The lifeworld of Nepalese teachers

Ideals, beliefs and agency

Helen Eikeland

Helen Eikeland

The lifeworld of Nepalese teachers
Ideals, beliefs and agency

Doctoral Dissertation

University of Agder
Faculty of Humanities and Education
2018

Summary:

This study investigates aspects of Nepalese teachers' lives and work through the portrayals of 12 teachers that are situated within their historical context by enquiring into why stories were told in particular ways at particular historical moments. The contextual considerations and the conceptual framework of the study emerged from the empirical data to present a perspective to further examine the teachers' life histories. One of the purposes of the discussion of the Nepalese context is to try to frame the study within the teachers' socio-historical context, while also recognizing that ideologies and policies are refracted in personal ways, focusing on both structure and individual agency.

Over the course of the study major revisions of the text and the theoretical approach of the enquiry had to be taken in response to the inadequacy of western theoretical concepts when considering the cultural foundations of the study. The open/ closed perspectives from Popper's criticism of ideologies presents a way to view the Marxist movement in Nepal and also the EFA models based on the western origins of these influences. The local cultural foundations had to be viewed by a set of other perspectives based on a Hindu cultural heritage.

In this study the concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency emerged gradually during the progress of analysing the empirical data. On an individual level, the empirical data required a nuancing of the concept of teacher belief as a framework for analysing the life stories of teachers. The concept of teacher belief applied in a broad sense made it difficult to use as an analytical tool to view the data. The phenomena of ideals emerged from the data as somewhat different from the phenomena of teacher beliefs. In situations where deeply held values were challenged, then it seems that agency appeared to be closely connected to ideals rather than beliefs. The differentiation of these concepts and phenomena have emerged from the examination of life stories of the teachers in this study.

Subsequently, the historical and cultural context sheds light on the individual strategies that teachers use to respond to educational reforms. From the cultural foundation of the study, narrative styles must be viewed as grounded in a Hindu worldview, thus making use of available courses of action in the cultural setting. It appears that the life stories that reflect analytical reflection and personal agency seem not to break away from established patterns of socialization, however employ the established Hindu social structures to develop their individual course of action. If we try to understand the significance of Hindu social structures and culture, teachers use the opportunities that the teacher role signifies in various ways to

negotiate personal agency. These cultural foundations set the stage for how individuals differ in their narrative styles and also in the way they negotiate courses of action.

The close relationship between historical, social, cultural and political circumstances and the teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency might enable an understanding of stories of action within theoretical considerations of context. The ideals, beliefs and agencies of Nepalese teachers are founded in a Nepalese cultural heritage, thus requiring attention to cultural understanding when creating a framework for educational discussions and debate. This study is an attempt to present ways to create a platform for pedagogical work and school development by means of local and cultural understanding. The cultural foundations represent different values and a world view worth considering.

Cross cultural studies interfere with complex issues regarding approaches to understanding the foundations of pedagogical possibilities in a given society. Education reform is a multifaceted matter in any society; thus, when aiming to develop education and implement reform on an international level, cultural insight and cultural understanding is required. The considerations of teachers experience of life and work has shown that the conceptual framework adopted from a western tradition is insufficient to reveal the foundational worldview and strategic positioning of teachers in Nepal. As an alternative, the study claims to present a contextual, cultural approach towards understanding teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency. Consequently, the enquiry presents an approach to understanding a pedagogical phenomenon and how external western approaches and concepts to understanding a Hindu cultural setting can be misleading.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction

1.1. Background

This study investigates Nepalese teachers' lives and work through the portrayal of 12 teachers. The portrayals of the teachers are situated within their historical context by inquiring into why stories were told in particular ways at particular historical moments. The close relationship between historical, social, cultural and political circumstances and the teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency enable an understanding of stories of action within theoretical considerations of context. The personal sense of purpose around which teachers organize their lives and work reflects a perspective through which to conceptualize teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency within a broader context. Teachers' agency is scrutinized in relation to how teachers articulate and experience the possibility to think and act according to their ideals and beliefs within the context of educational reform.

1.1.1 My background for investigating teachers' lives and work in Nepal

My growing interest in teachers in Nepal traces its roots to my childhood. I was born in the late sixties in a village in the mid-hills of Gorkha district and raised in a community in Nepal. Since then, I have had a knowledge of a way of life that is very different to that of what my parents referred to as 'home', Norway. My parents represented a foreign culture and way of life in the Nepalese context. Our home was totally different from the other homes in the neighbourhood. As a child, these different ways of life were not foreign to me—they were just spaces and places you moved in and out of depending on who you were with. Yet, from the beginning, I had a sense of being an insider as well as an outsider. From a distance, I observed (with a certain amount of envy) the Hindu rituals and festivals in which my friends took part, while maintaining the Christian traditions of my family within an international community and to going to the local church. However, when visiting my neighbourhood friends, I knew, for example, that I could not step over certain boundaries in the kitchen or pollute the family alter with my foreignness. Despite this, and perhaps because of my social nature and my parents' busy lives, I felt a strong sense of community and was comforted by the assurance that everyone in the surrounding neighbourhood knew me and mostly everyone else. It was a relational and a deeply oral culture in which I was raised at that time. I recall spending hours sitting on the laps of neighbourhood mothers wearing cotton saris, listening to them lamenting their drunkard husbands or the girl next door who had run off with some unsuitable boy. I recall how I would scold my dolls, shouting that I would kill them, and threw pebbles at them, like the mothers in the neighbourhood would do when we children had been mischievous. This became an

embodied knowledge of a life where the community took care of you—like their own. You were slapped, held, fed and loved.

Early on, my parents were given the task of supporting Nepalese teachers that were employed in the 10 local village schools that the government had allowed the United Mission to Nepal (UMN) to establish in the mid-hills of Nepal in the sixties. Teachers, mostly Brahmins, who were often articulate and confident, used to come around to our house to meet with my parents. Because of the long distances they had travelled, they often stayed the night in our home. I grew up listening to teachers talk of school and the community. Over the years, I developed a keen interest in teachers in Nepal—and even more so after working for several years in different educational institutions after completing my teacher education in Norway. In retrospect, discussions of foreign involvement in education arose gradually in Nepal, with respect to the position of western education advisors and western educational influence in Nepal. From the beginning of my work in education, I have had a sense of dichotomy. What increasingly began to trouble me when working in education in Nepal was the perception of the alleged superiority of western education advisors and western education. This position was seldom challenged or questioned as to its relevance to the local context (Carney & Rappleye, 2011).

The historical and theoretical considerations of the context, that follow, are accompanied by notions of what is taken for granted from a local perspective. My work as a teacher and advisor in different educational settings has provided me with many opportunities to meet with teachers in urban and remote rural areas. These experiences have given me a deeper understanding of the challenges teachers face in relation to making use of teacher training packages based on western methods of teaching, in light of their lived experiences and culture. The perspective taken in this study derives from the experience and conviction that teachers are capable of looking critically at their world and perceiving their personal and social reality within it. However, it is in the encounters with the hierarchical social structures that the personal is often lost or left unspoken. Teachers' stories convey the tone, the language, the feelings and the perceptions of how teachers see their lives and work. Nevertheless, the experiences that have influenced their thinking about school and teaching are part of a broader context—cultural, social, economic and political—that influences and shapes teachers' work in Nepal.

The analysis and interpretations presented in this study are reflective of the underlying principles of life in the Nepalese context and the complex social relationships affecting teachers. The theoretical premise of the study is supported by local cosmologies that impact teachers'

lives and work. These realities speak of social relations and human capabilities that can seem somewhat alien to outsiders. The historical outline presented in the following sections reflects that of my own life, particularly the Panchayat system. The Panchayat System refers to a political system that was a party-less 'guided' democracy, which implied that people could elect their representatives, while the real power remained in the hands of the monarch. Additionally, the early stages of the involvement of aid agencies in Nepal, also set the historical backdrop to my childhood. The many visits to schools and health posts in various districts that I made with my father gave me a sense of the social relations present in the villages. The more recent influences of global educational policies and the plethora of organizations involved in aid have formed the context for my later working environment as an adult. While the Maoist People's War raged between 1996–2003, I was working in various educational institutions in Kavre district, a Maoist stronghold. At the time, I visited schools for Save the Children Norway, to investigate the reasons for students dropping out of government schools. The experience of talking to teachers gave me insight into how they all gave similar answers to explain the high drop-out rate. While the issues that they raised could easily have been dealt with on a local level, the strategy employed by many of the teachers with whom I spoke was to wait for foreign donor projects to implement changes.

These two separate periods of time were both marked by people's hopes for living standards to rise, and their eventual disillusionment caused by the failure of donors to realize these ambitions. Some might blame people's lack of resolve to change in terms of donor agencies' programmes, while others have held the government responsible for not being committed to these initiatives. Thus, my notion in the exploration of teachers' subjective experiences in Nepal is situated within this timeframe and examines whether many Nepalese teachers' overarching sense of mandate and vocation has been somewhat destroyed by standards-based reforms made in and imported from the west.

1.2. Education in Nepal

In the quest for modern education, Nepal has been supported by numerous aid agencies since the 1950s, and has increasingly had to prepare education plans according to global targets to be eligible for external support (Bhatta, 2011). Since the 1990s, the Education For All (EFA) targets have been the main reference point for developing educational policies in Nepal (Bhatta, 2011, p. 22). Accordingly, Nepal has gradually adopted global educational models and activities, which are perceived as important keys to progress and modernity (Bhatta, 2011).

Consequently, the substantial influence of aid agencies has undermined the country's ownership over the educational agenda at the cost of local participation and contribution (Bhatta, 2011). Teachers who had once been on the forefront of national movements for social reform processes have somewhat been relegated to a shadowy existence, where they are merely informed of new policies and made accountable to donor agencies for implementing them (Awasthi, 2004; Bhatta, 2011). However, according to Awasthi, Nepalese teachers' sense of generational mission and the sense of commitment that motivates teachers over their lifetimes are viewpoints that are rarely considered in the reform processes taking place in education in Nepal (Awasthi, 2004, p. 312).

Formal education has been seen as key to achieving social and economic development and has therefore been given priority in reform programmes by the government (Parajuli & Wagley, 2010). This perspective on education is based on the assumption that poverty and social inequality can be alleviated by increasing access to formal education. This carries with it high hopes for social mobility, which is the driving force for parents to provide their children with access to education.

1.2.1 Teacher research in Nepal

It is necessary to situate this study in the context of research on teachers in Nepal, even if only briefly, in order to determine the foundations for how the findings might contribute to teacher research in Nepal. Since the 1990s, the conventional analysis of the "modern" education project in Nepal has mostly been concerned with explaining and understanding the failures of the development "industry" (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 4).

There are numerous academic articles investigating educational development in Nepal, in particular exploring the impact of external donors and transfer processes, policy formation and civil society (Caddell, 2005; Carney, Bista, & Agergaard, 2007; Rappleye, 2011). These articles sketch how educational policy initiatives have been influenced by donors, focusing for example on the tendency to instrumentalize civil society in educational development. These analyses explore how external actors transfer policies through civil society, questioning whether civil society is able to respond to local demands (Rappleye, 2011). Bhatta (2011) argues that the Ministry of Education has been reduced to 'managing' aid and aid agencies. Following the policy to push towards decentralization in education, scholars question the development agenda, concerned with the issue of national identity and community ownership. The issues related to the lack of equity in processes for the decentralization of education seem to be driven

by the rhetoric of empowerment, while failing to tackle equity concerns (Caddell, 2006; Edwards, 2011; Shields & Rappleye, 2008).

In examining efforts to decentralize education, Edwards (2011) highlights "Nepal's democratic deficit", through a lack of reform in a culture of social inequality (Edwards, 2011,p.81). Similarly, Khanal raises issues of favouritism and corruption in teacher management (Khanal, 2011). As a result of decentralization, political parties tend to take control of school management committees and affect teacher hiring processes. Furthermore, Caddell puts forward the importance of a local, contextualized understanding of educational reform (Caddell, 2006).

Other perspectives on education emerge from the historical development of education in the Nepalese context, such as through the work of Pigg (1992), who points to how the concept of *bikas* (development) in the local culture has been seen as the urban professional transforming the ignorant villager. Historical accounts of education policies have been extensively debated (Carney & Bista, 2009; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997a). Based on ethnographic studies, Valentin (2006) reflects on educational policy planning and the outcome of schooling for the urban poor, examining the contradictions of the ideals of progress portrayed in educational planning, and social exclusion. Madsen and Carney (2011) have looked into the meaning of schooling for youth in Kathmandu, balancing visions of modern society with social realities. Caddell (2006) reports on the growth of private schools that has led to an exodus of students from government schools, thereby undermining national unity in education.

By the late 1990s, there had been a shift in educational analysis, and attention began to be directed towards education during the Nepalese 'People's War'. A wide range of papers and articles analyse the impact of the 'People's War' on education, arguing that social and cultural inequalities had been reinforced through education, thus contributing to the Maoist uprising (Pherali 2011; Shields & Rappleye, 2008; Standing & Parker, 2011). The school system has been depicted as reinforcing inequalities, while at the same time acting as a mediator between opposing sides in the conflict. The role and position of teachers in the conflict between the Maoist insurgents and the national government has been explored in these academic articles, to some extent. The status of teachers as government employees working in local communities put many of them in difficult positions during the war; nevertheless, there is little empirical data on their lives and work during that particular period. However, Baral (2011) explores the development of the "New Democratic Education" carried out by the Maoists during the

uprising, describing the radical pedagogical intervention as an attempt to oppose mainstream education.

