

Emergence, Representation, and Reception of Education Policy in Nepal

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Statement of Originality

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. This thesis contains no materials which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and beliefs, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis to be available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to provisions of copyrights Act 1968.

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Remarks on Transcription and Nepali Terminology

Following the conventions discussed by Raj Yadav¹ and Shrestha and Bhattarai (2017), in this thesis, “Nepal” means the “Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal,” which was named the “Kingdom of Nepal” until the monarchical rule of the Shah Dynasty that ended on May 28, 2008.

I have intentionally used the term “Nepali” rather than its alternative “Nepalese.” The word “Nepalese” does not fit into the Nepali vernacular. Rather, it is the result of the Anglicisation of Nepal and gained status among elite English-speaking Nepali people, expats, and western travellers. The term “Nepal,” used in this thesis, signifies commonly to the diverse people of Nepal and anything relating to them, such as language, culture, costume, lifestyles, values, and norms. Nepal is a pluralist society with linguistic, cultural, and geographical diversity and the application of “Nepali” suggests its diversity and heterogeneity.

It is easy to speak Nepali as there is no illogicality between the script and pronunciation of the words as applied in daily life. Nonetheless, there are some exceptions particularly the letter “V” that is pronounced “B”; for instance, in the word “Vijay.” Similarly, instead of stressing the tongue, the sound “chha” comes from the throat. The sound “Th” is complicated as “h” may be aspirated, such as in “Kathmandu,” or non-aspirated, such as in “sanstha.” Not only this, but one would notice that each Nepali society uses adages to denote specific concepts and moral lessons in everyday life. These are passed as traditional beliefs from generation to generation, without specific reference to the anonymous author.

¹ Yadav, R.K. (2017). Decolonised, developmental Nepali social work: making it matter. Available from NOVA-University of Newcastle Research Online (UON: 31252)
Shrestha, N & Bhattarai, K. (2017). *Historical dictionary of Nepal*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Each adage is also called the “gau khene kathas,” which connotes “stories to devour villages.” These adages are unfathomable in their wisdom and philosophies and are consistently used by Nepali people in their everyday conversations.

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List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Plan
CDC	Curriculum and Development Centre
CIP	Core Investment Plan
CSSP	Community School Support Program
DANIDA	The Danish International Development Agency
DFID	Department of International Development
EDPs	External Developmental Partners
EFA	Education for All
EFAP	Education for All Program
EU	European Union
GoN	Government of Nepal
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
NCED	National Centre for Education Development
NEB	National Examination Board
NEPC	National Education Planning Commission
NESP	National Educational System Plan

NNEPC	Nepal National Educational Planning Commission
NPA	National Plan of Action
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PEP	Primary Education Project
SESP	Secondary Education Support Program
SSDP	School Sector Developmental Program
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WB	World Bank

Abstract

While Nepal lacks clarity among its leadership, policymakers, and stakeholders over how its education and education policies are currently interlinked to globalisation and aid dealings. Adopting a Foucault-inspired poststructuralist framework, this study explores issues relating to the emergence, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal. It aims to generate understanding of the processes of governing and thus the governed and, consequently, the ways in which such controls are possible by means of specific problematisation of educational discourses. Furthermore, it delineates the idea of producing possibilities, subjects, and objects of education, as well as concepts and categories of education, in the context of power. Such constructions are sustained by proposals represented by power or conceptualised by experts governing Nepali education—the matrix of signified provisional truths in Nepali education that has far and unforeseen repercussions to both educational development and people’s lived experiences. This study thus establishes that such truths can be altered, substituted, redefined, and scrutinised using an unconventional perspective, analytically arguing it as necessary for reimagining educational practices and processes. Meanwhile, analysing educational politics that have shaped and is shaping Nepali education, it examines the ways in which Nepali educational boundaries can be changed to ensure more egalitarian processes in the development of educational policies.

The participants in this study were policy stakeholders who come from different backgrounds, such as cabinet members, senior -level bureaucrats, and academicians, and have been engaged in Nepal’s education policymaking, implementation, and research.

In this study, we outlined the features of Nepali education and its policies by discussing the mode of educational practices and processes in Nepal. The core idea of education described in national policy and the discursive environment have influenced the policymaking and implementation process. Likewise, the study elaborates on Nepali

education, especially from the perspective of policymakers, cabinet members, and academicians, who as professionals in the field are accountable for the planning, implementation, and assessment of education and educational policies in Nepal. Because of the discursive role of these stakeholders, education has experienced various transformations that represent the issue of power while also silencing the issues of marginalised and vulnerable groups and communities in Nepal, exacerbating their exclusion from the education system, education policies, and the policymaking process. The concerns of Nepali people who reside in the periphery of power regarding education contemporarily have become politically polarised. Additionally, global and local authorities are rejecting any scientific evidence that does not align with their political preferences. As such, actions of policy reforms based on coercion, subjugation, and pejoratives exercised in Nepal requires critical scrutiny. Subverting such binaries, this study was conducted to engage in the reflection and reimagining of these systems and to provide the spaces for analysing how such exclusions were made possible.

Educational realisation in this regard—that is, in the context of political attainment and marketisation—was critically analysed in order to redefine the processes that will produce deferential and accountable educational policies for all in Nepal. Against the backdrop of policy influences, as operated by policy networks and aid politics and their vested suggestions, presumptions, and mechanisms, part of the strategy in addressing these concerns was to problematise whether or not the discourse of power and actions aligned with marginalised voices. Also, perspectives of the governing were examined in relation to how such powers demarcate politics and possibilities and shape subjectivities and vice versa. Analysing Nepal’s education policymaking process and practices unconventionally, this study provides insight into both the limitations of and the requisites for continuous

reappraisal of education and policies from the perspectives of the marginalised, enabling possibilities and inclusion for all.

Who makes decisions about Nepali education (its concepts, categories, preferences, and so), and why? Do politicians and policymakers assume the underlying values and principles of education? Whose and what discussions and recommendations do education policies cloth, and how do national and international networks influence them? Is there a process for collaborating with global networks and aid providers for national educational development? Are such alliances, practices, and processes or other efforts to support Nepali education legitimate? These were the initial assumptions and questions. Therefore, this study proposed to respond to the adverse context of educational and schooling in Nepal and the experiences of the nation in the last seven decades by diagnosing policy as politics and discourse (see Bacchi, 2009; Ball, 1993). This study thus analysed the influence of all this in the emergence, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal.

In this study, I investigated the (re-)discourse of Nepali education policy. Drawing on the firsthand experiences of Nepali policymakers, I firstly argue that donors' discourse drives the contemporary Nepali education policy, leaving Nepali education stakeholders with limited choices to assess and prioritise the educational needs of its citizens. Then, I empirically delineate how the donor-led education policy framework has attributed to persistent inequities and exclusionary practices in education policy, especially alienating the economically deprived, rural poor, and those in the Indigenous and ethnic marginalised category. Given this backdrop, finally, this study highlights that there is a need to (re-)discourse education policy. Using Carol Bacchi's (2009) poststructuralist framework "Analysing Policy – What's the Problem Represented to Be?" it is identified that home-grown policies would contribute to the emancipation and liberation of the underrepresented population categories of Nepal.

To redefine Nepali education is to re-examine it with a rationale to bring about change. This study, therefore, explores the practice and processes of (re-)defining Nepali education, its policies, and its implications for the Nepali people in contemporary times. It is vital that such policies reflect community values, its wants, and its needs.

Chapter 1

Policymaking in education is a political and normative activity.

Lingard and Ogza (2007, p. 6)

Seven decades ago, in the 1950s after the demise of the despotic Rana regime and the start of a democratic government in Nepal, a planned attempt to introduce universal education commenced in Nepal. Following the end of the 104 years of repressive Rana oligarchy that forbade education for common Nepali people, the authorities of the new government made efforts to institute an all-inclusive education system in Nepal. The Ranas had made some efforts prior to the 1950s for education but it was only for the children of the ruling elites. To this, Sharma (1990) previously wrote, “education was acknowledged ... [as] a force for social change in Nepal, both by the Ranas and by their adversaries” (p. 6). The new democratic government of the 1950s realised that education was the foundation of a firm democracy, modernity, and prosperity for Nepal and its people (Wood, 1959). Therefore, historically, from the 1950s to the present day, Nepal has endorsed various educational reforms and policies.

In 1954, the National Education Planning Commission (NEPC) was established. The committee drafted a proposal for the Government of Nepal (GoN) in 1956 entitled the Nepal National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC). This proposal was criticised as an “importation of western ideals” (Awasthi, 2008, p. 23). In 1961, the All Round National Education committee, and in 1968 the National Education Advisory Board, were established to carry out and improve the education system in the country and provide suggestions and guidance for government. In 1971, the New Education System Plan (NESP) came into action as an essential part of the fourth five-year plan (1970–1975). It was Nepal’s first

comprehensive education policy. In 1983, the Primary Education Project (PEP) was implemented in the six districts of Nepal with the financial assistance of both the World Bank and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), while the five-year experimental Education for Rural Development project in Seti zone was financed by the United Nations Developmental Programme (UNDP) and the Government of Nepal (Khaniya, 2007). Nepal's initial democracy, which began in the 1950s, persisted until the 1960s when King Mahendra took over power and instigated the active monarchical form of governance in Nepal. In the 1990s, democracy was restored in Nepal; in the very same year, Nepal became the signatory of the Jomtien Declaration on Education for All," a universal educational campaign held in Jomtien, Thailand. Nepal then called upon the international donor community for financial assistance in order to improve its primary education (Khaniya & Williams, 2004). Nepal accordingly developed a Basic and Primary Educational Master Plan that provided the direction for Basic Primary Education Program I and II (1991–2003) and the Primary Education Development Project (PEPD 1992–1999), which were exclusively funded by bilateral and multilateral donors. Subsequent to 2000, Nepal experimented with bank policies like “decentralisation,” “privatisation,” and “community management,” which have been blamed for the disintegration, corruption, quality collapse, learning crisis, and overall disappointment and contemporary anguish against public education in the media and in the general public (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2013; Mathema, 2007). Nepali governments and Nepal's external developmental partners (EDPs) have executed several policy programs and reforms to resolve this; however, nothing has improved.

Nepal executed EFA 2004–2009, a five-year strategic plan within the EFA 2015 NPA framework with three recognised objectives: (a) ensuring access and equity in primary education, (b) enhancing quality and relevance of primary education, and (c) improving

efficiency and institutional capacity. Nepal then implemented the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) from 2009 to 2016 and is currently undertaking the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), which is due for completion in 2023. However, until now there have not been any empirical studies that have examined the emergence, representation, and reception of education policy and its discourses in Nepal. Essentially, the primary stakeholders driving education and its policies are the bureaucrats in the Nepal Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), academicians, cabinet members, and donor agencies and their discourses. Education has played a significant role in enhancing Nepali development into an independent democracy. However, due to long political instability and the impact of donors on the educational mechanism, indecisions have severely hampered the nation's education and policymaking processes. To this, Khaniya (2007) observed:

Lacking an understanding of the process of education reform, and the ways in which the central actor can-and-cannot aid those processes, we tend to take one of several routes. On the one hand, we may mandate results ignoring our ignorance of process [and purpose], and blame or apply negative sanctions to those who do not achieve those results. Alternately, we may provide a range of necessary inputs and hope they lead to desired outcomes, out of ignorance, of what is sufficient. Or we may not look for outcomes at all but instead decide that success means meeting the terms of the contract [donors' contract] that we ourselves wrote. (p. 48)

Thus, this study scrutinises Nepali education policies affected by different governmental processes and practices after the 1950s. Bacchi (2009) infers that "it is important to make the 'problem' implicit in the public policies explicit, and to scrutinise them closely" (p. X). I start with the assertion that, for the most part, education policies, programs and practices have continued as government programs, though this did not mean that the global was absent. Rather, it is possible to detect the education policy regime historically, and

arguably so in the years following the change in global politics after the 1950s. The rise of neoliberal policies after the 1990s in the context of Nepal should be considered. The expansion of neoliberalism as western political projects enmeshed with aid politics and concerns have also arrived in Nepal. The global policymaking activity and the transformation of national and regional education spaces, policies, and outcomes are in turn affiliated with globally oriented agendas and campaigns like Education for All (EFA), which are more closely tied to social and economic forms led by banks and cosmopolitan establishments in the name of development and modernity. Such pejorative discourses operate from the standpoint that many countries, including Nepal, prior to such educational policy borrowing, were underdeveloped and embryonic. Presently, discourses such as global economic power and knowledge-based service economies are foremost the focus of education policies. In brief, the form, content, and scales at which education policies had become more global have influenced the national capacity of policymaking, and it has impacts in the formation of subjectivity of those living in Nepali society. This in turn has produced significant challenges for researchers of education, as education policies are no longer national or indeed made by national states, yet national education has tended to be taken as the basic unit of comparison when it comes to education policy—and this may be both necessary and unavoidable. In this context, I begin with outlining the contours of the changes that have taken place in the governance of education systems because of global processes, national government proposals, and positionality, as well as the challenges of specific representation within education policies. I do this by way of problematisation, which involves the problematising of national and global educational power in specific educational proposals. I then raise the question of governance and focus on the discourse of power, production of knowledges, and truths. The methodological reflections—each with a different dimension through which to explore national and global education processes—discourse, power, and representation logics

of governing in education policymaking and practices, as put forward by Bacchi (2009), are employed. Ball (2015) states that “[d]iscourse is that which constrains and enables writing, speaking, and thinking” (p. 311). In the context of policy research in Nepal, Caddell (2005) argues that “[t]he collection of data is not an objective activity ‘above’ the Nepali landscape, but is firmly situated in and intertwined with broader networks of influence, power and inequality” (p. 468). Her inferences are towards the production of educational strategy that shape education policy and practices in Nepal. She observed that the actual referent to educational problems in Nepal are not the Nepali people but outsiders who have influenced educational decisions and decision makers in Nepal. Similarly, how such exogenously produced policies affects modes of social practices was of deep interest to me. In this regard, Santori (2017) writes:

The process of self-modification and construction in relation to prevailing policy discourses, however, is a task that remains to be accomplished in the field of education policy, where the powers of standardisation and metrics driven accountability are producing new forms of relationality. (p. 277)

In the wake of the new political upheavals of the 1950s and the initiating phase of constitutional rights, both the government and people of Nepal assumed an increasingly critical orientation towards education. The then elitist intellectuals defied “traditional” educational processes and favoured modern education for sustaining democracy and meeting the developmental aspirations of the Nepali people. The political change of that period marks a generous liberal approach to education, contrary to the autocratic Ranas who prohibited education for the majority of the Nepali people. When this extremism of the Ranas receded, it nevertheless marked the beginnings of a “critical drift” in Nepali education. In Nepal, meanwhile, the cosmopolitan political changes in the aftermath of World War 2 and the new discourse of developmental assistance in the conflicting global order of capitalism and

socialism, saw new engagement with western powers in developmental policies, including education and its policies. These practices, problems, and ideas directed by western powers and through their vested politics shaped the educational trajectories of this small nation in the lap of the Himalayas. An early example was the appointment of Hugh. B. Wood, Professor at the University of Oregon, as educational advisor for developing Nepal's initial education policy. Furthermore, primarily the discursive legacy of Lord Macaulay in regards to producing education sector documents and discourses in South Asia including Nepal is dominant (Awasthi, 2008). Secondly, the financial assistance of the United Nations to Nepal in educational processes and its key antecedent thereto have facilitated the quantitative expansion of schooling not educational quality in Nepal (Khaniya & Williams, 2004).

Throughout the course of history, Nepal witnessed frequent political upheavals: (a) the active monarchy of 1960s; (b) constitutional monarchy with multiparty democracy in 1990s; (c) Maoist insurgency of 1996–2006; (d) end of the monarchy in 2008; and (e) federal democratic republic in 2008. During these historical junctures, Nepal's engagement with international organisations and governments intensified, making Nepal the major recipient of foreign aid. One of the major influencers in Nepali education and its educational policymaking is the World Bank. It has continually produced new education sector documents; some officially designed as education policy, other characterised as strategy or review—all proposed to shape education policy and practice of Nepal (Bhatta, 2011; Regmi, 2017). Despite enormous aid to education, progressive educational changes did not transpire, and the education sector remained vehemently criticised by the public (Khanal, 2013; Mathema, 2007; Regmi, 2017). Such outcomes are largely due to the choices in the policies and objectives adopted by the Nepali government and Nepal's external developmental partners governing its education and policymaking procedures in this context. As Bruno (2018) reviews:

Thinking about the questions raised by my Nepali colleague leads us to question basic assumptions about educational practice, not only for Nepal, but for Western systems as well. Questions about financing, management, curriculum, teacher preparation and support, and impact on students and learning often reveal how we have focused on the means without reflection on the ends. (p. 311)

[U]nder neocolonial agenda of education, knowledge creation became political and ideological process. Under such circumstances, many of the Nepali politicians, academics, policy makers and administrators, because of the western education they attended, developed western-modern mindsets. Those educated elites, when they were in the responsible positions to make national educational policies, (uncritically) began to lead the government on “their” path to modernity. (Luitel & Taylor, 2005, as cited in Wagle et al., 2019, p. 37)

Therefore, a reflexive study that problematises assumptions and presuppositions within Nepali educational and practice was required. In this view, a study that explores the historical trajectories and the discursive encounters of Nepali education was necessary to analyse and provide a comprehensive analysis of the state of education and its ways of doing policies. I also often reflect on whose view is being taken of in Nepali education. Is it from the inside or the outside? Why have we assumed development “bikash” as westernisations? I was searching for an answer to these questions. This study, therefore, fills in those gaps and aims to contribute to the field of Nepali education policy studies.

This study pursued the examination of evolving educational practices, the discourse within it and its reception in Nepal. It also sought to explore the extent to which Nepali policymakers in high-level policymaking portfolios perceived their educational development, practice, and processes to be relevant to Nepal and its people. It sought stakeholder views that reveal the subjective perspectives of the dominant actors. Similarly, I analyse the present

state of the Nepali educational system and current trends across a number of crucial variables affecting educational development and locate these within specific discourses that register power plays for the direction of Nepali education. In conjunction, I also sought to understand educational developments and policymaking processes vis-à-vis the problem representation that underpins the policy discourse of their authors. The study emerged from the researcher's critical reflection and interrogation on the development, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal. In other words, the study pursued an understanding of what educational practices and discourses, tailored to represent the perceived educational problems, have directed the Nepali educational system to its current state.

Pokharel (2019) reasons that “Nepal has lagged behind the rest of the developing world in the field of research and development” (n.p.). Given the paucity of knowledge about the practice of educational policymaking and process in Nepal, the researcher used a poststructural approach to policy analysis to analyse the perceived synergy between educational policies and the practice of educational policymaking as it was emerging in Nepal and by which it was justified. The policy-making process is driven by political agenda in Nepal (Budhathoki, 2018; Carney & Bista, 2009). How relevant were these policies and how have the people of Nepal received the problematisation of education and its policymaking process as such by the power, is one of the underlying concerns of the study. Throughout, I consider if educational policymaking processes are always the product of the intertwined networks of national and global powers and, if so, what the underlying assumptions and presuppositions, politics, and practices are that shape education policymaking in Nepal. I also consider if policymakers are equally concerned about critically analysing the process of educational policymaking in Nepal, investigating how such a study might be of value for Nepal. As noted by Nordtveit (2012) “These choices of words [in education policies], constructs, and topics are not simply inconsequential preferences but

rather a selection of priorities with significant direct and indirect consequences” (p. 31). Thus, the study interrogates the very politics determined by the “selection of priorities” inherent within policymaking processes, employing Bacchi’s (2009) poststructural methodology for policy analysis.

In my own experiences with Nepali education, I recall encountering children walking in bare feet, tattered bags without any stationary, pens, or pencils, hungry or dropping school for economic reasons. Teachers would seem to be enjoying socialising and having refreshments in the nearby shop, ordering the students to read by themselves. These teachers always seemed to be discussing politics. Besides being a teacher at the public school, they were also members of political parties, land dealers, and shareholders in a local debit and credit cooperative. These teachers seemed enormously concerned about satisfying the needs and demands of the president of the school management committee (SMCs) rather than being accountable to the students and their education. The president of the SMCs usually is a member of a political party or village elite. The children who attend such public schools are the people from the lower strata of society—the underprivileged. There appeared no ownership, no accountability among teachers, and I was left baffled by the status quo. These life experiences provided the motivation for my study and led to my concern to map the dominant discourses within Nepali education, its policies and policymaking processes.

Rationale of the Research

“Practices construct reality” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 144). Research aims to create reality. Mol (1999) observes this process of knowledge creation as “ontological politics” (pp. 74–75). Nonetheless, this kind of politics in research practice reproduces provisional realities. For that reason, the plans for researching, identifying procedures and other subsidiary research activities, developing a research objective, as well as researcher expertise and researchers’ capacity for substantial contribution to knowledge, are all political acts. A governing body—

in this case, the University—authenticates the process and provides legitimacy to the reproduction.

As a result, being reflective about my own research interest and the process was important. However, while conducting my study, I learnt that research begins with questions relating to the problems (Punch, 2009; Richard, 2015). Sharp and Innis (2019) observed in their research “the influence of public and popular discourses cannot be ignored” (p. 49). Thus, in attempting to understand Nepali education policy and its policymaking processes, I consider both my own experiences, alongside public discourse.

Positionality of Researcher

I was born to illiterate parents in a remote village of Nepal in 1984. I began school in the year 1990. Since my parents were illiterate, they valued education and wanted me to be a well-educated person. However, the public school that I attended in a remote part of Nepal lacked the education culture and quality that would equip me to compete with students from urban areas who pursued their education from private schools. Therefore, my own life, thinking, and worldview has propelled this study, as I believe educational disparity stems from the way that government defines policies. Such practices have far and unforeseen effects in the lives of the people governed. The 1990s marks the revival of democracy in Nepal and Nepali alliances to international educational movements like Education for All. At this time, Nepal committed itself to many global initiatives in education by becoming a signatory on all of these campaigns, which were led by the policies of western cosmopolitan organisations like the banks and bilateral and multilateral organisations. As Ball (2007) articulates, “policies are both [a] system of values and symbolic systems: ways of representing, accounting for and legitimating political decisions” (p. 41), and in the context of Nepal, the study of education policy is still an area of less concern. There has been a lack of attention to situating Nepali education policy changes within the global discourse of

education, which arguably have a significant impact on the practice of education in Nepal. So, problematising the discourses of Nepal's educational reforms, educational policies, and policymaking processes, and ascertaining the role of the key players within its educational politics, I aim to explore the current state of Nepali education, engaging in a critique of dominant practices and processes, while examining the cooperation between the local and the global powers. Nepali educational policies and its discourses are mediated by the narratives of educational restructuring, political representation of concerns, and international donor agencies and their global connections. However, to be precise, my major focus will be on explicating the kind of discourses, policies, and politics that are evident within Nepali educational policymaking processes and practices. Following Ball (2015), I am interested in this as a process of recognising the problem of government that frames and "produces" the existing "problems" of education. As international aid organisations are important stakeholders in Nepali education and its policymaking processes (Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017), they are also equally considered.

Therefore, this study centres on education policy research to help navigate Nepal's educational policymaking discourses and design.

Why Scrutinise Education Policy?

During my childhood I attended a public school in a remote village within the Annapurna region of Nepal. When I was seven years old, my family relocated to a city. In the city, I was admitted to a private school through the altruistic support of a foreigner. I was the only fortunate child in my village to have this opportunity. During my schooling, I did relatively well in my school. I completed my schooling in 2000. After successful completion, I could not decide what further study to pursue, as my parents were poor villagers and there were no means by which they could meet the expense of college in urban areas.

Most of my friends from school went to study in private colleges and expensive universities. They had wealthy parents who could manage the cost incurred. Today, my classmates from school are doctors, engineers, nurses, and a physicist, chemist, and forester. I, on the other hand, had to attend government college, start work in a garment factory, and work as a porter and trekking guide to support my brothers' and my own education. After completion of university education, I worked as a schoolteacher. When I completed my Master's degree in English Literature in 2007, I began to teach at Pokhara University as an English lecturer. I still consider myself privileged, as my friends in the remote villages are either farmers or migrant workers in the gulf nations, Malaysia or India.

In the same year (2007), I founded a not-for-profit organisation called Pathfinder Nepal with a mission to improve and eradicate illiteracy from two villages in Nepal by helping children who have never been to school. It was an independently run project which attained huge success, completely eradicating illiteracy in the village by the year 2009, as "no child was left behind." More than 600 students were sponsored, and full support was provided for all wishing to return to school. My life experiences as an educator have triggered deep-seated questions about education and educational policy. I did not remain quiet. I yearned to find answers to how education and its policies have far and unforeseen repercussions in the lives of people and wanted to understand who was responsible for constructing the possibilities and impossibilities one sees on the ground. I began to take a critical approach to policy, interrogating its procedures and the preferences of policymakers, which brought me closer to the poststructural view that policy is "produced." Today, I still believe educational policies have subjective effects and that they have the power to define prospects. Therefore, I believe a study such as this is imperative, for the light it might shine on policy processes and practices in Nepal. This motivation has led me to ask the following research questions for this study:

1. How are educational policies represented in Nepal? What are critical factors that shape education policy?
2. What should policymakers do to revitalise public education in Nepal? How are continuing discourses determining educational constructs?
3. Can education policies be further inclusive? What are upcoming possibilities and the ongoing reforms defining?

Problematising Educational Procedures

Despite continuous efforts made by authorities to improve the school education system in Nepal, there is little evidence to support current practice. In this context, this research explores the ways education policies are initiated and implemented in the country including: (a) how education policies are evolving in Nepal, (b) how inclusive education policies are in the context of Nepal, and (c) how national and international mechanisms influence education policies of the country.

Nepal's history of methodically formulating education policies is only 70 years in development. Throughout the years, the implementation of policy has earned assorted results. In some assignments, policy has failed partially, whereas in others it has continued declining to a larger extent. The problem confronting Nepali educational policymaking in relation to how power operates at the level of population is significant. Furthermore, how and what of education policy comes about or the knowledge via which educational procedures operates are critical to be identified. Policymakers and authorities in power who streamline the Nepali education system and its processes cannot be all inclusive so excluded issues must be scrutinised. Nepal's inherent problems of ineffective educational exercises, inequality, and exclusion have been intensified by public and official media outcry, both calling for immediate overhaul of its educational policy (Bhattarai, 2016; Budhathoki, 2018; Mathema, 2007).

In addition, this study analyses how high-ranking government officials, policymakers, and members of cabinet think about the process and practices of Nepal's educational policymaking, along with different networks of power and the ways they produce specific provisional realities that result in far and unforeseen repercussions in the lives of Nepali people. To scrutinise the perspective of powerful influences who have played a crucial role in formulating education and its policies is to engage in an understanding of educational governance. To this, Bacchi (2009) articulates, “their [governing authorities’] version of ‘problems’ are formed or constituted in the legislation, reports and technologies used to govern” (p. 33). The dominant discourse that is locatable in such policy forms is socially and culturally produced. Such policies can be interrogated as both texts and discourses (Ball, 1993). Bacchi (2009) argues that “calling something a ‘discourse’ means putting its truth status into question” (p. 35). Furthermore, according to Bacchi (2009), “[t]hese truth claims can be described as ‘knowledges,’ rather than as ‘knowledge’ to assert their contested status” (p. 35).

Theoretical Framework

In this thesis, I work from a poststructuralist framework. This framework is an accommodating tool for analysing policy. It politicises policy proposals and representations and seeks to locate discourses of power within specific policies in a normatively justified way, always understanding the realities represented in policy are either produced or constructed. It analyses structures and rules that constitute discourses, or the conditions under which these presumed “truths” as representations of the powerful emerge and change as new discourses circulate (Bacchi, 2009; Ball, 2015). Thus, with changes in who exercises power, strategic priorities and representations, in the form of different discourses, may re-emerge or be transformed. Thus, problematisation forms temporary “truths” having subjective effects in the lives of people (Bacchi, 2009). Therefore, a poststructuralist paradigm comprehends the

subjects of policy as the subjects of discourse (Alcorn, 1994). Nepali education and its policies' emergence, representation, and reception under the governance of the Government of Nepal and bilateral and multilateral agencies, experiences the similar kind of oscillations between global and local discourses (Khanal, 2013). As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019) notes: "The problem constitutive of the present historical interregnum is not that of a lack of ideas but that of taking ideas from a singular 'province' of the world and making it into universal knowledge" (p. 122). As "research is a political practise" (Bacchi, 2012b, p. 152), I begin this project with an acceptance that my subjectivity has its own impact upon the arguments I put forward in this thesis, producing its own discursive construction of Nepali education and educational policies.

Goodwin and Bacchi (2016) situate what the problem is represented to be (WPR) as a research framework that "provide[s] a succinct and accessible overview of what it means to analyse education policy from a Foucault-influenced poststructural perspective" (p. 4). Power represents distinctive matters as solutions to specified educational problems—political actions legislated by governments. Thus, government-specific representation are problem representation. Such problematisation thus have effects that are either exclusive or inclusive for those governed through policy (Bacchi, 2009). Therefore, WPR questions how governing takes place through policy practices. WPR is a Foucault-inspired poststructuralist framework that builds on understanding how policies govern (Bacchi, 2009). The study of Nepali education, using the WPR paradigm, will help unveil the historically constructed educational inequalities and prejudices in Nepali education and its policymaking processes.

This study primarily contributes a normative understanding of education and educational policy development in Nepal but may offer something of value to other developing countries that are like Nepal in their relationship with global policy imperatives shaped by donor interests, developmental aid, international governance, and the role played

by cosmopolitan institutions in education and educational policy development. The study also contributes to an understanding of controversial debates in international development-focused educational policy, and shares how donors have influenced the development, representation, and relevance of education policies. Aid conditionality, politics, and imposition have become the defining characteristics of developmental aid from banks, cosmopolitan organisations, and donor governments (Regmi, 2017). As a result, this thesis contributes towards comprehensive debates in international educational policies and politics.

Being situated within the Nepali culture, my personal experiences directed me often to streamline educational discourses in sets that reflected those practices and experiences. Bacchi (1999) articulates that neither policy problems nor solutions are objectively given. Larsson (2018) enunciates poststructuralist analyses “also emphasize the need for self-reflection by policy-makers and critical engagement on the part of scholars” (p. 104). Therefore, “reflection” has been an important aspect of this research.

Construction of Dissertation

This thesis is structured into six chapters that provide critical analysis of the central problems enveloping the research questions. Following the concerns detailed in this chapter, an overview of the following chapters’ concise content is as follows:

Chapter 2. This chapter provides a short history of Nepali education. Nepal is a nation with a population of nearly 29.5 million people (Bailey, 2019). It is one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world, with about one-third of its people living below the poverty line (Country Watch, 2019). This chapter details Nepali educational history from the early periods, prior to the 1950s, to the current period that can be said to have emerged after the 1950s. This includes an outline of the neoliberal model of education and its policymaking following the 1990s, sponsored by Nepal’s external development partners together with the World Bank (WB) and other international powers. After the 1990s, it is noted that Western

powers almost exclusively delineate the roadmap of Nepali education policies. This historical overview provides a purview for analysing Nepali educational policy discourse in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3. This chapter explicates the interview methodology and method of analysis employed in this aspect of the study. Research is a methodical, organised, and logical procedure of investigation (Punch, 2009; Richards, 2015). The questions presumed to be scrutinised by the researcher dictates the method for a particular research methodology. There is a reciprocal relationship between questions and method applied in a research endeavour. The process of planning and developing research connected by logical and systematic processes requires “questioning rather than problem-solving” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 262).

I adopted a qualitative research methodology to scrutinise “problems” represented by dominant authorities in Nepali education and polices. Furthermore, I employed Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) “Poststructural Interview Analysis: Politicizing ‘Personhood’ for Data Analysis,” as “problems do not exist outside of the ways in which they are thought about or conceptualised” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 262). I chose a poststructuralist method of policy analysis from *Analysing Policy: What is the Problem Represented to be* (Bacchi, 2009) for the following reasons:

1. It allowed exploration of Nepali education and its policies through a focus on the complex procedures of educational governance that shape individual lives, perception of reality, values, and beliefs. Thus, the Foucault-inspired poststructuralist approach to policy analysis investigates Nepal’s historical relations in the formation of knowledges about education and its policies. The approach helped ascertain “changes simultaneously affecting several discursive formations, including: the inversions of hierarchies, change in the nature of the directing principle, and functional displacements [of truths in Nepali education]” (Beasley, 2015, p. 1440).

2. It assumes that “policies are contingent historical creations, [and] human constructions that produces effects” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 7).
3. It also assumes that “[w]e are governed through problematisation” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 263).

The analytical nature of the study on the topic about which little was known in Nepal demanded an accommodating interviewing method. The imperative of the study was to explore the emergence, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal. This led to the formulation of questions, such as: What led to several policy reforms in Nepal and who are the key authorities in defining and representing such policies? Do they reflect how the discourses created are representing the voice of a specific category while silencing others? In so doing, how do they see the reception of the education policies and practices in Nepal?

Chapter 4. This chapter provides a critical analysis of Nepali education and its policies reflecting Carol Bacchi’s (2009) poststructural approach to policy analysis as articulated in *Analysing Policy: What is the problem represented to be?* It interrogates Nepali educational policymaking processes and practices by analysing their effects from a variety of Foucault-inspired perspectives, using concepts such as governance, discourse, and power, and explores the kinds of politics that are involved in the framing of Nepali education and its policies. It also analyses different networks of power, their engagement with politics and policy in the context of Nepal, and its involvement with a variety of developmental partners including numerous western institutions and countries and the role they played in framing the contemporary context of Nepali education and its policies. This chapter also provides an argument as to why an insider’s perspective is necessary. Therefore, this analysis diagnoses educational policy concept, categories, and any policy representation as provisional. Bacchi (2009) underscores the need for reviewing “conceptual logic,” “discursive practices,” and representation as “problem representation.” This chapter therefore undertakes a poststructuralist analysis of Nepali educational policy.

Chapter 5. This chapter dispels the link between participants' perspectives and the values underpinning Nepali educational policies. Conceptualising Nepali educational policymaking process and practices through the lens of research participants, it analyses the data and infers the discursive trajectories of educational policymaking in relation to discourses and power synergies between national and global authorities, policy networks, and politics. It invites reflection on what provides the substance for the findings for the emergence, representation, and reception of educational policymaking practices and processes in Nepal. It paves the direction for the discussion, recommendations, and conclusion in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter 6. This chapter continues the discussion around the findings related to emergence, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal in relation to the discourses shaping Nepali education and its policies. It discusses the implications of the findings and recommendations for further research and for the knowledges of education in Nepal. The focus is deliberately on the ideologies and politics within policymaking procedures as the poststructuralist framework locates social problems within the realms of power.

Conclusion

I do consider the implications and limitations of this study and believe some potential pathways for further research developing from the thesis. Research was required to address the matters of power in Nepali education and its policymaking processes and, in addition, to understand how power produces discrepancies in Nepali society through policies in education. While literature regarding education policies exists in detailing knowledge about access, relevance, quality, equity, and gender parity along with the subject of policy and development. Literature is silent about analysing education policy discursively to improve educational policymaking processes. To understand the legislative functions of government,

the objective of this study was to analyse the contemporary perspectives of high-level education section leaders and cabinet members on the cultural dimension of policymaking processes. This research contributes to the literature on the role of power in policymaking processes in Nepali education. Through a qualitative study using WPR design, leaders in government and educational policymaking portfolios were interviewed. Documents were analysed, to identify Nepali policymakers and cabinet members' perspectives on Nepal's educational policy processes and in shaping and reshaping education trajectories. Such research supports policy, pedagogy, and everyday practices in exploring the concerns and issues of minorities to ensure more egalitarian and inclusive policy practices.

Chapter 2

*...both in relation to patterns of convergence in education policy
and the recontextualisation of policy, we need to be asking the question,
“whose interests are served?”*

Ball (2008, p. 128)

Matters of Education in Nepal

How are we to investigate and value Nepali education in its present construction?

Considering Bista (2018), it is critical that:

Both local and transnational realities demand that our research and scholarship transcend conventional frameworks, disciplinary boundaries, and apolitical framing.

We [Nepal] need broader, bolder vision [in doing education policy]. (p. II)

The progress of development of Nepali education is complex. Governed by participations and supervisions of assorted stakeholders, political lethargy and policy unreceptiveness are holdups of its educational reforms so far (see Wagle et al., 2019). Neoliberal educational policies initiated in the late 1980s with the proposals of the World Bank in Nepal have had substantial impacts in Nepal's education policymaking processes and in its educational trajectories so far (Regmi, 2017; Sharma Poudyal, 2017). Critics argue that western purview and governance in Nepali education have created various discrepancies in Nepal. Wagle et al. (2019) noted, “Such uncritically accepted dominances were observed in many spheres of national educational plan and policies” (p. 36).

The biases between public and private school attendees and the meagre performance of public schools in Nepal is one such example (Khanal, 2013; Methama, 2007). As a result, researchers argue that neoliberal educational policies have had a disparaging influence on

Nepali education and its policymaking processes (Regmi, 2017; Sharma Poudyal, 2017).

Bista (2018) appropriately reasons that educational research and scholarship must promote unconventional ways of thinking and doing policy. In the case of Nepal, Nepali educators and researchers need to review its education and education policymaking processes more critically. Policies currently restructured by exogenous educational objectives and provisions are not in the interest of Nepali people. Such policies are blamed to be deficient for producing functional results, an explanation to current educational woes in Nepal (Khanal, 2015; Mathema, 2007; Regmi, 2017, 2019c). Wagle et al. (2019) explain:

Being mindful at the discomforts initiated by decontextualized school curriculum in past, it is the right time for Nepal to cultivate its national culture through relevant education practices. If current sociopolitical changes as discussed above [meaning Nepal's political and social transitions from the 1950s to current times] are not addressed by effective exercises on education, perhaps, falling under neo-liberal political agenda of secularism, and hegemonic globalization, the country is likely to fall further. (p. 38)

Shrestha and Bhattarai (2017) hark back to Nepali privatisation policies as a prodigious historical event that emerged without internal economic engineering by the leniency of exogenous financial endowment. Ball (1998) suggested this phenomenon as a cosmopolitan outcome, the result of market and major policies discourse. The market redefined new education as an economic private good. Some national governments (in this case, Nepal) participated spontaneously in the chariot run of global agendas backed by bilateral and multilateral institutions. The agendas of these big corporations not only ignored the concerns of local societies and nations but also robbed recipients of the opportunity to develop a native discourse, by forcing people within a specific territory into categorisations such as the third world (Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017).

Supranational governments generate deleterious representation of local realities, sustained by narrow worldviews of domestic rulers who capitulate, buying into the global discourse. Nepali education and its policies are politicised by exogenous governance. In particular, when Nepal began its planning approach to education under western guidance in the 1950s, the period in the aftermath of the Cold War, education policy processes were defined by values and assumptions of western experts and technocrats (see Awasthi, 2008). It was during this time that the United States emerged as a key player in Nepali policymaking processes. Presupposing western democracy and modernity binaries between communism and democracy, developed and underdeveloped, poor and rich, such narratives were romanticised by Nepali elites in Kathmandu, which had a pejorative effect on Nepali education and its policymaking endeavours (Pigg, 1996; Regmi, 2019b; Robertson, 2019a; Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2017; Wagle et al., 2019).

International donors, aid agencies, multinationals contributors, and the Nepali governments have consistently failed to ensure operational educational policies for Nepal. Primarily, American and European development strategies and modernity discourses that corresponds to western social and economic values and principles have no relevance to the Nepali context. This imported educational production is unmatched to Nepal's socio-material background (Awasthi, 2008; Khanal, 2013; Koirala, 2008; Regmi, 2017).

Modern education in Nepal is a western construct framed by western worldviews. The United States of America and prominent European countries have funded and planned Nepali education using a top-down model without assessing its relevance to the Nepali people and context (Maudslay, 2014). Under this type of model, policies travel from the cosmopolitan hub to national capitals, a process by which the local national context is marginalised threefold—firstly by cosmopolitan hubs and then by the national elites. In the case of Nepal, such marginalisation has been produced by Singh durbar, Kathmandu, and by

the Nepali government's administrative hub (Jha, 2014; Neupane, 2017). Regmi (2017) exclaims, "neoliberalism [is] perpetuated deeply into educational policies and plans devised at later stages" (p. 199).

Therefore, bearing in mind Ball's (1993) definition, I interrogate policy as discourse. My personal life experience as a Nepali embedded within its sociocultural realities is mostly contingent and contradictory to that which I am often asked by outsiders, being inside vis-à-vis the dominant multiplicities of Nepali society. Having lived under these multiplicities, and under the governance of today's global uniformity, I politicise to understand the emergence, representation, and relevance of Nepali education policies and the challenges and possibilities Nepal is confronting. What I see today is a puzzling mix of the use and abuse of discursive power by the powerful in power. In this context, I must question, "how we [Nepal and the Nepali people] are governed" (Bacchi, 2009, p. 46).

The History of Education in Nepal

Nepal is one of the poorest nations in the world, with soaring illiteracy rates and the second highest level of child labour (Chakrabarty et al., 2011). Geographically, Nepal is located in South Asia in-between two giants, China and India. It is a landlocked country with cultural, ethnic, religious, and geographical diversity. Nepal was declared the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal on December 28, 2008 after the monarchy was abolished. The per capita, Nepal's GDP is \$1,200USD, with 25% of the population living below the poverty line. The highest levels of poverty are within rural areas, which are scattered throughout the hills and valleys of the Himalayan Ranges. In these areas, Nepali children are often required to assist in increasing the household income by abandoning their education and entering the workforce (Baker & Hinton, 2001). Because of poverty, polygamy, and gender discrimination (Baker & Hinton, 2001), Nepali children are prematurely forced into the labour market, and thus they are required to abandon their education (Overall, 2017). Added

to this, in April 2015, a devastating earthquake ravaged Nepal, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of Nepali people. Because of this natural disaster, significant damage occurred to an already weak infrastructure that compounded the extreme poverty already being experienced by Nepali children. In this research, I endeavour to understand the nature of Nepal's educational policy development and its processes within this context.

Locating the Historical: An Ephemeral Vision

The Nepali education system has many problems. Every government introduces new educational policies, and debates on reforming school level education are continuously emerging. Of these, policy reform is a basic matter. On the one hand, politicians and policymakers speak about global education to make our people globally competent in order to thrive in the global market. At the same time, they also paradoxically talk about the inability of global educational strategies to address Nepal's local needs. Historically, the former debate has been practiced in Nepal since the 1950s whereas the latter debate in more recent times. Therefore, it is important to understand the Nepali history to envisage its educational lines.

The Dominated Past

Until 1951, Nepali people's access to education was available to only a few elite families. During the internal colonial rule of the Rana family (1846–1951), Nepali citizens were systematically prevented from accessing education due to the belief that education would empower citizens and possibly disrupt their tyrannical regime, which up until this point had been sustained by coercive action rather than the democratic principles of norms and values. Since the end of the Rana regime and Nepal's first experiment with democracy in the same year of 1951, Nepali people's access to education has not only improved but has also significantly expanded. Consequently, Nepal witnessed a massive improvement in its

literacy rate and the number of schools attended by children. Adult literacy rates grew from 5 per cent in 1951 to 63.9 per cent in 2011 (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

However, the country's currently prevailing school liberalisation policy, which is largely orchestrated and sponsored by neoliberal international monetary agencies (such as The World Bank, The Asian Development Bank, and International Monetary Fund) and international aid agencies (such as USAID, DFID, and JICA), has resulted in the deterioration of the public school system upon which the most marginalised in Nepal are reliant. Those in the bottom of Nepal's caste and class strata as well as those who are geographically marginalised can barely afford to take advantage of current education policies. As a result, the current ongoing educational policies and the ongoing privatisation of the schooling system in Nepal needs to critically scrutinised.

