being held.

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