Thus, more specifically, analyses of the failures of the development 'industry' are often explained in terms of poverty and the local stakeholders' inability to implement reform programmes. The attitudes of local stakeholders towards new policies are often interpreted as a reluctance or a lack of understanding in official reports of policy implementation (Parajuli et al., 2012, p. 18). Why teachers show reluctance has been confronted less often in reports, as the following example demonstrates:

> Local school actors have not internalized the policy in provisions, and there are misunderstandings regarding the intents and the procedures of different activities. More critically they are found not very serious and enthusiastic in understanding those provisions; and thus making their implementation problematic. (Parajuli et al., 2012, p. 18)

In general, one might say that overall, the subjective experiences of those described in these reports have been less documented. While the aims of the Education for All programme have been emphasized in educational reform programmes in Nepal, research on local stakeholders and teachers seems to be directed towards reducing and decontextualizing the complexity of teaching into an objective truth regarding 'what works'. In evidence-based policy and practice, 'knowledge' seems to be rationalized into a form of transportable commodity, thereby instrumentalizing teaching as a mere delivery service, and turning the question of school quality into a question of the effectiveness, transparency, standardization and accountability of the result and the 'delivery' of educational reform initiatives (Autio, 2014).

Researchers express reservations regarding the danger of overemphasizing the importance of impact studies on policy programmes that merely serve to provide justifications for the implementation of the government's policies, thus increasing funding from aid programmes. The institutionalized reform processes in Nepal have led to little change in classroom processes (Norad, 2009). In all, it is clear that the development of modern education in Nepal has resulted in "deeper inequality and a sense of a profound inner confusion" (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 2). These are conclusions drawn from a series of articles that have responded to education reform in Nepal in recent years (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 2). Surprisingly, there is little research exploring the cultural implications of developmental modernity within the realm of schooling (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 7). Parajuli and Wagle call for more localized

knowledge building: "Likewise, it was thought necessary to work for bringing change, through research, teaching and publications, to the whole understanding of development and education in Nepal that was largely asocial, acontextual and ahistorical" (Parajuli & Wagley, 2010, p. 838). Teachers seem to be more or less pushed into a "shadowy existence" in the educational landscape in Nepal (Bhatta, 2011, p.22). Thus, as presented above, in terms of their formal role, teachers appear as incumbents in reports related to educational policy, most often through statistics on how effectively they are able to respond to the expectations of reform programmes. Some empirical research has been done on women teachers in Nepal, pointing to their experiences of social exclusion and inclusion related to gender and teaching (Shultz, 1989).

In terms of the orientation of this study, teacher research opens up the question of how teachers perceive their work and lives, with the argument being that educational research in Nepal has not yet confronted the complexity of the role of teachers as part of the historical and cultural context. However, the traditional Hindu description of teachers is presented in Hindu texts, thereby illustrating the foundations of local cosmologies and the importance of the teacher and guru in the local context.

In more recent academic articles, the traditional roles of the gurus are described through references to the historical development of Hindu education and the *gurukul* school system (Acharya, 1996; Mlecko, 1982). Moreover, most articles on the traditional role of such teachers are written by Indian scholars in reference to the historical and cultural nature of teaching in an Indian context (Acharya, 1996; Kashalkar- Karve, 2013; Kumar, n.d.; M. Singh, 2013). There is little research exploring teachers' *Hindu gurukul* relationship in more modern educational settings in Nepal. Some scholars point to how the traditional roles of gurus are changing and eroding due to the pervasive influence of the west (Awasthi, 2004; Raina, 2002). Nevertheless, these articles and studies are mainly based on historical references.

In educational research in Nepal, there is a tendency to treat teachers as historical, interchangeable types, resulting in a need for more empirical and biographical data that can challenge this assumption. The intention of this study is to generate more critical and autonomous research and broaden the range of enquiry in order to develop insights into the social and cultural constructs of teaching, and thereby avoid presenting a specific view of teachers. The simplistic image of teachers within the educational community as 'backward' and lazy has permeated and stifled the educational endeavour. Studying the lives and work of teachers as social and cultural constructions will provide a perspective through which to

understand the educational reform programmes produced and promulgated through EFA global educational models. Studying teachers' particular commitments to education as a foundation for social change is a viewpoint that has been less investigated in terms of the reform processes taking place in education in Nepal (Awasthi, 2004, p. 312).

1.3 The intentions of the study

This study of Nepalese teachers' lives, and work is based on the portrayals of the lives of 12 teachers. The initial focus was on the way teachers narrate their life stories, aiming to portray them just as they, themselves, want to be viewed and presented. However, in seeking to understand the 'hearts and minds' of teachers, the need to investigate the social purpose and socially inclusive practices of teachers that emerged in their life stories became apparent. Understanding what teachers pursue like a commanding storyline is used to articulate the beliefs underlying their lives and work. This particular study aims to describe and understand teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency, their commitment to education and how they view their mandate as teachers in the Nepalese context.

The enquiry intends to probe teachers' responses to social constructions and educational reforms. The teachers' stories are seen in the context of a traditional Hindu education system right up to the more recent influence of multilateral organizations on the Nepalese education system. The study proposes to see the individual teacher in relation to the history and culture of society by exploring some of the choices and possibilities that open up to individuals. The stories the teachers told about their lives were therefore linked to a wider cultural and political context aiming to investigate lived experiences. Additionally, the metaphor of refraction might help to visualize how, in the processes of educational reform, the initial intentions of these programmes can divert in different directions when documenting subjective experiences of these processes.

Subsequently, this study's intention is to contribute to reflexivity in educational forums on implications of culture within the realm of education, that offers a more informed response to the institutionalized and socialized practices of schooling. The aim is to contribute to developing possible local perspectives within education in order to respond to local challenges within education in a more meaningful and relevant way. The study's intention is to develop more localized and contextualized knowledge of education, derived from culture and the perspectives and worldviews of teachers in Nepal.

1.3.1 Research questions

The research questions will inform and guide the initial stages of the enquiry; I expect them to develop in light of on-going findings in the research process. The first question is:

- *What are the experiences and self-understanding that Nepalese teachers have of their lives and work?*

This question forms the foundation for the next question, which is:

- *How do Nepalese teachers perceive, act upon and position themselves in terms of global education policies?*

1.3.2 The design of the study

Chapter 1 points to research on education and teaching in the context of Nepal, probing the various perspectives from which education has been viewed. This investigation contributes to research in Nepal by way of understanding teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency through portrayals of teachers' lived experiences and personal histories. Therefore, to examine the teachers' lives and work, the enquiry starts in Chapter 2, by looking at the traditional role of teachers in Nepal and by describing its historical teaching landscape. The intention is to place the teacher in the context of Nepalese society—historically, culturally and socially. The historical domination of certain caste groups in society, backed by the traditional social system of submissiveness to authority, has in many ways laid the foundation for a self-contained elite and an inert society.

During the development of the enquiry, the way in which the study was ordered and presented has had to be somewhat restructured because of the need to theoretically reconsider the context of the empirical data. Thus, after presenting a brief historical outline of education in Nepal, the preliminary study of the concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency is presented in Chapter 3. Furthermore, I provide an overview of concepts from the narrative research tradition in order to give meaning to the use of life history as a method in Chapter 4. Against this background, I outline the life history approach as a framework to the methodology of this study of Nepalese teachers. In Chapter 5, the life histories of the teachers will then be presented according to how teachers have articulated certain cultural, political and social influences in their stories, thus forming three categories of meta-narratives that impact the Nepalese education system: Hindu education, Maoist political ideology and global educational models.

As mentioned, the empirical data generates a need to further consider the stories of action within theories of context. In Chapter 6, the Maoist and global educational models are scrutinized using Karl Popper's (2002) open and closed categories, and the Hindu foundations of Nepalese education are examined through Hindu perspectives. Subsequently, by examining how teachers employ stories derived from the environment in which they live and work, the relationship between agency and structure emerges, thereby enabling greater understanding of stories of agency within theories of context (Goodson, 2008). The personal sense of purpose around which teachers organize their lives and work articulates a perspective by which to conceptualize teacher beliefs and ideals within broader general belief systems. In Chapter 7, the theoretical position of teachers' beliefs, ideals and agency creates a framework through which to investigate the teachers' stories located within social constructions, thus incorporating teachers' broader general belief systems. Teachers define their successes and failures in their lives and work according to their beliefs and ideals, thus implying their sense of agency. Teachers' agency is scrutinized in relation to how teachers articulate and experience the possibility to think and act according to their beliefs and ideals within the context of education reform. The analytical framework focuses on the relationship between narrative quality and action potential in their life stories.

Finally, in Chapter 8, the sense of purpose and the potential for action presented in the teacher portrayals are reconnected with global educational models and activities, which have become the reference point for developing educational policies in Nepal. This allows for an examination of how new reforms are, in the given context, integrated in the narratives, and how the reforms are accepted or contended (negotiated) by the competing forces of teacher beliefs and ideals. The metaphor of refraction is appropriated to discern and locate how the global educational models are mediated in the particular cultural context of Nepal.

In the following chapter, a brief historical outline of education in Nepal will be presented.

2.0 Historical outline of education and schooling in Nepal

2.1 Introduction

Before presenting the historical outline of education and schooling in Nepal, this chapter will take a brief look at some demographic data regarding Nepalese society. According to the World Factbook Nepal is ranked amongst the poorest and least developed in the world. It is said that one-quarter of its population lives below the poverty line, and the country is heavily dependent on remittances, which amount to 30% of its GDP. Agriculture is the backbone of the economy. The literacy rate amongst the total population is estimated to be 63.9%. The government is currently a federal parliamentary republic. The majority of the people in Nepal are Hindu (80%), with the remainder split almost equally between Buddhism and other religions ('The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency', n.d.).

2.1.1 Poverty and education

In relation to Nepal being ranked as one of the poorest countries in the world, its people hope to escape poverty through education. The urgency to gain greater access to quality education has led to the creation of a commercialized, business-like and private education system that runs parallel to the government-run schools (Caddell, 2006). These institutions offer stricter discipline and test culture and have in many ways overrun the government school system. The social imaginary that posits that discipline and the mastery of English can be acquired through private schooling is strong, thus enforcing the idea of formal schooling as a precondition to accessing resources. In an environment of fierce competition, educational institutions are, one might say, founded on differentiating between people, based on their resources, and emphasize the importance of conforming to the system, thereby creating exclusion and division amongst people.

2.1.2 The current school system and teacher education

The current school system in Nepal consists of primary and lower-secondary levels, 1-8 class and upper-secondary levels, 9-12 class, which culminates in the School Leaving Certificate examination—the SLC, and higher education (university). Officially, children are enrolled in school by the age of six; however, there has been increasing pressure in urban areas to enrol children at the age of three or four. The trend of sending children to private schools has additionally reinforced this tendency by offering opportunities to send children to pre-primary classes, which have also recently been implemented in some government schools. A problem affecting schools in Nepal is their relatively high dropout rate—one out of every five pupils has

to repeat grade one, and almost every tenth pupil drops out of school in the first year, while three out of ten do not complete their basic education (KOF, 2015). The percentage of students who passed the SLC examination in 2016 was 47.43%.

The 'ten plus two' system has been introduced in Nepal as grades 11 and 12, in order for students to qualify for higher education, and offers vocational education. In addition, there is a separate Sanskrit Education that runs from the school level up to higher education (MoE, 2010). There are currently nine universities in Nepal (namely: Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, Nepal Sanskrit University, Pokhara University, Purbanchal University, Lumbini Buddhist University, Agriculture and Forestry University, Mid-Western University, and Far Western University). The largest and the oldest is Tribhuvan University, which was established in 1959, followed by Mahendra Sanskrit University and Purbanchal University. State-run university fees are relatively low; however, the quality of the education offered seems to make it difficult for their graduates' qualifications to gain official recognition abroad. The university grant commission is responsible to keep track record of each of these universities in terms of their education and research activities. The ministry of education allocates the annual budget to each of these universities. However, Kathmandu University is Nepal's only privately-run university which receives partly grant from the state and partly runs through tuition fees paid by the students.

Up until recently, it was enough for one to have passed the higher secondary examinations (twelfth grade) in Nepal in order to qualify as a primary teacher; however, teachers are now subjected to a teacher licence examination. Pre-service teacher education in Nepal is conducted primarily through university-based programmes. However, some private institutions (recognized by the government education agencies) also run basic teacher education programmes. During 1990s til 2000 the In-service teacher education was conducted through the Teacher Education Project (TEP) and the Secondary Education Programme (SEP), along with several other institutions. The National Centre for Education and Development (NCED) implements the programmes in Nepal by the way of offering management training programmes for the education personnel working under MoE system and teacher training programmes mainly for the In-service teachers at primary and secondary levels. The NCED runs various courses for in-service teachers. The primary teacher training programme for in-service teachers is conducted in the form of courses for those already involved in teaching, particularly in government schools. The courses are divided into three packages:

- Basic teacher training programme (330 hours);
- Primary teacher training (660 hours), by distance education/open learning;
- Primary teacher training (330 hours).

In-service teachers in government schools also have the option of attending a 10-month lower secondary and secondary teacher training programme, which is divided into three phases:

- In-service lower secondary and secondary teacher training (330 hours);
- In-service lower secondary and secondary teacher training (660 hours);
- In-service lower secondary and secondary teacher training (330 hours).