From this context, the proposed study seeks to analyse neoliberalism and the educational policies of Nepal, as a whole, with a focus on the emergence, representation, and reception of such policies. The proposed study will explore critical concerns in relation to marginalisation and the restriction of people's access to school education in Nepal. The study literature emphasises, inter alia, how neoliberalism has informed Nepali education policy; the impacts that neoliberal education policies have had on the lives of Nepali people, particularly those in the most marginalised populations; and, above all, the ways in which Nepal can shift its dependency on neoliberal international agencies to a more autonomous model of self-determination to ensure that educational planning and policy formulation and representation are locally initiated and meet the needs of the Nepali people.

A Brief History of Education

This section will provide a brief account of the history of Nepal and its educational development prior to the establishment of what is known as modern day Nepal.

Historical development and Nepali education

The historical development of Nepali education can be traced as follows:

1. The Early Medieval (400–879 A.D.)
2. The Rana (1846–1950)
3. Nepal's First Experience with Democracy (1951–1959)
4. Panchayat (autocratic monarch period) (1960–1990)
5. Multiparty Democracy (1990 onwards)

The Early Medieval (400-879 A.D.)

The history of education in Nepal can be traced back to the Lichhavi period (400–879 AD). Licchavi rulers recruited priests and monks to impart knowledge in Gurukul (i.e., Hindu residential school system), which embraced and promoted Sanskrit language as the means of instruction (Vir, 1988). However, Gurukul was only accessible to members of the upper elite castes, such as the Brahmins and Kshatriya.

From 879 to 1200 A.D. Nepal experienced a period of non-educational achievements. The Mallas substituted the Lichhavis rulers in 1200 A.D. and ruled over Nepal until 1769 A.D. The Mallas rulers believed education was essential to empower their citizens. Therefore, contrary to the Lichhavis' elitist emphasis, the Mallas encouraged everyone, including the untouchables, to pursue education. However, they also encouraged and preferred Brahminical institutions over Buddhist ways of teaching. Simultaneously, they introduced western culture including the western education system by allowing missionaries to practice their teachings in the country (Vir, 1988).

In 1769, Prithivi Narayan Shah, the king of Gurkha, conquered Nepal then scattered tiny kingdoms, which laid the foundation for modern day Nepal. During his time, the already developing education policy came to a halt as his administration was engaged in expanding

Nepal's territories on the one hand while resisting a major threat in the form of the East India Company, which had already colonised giant neighbouring nation, India (Sharma, 1990).

Education Throughout the Rana Regime (1846– 1951)

The coup of 1846, also known as Kot Parva, gave rise to the power of the Ranas, which established an autocratic family rule in the nation from 1846 to 1950 by keeping the monarch as its figurehead (Caddle, 2007a). During the Rana regime, the development of education saw both a rise and fall. While some of the Rana rulers such as Padma Shamsheer, Chandra Shamsheer, and Dev Shamsheer showed their willingness to develop education systems, other Ranas saw education as a means of awareness and empowerment, and thus constrained Nepali citizens from education in order to sustain their autocratic regime (Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2017).

The Ranas' connection to the western world, especially England, familiarised them with the modern education system and institution. On returning home from his tour of Europe in 1850–51, Junga Bahadur Rana—the first Rana prime minister—brought back two teachers and opened an elementary English school in his palace to educate the Ranas and the children of elite families. It was the first formal school to be established in Nepal.

Later, the school became affiliated with the Indian Educational board, and the teachings were organised strictly as per Indian standards. As a result, English was both the medium of teaching and examination. This led to a focus on an English education by the ruling elites, which constructed the supremacy of the English language over traditional Sanskrit-based education in Nepal. In 1891, English education still carried a higher status and prestige than did traditional Sanskrit. Nepalese students would go to India to undertake the high school entrance examination. But, when the Examination Centre in Kathmandu opened in 1929, this trend came to an end (Sharma, 1990).

Major changes in government education policy under the Ranas took place in 1901 when Dev Shamsheer Rana became prime minister. He recommended a public primary education system, implementing Nepali as the language of instruction. This change was a significant shift as the medium of instruction up until this point had been in Sanskrit. He also opened Durbar High School to the children of the public. Simultaneously, more primary schools emerged in Kathmandu, the Hill region, and the Terai during the Rana regime (Vir, 1988).

Nepal's Initial Democratic Practice (1950–1959)

The people's movement in 1951 ended the Rana oligarchy and installed democracy for the first time in the history of Nepal. Nevertheless, Nepal's experiment with the first democracy did not last for long as King Mahendra banned political parties in 1959 and instituted the Panchayat system (discussed below). Despite political instability, this period was important as the government commenced systematic educational planning which has continued to this day. The government also recognised education as the right of the people (Vir, 1988). Further, the government set up an education board that held its first meeting in November, 1953. The commission advised the government to appoint an educational committee in 1952 to administer and develop educational facilities in Nepal. According to the suggestions of the board, Nepal's National Educational Planning Commission (NNEPC) was formed to review the educational facilities and to make a plan for national universal education in Nepal (NNEPC, 1956). This commission proposed four major goals:

1. Five years of universal primary education within 25 years;
2. Multipurpose secondary education for about 20 percent of the nation's youth, and at least one high school in every one of the 32 political districts within ten years;
3. A national residential university within five years, and some form of higher education for about 5 percent of the youth within ten years;

4. Adult education (including literacy) for all who desire it within 15 years (NNEPC, 1956, p. x).

As the Nepali peoples' attraction to education increased dramatically during this period, communities established schools by themselves, with minimal support from the government. Nevertheless, as Khanal (2013) states, the challenge was to control the unplanned growth of schools by the government, although all citizens were given the opportunity to access schools during this period. The government also focused on improving an education plan, policies, administration, and infrastructure through the National Education System Plan (NESP) between 1971 and 1976. It was Nepal's first comprehensive education policy document (Caddle, 2007; Khanal, 2013; Sharma & Bhattarai, 2017). However, others criticised that this period intended to homogenise the Nepali population by imposing one medium of instruction; that is, mainly the use of Nepali language when teaching (Awasthi, 2004; Phyak, 2016; Yadav, 2007).

It should be emphasised that if Nepali is to become the true national language, then we must insist that its use be enforced in the primary school. Otherwise, Nepali, though learned may remain a "foreign" language rather than the child's basic thinking language. Local dialects and tongues, other than standard Nepali, should be vanished from the school and playground as early as possible in the life of the child. (NNEPC, 1956, p. 96)

Panchayat (Active Monarchy) and Education in Nepal (1960–1990)

Before the 1950s, the repressive Rana rulers prohibited education for the common Nepali. They believed that educated Nepali people would confront their tyrannic rules (Khanal, 2010). The end of the Rana regime saw an already developing primary school system to mushroom during this phase, with an increase in the number of enrolments of

students in schools (see Table 1). Contrary to the Rana regime, the King supported the development of education in the country. However, it was yet to be determined.

Table 1

Student Enrolments in Nepal, 1950–1970

Year	% Primary school	% Secondary school	% Higher secondary school
1950	0.9	19.0	20.5
1961	15.8	12.0	24.4
1970	32.0	23.0	16.0

Note. Source: National Educational System Plan (NESP) for 1971–76 (Ministry of Education, 1971).

Democracy and Education After the 1990s

The Panchayat came to an end due to the peoples’ uprising of 1990. Post-1990 “education was viewed by policy makers as central to societal transformation” (Carney & Bista, 2009, p. 197). Although the foothold of a budding education system was yet to be sustainable, the government adopted liberal (that is, privatised) educational policies, which opened up avenues for a private educational sector to develop (Bhattarai, 2016). Without its proper analysis and critical questioning, Nepali stakeholders and policymakers participated and simultaneously adopted the outcomes of the World Education Forum 1990, committing Nepal to the global campaign of Education for All (EFA) (Bhattarai, 2016; Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2013; Khaniya & Willams, 2004).

Basic and Primary Educational Master Plan

With technical support from donors, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the government developed the Basic and Primary Education Master Plan (BPEP) 1991–2002, a comprehensive educational plan that aimed to systematically restructure the educational system in the country to improve primary education. As it was planned under technical assistance, it opened up spaces for international agencies to impinge

upon Nepal's internal educational policies (Bhattarai, 2016; Caddle, 2007; Carney & Bista, 2009; Khaniya & Williams 2004).

Basic and Primary Education Plan (BPEP)

Later, the Ministry of Education (MoE) implemented the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) 1992–1997. Alongside the World Bank and other bilateral and multilateral agencies, such as DANIDA, the Japan International co-operation Agency (JICA), and the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Nepali government was financially assisted to design and implement BPEP. The second phase of this program (BPEP 1999–2004) was implemented on a basket-funding modality with the support of the governments from Denmark, Finland, Norway as well as from the European Union (EU), and the World Bank under a core investment program (CIP) and JICA and UNICEF as part of non-core investment plans (Bhattarai, 2016).

Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP, 2003–2010)

The Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) initiated in Nepal in 2003 with a basket fund of USD 74.8 million, is Nepal's most important investment in its education system to date. SESP was implemented for seven years from 2003 to 2010 by the Nepal Ministry of Education, which was financially assisted by the Asian Development Bank and DANIDA. Its objective was to expand the quality of secondary education as per the need of Nepal's development. Furthermore, the key goals of SESP were:

1. To develop the quality and relevance of secondary education in public schools;
2. To improve access of secondary schooling of girls and students from poor and disadvantaged groups and districts in public schools; and,

3. To enhance the organisational capacity, management of central, district educational establishments, and public secondary schools based on the decentralised system of design and administration.

This ambitious program had four important elements, each with its own separate goals such as: to increase equitable access to an improved learning environment particularly for educationally disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities, and female students; design relevant curriculum, technically enhanced assessment, and accessible instructional materials; to plan integrated systems of teacher education, development, and management; and enhance institutional capacity in the school sector established on a system of decentralised planning and management.

Community School Support Program (CSSP, 2003–2009)

The CSSP was a World Bank–funded program in Nepal launched by GoN in 2003. It intended to extend community management to all Nepali public schools and to empower local stakeholders in educational planning and policymaking. However, it failed to gain its intended results (Regmi, 2017). It was hoped that, by facilitating ownership at the local level, the quality of schooling would be enhanced. However, to Nepal’s dismay, schooling was instead captured by political parties and, as a result of their policies, educational quality and development strongly suffered in Nepal.

School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009–2016)

The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) was a long-term strategic plan that designated the goals and objectives as outlined by the Government of Nepal and Ministry of Education over the period beginning from the fiscal year 2009/10 until 2015/16. The plan included important policy interventions and data on essential financial support for Nepal to implement related policies. These are discussed in more depth below.

The SSRP was an extension of the ongoing plans of the earlier Education for All (EFA) initiative, Secondary Education Support Program (SESP), Community School Support Program (CSSP), and Teacher Education Project (TEP). Founded upon the experiences and gains Nepal had made in the education sector, the SSRP also presented new improvements categorised by strategic interventions such as the restructuring of school education, improvement in quality of education, and institutionalisation of performance accountability (MoE, 2009).

By putting forward these reform proposals, the plan has positioned emphasis on educational access for out-of-school children and assured the learning of all children by lifting efficiency and improving effectiveness in the provision of services in the education sector (MoE, 2009).

School Sector Development Plan (SSDP, 2016–2023)

The Government of Nepal has developed a largescale School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for 2016 to July 2023 period which is to continue its efforts to safeguard equitable access to quality education for all. The SSDP has been mapped out for the first five years (2016–2021) of this seven-year initiative. It was prepared through a participatory process directed by the Nepal Ministry of Education and is expected to graduate Nepal from the status of a Least Developed Country (LDC) by 2022.

Furthermore, the SSDP is an important policy that would facilitate Nepal attainment of the international vision of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) and to achieve the its objective of becoming a middle-income country by 2030. The key forces of this policy are the achievements, lessons learned, and unfinished agenda of the Education for All Programme (EFA, 2004–2009) as well as the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009–2016), both of which are managed under the Education for All National Plan of Action (EFANPA, 2001–2015). SSDP is the all-embracing strategic plan for the education sector and

has been engineered for accomplishing the goals and objectives of the national periodic development plan and section 4 of the SSG. It intends to guarantee lifelong learning for all, and is jointly funded by the Government of Nepal and nine financing partners (MoE, 2016).

Education for All (EFA)

A decade after the Education for All (EFA) promise, the Government of Nepal developed a long term EFA National Plan of Action (EFA, NPA 2001–2015). Correspondingly, the government also launched the Education for All Program (EFAP, 2004–2009). This initiative was implemented with financial support from the governments of Denmark, Finland, Norway, and the United Kingdom (UK), the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank (as pool donors) as well as JICA, UNICEF, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (as non-pool donors). The aim of the program was to achieve the six goals of the EFA plan in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013). Thus, from 1990 onwards, donor-led education policies have been given significant priority by the Government of Nepal (Bhattarai; 2016; Caddle, 2007; Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2016). Nevertheless, a critical debate on their legitimacy and relevance to educating Nepali populations is yet to take place in the public arena. Despite the donors' well-intentioned claims, Regmi (2017) and Sharma Poudyal (2017) argue that donor-led education policies have asserted a neoliberal aid agenda. On the one hand, it creates a dependency on aid; on the other it neglects local circumstances such that to have access to education pivots around sociocultural-politico dimensions (Joshi, 2016; Matheme, 2007; Maudsley, 2014).

Meanwhile, with the backing of aid agencies, the Government of Nepal proposed a School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP, 2009–2015). This was mostly the same as the goals stated in the BPEP except it considered grade 1 to 8 as basic education and 9 to 12 as secondary

education. At present, Nepal is in phase II of the SSRP policies, which emphasises quality, equity, and relevance of school education (Bhattarai, 2016).

Aforementioned policies focused on structural changes neglecting the fact that there were layers of interlinked other dimensions significant to educational policies and programs. For instance, donor-led education policies failed to realise the pluralist nature of Nepali society. Furthermore, instead of equipping peoples with education, the donor-led “one-size-fits-all” approach has further marginalised linguistically, culturally, economically, and socially disadvantaged populations (Carney & Bista, 2009). The donors have failed to acknowledge insiders’ sentiments and concerns, as highlighted by Khanal (2010):

The deep-rooted bureaucratic culture in government offices along with the tradition of power monopolisation by top-level officials has been a key impediment to the success of power devolution. In the meantime, donor led liberal educational policies were heavily loaded by the discourse of decentralisation and privatisation [and largely overlooked the peoples’ concern at the local level]. (p. 156)

In a similar vein, Regmi (2017) explains that donor-led education policies are a market-driven strategy, which have undermined the public voices of the population:

Review of [the World] Bank’s key documents shows that its educational policy recommendations are guided by three key tenets of neoliberalism; marketisation, privatisation, and decentralisation. The World Bank takes education as a form of market commodity that must have certain economic value. Hence, the Bank is interested in investing in education because, like other sectors such as hydropower, investment in education has “the greatest pay-off.” (p. 3)

Advent of Neoliberalism and its Destructive Path in the Nepali Education System

Neoliberalism as political economic practices “proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey, 2005, p. 2), and is mainly inspired by Xiaopingism, Volckerism, Thatcherism, and Reagansim between 1978 and 1980. Neoliberalism has become the driving force for Bretton Wood Industries as well as aid agencies to assert their vested political, economic, and developmental interests (Baltodano, 2012; Blum & Ullman, 2012; Harvey, 2005; Majhanovich & Geo-JaJa, 2013). Furthermore, neoliberalism has influenced the Third World or, more recently, the Global South including Nepal to privatise their social services, replacing the role of the state by international and global institutional frameworks. Many argue that the western world embraces neoliberalism projects, as a soft power strategy, to colonise other non-western nations (Klein, 2007; Kless, 2008; Monbiot, 2015). Citing the engagement of the World Bank in Nepali education for several decades, Regmi (2016) illustrates how neoliberal projects exercise “soft power,” “colonisation,” “hegemonisation,” and, above all, “territorialisation”:

The hegemonic presence of neoliberal thought in the Nepalese educational policy context has its historical roots. During the 1950s, in fact after the advent of democracy in Nepal in 1951, many educational elites got opportunities to study abroad. After their return, they held key government positions and played decisive roles in formulating policies and devising plans for Nepal.... However, their training and qualifications earned at Western universities had almost no capacity to devise plans according to the contextual realities of Nepal. (pp. 10–11)

Neoliberal Influence and Critical Discourse in Nepali Education

Neoliberalisation has given rise to the privatisation of the schooling system including higher degree studies. Consequently, as has been noted earlier, the public school system is deteriorating when the most marginalised population rely upon it (Bhatta, 2011; Khaniya & Williams, 2004; Regmi, 2016). A new mindset has recently emerged in Nepal that assumes being educated is an individual's responsibility—a typical neoliberal idea. Many in the bottom of social hierarchy as well as marginalised on the basis of Nepal's complex geographies can barely afford and take advantages from the currently ongoing extreme right bent education policy and privatised schooling system of the country (Andersson & Lindkvist, 2000; Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017).

According to the National Institute for Research and Training (2017):

[In Nepal, educational stakeholders] SSDP architects and national decision-makers (NPC, MoF, other ministries and development partners) must have a shared vision of the national development goals, the role of education in achieving those goals, and the budget parameters that determine what can be achieved with current and projected resources. This can only happen if education reform has political champions inside and outside MoE. Their support can be won by presenting them with compelling cases of Nepal's educational problems, what happens if these problems are not solved, what needs be done to solve them and the responsibilities of stakeholders in contributing to solutions. Follow-up mechanisms need to be in place to ensure that stakeholders follow through on commitments they make. (p. 155)

In Nepal, educational stakeholders have experimented with different educational strategies like decentralisation and privatisations. The ideas of “decentralisation” and “privatisation” in educational policies are the result of a neoliberal foreign aid development agencies and their influence in Nepal since the late 1980s (Joshi 2016; Khanal, 2013;

Rappleye, 2011). It was believed that a neoliberal policy would improve the access, quality, and management in educational sectors. The components required for the enactment of neoliberal educational policies in Nepal were exported from extraneous organisations. Their function was to define the concerns of cosmopolitan institutions, the major contributors for educational funding (Carney & Bista, 2009). As a result, the neoliberal policies have trickled down into the education services and policies (Bhattarai, 2016; Carney, 2008; Mathema, 2007; Maudslay, 2014).

The donors' top-down model has been detrimental to the formulation and implementation of educational policies in Nepal since the 1990s. Educational policies were formulated by international organisations in collaboration with officials from the Ministry of Education. The interests of the prevailing state power principally articulated educational policies before the 1990s. However, post-1990s policies acknowledged egalitarian models in policies regardless of elitist model in practices (Khanal, 2013). After the restoration of democracy in the 1990s, the democratic government of Nepal adopted liberal educational policies, opening private sectors to contribute in education (Bhattarai, 2016). Khaniya and Williams (2004) clarify how policymakers and stakeholders in Nepal lack “a real understanding of the processes of educational change, and the ways in which central actors can—and cannot—aid those processes, planners and policymakers tend to take one of several routes” (p. 327). Instead of prioritising evidence-based studies to explore the required reforms and provisions to develop quality education, policymakers and administrators engaged in applying faith-based policies one after another or even resorting to multiple policies at any one time. Parajuli and Das (2013) declare that the “quality of education is poor in Nepal” (p. 148). To address this dismal quality, the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) emphasised quality education at all levels of education (Ministry of Education, 2009). However, again, making sense of policy relevance to the local community became problematic. Educational

inequalities and injustice prevailed. Therefore, the influence of neoliberalism in the emergence, representation, and relevance of the education system of Nepal needs an in-depth inquiry and holistic exploration to make suggestions for what Nepal could do.

External donors' "reformist" agendas have been included in Nepali policy continuously from the 1990s onwards; nevertheless, they have made little improvements in the education sector of the country (Bhatta 2011; Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2015; Robinson-Pant, 2010). In the past few decades, educational reform has been and continues to be a main feature in the context of Nepal (Pherali, 2014). On the contrary, the literature to date has simply described how foreign-led developmental agencies have supported the evolution of Nepali education policies. And, thus, a key area of the vested interest—or, in other words, the impact of destructive neoliberal agendas of these developmental agencies—is yet to be unveiled from behind the "smoke screen." As Mathema (2007) stated, "the prevailing system of education works well for the elites and those sectors, which do not have to rely on public education for their children" (p. 64).

Donor-backed education plans and policies have been described as "necessary but not sufficient" (Khaniya & Williams, 2004, p. 1). Likewise, Bhatta (2011) claims the "increased donor–ministry [or government] nexus has narrowed the avenues for broader participation by other national stakeholders" (p. 1). Keeping the country's unique socioeconomic-cultural profile in mind, what Nepal currently requires is a shift from de facto policies of donors to the nationalisation of policy formulation and implementation that cater to the needs of Nepali peoples (Bhatta, 2011).

An evident gap exists between policy discourses of quality, equity, and access in school education. There is a contrast between rhetoric and practice of policy (Maudsley, 2014; Shields & Rappleye, 2008). Neoliberal education policy and donor aid are wounding the approach to development of sustainable and an advanced schooling system in Nepal

(Bhattarai, 2016; Carney & Rapple, 2011; Khanal, 2013; Maudsley, 2014; Regmi, 2016).

Discourses within current media and research about education in Nepal have emphasised social segregation, subjectivity formation, prospect determinant, and social categorisation as based on young person's schooling type, choice, approachability, and socioeconomic possibilities (Koirala, 2015). Researchers have derived from their observations several issues identifying neoliberalism as a destructive educational force. Some condemn neoliberal policies as the root for the failure of public educational systems while others believe that such policies are facilitating education progress. Nevertheless, differences regarding the consequences of liberal education and international policies offers debatable viewpoints. While inspecting issues of impact, Regmi (2017) explains that “neoliberal alliance[s] in education enforced by the World Bank [including other aid agencies have] ... virtually no possibility of influencing improvement in Nepal” (p. 1).

Conclusions

In this backdrop, using a poststructurally-inspired WPR design, the proposed study will critically examine the neoliberal link in Nepali education policy—particularly the dichotomy of ongoing influence of donors and aid agencies (outsiders) versus the need for local perspectives (insiders). The study will emphasise how neoliberalism has informed Nepali education policy; what are the impacts of neoliberalised education policy in the lives of Nepali peoples, especially for the most marginalised populations; and, above all, in what way Nepal can check and shift its dependency from the neoliberal discourse advocated by international agencies to more autonomy and self-determination based on insider-initiated educational plans and policy formulations.

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Chapter 3

To politicise “personhood”

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016, p. 120)

Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study. It begins with a discussion of poststructuralism, the theoretical framework that underpins the study. It then explores Carol Bacchi’s “WPR” methodology, a poststructural approach to policy analysis. I then discuss my position as a researcher and the establishment of trustworthiness from the outset before explaining the methods of sampling and recruitment, data collection, and ethical considerations. It ends with an overview of the limitations of the study.

Poststructuralism and the Crisis of Representation

Poststructuralism began as a literary movement that arose as a response to the perceived limiting binaries of structuralist philosophy. The “Post” in poststructuralism specifies the movement as a “reaction to the philosophy of structuralism” (Parkes, 2012, p. 8). For the poststructuralist, language does not describe reality, but constructs the reality we perceive. Further, poststructuralism “recognises that certain ideas, languages and practices (called ‘discourses’) shape or form (or constitute) individuals and their way of thinking, behaving, and being” (Parkes, 2012, p. 26). Poststructuralism motivates us to question established meaning and uncover the points of ambiguity and indeterminacy that are integral in any system, and outrightly rejecting the rationalist reverence that all systems are internally coherent, circling around a static centres. It represents discourses as forces of power capable of moulding us into specific subjects and assigning upon us the burden of ethical

responsibility that accompanies the acceptance of freedom (Parkes, 2014). It is concerned with:

[T]he political stakes here concern the way in which a critical and radical discourse can relate to the dominant societal discourses, to those excluded from them, and to the possibility for change. If representation is constitutive, then any critical and radical discourse goes through representation—and institutions—which is another way of saying that there is no critical and radical discourse which is not also involved in inequality, marginalisation, exclusion and power. (Thomassen, 2017, p. 543)

Poststructuralism can be interpreted as a specifically philosophical response to the asserted scientific status of structuralism as a mega-paradigm for the social sciences; and also as a movement inspired by the works by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and others. It pursued a path that decentred “structures,” systematically analysed binaries, and re-examined key concepts and categories represented within taken-for-granted discourses (Bacchi, 2009). It dismantled the scientific status of structuralism, to review its underlying metaphysics, at the same time preserving the central elements of structuralism’s critique of the humanist subject.

Poststructuralism challenges scientism in the human sciences. It challenges the rationalism and realism that structuralism continues from positivism with its faith in scientific method and progress. It especially challenges the capacity of the structuralist approach to discern and identify universal structures of all cultures and the human mind. Poststructuralism is anti-foundational, understanding texts to always be in a complex relationship with other texts. Poststructuralism assures a critical history through a “re-emphasis on diachronic analyses, on the mutation, transformation, and discontinuity of structures, on serialization, [and] repetition” (Peters, 1999, para. 6.1). Mol (1999) defined poststructuralism in terms of “semiotics” and “ontological politics” to specify that realities are political in nature, emphasising the interplay of history, power, knowledge, culture, and social practices as the

core concepts of human interest, sense making, and interpretation. Likewise, for Parkes (2012), “poststructural philosophy builds on ... [the] crisis of representation, casting a sceptical eye on ‘grand’ representations of the world; questions of ‘authorship’; and questions of how we understand and define ourselves” (p. 11). Poststructuralist research is underpinned by this concern with what has been called “the crisis of representation”—the perspective that what we know as “truth” is the product of discourse (Petersen, 2015). For Foucault (1980), “discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power” (p. 101). Foucault (1972) used “discourse” in a range of ways, “treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements” (p. 80).

In their attempt to make sense of the work of Foucault, Parkes et al. (2012) explain that discourse operates as sets of “authoritative statements” that “discursively construct the boundaries of what can be considered ‘intelligible’” or acceptable and meaningful, in the contexts and cultures in which the discourse circulates and operates. According to Ball (2010), “[d]iscourse are practices that systematically form the subject of which they speak” (p. 2).

Policy as Discourse

Discourse is one of the core concepts of Foucault’s analytical framework. Bacchi (2009), drawing upon a Foucauldian notion of discourse, asserts that “[a] starting point is to recognise that policies are elaborated in discourse” (p. 7). Bacchi (2015) further enunciates discourse as a “Foucault-influenced perspective which directs attention to problematisation as the products of governmental practices” (p. 3). Bacchi (2009) defines discourse as “more than language. It encompasses the assumptions, values, presuppositions, and accompanying signs that I have called conceptual logics” (p. 7). Elaborating on this further, Bacchi (2000) stated that:

The premise behind a policy-as-discourse approach is that it is inappropriate to see governments as responding to “problems” that exist “out there” in the community. Rather “problems” are “created” or “given shape” in the very policy proposals that are offered as “responses.” (p. 48)

Bacchi (2009) articulates that “policy is about meaning creation and our task is to identify how meaning is created” (p. 7). Policy are discourse and discourse are policies (see Ball, 1993). Therefore, plans intended towards solving identified problems by a government authority are policy or policy discourses. Goodwin (2012) suggested:

It is, however, possible to deconstruct or defamiliarise policies and policy proposals in order to obtain knowledge that is critically different from the existing system of meaning. This type of strategy is particularly important in policy practice because different constructions of policy problems will have different effects: discursive effects and “lived” or material effects. (p. 35)

Policy discourses, as sets of “authoritative statements” (Parkes et al., 2012) that exert power over people, have far-reaching repercussions both in peoples’ beliefs and in subjectivity. While policies appear as solutions to problems, the poststructuralist considers the policy itself to be constructed the very problem it seeks to solve. Policies ultimately have the effect of governing individuals as a result of their discursive and practical effects. As articulated by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016):

[Policy as discourse] provides an important vehicle for questioning how governing takes place. It begins by sketching the broad parameter of a post-structural approach as a form of critical analysis that allows a refreshing scepticism towards the full range of things commonly associated with policy: policy itself, the knowledge that supports policy and policy proposals, as well as a conventional form of analysis. (p. 3)

Therefore, from a poststructural perspective, what a policy represents as the “problem” it is trying to solve, establishes a “truth” that “governs people,” and does this by making some things possible while restricting other possibilities. By its nature, a policy discourse will, through its selective representations, include and exclude, resulting in the empowering of some, while marginalising others.

Governmentality

Following Hajer’s (1995) concept of discourse institutionalisation, institutions represent the sedimentary form of dominant discourses—that is, provisionally represented rules of the game that have political and subjective implications. This makes them a primary target for political agency because actors engaging in policymaking processes aim to change existing rules and their apparatus of implementation. Analysis of the gaps between institutionalised and currently reproduced (spoken and written) policy discourses provides insights into (the scope for) discursive agency (Leipold & Winkel, 2016). Leipold and Winkel (2017) further clarifies this tendency when they state:

Policy discourses usually contain patterns of problematisation, problem solutions [including proposed governance arrangements] and responsibilities (e.g., who is responsible for a problem, who must/cannot act, etc.); it is this latter category that specifically provides access points for the emergence of discursive agency. (p. 523)

Along with the concept of discourse, Foucault asserted the importance of the concept of “governmentality” which he used to refer to the conduct of conduct, and especially the effect of the “technologies” used that govern individuals (Bevir, 2010, p. 423). Bacchi’s (2009) analysis of governmentality is that it “operates at the level of population and utilises such means as social and economic policy to ensure security and order” (p. 27). As observed by McHoul and Grace (1993), “for Foucault the question of subjection, and the political

struggles associated with ‘identities’ constitute the most important issue of our time” (p. 57). This infers that political practices are inseparable from the philosophical questions of “being” or “subjectivity.” Fitz et al. (2006) posited that policies “originate, operate and are made effective by ensembles of institutions or agencies and the actors working within them” (p. 17). Governmentality or “governmental rationality,” therefore, is a “way of thinking about the nature of practice of government” (Gordon, 1991, p. 3). In relation to this study, as Joseph (2010) construes, “these [Governmentality, Governmental rationalities, Genealogical theory of governmentality] can be seen as a middle layer of a wider social ontology that helps explain the complex and contradictory workings of capitalist social relations in the twenty-first century” (p. 204).

Following this poststructural line of logic, in this study governmental practices and their rationalities as understood as inherently problematic. Public policy are the programs of the governments, with underlying assumptions or claims for solving specific problems. Bacchi (2009) argues that “we are governed through problematisation” (p. 25). The political implications that accompany how Nepali people are constituted with educational policies or how they are governed requires critical scrutiny; the concept of governmentality, therefore, is of clear relevance, and underpins the policy analysis process.

Poststructural Policy Analysis

Ogza (2000) observed, “there is no fixed, single definition of policy. How the term is understood depends to a considerable degree on the perspective of the researcher” (p. 2). In addition, she further states, “Not only is there no clean definition of education policy there are no easily identifiable lines of demarcation between education policy and other areas of social policy” (p. 4). From this line of departure, the study of policy itself—the education policy of Nepal, in this case—is the subject matter of both “semiotic” and “ontological politics.” In other words, the understanding of education policy is also the matter of discourse

analysis since policies are discourses, and discourses produce particular effects on a population by enabling and constraining what is intelligible, ethical, and deemed “effective.” Bacchi (2009) suggests “What is the Problem Represented to be?” (WPR) is a way to approach public policy analysis from a poststructural perspective. Bacchi (2012a) notes that:

The “WPR” approach is a resource, or tool, intended to facilitate critical interrogation of public policies. It starts from the premise that what one proposes to do about something reveals what one thinks is problematic (needs to change). Following this thinking, policies and policy proposals contain implicit representations of what is considered to be the “problem” [problem representations]. (p. 21)

Drawing on such convictions the proposed study employs post-structuralist discourse analysis to study the emergence, representation, and reception of Nepali education policy discourse. Bacchi (2012a) argues that “policy is not the government’s best effort to solve ‘problems’; rather, policies produce ‘problems’ with particular meanings that affect what gets done or not done, and how people live their lives” (p. 22). Similarly, Vick (2006) writes, “post-structuralists identify two issues of policy as potentially problematic: the terms in which policy problems and responses are formulated; and the institutional practices shaping the generation and use of relevant knowledge” (n.p.). The emergence, representation, and reception of Nepali education policy can be drawn in two ways. Firstly, by analysing problems considered by Nepali policymakers and donors. Secondly, by analysing the official practices in respect to educating the Nepali population.

[Nepali education] policy is just not a matter of understanding its educational context of reading it as the “pronouncement” of the “policy-makers.” It requires an understanding of the dynamics of the various elements of the social structures and their intersections in the context of history. Policy documents are discursive embodiments of the balance of these dynamics as they underlie social relations at

particular points in time. It is for this reason that the discursive formations they contain constitute a highly politicised form of public rhetoric. (Olssen et al., 2004, p. 2)

Therefore, the problem analysed in this qualitative study was how policy stakeholders with responsibility for educational policy formulation discussed the concepts and issues represented in Nepali policy, how such representations are underpinned by specific power relations, and what impact this has on the lives of people and in the development of the education system. Furthermore, the purpose of this qualitative research using WPR was to excavate and critically examine the perspectives of high-level officials, academicians, and cabinet members in Nepal on the nature of education policy practices and processes. While defining what qualitative research is Aspers and Corte (2019) enunciate:

Qualitative research is about questioning the pre-given [taken for granted] variables, but it is thus also about making new distinctions of any type of phenomenon, for example, by coining new concepts, including the identification of new variables. This process, as we have discussed, is carried out in relation to empirical material, previous research, and thus in relation to theory. (p. 155)

Richards (2015) asserts that qualitative research presents a range of interpretative methods for probing the human world recognised through analysis or rationalisations of “rich data, rather than [through the] test[ing of] existing theories” (p. 1). As a result, this study engages in in-depth interviews in which research participants are encouraged to engage in reflection, contemplate on their experiences, and to share their beliefs, values, artefacts, and cultural texts. Rather than regulating the types of knowledge that could be produced by reducing them to measurable criteria, qualitative research has transformed the world of research, opening up a heretofore-new area of study on how knowledge is produced within a specific system and the ways of its cognitions, reflections, interpretations, and descriptions of

experiences. As Richards (2015) explained, “Qualitative [research] methods are ways of studying people and their social worlds by going there, observing them closely, in their natural setting, and learning how they understand their situations and account for their behaviour” (p. 1).

For this study, qualitative research presented a way for the researcher to procedurally study the articulations and silences inherent within Nepali education policy.

Throughout this study I was entirely conscious of my positionality. As Jackson et al. (2007) explain, “I am mindful that methodology means ‘why to’ collect data a certain way” (p. 22). Qualitative research offered a direction for me to study the inherently politicised problems represented at the heart of education policy in Nepal. What I intended to do reverberated with Bacchi’s (2009) and Ronnblom’s (2012) concerns that it is essential to consider how methodologies create realities and that there is a requisite to reflect on forms of politics enabled in opposing theoretical positions. Bacchi (2009) makes a case that poststructural theory offers prospects for political challenge closed off by other empirical approaches and requests that social scientists engage in theories at the level of politics—to ask how they are political and what sorts of politics they make possible by representing certain problems as problematic (Bacchi, 2009). Parkes (2013) has likewise challenged the modernist belief that “histories unproblematically describe the past as it was” (p. 32), inferring why problematisation of any history is necessary. As asserted by Parkes (2014), “nothing stands outside history” (p. 4), and this includes the researcher’s own interpretive perspective. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) give reasons for conducting qualitative research when they assert:

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of

the meanings people brings to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials—case study, personal experiences, introspective, life story, and interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals’ lives. (p. 2)

When it comes to educational policy analysis, Remling (2018) further argued that:

Which particular courses of action are valued and prioritized over others, and which ones are suppressed and delegitimised is the outcome of political articulation. Policy change [emergence] always involves power struggles over meaning as new ideas, understandings and procedures are instituted. (p. 3)

Committed to an approach that problematises policy discourse, this study employs a Foucault-inspired poststructuralist approach called the WPR to analyse the emergence, representation, and reception of education policy in Nepal.

What is the Problem Represented to Be? (WPR Approach)

The approach utilised in this study largely follows Bacchi (2009)’s method outlined in “Analysing Policy – What is the problem represented to be? (WPR)” (see Table 2). The WPR approach to education policy analysis makes the case that policy is not a reaction to “problems” that sit outside the process waiting to be “addressed” or “solved.” Rather, policies produce or constitute “problems” as particular types of realities that need amelioration. The task therefore becomes interrogating how education policy initiatives or proposals produce “problems,” with particular meanings and effects. This suggests that such an approach marks a useful intervention in education policy, given the extensive tendency to refer to educational problems, which often tend to be treated as obvious in conformist methods, and unconnected (exogenous) to the policy process. The study thus seeks to critically scrutinise Nepali

educational policy discourse and practices. Poststructural policy analysis is imperative to this study as Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) assert, “[It] enables policy workers to reflect critically on governing practices, to theorize their location within those practices, and to resist practises deemed to have deleterious consequences for specific people and groups” (p. 9).

As this analysis seeks to reflect critically on the historical processes of Nepali educational policymaking, a poststructuralist perspective in this regard offers an inclusive understanding of how the process of knowledge formation is inherently a political consultation and construction, given that “[f]rom a Foucault-influenced poststructural perspective, policy work, like all knowledge work, is political work; policy research like all research, is understood as a form of ontological politics” (Mol, 1999, as cited in Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 9). Carta and Wodok (2015) note that “poststructuralist approaches emphasise the performative and enacting quality of discourses, while focussing on power relations inherent in discursive practices” (p. 6).

How education policies shape the education system in Nepal is critiqued in this research. Despite continuous efforts made by authorities to improve the school education system in Nepal, there has been little evidence to support current practice. In this context, this research explores the ways in which education policies are initiated and implemented in the country, including: (a) how education policies are evolving in Nepal; (b) how inclusive education policies are in the context of Nepal; and, (c) and how national and international mechanisms influence education policies of the country. Through research questions connected by these three questions, policymakers’ perspectives on the role of educational development, and the representation of various discourses about education and its policies, the processes of the system as a whole will be analysed.

The WPR design was considered highly applicable as the research focused on the analysis of perspectives of policy stakeholders, proposing to understand the complexity, and

questioning the legitimacy of representations of specific discourses pertaining to the research topic. As Bacchi (2009) infers:

[The] WPR approach builds on the premise that, since all policies are problematising activities, they contain implicit problem representation. The argument here is that, since how you feel about something determines what you suggest doing about it, it is equally true to say that looking at what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issues is being thought about. (p. 3)

Such policy representations referred to as “problems” by Bacchi (2009) have subjective effects. Such “problems” represented in policy discourse govern us; for that reason, identifying major controls, issues, and effects in educational policy processes this study details, analyses, and interprets the discourse of policy stakeholders as a “proposal for change” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 1). The topic is of great importance as Nepal is proceeding to undertake various educational reforms currently, and as its educational reorganisations are ongoing. As a result, this study has much to contribute as “what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 3). This approach thus revolves around concerns of “problem representation” within Nepali educational policies. As Bacchi (2009) observed:

If you look at a specific policy, you can see that it understands the “problem” to be particular kind of problem. Policies, therefore, constitute (or give shape to) “problems.” Hence, rather than reacting to “problems,” governments are active in the creation (or production) of policy “problems.” There is, however, no suggestion that this is an exercise in manipulation or misrepresentation. Rather, it is a necessary part of making policy. This is, because all policies make proposal for change, by their very nature they contain implicit representation of “problems.” (p. 2)

Table 2*Adoption of Bacchi's (2009) Poststructuralist Policy Analysis Framework*

WPR	Adoption in the proposed study
What is the problem represented to be in the study?	The researcher will review Nepal's education policy documents to identify implied problems within specific policy texts. How do the text or texts present the problem? Instead of craving what they say, focus will be on what they produce or constitute.
What presupposition or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?	The research will employ bureaucrats of Nepal to understand the presupposition or assumptions regarding emergence, representation and reception of Nepal education policy. This will recognise what Goodwin (2012) says identifying key concepts and categories and interrogate the binaries operating in [Nepali education] policy.
How has the representation of problem come about?	The researcher will ask, "How have key concepts in the [Nepali education policy] text/s become legitimate? (Goodwin, 2012, p. 33)
What is left unproblematic in this problem representation? Where are silences? Can the "problem" be thought about differently?	Inter alia, the researcher will identify key policy issues not produced and constituted. Where are the grey areas in the discussion of education? Can the debate on education policy be formulated differently? Reflecting and considering such issues and perspectives in terms of Nepal education policy this section will trace silences within education policy. This will help analyse if Nepali education policy constitutes dominant politics, culture, and economy.
What effects are produced by this representation of problem?	The researcher will seek to conceptualise the effects in terms of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discursive effects: what the participants think and say about Nepali education policy • Subjectification effects: how do participants define themselves in relation to Nepali education policy • Lived effects: How do participants relate the education policy in the day-to-day life of Nepali populations
How/ where has this representation of the "problem" been produced, disseminated, or defended? How could it be questioned, disrupted, and replaced?	The researcher will seek to conceptualise the ongoing debates about Nepali education policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implicit problems within policies will be identified • Ministry of Education (MoE) and donor agency policies • Dominant representation is the product of discursive practises and politics of dominant group

In the WPR, the approach to “policy analysis” policies are problematising activities as “all policies make proposals for change” (p. 1). Table 2 below provides a comprehensive framework for Nepali policy analysis. How the problem is represented matters, as it proposes: “In a WPR approach we are focusing on the knowledge through which rule takes place, and the influence of experts and professionals on and through these knowledges, rather than examining their direct role as participants in political processes” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 26). As a result, the WPR approach to policy analysis deeply interrogates the process, practices, and discourses of power in policymaking methodologically using six specific questions. This poststructuralist approach analyses “policy as discourse” (Ball, 2010), and “calling something a discourse” means putting its truth claims into question (Bacchi, 2009, p. 35).

Recruitment of Participants

I approached the Nepal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) through its website, which is publicly available (<https://moe.gov.np/>). This website enabled me to select participants from bureaucracy, academia, and members of cabinet working for Nepali educational planning and policymaking. I purposefully chose high-ranking policy actors in Nepal’s educational planning and policymaking sector because of my own familiarity with the field and partially because of my critical assessment of educational history, context, and provisions in Nepal. In addition, to divulge the politics of Nepali education, as Batteson and Ball (1995) explain:

The emergence of the modern state, and its personification as political and bureaucratic populations, reflects a set of well-established socialisation procedures premising acquiescence in seeing how things can and should be. One aspect of this social process is a will towards accomplishing socio-political views of the only ways in which society can be imagined and how such conceptions are pursued. In policy terms this is “symbolic” as often as it is “practical.” (p. 202)

Snowball Sampling

Snowball sampling was a suitable method to recruit my sample, given the intention to approach the elites working in high-level policymaking and implementation positions in the country. There was no other viable way of locating policymakers, bureaucrats working at policymaking level, or cabinet members other than by word of mouth through “organic social networks” (Noy, 2008, p. 329). Snowball sampling was the most dependable method to recruit my sample, given the absence of the comprehensive understanding and connections to the foremost educational policymakers and other educational stakeholders in the country. Thus, I utilised my personal and professional networks to categorise potential participants who fitted the selection criteria—that is, Nepali citizens who have extensively worked in high-level educational policymaking either in the bureaucratic, intellectual, or political purview. I chose this context for my research as these categories are responsible for proposing and implementing educational policies for the country and as GoN, MoEST, and educational committees formed by the government have historically legislated educational policies in Nepal.