NCED has 34 education training centres throughout the country to carry out teacher training programmes (MoE, 2010). Teachers in Nepal are employed on permanent and temporary contracts.

2.1.3 Foundational principles of Hinduism

The main religion in Nepal, Hinduism, is referred to as a plethora of socio-religious beliefs and practices that have long been prevalent in the Indian sub-continent. The intention of this brief introduction to the characteristics of Hinduism is to delineate the basic principles of a Hindu faith system. The general precepts of religion appear to revolve around questions concerning spirituality and the supernatural, which inform how people live according to certain rules and rituals of the faith.

The ancient scriptures of Hinduism, the Vedas, are alleged to have been divinely revealed and written down in Sanskrit, which laid the foundations of a common heritage for Hindus. There is no absolute distinction between deities and people in Hinduism (Fuller, 2004, p. 8). Vedic traditions are based on polytheism and pluralism (worshipping many gods), which are the characteristic features of the Hindu socio-cultural system. In the Hindu faith system, it is believed that gods and goddesses have to fight evil forces to protect truth. The chief attribute of the Vedic gods is their power over the lives of men (Brockington, 1996, p. 10). Gods will come to the rescue in the form of an incarnation, but for this to happen, people need to perform their duties without worrying about the result.

In his perspective on Hinduism, Fitzgerald, among others, suggests making an analytical distinction by dividing Hindu Dharma into 1) ritual and hierarchy, on the one hand; and 2) personal salvation/spirituality on the other.

1) In traditional Hinduism, the ideology of Dharma is fundamentally based on the social order of hierarchy, which is most evident in the caste system. Dharma in the local context is defined as a system that governs the entire universe. Dharma ensures harmony between all parts of nature and shows the path to salvation (Jain, 1994). Dharma defines the obligations of all beings and is less focused on doctrine. The basic principle of social relationships is expressed through rituals of purity/impurity that indicate one's position in a caste group. In the classical model of Hindu caste hierarchy, there are four main castes that reflect certain divisions of labour: Brahma, Kshatrya, Vaisya and Sudra. How a religion or a faith system relates to this socio-economic system will vary; however, the social hierarchy of caste in Hinduism is less related to economic differences and is more to do with notions of duty and purity. The belief system proposes that one's circumstances are predetermined, which might be referred to as *karma* or *bhagya*, meaning fate

The following figure 2.1 is taken from Bista's book, *Fatalism and development, Nepal's struggle for Modernaization* (1991, p.43), which illustrates some differences in how terms and meanings of caste may slightly vary in the Nepalese context from the classical models of Hindu caste hierarchy.
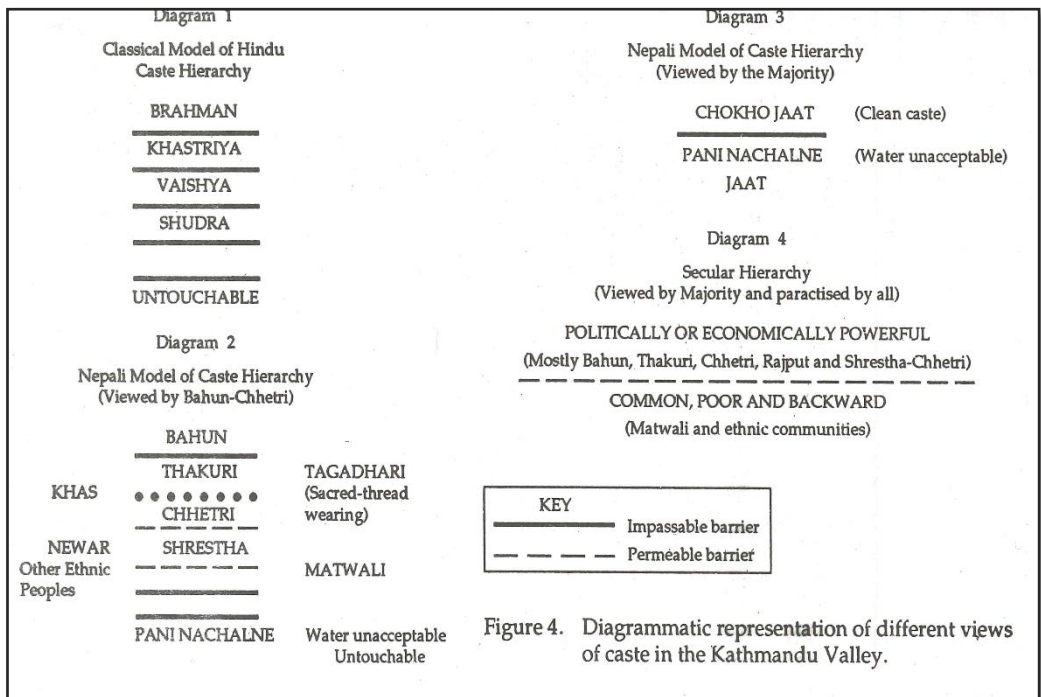
Figure 4. Diagrammatic representation of different views of caste in the Kathmandu Valley.

Figure 2.1 Diagrams of caste perspectives

Bista (1991) outlines how the classical models of caste hierarchy does not exist in its original form in Nepal. In Nepal the Bahun are Brahmans, the Chhetri are the Khastriya and the Matwali

the Vaishya and Shudra. As Bista (1991) points out, the Thakuri and the Shresta are class labels that are also found outside the Bahun societies, however assume some of the qualities of sub-caste distinction (Bista, 1991, p.44). Nevertheless, the boundaries between the Bahun and the Pani Nachalne, the untouchables are by many rigorously maintained. The perspectives are changing and there seems to be a tendency to replace the caste perspective with a class perspective of politically and economically powerful on the one hand and the marginalised and other ethnic groups on the other.

In the interpretation of the life stories, references to religious Hindu texts, such as the Manusmriti and the Law Code of Manu are apparent. Though the Law Code of Manu is found in English translation, the Manusmriti in English has been less easy to access. Thus with my lack of Sanskrit reading ability, I have accessed some texts in English as well as relied on references also found in Awasthi's (2004, p.91-94) work related to teachers in Nepal, for some references.

The second analytical division of Fitzgerald is of personal spirituality.

2) In terms of personal salvation/spirituality, or *moksha*, Hinduism also inclines towards notions of personal devotion, rather than relying on concepts of duty and purity. A person's personal devotion might relate to their devotion to a personal god or a guru (such as Sai Baba, Osho or Maharishi Mahesh Yogi) (Fitzgerald, 1990).

In the following, an overview of the historical periodization of reform processes within education in Nepal aims to present the backdrop against which the new global educational policies have emerged and are emerging. First, a brief outline of some of the historical educational processes in Nepal will be presented, beginning with Nepalese teachers' indigenous culture of teaching: the Hindu gurukul education system. Then, a concise account of certain historical events that can be said to have formed education and schooling in Nepal will be outlined, particularly through the influence of English and western education.

First, a closer look at Hindu education. The underlying philosophical beliefs of educational practices in Nepal reflect departures from and continuities with the past, emphasizing the dominance of Hindu religion as shaping educational practices. Teacher narratives in Nepal disclose something of the way in which teachers respond to their cultural and religious heritage and the construction of society. The modern school system in Nepal was introduced and

developed within an already existing set of cultural values and ideas about schooling and education. This is important to take into account in order to understand education in Nepal and how it legitimizes itself today, along with how local (education) teaching–learning processes were shaped and reconstructed within a changing social and political context.

2.2 The Hindu heritage

In Nepal, two major forms of indigenous education were practiced prior to the introduction of English-based education in the 19th century, namely Buddhist monastic training and Hindu education (Bista, 1990, p. 117). Buddhist education was a well-regulated system of practical and religious education, connected to the monasteries (Bista, 1990, p. 117). However, as Hindu education gained traction, the Buddhist tradition gradually decreased (Acharya, 1996). Bista argues that the Hindu system of education was quite different from that of the Buddhist system and was based on Sanskrit learning. Knowledge about early Hindu beliefs and practices originated from the Sanskrit texts called the Vedas, which are considered to be the foundation of Hindu identity (Awasthi, 2004, p. 86).

Hinduism appears to have impacted most faith systems in Nepal (Awasthi, 2004, p. 86). Thus, the traditional form of most social life in Nepal has Vedic foundations, in the form of Hinduism. Though some would argue that colonial rule in India destabilized the Hindu faith system, since Nepal was not under the rule of the British, and because of its remote location, the Vedic traditions seems to have remained strong. Nepal was known as a 'Hindu kingdom' up until 2008, and the king was regarded as an incarnation of the god Vishnu. Although the canon is not read by the vast majority of Hindus, the Vedas are regarded as the canonical scriptures of Hinduism (Brockington, 1996, p. 6). Fuller notes that, the "sacred texts of Hinduism – and the concepts, ideas, and speculations contained in them are often vitally important to popular religion, and the latter cannot be studied successfully unless textual scholarship is taken into account" (Fuller, 2004, p. 6). The Vedas are Hindu scriptures of spiritual experiences that create pathways to approach the unknown through the known in the pursuit of truth (Jain, 1994, pp. 16–19). The Vedas contain hymns and prayers dedicated to divinity.

Nepal's indigenous system of education was based on the Vedic learning philosophy (Acharya, 1996). In the Vedic tradition, gaining spiritual knowledge through self-discipline and control was seen as an important ritual (Acharya, 1996). There were several strands of Hindu education that emphasized different subjects, like Sanskrit literature and memorizing sacred Hindu

scriptures that concentrated on prayers and astrology, as well as literacy and numeracy, depending on the various caste groups in society (Acharya, 1996, p. 98).

Primarily, members of the Brahmin, the Kshatrya and the Vaisya castes were those who went to school in Hindu society. In earlier days, members of the lowest caste, the Sudra, were not allowed to go to school (Acharya, 1996, p. 99). Furthermore, lower castes were denied access to the knowledge of religious texts (Koirala, 1996, p. 115). Initially, Vedic learning was confined to the Brahmin caste. Only the Brahmins could study the sacred Hindu texts and were entitled to take up teaching as a profession (Acharya, 1996, p. 102). The Brahmins were, according to the Vedas, assigned to study the religious texts and perform rituals for other castes. Consequently, the Brahmins gained ideological control and a certain monopoly over knowledge, which helped them become leaders in society, which in many ways legitimized the hegemony of Brahmins in Hindu society as a whole (Acharya, 1996, p. 103).

Indigenous Nepalese educational institutions were established and supported by the community and there was no centralized system of education. In the teacher-centred oral tradition of education, the teacher would recite information while the learner would listen, memorize and recite it back. In the Hindu education system, the teacher is referred to as the *guru*, and the pupil as the *shishya*. The guru–shishya relationship traditionally replicated the hierarchical model of Hindu society (Acharya, 1996, p. 103). The teacher–pupil relationship was characterized by the absolute authority of the guru over the shishya, who was in return expected to be obedient and loyal (Acharya, 1996, p. 104). Obedience to the guru was considered to be the basis for learning, and therefore the guru was permitted to physically punish any pupil who became indifferent to his studies (Acharya, 1996, p. 111).

Scholars refer to the traditional system of education based on Sanskrit education as the gurukul model. The gurukul education system was formally institutionalized in Nepal through the establishment of the Ranipokhari Sanskrit School in Kathmandu in 1892. The school was the first government-supported Sanskrit school in Nepal in the late 19th century during the Rana era. The Rana's rule began after the Shah rulers were overthrown in 1846 and lasted until the restoration of the monarchy in 1951 and the introduction of political parties (Whelpton, 2005).

2.3 Rana rule

The Rana rule refers to the autocratic leadership rule of the Rana dynasty from 1846 until1951, where the Rana rule reduced the Shah monarch to a figurehead and made the prime minister and other government positions hereditary. At the time of the Rana rule, public education was

perceived by the rulers as a political threat, aimed at primarily high-caste families for the purpose of recruiting government administrators (Bista, 1990). However, after a visit to the United Kingdom, the first Rana prime minister opened an English-language school for Rana children in 1854 and called it Durbar High School. Nonetheless, during the Rana period, other schools were opened in various parts of the country by different prime ministers, mainly in urban settings, which were called the *bhasa pathsalas*, or language schools, in reference to their secular education (Bista, 1990, p. 119). Yet, education remained an entitlement for the privileged who were born into a caste with access to this kind of knowledge (Acharya, 1996, p. 99). The ideal was for the high-caste student in Nepal to gain admission to a Sanskrit college in India. The tradition was to send Nepali educators to Benares, India, for their further education in Sanskrit in order to expand the gurukul model in Nepal (Bista, 1990). The system had social implications and continued to legitimize the caste hierarchy, making it "instrumental in preserving the traditional social structure" (Acharya, 1996, p. 105). Furthermore, the legal code of the Muluku Ain of 1854 supported the social order based on caste in Nepal, thus enshrining the position of the ruling classes in law (Hofer, 1979), and since Nepal's remote geographical location prevented the British from occupying the country, its social structures remained largely unchanged until 1950.

After 1947, there were initiatives to introduce educational reforms that were inspired by the Gandhian model; however, Bista argues that concepts of skills-based training and a strong work ethic were not found within the Hindu, Brahmanic education tradition. Rather, the aim of education was to separate oneself from manual labour (Bista, 1991). The division of labour in the Hindu social order legitimized the predisposition of high-caste pupils to pursue Sanskrit education or higher education, whilst learning practical skills was considered a low-caste pursuit (Bista, 1991).

British rule in India gradually diminished the gurukul system of education by implementing western methods of education instead, as the gurukul education system was regarded as outdated (Frederick, 2016). With the introduction of western-based schooling in the 1950s, the Brahmanic privilege of attending formal education was somewhat challenged. According to Valentin (2001), the English system promoted "new ideas of education and came to represent a competing model of the 'educated person'; one who was secularly schooled" (p. 99). Nevertheless, it was only after the 1950s that the system of state schools was expanded. Before the expansion of the state schools, fewer than five in every hundred people could read in Nepal (Whelpton, 2005, p. 165).

2.4 National unity

The Ranas maintained their power through force and control of social dissent. However, Nepali political activists living in India became increasingly difficult to control, which resulted in an uprising and led to the end of Rana rule in the 1950s (Whelpton, 2005). Indian leaders supported the independence movement and the creation of a parliamentary democracy in Nepal, influenced by the parliamentary system in Britain (Whelpton, 2005). However, parliamentarianism in Nepal was brought to an end in 1960 when King Mahendra took over power by means of a military coup (Whelpton, 2005, p. 86). Under the monarchy, the single-party Panchayat system operated as a kind of democratic structure that provided services to the population, such as healthcare, water and education. The Panchayat system was based on a model of local government and was meant to enhance popular support and boost external financial backing of initiatives (Caddell, 2007, p. 12). Despite this, throughout the 1960s, Nepali politics reflected, for the most, power struggles between a few prominent leaders and the monarchy (Caddell, 2007, p. 12). Nepal was ruled directly by a king for nearly three decades (Caddell, 2007, p. 12). With less external influence, the Vedic traditions continued and Nepal remained a Hindu kingdom up until 2008. The king was, according to Hindu scriptures, believed to be an incarnation of the god Vishnu.

During this period, after the overthrow of the Ranas in Nepal in 1951, formal education was closely connected to nation building and attempts to achieve unity and foster development, based on a common culture and identity, by way of a national school system (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997). But, as Caddell (2007) argues, the vision of a nation served to legitimize the position of the political elites. The National Education System Plan (NESP) was introduced in 1971 to nationalize all schools and centralize an educational framework for curricula and educational service delivery, including teacher recruitment, in order to embark upon a comprehensive educational reform programme (Whelpton, 2005, p. 165). In part, the NESP could be seen as a move away from American donor influence, in particular, on education at the time (Caddell, 2007, p. 16). Community schools were declared government schools. It became compulsory to sing the national anthem in schools, which more or less replaced the Hindu prayer to the goddess of learning—Saraswati. As Awasthi (2004) states, the process of Nepalization was achieved through schooling and the Nepali language. Hinduism was presented in textbooks as the official state religion and portraits of the royal family hung in every principal's office. As such, one particular aspect of Nepalese culture was presented as representing the 'nation' and reinforced

the dominant position of the urban, high-caste, Hindu elite (Caddell, 2007). Accordingly, schools were run via a national education system that prioritized central control and rational knowledge in order to align the aims of education with those of economic development (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 4).

In order to accomplish the task of expanding the school system, Nepal increasingly sought foreign help and adopted global educational models and activities. The state sought funding from foreign aid donors, in particular from China, India and the United States, which all had political interests in the region. The position of the educated, high-caste elite was reinforced by the concept of national development (Caddell, 2007). The elite's engagement with external aid agencies and the outside world had important implications for how notions of equity and inclusion were dealt with in practice (Caddell, 2007). The symbol of the developing state became education, and programmes were implemented to build schools around the country. Through the influence of the outside world, Caddell (2007) argues that the implicit preference for the "external" over the "local" gave the impression in society that those engaged with the external were more educated and enlightened (Caddell, 2007, p. 10).

However, political parties became increasingly more visible with the growing discontent with the Panchayat system. A new wave of democratization during the 1990s forced the king to agree to reinstate a multi-party system. This meant reducing the position of the king to that of a constitutional monarch (bearing in mind that in common Hindu belief, the king was perceived to be an incarnation of the god Vishnu). In view of Nepal's historical legacy, the radical transitions created by political change have been comprehensively debated. In the aftermath of the 1990 democratic movement, called the *Jana Andolan* (the People's Movement), expectations were high regarding the transformation of politics and the economy (Raeper & Hoftun, 1992).

2.5 The turning point – The UN and Education for All policies

As presented, Nepal pursued a policy of expanding a uniform, national education system after 1951 with the financial and advisory support of various aid agencies. Subsequently, the reinstatement of democracy in 1991 opened up possibilities to undertake educational reform, with the aim of promoting equity and access to education. Education policies became increasingly adjusted according to the agendas of international donors (Bhatta, 2011). After 1990, Nepal committed to the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA), which marked a shift in the support of education by the United Nations and the World Bank. Global targets to

reduce illiteracy and universalize inclusive, learning friendly primary education were declared in several conventions made after the World Conference on Education for All was held in 1990. Organizations like UNESCO, UNDP, UNICEF and the World Bank initiated the Education for All movement. Leading international development institutions and 189 countries, including Nepal, adopted the EFA policies that committed them to a series of time-bound targets. UNESCO was mandated as the lead coordinator of EFA, working with aid agencies, civil society and stakeholders in government and non-government organizations (see UNESCO, 2009).

The EFA declaration represented a global educational architecture for the right to education for all, as part of UNESCO's strategies for education. These strategies were promoted through the Millennium Development Goals and the six goals for Education for All (see UNESCO, 2014). Formal education is seen as the positive link between poverty reduction, development and literacy.

As a result of committing to these goals, the EFA targets became the reference point for developing educational policies in Nepal, by adopting a rights-based approach to education (Bhatta, 2011, p. 22). Accordingly, the global educational models and activities were considered as key to progress and modernity and as a means to promote democratic culture (Bhatta, 2011, p. 12). As Bhatta argues, in order to be eligible for financial support, Nepal has to prepare policies and documents that are in line with EFA targets. What is significant here is that these documents are developed under substantial aid agency influence and support (Bhatta, 2011, p. 22).

Awasthi (2004) maintains that the foreign advisors' influence on Nepal caused the country to enter into another phase of external domination through the importation of alien ideas (p. 311). Some argue that the institutionalized "development" of education in Nepal has primarily been led by western development institutions and therefore it must be understood within a post-colonialist framework (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 3). Since the 1950s, the education sector has been a significant recipient of aid to finance development programmes. As Bhatta (2011) argues, the agencies more or less dictate the implementation process of global educational agendas. As a result, important decisions regarding Nepal's educational development appear to be made by aid agencies and high-level officials in the Ministry of Education; but, in reality, Bhatta (2011) claims that government ownership of the agenda is an illusion, since the content

has been pre-determined and implemented by the more powerful aid agencies (Bhatta,2011. p. 22).

The development programmes promote the decentralization of school administration, representing a shift away from the central control of the government. The strengthening of civil society by means of decentralizing programmes has paved the way for a new view on democracy based on engagement with the development processes of international donor programmes. This has highlighted tensions between the local, national and global visions of the state and the inclusion of various groups in society (Caddell, 2007, p. 21). Some might argue that the processes are implemented as a global policy logic into a localized context without taking into consideration the social culture of the civil servants, teachers and communities involved (Edwards, 2011). Furthermore, these processes challenge the paradox of the state promoting a vision of national identity, yet at the same time being directed towards community ownership and inclusion of diverse ethnic groups (Shields & Rappleye, 2008).

A multitude of reform initiatives in Nepal have been implemented to ensure access to education and strengthen institutional support. In response to the global initiatives for education for all, Nepal initially instigated the Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP, 1992). The focus of the BPEP in particular was to improve the quality of education and increase access to it; furthermore, it aimed to improve participation in and management of the educational system. This resulted in the development of district resource centres and the development of curricula. Some of the outcomes of the BPEP programme and the EFA targets were an increased focus on measurable indicators of achievement (Caddell, 2007).

The following EFA programme (2004–2009) was based on the experiences had while implementing basic and primary education reforms through the BPEP programme (EFA, 2003). The EFA's strategic five-year programme had a particular focus on early childhood development, free and compulsory primary education, adult literacy, elimination of gender and social inequalities and improvement of quality in education (EFA, 2003). The government-run schools claim to be free of charge; however, in practice, parents are often charged for admissions, examinations and sometimes textbooks, thereby putting a strain on households with few financial resources. The paradox of government schools being free to all while still charging fees is apparent to many of the poor families who attend them (Valentine, 2001).

The human rights aims of the EFA have had important implications for the content and delivery of Nepalese education. They uphold the idea of child-centred education, in which corporal

punishment is deemed to be a clear violation of children's rights (EFA, 2005). Based on the overall EFA implementation guidelines, district education offices were supposed to carry out EFA activities in individual districts and deliver services to schools (EFA, 2003). The in-service teacher training programmes that support the EFA initiatives promote "active teaching–learning methods" for teachers to become child-centred in their teaching practices (Save the Children, 2007). These programmes originated in global child-friendly school programmes (CFS) promoted by UNICEF with the aim of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (UNICEF, 2006). However, the primary education system was reported to have confronted a number of problems that affected its efficiency and effectiveness. Such problems included inadequate access and low participation, low student retention, low-quality education, inequity in gender, regional imbalances and low levels of ethnic empowerment (EFA, 2003).

2.6 The expansion of private schools

On the one hand, modern schooling appears to have created a sense of liberation from oppressive social structures and challenged the legitimacy of caste and gender-based discrimination. These new ideas came to represent the "educated person" as one that was secularly schooled (Pigg, 1992; Skinner & Holland, 1996). But, as Bista points out, "traditionally, education was designed solely for high caste and highly placed people", and "the newly educated people tend to equate themselves with these classes" (Bista, 1990, p. 128). This view of being educated, Bista says, would manifest itself in a dislike of physical work and a dependency on influential connections higher in the hierarchy. Education was, and still is, assigned the role of promoting economic progress as the key to entering the administrative job force and advancing in hierarchic positions (Bista, 1990, p. 128). While modern western education tends to promote equality, in Nepal, "the project itself paradoxically produces and reinforces a social divide between those who participate in the project and those who do not" (Valentine, 2001, p. 36).

Overall, people's interest in and access to education increased with modern education. Since the restoration of the multi-party system in 1990, the number of schools and educational institutions have grown rapidly (Caddell, 2007, p. 464). The expansion of private boarding schools (English-medium education) has been particularly important for catering to around 20% of the children in secondary schools in Nepal (Whelpton, 2005, p. 227). These schools have had a higher pass rate for the School Leaving Certificate exams, averaging around 80%, when compared to the 30–40% pass rate achieved by the government-run institutions (Caddell, 2007, p. 463). Whelpton argues that "the state-run schools were never particularly good, but

politicisation after 1990 has eroded discipline and commitment among the teaching staff even further" (Whelpton, 2005, p. 227). Accordingly, for the common Nepalese person, the ability to afford to enrol children in private schools, thus giving them a better chance of passing their exams, is considered to indicate one's high status (Liechty, 2003, p. 216).

Thus, the focus on nation building was increasingly diverted away from patriotism toward a fiercely competitive stigmatization and commercialization of schooling. This prioritization of results and test scores marks Nepal's educational policies in ways that perpetuate historic inequalities. The hope for poor people to escape poverty is closely connected to their access to education, and it is their belief that education will free their children from the cycle of poverty. This outcry for quality education has created a market for schools that may offer stricter discipline and more of a test culture. These institutions have, in many ways, overrun the government school system.

Families that cannot afford private schooling send their children to government schools; however, many children are forced to drop out of primary school before completion (Devkota & Bagale, 2015). This is often due to children having to help out at home with domestic work. Moreover, many farming families cannot afford to buy uniforms and textbooks, and parents need their children to assist them to bring in the harvest. Traditionally, sons were educated rather than daughters, because girls were considered the property of their future husbands. However, educating girls became a way for families to increase their daughters' value when searching for eligible husbands from among the sons of families occupying higher social positions. Moreover, some underprivileged, low-caste groups are offered benefits from the government to send their children to school.

Despite the introduction of a western model of education, Nepalese teaching practices seem to have continued in keeping with the gurukul approach (Awasthi, 2004, p. 311), and the central position of teachers in schools in Nepal reflects the lasting legacy of the Vedic Hindu tradition. Teachers, in both private and government schools, seem to function as agents of the modern school system; however, they also seem to be inclined to protect the traditional gurukul legacy. Awasthi concludes that a "teacher's personality seems to have been divided into these two selves: traditional *gurukul self* and *western school culture self*. There are visible tensions between teachers' *Gurukul* roles and modern school roles" (Awasthi, 2004, p. 311).

2.7 The 'People's War' in Nepal

The emergence of socialistic ideologies in Nepal can be seen as refractions of wider global movements against authoritarian power and patriarchal authority from as early as the 1960s. Since the start of the People's Movement for democracy in 1990, the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist) has been at the centre stage as the main left-wing party of Nepal, amongst many other left-wing parties, acting as the opponent to the right-wing Nepali Congress. Increasingly, disappointment with the democratic movement and political reforms ignited political tensions in Nepal. In addition, the poverty afflicting the country's majority, especially in rural areas, escalated the deep-seated tensions that were rooted in issues of disempowerment and political representation and resulted in an uprising against the government (Do & Iyer, 2007; Hutt, 2004). The popularity of the communist movement grew during the 1990s, mainly due to people's disillusionment with the government's political performance. In the fight against the state and the monarchy, one of these parties, the Communist Party of Nepal–Maoist (CPN–Maoist), declared a 'People's War' in 1996, aiming to establish a communist republic and overthrow the monarchy, which subsequently led to the use of violence to achieve their political ends. This happened after negotiations with the Nepali Congress-led coalition government failed over a list of 40 demands related to democracy and livelihood, which was forwarded by the Maoists.