This sampling employs a process of seeking additional linkage from one interviewee to another while collecting data. As the participants of this study were leading government officials, it was daunting to locate them and interviews were hard to produce. Approaching important actors with a recommendation is obviously more credible as opposed to making “cold calls” (Blech & Pakkanan, 2015). Therefore, seeking referrals from an expert to identify participants was advantageous for developing a higher level of trust with the participants (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004).

Participants

The participants in this study ranged from top-level government agencies and academia to education sector leaders and officials (politicians and cabinet members) in

positions of authority for Nepal's educational planning and policymaking. Participants recruited were from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Department of Education, National Centre for Educational Development, as well as from leading universities and the members of the cabinet in the Government of Nepal. These bodies include leaders, bureaucrats, and academics focused on Nepali educational policymaking, restructuring, and implementation. The essential characteristics of research participants comprised extensive experiences in educational planning and policymaking as government leaders contributing to various educational councils as key policy stakeholders and participating in the production of policy documents and proposals on policy restructuring and problematisation of Nepali education.

Initially, I identified 16 participants and sent them a written invitation inviting their participation in the study. Of these, only 13 expressed an interest in participating in the study. However, two were unable to participate due to their busy schedules. One was unable to participate due to parliamentary work. After interviewing 10 participants, I reached data saturation stage, when no new information was imminent. Thus, one participant, who had conveyed his interest in this study, was not interviewed. The ten participants in the study were comprised of high-level government officials, consultants, and university faculty members and administrators. Of these, two participants were high-level government leaders with authority and power over educational concepts and categories, policymaking, and practices. The participants were selected based on their official portfolios and roles, and legitimate social authority in Nepal's educational policymaking processes.

As elsewhere, Nepali education and its policies strive to balance the Western World views it had inherited with localised ethnic and Indigenous pedagogical activities, curriculum, and language of instruction. In Nepal, international establishments and nations powering neoliberal development agendas govern policies, and therefore, the highest

government agencies including Nepal Ministry of Education and educational leaders have approved an uncritical approach to borrowing western policies, frameworks, and approaches that have far and unforeseen repercussions. At the time of the study, Nepal was politically restructuring to Federalism and there were uncertainties about how each federal state may venture on its educational restructurings. Furthermore, there had been no concerted endeavours within Nepali educational stakeholders to embark on research exploring how discourses of power discussed the paradox of international educational policies and models to deal with Nepali local educational policy problems. I wanted to explore the underlying assumptions and presuppositions within Nepal's educational policymaking processes and practices in order to conceptualise how:

1. We are governed through problematisation;
2. We need to study problematisation (by analysing the problem representations they contain), rather than “problems”; and,
3. We need to problematise (interrogate) the problematisation on offer through scrutinising the premises and effects of the problems representations they contain (Bacchi, 2009, p. 47)

What new understandings will emerge from Nepal's educational procedures, stakeholders' direct experiences embedded in Nepal's educational planning and policymaking processes? As we know, “it is useful to engage in a form of discourse analysis, identifying and interrogating the binaries, key concepts and categories operating within policy ” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 7) and “what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about” (Bacchi, 2009, p. 3). The six questions in WPR provided by Bacchi (2009) as a methodological tool will analytically guide this study.

Participants' Characteristics

Table 3 below provides an overview of participant demographics. In summary, participants' areas of expertise included: (a) policy-related planning and implementation in government agencies, (b) leaders and consultants in educational policy planning and policymaking, and (c) educational policies implementation and reformation.

Table 3

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	No. of participants
Gender	
Male	9
Female	1
Languages spoken	2 or more
Native speaker of Indigenous and/or minority languages	2
Member of minority ethnicity	2
Sector ^a	
Government ^b	
University ^c	
Cabinet ^d	

Note. Participants' ages range between 40 and 65 years of age. ^a An individual participant may have held more than one position. ^b Includes the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, the Language Commission, and the University Grant Commission. ^c Includes university professors, vice-chancellor, dean of education, and associate dean; members within these categories have also contributed to various educational planning and policymaking via appointments to various committees. ^d Includes ministers.

Data Collection

I conducted interviews to collect data about the development of education policies, practices, and processes in Nepal with the aid of a semi-structured interview guide containing

open-ended questions to allow participants to provide a full and detailed account of their knowledge and experiences. This method allowed me to obtain focused responses directly related to the research questions. The research questions intended to critically understand the perspectives of high-level education leaders in the education sector on the emergence, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal. I continued recruiting and interviewing participants up until theoretical saturation had been reached and no new accounts of educational policy practices and processes were forthcoming from the participants (Goulding, 1999). Thus, I conducted 10 interviews as noted earlier.

In-Depth Interviews (IDP)

In policy analysis, interviews are sites for “knowledge practices, including conventional policy studies” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 114). In-depth interviewing is a process of knowledge construction through a conversational relation between interviewer and interviewee. Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) believe interviewing is “a craft, as a knowledge producing activity, and ... a social practice” (p. 18). Boyce and Neile (2006) explain that “In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, program, or situation” (p. 3).

In poststructural theories, in-depth interviews are locations for “interviewer and interviewee as co-construction of knowledge” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2008, p. 18). In policy research, co-construction of knowledge through interviews are highly valued (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016; Roller & Lavakas, 2015). While considering these approaches, it was indispensable that the researcher (i) informed participants completely about the purpose and nature of the research; (ii) participate in a give-and-take association with participants; and, (iii) gave them information about the access to the reported research findings. Paulston and Liebman (1993) rightly puts forward: “If we are to develop rules for accuracy and inclusion

in a critical, postmodern, social cartography, we should attempt to envelop not only the space being mapped, but the perceptions of the claimants of that space” (p. 22). Therefore, as Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) observed: (a) what was said in the interview?; (b) how was it viable to say those things?; (c) which system of dealings (discursive practices are relevant to the interview topic); (d) what do the particular “things said” produce as “subjects,” “objects,” and “places”?; (e) how do the interviewers and interviewee problematise “what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live”?; (f) which “things said” put in questions universal ways of thinking?; and (g) what political concerns follow from interviewers’ selection and distribution practices? I was mindful, therefore, that the participants’ views and experiences regarding the development of Nepali education and its policymaking would be prejudiced by their deep-seated presuppositions and assumptions and the ways in which policies actively produces, or constitutes “problems,” “subjects,” “objects,” and “places” in the Nepali context. I was also cognisant that, such unconventional critical analysis would create options for analysing policies otherwise. I was acutely aware of the fact that my views and experiences may contrast that of the participants, due to my own position, views, and life experiences. Yet, I was respectful of, embraced divergent ideas and opinions, and did not let my views influence the participants’ responses (Charmaz, 2006). As Roller and Lavakas (2015) observed:

[T]he interview approach in qualitative research is not inherently combative or confrontational and does not purposely create conflicts to provoke the interviewee but rather centres on building a trusting relationship where all input is honoured and candid revelations can thrive because it is understood that they will remain confidential unless the interviewee permits them to be disclosed. (p. 51)

This means the trustworthiness of the interviewer is paramount. The interviewer/interviewee rapport is the cornerstone of research; the interviewee has to feel

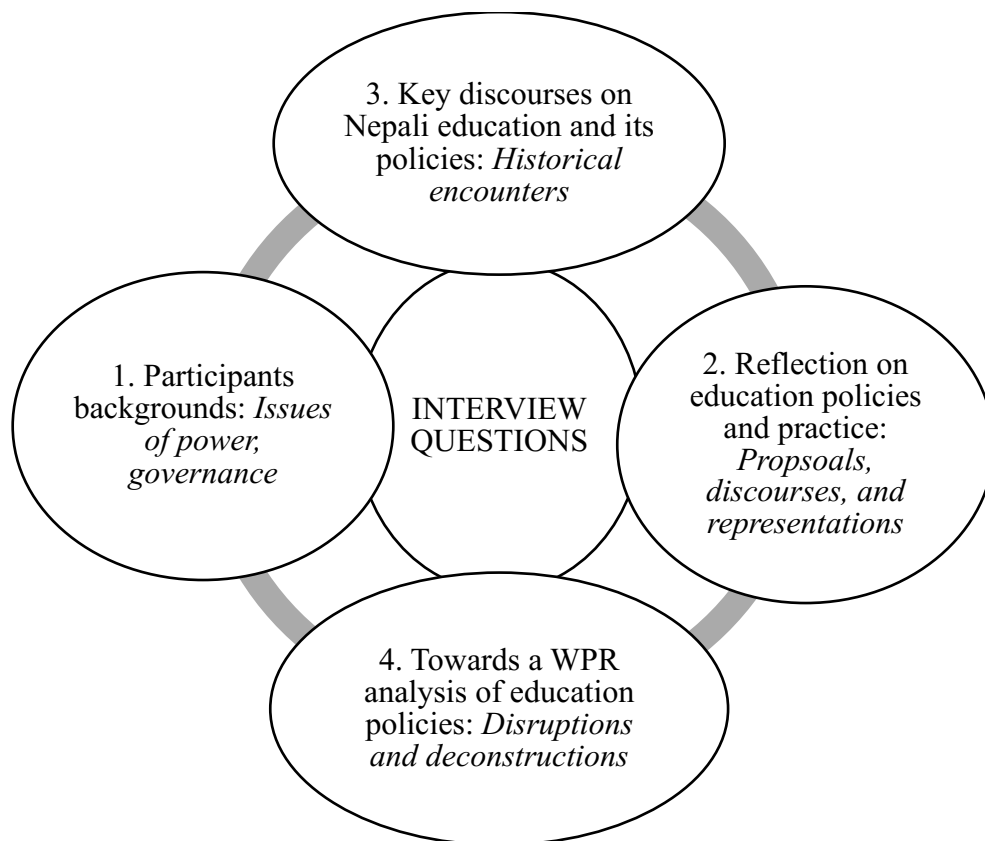
confident, and the virtuous expertise of the interviewer is critical. As Fontana and Prokos (2016) have mentioned, interviews are “not neutral tools of data gathering” but rather active interactions between the two (or more) people leading to negotiated contextually based results (p. 10). In policy analysis, the researcher needs to preclude overgeneralisations and misrepresentation of data by following closely to the words of the participants. Therefore, I emphasised that I was interested in the interviewees’ perspective on Nepal’s education and educational policy problems; the ways policy proposals and practices have defined its emergence, relevance, and reception; and, the activities in which they engaged and how they interpreted and analysed the processes. Numerous considerations were in use prior to the interviewing process: (a) structure, length, and spacing of interviews; (b) interviewer expertise; and (c) the relationship concerning the researchers and interviewees.

Structure, Length, and Spacing of Interviews

The construction of an interview is an important consideration in research. Seidman (2013) assumed there was “a logic to the interviews and to lose control of their direction is to lose the power of that logic and the benefit from it” (p. 23). To ensure the participants were comfortable in answering the interrogations, I organised the interviews at a time and place that was most convenient for the participants. I posed the questions compliantly, obtaining consent forms from interviewees to give participants control over the interview process, and I discussed the interview transcripts when questions arose (Birks & Mills, 2011; Roller & Lavakas, 2015). I also detailed my observations in a research journal, noting any resemblances and distinctions between my own thoughts and the participants’ answers.

Figure 1

Interview Questions Politicisation



I began by providing participants with information statements, which outlined the objectives of the study (see Appendix D: Participant Information Statement) to confirm they agreed with the principle phenomenon under examination—that is, the nature of the emergence, representation, and reception of education policy in Nepal, in which, or about which, they are the powerful actors. I continued with questions exploring their positions, their roles, their years of service, their contributions, and so on, to familiarise myself with them in relation to the problems I wanted to explore. I then engaged in probing questions that encouraged reflections on Nepali education and its policymaking processes, politics, trends, and networks and its bearing on the life on the Nepali people. I saw positionality as an issue of power and governance that, along with their present positions of authority, shape the

discourse of Nepali education and practice. Thereafter, I questioned them on their thoughts and understandings about the representation and proposals compelling them to gather their experiences and understandings about the process of educational development and the consequences that are leading the development of Nepali education. I proceeded to analyse the historical encounters with the dominant discourses in Nepali education. Finally, I explored the discourses they shared relating to the emerging nature of education and educational policies in Nepal, resulting from what Bacchi (2009) terms “problem representation,” “problematisation,” and “discursive practices.” I employed an interview schedule to guide the interview and ensure consistency of questioning across the interviews (see Appendix B: Interview Schedule). When participants deviated from concerns, I drew them back to the main interrogations.

The duration of the interview was significant in the interviewing procedure as too short an interview would result in a questioning of the trustworthiness of the study as short interviews are undesirable (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015), whereas long interviews would produce needless anxiety to the participants. Seidman (2013) clarifies:

Two hours seems too long to sit at one time [therefore] to have participants reconstruct their experiences, put it in the context of their lives, and reflect on its meaning, anything shorter than 90 minutes for each interview seems too short. (pp. 23–24)

As a result, most of the interviews lasted 90 minutes. I discussed each interview’s time and location in advance with the participants.

On revising the initial round of interviews and my field notes, I recognised further evidence or justifications were necessary and therefore I conducted a second interview with one participant. Mindful of his time and schedules following his prominent position in the government, I waited two weeks before conducting the second interview.

Interviewing and Interviewer Skills

Interviewing is an important qualitative data collection technique in qualitative research. Gubrium and Holstein (2001) assert that “[t]he purpose of qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondent talk” (p. 84). I aimed at what constituted and produced Nepali education policies discourses for understanding the knowledge of people and the implication they make of that experience [in qualitative research] which is required (Daher et al., 2017).

Regardless of my previous and current contact in academia, I had no personal experience in conducting face-to-face research interviews. Furthermore, I did not know any of my participants personally or professionally. As a result, I was concerned about conducting the interviews. As Roller and Lavrakas (2015) observed:

Regardless of interview format, the skills of the interviewer are among the most important components of the IDI method. A quality interviewer demonstrates skills that minimize unintended variation in the data associated with potential interviewer and participant biases, and thereby maximize the validity and the reliability of outcomes. (p. 55)

Nevertheless, I learnt from Kvale’s (1996) criteria of an effective interviewer. He argued that an effective interviewer was knowledgeable, structured, clear, gentle, sensitive, open, and critical. They exploit their talents in operating the interviews, retention, and construing information. Furthermore, Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) poststructural interview analysis schema supported my focus and objective to remain on topic and interpret information. To practice these skills, I led two experimental interviews, which facilitated the refinement of my skills and boosted my confidence, easing my way towards interviewing Nepali policy stakeholders and leaders for this study.

Researcher-Interviewee Rapport

Wood et al. (2019) note that “researchers minimize [their] power dynamics within the interview setting by building rapport with the participants” (p. 2445). Seidman (2013) endorsed that interviewing stretched in scope from a research method to a social relationship and he underscored that as interviewers one must “try to craft relationships with their participants that are like islands of interchange separate from the world’s definitions, classifications, and tensions” (p. 97). He trusted that, while making sense of participants’ experiences, the interviewer produced, nurtured, sustained, and thoughtfully ended a social (rather than inquiry) relationship with them. For that reason, it was vital to infer the underpinnings for the relationship in the interviewing process (Dexter, 1970; Mishler, 1986).

This study intends to analyse the development of education policies and its policymaking practices in Nepal from the contested, but related, networks of universal and local, the western and non-western discourses. It was imperative that I immersed participants in erudite, consistent, and common discussions on Nepali education. Therefore, I was thoroughly prepared in line with Empson’s (2018) approach:

In order to build a rapport with elite interviewees, I need to enter into their emotional as well as their intellectual space. In starting to see the world through their eyes, I inevitably start to feel a degree of compassion for them. I allow this to happen in the interview and then step back to re-establish critical distance during the analysis phase. Once the interesting and engaging person I met some months ago is reduced to a series of anonymized text fragments in an analytical software programme, my critical distance is re-established. (pp. 67–68)

Nevertheless, research often positions identical encounters for “studying down” or “studying up” (Conti & O’Neil, 2007). Therefore, effective groundwork is crucial. This necessarily involved winning participants’ emotional and intellectual interest and engaging

them in analysing their experiences and understandings in ways they might have not formerly considered. Many might have perceived, or even contemplated, the disparity between the universal and particular, or western, and developing southern educational governance, discursive practices, and its policies. Some might have accessed it constructively, others adversely. It was my intention to see how historically produced realities about Nepali education and its policymaking practices hastened by so-called progressive development, modernity, and globalism dominated its development and discourses. Before commencing the interview, I thoroughly introduced myself to the participants and the purpose of study.

Building rapport with the participants is necessary. Buber's (1976) "I-Thou" relationship represented what "I" was aiming to achieve—a respectful relationship, awareness of differences, that prompted rationales and created some distance between me and participants, in order to facilitate the (co-)construction of intersubjective meaning. Seidman (2013) noted that "Thou" is the participant involved with the interviewer—a different, but "fellow person" (p. 97). The "I-Thou" relationship enabled me to: (a) handle the participants as producer or construer of knowledge, governing authorities in Nepal's educational planning and policymaking, and (b) shift my role from politicising to internalise participants' knowledge as produced from "Thou-ness" or the priorities /interest of authorities. In doing so, I was aware of "unwanted intimacy" (Stacey, 1988), the "non-genuine method" (Brinkmann, 2012), and "faking friendships" (Duncombe & Jessop, 2002), as opposed to the ethical "I-Thou" relationship that I pursued.

Throughout the course of the interviews, I encountered many high-ranking officials working in elite roles; many of them had a PhD, were educated abroad, held high-status positions in society, and were powerful members with decision-making capabilities. My status as a research student in a foreign university seemed somewhat privileged to the participants but, with modesty, I made a concerted effort during the course of the interviews

to equalise researcher-participant status, validating the participants as authorities responsible in formulating knowledge as a specific kind of knowledge to which I wanted access. The control of the content of responses was their decision as they could confirm any information they share, disclose that information with me, and decide on the limits of that information.

Constructing a critical analysis of education policies in this strategy was thus facilitated by the trust developed between the researcher and the interviewer. Given that all knowledge is subject to misrepresentation or substantiation through further testing, the possibility of contribution is critical. The problem about this form of qualitative research was that, given it was emerging knowledge based on cultural practices, contexts, representations, and co-constructed reality, it might specify a glimpse into a situation at a particular historical juncture, between a particular group of people, that could be reconstructed, re-represented, and subjected to further testing, as realities are multiple (Mol, 1999).

Continual Reflection: Memos, Journals, and Diary

Understanding continual reflection and critical interpretations as fundamental to poststructural policy analysis research, the researcher took an enthusiastic role, influencing the study's framework, systematically collecting the data, and filling the blanks regarding presuppositions and assumptions during data collection and analysis processes, most notably reflecting on concepts and categories like (a) power is productive, (b) practice as a starting point for analysis, (c) discourses as knowledge, (d) governmental problematisation, (e) governmentality perspectives, (f) cognising Foucauldian-style genealogies, and (g) questioning the humanist subject (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Therefore, the researcher kept a journal stating important observations, problem representations, thoughts, and assumptions, throughout the research process, especially during the data collection process (Goulding, 1999). Furthermore, the use of memos—transcribed records of analysis—critically improved

the data analysis process that was used to explore the policy emergence processes of Nepali education (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

For me, the use of memos was very helpful during the study. First, it brought into play a wide range of professional and “expert” knowledge that have a significant role in analysing how Nepali people were governed and in producing the kinds of “subjects” they were encouraged to become. Second, journaling memos were more discerning and allowed me to inform and communicate to myself about the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Moreover, I recognised these memos were reflections of analytical thought required to pave the way for enhancing the understandings of Nepali education and its policies’ emergence, representation, and reception. Thus, memos became one of the most insightful aids in the proposed study. It facilitated the organisation of thoughts, development of thematic structures, the distinguishing of similarities and differences, the examination of questions through coding and analysis, and access to how the discourse of Nepali education and its policies have developed from the complex interplay between multiple synergies and dynamics (Charmaz, 2006).

I selected both notebooks and computer programs to record all memos. The purpose was not to accentuate focus on the techniques of memoing but to ensure that memo accounts were “orderly, progressive, systematic, and easily retrievable for sorting and cross-referencing” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 220), which would allow me to analyse the discourses of Nepal’s educational policymakers’ experiences with respect to educational development, its representation, and its reception. Most importantly, I structured the memos in chronological order, using headings to match their source, code notes, literature, or my reflections.

I also encouraged the participants to maintain a diary after the first interview in case they wished to provide any additional information to the researcher that had not been

explored in the earlier interview. After each interview, I provided a diary to participants with the guidelines to reflect on information that may have been skipped during the interaction. The researcher obtained a journal entry from one participant. This information was coded and evaluated with emerging initial codes, concepts, and categories in the data analysis process.

Other than the one participant's journal, my own journal writing substantially informed my thinking on the process of education development and policymaking in Nepal and the inherent internal discourses. As one of my supervisors encouraged me to maintain the journal thoroughly from the beginning of the research project, I structured my thoughts sometimes symbolically in abbreviation and at other times with more comprehensive details. While the earlier phase of journaling was instrumental in identifying my personal politics as a researcher and in taking decisions to select an appropriate methodology, define coding and categories, and writing the narratives for presentations, journaling also enabled me to note my active observations of participants and their physical, cognitive, and behavioural context during the interviews. All of these detailed records transpired to enrich a source of information, or secondary data, that I added during data coding and analysis to construct the findings of this study.

Data Analysis

The process of coding data is a common technique in qualitative research and is particularly significant to WPR theory. This poststructural approach of policy analysis scrutinises both politics and process within knowledge formation, practices, and implications for subjects within specific socio-material contexts (governance, authority, representation, and interests) through representation of specific issues as a “problem” required to be solved, though there are several problems unrepresented. Furthermore, this problematisation entails exclusions and marginalisation and therefore nothing is taken for granted (see Bacchi, 2009). Interview data with policy stakeholders determines the experience of participants; Bacchi and

Goodwin (2016), with regard to poststructural interview analysis, provided a seven-step process to address policy issues, which was adopted for this study:

1. what is said by the participant [about Nepalese education policies emergence, representation and reception]
2. produce genealogies of what is said [about policies development]
3. highlight key discursive practices
4. analyse what is said
5. interrogate the production of subjects
6. explore transformative potentials
7. question the politics of distribution [in Nepali education policymaking] (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 113)

I was also sensitive to Bacchi's six questions (see Table. 3) and its cross-examinations in this data analysis. Litchman (2006) notes that "no one form of data is better or more legitimate or more meaningful than other type of data" (p. 162). I was also cognisant of the research purpose to construct knowledge about the historical decorum of policy discourses in Nepali education and its policymaking processes and to examine its impact on the people of Nepal. Several divisions of data analysis through content comparisons, reflections, and a sceptical eye are not only typical to, but also useful skills in, poststructuralist policy analysis (as outlined below). Once transcribed, I employed NVivo, a computer-assisted data analysis package, to code the interview data and generate concepts, categories, and themes. The categories formed the basis for the findings of this study.

Punch (2009) describes the techniques of qualitative data analysis as used in Foucault-inspired poststructural analysis as follows:

[D]iscourse analysis is similar to deconstructions, in dismantling constructed account to show connections with power and ideology. It has grown into wide-ranging and

heterogeneous discipline, which finds its unity in the description of language above the level of sentence, and an interest in system of meaning and in the context and cultural influences that affect language in use. (p. 198)

Therefore, as reflexivity is required in poststructural data analysis, going beyond the literal implications of language is necessary (Punch, 2009). Fundamental to this process was data coding. Referring to Charmaz (2006): “Coding means categorizing segments of data with a short name that simultaneously summarizes and accounts for each piece of data ... codes show how [researchers] ... select, separate, and sort data to begin and analytic accounting of them [systematically]” (p. 44).

Grasping Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) constructivist paradigm, the coding in the study comprised the seven steps outlined above. These levels of coding of data analysis entail continuous appraisals of data, as discussed below. Correspondingly, this process involves reflection and consideration of Bacchi’s (2009) procedural questions, as presented in Table 3.

Continuous Appraisals

As a researcher I exercised the continuous appraisals method to develop concepts from data by coding and analysing simultaneously. It is apparent that in qualitative research, methods should ensue from research interrogations. This study collected and analysed interview data. Continual appraisals combine “systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing” (Conrad et al., 1993, p. 280).

The key purpose of the continuous appraisals in a poststructuralist theory is to comprehend what Bacchi and Bonham (2016) outline phases for interview analysis:

1. Precisely what is said in the interview?
2. How was it or is it possible to say those things?

3. Which networks of relations (discursive practices) are relevant to the interview topic?
4. What do the selected “things said” produces as “subjects,” “objects,” and “places”?
5. How do the interviewers and interviewees problematize “what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live”? (Foucault, 1986)
6. Which “things said” put into question the pervasive ways of thinking?
7. What political consequences follow from the interviewers’ selection and distribution practices? (p. 113)

Continuous reflection and constant comparison are critical to poststructural approach to interview analysis. Therefore, I employed this to compare the data from individual participants to discern similarities and differences in their accounts and to highlight the contingency and politics involved in shaping the kind of person it was possible to grow into. This accomplished a systematic and logical process in which numerous discourses and perspectives within the same interview and across interviews could be differentiated.

Figure 2

Interview Data Analysis

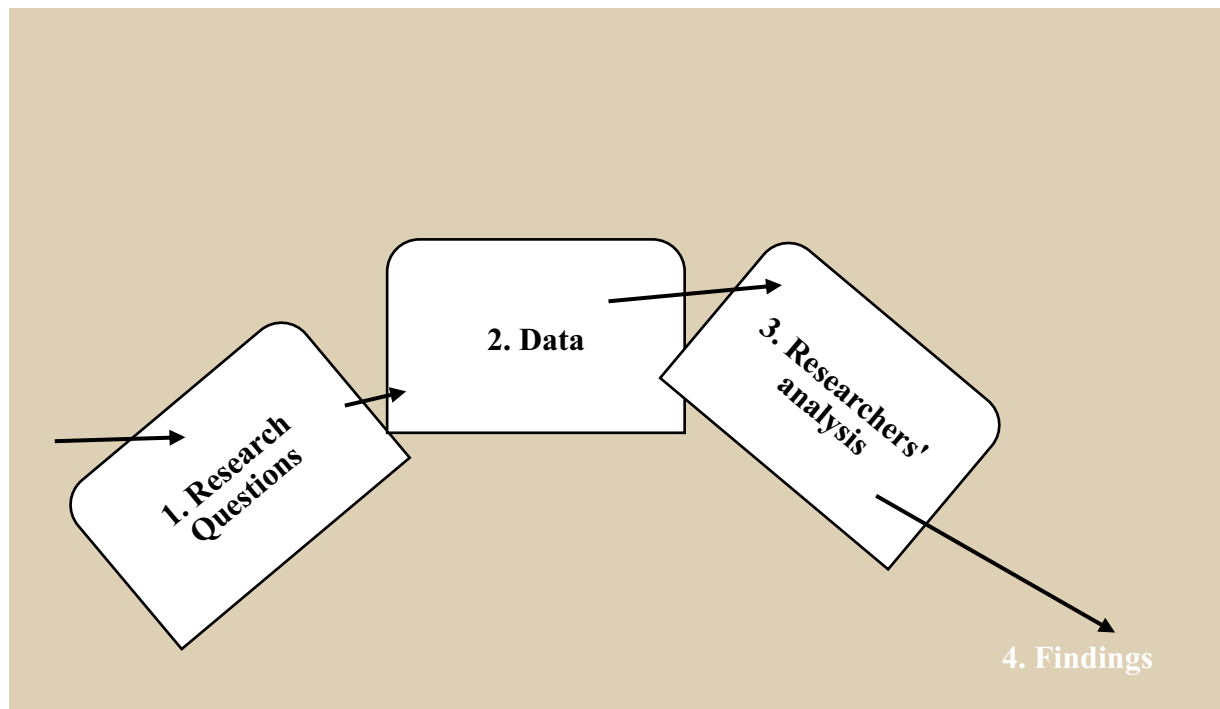
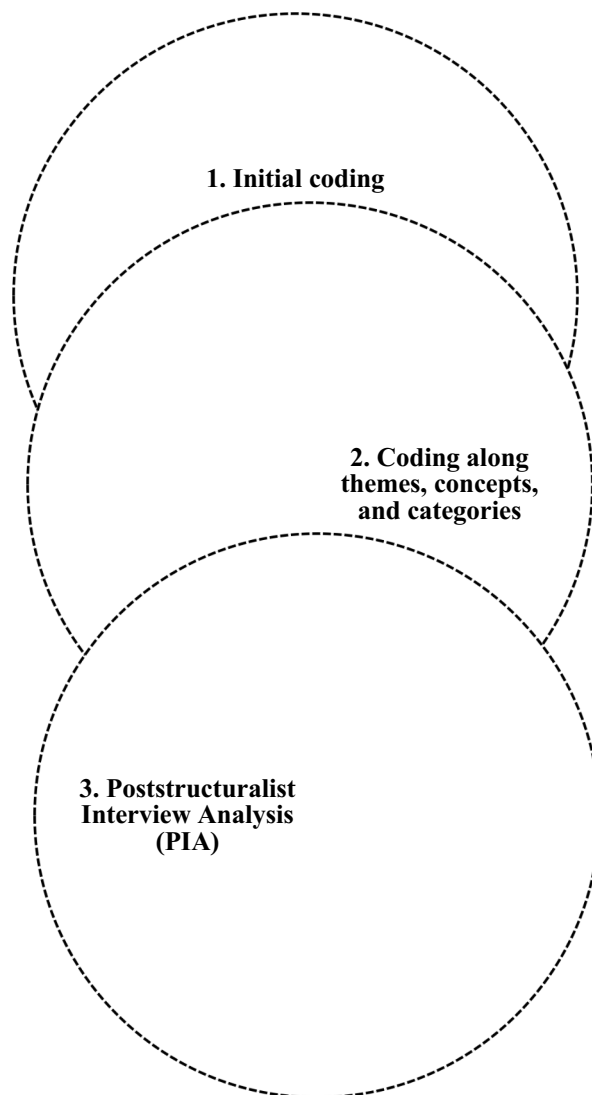


Figure 3

Data Coding Phases



The researcher persistently arranged the data collected, taking into account the seven issues extrapolated by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), analysed and coded the information, and emphasised findings and ideas through the process of poststructural interview analysis (PIA) and internalising what Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) have observed: “‘reality’ is made in and through discursive practices and that, given the plurality and mutability of those practices; it can be unmade” (p. 121).

Initial Coding

Initially coding begins by probing normative implications from “What is said” to the “things said.” During initial coding, I evaluated data, while continually asking questions:

1. What “things said” have been noted?
2. On what grounds have they been noted? (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 116).

I evaluated data, while repeatedly asking questions about what I recognised within the consideration of concerns. I employed an assortment of techniques in categorising the properties and dimensions within and among the data and, in the process, systematically examining parts of or the whole transcript through: (a) excision and attribution, (b) measurement, and (c) self-formation. Excision and attribution refer to opinions in the interview where particular ways of thinking, feeling, characteristics and doing are distinguished in terms of “What is said” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 118). Measurement refers to the process in which interviewee converses in terms of available subject positions. Self-formation occurs when the interviewee is located within the domain of power and has a high authority in “things said,” attaching themselves to their position, which in this case relates to their discourse (knowledge) with strong official apparatus in the context of Nepal’s education and educational policies (see Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

Initial coding involved constant readings of the interview transcripts as well as listening to the recorded interviews frequently. This led to the production, naming, or labelling of words, phrases, lines, and entire paragraphs in terms of scopes and properties, and memos were used to document the initial coding process. Some of the initial codes were linked to the questions asked by the researcher, while others transpired from the participants’ intense descriptions of their direct experiences. Where possible, to ensure that codes remained close to the data, I used participants’ terms (i.e., in NVivo code).

Coding Along Themes, Concepts, and Categories

“Coding along themes and topics can help to highlight priorities and provide focus to the process of analysing qualitative data” (Vaughn & Turner, 2016, p. 50). The interview with Nepali policy stakeholders was operated within a plethora of discursive practices of education and its policies. Therefore, coding along themes and concepts was critical in mapping educational discourses and discursive practices. I focused on more directed, selective, and conceptual coding. It permitted me to identify, detect, and synthesise emerging themes in the participants’ interviews, which later became the basis for forming categories and sub-categories. As the process of data coding and analysis extended to this stage, the relationships between the codes in themes and concepts become apparent. By reflecting on language and metalanguage, I was able to trace epistemic connections and linkages to a range of concepts. Data was pieced together with better techniques after initial coding to determine networks/influences between codes. Coding in themes and concepts therefore enabled continual interrogation of the data and constant comparison between the themes and concepts.

The responses of each interviewee were arranged and mapped systematically within coding categories in relation to the collected data. The mapping process entailed identifying similarities and differences. Discriminating themes, concepts, and categories was enabled through the coding of data and rigorously toiling over their significance and interrelationships. Synthesising data in NVivo, I placed similar focus on classifying data into various themes and concepts and categories. I placed such codes in an envelope and proceeded to narrate them through themes, concepts, and categories—keeping in mind the various categories and subcategories for thematic and conceptual classification of data. I wrote concise descriptions of all possible themes and concepts coded in each envelope using various coding categories. I reorganised the envelopes and checked whether the grouping

could be constructed otherwise. I asked questions about the data according to the themes and concepts, which enabled me to systematically develop appropriate coding categories.

Poststructural Interview Analysis (PIA)

An interview is a qualitative method of data collection—an inclusive interview technique that combines a pre-determined set of open-ended questions based on a subject that the researcher is attempting to investigate. It offers flexibility for the investigator to probe deeper into particular topics or responses of participants and to understand the ways in which they represent ideas, opinions, or experiences (see Kvale, 2007). The open-ended nature of the questions enables both the interviewer and the interviewee to discuss the subject broadly (Kallio et al. 2016). Roulston (2018) describes that “theoretical assumptions of the researcher—whether explicit or not—inform the design of interview studies and interview questions, as well as the analysis and representation of data” (p. 4). From a poststructuralist view, I will treat my data as Gubrium et al. (2012) have stated—“interview as qualitative and discourse data” (p. 2)—while adopting Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) poststructural interview analysis (PIA) method.

PIA offers seven procedures and several questions within each procedure to help analyse data. Synthesising data in NVivo, I drew on Bacchi and Goodwin’s (2016) poststructural interview analysis method of classifying processes into various coding types. I placed the focused codes in an envelope and narrated them through the PIA processes. I wrote concise descriptions of possible themes and concepts within each process while classifying the codes in each envelope into various categories, according to PIA process. I reorganised the envelopes and checked whether the grouping could be reconstructed each time systematically probing the data based on the PIA process, I then developed my analysis. These seven processes employed for data analysis in this study assisted in the development of

descriptions and the analysis of Nepali education policy development, procedures, and discourses. The seven processes were as follows:

1. Noting “what is said”

Here, categorised interview data was treated as having normative implications, forming people subjectivities. Nepali educational policy processes and policy practices were theoretically analysed by asking:

- a. What meanings need to be in place for particular “things said” to be intelligible?
- b. Where and how has a specific “things said” comes to be accepted as “truth”? (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 116)

2. Producing genealogies of “what is said”

As discussed earlier, historical reflection of Nepali education and its policies was necessary for producing genealogies of “what was said.” Discourse referring to Foucault is knowledge, and discourses are practices (Bacchi, 2009; Burchell et al. 1991). “Within discursive practices subjects, objects and places are in continual formation” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 117). Political analysis provides insight into how political practice plays an important role in the emergence of education policy and interviewee insights. In this process, I examined:

- a. What meaning needs to be in place for particular “things said” to be
- b. Where and how has specific “things said” come to be accepted as “truth”? (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 117)

3. Highlighting key discursive practices

As Bacchi (2009) regards “conceptual logics” as fundamental to understanding various modes of discourses, the focus of this section is on the subject position of interviewer and interviewee. Relevant questions considered in the analysis of interview data included:

- a. What discursive practices are relevant to the “things said” that are the focus of the analysis?

- b. Which subject's positions are made available within these discursive practices?

(Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, pp. 117–118)

4. Analysing “what was said”

Things said have implications in relation to norms and subject positions. They play a critical role in forming “subject,” “object,” and “places” and in conferring power to certain discursive practices. Hence, data must be analysed in terms of what it produces, or constitutes, rather than in terms of what it “means” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Therefore, during the analysis process, the following questions must be considered:

- a. Which norms do the “things said” invoke?
- b. Which “subjects” are produced?
- c. Which “objects” do they create?
- d. Which “places” are produced as legitimate? (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 118)

For example, a comment such as “Nepal cannot finance its education” by a participant produces “Nepal” as a poor, resource-constrained country. Alternatively, a comment that “Nepali policymakers lack technical expertise or skills” reflects human attributes. Bacchi (2009) presented problematisation as a theoretical interference in probing the production of subject-studying provisions in which human beings problematise “what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live” (p. x). Research interviews deliver access to such problematisation practices. The following questions are asked in this process:

- a. What does the individual relate to the self?
- b. What ways of moving, thinking, characterizing, and feeling has the interviewee exercised and related to the self?
- c. In which discursive practices have these attributes been, and continue to be, formed?

(Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 119)

5. Interrogating the production of “subjects”

“Interviews are an important resource for considering how we are continually produced as a particular kind of provisional subject (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 118). In this study, data was collected through interviews with Nepali educational policy stakeholders. In the process, the interviewer provides access to problematisation processes within the system as well as their subject positionality and insight into what they say, which in turn are differentiated as particular kinds of subjects.

6. Exploring transformative potentials and processes

In this process, the interviewer data are considered political resources, while discursive practices are understood as multiple and cultural as well as social-material specific. Data is probed using the following questions:

- a. Does a particular interviewee’s comment appear unusual, inappropriate, or out of context?
 - b. Does a particular comment offer an alternative to a taken-for-granted “reality”?
- (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 119)

7. Questioning the politics of distribution

In this section, the researcher role is in producing, analysing, and distributing data by using and understanding power and the networks of power in terms of what will be informed and included/excluded, and how and where the data will be disseminated. The following questions provide ways for deconstructing and revising the established norms and standards:

- a. Do particular interviewer comments (“things said”) challenge or reinforce pervasive ways of thinking?
- b. Does the question asked (in interviews) function to reinforce or challenge pervasive ways of thinking?
- c. Are the sites for distributing research results constrained in ways that reinforce pervasive ways of thinking? (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 120)

Data analysis for this study was undertaken by dividing the data into three coding sequences and through the application of Bacchi and Goodwin's (2016) seven processes within their poststructural interview analysis method. Through numerous categorisations into conceptual categories and sub-categories, which included emergence focus, representation focus, as well as reception-focused policymaking processes and practices, I wove this fragmented data into the construction of themes related to the emergence, representation, and reception of education policy in Nepal as outlined in chapter 1. In the process, I revisited multiple data resources—interviews, memos, journals, and code reports—to construct rich narratives. This involved reflexivity and critical interrogations.

Probing Unceasingly

The questions outlined above provided a process by which data could be coded and analysed critically. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) provides questions in their PIA method to probe data procedurally in rational and logical ways. This helped with data categorisation and, in turn, the development of findings as suggested by Bacchi “identifying and interrogating the binaries, key concepts and categories operating within a policy” (p.7). I examined whether my sample provided answers to my research questions and the objective of my research. I used all questions in each process outlined by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016). Several sequences of coding and analysing became imperative during the process (see Saldana, 2016).

Conditional Matrix and Charts

Separate to NVivo, working on A0-sized paper helped me to produce a makeshift matrix expounding codes and categories related to the phenomenon under examination. It facilitated the process of analysing data and deciphering the findings of the study. This was

instrumental as it enabled me to analyse and structure my findings chronologically and to examine the relationship and interrelationship between data. As Richards (2015) articulates, “[m]atrix work is like typology construction, a task of systematic comparison in order to arrive at a pattern” (p. 196). The conditional matrix and charts were therefore instrumental in data coding and analysis (see Luna & Berg, 2016). They helped me determine and relate categories to answer questions about the emergence, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal. The matrix gave an overall picture of evolving educational practices through a visual representation of interrelated categories along with providing open and broader conceptual logic for PIA procedures.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to data collection, I obtained ethics and safety approval from the University of Newcastle, Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). I spent three months conducting my fieldwork in Nepal and the remaining time in Newcastle, Australia. I adhered completely to the Australian Statement of Ethical Conduct in Human Research. I also utilised literature on research ethics to guide me in undertaking the study (Dei & Johal, 2005; Dominelli & Holloway, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Liamputtong, 2008; Smith, 2012). The major ethical considerations in this study are as follows: voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, recordkeeping, ethnic sensitivity, and comprehension of the politics of knowledge production.

- Voluntary participation: I provided the participants with a participant’s information statement and invited them to read it fully prior to the interview. This elucidated that their participation in the study was voluntary (see Appendix A). Participants conveyed their willingness to participate in the study by signing the informed consent (see Appendix C). I made it clear that there would not be any unnecessary consequences if they chose not to

participate, and ensured participants they could withdraw from the study at any time before interviews were transcribed.

- Anonymity and confidentiality: I guaranteed the participants that all information they provided to me would be confidential and that I would protect their anonymity, using pseudonyms when reporting the findings of the study.
- Recordkeeping: I kept all information and data relating to the study on a password-protected computer and stored printed information in a private cabinet, which was accessible only to the research team. On completion of the project, I transferred these documents to the School of Education where they will be preserved for a period of five years and then destroyed using the University of Newcastle's secure documents removal service.
- Ethnic sensitivity: I fully recognised and valued the ethnic compositions of the participants.
- Comprehension of the politics of knowledge production: The politics of knowledge production is drawn from power hierarchies inherent in the prevailing knowledge order and the commodification of knowledge (Bacchi, 2009; Dei, 2005; Denzin, 2010; Mol, 1999; Weiler, 2009). Given the poststructuralist approach and WPR analysis informing the study, I regarded knowledge development as political, reproductive, and co-constructed between the researcher and the participants as producers of knowledge legitimised by authorities in power. I positioned the study and reflected deeply on representing the voice of the participants and their experiences, and will make the findings available through publications in recognised, peer-reviewed journals and open sources.

Furthermore, as Bacchi (2007) observed:

[E]xpanding the scope of ethical reflection and debate beyond the individual behaviours of politicians and public servants, and beyond specific issues labelled “moral issues.” It [poststructuralist research] does this by drawing attention to the ethical implications of the problem representations implicit in policies and policy proposals. Recognizing that problem representations have a range of important implications both for outcomes and for power relations. (p. 17)

Limitations

No research and knowledge reproduction pursuit can elude the trap of limitations. There are several limitations to the study. As with qualitative research designs, there are limitations relating to the small number of research participants. This is significant to note, as are the strengths of qualitative research practice. Nevertheless, in saying so, no one knows what the accurate sample size for a research project should be; there are just expectations and assumptions. Regardless, this poststructuralist, qualitative study provided unique knowledge that would be of concern to scholars advancing education and its policies. Relatively, it embraces unconventional ways of thinking about Nepali education and its policies. The other moderating factor was access to participants. As soon as I arrived in Nepal to undertake data collection, access to the powerful participants, despite their full approval, was constrained by organisational and bureaucratic complications. Provided the time limitations of my scholarship, I did my best in the situation encountered and remained exceptionally appreciative to those who participated in these circumstances.

The method that was applied to explore the research questions and encounter the research objectives required uncovering diverse perspectives. The strength of qualitative research resides in its prominence on the intricacy, multiplicity, and specificity of particular cultural practices, communities, institutions, or worldwide discourses. The assumptions and presuppositions is that dense descriptions, nuanced interpretations, and critical analysis of a

particular sociocultural context advances knowledge of the particular and contributes to the general conversations of human condition (Bernard, 2011). According to the state of affairs in Nepal, as described in Chapter 4, some may challenge the findings of this study.

Nevertheless, I would endorse the findings to policymakers and others who share my position on the nature of educational policy development and the changes needed for more critical and inclusive educational practices alternatively more representative.