Early on, both the Shining Path in Peru and the Indian Maoists in Naxalbari exercised the most influence on the Peoples' War in Nepal (Marks & Palmer, 2005). The Maoists were known as the Maobadi, and they declared their commitment to Mao's theory of a people's war. Over time, the Maobadi exerted their control over large parts of the mid-hills of Nepal, where support for the communists was strong. It was an area of extreme poverty, where tensions were growing between the Nepali Congress leaders, who were often affiliated with the previous Panchayat system, and the left-wing leaders. With the increase in police brutality and numerous counterattacks carried out by the Maoists on police stations and army garrisons, the country had entered a state of emergency by 2001 (Whelpton, 2005).

The ethnic groups of Nepal have historically been marginalized from the centre of power. The democratic movement meant that there needed to be a radical shift in the administration in order to make it more representative of ethnic groups and to become more responsive to the needs of peasants living in rural areas. However, the government's overall failure to meet these demands for equality fuelled ethnic discontent and thus the Maoists made further demands regarding the existing class struggle (Thapa, 2002). Initially, the Maoist leaders focused their political efforts

on the rural population of the mid-western hill districts. The capacity of the Maoist leaders to mobilize people was, in many ways, seen as the driving force of people living in the rural areas (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997b). The Maoists pursued a strategy of firstly winning the hearts and minds of marginalized groups, and then intensifying the pressure on the government by using terror to subsequently launch a warfare phase. To many, the intensifying terror actions that drew the country into civil war were shocking, especially when considering that Nepal was known to be a quiet corner of the world, often referred to as the birthplace of the Buddha. However, the Maoists painted a different picture of the history of Nepal and declared war against feudalism and domination by the country's elite. As the war escalated, the army was recruited to support the overwhelmed police force. Nevertheless, there were difficulties in coordinating the efforts of the army, police and other representatives of the state. Consequently, foreign assistance was sought to help mediate the conflict. However, as Marks and Palmer point out, no amount of foreign help could compensate for the shortcomings of a traditional system of extreme submissiveness to authority and an ineffective central government. As a result, the Maoist revolt expanded far beyond their main territories (see Marks & Palmer, 2005, p. 106).

The Maoists viewed mainstream education as a symbol of state power and declared a 40-point manifesto that included, amongst other things, the right to education in one's mother tongue and the closure of private, profit schools (Caddell, 2006; Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). Their rhetoric to "set fire to the educational supermarket" highlighted their aim of shutting down private schools, reducing school fees and nationalizing the school system (Caddell, 2006, p.471). In education, the Maoists sought to uphold local ownership of the Nepali state and promote indigenous identity. The Maoists called for a less nationalistic curriculum and argued for the rights of marginalized groups in society (Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 96). Their demands included the removal of references to the monarchy in the curriculum, singing of the national anthem, and a reduction of western influence on education. Some of these demands were enforced through violence, with schools being used as sites to promote political ideology during the uprising.

By 2003, the Maoists had established 'new democratic schools' with their own curriculum in the mid-western areas of the country (Baral, 2011). The curriculum, entitled *Naya Janabadi Shiksha*, or, the New Peoples' Education, provided textbooks that discouraged competition between students and emphasized physical labour and local production of goods (Baral, 2011). During the People's War, schools were used by both sides—the government and the Maoists— as an ideological battleground, which resulted in schools being closed for long periods of time,

causing exams to be disrupted and students to flee to urban areas for their safety (Standing & Parker, 2011).

The Maoist demands to end the use of Sanskrit in schools, reduce school fees and nationalize private schools were effective mechanisms through which to engage middle-class stakeholders, in particular, by appropriating education as an instrument of economic, political and social control. In the process of transition, negotiations between parents, the state and the Maoists were constrained by the fact that the Maoists were classified as terrorists (Caddell, 2006). Thus, most attempts to negotiate failed. Similarly, the systematic promotion of their political propaganda and their emphasis on army tactics as part of the curriculum they developed might have discouraged donor agencies from supporting any cooperation with the Maoists, given their propensity to engage in armed struggle and violence.

In 2003, the Maoists declared a ceasefire and entered into negotiations with the Nepalese government. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2006) set the stage for the formulation of an interim constitution and a new constitutional assembly, with the aim of drafting a new constitution. The Maoists transition into mainstream politics has, however, been described as an ongoing debate between those in the party leadership who struggle to gain access to political power by accommodating other political parties, and the more revolutionary local organizations that wish to uphold and stay true to the party's revolutionary ideology (Ishiyama & Batta, 2011). Some scholars argue that the preoccupation with preserving consensus in Nepalese politics has been driven by a desire to prevent causing any further antagonism (Byrne & Shrestha, 2014). However, the damping effect of mainstream politics on the party's revolutionary ideology, and the prevalence of corruption—some would argue—is not just the legacy of hierarchical structures, but the result of a lack of democratic culture. Byrne and Shrestha point specifically to the politics of democracy itself, in terms of democracy's inherent adverse potential (Byrne & Shrestha, 2014).

In the transition out of the conflict, the educational agenda of the Maoists centred on a redistribution of resources by moving schools and resources out of urban areas and into rural areas. However, the donor community has tended to perceive schooling as a technical–administrative problem in terms of maximizing enrolment and minimizing expenditure (see Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 96). The differences in how the various political parties and the donors have envisioned education have created tensions between these centres of power. In the context of Nepal's post-conflict resolution, the Maoists' demands presented an opportunity to

develop different discourses on education; however, it became increasingly evident that the coalition government was unable to make any radical changes in this regard (Thapa, 2002).

Pherali (2011) argues that many of the current challenges in education are rooted in the failure to break with the historical conventions of education in Nepal, meaning that the status quo has been maintained (p. 140). He discusses the relationship between the People's War and education in Nepal and argues that education was one of the main causes of the violent conflict. Despite 'modernization' efforts and increased participation, schools in Nepal continued to embody socially and culturally prejudiced values and institutionally legitimized inequitable practices through the education system. Drawing on qualitative interviews with educational stakeholders from six diverse districts across the country, he shows how manifold deficiencies in the education system contributed to generating and fuelling the 'ideology-led' Maoist rebellion, and subsequently how schools thus became a key battlefield on which the violent conflict was fought (Pherali, 2011). Accordingly, Pherali points to how the missed opportunity to engage in educational reform can be attributed to a lack of understanding of the connection between schooling, 'development' and conflict (2011, p. 150). Instead, the tendency has been to revert to relying on the global framework of the EFA, thereby leaving the Ministry of Education to assume the role of managing aid (Bhatta, 2011, p. 22). As Pherali argues, the politicization of the education system has become a form of corruption itself, perpetuated by powerful groups who promote their political ideologies, rather than support the educational interests and needs of Nepal (Pherali, 2011, p. 149).

The methodological approaches in the current literature on the Maoist movement in Nepal promote a more local and national perspective in order to illuminate how ideologies and reforms have been refracted by local authorities, academics and individuals in the Nepalese context. There are a few articles that look at the experiment of a Maoist education as an alternative to mainstream education in Nepal, highlighting the different curricular approach (Baral, 2011; Eck, 2007). However, there appears to be little research related to what is educationally desirable within this context when comparing the traditional educational system to the new global reforms and Maoist policies. What communist ideologies and practices might contribute to for educational matters are somewhat less debated.

Nonetheless, by listening to public debates and talking to people in various walks of life, the general sentiment seems to be that the lack of moral authority and commitment to cure what ails society has earned party politicians the reputation of being corrupt and self-absorbed. As

for politicians in the Nepalese context, you are left with the impression that when entering the elite sphere, one is drawn into dirty power struggles. Constant allegations of corruption and power grabbing mark the processes behind the new efforts to build the nation. Panday (2012) states that high-caste groups still enjoy significantly higher human development standards than lower-caste groups, in spite of the efforts made to restructure the state. The real issue with the elites' seizure of power lies in the traditional social stratification of society, he argues. Panday points to how the government's efforts to empower marginalized groups have mainly benefitted the high-caste elites, thereby accentuating the lack of will, in terms of the process of developing the country, to incorporate political, social and cultural transformations (see Panday, 2012, p. 90). Maintaining the power structures of the past has marked the historical and political processes of development in Nepal, due to the prevalence of members of high-caste groups holding leadership positions, Panday argues. The tendency to adopt the attitudes and mindset of the elite has cast a shadow over any real debate on the root cause of human suffering and conflict in Nepalese society, which is its fundamentally deep-seated stratification. Unfortunately, Maoist leadership failed to be exceptional in this regard.

This brief historical outline has served to present the backdrop for the development of thought concerning the complexity of historical processes in Nepal. In the next chapter, the theoretical foundations of the study will be discussed.

3.0 Theoretical framework of the study: Ideals, beliefs and agency

3.1 Introduction

The focus of this study, which is on the experiences and self-understanding of teachers in Nepal, implies a perspective that embraces the individual teachers' interpretations of their lives and work. The intention of examining Nepalese teachers' personal views is to put forward a perspective that highlights their active, strategic contribution to shaping their environment. This perspective views teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency as vital parts of their lives and work. In the following, the concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency will be further examined as forming the theoretical framework with which to view Nepalese teachers' experiences and self-understanding of their lives and work.

As was presented earlier, research on teachers in Nepal has primarily centred on how teachers experience reform programmes. Evaluative research and impact studies on the implementation of policy programmes seem to characterize the field of research on education in Nepal. This enquiry offers a different perspective on teachers by presenting their lives and work in their historical, social and cultural contexts. When examining the portrayals of Nepalese teachers, it is with the intention of understanding their views of themselves as embedded in a social world, and to take a closer look at the events they describe as significant in their lives that can give substance to what might be described as their ideals, beliefs and agency. The field might also be viewed from the perspective of how ideals, beliefs and agency influence how teachers position themselves and refract reform processes in the context of Nepal.

The data has somewhat required a nuancing of the theoretical framework that has been chosen for this study. This will be explored later in this chapter, in the light of research in the field of teacher beliefs. While analysing the empirical data, concepts such as ideals, beliefs and agency emerged as ways to view teachers' life histories, reflecting teachers' lived experiences, worldviews, cultures and contexts. Similar to what Goodson argues, which is that the life history method links personal stories with context, the theoretical perspective of this enquiry emerged from the life stories of teachers (Goodson, 2008). This might mean that in some cases, the researcher initially seeks to investigate something in particular, but then throughout the course of the investigation incorporates new viewpoints as informed by the data, thereby implying that there is a dynamic between the data and the theoretical viewpoint. In this research, it has thus been necessary to elaborate and develop the conceptual framework through analysing

and understanding the data. The conceptual framework that can contribute to understanding the empirical data is associated with the everyday use of beliefs, ideals and agency.

In my earlier investigations of teachers in Nepal, I used the concept of *teachers' image* as a way to examine how teachers viewed their role as teachers in the light of a western teacher image presented in in-service teacher training programmes. When working with the empirical data for this study, a need to develop the theoretical concepts emerged that allowed for taking a closer look at how teacher image was created in the Nepalese context. Therefore, the *teachers' beliefs* concept in some ways aims to delve deeper into teachers' subjective experiences, stemming from their experienced *image* of being teachers.

Initially in this study, teachers' experiences, worldviews, cultures and contexts were first linked to the exploration of the construct of teachers' beliefs. However, as will be discussed, when investigating teachers' beliefs, the need to differentiate between teachers' beliefs, based on the concept of teachers' ideals, and teachers' agency, became somewhat apparent when analysing the data. The concept of teachers' beliefs looked as if to point in two directions: beliefs founded on ideals, and beliefs related to how teachers find ways to act on their ideals and beliefs. In that sense, the three concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency are viewed as closely connected, intertwined concepts. *Ideals* emerged as teachers' deeply held values and visions for their lives and work, founded in their cultural heritage. *Beliefs* constituted ideals negotiated in the uncertainty of life and work, while *agency* represented the ways in which beliefs became somewhat visible in action, a kind of reality testing. Thus, informed by the data, a differentiation between teachers' beliefs in relation to teachers' ideals and teachers' agency has been incorporated into the theoretical considerations of the study.

The model below illustrates how the concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency, regardless of context, are viewed as intertwined orderly concepts, holding *ideals* to be initial, deeply held values and visions, *beliefs* to be ideals negotiated in reality and *agency* to be reality testing. However, there may be certain dynamics between the elements in this model. Through testing out agency, the results might create a need to renegotiate or modify beliefs and perhaps even foundational ideals.

Model 1
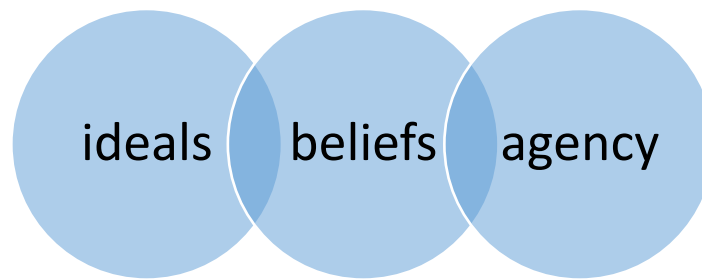
In the analysis of the data, it will later be discussed how these concepts might appear less orderly when connected to a given situation, in particular, when the situation requires more decisive action and less negotiation.

As mentioned, when searching for a theoretical perspective with which to view the empirical data, the initial commonality was found in the concept of teachers' beliefs, thus necessitating a closer look at the field of research on teachers' beliefs. It is necessary to situate the research on teachers' beliefs in its historical context, even if only briefly, in order to construct a foundation for how teachers' beliefs are to be understood in this study.

3.2 The tradition of research on teachers' beliefs

Since the 1920s, American educational scholarship has been characterized as increasingly removed from practice, becoming more and more technical (Lagemann, 2000). Lagemann (2000) points to the somewhat instrumental orientation of education at that time, with psychology at the core of educational study, as distinctively behaviouristic and individualistic. "It simply ignored the degree to which multiple factors, including subtle interactions between and among individuals, groups, cultural traditions, and the social structure, all combine to influence teaching and learning" (Lagemann, 2000, p. 236). As Lagemann argues, in the American progressivist movement, John Dewey was particularly critical of the lack of relevance and connection to the outside world of schooling (Lagemann, 2000, p. 232).

Taking a giant leap forward in time, during the 1980s there appears to have been a growing emphasis amongst educational researchers on questioning the trend in teacher education of applying research-based teaching practices. The behaviour-oriented research approach was gradually challenged by more *teacher thinking* processes, including the importance of teachers' beliefs in relation to practice (Fenstermacher, 1978; Floden, 1985). Research on teachers' beliefs viewed the approach as seeking to understand teaching from a teacher's perspective (Nespor, 1987, p. 323). In contrast somewhat to the field of teachers' beliefs, research on

teacher thinking was seen as focusing on teachers as an obstacle to the implementation of school reforms. Teachers' beliefs, however, were viewed as the filter of education reforms (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). Fenstermacher argues that teachers' beliefs have a major impact on practice (Fenstermacher, 1978). Similarly, Floden upholds the importance of acknowledging the beliefs of teachers in implementing reform programmes (Floden, 1985). Attempts to align teachers' beliefs with reform programmes seem to merely focus on surface features (Scott, 2015). Thus, critics of research on teacher thinking have suggested that teachers' beliefs are a better way to understand teachers' behaviours, thereby indicating that beliefs play a main role in decision making (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993). The focus on teachers' beliefs is embedded in a research tradition that views teachers' beliefs as one of the most influential factors affecting teaching practice.

Nevertheless, there has also been an exploration of the construct of teachers' beliefs, in particular, from different perspectives on the study on teachers' thinking and beliefs, as described in handbooks and articles (Fives & Gill, 2015). What scholars refer to as *beliefs* can be complicated to define, but they generally refer to things that affect the way we think and the way we make decisions, things that are often unexamined influences on people's lives and work. In practice, teachers rely on their explicit and implicit beliefs to function in a complex context, particularly those that instinctively underlie their intuition and habits, to meet the demands of the environment (Fives & Gill, 2015, p. 1). Accordingly, the concept of belief does not lend itself easily to definition or empirical investigation (Fives & Gill, 2015; Scott, 2015).

Beliefs in terms of this study might also be differentiated from religious beliefs. Philosophers of religion have contemplated what religious beliefs involve. Some scholars argue that there is a difference between ordinary, common beliefs and religious beliefs, questioning if religious beliefs can contribute to our understanding of common beliefs (Pojman, 1986; Wisdo, 1987). In relation to ordinary beliefs, some argue that ordinary beliefs are more acts of will to negate uncertainty. On the other hand, others might argue whether *will* is required in religious beliefs, since, for some, religious beliefs are not objects of will, but more objects of knowledge, the recognition of a spiritual world. Yet, others would argue that religious beliefs are an act of will since the supernatural is not something that we can know scientifically, thus belief in it requires will. However, in this study, the perspective on common belief as an act of will to negate uncertainty is useful to connect the concept of belief to ideas and plans to either stabilize or change a situation that guides actions. Thus, the concept of belief in this study refers to common, everyday beliefs that might, or might not, point to an act of will to stabilize or change a situation.

The character of religious belief as will might be linked to the concept of teachers' ideals, instead. This will be elaborated on later in the chapter.

In the following, I will examine some of the literature related to discussions on the concept of teachers' beliefs to begin to try and find a working definition for the term as it is used in this investigation. There are obvious limitations to fully covering the field of teachers' beliefs in this section; therefore, the following outline will sketch some of the more general research and discussions on the construct of teachers' beliefs in research communities. Acknowledging the fact that the term teachers' beliefs in this study takes its departures from very different historical, cultural, social and political contexts, these will be examined subsequently.

3.2.1 Teachers' beliefs and knowledge

The classical issue of the relationship between belief and knowledge has long been part of the debate on teachers' beliefs. In the field, the concept of belief in teaching has been debated in order to try to distinguish the concept from other notions, such as knowledge, thus arguing the importance of belief systems *versus* knowledge systems in teaching. Researchers, such as Nespor (1987), maintain that there is a distinction between knowledge and beliefs, focusing on beliefs as relying more on evaluative and affective components. Similarly, Pajares (1992) argued that the emotional aspect inherent in beliefs accounts for the resistance to efforts to change in teachers' beliefs, hence pointing to an insufficient understanding of the nature of beliefs in teaching. In relation to knowledge, beliefs are seen as characterized by individual convictions, which are in some ways not subject to standard justification (Scott, 2015).

3.2.2 Teachers' beliefs and lived experiences

Beliefs have been associated with life experiences, implying the deep-seated nature of beliefs (Kagan, 1992, p. 76). Teachers' beliefs are viewed as being established early in life and continuously created through the course of one's life (Grossman, 1990). Teachers' own schooling experiences contribute to developing their understanding of and views on teaching, as Clandinin (1985) states. These experiences often overrule theories that teachers are introduced to in teacher education (Carter & Doyle, 1995). As Kagan notes: "what a teacher knows of his or her craft appears to be defined in highly subjective terms" (1992, p. 421). According to Nespor (1987), past experiences are found in memories, creating a reference to specific incidents from which a person draws in their teaching.

Pajares (1992) argues that to understand more of teachers' beliefs, researchers must focus on contextual beliefs and personal beliefs that are connected to educational beliefs. Fives and Buehl (2012) focus on how teachers' personal beliefs are influenced by the narrow or broad contexts in which they are a part, and how these contexts challenge or support teachers' ability to act on their beliefs. These discussions highlight the importance of considering the lived experiences of teachers, as well as teachers' own experiences of schooling, in order to understand teachers' beliefs. As will be elaborated on in the final section of this chapter, this study considers these early life experiences as related more to teachers' ideals than to teachers' beliefs.

3.2.3 Teachers' beliefs and emotional aspects

The discussions on teacher beliefs centred on the cognitive and social aspects of the concept, however, acknowledging the role of the emotional characteristics of teachers' belief (Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992; Pintrich et al., 1993). Though one can find common elements to the concept of teachers' beliefs when reviewing the literature, difficulties remain in distinguishing beliefs from aspirations, attitudes, motivations, worldviews and values, for example, which encompass the emotional aspects of the phenomenon (Pajares, 1992, p. 327). As mentioned in the previous section, although teachers' beliefs might be associated with aspects such as their worldviews and values, these aspects would be considered in this study as more closely related to teachers' ideals.

Fives and Buehl (2012) lamented the difficulty in finding consistency across the various definitions. As seen in the *Handbook on Research on Teacher Beliefs* (Fives and Gill, 2015), the concept of teachers' beliefs might thus be viewed as evolving, as it is influenced by many factors and adapts to various situations. As viewed from a general perspective on research addressing the historical foundations of the field, the following model, shown in Figure 3.1, exemplifies some of the aspects that are described as what might influence teachers' beliefs. The model attempts to illustrate how beliefs are connected to different parts of life, and in this respect, cannot be seen as isolated from other phenomena. It also tries to illustrate how beliefs are affected by different facets of life.
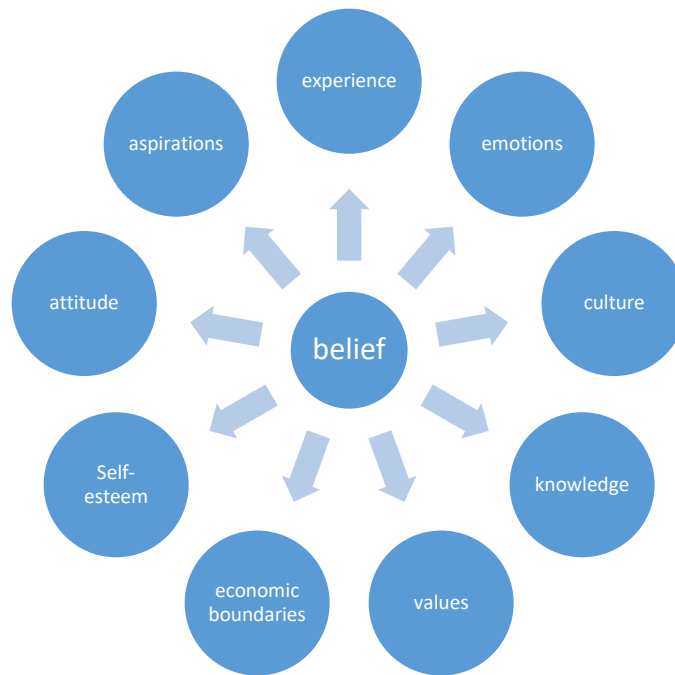
Figure3.1. Aspects of teachers' beliefs

The perspective taken on teachers' beliefs in this study encompasses reflective processes, aspirations, emotions as well as the social contexts that impact teachers' beliefs. Nespor (1987) suggests that tasks and problems are *defined* by beliefs. Discussions have thus evolved around the influence of teachers' beliefs on their lives and work (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs are seen as constructed thorough experiences, negotiated in and with the environment. Investigating teachers' beliefs is thus closely connected to how teachers define and argue for the decisions that they make in their lives and work as related to their lived experiences and the social context. Thus, the working definition of teacher belief in this study is related to what teachers find to be meaningful at a particular time and in a particular setting. Similarly, since the assumption is that some beliefs are more explicit, while others are more implicit (Rokeach, 1968), this study acknowledges that some may be more core or peripheral beliefs, depending on the scale of the teacher's conviction, ranging from merely a notion to that of an inner conviction. Thus, in this investigation, it is necessary to differentiate between the *beliefs* upon which teachers rely in the limiting and challenging environments in which they work and live, and those that are their deeply held visions and values, which are considered the *ideals* to which teachers aspire.

3.3 Teachers' ideals

As presented, the concepts of teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency in this enquiry find their starting points in the stories of teachers and the related contextual documentation. The teachers were not asked directly about how they would describe their beliefs in relation to their lives and work. Rather, the concepts of teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency emerged when interpreted and elicited from the teachers' stories. In their life stories, teachers told of significant experiences they had had and particular choices they had made and why, signifying what they felt were important events or choices that they had made in relation to their lives and work. Probing these events further, teachers were asked why these particular experiences were important to them, thus allowing them to elaborate on what they had perceived as meaningful to them and what had influenced their decisions in situations when they found themselves in challenging or stressful situations.

Ideals emerged in situations where traditional values were to some extent challenged. In these situations, it appeared that the informants tended to lean towards more foundational values and visions for life. In this sense, the informants expressed certain subjective, personal ideals for their lives and work that emerged in particularly challenging situations. These personal ideals are embedded in historical, social and cultural contexts. Ideals are thus seen here as dimensions that offer an orientation towards an ultimate vision for society and the individual, implying that ideals are more deeply held personal convictions than beliefs. Individuals, for different reasons, might express certain ideals for their lives and work within a social context that impact how they make decisions and take certain courses of action. Research on teacher cognitions view courses of action to be determined by cognitive processes (Huber & Mandl, 1984). Some might argue that according to a rational cognitive view, teacher ideals about education will guide behaviour. The idea is that teachers will aspire to act in keeping with their ideals, although they are not always able to live up to their ideals for a variety of reasons. When there is a cognitive dissonance in beliefs and actions, an individual might rely on other solutions to the situation that reflect their deeply held emotional and evaluative components, meaning the lived experiences and social constructions to which I refer to as teachers' ideals (Festinger, 1962).

Ideals therefore imply the foundational visions for a person's life and work that are embedded in their cultural heritage. For some, these articulated ideals create a source of moral aspiration. The idea is that teachers will aspire to act in line with their personal ideals, although their ideals are perceived as difficult to realize in a complex world. Day argues that our ideals as teachers sustain us through difficult times and challenging environments, and he further states that our

ideals commit teachers to change and improve their practice according to the needs of students and the demands of society (see Day, 2004, p. 20).