Another possible limitation to this study is the use of language. I analysed the discourse of Nepali educational policies and its development in English, although my mother tongue is Nepali. I led the interviews in Nepali. After each interview, I transcribed the information from Nepali language into English and also reported on the study in English. In this process, I frequently reflected between Nepali and English. Thus, in discoursing education and its policies, the process was extremely laborious and demanding and, undeniably, some things may have been lost in translation. As Squires (2008) noted, “failures to recognise language barriers threatens the credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability [of research]” (p. 265). However, I am bilingual; therefore, I was able to interview in Nepali and write in English because of my educational training and social background. There were also benefits in not using a translator or interpreter since I was able to engage deeply and personally in the precise words and phrases of the participants, thereby providing reliable accounts when reporting on the study.

While quantitative studies endeavour for external validity, the ability to generalise findings is not an essential dimension of qualitative research. Qualitative studies function on the rulebook that well-designed, thoughtful inquiry into particular human worlds, organised around significant questions shared by other human beings, facilitates finding the exploration of other problems and questions that are not statistically or ethnographically incorporated in research projects. A qualitative study seeks to provide rich data that enables critical analysis

of the particular context that is relevant to understanding the topic in comparative and cross-cultural frameworks. The goals of Nepal's educational policy analysis based on its emergence, representation, and reception entails stimulating inquiry into particular socioeconomic contexts and the influences educational discourses have in shaping what Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) describes as "personhood." The limitations of a lesser sample size may become a strength insofar as it uncovers the beliefs and values of the most dominant groups—particularly as the study intends to examine, unconventionally, knowledge as constructed, practised, and governed by power. However, evidence-based practices as observed by Bacchi (2009) are symbolic representations of concepts and practices, implying that limitations are thus inherent in research.

All participants provided their verbal and written consent. Taking into account the significance of participants' positions and the possible political and legal implications of their participation in the study, and to avoid harm or unwanted consequences, the identification of the subjects was not revealed. Safety and protection of the participants was highly considered. Moreover, ethics approval from the University of Newcastle ethics committee was obtained prior to data collection with acknowledgement of complete adherence to its standard of conduct.

Conclusion

As Foucault (1991) observed:

I wouldn't want what I may have said or written to be seen as any claims to totality. I don't try to universalise what I say; conversely, what I don't say isn't meant to be thereby disqualified as being of no importance. (p. 73)

Similarly, Ferreira-Neto (2018) considered:

Michel Foucault's work resonates with perspectives regarding what is defined as quality in qualitative research. Quality is measured, among other criteria, by explanations about how the research is defined, managed in the stages of this decision-making process, and produced step-by-step. Michel Foucault, throughout his work, was careful when presenting his investigative path to his readers and students, along with his methodological choices, and justified, when necessary, changes in his trajectory. In this manner, he upheld the virtue of a classic researcher by being explicit in the discussion of how he carried out his investigative process. (p.349)

The research is a study of Nepali educational policymakers and stakeholders' perspectives on the emergence, representation, and reception of educational policies. The discursive order categorising current reflections, strategic intervention, and networks of power, practice, politics, interventions have been scrutinised. Within a short period of the fieldwork, I was able to collect rich data in keeping with the methodological politics for my research as a researcher (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Poststructuralist theory's potential to generate a critical discourse analysis of Nepali educational policies and the nature of their development proved an asset because of its "fit" and "silences" within the context of study. Moreover, it will generate new understandings about the role of power and the discourse of policymakers and policy stakeholders, who, like the researcher, belong to the same community produced and reproduced by such discourses within the system. As Gordon (1991) contended, the "worded world" could "never accurately, precisely, completely, capture[s] the studied world" (p. 923). Teman and Lehman (2019) specifies in respects to the requirement of a poststructuralist research "You cannot answer that question quantitatively; you need to pursue a qualitative approach" (p.65). Concisely, this chapter outlined the methodology used to study the emergence, representation, and reception of Nepal education policies and practices, and its synergies with power and critical discourse. It outlines the

process of the recruitment and selection of participants and the methods of data collection and analysis employed, as well as ethical considerations and study limitations. The next chapter presents the policy analysis of this study.

Notes

- The “methodology” applied in this study, including the research procedures and research practices, are works in progress, not perfections.
- The use of quotations marks signals the provisional status of subjects, and henceforth, the concepts, affirmations, and conclusions reached through data analysis are limited to and politicised by the researcher.

Chapter 4

Planning has long been subverted to serve the political and economic interest of a small class of Nepali elites.

Shrestha (2009, p.71)

This chapter briefly discusses the history of Nepali education policy. In addition, drawing on the logic of Carol Bacchi's WPR poststructural policy analysis framework, it uncovers problems represented by policy, how such representation of particular problems within policies were made possible, and problems yet to be proposed or previously ignored by power in policymaking processes. In essence, this chapter discloses the rhetoric formerly embraced, currently in vogue, and the need for (re-) discoursing excluded matters of Nepali education policies and its policymaking processes. This chapter sets the context for this study as the researcher portends to construct a critical analysis of emergence, representation, and relevance of Nepali education policies. Exploring literature, it uncovers silences within Nepali education and its manifold and multifaceted policymaking processes, providing insights into how discourse of different actors engaged in educational policymaking have influenced the processes. Additionally, it also discourses sequences that have led to the current context. Furthermore, problems of minorities categorised by caste, religion, language, region, and location vis-à-vis education and its policies will be critically analysed pertaining to the purview of Nepal and Nepali.

Revisiting the History: The Burden of the Past

Formal schooling is by and large organised and controlled by the government (Apple, 2003). The case of Nepal is no different. In Nepal, educational issues are primarily the concern of the government. The Government of Nepal has historically directed educational

matters and issues since 1951. It administers the problem of education and its policies in consultation association with Nepal's Ministry of Education, the peak body for educational policymaking and implementation in the country. This study, therefore, intends to analyse Nepali educational policies, including the concepts and categories under which they are constructed and carried out. Tikly (2003) clarifies, "studying the policy through the lens of the governmentality theory allow[s] for the consideration of the autonomous effects of the rationalities of government on shaping the possibilities of policy and invoking different form[s] of power" (p. 161).

Governments' exercise of power through governance produces both possibilities and limitations for the populace. Fukuyama (2013) as regards to governance states: "As a starting point, I am going to define governance as a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not" (p. 350).

Rules and services are enforced through policies by the government that governs us. However, Lemke (2002) asserts, "it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality underpinning them" (p. 50). Apple (2003) explains that educational policymaking processes are political spaces as it gives authorities to the power "to ask and answers these questions [regarding educational problems]" (p. 1). Furthermore, it regulates our actions and defines the possibilities. To put it into perspective, this understanding has been broadened by Tikly (2003) who articulates: "Political programmes and technologies of government constitutes a key discursive terrain over which politics, including educational politics, is fought both in South Africa and globally" (p. 173).

In Nepal, the discourse of education and its policymaking processes is interconnected between local and global forces and unearths an exceptional struggle over the direction of educational institutions, policymaking, and its legitimacy. Alongside reciprocation with representation and the relevance of concepts such as democracy, development, modernity,

neo-liberalism, and so on, furthermore, discourses of modernity and development, as proposed by western forces, entails policies linkages and practices (Pradhan & Valentin, 2019; Rappleye, 2019; Robertson, 2019a; Shrestha, 2009). While such concepts and the categorisation of educational policies are incorporated by the government into Nepali legislation, educational concerns of the Nepali people are addressed superficially as banks, international governments, and co-operations define and influence existing educational policies in Nepal under the guise of international development and policies (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2017; Liechty et al., 2019; Pradhan & Valentin, 2019; Rappleye, 2019; Robertson, 2019a). As Apple (2003) has noted: “The educational system will constantly be in the middle of crucial struggles over the meaning of democracy, over definitions of legitimate authority and culture, and over who should benefit the most from government policies and practices” (p. 1).

In Nepal, the lived experiences of those in historically marginalised sections of society is that of systematic exclusion as a result of government policies and practices. Although the rhetoric of access and equality is discoursed by most policies, Carney (2015) explains the situation: “the quality of schooling in Nepal is a key concern for policy makers in Nepal with state-provided education often described as failing the poor, 1.7 million of whom remain out of school” (p. 109).

Despite this historical marginality, in Nepal educational policies have been criticised as impractical (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013). According to Wood, a formative technical advisor to Nepal’s National Educational Planning Commission in 1956:

Prior to 1951, education in Nepal was practically non-existent. There were six high schools, four of which were in central Kathmandu valley. There was one small collage in the capital. It is estimated that there may have been 100 primary schools,

but many of these were little more than tutoring classes. Education was discouraged, even prohibited, except for the sons of the government officials. (Wood, 1959, p. 429)

Wood substantiates how discourses constructed by governing authorities through governmental practices and legislated policies have many intended and unintended effects in the lives of people. Educational policymaking that is prominently power-driven lacks empirical improvement due to overt external influences that have unconstructively obstructed Nepal throughout the historical continuum. Carney (2015) opines that the “global developmental apparatus ... structure[s] the country as deficient and inferior to its powerfully-powerful neighbours, western donor ‘partners’ and an abstract cosmopolitan ideal” (Carney, 2015, p. 103).

Researchers have deduced educational disparity as a key reason for persistent discrimination, segregation, and the poverty of minorities and people outside policymaking spaces in Nepal (Pherali, 2013; Valente, 2014). However, the country itself fits within the marginalised category when analysed as to how western developmental apparatus structures and the kinds of discourses they create about Nepal and its education. Education and its policies can be procedures for cultural reproduction (Bourdieu, 1984). Dilas et al. (2018) write:

Reforms such as the 1971 National Education System Plan have created a much more modern and egalitarian education system with compulsory public basic education. There are now 35,222 elementary and secondary schools and 10 universities with more than 1,400 colleges and campuses throughout Nepal (2016). Expanding educational opportunities is a priority of the government: its current 2016 School Sector Development Plan seeks to graduate Nepal “from the status of least developed country by 2022 through strengthening ... access and quality of education.” (p. 8)

Government policies have never treated people uniformly; rather, it has been a site for exercising power dynamics, power discourses, and disciplinary processes by those in power (Carney & Bista, 2009; Sharma Poudyal, 2017). This has led to the to perpetual exclusion of some and the inclusion of others in policies; this is the case in Nepal, too (see Parker et al., 2013). Policy research are not just written credentials; they are “both text and actions, words and deeds, it is what is enhanced as well as what is intended” (Ball, 1994, p. 10). Various discourses regarding Nepali educational domains and their development and the role of developmental cooperation and international aid agencies all have been said to have reproduced disjuncture between the local and global (Pradhan, 2018; Rappleye, 2011). Conversations heralding power effects in Nepali educational developments and subjectivities in this long process of educational practice and policymaking for the last seven decades in Nepal have shown destabilization exerted by politicians, bureaucrats, and international developmental partners in educational policymaking (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2013; Pradhan, 2018; Rappleye, 2019). Therefore, the process of Nepal's educational development requires holistic analysis. Regarding modern educational practices in Nepal, Wood (1965) highlighted that:

The description of education in Nepal today, which follows, includes the details of events after 1951, and thus they are not more fully developed here. At this point it is sufficient to note that 1951 marked the beginning of a new dynamic period in the development of education in Nepal—a period which is still continuing. (p. 19)

Over the past 70 years, multiple internal political changes and the premediated presence of international developmental organisations, their discourses and practices delineate a developmental and modernity narrative in educational policymaking processes in Nepal (Rappleye, 2011; Regmi, 2017). As Evans (2018) argues, “Policy-makers may also regard inequality as unproblematic: a just outcome and/or inevitable” (p. 262), implying that

a critical approach to policy analysis and reform practices is needed. In Nepal, governing elites discount the issues of minorities in educational policymaking processes. Khanal (2019), interpreting these enduring discrepancies in Nepali education, urges for change; he questions the policy-proposing mechanism in the past and suggests what Nepal must do in the aftermath of recent political changes:

The major aim of this political transformation has been to dismantle the old-age unitary political structure backed by historically rooted monocultural and monolingual policies and practices, and thereby make Nepal's democracy more inclusive and plural. Along with this political change, a number of school-related questions have also been brought to the fore, including: What constitutes a national curriculum and what should it be? What counts as official knowledge and how should it be organised? Whose voices and cultures should be dominant or at least represented in the school? (pp. 458–459)

Although Nepal has implemented and restructured several policies since 1951, there are voids in its educational policies. Mathema (2007) considered Nepali education as having failed and reasoned for urgent restructuring of its policies. Wu, Ramesh, & Howlett (2015) analysed the analytical capacity of the government in policy implementation and established three dimensions for successful implementation of policies: (a) analytical capacity to access and apply technical and scientific knowledge; (b) operational capacity for building the abilities of those in leadership within the public services; and (c) political capacity for augmenting the capacity of policy actors in policymaking, for policy attainment. Literature regarding policy failures indicate that a holistic analysis of policy processes and practices is needed. Peters (2015), regarding policy failures, notes that:

[W]hile certainly common and regrettable, [policy failures] are the easiest of these forms of failure within the public sector to resolve. If a policy does not work, it is not

linked to the organic structure of the state but is only an instrument that can be manipulated in order to produce better results. Policy change is not easy, and designing the right policy is also not easy, but it does not involve the large-scale political and even social change that may be required to address state failure or governance failure. (p. 264)

Nepal commenced its planned approach to education in the 1950s; this initial period stands accused of being influenced by international politics and governance through financial and technical supports, persuaded by economic and cultural transfers and control by the western influences (Awasthi, 2008; Rappleye, 2019; Regmi, 2019a). This brings to the fore trajectories that have far, unforeseen repercussions for the strong development of Nepali education and its schooling. They have not grown organically and do not reflect the social, cultural, and economic concerns of Nepal. Therefore, as Wu et al. (2015) have suggested, systematic, organisational, and political governance is necessary for policy success. Nevertheless, regrettably, this has not transpired in Nepal, and there is much inefficiency both in the bureaucracy and the political sphere in Nepal as policies need to be empirically designed and reproduced systematically with all-encompassing participations and representations of the discourses of the common people (Neupane, 2017; Parker et al., 2013). In the early phase of educational design and practice in Nepal, there were already discrepancies and shortcomings, as described by Reed (1979):

The [Nepali] national plans have been constructed by the Nepalese elite, most of whom have been influenced by modern world forces. Yet they are also close to the pervasive traditional culture that holds sway for nearly 12 million Nepalese living in the 29000 villages. Foreign influences is evident through advisors and resources to Nepal, representing a more modern industrial culture of varying political economic

ideologies (Russia, USA, United Kingdom, Japan etc.) and representing other powerful nations striving towards modern economic development. (p. 44)

During these foundational years of educational planning, policy presuppositions and assumptions were practised through strategic proposals of transnational agencies and their educational mandates directed Nepali educational designs. In this context, policies were imposed by these external influences, discounting the participation of the Nepali people. In this regard, both Nepali elites in power and the donors are analogously accountable (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2017; Regmi, 2017). This synergy between the donors and the Nepali elites have inappropriately formed the direction and dynamics for Nepali education and its policies to this day as identified in literature (Khanal, 2017; Pradhan, 2018; Rappleye, 2019). Devkota and Bagale (2015), scrutinising the educational context of Nepal, assert that “policies without effective implementation couldn’t be meaningful” (p. 153). Furthermore, Carney (2015) declares, “The search for new solutions is hardly new in Nepal” (p. 106). Subsequent to the 1990s, policy experimentation has been a new spectacle in Nepal. The revival of democracy and extensive involvement of donors and multilateral agencies has remapped the educational environment in Nepal. For that reason, this analysis will concentrate on how developmental discourses are directing past and current issues of Nepali education and policymaking processes under the instructions primarily of the banks and other intervening agencies through policy suggestions and politics. The Nepali 1990s political changes and Education for All (EFA) campaign in Jomtien, Thailand, occurred at the same time. The government of the 1990s readily committed to EFA goals and as Carney (2015) ascribed, “[it] became the fundamental pillar of Nepali public policy” (p. 106). Nevertheless, EFA and the subsequent educational policies were launched successively until the latest School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) was subjugated by agencies and development banks’ policies. Their discourses prioritised policies that emphasised neoliberalism, decentralisation, privatisation, and

community management (Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017). In the meantime, the inherently fragile political context and governance-produced inequalities have become historically constructed social problems in Nepal (Carney & Bista, 2009; Carney et al., 2007). Parker et al. (2013) argue that “[t]he problem in education is not only lack of access but also the unequal quality and type of education provided” (p. 376). Returning to global policies like EFA and MGD (Millennium Developmental Goals) governance and its attainment, Ahmad (2014) writes:

Policies and objectives falter too often in implementation, to which the EFA and MDG experience amply testifies. The processes related to governance and management are by their nature contextual and specific to a country’s public administration structures, culture, history and norms, which cannot be articulated in general terms as global goals. Moreover, bringing these into the list of global goals may undermine the sharpness and focus of a limited number of high priority goals, which has been a strength of MDG and EFA. (p. 66)

Problematising the discourse of global policies is necessary, as these policies when taken for granted have implications for Nepal and Nepali people. In this regard, how Nepali educational policies have developed will be interrogated. Moreover, what effects do such practices and processes produce? Is this critical? This analysis therefore concentrates on the discursive issues of education and its policies to re-imagine policy development and to discourse the issues of the excluded, whose concerns have been conveniently renounced by authorities in power and marginalised in policymaking procedures and processes. Furthermore, analysing the powers that govern education policy spaces, it advocates for more inclusive, operational policies and processes in Nepal while problematising what Klerides and Kotthoff (2015) argues as policymaking, which “in many parts of the world, has never been the exclusive privilege and playground of local governments” (p. 197).

The Histories of the Past: Problems in Historical Discourses and Ways Forward

Global politics, diplomacy, and policies powerfully construct the course of Nepali education, intertwined with internal political instability, aid reliant economy, global participation, and so on, in the aftermath of the Second World War (Lietchy et al., 2019; Phareli, 2013; Robertson, 2019a). In addition, transnational powers (especially USA) are a dominant policymaking force globally and in Nepal as well. The Nepali educational policymaking and implementation mechanism has thus been influenced by these global political changes, and these influences are the result of international control development politics and policies. Wood (1987) mentions Nepal's development trajectories as dominated by new global forms of development policy sponsored by western powers and their establishment's politics. Wood (1987) previously explained Nepal's educational progression as globally dominated by exogenous governance and revealed the role of such establishments as placed by outsiders:

[On] January 23, 1951 King Tribhuvan (having fled to Delhi) signed the momentous General Agreement for Technical Cooperation between Nepal and the United States, thereby allowing the US to launch an aggressive foreign aid and development agenda in Nepal. (p. 3)

As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, each of the educational policies of Nepal have been the result of political concerns of international forces and Nepali elites in Kathmandu. To illustrate the developmental course of Nepali education and its policies, it is imperative to understand the complex domestic politics and international influences that emerged in Nepal as directed by western developmental and modernity concepts and categories. Lietchy et al. (2019) apprise: "To any new postcolonial nation-state the US would offer 'aid' to help set it on the road to development, modernization, and open markets" (p. 3).

Carney (2015), in this regard, identifies a deficit view of Nepal as lacking resources. He further adds that “[g]overning the soul through policy” (p. 105) is how policy governs nation states. Nepali education and its policies since its foundation have been unquestioned. The exogenous governance taken for granted in Nepali educational expansion requires critical scrutiny. In particular, the issue of the representation of the most vulnerable and marginalised Nepali population categories such as Dalit, Indigenous peoples, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural minorities, women and others who reside in the periphery of power have been under represented in Nepali education and in its policymaking processes (Neupane, 2017; Parker et al., 2013; Pradhan & Valentine, 2019). Utilising the rich and valuable insight and experience of people in non-policy roles, Nepal needs to re-imagine its educational concerns. The centralised education policies as strategised by western powers to resolve the problems of the Nepali education via an outsider’s knowledge and practices have produced hierarchical and exclusive practices in Nepali education (Awasthi, 2008; Neupane, 2017). The citations beneath sum up the framework of Nepal’s educational policymaking in the early junctures: “The expansion of education during this period was simply a ‘psychological adornment’ rather than a national strategy to produce citizens capable of contributing to the economy of Nepal” (Ragsdale, 1989, p. 15, as cited in Pherali & Garret, 2014, p. 44).

Inevitably, Nepal needs to rethink these conventional approaches to its education and policymaking. In the last seven decades alongside expansion of its education, policy stakeholders in Nepal have failed to construct representative education policies under the direction of international agencies. International educational stakeholders have exercised their power through assistance; Menashy’s (2018) study indicates that this is nothing more than governance:

The study finds that in spite of efforts to create a more equitable environment via the GPE [Global partners in Education], bilateral donors and the World Bank in particular retain their hierarchical positions through the maintenance of structures that reproduce their dominant status, thereby countering the principles that underpin the GPE's mandate. (p. 13)

To conclude, international aid and such practices results in power asymmetry having significance for both the governing and governed. Therefore, historical antecedents have idealistic impacts on the development of Nepali education policies. Wood (1965) implied that modern Nepali education has been directed by these preliminary discursive practices. These discursive directions institute possibilities and impossibilities for the common people, administered by state or interstate powers and their modalities. In regards to Nepal, these discourses of education are intricate. Carney and Rappleye (2011) exemplify some of these internal limitations, saying:

Progressive political forces in Nepal seek to rewrite these relationships but are deeply bound up within them by virtue of historically grounded processes of dependence and submission which are now complicated by emerging global discourses of liberalism that prioritise individualised notions of rights, free trade and new systems of governance. (p. 3)

However, in the process, “developmental agencies prioritize policies over research” (Pigg, 1992, p. 504). This eventually leads to substantial damage to Nepal as to what they problematised ideologically, constraining the possibility for local choices and providing temporary solutions to Nepali educational concerns, due to the lack of durable policy estimations. Improvements and revitalisation of education naturally can be achieved through the reconceptualisation and reinvigorating of the field of policymaking processes grounded on Nepali internal necessities (Maudsley, 2014; Neupane, 2017). Reconsideration for holistic

discursive practices in educational governance is required. Similarly, relevant discourses in policies and education, with inclusive frames of reference, units of analysis, and greater recognition of the numerous stakeholders and improved policies and practices must be re-imagined as under neoliberal western policies Nepal has no prospect of revitalising its education (Regmi, 2017).

In this section, I have examined the evolution of the problems discoursed in Nepal's education and its policymaking procedures from the 1950s to current times, thus demonstrating the underpinning assumptions and presumptions within the literature. In Nepal, control of education and its policies moved into the hands of universal forces, with the influence of multilaterals and bilateral governance, and with the influence of the ruling elites over the needs and matters of education internally. The important factors were the end of the Cold War and Nepali transition to democracy and its exposure to the global arena, along with the unfolding situations that evolved both in education and politics simultaneously with Panchayat Rule through the 1960s to 1990s, the implementation of Nepal's education system plan of 1971, and the end of Panchayat and revival of democracy in the 1990s with its multiparty system and Nepal's commitment to Education for All (EFA). The subsequent educational policies that arose under the shadow of donors' governance and EFA strategies as discussed in Chapter 2 defines Nepali educational processes. However, the Maoist insurgency of 1996–2006, the end of the monarchy, and Nepal's political transformation into federalism defines the current historical juncture (Lietchy et al., 2019; Rappleye, 2019). Therefore, revisiting the nature of educational policies and their emergence, representation, and relevance is necessary to add to the gaps inherent within Nepal's education and its policymaking.

Reconfiguring Nepal's Educational Policies:

Emerging Assumptions, Presuppositions, and Silences

The role of governing authorities in construing Nepali education and its policies historically reflects a lack of vision among political leadership (Khaniya & Williams, 2004; Mathema, 2007; Phreali, 2013). Likewise, Budhathoki (2018) deduced that:

[Peoples'] views, opinions and concerns are hardly taken into consideration while making policies, including in the education sector. In most cases, the policy-making process is driven by political agenda. In other words, it is those in power who lead the policy-making process as such. (n.p.)

Government's inability to recognise Nepal's inherent complex geographical, socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural dynamism, and continual exclusion of minorities' problems in educational procedures have produced tensions among the most disadvantaged in society (Parker et al., 2013; Phreali, 2013). Such restricted practices have enhanced disparity, segregation, and systematic rejection of minorities' concerns and discourses in education (Phreali & Garrett, 2014). This sorry state of educational reform in Nepal outlines the problems of political interference. Although there were many political changes in the country after the inception of democracy in the 1950s, the subsequent changes failed to consolidate visions for Nepali education. Phreali (2013) illustrates: "Nepal has tremendous opportunities to radically reform education in a bid to address deep structural inequalities. However, the excessive politicization of both the education system and other state institutions poses serious threats to such reforms" (p. 64).

Researchers and educators in Nepal are probing the legitimacy of political parties and their overtly politicised policymaking mechanisms; its implementation processes are questioned, as is the integrity of Nepali politicians and authorities in these policymaking processes (Mathema, 2007; Pradhan, 2018; Regmi, 2017). Budhathoki (2018) argues, "In

framing policies, there are hardly any consultations and negotiations with the stakeholders” (n.p.). Literature justifies that there is a crucial need to re-introduce bold educational reforms in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017). There is significant inequality in education in Nepal, and policies have been unsuccessful to discourse such exclusive practices (Devkota & Upadhyay, 2016).

Lost in extreme politicisation and power interplay, political parties and governments in Nepal have structured political concerns vis-à-vis education and its policies. The discussions around Nepal’s education and its policymaking processes, which are directed for political gain, lack representation of the concerns of the common people (Maudsley, 2014). In this regard, Shrestha (2017) writes, “The government’s education policy lacks many things” (n.p.). There is no direct participation of the diverse Nepali population in the process of policymaking. Therefore, there is an urgent need to redefine Nepal’s education policies and for its systemic restructuring and implementation without further delay (Bhattarai, 2016; Mathema, 2007).

Nepali education and its policymaking processes must be critically reappraised. Regulated by the discourses of party politics and international aid agencies, Nepali education is certain to experience further destruction if policies are not restructured urgently (Bhattarai, 2016; Mathema, 2007; Regmi, 2017). Studies have shown that international actors have exerted power coercing the Nepali government to shape its education and educational policies under the narrative of developmental goals (Rappleye, 2019; Robertson, 2019a). As a result, the idea of re-discoursing educational policymaking and implementation processes for enhancing both policy relevance and representation is vital to Nepal.

These frameworks of educational development and planning and the role of the Government of Nepal in discussing concerns with Nepal’s international developmental partners (EDPs) and the ideas of neoliberalism, privatisation, and decentralisation of Nepali

education have come under scrutiny (Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017). The main purpose of MoE should be to take responsibility of policymaking and implementation, with deeper concentration towards national concerns that have been historically ignored in the past (Bhattarai, 2016; Koirala, 2008). In spite of this ruin, some optimism still exists further to political changes and the governance of education at the federal level as per the newly promulgated constitution (2015). Ironically, Nepal is still trying to bargain with the donors to continue funding its education programs. Donors' aid-conditionality as biased practices have resulted in distrust towards the capacity and responsibility of the GoN and MoE. However, the expectations of the Nepali people in recent times, particularly after Nepal's post-conflict and 2015's post-disaster reconstruction, is extreme. Despite political changes, governing organisations have poorly performed. The Nepali political reorganisation to federalism and its grit to upgrade from the least developed country by 2022 dawdles in doubts amid such drastic implications for changes (see Dilas et al., 2018).

Despite several policy restructurings in Nepal comprising privatisation, decentralisation, community management, and centralisation of policymaking, curriculum, and outcomes since the 1950s, very little progress has been achieved (Bhattarai, 2016). Cosmopolitan discourses are comprised of developmental descriptions at the nucleus of validation for such dominating acts of external governance. Findings on decentralisation policies and its outcomes in terms of local participation in Nepal shows that educational policies for public schooling in Nepal have shown little success under universalised educational policies of transnational organisations. The declared outcomes entail hybridisation of globalised features while standardised policies are being filtered through the national systems, destabilising Nepali education and its policies' functionality (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017; Sharma Poudyal, 2017).

Even though Nepal is one of the biggest aid recipients amongst developing countries it is unlikely to achieve any proposed goals (Bell, 2015). Amidst all these reservations, educational policies that are historically constructed by confrontation and produced by structural and ideological encounters of control, shape ideas that are incorporated into policies without much effect (Carney & Bista, 2009). Such discourses enable policy stakeholders to consider specific policy representation as constructed by authority whose assumptions and pre-suppositions define Nepal's educational problem through their politicised problematisation that has little or no relevance to Nepal and Nepali people (Bhatta, 2011; Regmi, 2017). Therefore, analysing how historical consciousness shapes our current realities is essential (Parkes, 2012). Such assumptions follow that a reflective revision of Nepal's education policies is necessary for understanding the process of Nepal's education policy emergence, representation, and relevance.

Equated with conventional approaches, it is necessary for Nepal to re-discourse its educational policies and its policymaking procedures. In this regard, Lietchey et al. (2019) historically examines:

For Nepal, then, the long 1950s are decades of social and political flux as patterns of power—both nationally and globally—shifted from long-entrenched colonial dependencies to new, “modern” inter-state relations. The emerging new global order simultaneously placed Nepal within Cold War constraints and created the conditions for new forms of international patronage, new configurations of national political power, new civic freedoms, new foreign development initiatives in Nepal, new class-based patterns of social organization in Kathmandu, and new commercial opportunities (including tourism) drawing on liberalized trade regimes linking Nepal with the outside world. (p. 6)

These powerful effects of western practices of development, modernity, and democratisation have shaped the course of Nepali education and its developmental policies. Shrestha (2009) critiques this tendency, saying that the “ladder of modernity, imported and imposed from west, was actually a trap” (p. 50). In the field of Nepali education and its policymaking, the trend of educational problematisation requires critical scrutiny as the space remains relatively silent. Every policy including educational policies in Nepal are fenced within developmental, modernity narratives (Carney & Reppley, 2011; Edwards, 2011). Thus, it is still unclear how such problematisation has created possibilities for some of the population and none for others. Shrestha (2009) writes: “Foreign aid is a modern-day colonialism, its purveyors and practitioners must suffer a sense of guilt if they were to assess themselves and the way every ‘irrational’ conduct of theirs is rationalised in the name of “irrational Nepalis” (p. iii).

Depending on the assumptions and presumptions of literature, it is evident that Nepali educational policies require critical scrutiny. As Andrews and Bawa (2014) discuss:

In order to extricate development, as discourse, practice and theory, from its colonial and modernist history and explore its practical significance as human progress, a context-specific approach, which makes local populations an integral part of a dialogic process, is a must. (p. 922)

Thereby, this study pursues to understand the nature of educational development in Nepal but equally internalises that:

Development studies [have always informed policymaking and practice, [but] in what ways does it offer concrete alternatives to the problematic of development in this post-development era? Or does it remain merely a discursive analytic tool employed by development theorists? Bruno Latour [Actor Network Theory (ANT)], one of its

primary proponents, maintains that it is a method, not an explanatory variable.

(Andrews & Bawa, 2014, p. 932)

On the other hand, by analysing Nepal's educational development processes, its construction, and historical approaches, this study intends to problematise the dominant discourses prevalent within Nepali educational policymaking processes. Nepali educational policies and its processes are outlined by western "development" and "modernism." These emergent schemes, which determine Nepal's education development as a particular kind, advances the framework for policy and practices in Nepal, historically charted by the control of aid agencies. Thus, a post-structuralist reading is necessary, as it enables policy stakeholders to question and deconstruct the developmental policies and practices of multilaterals and bilateral organisations, particularly those essentialising and universalising Nepal's educational development. Parkes (2014) referred to post-structuralism as an approach contrary to the "essentialising" or "universalising" tendency of discourses. Therefore, international development partners and their discourses require critical scrutiny as they have subjective effects on both the people of Nepal and the nation. This approach entails questioning the exclusion and oppression entrenched by such constructions—constructions that are leading to the exclusion and marginalisation of groups outside the mainstream of power in policy practices and applications.

Challenging and Rupturing Conventional Concepts: Future Directions

It is imperative to know the procedure of education and its policymaking in the context of Nepal—how it emerges from deeper historical, structural, and ideological encounters and the challenges it has faced historically. This will enhance and facilitate the investigation into how specific representations have constructed a specific problem as a particular type of problem (Bacchi, 2009). It follows that reflective revision of Nepal's education policies is necessary to understand the process of Nepali education policy's

emergence, representation, and relevance; to understand its (accused) policy failure and impact. For this, an extensive analysis of policy processes is necessary (McConnell, 2015).

Acute Analysis for Breaking Discursive Limitations

Nepal's National Education Planning Commission declares "[Nepal as] a little country with big problems" (p. 23). This is a significant historical construction. Celliers (2013) takes into account: "knowledge is always linked to historical processes, and these historical processes simultaneously draw the borders and offer the possibilities for knowledge. History offers space for the formation, but also destruction of knowledge" (p. 2).

Through historical encounters, the present-day context can be explicated. Similarly, to understand the state of Nepali educational development, links and reflections on the report of Nepal's National Education Planning Commission 1955 is necessary as "Not only are there very few schools, but these schools are concentrated into the larger towns and population centres, leaving the vast majority of the country untouched by education in the modern sense of the term" (NNEPC, 1955, p. 37).

This representation of Nepali education is problematic as the assessment located Nepal's educational situation within the frame of modern education discourse as exemplified by the western powers (Koirala, 2008). This initial education policy and education system, structured with the technical advice of US Professor Hugh. B. Wood, guided Nepali education and proposed western capitalistic ideologies while ignoring Nepal's distinctive sociocultural values, morals, characteristics, customs, beliefs, and practices (Awasthi, 2008; Koirala, 2008). Representing Nepal under a deficit rubric, the early educational planners and policymakers positioned Nepal under a specific category through specific considerations. However, Wood's legacy has been driving the course of Nepal's education and its policies to this day (Gyawali, 2019; Lietchey et al., 2019; Rappleye, 2019).

These facts discoursed even today are substantial as they explain how western governance hijacked Nepal's opportunity to formulate its educational policies based on its own internal context and knowledge (Maudsley, 2014). During this initial phase, policies assumed specific representation of problems outlined and produced particular premises vis-à-vis Nepali education and knowledge about it. In the process, the policies proposed favoured the ruling elites and excluded minorities. Elites and Nepali developmental partners faced strong backlash for deliberately segregating non-policy actors from decision-making in matters of education and its policies (Drucza, 2018).

Policy literature indicates that western hegemonic establishments have decolonising tendencies (Robertson, 2019a; Yadav, 2017). These assumed versions of western knowledge exercised in Nepal and throughout other developing contexts produce a specific kind of social reality shaping not only everyday lived experiences and subjectivities but also changing how people think and behave as individuals and as a community (see Yadav, 2017). Realities we live in are multiple and are culturally situated (Mol, 1999). Under the western hegemonic discourses, Nepali educational realities are universalised under metanarratives of bilateral and multilateral organisations such as Education for All, privatisation, decentralisation, standardisation, Millennium Development Goals, Sustainable Developmental Goals, and so on. Owing to Nepal's educational policymaking process, concepts and categories like quality, equity, equality, relevance, gender parity, inclusive education, and lifelong learning were produced and dominated the educational discourses (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2010; Khaniya & Williams, 2004). These problems were neither the construct of the Nepali context nor the vision of the Nepali government. However, all these concepts and categories represented within Nepali education and its problematisation. The cosmopolitan institutions strategized such problems (Regmi, 2017; Shrestha, 2009).

Information gaps regarding the nature of education, its policies and development, issues of representation, and its relevance for Nepal and Nepali people make it imperative to consider such evaluations as critical for further progress. There is robust literature on the decolonisation of Nepali development. There is no unique Nepali model of governance that is different from those of the West in the aftermath of the 1950s Cold War when global politics and Nepali developmental policies were implemented in Nepal. Powerfully backed by USAID (United State Agency for International Developments), these policies were political in nature. Therefore, Nepal's political governance incorporates connected experiences: imparted cultural, historical norms and trajectories; and, intra-regional transnational knowledge transfers backed by developmental aid and politics (Liechty et al., 2019; Pradhan and Valentine, 2019; Rappleye, 2019; Robertson, 2019b; Shrestha, 2009; Yadav, 2017). Khadka (2000) delineates "foreign aid [as] a diplomatic instrument" (p. 77). Experts in Nepali development processes assume that neoliberal policies subsequent to the 1990s have directed the development of Nepali politics and policies. However, the historiographical root of these policies germinated in the aftermath of the 1950s Cold War capitalist interventionism and aid politics of western powers, which explains Nepali developmental routes to this day (Liechty et al., 2019; Robertson, 2019a). Robertson (2019b) further added: "With the RVDP [Rapti Valley Development Project], Nepal joined the scores of nations, from Thailand to Iraq to Brazil, which the US hoped to 'modernise' in the 1950s" (p. 418). An incremental rush of change in the new domestic politics situated Nepal between political emergence of democracy and the upsurge of strong aspirations among the Nepali people for far-reaching socioeconomic changes. The democratic government of the 1950s, in the new global order, allied with western powers who were ideologically safeguarding capitalism over communism and were constructing geo-political alliances in South Asia (Khadka, 2000). Gyawali (2019)

sums up the inception of the concepts of so-called modernity and development in Nepal by saying:

Bikas [Nepali word for development] had enlarged semantically and could accommodate a wide array of issues into its definition. This semantic extension was due to a simultaneous proliferation of the English word “development” in the aid discourse in the 1950s. It was championed by the American aid program which associated development with an array of material benefits and the democratic ideals that it wished to foster in Nepal. Ambiguity is the hallmark of concepts and the semantic richness of *bikas* had almost rendered it ambiguous in the 1950s. However, there are other criteria that are involved in the transition from a word to a concept and *bikas* had not yet made the leap.” (p. 36)

In this western discursive network of modernity and developmental narratives, education is not exclusive to Nepal. Rappleye (2019) problematised:

Seven decades after Wood, the most interesting questions for future research might now be: Can deteriorating realities on the ground eventually become so great as to one day challenge the faith Wood and others delivered in the 1950s? Or will continued setbacks simply ignite a stronger faith? Are there any resources in Nepal’s history or culture still available to construct an alternative? If so, who would lead us to them when the country’s best minds continue to be schooled into the faith? (p. 139)

This question represents how those engaged in Nepali educational development are inescapably connected to those forms of violence and dislocations caused by imposition. These are epistemic and ontological assumptions behind what is supposed to be a discourse in the international development. Relevantly, such critiques ask: What is the level of complicity in development as a neo-colonial project for Nepal? Who engages in the process as “experts”

including those who see themselves as architects of a process involving the formation of specific subjects and problems (Carney & Bista, 2009; Sharma Poudyal, 2017)? Therefore, such gaps can be uncovered by a post-structuralist analysis of Nepal's educational history. Bacchi (2009) explains, "what is proposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issues are being thought about" (p. 3). Therefore, as there is little consideration about how such discourses have governed the development of Nepali education, it is imperative to scrutinise its policies and how it subserves customary conventions.

Although EDPs agreed to finance Nepali education jointly through the Sector Wide Approach (SWAp), such policies further reinforced donors' interest in Nepali education. Moreover, the review of all educational policies in Nepal since the 1950s conducted by cosmopolitan organisations has left little room for education policy in Nepal to be analysed otherwise (Khanal, 2013; Maudsley, 2014; Regmi, 2017; Yadava, 2007).

Initially, there was criticism from academia and researchers about the Nepali government's inability to deliver egalitarian public policy in education (Mathema, 2007; Pradhan, 2017). As such, it is imperative to reflect on the function of policymakers. External development partners and the Ministry of Education along with other establishments of the Government of Nepal are accountable in formulating educational policies for Nepal and the role policy stakeholders have played in discoursing and representing policy proposals. However, the generic development of policy has demonstrated uneven oscillations from the global to local, delineating misbalances in the discursive, logical, and applied aspects of policy (Maudsley, 2014). The hegemony within the rational and rhetorical policy space and policy objectives infers such power disparities (Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2010; Regmi, 2017), a fact acknowledged by the literature.

Upon reviewing Nepal's education system and discoursing the nation's needs in light of the revised political situation, the democratic government of the 1990s commenced a

process of determining egalitarian concerns within policy by including some opinions of minorities. The National Education Commission of 1991, in discussing the national needs, advised the government on new policies that were comprised of international principles and commitments (Regmi, 2017). The government also approved liberal educational policies, opening the door for the participation of the private sector in education (Bhattarai, 2016). Rendering to the directives of World Bank's (1999) liberal educational policies were said to be executed in Nepal as the Bank discoursed that the development of education can be quickly improved through private funding:

[Nepali] government began implementing a broad strategy to reduce poverty by stimulating market- oriented private sector growth and expanding access to basic social services. Good progress was made in liberalizing the price and trade regime, maintaining stability, and increasing access to primary education. (p. 28)

What is Already Represented in Nepali Education Policy: Discourse Currently in Vogue

The problematisation of Nepali education policies since Nepal began its planned approach to education are driven by several policies restructurings directed by cosmopolitan organisations and their discourses (Bhattarai, 2016; Carney & Bista, 2009; Khaniya & Williams, 2004). The principal problems that have constructed the discourse of Nepali education policies are quality, equity, relevance, access, gender-parity, equality, lifelong learning, and inclusivity (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2017; Koirala, 2008; Neupane, 2017; Khaniya & Williams, 2004). Nepali education policymaking processes and the dominant discourse in educational proposals have been historically constructed. As noted by Gale (2009), policies are “ideological and political artefacts [that] have been constructed within a particular historical and political context” (p. 399). This is evident in Nepali education policy, which continues to emphasise 1950s education policy goals even today, such as the goal to enhance literacy and numeracy—a central discourse of bilateral and multilaterals (see

Neupane, 2017). Education policies that are forms of discourse and politics (Ball, 1994) can also be considered trajectories; therefore, the process of policymaking is a complex discursive practice of power with various implications for beneficiaries (Bacchi, 2009; Ball, 1994). McConnell (2010) has argued that there are three strands for analysing policy failure and success—process, programs, and politics. Nepali education policies are criticised by researchers for being ineffective (Bhattarai, 2016; Mathema, 2007; Regmi, 2016). However, its policies have not yet been analysed critically. However, policy is a multidimensional area with chaos; a credible approach can help comprehend many aspects of policy concerns (Ball, 1994; McConnell, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to revisit Nepali education policy critically. The discourses of Nepali education and its policies argue that Nepal lacks the representation issues and concerns of Nepal's multicultural, metalinguistic, and multiethnic dynamism. Khanal (2017) noted that Nepali education policies require dynamism and especially representation of Nepali issues and concerns backed by multifaceted sociocultural, linguistic, geographical, and political factors:

The root causes [of policy failure] are both the macro-level policies that do not acknowledge diversity and do not guarantee equity within the school system; and the micro-level practices of marginalisation, exclusion, misrecognition and a lack of appreciation of the non-dominant groups of communities, parents and children. (p. 264)

Furthermore, both the development and implementation of education policies in Nepal have always been questionable due to their imported roots as well as outsiders' influence. The outsiders, mainly INGOs, bilateral and multilateral aid agencies, have poured funding and technical supports into the Nepali education policy; however, Nepal has been unable to materialise this assistance in favour of the Nepali people and educational development (Bell, 2015; Bhatta, 2011; Karkee & Comfort, 2016; Regmi, 2017). Heyneman

and Lee (2016) have highlighted how the outpouring of international aid into educational development in developing countries has had detrimental effects:

1. Aid has created institutional imbalance and overlapping amongst recipient educational development and policy stakeholders
2. Information capacity: research capacity has been weakened or ignored as the aid recipient depends heavily on donor's agency for all policy-related matters
3. Aid has weakened domestic educational policy institutions
4. Aid has created dependency mentality amongst the educational policy stakeholders
5. Funding shortfalls and aid volatility as the recipient government puts no effort towards supporting its educational institutions through the use of domestic resources
6. Unmanaged and uncoordinated aid outpouring has also hampered the development of effective education policy

Likewise, questioning the credibility of donor-aided education policy, Regmi (2015) argued that Nepal has no hope in improving its public schooling system under aid dependency. In that respect he is not alone, as the policy space remains divided on the positives and negatives of its inability to improve Nepali schooling (Bhatta, 2011; Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2013). Especially after the 1990s, Nepali public schooling policies were short-term projects led by bilateral and multilaterals. As Regmi (2017) argued: “there was not a single overarching national framework (like the NEPC 1956 or NESP 1971) to guide Nepal's education system, [thus] educational development after the 1990s was limited to project activities guided by the respective external funders” (p. 79).