The ideals expressed by the informants provide a kind of reasoning for their actions in a given situation and creates a foundation for their lives and work. It is during particularly challenging or stressful situations, those that require the kind of reasoning that is necessary in order to make a particular choice, a choice that might overrule the expressed beliefs of an informant, that ideals seem to be more closely linked to agency. This implies there is a dynamic between the three concepts. From viewing the concepts as orderly and stable, in certain situations mentioned in the life stories, the informants express a closer and perhaps a direct connection between ideals and agency. Ideals thus emerge as overruling beliefs in certain circumstances. As shown in Figure 3.2, the circumstances seem to trigger a need to uphold deeper values as ideals, which are related to cultural values and cultural heritage.
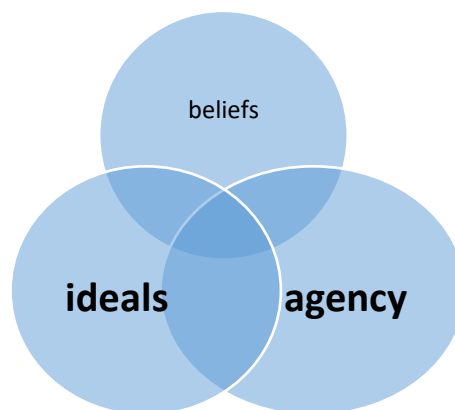
Figure 3.2 The dynamic interplay of teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency

This will be further explored in the analysis of the teacher portrayals. Nevertheless, the teachers' ideals construct complements the theoretical approach of the study, which is related to the more normative aspects of teaching. The following presents an overview of the concepts of teachers' ideals and teachers' beliefs as applied in this study:

Teachers' ideals:
- Ideals encompass dimensions that offer an orientation towards ultimate visions for the individual and society as rooted in their cultural heritage.
- Ideals may encompass moral dimensions and commitment.
- Ideals may encompass individual aspirations of becoming.

- Teachers' ideals are established in the past and are oriented towards the future.
- Teachers' ideals constitute lived experiences, and most likely include childhood experiences and specific events in their life course, including their conceptions of self.
- Teacher's ideals might also be concerned with concepts outside science, such as the existence of supernatural powers.

Teachers' beliefs:
- Teachers' beliefs are seen as ideals negotiated in the uncertainty of life and work.
- Teachers' beliefs are created in cultural, social, religious and political contexts.
- Teachers' beliefs are affected by emotional elements.

Understanding the ideals and beliefs of the individual teacher within different sets of circumstances requires taking a perspective that articulates the person's sense of purpose around which they organize their life and by which they define the failures and successes in their life and work. The focus on the agency of the informants in this study draws attention to how individuals find the scope to act according to their ideals and beliefs within a given context.

3.4 Teachers' agency

The dynamic interplay between ideals, beliefs and agency makes ideals and beliefs become somewhat visible in agency. Agency is a common everyday concept used in different fields of study, thus a brief explanation of the use of the concept is necessary. The concept of agency has been associated with "active striving, taking initiatives, or having an influence on one's life situation" (Eteläpelto, Vähäsantanen, Hökkä, & Paloniemi, 2013, p. 46). Their argument is that individuals act purposefully in society and can impact the structures of the world that they are a part of. The perspective acknowledges that people's actions are affected by, but not determined by, cultural and social structures.

One might say that the idea of developing the capacity of the individual to take action has been an underlying aim of western education since the Enlightenment. In theories of adult learning, Freire (1979) points to the power of collective agency through community-based development. In more recent discussions of adult learning, Biesta and Tedder (2007) view agency as learning through life and work as active citizens in society. Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto (2009) see agency as a force for development and change that might appear as resistance to impinging reforms.

However, in the literature, agency is often associated with positive aspects of change, embracing agency as a vital part of teachers' professionalism and implying teachers activly influence their lives and work (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Goodson, 2008). In the book *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds* (Holland, 1998), the term agency is used in anthropological references to Nepal. The authors address the individual's ability to use the cultural resources that are available to interpret actions. The ability to use cultural resources might also imply finding ways to maintain, but not necessarily change, a situation, or actively resist change in the local context, which is something the empirical data gathered in this study seems to point toward.

In the article, "What is Agency? Conceptualizing Professional Agency at Work", Eteläpelto et al. (2013) discuss notions of agency and conceptualize agency from a subject-centred perspective and a socio-cultural perspective, identifying four traditional areas of discussion in terms of agency. One discussion they point to refers to the social sciences by looking at social structures and human agency through a particular reference to Gidden's (1984) focus on the individual's capacity to influence social events (Eteläpelto et al. 2013, p.49). Another discussion refers to Archer's (2000) definition of agency as emerging from internal conversation to intentional actions, pointing to individuals' sense of self as being connected to agency on various levels (Eteläpelto et al. 2013, p.50). Yet another discussion revolves around post-structural feminist discussions on agency and the individual identity(Eteläpelto et al. 2013, p.51). Lastly, within a life-course discussion, agency focuses on past influences, as well as on the present by looking towards the future, where identity is related to the practice of agency in different contexts (Eteläpelto et al. 2013, p.54).

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) point to three dimensions of agency: the past, the future and context. They refer to the iterative part of agency, where choices are influenced by the past, on the projective aspects of choices that are based on future hopes, and on the practical evaluative aspects that depend on the external demands of the situation. Biesta and Tedder (2007) argue that to understand agency one must understand the ecological circumstances or conditions in which a person reflects and makes choices. They maintain that the "achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural factors" (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137). They highlight that actors act by *means* of the environment, not just *in* the environment. In that sense, the effects of culture and the perceptions of expectations in a particular setting either enable or hinder the extent to which

agency can be achieved when the actors critically respond to challenging situations (see Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 11).

Biesta, Priestley and Robinson (2015) have used the concept of agency related to belief in their studies of teachers. They argue that achievement of agency is informed by past experience in the way of personal and professional biographies that is orientated towards the future. The perspective on agency is influenced by what they refer to as cultural, material and structural resources, pointing to the role of beliefs in the achievement of agency (Biesta, Priestley, & Robinson, 2015, p. 627). The way in which agency is used here, deals with how individuals find space or scope to act according to their beliefs, within *structural, cultural and material* circumstances. In this investigation this might refer to understanding agency in Nepalese structural, cultural and material circumstances. Examples of how circumstances in society might influence how agency is perceived could be illustrated by the following.

3.4.1 Teachers' agency in Hindu structural circumstances

Understanding agency in the context of Nepal implies understanding agency in hierarchical social structures, since the social hierarchy is a fundamental element of Nepalese society. Relationships in a social hierarchy dictate appropriate types of interaction in accordance with relative superior–inferior positions, reflecting ethical principles for relationships based on the same superior–inferior positions. The ethical principles are considered in order to show respect to the superior in order to determine who assumes the role of resource allocator. Those who assume the role of the superior should guide and make decisions for those in the inferior position, and for those who assume the role of the inferior, the principles of duty, obedience, submission and loyalty to the instructions of the superior apply (Hwang, 2001).

Even though Nepal is not a homogeneous society, education and teaching, as mentioned earlier, have in this setting mainly been influenced by high-caste groups, like the Bahuns/Brahmins who adopted a Hindu worldview that dates back hundreds of years. The Hindu hierarchical social structure does not, however, represent all groups in Nepalese society, but in some ways it represents the most powerful subculture in education (see Bista, 1990, p. 77). When related to Nepalese cultural circumstances, agency might be affected by religious perspectives, such as the concept of karma.

3.4.2 Teachers' agency and cultural circumstances

The concept of karma in Hindu philosophy means that traditionally, people in the Nepalese society have been brought up to believe that life has been predetermined, which means that life is predestined by powerful external forces. In that sense, fatalism might affect agency, since life is already decided, and personal effort might only have an impact if it resonates with powerful external forces. In particular, people have a habit of cursing themselves and referring to fate as what is written on the forehead, when distressed over their lack of agency in terms of accessing resources. Bista (1991) argues that a fatalistic attitude "greatly affects problem-solving and goal achievement behaviour" (Bista, 1991, p. 77). Only religious merit can influence one's destiny. The Brahmin gurus were the intermediaries between people and the supernatural powers, and could in some ways, through prayer and *puja* (ritual), influence future outcomes.

Bista (1991) explains that since high caste activities in society, such as reading, writing and debate, have gradually become accessible to other caste groups, it has been possible for other caste groups to gain high-caste status through the pursuit of education. Education is looked upon as a means of acquiring status and respect in society, which can give a person a position of authority. Regarding the traditional Hindu worldview, education is not primarily looked upon as a way to obtain skills or a particular set of knowledge to gain employment in the labour market (Bista, 1991, p. 124). Nepal is considered one of the economically poorest countries in the world. In the Nepalese context, material wealth greatly affects the range of choices available to the individual. Freire, the Brazilian educationalist, puts forward a particular viewpoint on systems of dominant social relations. Freire views how the oppressed perceive themselves as oppressed as being impaired by their submersion in the reality of oppression (Freire, 2008, p. 45). It might be simplistic to limit Freire's analysis to that of material oppression, however, he refers to freedom as perceiving the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which people can transform (Freire, 2008, p. 49).

3.4.3 Teachers' agency and material circumstances

While recognizing the role of class, in the Nepalese context, class constitutes a very different cultural understanding in the form of caste relationships and Hindu orientation towards spiritual upliftment. Traditionally, from a Hindu perspective, material wealth is considered to be connected to corruption and greed and low-caste physical labour. The ultimate aim is to free oneself from material things and desire, and to comply with a supernatural agency and purpose. Individual agency is submissive to external forces. Under the caste system, people should

"engage in activities that are appropriate to one's cast" (Bista, 1991, p. 79). Physical work is referred to by most people as pain (*dukkha*), and to be able to live without working is considered *sukkha* (fortunate). In contrast to western thinking, one might say that the individual, in a Hindu perspective, has a strong sense of personal control and social responsibility. Bista argues that in Nepal, there is a tendency to develop a (cultural) value system that lacks personal responsibility (see Bista, 1991, p. 78).

From this perspective, material interest is in some ways meaningless. In a Hindu worldview, material gain is associated with physical labour (pain). The ultimate goal is to avoid material pursuit or greed by accepting one's position and pursuing self-discipline. It would therefore be important to approach any analysis of oppression through a convergent theoretical framework in which where factors such as culture, religious beliefs, local cosmologies and history are recognized. The world of Christianity and capitalism in the west is not the world of high-caste spiritual Hindus. As Bista (1991) argues: "Western economic development theorists and foreign aid administrators continually ignore this difference and retreat into their own ethnocentrism" (p. 84).

3.4.3 Summing up the concept of teachers' agency

The argument for a subject-centred, socio-cultural and lifelong perspective, as proposed by Eteläpelto et al., seems an attractive one, because it offers a way of conceptualizing how individuals negotiate their lives and work in the contexts in which they form a part. Agency is seen here, shown in figure 3.3, as both the *intentionality* of actualizing beliefs and ideals as well as *acts* of will.

Figure 3.3 Agency as intentionality and action

Thus, agency might be seen as closely connected to acts of will to negate uncertainty or to stabilize a situation. The perspective points to how past experiences impact agency. The concept of agency holds that when experiencing ambivalence, uncertainty and paradox, people intend to resolve dissonance, by drawing on their deep-seated ideals. As highlighted earlier, when traditional values are challenged, the foundational ideals of a person appear to be revealed. In

these situations, the more rational, negotiated and practical *beliefs* of a person seem to be set aside while their ideals are vitalized, which appears to reflect the deeper emotional aspects that are activated through agency. Agency reflects a will to act according to deeply held ideals, visions and values, representing lived experiences and cultural heritage. In these situations, agency appears to be closer linked to what a person finds to be moral and just in a given situation.

3.5 Conclusion

Lastly, to sum up the discussion, when analysing the literature presented, the concept of teachers' beliefs is applied in the broadest sense. The concept of teachers' beliefs seems to encompass a person's cultural heritage, values, worldview and religious beliefs. In addition, beliefs are seen as affected by emotional aspects and rational aspects. Certain scholars also emphasize different views of how beliefs are connected to lives lived and biography. This wide range of perspectives on teachers' beliefs makes it difficult to use it as an analytical approach to examine the data presented in this study.

Ideals, as discussed earlier, have emerged from the data as separate from the concept of belief in situations where deeply held values, which are often traditional values, are challenged. Agency has been described in various ways in the literature. Some academics view agency as taking initiative or having an influence on one's life situation. Others elaborate on the concept as it connects to past experiences, future prospects and the external demands of a situation. These various perspectives describes how the concepts overlap one another, making concept of teachers' beliefs as difficult to use as an analytical tool. As shown in the previous presentation of the field of teachers' beliefs, the concept of teachers' beliefs seems to cover a whole range of elements collected under one general definition, encompassing worldview, culture, values, experience, emotions and rationality, aspirations and attitudes.

The theoretical perspectives and conceptual discussions that frame this research have required that distinctions be made between the concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency in order to analyse and understand the empirical data as shown in Figure 3.4.

Figure 3.4 Distinctions between ideals, beliefs and agency

These concepts are avenues through which to better understand teachers' lived experiences. Thus, in this perspective, life stories can have the character of modification of and flexibility towards life's events, including some kind of negotiation with reality that illuminates how the individual can interpret life's events. In the following, the three concepts will form a central framework for analysing the life stories of teachers. These concepts help to distinguish between deep-seated values that are rooted in the teachers' cultural heritage that is subject to the dynamics of the social influences of everyday life, which are inherent in belief and agency. Thus, cultural heritage and values shall be viewed as ideals, beliefs as ideals negotiated in reality and agency as the intentions of actions and of actions themselves.

4.0 Methodological considerations: A life history approach

4.1 Introduction

The research questions and the method upon which this study is based will set the stage for the enquiry. Various avenues can be taken to investigate how teachers perceive their mandate in the context of educational reform in Nepal, such as by way of observations and structured interviews, or through surveys and questionnaires. However, the intentions of the study are to understand the social purpose and socially inclusive practices of teachers that are related to deep-seated values that would be difficult to detect in a questionnaire or through classroom observation. Moreover, with structured interviews, there is a risk of the researcher controlling the conversation to the point that some of the natural flow of the informant's understanding and experience might easily be lost. Thus, one might argue that my contextual competence and ability to ask questions and get answers opens up the possibility of listening to what teachers want to say and how they wish to present themselves, while at the same time understanding the issues they raise in light of the context in which they live and work, as a result of my insider/outsider perspective.