In general, Yadav (2017) analysed the role of aid agencies in development sectors, which to an extent can clarify the education policy sectors, too. Yadav (2017) argued that:

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund pushed Structural Adjustment programs to create growth through their privatisation and liberalisation agendas,

which benefited few elites, while rural growth did not materialise. During the period [after the 1990s], the idea of partnership and sector support opened doors for many European donors and INGOs that still influences Nepali development policies program, [as well as education policies]. However, the state of underdevelopment [and ineffective education system and practice] did not radically improve, despite the aggressively pursuits of international and non-profit aid agencies. (p. 110)

Consequently, as scholars have argued, Nepali education policies have not produced the results require to resolve the problems inherent in Nepal's education system (Mathema, 2007). Through an extensive review of literature, this chapter identified Nepal educational policy analysis as a field with two important traditions: the donor governance in educational policymaking and the reliance of Nepali governments to these institutions for financial and technical support.

This chapter highlighted that the discourse around democracy, development, and modernism by western powers, especially after the Cold War period, have deeply influenced the development of Nepali education and its policies. As this study intends to examine the associations and networks of policy discourses that have shaped Nepali educational policies, it is evident that researchers need to analyse the role of global forces, especially the effects of neoliberalism (Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2015) in educational reforms. While reviewing the literature, in particular for understanding how educational policies are emerging in Nepal, it was that globalising policy discourses emanating from cosmopolitan organisations and supranational organisations have been transferred to less powerful countries like Nepal. In this backdrop, it is important to understand how educational discourse in the time of neoliberal educational reforms have impacted Nepali educational development and its citizens' subjectivity, and to find the solutions for both individual and social problems by subverting the current orientation.

Policy regulates the operational mechanism of any society, imperceptibly altering specific contextual realities and individual practices and discourses formed historically and politically by power (Regmi, 2019a). Policy literature regarding Nepali education and its development illustrate that Nepali education policies have failed and there is an urgent need to restructure its schooling and its policies (Bhattarai, 2016; Mathema, 2007). It is an important concern because public policies absorb resources to address major social issues that power represents to solve (Bacchi, 2009). Policies always propose change and through such proposals produce specific problems. Such “problematisation” of policies are at the cost of power politics and interest, and what they propose has impacts in the lives of our people (see Bacchi, 2009). Unfortunately, despite best efforts, policies cannot be all inclusive, as representation of a specific problem automatically excludes the issues of non-represented problems. Nepali educational policies are criticised for failing to represent the issues of the minorities and marginalised, relegated populations who live on the periphery of power (Neupane, 2017; Parker et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important to remain critical and take nothing for granted when constantly discoursing the views of the relegated population.

Nepal's governments in particular do not provide accessible views into overall success or failure of Nepali education policies. Although the World Bank does provide such views, the ideologies of the Bank have been heavily unproductive for Nepal (Regmi, 2017). Bank policies support policy interventions one finds in favour of the Bank itself and the Nepali Governments (the political elites in power). As planning for Nepali education is heavily reliant on EDPs, researchers have examined the World Bank's failure in Nepali education with no prospect for sustainable educational development in Nepal (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2010; Regmi, 2017). The problem of education and educational policy failure in Nepal has integrally incorporated the discourse of power both outside and inside Nepal; the politics of power behind the narrative of Nepal's policy process and the role that the Nepali

government has had in this process remains a complex and ignored area. The space to represent an issue of concern to be “problematized” in this study is the educational policy process. How policy stakeholders have accessed educational problems of Nepal has affected the process of educational development, its representation and relevance thus remain unexamined.

Acknowledging the Political Effects of Engagement in Education

Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) identify “policy workers as involved in theorising” (p. 13). In Nepali education, such theorising is the exclusive privilege of the global aid agencies and the Nepali political elites in power. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank (WB), the UN Development Programme, and the UN Population Fund initially launched the Education for All (EFA) movement in the 1990s as a human rights approach to education (Bhattarai, 2016) which then expanded globally. It was also during this time that democracy was restored in Nepal. Promptly, Nepal joined the World Conference in Education, held in Jomtien (Thailand), committing itself to provide quality basic education for all children, youth, and adults through the campaign of EFA (Graner, 2006; Khaniya & Williams, 2004). Education is Nepal’s main sector receiving foreign aid and Nepal launched ambitious educational plans to overhaul its education. Despite various changes in the level of policy, the quality of public schooling in Nepal remains poor (Khanal, 2019; Mathema, 2008; Neupane, 2018). Graner (2006) criticises Nepal’s efforts to schooling, saying:

In Nepal, educational policies have been designed for the past 50 years, and the need for providing universal education has been targeted in virtually each of these policies. Yet, the “deadlines” for reaching this crucial goal keep being postponed, indicating not only a lack of achievement, but possibly also a lack of commitment. (p. 155)

Realising proper approaches to operational policy implementation remains a major undertaking for different developmental organisations and institutions along with the Government of Nepal, even today (Karkee & Comfort, 2016; Neupane, 2018). Donors are the driving force behind public school policies, financing, and implementation in Nepal, along with the Nepali government. Both donors and the government are accountable for not adhering to schooling policies and procedures to improve Nepali education. The discourses of donors and the Nepali government regarding education and policies development has brought aid, not progress, to Nepali education. The problem with financing in education is that there has been far too much investment for what has been delivered as scandalously little influence (Bell, 2015). Donors and the Nepali government must reflect on their collective failure; throwing even more money into waste without reconsidering what went wrong further challenges the public schooling context. Therefore, the preliminary place of scrutiny is to ruminate over preceding schooling policies or procedures to policymaking, implementing, and understanding how policies procedures can help improve Nepali public schooling. Bell's (2015) analysis is that "Nepal's problem is not a want of aid or technical advice. It is political" (n.p.).

The controversy inherent in international development is that donor dollars perpetuate (and even exacerbate) more social and political problems than they ameliorate, making critical analysis imperative for this study. Karkee and Comfort (2016) specify donors who participated in Nepal education and its policymaking since 1980s. However, their involvement has stretched and had an impact continuously since the 1990s. Nepal opened itself to the global arena by joining the EFA campaign in the 1990s. Nepal's subsequent education policies after the 1990s that were enclosed within the EFA framework policies were restructured in different short-term programs. Within the EFA framework "education is a universal entitlement that governments are bound to fulfil regardless of race, ethnicity, or

socioeconomic status” (Niño-Zarazúa, 2016, p. 2). Nepal’s Basic Primary Education Plan I and II were also contracted within this structure; therefore, the government’s promises within the EFA agendas are significant. Regmi (2017), in his seminal study, postulated that foreign aid was inefficient in augmenting basic quality education in Nepal. In this regard, Andersson and Lindkvist (2000) clarified:

Since Nepal is a country with a large number of low-income inhabitants, many people cannot afford to pay the school fee. Therefore, the government has invested money in the project “Education for All.” The government provides schools with money so that the parents do not have to pay school fees. (p. 16)

Therefore, the assumption of public education in Nepal is to provide free basic education for all. Architected within EFA agendas, BPEP II and I are Nepal’s most anticipated primary education programs. In 1991, the Government of Nepal developed the Basic and Primary Education Master Plan with the technical support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This plan included a comprehensive scheme for the development of primary education in Nepal and delivered an outline for its future development. It also defined purposes for both the GoN and the international agencies to work together in this work. Further to the evaluation of past policies, the Ministry of Education implemented the five-year Basic Primary Education Program (BPEP) 1992–1997. The World Bank (WB), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), Japan International Co-operation Agency (JICA), and UNICEF financially supported BPEP. The presupposition and expectations within BPEP were improving access to and the quality and organisation of primary schools throughout the nation. BPEP II (1999–2004), another five-year program, was implemented in basket funding modality and it was financially supported by Denmark, Finland, Norway, the European Union (EU), and the WB as a core investment program (CIP) and by JICA and UNICEF as non-core investment partners. This program

scheduled access, equality, equity, quality, and relevance as central policy goals (Bhattarai, 2016; Khaniya & Williams, 2004; Sharma & Bhattarai, 2013).

The presupposition and assumptions of BPEP II and I were to finance free basic primary education for all. Evidently, the donors and the GoN implied the “problem” to be financial inability of Nepal’s capacity to finance its education. The prejudice of low expectations outlined within policies truly disabled Nepali public schooling progression. This was the consistent position taken by the developmental agencies regarding the case of Nepal since the 1950s; therefore, the poor outcomes suggest a need for critical analysis of developmental discourses in Nepali education. Well established within the discourse of poverty, the policy proposals of donors and the Government of Nepal in education and development categorises Nepal as incomplete. In “Why Planning Fails in Nepal,” Wildavsky (1972) correctly reveals the “wide discrepancy between the target it set out and actual performance” (p. 508). Such historical statements delineate how authoritative presumptions and functions equate to policies attainment and failure. Historical processes and procedures, therefore, are the basis of our (personal and national) contexts.

Primarily represented as “a poor country” and secondarily the land of “poor illiterate people,” Nepal has been categorised in dichotomies through the established storylines of global aid agencies, even to this day (Pradhan, 2018). The subjectivities of both the nation and its people were created similarly; by discoursing poverty as shaped by developmental agencies, Nepal’s schooling policies swung between the local and the global (Khanal, 2010; Pradhan, 2018). As a result, “poverty” and “development” frame Nepali schooling policies. Analysis of both local politics and global “conditionality” (Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2013; Maudsley, 2014) within this construct and its synthesis—vaguely referred to as “modernity” in Nepali education (Carney, 2008)—discourses strategies that drive the BPEP II and I objectives.

Nepal implemented the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) from 2009 to 2016. Currently, the School Sector Development Plan is ongoing in Nepal (2016–2023). These are Nepal’s important educational plans under the mask of funding models of cosmopolitan institutions running as specific educational projects for Nepal. While analysing Nepal’s educational policy literature it is evident that educational development shows a relationship to the ideas of Boekye and Liu (2016) on “projectisation.” Boekye and Liu’s (2016) assessment of this projectisation model was that it does not offer an effective approach to educational planning and policymaking. Under this approach, Nepal’s international developmental partners (IDPs) implemented their developmental projects. IDPs’ discourse becomes predominately powerful as the primary financier in Nepali education planning and policymaking. McConnell (2010) argued: “Failure is the mirror image of success: a policy fails if it does not achieve the goals that proponents set out to achieve, and opposition is great and/ or support is virtually non-existent” (pp. 356–357).

The case of Nepali education and its educational policymaking is no different to what McConnell (2010) analysed. The educational projects schemed under projectisation developmental models propose the agendas of only multilaterals and bilaterals who have funded and are funded its educational policies. However, these authorities—Nepal’s external developmental partners have produced a deficit representation of the Nepali educational context and imposed their vested interest in its development, such that there is no prospect of developing the context of Nepali education (Karkee & Comfort, 2016; Regmi, 2016). They are also making it difficult for Nepal to manage Nepali education sustainably as EDPs exert extra burden on Nepal as it is required to feed these projectised policies. Maudslay (2014) negatively assessed it as deferring Nepali educational development based on its homegrown experiences of internal trial and error procedures. Similarly, the EDPs’ “aid conditionality” has further imposed external control in Nepali education (Bhattarai, 2016;

Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2013). Such developmental models have been deemed to failed (Boekye & Liu, 2016; Regmi, 2017). The question of the functionality and legitimacy of such projectised educational policymaking and implementation remains silent in Nepal. Therefore, in this study I question how educational policies are produced in Nepal. I am intending to analyse both policy documents and interviews with those in the top positions among educational policy stakeholders in Nepal and to explore the silences within to examine the emergence, representation, and relevance of education policies in Nepal.

Educational planning and policymaking are important functions of the Government of Nepal and Nepal's Ministry of Education. Many other stakeholders are also equally responsible for Nepal's educational planning and implementation. Several factors have contributed to government incapacities, despite strong international meddling in its educational processes. Incongruences in power dynamics have also influenced the capacity of the government. It has forced Nepal to negotiate and reconsider donor proposals in order to comply with aid conditionality (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013). Therefore, probing both the internal and external problems related to the principal educational policy proposals of the Government of Nepal, this study questions the schemes of Nepal Ministry of Education and Nepal's external developmental partners. It is important for Nepal to adopt a strategic and long-term educational perspective and to draw upon its historical blueprint in order to identify more appropriate procedures for improving educational policies and ensuring that the issues not yet discoursed are represented.

Nepal does not have a homespun educational history. Luitel and Taylor (2006), in their auto-ethnographic research, assert that Nepal is still in a dilemma about conceptualising a clear policy that can define the need of Nepali people. Its education system has emerged from continuous reforms, policy modifications, political domination, uncertainty, and massive external influences. However, policy objectives have not converted in actuality.

Global movements of education that began in the 1990s were decisive for change. However, its schooling stories are acrimonious. This powerful line by Onta (2000) reflects the current state of education in Nepal:

It is hard to remember a time when anyone was saying anything in public about education in Nepal. Most current reports about primary, secondary or higher education in Nepal present a depressing composite of systemic inefficiency, failure and wastage. While there have been intermittent discussions regarding this state of affairs in Nepal, an extensive public debate on the subject toward rectifying this national disgrace is non-existent. (p. 4093)

There are inconsistencies between policy and practice; scheduled policies hardly translate into reality in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2016; Maudsley, 2014). Regulated by external multilaterals and banks, public school improvements are dismal despite expansions in gender equality and enrolment percentages. Being foremost practitioners in education, researchers and academics criticise dealings between these agencies and the Government of Nepal in designing educational courses (Mathema, 2007; Onta, 2000). Poverty is relentlessly discussed as Nepal's principal "problem" (NNEPC, 1956; Regmi, 2017).

Dependency theorists criticise aid as a universalising, homogenising, and biased trend (Edwards, 2011; Heyneman & Lee, 2016). Deficiencies in policy implementation are primarily political incapacities as well (Mathema, 2007). Uddin (2014) asserts that "government must keep themselves outside favouritism, nepotism and corruption and use the power assigned by the people reliably" (p. 26). Since restoration of democracy in 1990, different elected governments in Nepal have been involved in widespread corruption (Khanal, 2013; Sharma & Bhattarai, 2013). This corruption and its association with the global aid agencies are reciprocal in nature (Bhatta, 2011; Shrestha, 2016). Nepali education and its policymaking procedure calls for reigniting discourses that are more inclusive whereby the

issues of the excluded be included within policies, as emphasised by Phreali (2013):

“Throughout the educational history of Nepal, this dark ‘face’ of education has rarely been scrutinised, even while perpetuated by those who exercised power and (mis)used education as a tool to systematically achieve the unquestioning political compliance of the people” (p. 7).

Phreali justifiably reasons, in his assessment of Nepal’s ethnic and cultural concord, that promoting equity, autonomy, innovation, and participation by power is necessary. Nepal has polarised the population’s needs against governments that are adept in handling tensions, dilemmas, and trade-offs. Therefore, the bottom line is, if Nepal wants to stay ahead in education, it has to find and refine its education policy and deal with policy problems practically.

It is important not to compete with the world. Nepal external developmental partners are proposing and endorsing such educational philosophies (Khanal, 2017; Khaniya & Williams, 2004; Neupane, 2017). Analysing past policies will signpost policymakers and stakeholders to recognise correct measures to take in the future to make better choices, to understand the silences and its impacts. This assessment endeavours to reveal the extent to which Nepal can generate manifold, different, and innovative policy ideas by understanding the nature of public school development of the past and by realising the undercurrents and the forces that will shape future directions.

Understanding the politics, interests, and subsequent educational reforms are crucial to Nepal. Today, amid public schooling failure, broader configuration of its organisational procedures and governance of exogenous power and infiltration in public schooling policies have emerged as problems. Therefore, delineating the challenges of public schooling and development discoursed by the Government of Nepal and the external developmental partners in terms of educational engineering—amidst several challenges to public schooling and turbulent political history politics in schooling—matters. EDPs refers to dominant

external groups financing Nepali Schooling partnered with the Government of Nepal, and central level government organisations including Nepal's Ministry of Education, Department of Education (DoE), the Curriculum and Development Centre (CDE), the National Examination Board (NEB), and the National Centre for Education Development (NCED). Bhatta (2011) asserts:

[A]fter 1990, when global education targets provided the basic framework for all donor agency funding to primary education and the subsequent use of a sector-wide approach to achieve them, “national” education policy-making has become relatively unimportant if not meaningless because the documents produced within the parameters of global education targets have become the de facto policies. (p. 11)

The discourse within the policies governing Nepali schooling is perplexing; such dilemmas have been evident in mass schooling subsequently since the 1950s (Bhatta, 2011; Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017). As a result, reflecting upon schooling genesis is important. In this review, I will analyse how discourses formed have produced specific realities in Nepal. In addition, Bacchi (2009) enunciates that “policies produce or constitute political subjects” (p. 8); in the Nepali context, the role of the small group of technocrats at the top level of leadership and power has been to streamline educational goals and objectives for the population (Carney & Bista, 2009). This representation is political. Furthermore, GoN and EDPs' recipients and donors regulate the policy landscape of public schooling. Policies in Nepal are conditional; several interests incorporated into policy objectives and goals are provisions over which recipients have no control (see Maudsley, 2014). With such representation, distinctive educational truths evolve. To critically analyse policies means to diagnose what Mackinnon (2012) calls a “conceptual and linguistic double bind of the past” (p. 17). The entire field of power and the position it generates for citizenry thus become important to be analysed within the domain of Nepal's public schooling.

One of the essential concerns of education scholarship has been to scrutinise and challenge the dominant knowledge production. Nepali educational planning as administrated by powerful multinational organisations in the name of development requires critical scrutiny, as there are political implications as a result of such actions. Educational projects patterned around the framework of several configurations of standardisation and marketisation cannot be apolitical (Sahlberg, 2007). Mass education intended for global implementation is in its very nature conceptually flawed as it overlooks circumstantial representativeness in regards to sociocultural and linguistic consideration and pedagogies (Young, 2010). Both local education and global mass education currently compromise certain political aims; therefore, without political analysis, the conception of educational development itself is unmanageable.

The public pressure to probe the problems of educational plans in Nepal is extraordinary. Therefore, it is imperative to study the political and technical mechanism in order to cognise past discourses as well as to determine the blemishes. Historical antecedents have influences in streamlining the prominent discourses of schooling in Nepal. One of the major assumptions and suppositions in Nepal is that English medium schools provide quality education and the chance for social, economic, and cultural mobility (Liechty, 2003; Phyak, 2016). Educational planning and policymaking is discussed and rigorously thought about by authorities and are state-level policy endeavours. Despite public education being the subject of debate and continuous reform in Nepal, the past governments' concerns and focus have been of considerable importance. Realising government legislation, procedures, and standard practices in policies are necessary to reflect the ways in which government decides on specific policy. This study thus scrutinises governmental activities to cognise policies past and their implications for the present. Probing the silences within public school policies, it analyses its impact to the varied linguistic, cultural, and Indigenous minorities of Nepal. It

will uncover the implications of discourses formed by power in historical juncture for streamlining the contemporary context and societies' psychology. The objectives of each of the schooling policies since the 1990s has been recognised as equality, equity, accessibility, quality, and relevance (Bhattarai, 2016; Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2013; Khaniya & Williams, 2004). To put this into perspective, such categorisation challenges the epistemological foundations of policy. In principle, intrinsically nurtured by the discourses of power, the development of public education is an act of preference or representation. For instance, language policies in Nepal have been severely criticised by researchers and academicians unceasingly since the 1990s. There are different linguistic groups in Nepal but only two dominant languages—Nepali and English—are the language of instruction in schools (Sah & Li, 2018). Sah and Li (2018) further assert, “We know very little (if anything) about the ideological and implementation spaces of EMI [English Medium Instructions] policy in Nepal because of the lack of research and concerns” (p. 110).

Amid public schooling failure, broader configuration of its organisational procedures and the governance of exogenous power and infiltration in public schooling policies have emerged as problems. Mol (1999) reasons that “reality is historically, culturally and materially located” (p. 75). Nepal's reality is shaped by practices; this process of shaping, as defined by politics, intensifies realities of which there are multiple. Therefore, what power represents becomes the contextual reality. In this regard, probing reflexively to internalise the current state of Nepali schooling affairs and its policies are necessary amid present disarrays.

Ways Forward

In short, this literature analysis on Nepali education and its policies delivers a historical framework and an understanding of the major players involved in the processes, offering much-needed clarity on educational issues. By concentrating on the literature, this analysis proposes a stronger footing for discussions and the steps forward towards an

understanding of the emergence, representation, and relevance of Nepal's educational policies. The mode by which the production of certain policies and realities are constructed and continued are also examined. As Mol (1999) analyses:

If the term “ontology” is combined with that of “politics” then this suggests that the conditions of possibility are not given. That reality does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is rather shaped within these practices. So, the term politics works to underline this active mode, this process of shaping, and the fact that its character is both open and contested. (p. 75)

Reality is an ambiguous idea; as Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) remark, “production of ‘knowledge’ through research is understood to be a form of political practice” (p. 15). As researchers also aim for evidence-based practice, this politicised notion problematises the idea that what researchers pursue to represent makes possibilities to define his/ her own politics for conducting a specific research—as the idea itself is a very political construct. Despite this challenge, critical engagement should continue in order to rupture the canonical discourses in the pursuit of representing the excluded within Nepali education and its policies. Finally, the chapter that follows will summarise the views of the participants.

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Chapter 5

[Participants] ... are being invited to participate in [this] research [for]: 1) research contribution: ... [for] 2) research relationship... and [for] 3) research impact.

(Wendler & Grady, 2008)

The central politics behind this study was to critically interrogate Nepal's public schooling policy, their discourse, and how Nepali schooling policy and policy proposals are constructed. Understanding how Nepali educational policy developed and its significance, it also intends to analyse the dominant discourse of the power elites, questioning governance with an acute sense of scepticism for conventional procedures. The purpose of this study was to critically analyse the development, representation, and relevance of education policy in Nepal based on participants' personal experiences of working in policymaking and their critical understanding of education policy and practice in Nepal, along with policy analysis, as discussed in Chapter 2. The operational strategies for this research have been drawn from Carol Bacchi's (2009) "What is the Problem Represented to be: An Approach to Policy Analysis," which employs poststructuralist perspectives to analyse policy.

By drawing attention to policy practices, particularly its hierarchical and inegalitarian arrangements in the Nepali context, participants were interviewed. Matters of social inequalities, marginalisation, exclusion, and disparity produced by structures of power are complex and difficult to grasp. Therefore, the knowledge provided by participants will provide insight into how the problems around Nepali education and educational policymaking are being considered.

Participants of this study are high-level leaders with detailed knowledge and authority in the planning and application of Nepali education policy. Senior government officers, central members in educational policymaking, academicians, and independent educational advisors working for bilateral and multilateral organisations funding Nepali education and its

schooling policy form participants in this study. In this chapter, I present the study's findings detailing participants' views of the process of Nepali education policy development and implementation, concentrating on how they talk about the Nepali education system, development of its policies, problems and silences, and its relevance, to which participants provided their responses voluntarily. Before reporting on the participants' concerns about education policy and its development and practice, in addition to the way that Nepali education policy is emerging, as Bacchi (2009) elucidated, "a starting point is to recognise that policies are elaborated discourse" (p. 7). As such, I recognised that participants' perspectives incorporate deep socio-material assumptions, values, and suppositions established by cultural practices (in terms of policymaking) and have scrutinised those practices and thoughts in order to interrogate their views that provide insights into discourse, power, and representation.

Participants

In this study, ten prominent people in the Nepali educational sector were interviewed along with Nepal's Minister of Education, Science and Technology. Among the interviewees, nine were male while only one was female. All research participants spoke at least two languages (English and Nepali). Three research participants were recognised as senior government bureaucrats. Another three participants were retired academicians who are currently working in educational commission and are responsible for proposing policies to the government. One of the participants was a senior officer at the Nepal Language Commission, an organisation with authority for devising linguistic plans and policies and for advising the Government of Nepal to make specific changes in issues related to languages. Other participants included a researcher and policymaker at the University Grand Commission of Nepal (UGC), and a senior professor at the Tribhuvan University who had worked with donor agencies along with being a member of educational committees to draft

educational policies. Similarly, the final participant was an important officer at the Department of Education of Nepal (DoE). All research participants held advanced degrees in various areas of education, linguistics, policy, and management.

Women in Policymaking and Planning: An Area of Silence

It is clear by the representation of only one female participant in this study that women still lag well behind men in having a say in decision-making and their participation is minimal in educational planning and policymaking in Nepal. This could also be the result of societal biases as the current study gained access to participants through snowball sampling, and thus was somewhat at the mercy of who individuals recommended be interviewed. Although, it is also worth noting that no studies have been conducted to date (to my knowledge) regarding the participation of females in educational policymaking and planning in Nepal. This issue has emerged as a potential gap in the current literature.

Participant Descriptions

Participants of this study had comprehensive experience, having served from lower level to high level positions within Nepal's Department of Education and Nepal Ministry of Education. Some participants had also worked as Project Director for the Government of Nepal, International Donor Funded Educational Programs, and university faculties. They were also senior level administrators, including the Minister of Education, Secretary of the Ministry of Education, high-level administrators in government departments, an academic dean, politicians, department chair, and vice chancellor of major universities. A majority of the research participants had or are in decision-making positions, with experience working in these sectors for a minimum of ten years and a maximum of 30 years. Each of the research participants was interviewed in an open-ended format that allowed them to elaborate spontaneously on their specific experiences and areas of expertise. The duration of each

interview was 60 to 90 minutes. The profile of each participant, against a pseudonym I have provided, is highlighted in the table below.

Table 4

Participant Profiles

Participant	Position / Role	Expertise and position details
Bednath	Education expert	University professor, policymaker and advisor for several educational commissions
Laxman	Government officer	Works in bureaucracy, senior-level official with policymaking mandate, educational researcher
Sushma	Education expert	University professor, policymaker and advisor for several educational commissions
Krishna	Education expert and researcher	University professor, policymaker and advisor for several educational commissions
Nabin	Education expert and researcher	Worked in university administration, responsible for planning and policymaking
Premraj	Government officer	Worked for bureaucracy and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology policymakers and advisors
Bikash	Education expert and researcher	Worked in bureaucracy, senior-level official at the Nepal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Ramnath	Education expert and researcher	University professor, policymaker and advisor for several educational commissions, worked with bilateral and multilaterals and banks
Madan	Cabinet member	Works for the Government of Nepal
Bhushan	UGC	Worked with University Grant Commission, planners and policymakers

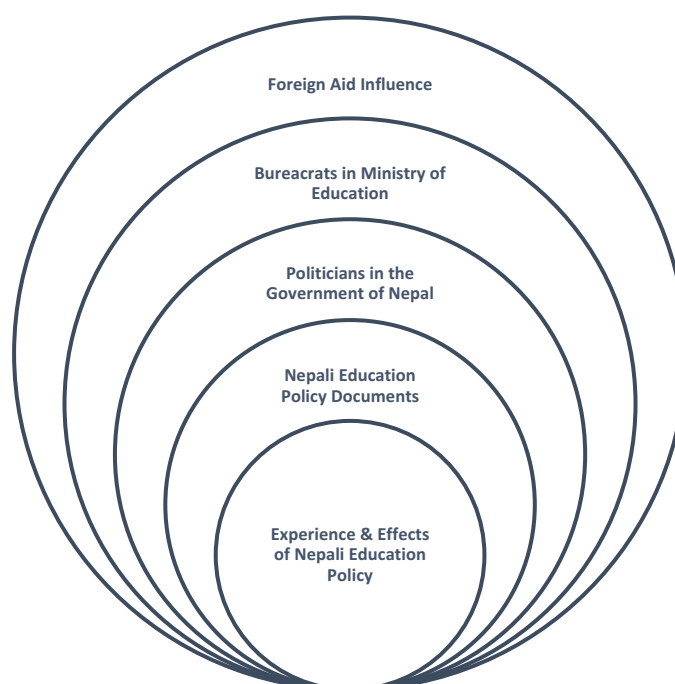
Note. Pseudonyms have been used to maintain participant anonymity. All participants except “Sushma” are male.

Policymaking in Nepal

Participants described five major components that often worked together and sometimes competed with each other to contribute to the development of education policy in Nepal, as shown in Figure 4. According to Bednath, the education policymaking process in Nepal was complex as well as confusing. The process of education policy development was influenced by the discourse of the government of Nepal and Nepal's external developmental partners who financed Nepali education as noted by Ramnath, Bikash, Bednath, Krishna, and Bhushan. Moreover, participants reported that Nepali education policy development was highly politicised, in which stakeholders' interests and efforts were not only highly varied from each other but also contradictory and disorganised. It was also found that foreign aid agencies played a significant role in the development of education policy in Nepal. However, policy processes, like all other knowledge practices, were characteristically political. These are reported in detail in the following sections.

Figure 4

Policymaking Discourse and Processes in Nepal



Policymaking Process

In the policymaking process, Madan asserted the Government of Nepal and its line ministry, the Ministry of Education, play the dominant role: “The Government of Nepal and [the] Ministry of Education make plans and policies for education in Nepal.” Apart from the government and Ministry, participants also noted that foreign aid agencies and politicians influenced the education policymaking process in Nepal:

[P]oliticians and development partners are principal agents in Nepali public education policymaking processes. Their role is significant in policymaking and reforms since Nepal began its planned approach to education. I can say this as I have worked in numerous sectors of education from district [level administration] to the Department of Education and I have firsthand experience of this. (Bhushan)

Likewise, Premraj reported that “the secretary level position [at the Ministry of Education] is duly concentrated in policymaking.” Krishna, however, stated that alongside the Ministry, prominent roles were also played by developmental partners and other stakeholders in the policymaking process:

Nepal’s Ministry of Education is the foremost institution of policymaking and planning in Nepal. Ministry actively engage [seeks suggestions] with our developmental partners, the government, and other stakeholders while policymaking. I don’t work for the Ministry... but I sometimes go to the meeting and make suggestions.

And, Sushma’s comments highlighted that:

In Nepal, our developmental partners, the senior bureaucrats of the Ministry of Education, and experts selected by the government discuss the what and how of

policy; in direct consultation with the government, these bodies draft policy proposals. Thus, the policy draft is written and sent to the parliament for legislation. This, when approved, becomes policy. Therefore, politicians, government officials, and government-appointed experts are key players in Nepal's educational policymaking processes.

Participants also described the role of politicians and political parties in determining education policy in Nepal:

In the context of Nepal, the policymaking process is determined by political agendas. In other words, it is those in power who guide the policymaking process as such. Our policymaking process is a top-down approach, and in making education policy, senior level bureaucrats at the Ministry conduct intensive discussions among the stakeholders. (Laxman)

Despite various actors playing a role in the policymaking process, the donors' roles were especially received positively:

[D]onors suggest the right knowledges; they have applied those designs in their homes. They have attained success with those policies. So, they want us to apply them in our case as well; they share their achievements with us, which I assume is good. (Premraj)

Participant Krishna summed up the educational policy process as follows:

During the policymaking process, I myself was in the committee. We [selected experts, officials of MoE, donors' representatives, and government representatives] articulated various aspects of requirements and finally drafted the educational policy proposal to parliament. The proposal was approved by the parliament.

Participant Krishna further consolidated his view by claiming that:

Politicians bring the best ideas for policymaking. We discussed profoundly together, and the concerns and interests of the government are included in the policies. Yet, policy discourses are shared concerns of the government, donors, and bureaucrats. So, we also listen to the recommendations of the donors as they provide technical support by conveying statistically our educational context.

Participants gave credence to research competency of donor agencies by attributing required expertise to them, referencing “donor agencies” as legitimate institutions for educational research. Such assumptions cater the presuppositions of Nepali policymakers and stakeholders that good research cannot be conducted by Nepal. On the other hand, it shows how Nepal’s reliance on external agencies are produced. Participants described Nepal’s policymaking process as largely based on theory, rather than empirical data, in which a selected few determine what changes are to be made. Participants’ acceptance of politicians and other selected experts as key players in policymaking processes indicate who produces educational discourse in Nepal and how such discourses are limiting educational concerns within the purview of politics and the vested interest of politicians.

Participants implicated authorities in power, such as politicians, nominated policymakers, and funding agencies, as key agents in Nepal’s educational policymaking processes. Participants also reported that bureaucrat officials have the power to appoint important policymakers, highlighting their relationships with the politicians in the practices involving policymaking. This reveals how governing takes place in Nepal and suggests that government officers (bureaucrats) along with politicians are important decision-making representatives according to Ramnath and Sushma.

Despite an educational policymaking history of almost 70 years, participants suggested that authorities in Nepal do not have the honest dedication or maturity to convert every opportunity provided by Nepal’s external developmental partners into successful

outcomes as asserted by Laxman, Premraj, and Bhushan. The processes presented challenges due to resource constraints, national context, conflict, natural disasters, and increasing political instability throughout the period starting in the 1990s. However, participants argued that Nepal demonstrated ignorance and unreadiness throughout the progression noted Bikash, Ramnath, and Krishna.

In restructuring educational policies, as implied by the participants, Nepali policy experts and their proposals failed to represent core domestic issues and integrate the aspirations of the Nepali people. Policy changes could not solve educational problems and streamline progressive educational trajectories in Nepal; rather, donors' discourses receive prominence in policymaking and the implementation process according to Bednath and Sushma.

Furthermore, Sushma, Krishna, Bikash, and Laxman all considered the educational policymaking process in Nepal as a centralised endeavour between officials, politicians, and experts nominated by government authorities in Singh durbar Kathmandu. The way that the policymaking process is understood and treated in Nepal currently relates to past practices where policy-related decisions were made privately by a select group in the Ministry of Education office according to Krishna and Ramnath. There was a concern among Laxman, Bhushan, and Sushma that Nepal's capacity for developing a sustainable and functional public education system diminished significantly, as donors began to facilitate such policy processes.

Krishna stated that the consequences of donor's led policy practices were the means for systematic exclusion of the minorities. This was approved by the regime and has been practised throughout the course of Nepal's educational developments and restructurings. Nepal's exclusionary processes of educational policymaking has a direct bearing in the life and life prospects of ethnic, linguistic, geographical, and other minorities according to

Bednath and Krishna. As educational policies influence the life prospect and opportunities of the people, the procedure authorities' embrace to restructure educational reforms in turn influences the life of subjects. Ramnath and Krishna articulated the procedure itself is indicative of how power has politicised whose discourses and concerns form part of policy development and whose are excluded. Therefore, the integral political nature of policymaking redraws and re-defines the boundaries of exclusion and inclusion—resulting in some concerns and issues being scrutinised, while others are ignored in favour of the foci and representations of specific political powers.

Therefore, following the considerations of participant Laxman, it can be concluded that there are several inconsistencies and ambiguities in the policymaking process in Nepal. Many of the informants for this study felt that Nepal is well short of endorsing proper educational policy measures addressing the concerns and the needs of Nepali people from diverse ethnic, linguist, socio-economic, cultural, religious, and geographical settings. Nepal, over decades, has pursued positive international support. However, Bednath and Bhushan argued that the Government of Nepal, and its external developmental partners in this process, have failed to address the underlying educational problems in Nepal. Despite the establishment of several educational programs, the transition towards effective policy drafting and implementation process has not yet transpired, making it urgent to navigate unconventionally the process of Nepal's educational policy development, its representation and relevance.

Policy Drafting Process in Nepal

As participants have asserted, the policy drafting process is systematic in Nepal and involves both government and non-government actors including independent experts and consultants:

In Nepal, our developmental partners, the senior bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education and educational experts selected by the government discuss the what and how of policy. Their ideas and suggestions are included within the policy draft and are written by the committee and referred to the parliament for legislation. Thus, this is how policy is scripted. (Laxman)

We discuss with them [politicians] and their ideas and interests are considered while making policies. However, we discuss this together and the officials at the Ministry of Education finally prepare the policy draft through all-encompassing consultations among politicians, educational experts, donors, and ministers. (Premraj)

Despite the systematic nature in the policy drafting process, Krishna pointed out that the process was authoritative in nature in which few actors decided on the content of policy itself, noting that “Assembling inside a small room, authorities decide on education policies. This just happened in the seventh amendment of education policy.” Laxman also adds to this picture of policy development arguing:

I would like to make it clear to you that in Nepal the discussion or debate about education and its development so far is insufficient. People in authority reason... [that] they know everything; if a common person were to make such suppositions, it may not have a big influence. However, what if accountable and responsible bodies as teachers, professors, policymakers, and policy implementing individuals and institutions create such assumptions? It is certain that education development will suffer. (Laxman)

Despite the systematic policy drafting process and setting clear objectives and goals for the policy to achieve, participants described how these were always delayed and repeated both by the government and by the funding agencies. Categories like quality, equity, equality,

relevance, and gender parity were theoretically ascribed without a comprehensive framework. Sushma and Binod noted that it does not include the procedural descriptions of what is to be done and how it will be accomplished.

In Nepal, policy is drafted by the officials of the MoE after an extensive consultation with representatives of EDPs and upon being legislated by the parliament. However, participants have raised serious concerns about Nepal's failure in attaining previous policy goals and objectives, linking it to the imperfections within the policy drafting process and continuous representation of the same agendas as expressed by Laxman and Sushma.

Nature of Education Policy Development

Participants also provided information about the nature of education policy development. Nabin stated that the nature of policy development in Nepal was based on reproduction of recommendations and suggestions provided by donor-funded research and their representatives' suggestions and guidance; these are usually discussed in the capital city, Kathmandu, and are thus highly-centralised, and formed rigidly using a top-down approach:

If you look at the policy process that we witnessed in the overall process of our educational development, mostly our policies are constructed in the centre. The top-down approach has been the basic characteristic of our policy development process. Most ideas, derived from research conducted by cosmopolitan organisations or agendas, are given precedence in their global campaigns. (Ramnath)

Typically, the nature of policy development lacked the home-grown perspectives. Instead, it followed global trends, especially those that are most popular and vigorously advocated by UN agencies and other bilateral and multilateral partners. According to Sushma, Bednath, Ramnath, and Krishna, inconsistency in the educational policies of various times are due to Nepal's long political instability, incompetent educational management and

system, and wastage of aid by different governments put in words. Therefore, Nepal does not have long-term vision in addressing its internal educational concerns and significance, as Laxman argued:

Nepal has no long-term educational vision; its schooling policies concentrated around global campaigns of education like Education for All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MGDs), and Sustainable Millennium Goals (SMGs) are conceptualised around problems of access, equity, equality, gender parity, quality, and relevance. Although Nepal has made noteworthy progress in areas of gender parity and access, other areas are incomplete.

The importation of global trends, however, undermined the Nepali peoples' cultural context; and the Nepali politicians and government have welcomed outsiders' influence in the education policymaking process:

Policy has come up with the realisation that literacy and enrolment are important. Educators and policymakers have failed to propose anything beyond this because government hires exogenous advisors to facilitate in the drafting of our school policies. These advisors have no idea about Nepal intricacy vis-à-vis culture, people, and geography. They study previous reports and preceding policies objectives and make recommendations. We are called at these ministry-level consultations to discuss various aspect of policies—invited for formality only. However, the proposals of the international advisors and government gets approved. So, I don't see an honest intention between politicians and funding agencies regarding the development of our schooling system. (Sushma)

Overall, the policy drafting process and the nature of education policy development in Nepal was according to Laxman, “misinformed leadership, misinformed policy discussions

... [and] confusing.” He further stated that, “I think sometimes we also feel that even the policy community is very deluded. It does not have the real understanding of what is an appropriate agenda for Nepali education” and again noted that “even the policies are misleading—they convey motivation or the interests of power.”

The Politics in the Policymaking Process and Implementation

“Policies are not outside politics,” argues Laxman and “politicians do not listen to the expert’s suggestions and proposals,” says Krishna. The expert’s voice is often ignored if it is not in the best interest of politicians. The discourse of politicians are principally adopted in policy, and policy changes as the government changes according to Krishna and Ramnath. Likewise, Sushma delineated the ways in which experts’ voices were overshadowed:

Politicians do not pay attention to [research] findings of professionals. Although professionals devote time and energy to understand the silences within education policies and provide recommendations to the government for implementing better policies, political interests get priority—not the advice of the experts.

People in power [politicians] do not have honest intentions to draft policies. Although experts review policies comprehensively and provide suggestions, the government does not implement them. The government has only focused on past failures as advised by donors. Experts work energetically to find problems and provide [recommendations] through reports to the government. However, due to political interest and donors’ politics, those proposals do not get authorised. (Bhushan)

The politics in education policy is so central that it has hindered its effective implementation:

There are problems but I see problems more in implementation than in policy. I am not saying that there are not any problems with the policy, but policies are always

made with good intentions. It is the political incapability that has largely hindered the educational development in our country. (Sushma)

Premraj, however, questioned the research competencies of the experts and the very nature of educational policy–related research:

They are sponsored research or prepared by sitting inside a room. I myself can prepare such research work as per my earlier comments.

Political Appointments and Political Inclination

As mentioned above, the participants informed that the policymaking and drafting process in Nepal is highly politicised. The appointment of senior members in educational commissions, academia, and other educational portfolios is acknowledged to be based on political predisposition rather than expertise, according to Krishna, Ramnath, and Bednath. During the discussion, some participants openly confessed their political inclinations and admitted that their selection in the committee was entirely based on their affiliation to a specific political party. In some cases, participants described how commissions established by one government were rejected by the other while new members were appointed to make educational changes based on different political ideologies and preferences says Ramnath and Sushma. Participants acknowledged that their appointment to an educational committee to draft policy for the country based on political partialities as enunciated by Bednath and Krishna.

Likewise, appointments, transfers, and the promotion of policymakers in Nepal is not founded on calibre, capacity, or the qualifications of appointees. According to Bednath and Krishna, the political actors in power are unmindful of the harm it would cause to the development of education in the country; and they are more eager to appoint their own cadres and political functionaries who align themselves with specific political parties.

I was chosen as a member of the education commission for the education amendment by the blessing of the Ministry of Education. They believed that I was the right person for the job, so I was given the opportunity. (Bednath)

Policymakers are appointed on the basis of political links and affiliations. As government changes, policymakers change—the new government rushes into making a new education commission without any procedural analysis and the new members in the new committee are often appointed by political connections. (Bhushan)

The recruitment of human resources in education [related departments] is not effective. It is always distorted by politics, political parties, or self-interest groups or unionisation, so fair selection based on merit does not occur... due to this there are so many problems in the system. (Ramnath)

In one instance, one participant revealed that he was sacked from the committee by the new government and that the recommendations of his committee were ignored by the new government purely because of political and ideological preferences:

I am not a leftist, so this government had better select a leftist expert in the commission for providing suggestions and amendments to educational policy. You know the relation between appointed experts and politicians is the relations between party [political inclination/membership] and non-party relations. (Bednath)

However, Sushma informed: “I am aligned neither to the left or right political parties or panels ... and everyone knows this.” Her inferences were that politically non-aligned people could hardly get through to powerful portfolios like policymaking. Nevertheless, they have the needed qualifications, capacities and experiences to undertake such eminent positions. Unfortunately, those chosen for educational matters are mostly political cadres who knows very little about education and policy problems, this has done much harm for the

development of education and its policies in Nepal. Furthermore, every political changes have resulted in appointments, transfers and promotions of party functionaries just to engage political cadres' in valuable ranks. Therefore, both participants criticised the overtly politicised context of policymaking in Nepal and reasoned policy professionals ought to synergise for Nepal to fill its educational ambiguities and understand its complete educational options. They were of the opinion that Government must hire experts to engage in fine-tuning policymaking and both believed it will then ensure smooth functioning and design of educational matters vis-à-vis government funding and independent experts nuanced research experiences.

Relationship between Politicians and Experts

Politicians have no trust of professionals. Participants informed that politicians do not understand the problems of education, such as the ongoing worsening conditions of public schooling. Most of the participants saw the problem in lacking political willingness and insincerity. Participants argued that without strong political determination, the condition of public schooling could not be improved. Participants also elucidated that without experts' capacity to conduct procedural research and quality analysis of the educational context; overall improvements in education are unfeasible. Bhushan argues good research can offer practical solutions to the problems. Therefore, the trend of politicians only recruiting political experts based on political preference should end; instead, they should be appointed based on merit:

Politicians do not pay attention to experts' information; if proposals are not in their favour, they will ignore the recommendations. So, there is no honest intention for advancing Nepali education among the authorities. (Krishna)

Politicians have no ear to listen to experts impartially. Experts are usually employed by politicians, selected in terms of their alignment with politicians' interests and ideologies. Therefore, fair-minded and critical views are systematically excluded from the process of policymaking. This has negative impacts on the representation of the current national educational context inferring to Bhushan. Laxman likewise showed the ways politicians disregarded educational researchers and experts:

Politicians have not given precedence to education as a national agenda so far, nor have they addressed the concerns of the experts seriously. Although there is intense uproar from public media, the general public and educators and educational researchers indicates poor performance of our public education ... politicians still do not consult experts for advice and guidance [Politicians] have the false impression that they know everything, when they know nothing ... therefore, a deeper analysis to uplift our schooling is urgent.

Organisational Stakeholders

Participants also responded in detail about organisational stakeholders and their role in Nepal's educational policymaking processes. These included the Government of Nepal and its Ministry of Education, international donor organisations or Nepal's external development partners, universities, and independent experts and consultants.

The Government of Nepal, Nepal's external developmental partners, and Nepal Ministry of Education and Sports (also sometimes called the Ministry of Education depending on government choice in assigning portfolios) also changes the educational purposes. Sometimes classified as Education and Sports (MoES), and at other times just the Ministry of Education, this department traditionally is an important educational stakeholder in Nepal. These institutions are central to educational development and in the planning and execution of educational policies. The discourse of educational planning and policymaking

are thus reinforced by the objectives and preferences of these organisations. These are, in other words, the governing bodies for the development of education and educational policy for the country according to participant Bhushan.

The rhetoric of these institutions is essentially decisive to the how and what of policies that are implemented. Despite concentrated efforts from government and partners, Nepal continues to have the high burden of educating all its children. Identifying opportunities to strengthen policy, to support the pedagogically progressive development of schooling, and to implement the educational programs of the government, these institutions are the important governing bodies. The GoN and MoES is believed to be engaging with NEDPs for educational development but most participants view the role of NEDPs as regressive rather than progressive in the educational development of Nepal according to Laxman and Ramnath. However, Bhushan and Bednath both highlighted in their respective interviews that there was lack of coordination among the organisational stakeholders.

Despite identifying the universities as one of the major organisational stakeholders, some informants claimed that the role of universities was not effective. One of the major roles for the universities was identified as conducting research. However, Bhushan, Bikash, and Premraj reported the inability of universities to conduct rigorous and evidence-based research in educational policy areas as a drawback to educational development in Nepal. Ramnath and Bednath likewise argued that as academics are appointed by political preferences, there is no research culture in universities, and minimal research is published annually by the universities.

Some of the participants—for example, Premraj—claimed that there was no need for an emphasis on evidence-based education policy. He claimed that he knew more from his experiences and readings than what can be informed by the research conducted at universities

where “[t]hey are producing nothing but baseless research.” Furthermore, Premraj asserted that such research are in fact forged documents:

Universities do not conduct research. The research institute of Tribhuvan University like CNAS, CERID, CEDA and others rarely do research work. I have no trust in the research work of the professors because they are not professors in the real sense. The professors should be professionals [but] they work for different aid organisations seeking [research data] projects and they submit their manipulated data as per the need of the related organisations. I am amazed that the professors seek projects with the NGOs and INGOs. (Premraj)

Furthermore, another Bikash placed emphasis on:

We [important government officials at the educational policymaking level] are not convinced that ... [university professors] are capable researchers. They are researchers sponsored by NGOs and INGOs. I myself can prepare such research works with professors for research; they do not produce anything beneficial. (Bikash)

In contrast, Bhushan was of the view that universities are playing effective roles in designing educational policies through research. Although, to do so habitually, he argued that universities should be equipped with proper research resources and that research culture should be promoted by the government. He stated that:

We do not have a culture of participating in academic research and working with evidence. Moreover, the Ministry does not provide any funds to universities to conduct research... which has diminished their potential for rigorous research. (Bikash)

Ramnath insisted that due to the failure of universities to engage in research, in addition to political meddling and disturbances, academia is suffering:

Our universities cannot conduct quality research through rigorous studies.

Chancellors, professors, and lecturers at our universities are appointed through quota categorisation of different political parties. Such people have no merit or capacities to deliver a reliable research culture. (Ramnath)

Research participants emphasised the value of research in bringing pertinent knowledge to the process of policymaking and educational development in Nepal. Most research participants stressed the importance of research in formulating educational policies and plans as critical to representing local information. The participants articulated a broad and comprehensive view of defining what counts as knowledge and how relevant discourses can be created through research, as Binod noted when he stated that:

Development of research practice in academia has not yet matured in Nepal.

University professors and other academicians do not conduct as much scientific research as we would like them to. The Ministry of Education provides no funds for research; moreover, funds are inadequate. So, policies are often rationalised based on a few research studies conducted by aid agencies and individual insight of academicians and politicians. (Binod)

Donors' Policies and Politics in Nepali Education

Education policies have been drafted continuously in Nepal and so is the nature of government formation and alteration. Foreign financial and technical assistance is a clear component of Nepali education, whereas the unceasing political changes are arguably, the defining characteristics of its national politics. Nepal's policymaking and restructuring are predominantly governed by the discourse of aid agencies and the perpetual changes in the government. Aid conditionality with its top-down approach and multiple approaches to

education, to which Nepal has made its commitment, were represented as critical areas of concern by Sushma, Ramnath, and Bikash.

However, Premraj, Ramnath, and Bednath all offered the opinion that Nepal's internal inability and incapacities are key elements along with external interference in its policymaking and implementation process. Bednath, Ramnath, and Sushma asserted that Nepal must work towards establishing its own national agendas for education and take a strong stance towards structuring domestic priorities and preferences rather than to compliantly pursue donors' guidelines in Nepali education. Despite the disturbing role played by donors, participants agreed that donors also played significant roles in some areas of education; in Sushma's words, "they facilitated [the] expansion of literacy, gender parity, and enrolment." Premraj also noted that:

[W]e had problems in formulating education policy in preceding times. Today, it is much easier. If you look at the Ministry of Education, the experts from the university had to come for such activities in the past as consultants, but their roles were not so important; I do not believe [in] their capacity either. Our capacity has greatly improved through the technical assistance of the donors. (Premraj)

Whereas as discussed earlier, other participants including Ramnath, quoted here, reported negative views towards donors' involvement:

If ... [Government and MoE officials] rejects the ideas [of the donors], they don't get the financial support. If the ministry needs the support, then they must agree to the proposals or "conditionalities" of funding. (Ramnath)

It was also found that some of the participants strongly disagreed with the donor-driven policymaking process. For example, Bednath did not like the engagement of donors:

I do not want to see even a single face of a foreigner and do not want to accept even a single rupee from them. If they have an interest in giving us the funds, make a basket and put all that money in the same basket. I have always said this and still today, I stand by my opinion.

Likewise, Sushma saw donors' roles as creating a negative discourse in the Nepali education policymaking—one that mainly involved monetary benefits for those who were directly and/or indirectly engaged in the process:

The game is all about the money. For the state, if it does not accept the conditions of the donors, they will not give the finances—particularly individuals and some organisations get monetary benefit from donors who create a negative discourse of Nepali schooling by false representation of its context. They only create discourse that are in their own interests and in the interest of donors—not for the advantage of the Nepali people. Let me tell you... my experience—our team refused to include the ideas of the donors in the latest committee where we were assigned the responsibility to draft new education policy proposals. We discussed, worked hard, and drafted the proposals; donors asked us for some amendments [but] we took the position for no changes. So, the government suspended our committee and formed a new one in the best interest of developmental partners.

Foreign Influence: The Politics of Education Policy

The persistence of Nepal's external developmental partners and their political ambition to fund education, despite stagnation in the system, is a substantial issue to be critically evaluated. Participants reported extensive foreign interference and domination in Nepal's educational policymaking and the implementation process. One participant asserted:

[D]onors brought Western educational philosophy, pedagogics, and discourse into our education and its policies. Even today their domination is by far and large accepted by both the policy community and politicians. This is gloomy! But the assimilation is so deeply entrenched in our minds that we can't even distinguish the differences.

(Bhushan)

To understand the views of the informants, it is essential to relate Nepali educational history of policymaking and the donor's rhetoric of technical and financial support. The majority of participants in this study criticised the role that Nepal's external developmental partners (EDPs) have exercised in the policymaking process, ignoring practical directions for the inclusive development of education and its policies in Nepal. However, participants did not undermine the roles of these establishments. Sushma inferred:

Nepal's External Developmental Partners (NEDPs) are important players in educational planning and policymaking in Nepal. They are the key driving force behind school education and policymaking and their discourses are instrumental in shaping the policy of education in Nepal.

Meanwhile, she obstinately implied, "Foreigners hire or purchase all of them [policymakers]." Similarly, Bhushan refused to accept the policies of donors as Nepali educational policy:

I do not like to call our school policies [Nepali] educational policies; they are donors' policies. See BPEP 1 and 2, SESP, SSRP, SSDP ... we do not have our own long-term schooling vision. Our education reform is changing fast as donors' strategies are variable ... this has created a lot of confusion among our stakeholders.

Participants do not discount the fact that the support provided by foreign aid agencies and their promises of educational development indicate a sincere desire to support Nepal.

Participants were, however, doubtful about Nepali politicians; they did not believe they were unaffectedly backing foreign aid agencies only because they wanted to improve Nepali education. For example, Sushma suggested sceptically, that:

Policies are made by people of higher authority [politicians]. However, our policymaking is directed by the concerns and interests of aid agencies. Nepal has the capability to make better policies independently but outsiders and our governments and elites in power do not want that.

Participants also inferred that Nepali politicians and donor organisations both had vested interests in Nepali education. Participants who had worked with the World Bank in the past stated that these institutions were merely engaging in the rhetoric of development and progress. However, they were not delivering resources to reinforce the skills and expertise of Nepali people in decision-making positions. The most important portfolios of these organisations are filled by foreign authorities who are unfamiliar with Nepal's educational context. So, according to Krishna, "they hire some lower level [officers retired from high-level government positions in Nepal] as consultants and experts from Nepal disbursing attractive salaries at these organisations." Therefore, there is power asymmetry, which ultimately results in donors dominating the process of educational policymaking Nepal. As Krishan notes:

One time I objected to the concept of the World Bank, even though I had worked with the World Bank at one point in my life. Here, a high-level official had come, and I had a debate with him. He argued for community school management issues and I confronted him about policies like that, which have ruined public education in Nepal. I told him that, now public schools have further deteriorated since the concept of community schools were implemented, despite my stance [on the matter].

Premraj explained about the vested interests of the donors' agencies:

Donors could say they will not approve certain aspects of our policy proposals. They have the power; if we insist, they can withhold their financial and technical support. So, we must be flexible. Remember, these policy amendments are for us. I believe, donors share their experiences. If they are investing in our education, they have their interests, which I think is justifiable.

Views on Foreign Assistance

Bednath, Susham, Ramnath argued ardently against foreign assistance. They believed that aid is useless for sustainable and progressive development of education both pedagogically and politically. International campaigns of education have placed extensive focus on enrolment rather than on quality and enduring learning. Moreover, Ramnath and Sushma asserted that the specific tenure of projects in education impedes the national educational system. One participant working in a senior government position, Bikash, confessed that he was more accountable to donors who had just funded less than 10 % in our education than to the Nepali people. Ramnath, Sushma, and Bikash all believed that the role of foreigners has had a regressive effect on Nepal's educational development and policymaking process and that, since the 1990s, policymaking and implementation processes in Nepal have shifted from the interest of Nepali people to the interest of the global agencies funding Nepal's education. Research participants also understood that donor dependency is a temporary solution to the development of education in Nepal. Along these lines Bikash stated that:

Donors cannot be solely blamed for our educational development. It is our own inability. If we cannot manage our system well, how can we blame the donors? It is our incapability that has impacted the growth of our schooling system.

Premraj likewise foregrounded why funding agencies are not trustworthy for Nepal's educational development:

The donors could say that if we do not agree on their concerns, they will withdraw the support. However, the amendments are for us. What I think is that donors share their experiences. But, if they are investing, they also have their own interests, which is acceptable.

For all research participants, donors' discourse and practice of educational policymaking was of significance to educational development in Nepal. However, they were also equally critical about how they can impede development of a sustainable and reliable educational system in Nepal. Ramnath asserted that:

Education, particularly school-level education, should not be run by taking money from the donors and it should be run through national revenues. Fifty percent of the budget of education either goes to consultants or their own foreign operators. Nepali officials also receive millions of rupees in the name of study trips, educational visits, or in the name of capacity building... they go abroad but not much is invested in education; nothing tangible happens in the classrooms.

Some research participants have expressed their opposition towards the idea of involving donors' agencies in the Nepali policymaking process, with views such as those expressed by Sushma that "for your information in this recent high-level commissions, we rejected the support of the donors in formulating policy." Sushma also expressed concerns about the silences in the government towards ratifying this national disgrace of donors' domination in Nepal:

[I]f an official rejects the idea of the donors, the Hakim [top-level bureaucrats] will coerce the lower level officials to change their stance. Moreover, donors have easy

access to the higher level officials though it might not be readily available for local officials. (Sushma)

Sushma viewed foreign assistance as promoting fraudulent culture in Nepali bureaucracy. She depicted the negotiations between aid agencies and their representatives as untrustworthy:

They [Hakims] agree or sign aid contracts; there is some negotiation. They may receive scholarships for their children to study abroad or some other initiatives.

Krishna, in another instance, expounded that “donors’ financial support for education had been stolen by administrative members and politicians.” Similarly, some participants viewed Nepal’s internal inability as the cause of poor educational development in Nepal. They, Laxman and Bhushan, argued that Nepal’s internal incapacities and misconduct were the drawbacks to developing its education. Bhuhan specifically stated that:

We blame others so simply. Although they have their concerns, they should consider their contribution. What about our own incapacities? The obvious issue is finances but there is resource gap and there is also lack of willingness among our politicians and leadership to resolve this.

Discourses in the Policymaking Process in Nepal

The participants reported that the act of policymaking was an ongoing practice with emphasis on the means rather than the end. In the process of making policy, the stakeholders needed to emphasise public participation, as Krishna noted:

Policy cannot be implemented just after a few hours of discussions in a room among selected members. Some of these policies need to be fought for public debate through radio, television, you know, like that... the discussion must go on for some months, maybe even a year. And after collecting data—suggestions, recommendations through

various means from common people—policymakers should unaffectedly and honestly restructure and decide national policy in education. Not through a room discussion as it is happening these days like in the 7th amendment of our education policy.

Emphasising public participation, the policymaking process should also address the issues of equity, equality, and relevance. For example, Bhushan highlighted why Nepali policy should aim to address issues of accessibility, quality, equity, and relevance, rather than drawing on donors' perspectives. Participants believed that, since the 1990s, Nepal has been proposing literacy and numeracy attainment as well as school attendance improvements as important policy objectives. Bednath argued:

These are donor-suggested objectives and our engagement with them for nearly seven decades. These periods have yielded nothing so far. There are several problems in donors' policy proposals. This kind of hegemonic engagement with them [external developmental partners] will not advance Nepali education.

His emphasis was on the need for Nepal to create its own national agendas based on its specific needs. He argued that Nepali policymakers and stakeholders must develop relevant educational policies based on contextual necessity.

The pursuit of advancement in quality public education is hardly new in Nepal. Though, the chase is lengthy, participants noted that Nepal had not yet begun an extensive discussion about education until today. For instance, Ramnath articulated, “the reason for absence of wider discourse is because neither the political leadership nor the people deeply internalise [progressive] education as the basis of development.” On the other hand, Laxman was of the opinion that, “a wide-ranging [broader] discussion about [quality] education has not yet emerged in Nepal.” Elaborating on this further, Ramnath reported, “Ten to 20 people like us sit in a venue and hold discussions; they write, give presentations. This is taking place but the wider discussions where we engage people from top-bottom and bottom-top

reciprocally between responsible government bureaucrats [educational stakeholders in power] and the public discussing mutually, discursing education actively, is not happening in Nepal.”

Sushma argued that Nepali policymakers and officials cannot confidently develop relevant policy proposals, while those who have the courage to speak of that which is relevant for the country are rejected by powerful politicians and donors. She further disclosed that:

[P]olicies are made by the people of higher authority but the people who are at the implementation level do not understand it or, in other words, they are not prepared for it. We dump our policy on them without their readiness.

Participant Krishna postulated:

In our case [in the policymaking process], the politicians announce their vision and they unveil policies to implement policies that corresponds to their interests and purposes. Our policies therefore are not developed through methodological research; rather, we include the aspirations of the political power in our policies.

According to Ramnath, Nepal needs to place more emphasis on progressive education policy rather than continuing the ongoing discourse of donors:

Extensive knowledge and understanding about how and why educational planning are done is misunderstood by Nepali educational stakeholders. The discourse so far is just about supporting public education; we need to change this towards attainment of progressive and excellent outcomes within the system through practical changes to educational policies. I am certain we can do this. However, sincerity of all stakeholders is necessary.

Sushma also lamented that:

[W]e have plans, but we cannot implement them. Since political pressure discourages its effective operations—there are so many interest groups in Nepal, the one who makes the most noise gets their voice represented within policy proposals. Even they are supported by exogenous organisations—though the issues they have raised might have very little or no credibility to improve the educational context.

Also, corruption was perceived as central in the policy-related phenomena, as indicated by Ramnath:

I would say, in Nepal, there is policy-level corruption where massive commercialisation is done in the name of privatisation, government-invested public education is discourses as lacking quality, and “private providers” are represented as messiah for quality education. The liberal education policy forwarded by donors have their interests in capital, not in the improvement of schooling.

Ramnath, Krishan, and Sushma assumed that the government sought to capture peoples’ sentiments in the policy drafting processes through verbal commitments while that which they promise to change is never materialised at the implementation level as there is no such ethos or commitment from the political level. These are some of the sorts of political tactics used to retain favour with people. According to Sushma, “Prime minister and other politicians’ photographs with students do not give results; it is just a populist media stunt.”

Participants also offered divergent perspectives during the fieldwork discussions about the role of international institutions in the planning and policymaking of Nepali schooling policies. Different participants disclosed contrasting ideas. Those participants who were aligned with the bureaucracy, Laxman, Premraj, and Binod, expressed their belief that cosmopolitan institutions have played a constructive role in the expansion and growth of Nepali education. Whereas those outside the administrative domain, Bednath, Krishna, Nabin, Susham criticised donors’ agencies for imposing unfeasible and impractical designs.

Despite the differences in opinions, participants on both sides believed that Nepali educational stakeholders should endorse domestic educational policies and manage Nepali education using possible local resources while endeavouring to decrease the substantial reliance on donors' institutions. For this to materialise, participants assumed robust political willingness would be necessary (including Ramnath, Bednath, Sushma, Bhushan, and Krishna). Ramanth argued that the discourse of educational development and policymaking in Nepal is fluctuating and contradictory as long-term educational goals and objectives have not been determined by the state. There are innumerable silences in the policymaking process as the question of relevance and representation has not been problematised comprehensively in previous educational policymaking procedures. Therefore, inclusive and egalitarian approaches to educational policymaking are desired as per the data, as noted by Sushma, Ramnath, and Krishna.

Nepal's educational planning and policymaking process has never been the sole responsibility of the Nepali state. The process has been either facilitated or subject to intrusions by exogenous bodies, both directly and indirectly. The liberal educational policies forwarded in the 90s through the privatisation and decentralisation policy of the World Bank permitted private providers to open schools—although there were no clear policies regarding such schools, which mushroomed dramatically all over the country (see Regmi, 2016).

The prevalent learning crisis in public schools and loss of quality are due to the repetitive experimentation of western educational policy in Nepal. It has not only failed the Nepali state but its public schooling system as well. Ramnath argued that Nepal's prospects for developing a sustainable and working educational system cannot be brought about by involving bilateral and multilateral organisations in this process. The huge achievement gap between private and public school attendees in Nepal reveals the existing discrepancies and disparities within schooling systems and the policy failure to address this gap. Both Krishna

and Ramnath claimed that no efforts have been made towards ratifying this national disgrace. Many participants raised several issues that demonstrated the inconsistencies in Nepal's educational policymaking, drafting, and implementation process.

As reported earlier, one participant, Premraj, proclaimed that his knowledge is superior to the recommendations of academics and experts. This explains the power of an official person and his/her capacity in determining that which is prioritised and what is excluded within policies. As a representative of the power elite, this senior member of the government recommends and suggests policy proposals that would be sent to the parliament for legislation. Authorities in senior government positions are bestowed with excess power; thus, as Ramnath declared, there is no engagement with lower level stakeholders in policy formulation and the drafting process in Nepal.

On the other hand, Laxman believed that Nepal needs a rigorous discussion about education. While Ramnath and Bednath argued that appointments, transfers, and promotions in the educational department in Nepal are not based on calibre, capacity, or qualifications. As the trend is for policy to be formed from the centre to the periphery, issues of the common people are not reflected in educational amendments. Participants argued that in Nepal policies must be formulated and drafted after extensive discussions and interaction with the local people and community's stakeholders. There is no sense of policy ownership among lower level stakeholders in Nepal, according to Sushma, Bednath, and Krishna.

Dominant Influencer

As already reported, in Nepal education policy is profoundly influenced by the discourse and concerns of aid agencies. Aid agencies are key players who suggest various reforms and improvements in policymaking and implementation. The GoN and MoE are also equally obliged to adhere and adopt policies recommended by these intuitions and to meet certain goals and objectives as suggested by these cosmopolitan institutions. Most

participants find this deleterious for the progressive development of education in Nepal.

Along these lines, Bhushan remarked:

We are fully liable to the donor agencies. Though I worked at a senior government position, I am accountable to bilateral and multilateral agencies and most of my energy and time is consumed by them. I feel embarrassed to accept this, but this is paradoxical. You may think because I am employed by the Government of Nepal, Nepali people pay my salary; however, I am not working for them. I work 90% for the donors and 10% for the Nepali people.

All participants believed that politicians and educational stakeholders in Nepal must commit themselves to a progressive educational system in Nepal as they are the dominant influencer. They stressed the importance of good policymaking and implementation, but also expressed their concerns about the overriding role played by the funding agencies. Whilst all participants were in strong support of Nepali politicians and policymakers retaliating against the unnecessary imposition of the donors, they were also equally concerned about the incapacity of Nepali stakeholders.

Bourgeoning Education Policy

All research participants understood that education policy should promote equality and equity. To achieve this, policy must translate into practice and government should improve educational policies to endorse equal prospects and opportunities for all people. Krishan stated, “education is a great social equaliser and education policy must safeguard everyone’s rights.” The hierarchies that power social priorities and resources must consider this thoughtfully, according to most of the participants. However, participants were concerned about education policies ignoring the importance of quality education for children of rural, remote, and socially marginalised communities. The emergence of privatisation and

knowledge economy, as well as educational policies based on choice and competition, have produced disparities between people of different socioeconomic groups. As Binod noted:

Everybody is a victim of globalisation, a victim of anglicisation, a victim of this marketisation. Again, I say, those who are in parliament are also elites. Elites would like their children to have the same privileges that they have. The elites' circle—I mean, their children will attend the best schools either in the country or abroad. So, their children will socialise in elitist culture. These people promote privatisation; they promote choice and competition so that the common people are systematically relegated from social mobility.

Participants suggested that the burgeoning education policy has promoted liberalisation of education in which private education providers and their umbrella organisations can exercise, to an extent, maximum autonomy with less regulation from the government. Krishna argued:

[T]here are inconsistencies in educational policymaking in Nepal. The government has not developed any regulatory provisions for the role and responsibilities of private educational providers in Nepal. You see, private and boarding school organisations in Nepal [such as PABSON] are powerful enough to formulate their own practices and often contest the government's [policy] decisions. They have even slammed the provisions in the law and can issue warnings to have them amended.

Nepal's public schooling policies are principally the policies of the Government of Nepal. Since the 1990s, when Nepal adopted liberal educational policies and allowed private educational providers to open schools, private schools of different types proliferated all over the country. Sushma noted that:

Although several policy changes like decentralisation, lifelong learning, inclusive classroom, scholarship provisions etc. were formulated by the government, these were fundamentally for public schools only.

Thus, this demonstrates that the government has assumed that public schools have problems needing to be addressed. Private schools acted autonomously, and were left to their own devices, as the government either believed they were not under its jurisdiction or that they were devoid of problems. So, politicians and people with money established private schools, as Ramnath explained:

[T]he elites in society opened private schools and demoralised public schools. They discoursed that attending private schools and having English proficiency [which is the medium of instruction in private schools] would transform students' life prospects and opportunities. These schools advertised themselves as the messiah for preparing students to become doctors, engineers, or for opening global pathways in higher education.

Such knowledge formation has far-reaching consequences in terms of educational development in Nepal. Today, as Krishan stated, "anyone who can afford to send their children to private schools will not send them to public schools." In another instance, he further consolidated this view: "[E]ven my maid has two kids and though she earns little, she sends her girls to private schools. She trusts private schools will help her kids move up in the social mobility."

Decisive Voices in Policymaking and Implementation

Nepal's external developmental partners, government, and the bureaucrats at MoEs are the key players in Nepal policymaking and implementation. For Bednath:

Aid agencies are foremost policymaking and funding bodies. I have worked with the Government of Nepal and with Nepal's Ministry of Education. We have several times taken a strong stance against their ideas along with other policymakers in the same committee, but they have the power to influence politicians and the government. So, our ideas and proposals are rejected. Government implements the policies of the donors, not ours.

The Nepali education system has been receiving foreign aid and technical support since the 1950s. Without doubt, they are important actors in Nepal's policymaking and planning. However, Nepali politicians and the bureaucrats are important players in this process, according to Ramnath and Krishna. Likewise, Sushma asserted:

Nepali education policies are the policies of the funding agencies. Everything is negotiated between the Government of Nepal and bureaucrats at the ministry. Our plans are not long-term but rather short-term projects, which is certain to change or continue depending on the donor's preferences. This is sad but it is the truth.

All participants believed that Nepal's external developmental partners, senior bureaucrats at the Ministry of Education, and the Government of Nepal are important authorities in Nepali educational policymaking and implementation.

Mindset Behind Restructuring of Education Policies

Political interest and agendas of external developmental partners are factors behind school policy restructuring in Nepal. For example, Bednath articulated that:

[P]olicies are restructured constantly for political gain and corruption. As the government changes, policies change, too. This is done for recruiting political members in important portfolios, to receive foreign assistance, and for popularity. The intention for development of education is non-existent in such changes.

International aid agencies and their vested interests play a critical role in Nepali educational policy restructuring. Donors are also equally reliant on their aid recipients. The Nepali government is dependent on the donor for aid, and donors construct discourses that suggest problems. Ramnath stated that:

[T]he minister is usually the chairperson of the education commission formed for educational reformation. When the committee is formed, it is usually for making certain changes in the policies but we are not independent. If we do not include some of the criteria specified by the ministry, he will not accept our report. If he is not going to accept the report, he will announce it in advance; sometimes they will dissolve the committee, if the committee does not make suggestions for their specified interests. There is no deeper internalisation and realisation about the education reform, its purposes or aims from any side in Nepal. It is always for political advantage.

Participants clearly elucidated that the problematisation of policies are intertwined between the interest of the donors and Nepali authorities in power.

Opportunities and Challenges in the Policymaking Process in Nepal

For all participants, the discourse of policy and practice of education was of great importance. Participants believed educational improvements materialise slowly through effective policy changes and implementation. They argued that although the political restructuring and the change of educational responsibilities from central government to the local government in Nepal is positive, local governments are likely to encounter several challenges, as there would be confusion about designing curricula, infrastructure management, human resource management, and financial management as well as freeing education and its policymaking process from political influences. Similarly, Bednath,

Ramnath, Sushma, and Krishna all argue that the federal government must make policy improvements to support public schools and to manage private schools.

Opportunities for Educational Development

Due to the recent restructuring of the Nepali state into a federal government system, there are opportunities for more relevant policy development. However, the central government has an important role in facilitating the provincial governments who are new to these processes. Sushma arhued in her interview that:

The political restructuring of the nation into different federal states has raised hope. I think it is a good step as most of the schooling responsibility from policymaking to implementation is now given to the local governments. This is a positive step as all provincial governments can now decide what is best for their region and decide policies accordingly. Much remains at the capacity of the local government now. However, the central government must help them with necessary resources.

Similarly, Ramnath says, “I am hopeful but there are some doubts about the commitments of local bodies towards building the methodological framework of educational development.” Despite the opportunity, participants are equally concerned about the challenges as well. Participants also believed that the latest political changes to federal government system was an opportunity for education policy development in Nepal. As Laxman stated: “I am hopeful that the political restructuring from centralised to localised governance will impact positively in the development of education.” Participants also believed that the political stability in Nepal at present presents an opportunity for further development of education. Bednath suggested that there were several opportunities for improving the policymaking process in Nepal. For example, he believed that Indigenous culture and lifestyle could be integrated into education policy in Nepal:

There are immense skills at the local level we need to recognise and practice. I just came [back] yesterday after talking to Tharu [one Indigenous group in Nepal] members. They have traditional skills, and if the skills of Tharu are connected to teaching, children acquire mathematical skills in an effective method because the circle, cylindrical, and many other items that they craft can become important teaching aids to improve numeracy. If attention is given to local skills and technologies—we have so many artefacts veiled in communities that can be used for education. Furthermore, skills and technologies of the local community are recognised, preserved, and their relevance enhanced through their application.

Grey areas in the policymaking processes

In Nepal, according to participants, authorities have failed to draft a broad-based policy framework in the field of educational programs, exams, and management of teaching and administrative staff. As discussed earlier, political biases, nepotism, and favouritism have corrupted the whole educational system as Laxman and Krishna argued. Participants asserted that due to the absence of evidence-based pedagogical practices in teaching and assessment design, Nepali educators still follow outdated (teacher-centred, rote learning, exam-oriented) teaching models. Much of the learning crisis in Nepali schools can be attributed to such practices. As teacher training is not a compulsory component of recruitment, many teachers do not know how to teach. Instead of helping students develop analytical, critical and creative thinking, and problem-solving skills, Krishna, Bednath, and Ramnath asserted that Nepal's students are becoming unskilled literates. Policy has done very little to address these problems. One other area indicated by participants as a current challenge is the preference of medium of instruction. English as the medium of instruction is favoured over Nepali languages today by most schools. Even policymakers believe that in Nepal all schools must teach in English: “Even today,” as Premraj argued, “what is believed is that the medium of

instruction should be made in English in the community schools.” On the other hand, Nabin, who stood sharp in contrast to Premraj’s ideas, voiced the following argument:

Students learn best in their mother tongue. Their cognitive capacity for learning other languages is highly improved by the proficiency they gain in their own mother tongue. So, medium of instruction should be in the mother tongue.

The continual construction of English proficiency as “success” in Nepali society and in policy is having a negative significance. Premraj asserted: “I will say all schools should teach in English.” Nepali policymakers are habituated to hearing about the failure of public education policy; this ameliorates deep inequalities in education. Although participants like Nabin advocate for instruction in the mother tongue, the social discourse in Nepal leans towards the glorification of English. Krishna asserts, “Today, no one who can afford to pay would send their children to public schools. This kind of knowledge formation has confused public school stakeholders.” Sushma argued: “There are two streams of instruction within a single public school in Nepal; those children who are good at English go to English instruction classes and those who are not so good go to Nepali instruction classes. They do not socialise with each other at school, at home, or in the playground. So, inconsistent school policies are creating discrepancies and exclusion.” On the other hand, participants contended that private educational providers have politicised the English medium of instruction in order to capitalise on their objectives. In Nepal, there is a dramatic difference in the quality of schooling when comparing public and private schools. Participants highlighted that the situation is miserable in most of the schools in rural areas. Participants also informed that policies have not addressed anything to remediate this decline in the quality of public schools.

It is crucial that policy challenges and problems in Nepal are exposed and attributed to public schools and their performances. But this explanation has become so dominant that

“failure” and “problems” become synonymous with the public education system itself, rather than with social or economic disadvantage, or even policy incapacities. The discourse has also escalated so far that, according to participants, policy failure is related to teacher accountability. Premraj politicised the shift of discursive practices within policy to teachers’ truancy when noting that:

[T]he poor performance of public schools is due to teachers’ low proficiency and accountability. Brilliant individuals don’t want to join the teaching profession; our social psychology is that one who cannot do anything else becomes teacher.

Sushma also raised concerns about the accountability of teachers in public schools:

Teachers in public schools are negligent. They occasionally teach [but] they spend most of their time in political party offices, district education offices, and other leisure activities. They must be regulated and made more accountable—people don’t trust public education because of this carelessness.

Bednath also voiced that teachers are more loyal to political parties than to their teaching profession:

They are not teachers but hacks; they just collect money as teachers but work for political parties. They betray students, their future, and the future of our nation, and you see the demise of public education—they are responsible for this; if only teachers were more liable, public education could be revived. Government must work towards making effective teachers’ policies. (Bednath)

The education policymaking discourse is yet to embrace the broader educational discussion including pedagogy, curriculum, teacher proficiency, resources, and so. As Laxman noted: “The reason for the absence of wider discourse [in education] so far is the reluctance of the politicians as they are the driving force behind educational development.”

Similarly, Ramnath concluded that “[it] is because neither political leadership nor the people of Nepal [have] deeply internalised ... education [as] the basis for our development and prosperity.”

Most participants did not consider Nepal in terms of what it lacks. However, politicians and donor agencies recognise it as a challenge. This is a key ingredient in their discourse in which educational policies are constantly reformed and implemented for the creation of specific educational truth. Ramnath asserted that “Nepal can finance its education.” As a result, policymakers assume that Nepal is financially incapable of funding its education. For example, current government policy is entitled “School Sector Developmental Plan.” By the very name, this suggests that the Nepali school sector is at a rudimentary level and, in some way, needing to be improved. Whereas the other plans were named “School Sector Reform Plan,” implying the school sector is not functioning and requires restructuring. Similarly, the “Basic Primary School Plan” implies that Nepal has just begun to work on developing its basic primary schooling. Nabin asserted, “our schooling policies have not failed; it is the deficit representation of the context.” Changing Nepali representations of being poor, underdeveloped, and primitive in the purview of donor-funded educational plans is almost impossible. In Nepal, there is a serious need to internalise how educational policy discourses revolve around a development narrative, making the production of other kinds of possible proposals impossible within Nepal’s policy and development sphere.

As reported earlier, education development in Nepal has been geared by both national government and international developmental partners. Despite substantial financial assistance and goodwill from the international community Nepal’s public education has not been able to develop positively due to unceasing political instability, corruption, lack of research, politicisation, inconsistency between policy and practice, teacher proficiency, privatisation,

English as medium of instruction, conflict, absence of methodological restructuring of educational planning and application, and the social psychology that being knowledgeable equates with being proficient in English. One of the grey areas was the lack of evidence-based research and its application in the policymaking process. Bikash revealed this concern when stating that:

In Nepal, there is no deeper analysis and scientific research for backing educational restructuring. The assumptions and presuppositions of the government, ministry, and donors are accounted for ascertaining policy goals and objectives.

As Nepali education is heavily funded by donors, the discourse of reliance has been foregrounded by Bednath as having a negative impact:

Our education policies are distanced from local knowledge. Mostly borrowed from cosmopolitan organisations, these policies cannot discourse the concerns and needs of the mosaic Nepali society with multicultural, multiethnic, and multilinguistic concerns of Nepali society.

Corruption was also distinguished as a grey area in policymaking processes by Bhushan:

There are many reports about fraudulent activities in our school system since BPEP I and II—corruption, in particular, has escalated since political parties began appointing their cadres as school community members. Due to the prolonged political instability there are cases of misuse in every area... education is one of the most impacted areas.

Bednath almost made the point that to some extent, donor agencies were blamed for legitimising the corruption in Nepal through their vested interests:

The donors' officials influence Nepali representatives through incentives and relationship building. These results in bribes and incentives. The representatives of the bilateral and multilateral organisations corrupt our politicians and other

stakeholders. This has two consequences: our education system suffers while donors' representatives sustain their jobs.

Problems Represented in Education

In Nepal, educational purpose is thought about and negotiated by government officials, academicians, and representatives of Nepal's external developmental partners in Kathmandu. Education inhabits a planned position in Nepal's developmental priorities. Nepal's successive developmental policies and five-year national planning have given importance to education. The major advances that guide the development of education and literacy programs in Nepal are various national policies and programs of education proposed and planned by the Government of Nepal, MoE officials, and representatives of Nepal's external developmental partners. They are the leading force behind Nepal's educational planning and policymaking; they are, therefore, the powers for problematising educational problems and for determining issues and concerns to be comprised within a specific policy or program (as noted by Ramnath, Sushma, and Bikash).

Policies and programs envisioned are implemented through the collaborative efforts of the Government of Nepal and Nepal's external developmental partners streamlined through MoE, Nepal Educational Department (NEP), and zonal and district level decentralised management structures, which involve local bodies. The major preceding national education policies subsequent to the 1990s in Nepal were BPEP I and II, SSEP, SSRP, and SSDP, focused on the concerns of quality, equity, equality, access, gender parity, and relevance (as asserted by Laxman and Bikash).

Many of the above-mentioned policies and programs implemented have defined the course of Nepali schooling. The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) is in its mid-stage of implementation at the time of writing. In Nepal, policymakers and EDP representatives emphasise concepts and categorisations for new policies or programs in education. They

believe restructuring should not be a departure from the existing policies, and nor as Bhushan argues, should they discard past policies or programs for new ones. Some of the problems needed to be represented in the policy debates are significant. He also spoke of several problems in policymaking processes in Nepal.

Government makes policy through direct consultation with the Ministry of Education and aid agencies; the Department of Education is responsible for its implementation. I can tell you that there is no coordination between any of these institutions as a senior member of the Department of Education. Everyone is playing their own trumpet. Government has its own interests; donors and MoE officials are not free from bias. The purpose and agenda of policy do not carry the needs of the people ... therefore, implementation fails and policy [does] too. (Bhushan)

Issues of Equity

Issues of equity were a major concern for the participants. Participants mentioned that educational development is a “constructivist” approach, emergent philosophically and methodologically and cultured historically by practices. For example, Sushma asserted that within the public school systems there were two modes of instruction in Nepali and English. To some extent, those students attending in the English medium were favoured over those students who were attending in the Nepali medium:

Yes, yes, there is a dual system inside a single public school. Despite policy proposals for equity, inclusion, and equality, there can [still] be separation within one school as well. In some schools there are two streams of instruction: English and Nepali. Those who are not good at English are sent to the Nepali stream. This is a discrepancy. In one instance, the headmaster of a school during class monitoring found that children in the Nepali stream were humiliated and bullied by their peers in the English stream.

Now, the playmate of these kids was also excluded at home and during gatherings.

(Sushma)

Also, those who were in the lower strata of the socioeconomic attended public schools. This, as stated previously, has the capacity to frame a social, psychological, and many other subsidiary structures and levels executed by organisational decision-making. However, most participants reported that Nepali politicians do not understand the broader impact of education and the application of its policies in societal processes. Among those making this assertion was Krishna who observed that:

Public schools are attended by the most vulnerable in society. Anyone who can afford to send their children to private school will not send them to public schools. Parents and children who attend public schools are humiliated by society.

Premraj also emphasised the need to understand issues of equity as deeply embedded within the concerns of geographical marginalisation along with other adversities:

If you talk about Bajura [one of the remote districts in Nepal], which is the lowest in terms of HDI, if you talk about Dalit, girls, the disadvantaged, special needs children—the question is very serious. A special needs child in Bajura can be the most disadvantaged child. But we are not targeting those children. In the name of equity, policies are serving those who are already somehow privileged. Due to certain flaws within the policies, government is serving those who does not need any assistance. Therefore, we need to work on our policies in order to serve those who are most disadvantaged in society.

Public vs Private Schools

Although better quality public education is a major concern of the Nepali people and its government, Nepal is lagging. Political interference in policymaking has been implied as a

daunting challenge by several participants. The ineptitude of Nepali bureaucrats, in particular, has been considered as a downside to effective educational planning for the country.

Influenced by the prejudice against public education, parents and students are moving away from these schools and are causative to segregation in the process, making public education the only alternative of the most vulnerable in society. Public schools' outcomes are mediocre, affirming parents' decision to pay for private education. Government and policy leaders regularly complain about the quality of public education, and Nepali media outlets frequently run stories of humiliating public schooling contexts. In the absence of methodological assessment of policies and systemic study of educational problems, the restructuring of public education policy has no impact in Nepal's progressive educational development or its public education policies, as illustrated by most participants. Policies implemented so far have failed to catch up with assured purposes, producing several barriers to improved educational development. Participants oppose the practice, and although the current Nepali Government is moving forward with a campaign to eradicate illiteracy and school enrolment, they argue for urgency in overhauling the current policy landscape and for revival of conformist methods of policymaking and implementation. Teacher training and attraction of the best minds towards this profession has also been foregrounded as a need by some of the participants.

The Issue of Power in Policymaking

The issue of power was dominant in the policymaking process in Nepal. Those with the most dominant powers, such as donor agencies, had the greatest influence on the policymaking process. Alongside the donor agencies, politicians and the government were powerful stakeholders in the education policymaking process. As noted by Bhushan:

[P]eople in power do not have the honest intention to draft policies. Although experts provide comprehensive suggestions to the government, it does not have the intention

or capacity to implement them. Donors' and political interests are treasured in policy proposals and amendments. So, top-level bureaucrats, politicians, and donors' representatives are key players in policymaking.

Donors as the influencing force is so powerful that their rhetoric has hindered the internal approach, as highlighted by Krishna:

No one says ... this is Nepali education policy. If you look at how developmental partners and their websites define Nepali schooling and its policies, it will be clear. [Instead] they say, "School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP), a project of developmental partners and so on." I have worked for the World Bank; I know why these projects are not education policies. [They are] just investments in the interests of outsiders. We need to plan our education by our own principles and requirements to say "Nepali education policies." International rhetoric and money cannot make Nepali education policy and improve its schooling. Nepal needs to invest its own money and make policies without the interference of the aid agencies.

Policymakers and academics in Nepal have expressed their frustration and powerlessness to draft comprehensive education policy due to extensive meddling from political authorities and government, as well as donors. Controlling the development, or in other words the emergence, of education has become the subject matter of power in which powerful stakeholders favour some policies while neglecting others, as Laxman noted:

If you look at how our policies are made you will see that our policies are constructed at the centre in Kathmandu. People at the Ministry of Education, international aid organisations that supports Nepali education, and the government through mutual consultation in Kathmandu make policies. So, [it is] the people in power [who] are instrumental in policymaking and implementation.

Political Commitment

Nepal's educational policies are failing and public school attendees in Nepal are bearing the brunt of failed policy. In the participants' analysis, we must apply a lens of political determination in education to illuminate policy failure for minorities, the Indigenous, the poor, women, and their communities, and call for the government to be held answerable to the outcomes of decades of detrimental policy. Participants emphasised that educational achievement and employment are inherently linked to economic opportunity, with higher levels of education decreasing societal disadvantage. When the government fails to address these fundamental social determinants in education policy and its practices, it contributes to the shortcomings of these communities. Lack of strong political commitment, according to the participants, is a major drawback to educational development in Nepal. Although unceasing political instability, conflict, and natural disasters have hampered policy implementation procedures, participants see Nepal's weak political leadership as an important factor behind educational failures in Nepal. For example, Ramnath argued that "There is no deeper internalisation and realisation about the reforms in education from any side—neither the people nor the politicians in Nepal." While Krishna made the point that it is only when the political leadership internalises this seriously that the nation can move forward in education:

You know people do not understand; I would not say the people who are ruling the country, the politicians—they do not understand the importance of the public system, public education. Why is quality public education so important? It is a great social equaliser.

Participants stated that honest political commitment will motivate the stakeholders to mobilise national and international resources and determine the most operational allocation of resources putting a burden on accountable authorities. However, this is non-existent in Nepal, as Sushma asserted when she stated that:

There is a reciprocal relationship between policy, strong political commitment, and its implementation. Due to donors' conditionality and the top-down approach to policy, everything is dispersed in Nepal. The interests of donors gets addressed in educational policies, and as there are no precise and measurable objectives in educational reform, politicians along with all other stakeholders are deluded.

Teacher as Political Representatives

In Nepal, according to the participants, teachers are “Ghole teachers” or, in other words, political cadres (as noted by Ramnath, Bednath, Sushma, and Bhushan). Structural disparities within Nepali society are based on unequal distribution of power, wealth, income, and status. A teacher's ability to move up and down the social system is directly impacted by socioeconomic position or status, including education and his/her political affinity.

Government teachers teaching in public schools seldom teach and spend most of their time in political activities. They are sheltered by political parties and they exercise hegemony upon ignorant parents and students in society. As Premraj noted, the power of maintaining inequalities and suppression from teachers at the local level requires major changes:

Teachers must be very well trained by the government; they must be dutiful and have interdisciplinary knowledge of pedagogy and curriculum. The poor performance of public schools is due to the lack of teachers' proficiency and performance. Due to the unscrupulous political appointments of temporary teachers, public school quality is

sub-standard compared to [that of] private schools. Moreover, teachers do not teach regularly.

Problems Within Policies

Participants also found that there were problems within the policies. For example, how people interpreted the policy, to what extent policy was accessible for the peoples, and how well the concerned stakeholders coordinated among themselves to implement policy. Western domination remains the dominant discourse among participants. Their worldview has shaped Nepali education and policymaking; however, participants contradict it with the cultural identity and knowledge of diverse cultural, ethnic, and linguistic communities of Nepal, including women and minorities. There is an urgency for Nepal's educational policymakers to recognise the issues of disparity, public vs private schooling, teachers' truancy, and to act with integrity on the deficit because Nepal cannot improve its public schooling system unless Nepal recognises the impact of political determination, as discussed earlier. Moreover, the stakeholders must be made aware of the political and social implications as a result of the policies, according to Sushma, who noted that:

Everyone interprets policy as per their convenience. There is no consistency in policy. The same policy is interpreted by different stakeholders in whatever is a convenient method for them. This is the case among those who are informed about policy. There are many stakeholders who do not know anything about policy; they are unaware.

On the other hand, authorities in Nepal make it difficult for the public to access policy documents, according to participants. Most policies remain on the shelf of the Ministry of Education or high-level bureaucrats' offices, as asserted by Bhushan:

Policy changes frequently in Nepal but they remain with the shelf of the Ministry of Education and the Department of Education offices. These policies are neither

updated in websites nor sent to stakeholders. Policy-related information are hard to access, and there is a lot of confusion about it in the Ministry and the Department offices as well.

Issues of Disparity

According to participants, disparity was also present in learning mechanisms among those attending public schools and those attending private schools. For example, Sushma outlined that:

[I]n public schools there is a great imbalance in learning compared to private schools. The learning achievement ... for both boys and girls in public schools is poor. Public education has no quality ... so everyone who attends these schools are affected regardless of [the child's] caste, gender, ethnic, or linguistic background The children of the rich go to private schools and the rich exploit the resources of these schools.

Likewise, Bikash differentiated the quality between public and private schools:

[The] level and quality of schools in Nepal are not the same. Some schools have more amenities like “The Rato Bangla” and “The Lincoln School.” Whereas, many other private schools have good facilities and resources. But, compared to private schools, public schools are substandard in every aspect. So, there is disparity in quality and learning outcomes, life opportunities, and prospects for schools’ graduates. Government must aim to equalise the quality of all schools in terms of resources, facilities, and teachers’ qualifications.

Disparity was also related to students sociocultural and ethnic affiliation by Laxman:

There are obviously many disparities in policies. Issues of minorities and Indigenous children, girls, Dalits, and people in the lower socioeconomic spectrum experience

these prejudices. Liberal policies in education have contributed to this sharp disparity. Today, people living in the lowest socioeconomic spectrum send their children to public schools, whereas the children of the rich attend private schools.

Policy on the Verge of Failure

Nepali education policy must discourse meaningful ideas in terms of proposing relevant contextual issues and its representation for social minorities on the periphery, rather than prescribing pre-premeditated and interest-based approaches where exogenous thoughts are integrated within existing and new educational ideas or within the curriculum, horizontally and vertically, as emphasised by participants. What emerged in this finding is that the participants saw education policy in Nepal on the verge of failure due to the lack of an insiders' approach—the government's unsystematic plans and visions and its overt technical and financial reliance on donors. As argued by Krishna:

Government has failed to implement policies. There is very little application of policy on pedagogy and curriculum goals in public schools. Growing disparity is evident between public and private schools' attendees and immediate action towards ratifying these problems is urgently needed in Nepal.

Likewise, Sushma also believed that education policy should discourse the economics and human capacity to generate it and its significance to society:

Education policies do not address the need to promote required human skills for Nepali society or its market. Rather, education so far has just produced educated idlers, deficient in the skills and abilities needed to fit in the workforce.

The fragile foundation of Nepali education and its policymaking have resulted in many school graduates remaining unemployed. Due to practices of theoretical education, they have gained no beneficial training or skills to contribute to the local economy. Nepali

administrators are incompetent in discoursing fact efficiently with the representatives of international aid agencies, and this has emerged as a problem, as they have a strong dominant voice in formulating Nepali education policies and its programs. Furthermore, these policies would become irrelevant if they cannot represent the needs and aspirations of the Nepali people and society, according to Ramnath, who believed that:

They [Nepali policymakers] could have come up with better policy, better ideas. I think incapability is there; this is the outcome of internal incompetence of the MoE administrators. Because donors give money, they put it and would set conditions, and now it is up to the Nepali experts and politicians to be competent to use those resources. They must be competent to negotiate, to argue, to counter-argue, and to bring those conditions in the national favour or in the interests of the nation. They could do that. But our policymakers and politicians are not so competent; that is the cause [and] why policy does not get the desired outcomes.

These views, depressing as they are, do not fully reflect the depth of Nepali education policy failure. For that, Sushma, Krishna, Premraj, and Ramnath all reported a learning crisis in Nepali public schools. Sushma also reported that Nepal's educational objectives were distorted by global goals and objectives. Moreover, well-designed reforms in pedagogy and school governance structures are critical to address Nepal's learning crisis. It is important to not only prudently ascertain their impacts through rigorous research, but also ensure that different models and innovations are evaluated and validated and that lessons learnt from such investigations should then find their way into Nepal's national policies in a timely manner (as agreed by Bhushan and Krishna). Some informants, Ramnath and Bednath, stated that Nepal could fund its own education and that the Nepali government must take that risk.

Nepal must reduce its dependency on funding for its education. Participants believed national agendas can emerge only when Nepal builds the capacity to invest in its own

education system. Nepal's domestic concerns and agendas will be represented when this autonomy is with Nepal. In that instance, Nepal's educational policies would be unconstrained by a donor's conditionality and governance as noted by Bhushan:

Foreign assistance has distorted our vision and priorities for educational development. Instead of helping us to strengthen and develop sustainable education, their financial and technical assistance are reasons for Nepal's inability to learn through trial and error. I would say it is high time we take risk and say "no" to foreign assistance with conditionalities. I am saying this as a senior government official; believe me, nothing will happen—rather, we will do well. These policies we have now further damage our system.

Thus, policymakers and politicians in Nepal do not understand why a nation needs its own educational program for a sustainable educational system; international meddling in policymaking rather than learning currently plague Nepal's education system.

Neoliberal Impacts

Nepali education policy needs to consider democratic and educational aspirations of the common people and deliver concrete steps for realisation of these endeavours. Krishan and Bednath argue that rather than addressing issues plaguing the Nepali education system, educational policymakers and politicians in Nepal look to privatise education and create a neoliberal education system that is market-oriented and profit-oriented and where government regulation is non-existent. Under privatisation, policies issues of choice, competition, and financial capacity are predominant according to Ramnath. This will then create segregation based on the economic capabilities of parents; and as Krishna argued, "only the children of the poorest attend public schools in Nepal today."

Liberal policies are in an important transition in Nepali education. This policy has generated massive debate both in social and political arena in Nepal and its significance has been heavily debated. Liberal educational policies were promoted by international aid organisations in Nepal in the 1990s. Therefore, participants evidently viewed the development of Nepali schooling policies as directed by neoliberal propensities of international funding agencies or liberalisation of education policies in Nepal as endorsed by bilateral and multilateral agencies during the 1990s. This policy legalised the privatisation of schools without government restrictions. These proliferated private schools in Nepal, as there were no legal provisions/ frameworks about such schools; people were free to commercialise education as market—although there was a lot of contradiction, confusion, and inconsistency in its significance. Moreover, the impact of such policies in Nepali society have been projected by the participants as having far and unforeseen repercussions by Krishna and Ramnath. Krishna specifically stated that:

Now, what happened is there came a new wave of neoliberalism. That wave of neoliberalism, unlike the socialist policy of the past, spread the message of privatisation—also called liberal education policies. This gave rise to private providers in education in Nepal. Politicians and people in power invested heavily in private schools and so they intentionally do not care much about public education. This is our social reality.

Neoliberal educational policies have intensified social disparity in Nepal. As these schools were clearly profit-oriented, participants have mixed approaches about them. According to Ramnath:

Yes, even in 1991. Even before. And, disparity was always there, and it was only aggravated later when these private, so-called high-quality institutions spread around the country after the Company Act. At that time, there was no company act [before

the 1990s]. Those were private but not for profits schools [back] then. These days [since the 1990s], they are business institutes and profit-earning private schools.

Participants also offered examples that illustrate the importance of more egalitarian educational policies committed to combating the social inequalities based on capital capabilities and the global inequalities as discoursed by developed and underdeveloped rhetoric. These include practical, affordable, and home-grown skills and technologies, resources that can aid towards effective and affordable steps, as well as more sustainable ways Nepal can embrace to strengthen and materialise political commitments. Unfortunately, such efforts and methods are the subject of the subjugation imposed by international donor agencies in Nepal's education. Nabin noted that:

[I]f you see private schools as a model, as a kind of ideal setting for education, the reporting is very misleading because the private school model cannot be a kind of inclusive, progressive, and democratic model. Private education providers create market-oriented English-focused bazaar propaganda or advertisements. People are misinformed that English proficiency will provide security for life prospects and opportunity. This is a misrepresentation.

The impacts of neoliberal policies are as follows:

According to Nabin, neoliberalism resulted in the proliferation of private schools in Nepal:

Look, "if you do not make your children learn English, your child's future is dark"; you see how it is a kind of propaganda machine. And this propaganda machine is creating havoc in the parents. "Oh, if we don't send our children to private schools, our children's future is uncertain." That is why such misinformed knowledge is detrimental to the public; [it is] a tool for private school owners to make money.

Participants also inferred the collective social psychology as hemmed by neoliberal policies in Nepal. Due to liberal educational policies, Nepali society was divided into two distinguished classes—one which sends their children to expensive private schools and the other, which sends their children to public schools. This escalated the sentiment that those who are in public schools are the children of the destitute, as Krishan asserted “Only the children of the poor and destitute attend public schools.”

Bushan likewise noted that “[p]eople have lost faith in public schools. Teachers don’t teach, and only the children of the most vulnerable in the society attend such schools. There are often no students in the class. Even the teachers have lost morale.” Bikash also asserted that:

People feel humiliated to say that their kids are studying in the community schools.

This is heartbreaking for many poor parents whose children attend such schools.

Government must work towards improving public education because it is not good for democratic society.

The Subject of Inclusion in Nepali Education

Recently, neoliberal policies have also intensified issues of inclusion and relevance in the Nepali education arena. In the interviews, participants openly expressed their views regarding these issues. Children with special needs, children from lower socioeconomic groups, girls, lower caste children [untouchables], children from ethnic and linguistic minorities, children in geographically remote areas were constructed by participants as concerns relating to inclusion. While exploring perspectives on inclusive education policy and practices in Nepal, Sushma indicated that:

Quality inclusive education is a fundamental part of the new Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs) of which Nepal is a signatory. But, girls in Nepal face

various kinds of discrimination due to their age, sex, and disability. Moreover, people with disabilities, people living under poverty, and ethnic and linguistic minorities have no access to education. Therefore, the issue of inclusion despite policy rhetoric is not effectively practiced in Nepal.

The participant also argued that linguistic inclusion within Nepal's educational policy is important. Absence of appropriate legislation and policies for inclusive education, poor political will, and understanding of appropriate measure to promote inclusive linguistic policies had been raised by Nabin:

Policymakers are overlooking the linguistic diversity of our nation. Linguistic diversity is our asset, it is our wealth. Each linguistic community has a knowledge system, which we must recognise. However, diversity is seen as a problem by policymakers, languages are problems, and even our whole unique cultural, linguistic, and social dynamic is considered as problematic. We have so much to learn from our own society, but policymakers and the government is content to import exogenous knowledge. I don't understand how they propose to make policy inclusive by doing so. The issue of inclusivity is also defined by exported definition. So, how would you explain this issue?

The tyranny of ongoing education policy is such that it has segregated class and ethnicity into various schools. For example, Krishna informed how the current education policy has enforced most of the poorer class children to attend public schools and meanwhile has encouraged upper class children to attend private schools.

The public education system is a system where the richer, poorer, lower caste, higher caste, Madhesi, people of hills, plains, or mountains—all used to study in a single classroom. It used to be inclusive as well as cohesive. But today, only the children of

the most vulnerable in society attend these schools. There is no inclusion in the public system anymore; if you can't afford private education, you attend public schools. This is the situation. (Krishna)

There are several contradictions to inclusive educational policies in Nepal. Although Nepali society, its culture and communities are uninformed about issues of inclusivity, the case is equally applicable to how the Government of Nepal and other international organisations who conduct extensive research about Nepal but produce knowledge that is incomplete and full of silences. Sushma expresses such a concern, stating that:

Though the data suggest that gender parity has made substantial progress in the last decade, these data are presenting an incomplete picture of the real situation. There are so many girls who have never joined schools, even today. There is no evidence, data are sporadic—but during my several field trips to different parts of the country, I have seen so many girls who are disadvantaged due to family and social contexts.

Sushma also stated that the policymakers fail to reflect issues outside the classroom as being detrimental to a girl's education. For them, gender parity is achieved if there is equal strength of both sexes in the classroom. There are several disparities and inequalities outside the classroom that state and policymakers must consider.

The participants rejected the application of global frameworks for defining and drafting policies related to inclusivity. They were of the opinion that Nepal social, cultural, and religious beliefs must be accounted for while formulating such policies. Whereas, others assessed that misguided leadership and the international community are attempting to normalise everything. This has resulted in ineffective implementation and outcomes, as Ramnath asserts:

In Nepal, parents and society see disability or any other form of special needs in karmic terms. If a child is born or has special needs, parents are demoralised, and there is both the burden of care and morality. Furthermore, if the child is born in a poor household, Dalit household, or is female, there are other serious problems. There are so many news about sexual exploitations, social discrimination, suicide. Policymakers must internalise this social humiliation and draft policies [accordingly]. Insignificant consultation with soapy NGOs and INGOs and international agencies has no potential to facilitate in this process.

Relevance

According to the participants, Nepali education policy considers problems that affect the debates relating to the provision of “education for all” in Nepal. It considers, critically, the objectives of international campaign for education, and the meaning assigned by such institutions regarding education for developing countries like Nepal. The proposals forwarded by them are seen as shaping the context of educational development based on the importance it has assigned to basic and primary education policies, infrastructure enhancement, and human resource development. Whereas, policies have continuously represented quality, equity, equality, gender parity, and relevance as policy objectives. Participants reasoned for a revised understanding of the concepts of relevance with a need for wider participation of various groups in the development of educational policies and practices concerned with relevance, including those who inhabit in the socioeconomic, linguist, ethnic, geographical, and gender periphery. To this, Sushma asserted:

Policy does not address the needs of the common people who are outside the access of mainstream public services. Policy has not spoken and enacted the idea of inclusion of minorities, geographically remote areas, children, Dalits, girls and women, or the issue of all linguistic, ethnic, and geographical minorities in Nepal.

Participants emphasised the concept of third world, poor, developing countries as donors' politics as they exert their hegemony through such categorisations. Some participants spoke about how such representation gave a deficit view of the relevance of quality education in Nepal and helped sustain discrepancy, segregation, and the demotion of Nepal. One of these was Ramnath who asserted:

Look! I have worked with donors in policymaking. They have their criteria for policy amendments; they don't value our proposals—I have always told them our youths need basic skills and relevant training to earn a living, and to contribute to their communities and societies we need to transform educational policies to cater to the needs of the rural poor, solve problems of unemployment, poverty, inequality, conflict, and domestic migration.

Participants like Bednath emphasised the need for Nepal to develop curricula that accommodate local skills and technologies within education, and for this he reinforced the need to make policy amendments by reflecting on how proposed policies create applicable discourses that represent Nepal's core concerns:

Our education policies to date have not discoursed on anything on anything relating to the national objectives. Policies so far have been short-term projects that aim to achieve international targets. They do not have long-term vision or a comprehensive description of national objectives. So, policies so far do not specifically ascribe to local needs and necessities.

Laxman implied that donors' policies are not productive for the overall development of education and the education system in Nepal. Along the same lines, Bhushan also advocated for Nepal to alter the policymaking process and engage profoundly in domestic requirements and needs before drafting education policy:

Policies must be free from donors' conditionalities. The process of policymaking in Nepal is heavily centralised. It excludes the issues of people outside the mainstream. This has several far and unforeseen repercussions for the growth of a progressive educational system in Nepal.

Participants reported that the irrelevance of education policies has resulted in brain-drain and migration in Nepal. Nepali education and its policymakers have not discussed the constructive impact of devising a socially relevant policy. This was underscored by Krishna who stated that:

I have voiced ... several times why the youths don't stay in Nepal. I would say it is because our education and education policy failed to realise and accommodate our requirements within pedagogies. We failed to bind domestic skills and capacities so that students can contribute towards Nepal's local economy using domestic material and evidence. We could not assure their future in Nepal. This is all because of the failure in educational planning and policymaking. What I want to say is that we need to impart social education that is intended towards enabling our youth to become Nepali citizens.

This chapter has presented the findings relating to the emergence, representation, and relevance of education policies in Nepal from the perspectives and experiences of the study's participants, all of whom have worked extensively and have had firsthand experience in the area of policymaking. The final chapter draws on these findings to discuss the implications of the study and make recommendation on ways to move forward.

Chapter 6

*We were undertaking research very specifically
as political practice with an overt agenda of change.*

Mackinnon (2012, p. 13)

The research work that began with exploring the emergence, representation, and relevance of education policy in Nepal from the perspectives of policymakers, academicians, and bureaucrats in leading positions (in the Government of Nepal) ends in this final chapter with the discussion, recommendations, and conclusion. It has been revealed through this study that the Government of Nepal must adjust its education sector, particularly given that inequality has become an institutionalised aspect of education. Only the privileged classes currently have access to high quality education. This situation requires the stakeholders to dismantle existing discourses of education and substitute it with discourses that are more representative. In addition, external developmental partners need to represent relevant education policy discourse that incorporates the voices of economically, geographically, linguistically, socially impoverished backgrounds in Nepali communities and the diversity of Nepal's population. I begin this chapter with an analysis of the participants' concerns in light of Bacchi (2009) has highlighted "What is purposed as a policy intervention will reveal how the issue is being thought about" (p. 3). Therefore, the information gained from the participants of this study revolves around elements of the Nepali education policy process; that is, "what is constituted, or made, by policy, and how this process of making occurs" (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016, p. 11).

Admittedly, as Goodwin (2012) clarifies, policy analysis is "a means of apprehending how meaning is created in and through policy processes" (p. 27). It is important to note further that:

The idea that social problems are socially constructed provides a direct challenge to realist presumption in policy studies. The suggestion that “social problems” are brought into being, rather than simply existing, waiting to be solved, corrected or addressed by governments can be unsettling for those who spend a good deal of their time attempting to have situations regarded as oppressive, intolerable, or simply untenable “addressed.” From the constructionist perspective, however, abiding situations becomes social problems through shifts in understandings. (Goodwin, 2012, p. 27)

Therefore, re-imagining and engaging reflectively on the idea that educational problems are socially constructed, this study attempts to re-think Nepali education. As Yadav (2017.) theorises in his grounded assessment of Nepali social work practices, colonisation is the process of development and modernity via a western technocratic exercise of power. Likewise, this study also acknowledges that social problems are brought into existence through discourse, and are not necessarily already existing empirical realities. In framing and reframing Nepali educational problems through a discourse of “technical and financial assistance” to Nepal, in the name of development (see Robertson, 2019a), these exogenous authorities and cosmopolitan organisations have created problems through their complex jargonised global campaigns, and mobilisation of ideas such as neoliberalism, development, modernity, and standardisation (Bhatta, 2011; Regmi, 2017). Through adequate representation and domestic experimentation, it may be possible to establish appropriate educational solutions; political struggle and foreign aid, however, smothers any possibility of such experimental learning from taking place (Maudsley, 2014; Regmi, 2017, Shrestha & Bhattarai, 2017).

Furthermore, in this chapter I scrutinise the implications of the findings (narrated in Chapter 4) by exploring their relevance for ongoing research and further development of

education policy and practices in Nepal. Fundamental to development, representation, and relevance of Nepali education policy were the concerns and issues raised by the study's participants. They problematised the process of formulating Nepali education policies, charging external partners and Nepali elites in Kathmandu (the Capital) with misinterpreting policymaking models under the narrow conception of deprivation and disadvantage. Nepal is in a resource-constrained context, which was brought into being via Kathmandu's corruption of finances for personal advantage, having been repeated throughout its history since Nepal began implementing a planned approach to education. They do not publicly and politically problematise education as a social good, but rather as a pejorative of developmental partners and elites in Kathmandu and the developmental partners—a situation that continues even today. Thus, participants' discourse of policymaking practice and participants' capacities to critique is scrutinised in a healthy way in this section. Bacchi (2012a), concerned with research integrity, explains that the “WPR approach ought to be conceived as an open-ended mode of critical engagement, rather than as a formula” (p. 23).

Culturally and politically embedded within Nepali society, my own experiences energised me for this doctoral study. During the preliminary phase when I began to ask questions for my doctoral thesis, which I commenced in 2016, I observed that, increasingly, poverty (*garibi*) and underdevelopment (*abikash*) in Nepal are represented as a problem to be solved. This created a space for my study that concludes here in this chapter. Whilst all of the research questions noted in Chapter 2 are political in nature, two of the three questions were interpretative while the other was philosophical. The questions assumed in the initial phase of this research journey now conclude in this chapter, bringing into being further discourses in Nepali education and its processes. As rightly articulated by Gottesman (2010):

How people understand the social order frames how they explain what goes on inside of it and the ways in which we can push back against injustice within it. Education

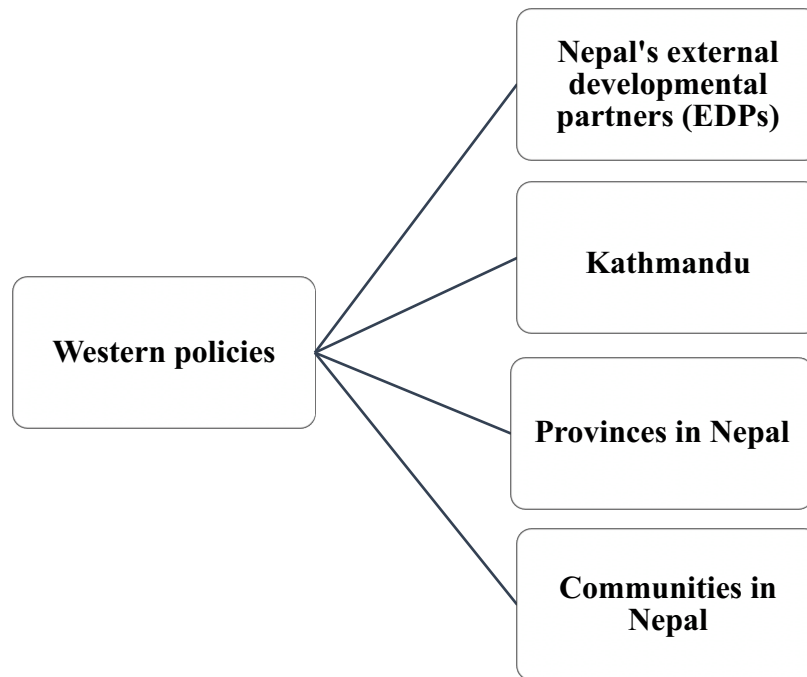
scholars thus need to be armed with rich theoretical work. This means engaging in close and contextual reads of texts, sophisticated thinking about the descriptive, explanatory, and normative dimensions of theoretical approaches, and close attention to the intellectual and political traditions that underpin our ideas about the social order. The field of education requires this careful approach if we are to develop scholars and activists who are working in solidarity toward the goal of radical social change. (p. 394)

This study, therefore, has endeavoured to discern the development of Nepali education policies as structured by the initial research questions. What the study has proposed to do delineates what the researcher thinks is problematic and needs to be represented within Nepal's education policies. Mol (1999) simplifies this by saying:

[The] reality [of educational policy] does not precede the mundane practices in which we interact with it, but is shaped within these practices. So, the term politics works to underline this active mode, this process of shaping, and the fact that its character is both open and contested. (p. 75)

Figure 5

Mode of Education Policy Transfer in Nepal



Educational planning that lacks genuine understanding of educational policymaking will be unsuccessful; it will dwindle not because of procedural planning errors but because of the policymakers' absence of knowledge about the historical development of the policymaking processes along with reflection upon how it shapes lives of people and societies not realising why and how these policies evolved and how the planning outcomes should model the new segments of policy analysis and formulation (Haddad & Demsky, 1995). Shrestha and Bhattarai (2017) describe Nepal's predicament in their book about Nepali history by foregrounding Nepali educational development as disorderly, organised around the incongruent discourse of developmental partners (as indicated by Figure 5):

Given such leap of time and compression of distance, every policy step Nepal takes appears out of sync and premature—actions with very little serious assessment of

consequences; that is, as Nepal tries to run even before it knows how to crawl, it has continued to stagger like a senseless drunkard during its march to modernity. (p. 1)

The findings of this study propose that Nepal's educational policymaking and implementation processes must include inventive elements through rigorous investigation to address the multitude of its existing problems. Prompt policies and ideas invented organically within the geography of Nepal, its diversity and region-specific experiences of the Nepali people and eco-system, are urgently needed for educational development. New policies must contain directions and problematisation germinated through critical analysis of previous policies; or through the re-visiting or re-formulation of conventional policies with critical scrutiny. As Goodwin and Bacchi (2016) assert:

When considering governmental agendas, therefore, it is considered to be inadequate to ask simply, "what is the problem?" or "what works?" in relation to an assumed "problem"; rather, there is an imperative to ask "What is the problem represented to be?" (p. 41)

Educational strategies recommended by international donors have shaped Nepal's educational policy and planning. Currently, donors' decisions orchestrate educational policy decisions in Nepal (Regmi, 2017). Therefore, "refusal to accept the taken-for-grantedness of any concept" (Marshall, 2012, p. 66) occurring inside Nepali educational problematisation under donor governance has been scrutinised by adjunct literature and discussed by participants in this study. As a result, and as Ronnblom (2012) theorises, the whole research process has political implications and material consequences.

Discussion

Recollecting the Silences: Shifting Discourses in Nepali Education

Participants collectively provided a critical analysis of Nepali education policy development, relevance, and representation in this study. They expressed concern about:

- its theoretical foundations that had methodically constructed pedagogics that do not philosophise the real problems inherent within Nepali communities;
- its Kathmandu-centred policymaking practices that have excluded the discourse of the non-urban Nepali public;
- the procedure of implementing imported policies, and pedagogical reproductions referred by Nepal external developmental partners and bilateral and multilateral agencies;
- the power asymmetry between Nepali policymakers and donors' representatives and their discourses;
- donors' impartiality to represent Nepali policymakers proposals outside their concentration;
- the inability to promote research culture and evidence-based practices within local educational institutions and systems along with the lack of rigour in current research in Nepali academia;
- the inability of Nepal's government to address the concerns of Nepal's diverse ethnic, linguistic, geographical, socioeconomic backgrounds and Nepali consciousness within pedagogy;
- Nepal's overtly politicised context and the need for depoliticising the appointment of educational leaders;
- the absence of continued education, training, and research through which to explore educational concerns and discourse for proposing relevant educational policies;

- the inability to decide on educational issues of national interests and discourse that addresses the educational problems inherent at the grassroots level;
- the discrepancies between private and public school attendees and the tendency to equate knowledge with English proficiency;
- the impact of liberal educational policies and the exclusion of minorities children;
- the consequences of neoliberal educational policies and globalisations;
- the inability of the Ministry of Education to move beyond the donor's guidelines and give education with relevant and necessary direction that reflects the discourse of Nepal;
- policymakers' lack of rigorous homework and research in advance to educational policymaking processes are full of incongruences that have exacerbated Nepal's incompetence and given room for imposition of ideas from outsiders that fail to address Nepal's inherent educational issues; and
- above all, how power problematises educational issues to represent the concerns of Nepal's diverse population of different cultures, traditions, socio-political dynamics, educational plans, policies, structure, and economic distributions and to draft educational policies representatively where everyone's concerns fit equitably.

Participants were concerned about the current process of educational policymaking and Nepali experts' unjustifiable submission to Nepal's external developmental partners and other bilateral and multilateral organisations funding Nepali education. Some participants argued that Nepal can do without their financial and technical support and noted the ongoing imposition of outsiders as creating further dependency in educational policymaking processes. The discourse from outsiders has overlooked Nepal's traditionally established sociocultural knowledge system and instead depicted a stereotypical representation of Nepal. Most importantly, however, given the context in which NEDPs are key players in Nepali education, participants were aware of the politics and policies of outsiders that, to them, lacks

critical understanding and the appropriate frameworks and policies that can improve the Nepali education system. Consequently, although participants challenged the authorities for imposing irrelevant educational discourses and blamed the political power for not representing the proposals they had drafted through various commissions and policymaking forums, they politicised not to reflect themselves as inherent in the system within which they were produced and their consciousness was framed. Nepali policymakers were themselves influential and were involved in educational policymaking in some juncture of history since the planned approach to education began in Nepal in the 1950s. Analysis of their ideas formed the heart of this study.

Theoretical Substructures: Leading Representation of the Problems

Nepal implemented its first education policy in the 1950s. Development and modernity were the initial cliché that defined the rationale of educational policy and practice in Nepal. While Nepal's International Developmental Partners present a discourse that articulates the significance of universalisation and globalisation in education policy, a position that is critically discussed here. Nepali education policy constructed within the development and modernity interpretations of western powers has strong ties within Nepali educational policy frameworks (see Caddell, 2007a). Nepal's alignment with the western powers was also related to the cold-war narrative of democracy vs communism. Robertson (2019a) more recently described the founding stages of the policy-formulating period of the 1950s in Nepal and reported:

The people of Nepal will lose all hope and may fall prey to an alien creed. Many observers told me that the future of Nepal will be decided within the next two years and that Nepal could tip either toward democracy and the West, or toward Communism and China. (p. 41)

Similarly, the reference below highlight the deficit modality that Nepal initially embraced:

One cannot discuss the emergence of Nepal's education system in this period without reference to the external (non-Nepali) influence on the development of national education policy. The NEPC, and all major education policy documents prepared through the 1950s and 1960s, were devised with the financial and technical assistance of the United States Overseas Mission (USOM, later renamed as USAID). Many of the decisions relating to schooling policy were made in the light of the experience of the United States. (Caddell, 2007a, p. 10)

Nepali education policy, which is primarily financed and theoretically directed by USAID, incorporates western assumptions. Nepali education practice has been imported mainly from western parts of the world, and some Nepali scholars, for example Yadav (2019), have concluded that such importation is nothing but a quasi-colonisation, which tends to distance the younger generation from their cultural and social understanding. Policymaking and representation of policy problems in Nepal over the past seven decades, including educational policy assessment and restructuring, had taken place in a context dominated by neoliberal rationality (Regmi, 2017). Neoliberal rationality emphasises liberal educational policies, while favouring and recommending the decentralisation and privatisation of Nepali education (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2013). Nepali scholars have recognised the semi-colonisation of Nepali education under this western episteme and the numerous problems encountered by learners under the blend of the western vs traditional pedagogical nexus in their everyday life (Yadav, 2017). In line with Yadav, informants provided critical insight to the process of educational policymaking in Nepal. They acknowledged policymaking as a political issue and conveyed concerns about Nepal's domestic incapacities which they perceived to be a product of the continuing and prevailing western developmental kinships

and governance that Nepali elites in Kathmandu had eulogised and welcomed as progressive without comprehending what that actually meant to Nepal and its people (Shrestha, 2009). Industrial and scientific revolution is yet to evolve in Nepal and the majority of Nepal's population sustains itself on an agrarian economy (Sugden, 2009). Therefore, the neoliberal educational policy proposals represented are distinct to Nepali people's needs and aspirations. For education policies to be applicable, scrutiny of neoliberal policies is required, which according to Regmi (2017) has no vision for refining the Nepali education system. A Nepal adage, "aaru ghoda cheda bhendra aafu dhuri chudna hudaina," meaning "if others ride on a horse, you should not climb the roof," best describes the sorry state of the effectiveness of current educational policies and practices in Nepal.

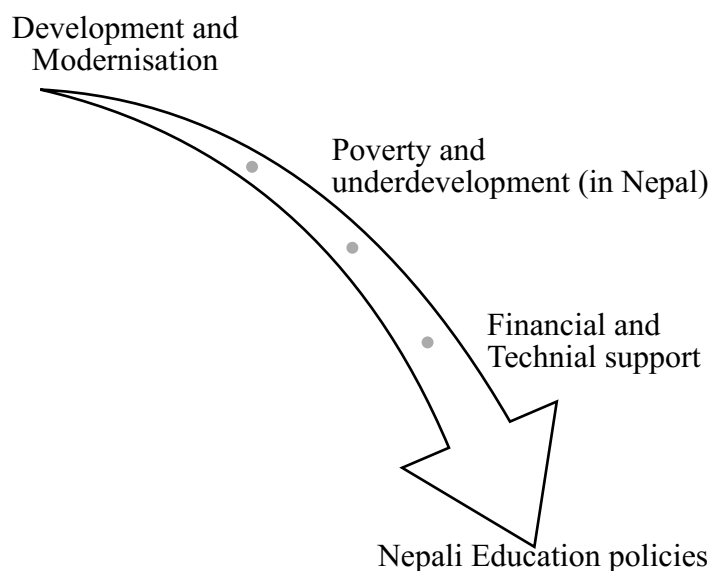
Education policies in Nepal have discourses broadly the issue of quality, equity, access, equality, and relevance since the 1990s (Bhattarai, 2016). However, these considerations are in black and white and do not translate to practice, as they are external to the contingent reality of the people. The educational development that operates within imported and dominant developmental discourses also referred to by Kangas and Salmenniemi (2016) as the "Colonial Matrix of Power," redefines the social, political, and cultural rationale of others as inferior and irrational. Whereas, Robinson Pant (2001) asserted:

The concept of development as discourse can thus broaden our perspectives as educationalists to consider the influence of developments ideologies on our roles as "developers" and on the perspectives of those being developed. As well as considering teaching approaches, languages of instructions and methods of school organisation in terms of technical effectiveness, we need to be aware of how development discourses have shaped and influenced these practices. Only when such educational policies, plan and practices are examined from the ideological perspective, can they begin to be a force for positive change. (p. 326)

Although most researchers noted that policy development in Nepal can be distinguished within the framework of modernity and development (Carney & Bista, 2009; Khanal, 2013; Madsen & Carney, 2011), in practice so far, Nepal has moved beyond this binary. Multiplicities of practices, influences, and impacts, and a collage of dilemmas within Nepal's own unique diversity while engaging in domestic and international resistance as well as acknowledging and embracing others within national discourse and the discourse imposed or informed by currents of globalisations defines policymaking and its practices in the Nepali current context. The "others" as seen and produced by foreign power has located local custom, practices, and communities within the colonial matrix of power and the discourse of development. By challenging this, Nepal must seek alternatives to educational policymaking through broader discussions with Nepali stakeholders. However, in the meantime, policymakers must not ignore the internal marginalisation imposed by power in Kathmandu. Imported educational policy and policymaking practices have constructed a space for foreigners to regulate and control Nepali elites and the common people through ambiguous representation of development (Shrestha, 2000). No discussions and negotiations with the concerned stakeholders, foreign developmental strategies to education, and failure to comprehend the ground reality are some of the reasons for the failure of education policies in Nepal. This has also resulted in the lack of ownership, teacher truancy, corruption, learning crisis, discrepancies in the public system, the demise of school quality, and so on.

Figure 6

Development Discourse and Validation of Influence in Education Policymaking



Both the previous literature and the findings of this study as outlined in Chapter 4 have provided a detailed exploration of the problems of influence perpetuated by external developmental partners in the process of Nepali educational development (as indicated by Figure 6). Participants foregrounded several issues in the emergence, representation, and relevance of education policy in Nepal. Findings show the repercussion of donors' developmental discourse and conceded policymaking as a disputed rather than a revisionist approach. The traditional procedure of Nepali policymaking is conceptualised within the developmental and globalisation narratives. Literature suggests that educational leaders and policymakers to be critical to problems associated with education and its policy:

Rather than seeing planning as technical field, we acknowledge that ideological dimension—the influences on how policy is formulated, how policy is transformed into plans and how plans translate into action on the ground. Analysing policy in

terms of discourse can lead us to ask different questions in place of the usual, why has this policy failed. (Robinson Pant, 2001, p. 325).

The educational decisions taken by the Government of Nepal or EDPs entails representations of concepts and categories not founded on socio-materialistic pedagogics of local contexts. How the government foresees the future of Nepal and Nepali people is delineated by what the government proposes to do in its educational policies and by what degree of sincerity they are implemented. As noted earlier in this thesis, since the 1950s, there have been several reforms to educational policies in Nepal.

Findings attributed to each political change in Nepal and through each educational restructuring process, the representation of concepts and categories—or what Bacchi (2009) describes as “discursive practices”—was a major factor behind policy amendments. Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) enunciate policy as a “cultural phenomenon” (p. 7). Defined by what each government through recent history has refused to do has had impacts on the life of the Nepali people and its communities. Similarly, informants in this study believed that power defines people’s beliefs and produces new social realities. The development of education and its reforms as practices of authority involves classifications of problems into various categorises (what the government proposes to do). Matters of education and educational problems raised are concerns of the regime. In the case of Nepal, they are also equally the concerns of Nepal’s external developmental partners who have resourced its public education. Their role in formulating Nepali education policy is pivotal. There are differences in judgement regarding their participation in Nepali education.

Some informants evaluate this as hegemonic, while others ascertain it as Nepal’s inability to realise its educational priorities and to defend them. Policy proposes to resolve identified problems represented by power. Rationalising international policies as critical to solving national issues are credible only in rhetoric; in practice, it silences the concerns of the

actual beneficiaries. Thus, Nepali culture and society is homogenised by these western propensities. They define Nepal as poor, underdeveloped, and needing to be modernised to fit into the global market (Bhatta, 2011; Khanal, 2013; Pradhan & Valentin, 2019; Regmi, 2017). Educationists and policymakers in Nepal articulate that reforms without any tangible national agenda have left educational development in Nepal in an indeterminate state. This is the result of compliance levied by aid agencies via aid conditionality, soft politics, and Nepal's representation globally as underdeveloped (Bhattarai, 2016; Maudsley, 2014). This neo-colonialism imposed by developmental narratives supports only ideas of westernisation, while the discourses of Nepal as impoverished and embryonic in development are pejorative (Shrestha, 2009). Thus, the development of Nepali education requires critical analysis of the development, representation, and relevance of education policy in Nepal. Participants were enthusiastic and responded positively to the western epistemic violence.

Informants recommended that the government and bureaucrats in Nepal should not only continuously reform schooling policies, but rather, they should also critically analyse the nature of Nepal's educational policy development, representation, and relevance. The contemporary crisis and criticism about the state of public education oscillated by the media, public, and politicians in Nepal is due to their trust of western educational models. However, Regmi (2017) argues that donor-funded Nepali education policy has no prospect of progressively improving the education system.

Nepal now has a unique opportunity to embark on a new educational journey. She must confront the elements discussed within these findings. Nepali educational policymaking intimately linked to global powers had silenced its domestic interests. Furthermore, relegating the voices of Indigenous and marginalised groups, policy had systematically deprived them of inclusion, equity, equality, and quality. Nepal needs to recognise the genuine concerns of the minorities, address the concerns that Nepal has failed to prioritise in its national interests,

and to embody the interests of local minorities. The Nepali government must institute relevant policy to steer inclusive educational practices.

Education policies delineate the education system of any country. Therefore, the development of a durable educational system is central to any country, as it is a motivating force behind national prosperity. An inclusive educational system provides the groundwork for equal opportunities and prospects. As a result, quality education is associated with and determines the progressive structure of a nation and, subsequently, offers a brighter future for its people. Everybody in Nepal believes that education is central for national development; however, authorities in power never seriously considered the long-term vision required for educational advances (Lamsal, 2016).

As social, economic, and political factors influence the educational development of a country, the case of Nepal provides greater insight into how political instability, feudalism, oligarchy, gender disparity, international aid, NGO and INGO politics, bilateral and multilateral organisation meddling, domestic conflict aroused by political and cultural bias, migration, brain drain, geographical variations, privatisation, and so on, powers the development of education in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017). Their discourses have been influencing the development, representation, and reception of education and its policies in Nepal since the 1950s.

That the Nepal educational system is draped with failure has not been comprehensively analysed. Many researchers have strived for improvement of the system as evidenced by their common use of the word “reform.” Khanal (2010) has noted that Nepal’s educational restructurings were impacted by the political modifications during different historical phases. Graner (2006) ridicules valueless paper statements that are critical of preceding policies claiming any sort of accomplishment. She contends that abundant capital financing education through donor agencies despite constructive outcomes has been wasted.

Ng (2008) elucidates that understanding educational change in many countries indicates a “gap in policy rhetoric and reality” (p. 600). This idea resembles the case of Nepal as policies seldom translate into practice. Khanal (2010) stresses that “decentralization in Nepal has been incorporated into policy papers but has hardly been translated into process and culture” (p. 156). Therefore, it is imperative to recognise who the key players are in the construction of policy rhetoric and representation in Nepal. In this regard, it is worth noting to consider Regmi’s (2015) claim that the World Bank is forcing the least developed countries like Nepal to change their educational policies and practices according to their vested interests. His paper also offers some critical analysis on how reliance produced by failing the potential of the least developed countries (LDC) to explore sustainable solutions to their educational development have destroyed schooling. Furthermore, Shrestha and Bhattarai (2017) conclude that the Nepali education system is broken and is in dire need of an immediate overhaul.

In summary, theoretical development and modernisation discourse underpins the evolution of Nepali education and education policymaking procedures. Such practices have silenced the voice of the ethnic and linguistic minorities, Dalits, lower socioeconomic communities, remote communities, girls, and other vulnerable groups in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2016; Neupane, 2017; Parker et al., 2013). Therefore, subverting this pervasive discourse towards making educational policies more representative and relevant is critical for Nepal. This research explores in depth a qualitative account of emergence, representation, and relevance of education policy in Nepal, focusing on the participants’ interview analysis and document analysis. By means of exploring the nature of planning and policymaking in Nepal, this study seeks to understand what policymakers propose and with what authority. Furthermore, it concentrates on the politics of policymaking. The process of policymaking involves representation of perceived problems by power, in spite of the repercussions for

those in the periphery. By exploring the process in detail, it underlines the actual context of Nepali education.

Co-Dependent Educational Policies: Many Facades of Lobbying and Related Problems

While a wide range of stakeholders are involved in Nepali education policymaking, it represents significant complexities and politics of concern. It has a high cost for the organic development of education in Nepal. This can mean that to the extent the lobbying is effective, it disproportionately benefits bureaucrats, politicians, and elites in Kathmandu along with representatives, think-tanks, and the office bearers of multilateral and bilateral agencies who work for a mosaic of funding agencies with, and for implementing, their vested interests in recipient countries like Nepal.

Moreover, “aid conditionality” imposed by contributors, as reported in the previous chapter, ignores the many concerns of Nepal. There is no resistance on the side of the Nepali policymakers as there is fear that aid agencies will withdraw from specific educational projects if contested. This results in one-sided proposals and representation of concerns. Donors’ proposals are represented without criticism. However, the donors have the capacity to criticise and even refute the proposals of the Nepali side. Apex-bodies for policymaking in Nepal’s MoE and GoN ensure that donors do not get offended and thus withdraw from the funding projects (Khanal, 2013; Maudsley, 2014; Regmi, 2017). As the funds received are used by these bureaucrats, politicians, and elites in Kathmandu, the embezzlement of resources is a common practice and there are domestic networks of lobbying within this political technocracy, which sustains the power of the elites in Kathmandu. Further, the largest educational think tanks globally campaigning for education like the World Bank and other cosmopolitan institutes along with Nepali bureaucrats in Kathmandu ensure that their ideology is well reflected in educational discourse (Carney & Bista, 2009; Neupane, 2017).

By sharp contrast, communities and villages who broadly represent the views on inevitabilities and who have the capacity to make contextual decisions of real-world educational problems that require to be reflected within education policies, tend to have no say and far fewer resources allocated at their disposal for educational financing. To that end, their ability to effectively improve educational issues are severely undermined (Bhattarai, 2016).

External donors control national education policy processes in Nepal. Education policies for Nepal, organised around Nepal's external developmental partners' ideologies and Bretton Wood Institutions' policies—such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, Asian Development Bank and other multilateral and bilateral aid agencies—are critically scrutinised by researchers and policymakers in Nepal. They reference the discourse represented by these agencies as delusional and exclusionary, considering educational policy's relevance to reconstruct Nepali education and be inclusive to the Nepali population (Awasthi, 2008; Bhatta, 2011; Regmi, 2017). These often reflect the discourse and power of outsiders whose assessment of Nepali educational needs are implausible from Nepal's circumstantial realities. They produce deficit knowledge by misrepresenting the actual issues of Nepali people and their educational concerns. Underdevelopment and modernity discourse, education policies defend ideas founded on technological and scientific advancement of the west that has little or no resemblance to Nepal (Awasthi, 2008; Koirala, 2008). These replications of policies seldom touch the economic, political, and social spheres of Nepal nor do they address the problems of discrepancies inherent within Nepali education system. Such practices of policymaking challenge the problems represented by donors and their educational assessment. Such constructed problems by ideologies of vested agencies cannot explain why Nepali education is not refining. The interview findings shared in Chapter 5, and

the policy analysis in Chapter 4, signpost several issues for the Nepali government to address the educational problems and for Nepali people to question them critically.

As policies are driven by the proposal of the exogenous discourse that have become default international representation, perceived problems in Nepali education policymaking processes come from external influences and not from the needs and concerns of the communities in Nepal (Koirala, 2008). Therefore, these policies imply that the traditional pedagogy of these communities are irrelevant and should be disregarded. When the authorities in power deliberately do this and suppose or assume it unnecessary to be represented within the policy frameworks, the discourse of the minority are systematically subjugated by policies in practice. Therefore, we need to address the discourse of minorities within education policies by representing them as new problems continually, as the finding of this study implores.

The imperative then is to ensure that future influences on Nepali education policy are inclusive of minority groups, avoiding the negation of traditional knowledge over the agendas of external influences. A rigorous analysis of the paradigm in educational problematisation as proposed by the agencies and the elites in Kathmandu who turn to external western influences for their direction and educational discourse is needed. The discursive practices so far in educational policymaking up to this point have failed to address the concerns and Nepali consciousness.

Nepal's Educational Roadmap: Synergy with the Literature

Increasing research has explained the urgency for educational policy reforms in Nepal in relation to its appropriateness and representation of quality, inclusivity, equity, and relevance (Banks et al., 2019; Bhattarai, 2016; Devkota & Uphedhaya, 2016; Mathema, 2007; Sharma Poudyal, 2017). Analysis of the nature of educational policy development in Nepal provides abundant suggestions for the Government of Nepal, Nepal's Ministry of

Education, and Nepal's external developmental partners. However, to date, the practices of policymaking in Nepal convey only international commitments on quality, equity, equality, relevance, and access (Bhattarai, 2016; Khaniya & Williams, 2004). Thus, such intentions and policies bear little significance for the Nepali context. Yet, the implementation of policies so far at the community level have failed to impart social justice (Bhattarai, 2016; Pradhan, 2018). Increasingly researchers have highlighted the issue of inclusivity as a concern in Nepali education policies. Special needs children, girls, minorities, Dalits, and public school attendees are segregated due to the limitations of Nepali education policies (Parker et al., 2013; Neupane, 2017).

Nepali education policies endeavour to expand access to schools and inclusivity for all school-aged children in Nepal. However, as the informants have already detailed in the previous chapter, in absence of a clear framework to classify each issue separately, the rhetoric of policy goals have become vague and confusing. There are various institutional and policy disputes that authorities need to redefine clearly in order to make education policy more pertinent and applicable both by the Nepali Government and by Nepal's external developmental partners (NEDPs) who fund and support Nepali education.

Imitative educational concepts from NEDPs have failed to discourse Nepali social needs and configurations, thus germinating impartiality and disillusionment in Nepali education. While reflecting upon educational policy proposals and concerns, it is vital that policymakers and educators consider circumstantial needs as an alternative to duplicating policies from other countries. Nepali policymakers have thus far discounted contextual significance while formulating educational policies. They have instead appreciatively accepted donor-prescribed educational policies, creating a principle drawback to Nepal's educational growth (Maudsley, 2014). This disinterestedness of policymakers and politicians in designing education policies on the basis of homegrown strategies and regular assessment

of domestic needs has impeded healthy growth of education for Nepal. External governance of Nepali education (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2017; Maudsley, 2014; Regmi, 2017) has delayed its progressive development. Khanal (2013) calls this situation “swing in the pendulum” to illustrate the impact of overreliance on the donor-driven program and its control on schooling. Educational policies in Nepal have neither clearly defined purposes nor long-term visions. It does not have the aptitude to adhere completely to the global criterions nor to internalise its domestic limitations and capacities. Despite several policy restructures in the past seven decades, Nepal has failed to improve its education. In spite of this catastrophic collapse of the public education system, stakeholders in Nepal do not seem too bothered by this demise (Bhattarai, 2016; Mathema, 2007). Instead of vigorous reflection and examination of policies holistically, Nepalese politicians, policymakers, and donors, seem content to experiment on donors’ policies and without any assessment of its impact. Khanal (2013) explains it is important to go back to the policy process and scan how the policies have been applied from the standpoint of those who were in power.

Policy borrowing is a wasteful way of planning an educational system. Ng (2008) asserts that borrowed policies turn out to be unsuccessful because they cannot diagnose the grounded realities in the local contexts, while any attempts that are made to transform policy goals into responsible steps are often deficient, rendering them unproductive for the beneficiary. On the other hand, Maudslay (2014) revealed that Nepal’s educational policies have continued to evolve despite not undergoing a trial and error process. She reinforces that such traditional forms of policy development would adversely affect Nepal’s educational evolution. A review of the literature (Caddell, 2007b; Carney & Rappleye, 2011; Khaniya & Williams, 2004), suggests that the culture of educational policy borrowing has seriously damaged the ability of Nepal to plan for sustainable growth of an operational educational system. As Haddad and Demsky (1995) asserted:

Planning that is not based on a solid understanding of educational policy making will fail; it will fail not primarily because of any technical planning errors but because the planners did not understand why and how these policies evolved and how planning results should lead to new cycles of policy analysis and formulation. (p. 16)

Policy borrowing culture has also affected Nepal's decision-making capacity and participation. As borrowed policies travel top to bottom, local stakeholders, teachers, and students are systematically excluded from the process of decision-making and participation while policies are being formulated; therefore, there is no sense of ownership among Nepali stakeholders. Carney and Rappleye (2011) elucidate that it is almost impossible to uncover any major educational policies and projects in Nepal that do not expose connections to donors. Furthermore, politics of funding agencies in the form of aid conditionality has governed Nepali educational policies (Khanal, 2013). These kinds of influences have significantly influenced the educational reform practices in Nepal. Similarly, national educational policies were not state sponsored but rather donor driven (Carney, 2008; Khanal, 2013). The Ministry of Education delegates are required to agree to the proposals forwarded by the aid contributors (Bhatta, 2011; Khaniya & Williams, 2004).

Admittedly, aid for Nepali education increased remarkably upon these approvals; however, policy consultations and negotiations do not represent the needs of the beneficiary, the repercussions of which are evident with regard to policy improvements even today. Failure regarding educational policies must be critically analysed to explicate the processes of policymaking and its aftermath. What policymakers and government propose to do affirms representation of concerns of a specific section of society within education policies, and by doing so, power always either replaces or dominates the issues of other sections of society (see Bacchi, 2009). Therefore, it is the obligation of the researcher to speak from the position of the marginalised and the suppressed. As Howard (2013) remarks, "Awareness is curative"

(p. 13). Nepal's broken educational system is also in need of transformation, not least its imperiled public education. Yet, policymakers cannot suggest what needs to change without sincerely striving to know the problems within the system (see Ball, 2006). Therefore, all policies by nature are political and require critical scrutiny.

Issues of Representation in Nepal's Educational Policymaking Processes

Mol (1999) articulates that policy is politics. Educational decision-making involves politics, and preferably, the process of educational decision-making must include people from different backgrounds, interests, opinions, beliefs, race, ethnicities, gender, age, academic qualification, organisational selections, and so on. In addition, the decision-making process contributes and influences the policy proposals that will affect the life of citizenry, both directly and indirectly. Politics is an apparatus through which power structures that we, ourselves as individuals, groups, and societies, may influence. Therefore, who makes the decision and under what type of interest and preferences those proposals represent, become critical for analysis.

Anticipatively, informants' perspectives elucidate important aspects in the process of education and educational policy development in Nepal. In particular, the following problems emerged throughout: legitimacy, discourse, power, relevance, and the functionality of the Ministry of Education. On legitimacy, the interviewees repeatedly indicated the formative role of the MoE because of its organisational ability. As MoE is the central body for planning and policymaking in Nepal, it plays a significant role in managing the donor's political interests in the process as well as the burden of policy implementation (Khanal, 2013). Remarkably, the "aid conditionality" of donors and what they propose in relation to how the finances should be spent rather than the substantive priority of the MoE and the Government of Nepal are always executed (Bhattarai, 2016; Maudsley, 2014; Regmi, 2017). Thus, GoN and MoE as internal and Nepal's external developmental partners as external organisations

have determined Nepali education policy; however, the configuration of power has remained asymmetric throughout the process (Regmi, 2017). EDPs have specific views about Nepal's educational problems along with their own policy concerns to compete as well as cooperate with MoE to influence outcomes regarding education. This has been the case since implementation of the Basic Primary Educational plan to the current School Sector Development Plan in Nepal; participants strongly believed that Nepal's policies to date have comprised of general statements or empty rhetoric only.

One interviewee suggested that much of the strategic and persistent contest around Nepali educational planning and implementation depends on issues of concerns proposed by the funding agencies as they are the undeniable force behind educational planning and policymaking in Nepal. The findings chapter, Chapter 5, validated these constraints in the policy formation process through participants' perspectives. Funding organisations in a roundtable shape problems and define certain intervention procedures to overcome perceived problems through the capacity to produce (finance) reports and the insight to know how data and research feeds into the policymaking and articulating processes. The following statement issued by EDPs illuminate the intentionality of these engagements:

“We wish to clarify that World Bank's support to Nepal's education sector,” said Faris Hadad-Zervos, World Bank country manager for Nepal. “The World Bank and a group of developmental partners finance a part of the Government of Nepal's expenditure in implementing its Schools Sector Developmental Plan through Sector Wide Approach (SWAP). Specifically, World Bank funding is linked to progress in agreed results in Grades 1-10, and not Grades 1-12 as mentioned in recent reports.” (World Bank, 2018, n.p.)

Literature demonstrates that donors' governance is seminal in Nepal's policy formation process, in addition to its implementation (Khanal, 2013; Regmi, 2017). Nepal's

developmental partners like World Bank either in person or in the form of reports have imposed their influence. These reports taken up by the Nepal Minister of Education, Nepal Department of Education (DoE), Education Commission formed by the Government of Nepal, and the technical teams of the bilateral organisations in particular have produced educational problem diagnosis and raised the profile of certain interventions over others through the capacity to structure consensus-generating roundtable conferencing. The ability to produce (or finance) education policy proposals, and the acuity to know how data and research feed into and the process of policymaking and planning, is governed by EDPs. Another statement issued by World Bank illuminates the intentionality of these actions:

Our support seeks greater access to and achievements in language, science and mathematics. This corresponds with the World Bank's global advocacy for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) as indispensable academic disciplines. (Hadad-Zevros, as cited in World Bank, 2018)

This extract clearly elucidates the politics of the EDPs in Nepali education and planning. Regrettably, despite much talk about the restructuring of educational policy, nothing creditable that represents the ethos of the people has yet transpired. Nepal unquestionably needs a national policy particularly for improving the quality of public school education. Nepal needs a new national educational policy particularly for improving quality of school education. Our policymaking bodies such as the Education Ministry should conduct national seminars on education policy from time to time to ensure policies are evidence based and representative. Every year, tens of thousands of students are going abroad with the permission of the Education Ministry. The context of Nepal's public schooling is miserable; it is a wake-up call for reformation within the public education system. If the Government of Nepal does not respond appropriately in time, it will be too late for any corrective action in

policy level to attain any of abovementioned policy objectives. Alternatively, to understand, as asserted by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016), that “policies produce ‘objects’” (p. 83).

Recommendations

In the Name of Education Policies

The process of educational policymaking in Nepal has lacked broader participation of people from different echelons since the 1950s when Nepal commenced its planned approach to education. Nepal’s National Education Planning Commission as stated earlier initiated with the technical and financial assistance of international organisations discourses in educational policymaking under the rubric of western ideologies of development and modernity (Shrestha, 2009). The procedure of educational policymaking in Nepal conventionally pursues the same practice at present. The School Sector Developmental Plan (SSDP), Nepal’s latest school policies, follows the same tradition—the principles of dependency on donors’ financial and technical support. Leading academicians and Nepali media consider schooling and education in Nepal as completely catastrophic. However, to my knowledge, research that articulates the nature of educational policy development, the discourse represented, and the significance of education policies were not investigated prior to this study. Therefore, this study makes several recommendations for policymakers, academicians, and the Government of Nepal.

The study suggests that Nepal’s educational policymaking procedure requires broader representation of local discourse to enable a critical understanding of local problems and issues and of the organisational structures that perpetuate inequalities and injustice. This requires integrating a deep understanding of Nepal’s cultural, political, religious, social, geographical, linguistic, and economic diversity and representativeness, as well as relevant educational policy discourse. Education policymaking and its application processes must

include concerns of the diverse Nepali communities, and the planning of education must be socially responsive. The educational discourse of authorities in power and their practices so far have been exclusionary, as seen, for example, in public schools. To understand what authorities propose to do to compound disadvantage and maintain exclusion requires a holistic systemic understanding of the policymaking process. It is anticipated that the findings of this study will be used to support the development of educational policy curriculum in Nepal.

While the study findings have drawn on theoretical worldviews about the emergence, representation, and relevance of education policy, there is also a need to re-discourse the process of education policymaking. There is also a need to scrutinise NEDPs' educational discourse from a historical perspective of governance. This study has suggested the need for culturally responsive discursive practices as its key method. Policymakers need to develop educational concepts and establish categories built on partnerships with multiple stakeholders engaged in the development of education policy to plan Nepal's educational strategies.

Educational proposals representing the contextual discourse proposed in this study reflect interpretations grounded in a poststructuralist perspective based on self-reflection, local discourse, and lived experiences. It gives policymakers a critical outlook and directions, and equips them with culturally sensitive practice knowledge and methods. Such a perspective orients educational policymakers to problematise educational concepts and categories by appraising what, how, and whose issues are represented within policies and what, how, and whose issues are excluded by power or representation of power, given that policy can be understood as discourse and discourse as policy (Ball, 1993) which network and represent the concerns of the privileged. It provides an understanding of the multilayered and diverse nature of Nepali society and the social and ethnic division that silences the educational concerns of marginalised and minority groups. It encourages politicians and

policymakers to integrate the educational matters of minorities and those politically excluded from education policies and to establish a reflexive and responsive understanding of existing knowledge as nothing but merely the historical construction of representations of powers that requires critical analysis. It suggests a focus on knowledge production and the understanding of power under specific educational plans formulated and implemented, and the politics within it.

A historical perspective is necessary considering the exclusion, inequality, discrepancy, and the impact of education policies in the lives of the Nepali people and to analyse the relevance of previous policies. Likewise, strong connection to the global educational campaigns and programs delineates how the Nepali government has developed its donor-dependent educational system, which is reliant upon the technical and financial assistance of Nepal external developmental partners. This interdependency, the aspirations of the Nepali people and educational policymaking procedure, the contradictions and governance define the complexity of development in the Nepali education system. Education policymaking processes that mediates the needs of Nepal and the interests of the donor community, in either the past or the present, are not in favour of Nepal. Nepal has to develop its sustainable education system and must consider developing a discourse that is sensitive its own concerns based on its own means, capacities, norms, values, and practices. The discourse of development (as informant Bikash described it) and modernity—which are, in fact, discourses of the western powers—have no prospect of developing Nepali education. Despite the western politicisation of educational discourse under the concept of development and modernity, Nepal's political, social, cultural, and ecological inabilities need to be re-appraised before policy modifications.

The study found that terminologies used in education and education policy forums are borrowed and alien to Nepal. Thus, it is also imperative to develop knowledge that is representative of Nepali societies and embedded within their everyday lived experiences.

From this study a new worldview in Nepali education policy is proposed that had not been presumed earlier. The results of this study will challenge as well as create opportunities for many—both insiders and outsiders. Through misrepresentation of the actualities of Nepal, those authorities currently benefiting from power, position, and financial gain will challenge these results. Therefore, to certify the dissemination of the study’s findings, I will draft a summary report for the key stakeholders in education and the Nepali government.

Reducing Donors’ Influence in Nepal’s Educational Policymaking Process:

Reconsidering the Methodology

The Nepali educational system is confounded with both challenges and opportunities. There are several concerns for additional improvements to the system. Although previous researchers have focused on the development of the system by using the word “reform” (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2013; Khaniya & Williams, 2004; Regmi, 2017), there are still concerns. The findings of this study as outlined in Chapter 4, suggests that authorities in power have problematised the need for solutions to issues as failed but then have repeated the same process themselves. Their focus is not on solving identified problems but rather on ascertaining and improving their own vested political and financial situations. Subsequent government authorities with a policymaking mandate in Kathmandu, the capital, have habitually repeated problems and problematised those represented concerns resulting in no new proposals to emerge for solving old and existing policy problems. In addition, they have failed to provide any opportunities for new policies to emerge. Despite several political changes, few strategies have emerged; old problems continue to exist and become the new mantra for new political parties, only to have those very same flaws repeated yet again. This

has no relevance; politics change but policy does not. As an old Nepali adage goes, “Jon jogi aaya panni kani chireyeko,” meaning whoever comes makes no difference. Regardless of the political parties in power, little or nothing has been done to implement change in Nepal’s educational policies.

This policymaking process therefore suppresses the voices of the minority groups and reduces any chance for progressive educational development to materialise. Solutions proposed within these elite groups in power always fall short of targets and continuously fail to bear fruit. However, educational changes that arose because of political upheavals, in different historical junctures—including the 1950s, 1960s, and 1990s, 2006 and most recently in 2015—have all resulted in some sorts of reform. Due to the governance of bilateral and multilateral agencies and their interest in Nepali education development and policies, changes happen in black and white and on paper only. This static condition on the ground is pathetic, especially in areas of public schooling. As illustrated by another Nepali adage, “Ghumdi Pherdi Rumga tar,” no evident gains made corresponds to this status quo.

Unfortunately, many non-government international agencies have offered “so-called technical advice” but the focus of this advice has often been on achieving political advantage rather than educational improvement. It is recommended that the policymakers in Kathmandu visit the regional and remote communities in order to identify the educational priorities and needs of the diverse peoples living in non-urban areas of Nepal. The issues identified by the linguistic, ethnic, religious geographical, gender, caste, and socioeconomic minorities should be prioritised to ensure that they are incorporated into subsequent changes to the educational policies, thereby making policies more representative and egalitarian. The current trend where policy is significantly influenced by Nepal external developmental partners and international non-governmental organisations needs to be discontinued and greater emphasis

placed on the needs of the Nepali people while still taking into consideration international advice.

Demand for Depoliticising the Appointment of Educational Leaders: Delineating the Process

The current process of appointing educational leaders and line managers must be modified to ensure that those appointed to these positions have relevant academic and practical educational experience. The current process often allows for the appointment of people with little or no educational merits. Political alliance should have no bearing on the appointment of people in positions of educational leadership. Therefore, it is recommended that a series of minimal criteria be created or developed for each position of education leadership and only those people who meet these criteria should be considered for such positions. Political allegiances should play no role in the selection of educational leaders. Mathema (2007) has hinted about exactly this national disgrace and overtly politicised context in Nepali educational policymaking.

Recent literature on education has also revealed the trend of appointing educational leaders based on the preferences of political parties; usually cadres who align with their ideology have negative implications for substantive development of education and its policy in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2017). Mathema (2007) has hinted towards this overtly politicised context in Nepali educational policymaking as a national disgrace by concluding that it has resulted in teachers' truancy, lack of ownership, and accountability.

Informants for this study have noted extreme politicisation within the policymaking and educational leaders' recruitment processes as a dark side of Nepali education system. This has been an intensifying factor in the collapse of the public education system. The shortage of capable/accountable teachers in government schools has caused loss of faith and respect for public education, with these institutions being attended by only the most

vulnerable in society—such is the current social psychology in Nepal. This has forced people to send their children to private educational providers, which has given rise to all kinds of private schools—from low-fee private schools to schools like Rato Bangla, a luxurious private school in Kathmandu. Such practices of power have produced a discourse of market-oriented educational practices, choice, and competition that generates discrepancy, segregation, and exclusion of minorities and Indigenous groups. Therefore, a critical scrutiny of issues represented by power is imperative if inclusive educational practices and policies are to be advocated and implemented.

Proposal for Refining Policies Outcomes: Reconsidering the Objectives

The ideals of quality, equality, equity, relevance, and accessibility has been suggested in every educational reform and policy legislation - public education, with these institutions being attended by only the most vulnerable in society—such is the current thinking in social psychology in Nepal (Bhattarai, 2016; Khanal, 2017). The constitution of Nepal in Article 31 declared that education is a fundamental right of every citizen and includes the right to have access to education and the right to compulsory and free basic education, including free education up to secondary level. Under the provision of the constitution of Nepal and federal structure of governance, the obligation to run and manage basic and secondary education is now under the assignment of local governments (Constitution of Nepal, 2015, section 31). In order to implement equality, equity, relevance, access, and quality of school education, policies must completely define how a class, an educational institution, a district, a federal government, or the whole country achieves this and what it means to do so. Regrettably, to date, no framework has been developed to enable educational leaders to implement Nepal's education policies methodically. This question of the relevance of educators' and educational institutions' participation in implementing these prescribed policy goals. Therefore, how well institutions and stakeholders define and practise these goals in comparison to other

institutions or stakeholders corresponds to the level of achievement of policy goals. This creates contradictions in failing to resolve policy dilemmas. Regardless of educational policy intentions to safeguard these policy goals, discrepancies in translating policies challenges the relevance of policies. Therefore, a clear outline detailing each policy's objectives is necessary for Nepal's' educational policymaking process and to redefine its policies.

Data for Policies: Rethinking the Procedure

Educational decision-makers in Nepal must turn towards educational research as a potential solution to long-standing challenges while restructuring Nepal's education policies. Of most concern, very few rigorous research studies have investigated policy reforms in Nepal. One of the participants, a member of the Ministry of Education, stated: "I have no faith in the ability of the Nepali academia to develop policies and implement them well." Similarly, another informant, an academician at a university, proclaimed, "Government do not deliver enough funds for universities to reinforce educational research." Authorities in Nepal must turn towards representing trustworthy research data as a measure for educational policy reforms.

To address the aforementioned issues, this study recommends that the Government of Nepal prioritises scientific investigation in education to back policy modifications. For this, the government must provide academia and research establishments in Nepal with sufficient resources. These research departments thus can report directly to the education minister, the government, and the educational board for policy change implementation. These departments' data can then assist the Government of Nepal to make informed decisions on education and educational policies including related changes as per the local need.

Head-Teachers as Key to Improving Quality: Scheming Schools' Autonomy

This study identifies head-teachers as being the key to improving the quality of education in Nepali schools. Policymakers should problematise the issue of enhancing the quality of head-teachers, as suggested by the participants of this study. As very little teaching and learning goes on in Nepali schools, there is a learning crisis in public schools in Nepal. Therefore, policymakers must focus on the enhancement of head-teachers' proficiency. By providing head-teachers of all categories and organisations with special training, incentives, decision-making power, and satisfactory salaries, the quality of teaching and teacher morale will be heightened. Furthermore, this will prevent teachers' truancy, elevate their sense of accountability and ownership and, importantly, facilitate in running classes regularly. The most important component of a school leader is to improve teacher quality. An effective school leader, as the participants noted, has the capacity to assist other teachers to take it to the next level and manage the overall running of the school environment. By providing head-teachers with the power and capacity to make school decisions, teacher accountability and the effective operation of schools will follow.

Revisiting Privatisation

Privatisation of education has had a demoralising impact in Nepali education; it has intensified disparity (Joshi, 2019; Koirala, 2015). Anyone who can afford to pay the fees of private schools in Nepal send their children to private schools as per their income level because parents are not happy with the standard of education at public schools (Mathema, 2007). Moreover, due to competition between these two sectors, several discourses regarding equity, access, and inclusivity along with life prospects and opportunities for school attendees have emerged in Nepal (Bhatta, 2011; Caddell, 2007b; Joshi, 2019; Mathema, 2007). As Koirala (2015) explains, the “issues of disparities between public and private schools are access and equity” (p. 4). Furthermore, the medium of instruction in private and public

schools are different—English in private schools, Nepali in public schools—which has also contributed to this disparity. As one of the participants in the study elaborated, there is an existing discrepancy in some school systems where certain students attend classes in English while others attend in Nepali. Policymakers must problematise the idea that education is not the privilege of the affluent but an undeniable right of every child. Under the privatisation policies of schooling, the destitute suffer the most. Researchers in Nepal have heavily condemned the marketisation of education and have urged for Nepal to improve her schooling by revisiting such policies (Khanal, 2010; Regmi, 2017). Joshi's recent research reveals that private schools in Nepal are fixed on monetary gains than on imparting quality education (Joshi, 2019). Therefore, reconsideration of the liberal education policies is critical for Nepal's educational development.

Open to the Universal but Harsh to National Educational Agendas, Nepal's Necessity to Review Pedagogy and Curriculum

Policymakers in Nepal must focus on restructuring the school curricula to make it stimulating and creative for learners. Deeper thinking, for instance, can be stimulated by integrating technology into pedagogy. Authorities in Nepal responsible for educational policymaking should focus their research more on Nepal's domestic concerns and less on the international domain to gain currency and favour; this tendency has severely influenced the concerns raised in education policies, as they are customarily the issues of outsiders. In other words, Nepal's international partners and authorities must problematise Nepal's contextual issues by discoursing local problems and by representing them within educational policies.

Conclusion

The problem examined in this qualitative inquiry using Carol Bacchi's "Analysing Policy: What is the problem Represented to be" was to understand the politics within

educational policymaking in Nepal and to explicate the nature of its development along with a sound focus on such policies' relevance and the role played by power in representing educational concerns. Ten high-level policymakers comprising bureaucrats, academicians, and politicians in the education sector examined emergence, representation, and relevance of education policies in Nepal. They provided their critical insight into issues regarding Nepal's education policymaking processes, the role played by powerful players in representing educational concerns, and the aptitude of such policies towards representing the concerns of the people and for constructing applicable educational policies for all-encompassing improvement to the system. The in-depth face-to-face interviews with ten educational leaders, all of whom have extensive experience in Nepali education and its educational policymaking process, enabled this researcher to conceptualise key problems as the data were rigorously analysed within, and organised using NVivo.

The findings in Chapter 4 identified many of the problems in the policymaking processes in Nepal. It provides direction for broad policy improvement through problematisation of issues and concerns of the diverse nature of the Nepali population and concluded that Nepal should not look towards the west for policy revisions but rather distill domestic issues and concerns representing ethnic, linguistic, cultural, geographical, and socioeconomic diversities inherent within Nepal for solutions. This would support and expand policymaking processes to construct appropriate and inclusive educational policies, in contrast to previous policies which have ignored the diversity of the Nepali people, their interests and preferences, resulting in vague and conflicting objectives among those in power and outside it.

This study, which began by looking for explanations for the nature of emergence of educational policies in Nepal, inferred that compliance and procedural confusion about policies have resulted in the uneven application of educational policies in Nepal. Political and

bureaucratic dishonesties have resulted in delays in procedural updates and regulatory changes as envisioned by new policies. Strategically and procedurally, the authorities responsible for policy implementation and for compliance regulations are abortive, and have contributed to institutional and bureaucratic failure and dishonesty. Institutional dysfunctionality is a major policy challenge in Nepal. This issue is critical for relevant and representative policies to follow.

The perspectives of participants in Nepal regarding the emergence, representation, and relevance of education policy in Nepal as elaborated above have several implications. Educational leaders in Nepal echoed with the critical literature on education development and educational policies of Nepal. Literature support the conventional procedure of educational policymaking, as entrenched within the discourse of Nepal external developmental partners rhetoric and or what Bachhi (2009) says assumptions or presuppositions. For the organic and sustainable development of education system in Nepal, for the inclusion of local knowledge in curricula and learning materials, for policies to be more strategically and procedurally more applicable, and to reduce the global knowledge hegemony, critical scrutiny of previous policymaking processes is imperative.

Participants also placed significance on Nepal need to conceptualise and reflect on how proposed educational concepts and discursive practices of donors have produced realities about Nepali culture, society, and people through unrelated and misleading discourses. Further, Nepal needs to problematise local discourse in ways that shift who and what counts as knowledge production and dissemination and to continue this scepticism continually. Therefore, without strategic intervention in education, Nepal will lose another generation to the politics of NEDPs, Nepali leaders, and funding agencies. Primarily, education policies are formulated by outsiders whereby there is no mechanism to ensure that those policies are put into practice. Secondly, those policies problematise Nepali

educational concerns by representing irrelevant discourse by politicising educational needs under the canopy of global campaigns in education has a deleterious effect. Therefore, the need and urgency to improve these gaps in Nepal's policymaking arena is an imperative. However, Kathmandu has been reluctant to call upon external powers to seek from exogenous authorities to administer her education which is currently clogged in aid conditionality and governance.

Informants' perspectives on the emergence, representation, and relevance of Nepal's education policy are key to producing recommendations that convey reformist discourse and are both challenging and encouraging. Education policies in Nepal have continued to circulate within social and political rhetoric without resolution. However, structural changes are difficult to implement as neither the government nor the donors' agencies financing Nepali education are purposefully concerned about educational problems. Rather, they are politically driven by individual philosophies and ideologies. This has direct bearing in the life and prospects of low-ranking communities, minorities, neglected people, and people from lower socioeconomic conditions. Governing authorities with the mandate of policymaking have expanded silences within educational policies. Further, in the implementation process these educational issues are problematised by power, resulting in the governance of educational provisions that implicitly infers limits and rejection for some but opportunities for others. Therefore, continuing critical reflection enables policymakers and authorities in power to construct and deconstruct silences within educational policies. Policymakers thus can endeavour to make education policies more inclusive for all participants. As issues are discoursed by authorities in power, only those proposals represented by power become policies. These selective proposals are the discourse of power and are governmentally prejudiced. Thus, those politically excluded, oppressed, discriminated, and silenced are left

seeking a voice for inclusion. A critical approach with reflexivity is therefore necessary for policy analysis.

Nepal's piecemeal and uncoordinated educational reforms without review of educational system as a whole has little impact for delivering improvements. Nepal must invest heavily in educational research. Nepal's educational restructuring must be confirmed diligently by extensive assessment of national contexts, needs, and resources. Policymakers and politicians must pay close attention to how innovative ideas and findings may be applied in schools. Furthermore, Nepal must invest deeply in developing brilliant teachers. The nation currently has a lack of competent and knowledgeable teachers, largely because of issues with training, deployment, and prestige. This study suggests that educational policymakers in Nepal should modernise pre-service teacher training programs, both in terms of subject and pedagogical knowledge. It is also essential to conduct systematic teacher recruitment based on merit rather than on political preference, and the allocation of teachers must be reconstructed so that disadvantaged parts of the country can benefit from having good teachers. To sum up, Nepal must revisit its educational discourse from a more egalitarian and dependent perspective such that the future of the Nepali people be drawn by Nepali—not through political interferences and the power hegemony of outsiders but through the local assessment of Nepal's own needs and priorities.

This study, conducted in a specific time, context and space for developing knowledge in this discipline, has several limitations politicised by the researcher's selection of methodology, selection of participants, time, and undoubtedly by many other invisible and unknown variables. As openly acknowledged, this study is definitely open for further improvements or problematisation, given that Bacchi (2009) stipulates unconventional ways for scrutinising problems that have been represented by governing authorities through discursive practices. Discursive practices as continuous practice for exploring silences

intends to redefine and redraw the boundaries of discourse or, in other words, what has been written or assumed. To this end, Bacchi and Goodwin (2016) ratifies: “It shows how specific problem representations produce targeted groups as responsible for an assumed ‘problem’ creating stigma and silencing the operations of other factors” (p. 69).

To sum up, the overall context of the development of Nepali education is emerging within an escapist paradigm in which the responsible stakeholders continue displacing their accountability to others instead of fulfilling their own roles. As discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter 4), the Nepali stakeholders in education policy blame the outsiders and their influence while the outsiders place the blame on Nepali policymakers. The folk poem below from an anonymous Nepali author accurately captures the escapist nature of the education policy process in Nepal:

Clucks the chicken (Khukhuri Kha)

*Chicken clucks
Feed on impure rice
Where is the cat?
Chasing the mouse
Where is the mouse?
Slipped into a hole
Where is the hole?
Cow stepped in it
Where is the cow?
Is swept by the river
Where is the river?
It dried!
(Unknown poet)*

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Information Statement

Researchers:

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Participant Information Statement, Version 2 (14/03/2018)

Emergence, Representation, and Reception of Education Policies in Nepal

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project, which seeks to examine education policies in Nepal. This study seeks to recruit participants through a snowball sampling technique, which means a colleague who believes that you may be interested in participating in this research has nominated you to receive this participation information sheet.

This research is being conducted to fulfil the requirement of an academic degree for the PhD of Basanta Poudyal under the supervision of Dr Robert Parkes and Dr Heather Sharp at The University of Newcastle, Australia.

Why is the research being done?

How education policies determine education system in Nepal is the focus of this research. Despite continuous efforts made by authorities to improve the school education system in Nepal, there has been little evidence to support current practice. In this context, this research explores the ways education policies are initiated and implemented in the country including: (a) how education policies are evolving in Nepal (b) how inclusive education policies are in the context of Nepal, (c) and how national and international mechanisms influence education policies of the country.

Who can participate in the research?

Participants who are employed in government agencies and are involved in policy related planning and implementations.

What choice do participants have?

Participation is fully voluntary. Whether you participate in this research or not, the decision will be respected and will not cause any disadvantage to you personally or professionally. You have right to withdraw your participation from this study at any time, up to the submission of the research for publication.

What will you be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in an approximately 60 minute long semi-structured, in-depth interview at a venue to be negotiated—such as an office—on the topic of education policy in Nepal. The interview will be audio taped. Your interview will be transcribed and you will be invited to review a transcription of the interview to check for accuracy.

You are also requested to provide a copy of this invitation letter to any other government employees with similar background who work in the field of education policies in Nepal who may be interested in participating in this research

How will your privacy be protected?

All the information collected from the participants will be used for the purpose of this study only. Your information will be securely stored in both electronic and hard copy. You will only be identified within the research outcomes if you provide your consent, and you will not be associated with your interview responses, nor will your employer be named or identified within the research outcomes. Electronic data will be password protected and hard copies will be stored in locked filing cabinet accessible only available to the student researcher and his supervisors. Information will be retained in an unidentified manner for a period of five (5) years and will be completely destroyed after that time, in accordance with University of Newcastle policies.

How will the information collected be used?

The information provided will be used primarily for academic purposes including a PhD thesis, journal articles, seminars, and conference presentations. The researcher will himself transcribe the interview. Upon completion of writing the thesis, a summary outcome will be sent to participants via email so that they can access the summary of the study results. Non-identifiable data may also be shared with other parties to encourage scientific scrutiny, and to contribute to further research and public knowledge, or as required by law.

Risks and benefit of participating

There are no identifiable risks of participating in the study.

What do you need to do to participate?

If you would like to participate, please complete the attached consent form and return it to the researcher.

Thank you for considering this invitation

Basanta Poudyal
Researcher

Dr Heather Sharp
Research Supervisor

Dr Robert Parkes
Research Supervisor

Should you have concerns about your rights as a participant in this research, or you have a complaint about the manner in which the research is conducted, it may be given to the researcher, or, if an independent person is preferred, to the Human Research Ethics Officer, Research services, Nier Precinct, The University of Newcastle, University Drive, Callaghan NSW 2308, Australia, telephone (02) 4921 6333, email Human-Ethics@newcastle.edu.au

Appendix B: Interview schedule

Opening Script

- WELCOME: Welcome interviewee.
- INTRODUCTION: Introduce self as a doctoral researcher from the School of Education, at the University of Newcastle.
- PURPOSE: Articulate purpose of the project.
- APPRECIATION: Thank participants for volunteering to be involved in the project.
- SELECTION: remind them that they have been selected because they have a role in the administration of education in Nepal.
- MOTIVATION: Indicate that I hope this research will inform future education policy development in Nepal.
- STRUCTURE: Explain that the interviewee will be shown some stimulus material (quotation or newspaper stimulus material) and asked to give their opinion on the ideas in the article/quote, based on their experience as an education administrator.
- AUDIO-TAPING: Make clear that the session is being recorded and will be transcribed by the researcher or a professional transcription service. Encourage participants to only share ideas that they don't mind being reported as part of the research.
- PRIVACY: Inform interviewee that they will only be referred to by a pseudonym in the research, and their privacy will be protected.

Interview Question Script

Q1. Please tell me about your role in, or relationship to, education policy in Nepal?

Sub-Questions that may be asked:

- *Have you had a role in forming education policy?*
- *Have you had a role in implementing education policy?*

Q2. Please read the quote/article I have placed in front of you. What is your opinion of the argument that is being made? [Stimulus article or quote will be on the poor performance of education in Nepal]

Sub-Questions that may be asked:

- *Do you agree/disagree with the claims in the quote/article?*
- *What do you see as the advantages/disadvantages of the ideas suggested in the article?*
- *Is there anything the article misses about the issues that you think is important?*
- *Do you think there is a difference in the performance of public and private education in Nepal?*

Q3. Please read the quote/article I have placed in front of you. What is your opinion of the argument that is being made? [Stimulus article or quote will be on the involvement of foreign aid]

Sub-Questions that may be asked:

- *How much should Nepal look to other countries for ideas?*
- *Do you think Nepal has benefited from the involvement of other countries?*
- *Do you support the idea of foreign aid? Why? Or Why not?*

Q4. If you had the power, what changes do you think should be implemented to improve Nepal's education system?

Sub-Questions that may be asked:

- *What would you change? Or keep the same?*

Closing Script

- Thank interviewee for their involvement in the project.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Researchers:

Robert J. Parkes, PhD

Senior Lecturer in Education

School of Education

The University of Newcastle

Callaghan NSW 2308

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Webpage: http://www.newcastle.edu.au/staff/research-profile/Robert_Parkes/



Consent Form, Version 1 (24/10/17)

Emergence, Representation, and Reception of Education Policies in Nepal

☐ I consent to participate in the above research project and give my consent freely.

I understand that this will involve the researchers observing the emergence, representation, and reception of education policies in Nepal and a recorded about one hour long in depth semi-structured interview. I understand that the observation and interview will be conducted as described in the Participant Information Statement, a copy of which I have retained.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing.

I understand that my personal information will remain confidential to the researcher, and my anonymity will be protected in any use of transcribed data collected during the workshop.

I have had the opportunity to have questions answered to my satisfaction.

Name:	
Signature:	
Date:	

For all matters relating to the project, I prefer to be contacted by (please tick whichever applies, and provide corresponding details):

<input type="checkbox"/> Phone:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Email:	

Please note: A hard copy of the signed consent form will be collected prior to interview. To express interest in participating, please return this consent form (signed or unsigned) via email or in person, with your name and contact details to: Basanta.Poudyal@uon.edu.au, or Robert.Parkes@newcastle.edu.au, or

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Appendix D: Email Recruitment Script

Researchers:

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u



Dear Participant

Emergence, Representation and Reception of Education Policies in Nepal

Hello,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research project, which seeks to draw upon the nature of evolution and acceptance of education policies in Nepal. This study seeks to recruit participants through a snowball sampling technique, which means a colleague who believes that you may be interested in participating in this research has nominated you to receive this email.

This research is being conducted to fulfil the requirement of an academic degree for the PhD of Basanta Poudyal under supervision of Dr Robert Parkes and Dr Heather Sharp at The University of Newcastle, Australia

If you would like to participate, please complete the attached consent form and return it to the researcher.

Thank you for considering this invitation

Basanta Poudyal
Researcher

Dr Heather Sharp
Research Supervisor

Dr Robert Parkes
Research Supervisor