In this chapter, the rationale behind my selection and appropriation of a life history method will be described. This will be discussed in relation to how Nepalese teachers perceive their lives and work in the context of the traditional Hindu education system and in the context of the more recent influence of multilateral organizations on the Nepalese education system. Ultimately, the question is whether the life history method is suited to examining how Nepalese teachers perceive and present their lives and work.

Among the challenges of life history research are the different terms used in relation to biographical methods and how the life history method differs from other narrative approaches. To further discuss the approach to the life history method, a brief account of the different strands within the narrative research field will be given in order to consider some of the challenges of understanding life history research.

4.2 The narrative landscape: The multitude of narrative strands

This investigation is situated within the qualitative enquiry community and takes a life history approach within a narrative research tradition. Most reviews on narrative research in social sciences point to the narrative shift or turn that took place in social science research in the 1960s

as a critical response to positivist approaches, which were perceived as too limiting to understand the human experience (Bamberg, 2007; Casey, 1995; Riessman & Quinney, 2005; Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray Orr, 2007; Ojermark, 2007). Within qualitative enquiry, a community of social scientists has developed a certain consensus regarding what counts as evidence, arguing for the "important aspects of the personal and the social realms that cannot be investigated within the limitations of what has been conventionally accepted as evidence" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 472). Although there has been a growing emphasis on the use of a narrative approach, the field is highly divided when it comes to ways of conceptualizing the narrative approaches and how stories are analysed (Bamberg, 2007; Casey, 1995). Polkinghorne (1992) states that narratives are stories used to understand human actions. The characterization of narratives differs in the way in which concepts are defined in the literature on the use of narratives. Some argue for the significance of social interaction in the construction of a narrative, whilst others focus more attention on the structure of the story and the researcher's role in eliciting meaning from and interpreting the events.

A growing interest in the narrative research approach has resulted in the creation of multiple definitions and standpoints within the field. Attempting to map the narrative research landscape is described by many as problematic, both when it comes to covering the multiple movements within it and when it comes to categorizing the research approaches into separate strands (Bamberg, 2007; Riessman & Quinney, 2005; Clandinin et al., 2007; Hyvärinen, 2010; Mishler, 1995; Riessman, 1993; Robert & Shenhav, 2014). Fenstermacher (1997) argues that the different approaches to narrative research have become so diverse that the field might need to establish a taxonomy of narratives, because what functions as "narrative research" is becoming increasingly relative to the individual researcher and the design in question (Fenstermacher, 1997). Ojermark solves the problem Fenstermacher points to in another way, by mapping the terminology used within the field and listing different research methodologies, such as: biographical research, ethnography, family history, narrative, oral history, case history, case study, life history, life story, narrative enquiry. She states, however, that the most common distinction in the field of narrative methodology is made between that of *life story*, which is the story told by the informant and *life history*, which is the story as interpreted and presented by the researcher (Ojermark, 2007). Robert and Shenhav (2014) show that meta reviews of narrative research have been approached in different ways (p. 2). According to them, all narrative studies implicitly or explicitly answer two key questions:

Is narrative the very fabric of human existence or a representational device amongst others? [...] Is it defined mostly as the characteristic of an approach, an object of investigation or both? (Robert and Shenhav, 2014, p. 1)

Narratives are by some researchers seen as the very fabric of human existence and they claim that narratives actually create the social world (Bruner, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988), while others examine the use of narratives on a more practical level and focus on narratives as a representational tool of that which is represented (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). Bamberg makes a similar point to that of Robert and Shenhav, and states that there have mainly been two different strands in theorizing and methodologically approaching narratives: the personal and subject-centred approach, and the social, cultural and plot-orientated methodology (see Bamberg, 2007, p. 2). The first strand focuses on personal ways to derive meaning and wholeness out of fragmented lived events, founded on the narrative as the means by which humans understand themselves, others and the world. The opposite strand puts it the other way around, arguing that personal stories are guided and framed within social and historical plots or grand narratives (Bamberg, 2007). There are however, those that emphasize a dialectic movement between the influence of personal agency in the construction of social practices and the process through which social practices reflects a person's view and actions (Bamberg, 2007; Goodson & Gill, 2011). How one answers these questions, emphasizing either the narrative itself or the "reality" it may portray, or both, has consequences for the research design on both an epistemological and practical level (see Robert & Shenhav, 2014, p. 13).

Maybe due to a resistance against the use of grand narratives, some approach meta reviews through "small stories", describing personal encounters with the various strands (Andrews, Squire, & Tamboukou, 2013). The grand narratives of the past are often linked to notions of progress; however, the public's mistrust of their "capacity to guide and shape our destiny" (Goodson, 2006, p. 8) is growing.

The overview shows that there are different traditions of and points of view regarding what counts as a scientific method in the social sciences. In this outline, two main traditions have emerged: life stories and life histories. Since the intention is to understand the deep underlying values and ideals of the informants within a given context, the life history approach seems to match the intentions of this enquiry. The research process intends to reveal patterns, structures and themes that might give a deeper understanding of how teachers perceive and respond to their local environment. In this study, it is particularly interesting to interpret the informants'

understanding of reform processes. Thus, taking a systematic approach to analysing the stories of teachers in an attempt to gain a true perspective of their understanding and strategies when manoeuvring within a context of reform, gives the study a scientific foundation. Accordingly, the life history approach taken in the study connects to an established research methodology.

4.2.1 Life history: Its origins

As a research methodology, life history has been applied by researchers since the beginning of the twentieth century. The work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1927) at the University of Chicago on "*The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*" is regarded as the foundational study promoting life history perspectives (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1927). Another prominent life history researcher from the Chicago school was Robert Park, who did several studies of life in the city(I. Goodson, 1980). Other major contributions were the works of Shaw (2013), on "*The Jack-Roller*"(Shaw, 2013), and "*The Professional Thief*", by Corwall and Sutherland(Corwall and Sutherland, 1988).

General traits of the methodology were analysed and described by Dollard (1935) in "Criteria for the Life History". According to Dollard (1935), the individual is a product of their cultural influences, and human action must be regarded as socially relevant—particularly in terms of family background. A person's character should thus be closely linked to their childhood and upbringing, and the social context surrounding the person has to be carefully and continuously specified. His criteria also address the structure and procedure of the life history in terms of the documentary analysis, the fairness of review and the normativity of the life history (Dollard, 1935). Critics of Dollard claim that he undermines the individual's capacity and power to influence culture (Goodson, 1980). Dollard's criteria might also have led to the more cohesive use of narratives, if the researchers did not acknowledge the storyteller's capacity to act and change the world around him/her.

Between the 1930s and the 1960s, little attention was paid to the life history method by mainstream sociologists due to the major appropriation of quantitative methods to generate "macro" theories (Roberts, 2002). One of the main reasons for the neglect of single studies in this period might have been the need for sociologists to professionalize their science, necessitating the use of a more "objective" approach that could justify sociology as an academic discipline (Goodson, 1980). Life history was also relegated to the sidelines when sociology moved towards the use of more interpretative research methodologies, due to its emphasis on social structuralism. Ultimately, the impact of an individual's biography on social interactions

was more or less ignored at this point (Goodson, 1980). In the following period, studies on the perspectives of groups and actors in society with more situational emphases emerged; however, in failing to connect these to historical processes, they continued to side-line the life history method (Goodson, 1980). As demonstrated in this overview of the origins of life history research, in many ways, narrative research facilitated a move away from the modernist master narratives as part of the social production of individualism linked to notions of progress and liberation.

Taking the multiple narrative strands and the origins of life history into consideration, the question of what forms of narrative enquiry will be most suitable seems to rely first and foremost on which method is most likely to yield answers to my research questions. This requires a method that both incorporates the individual perspective as well as the structural and historical context. Life history seems to be one of the few narrative approaches that provides an opportunity to do both. Life stories are seen as partial and selective accounts of lived experience in text, which call for a process of interpretation. The life history approach adds another layer of interpretation. This shift from a life story to a life history involves many methodological issues as well as the researcher's ability to locate the story.

In her anthropological work, Behar writes:

> Rather than looking at social and cultural systems solely as they impinge on a life, shape it, and turn it into an object, life history should allow one to see how an actor makes culturally meaningful history […] a life history narrative should allow one to see the subjective mapping of experience, the working out of a culture and a social system that is often obscured in a typified account. (Behar, 1990, p. 225)

Goodson describes life history as a middle ground method, encompassing both structural and individual perspectives. This provides the researcher with a tool to analyse how the political and historical context connects with the lived experiences of human beings (Goodson, 1980). The life history approach may access the overlap between life stories and their historical context through the collaborative interpretation of the researcher and the respondent. The emancipatory aspect concerning the participant's self-understanding is also accentuated:

> Life history work underlines the importance of placing the life narratives in the historical context, and there is a strong sense of research collaboration which helps locate each unique story in a broader frame – providing wider historical insights for the storyteller

and the broader audience for whom the story is recounted. (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 40)

Life is thus seen and acted upon through the narratives people tell about themselves, others and their purpose in the world (see Goodson & Gill, 2011, pp. 102, 104). The method is based on a transactional view of human and social development, making life stories essential elements in the construction of society and culture. The dialectic movement between individual agency and cultural influences empowers human beings to change their environment. Therein lies the possibility for single actors to battle hegemonic structures in society. Even though the perspective suggests a belief in human potential, it also avoids giving the individual a dominant position over structure, thereby allowing human behaviours to be interpreted as social and relational products, and not solely as individual traits.

4.2.2 Narrative characteristics and structure

There seem to be two main contradictory theories of how narratives are constructed and told: first, there is the claim that every narrative is structured by a similar formula, as proposed by Labov (1997), and second, Goodson's (2011) counterclaim, that stories differ in substance, aspiration and structure.

Labov's (1997) work on narrative structure rests on sociolinguistic arguments and is based on his and Waletzky's (1968) study of African American vernacular English in South Harlem (Labov & Waletzky, 1997). Labov focused on the narrative "product" and argued that a story could only be regarded as "well told" if it rested upon a specific set of sequential narrative clauses. Bruner (1987) also pointed to a set of recognizable structures in narratives (Bruner, 1987). However, in approaching narrative characteristics from a constructivist perspective, he incorporated both the linguistic and the formative process of narrating. He argued that the ways of telling life stories at some point become so habitual that they turn into "recipes" of how to structure and present experiences. According to Bruner (1987), these formal structures are laid down in early childhood based upon family discourses that are more or less path dependently embraced throughout life. To understand a life story one must, according to Bruner, examine not only how a story is structured, like Labov does, but also reflect on the various possible ways that the story *could* have been told. Goodson (2011) makes a similar argument as Bruner, and states that Labov's model is not adequate to be applied in life history research. He also claims that Labov's assumption that all stories are generally narrated in similar ways has been disproven. Goodson justifies this by referring to research findings that show there are distinct

and recognizable differences in both the aspirations and structures of stories—the interpretive process which he refers to as "narrativity" (see Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 57).
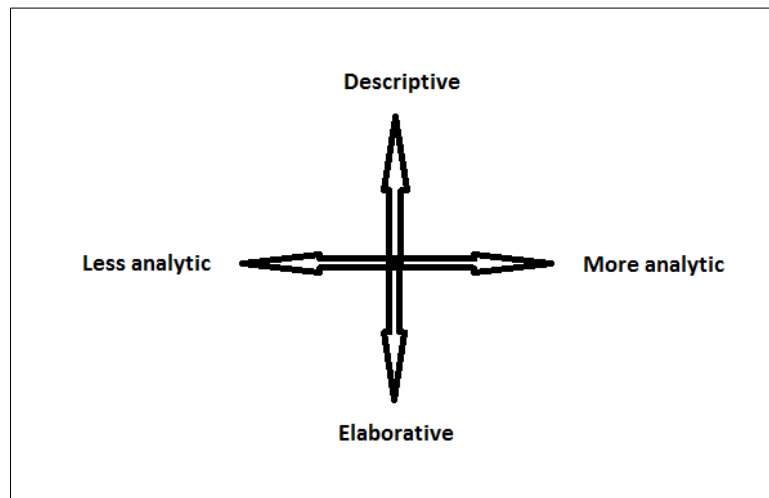
Figure 1: Goodson's model of the spectrum of narrative strategies

Goodson (2011) places narrative strategies on a spectrum between two distinctive categories: descriptive and analytical. People can approach their narratives in a more or less analytic manner, as well as a more or less scripted or elaborative way (See Figure 1). *Descriptive* stories are often characterized by chronological series of descriptions of what happened with less reflection, whilst *elaborative* stories involve more analysis and reflection on life's events. Understanding that people employ such different strategies, is, according to Goodson, not only important for comprehending the story told, but it also demonstrates that social patterns do not necessarily determine individual responses, and that the researcher must work with both social forces and narrative responses in order to understand human agency or cultural transformation.

4.2.3 Differences marked by the concept of "truth"

The concept of "truth" is central in all sciences, and researchers take various approaches to the concept. The same is true for the narrative tradition. Issues related to what counts as evidence in social sciences is of relevance to this study. In qualitative research, the philosophical question of what is *truth* implies an interaction with the social world, and involves checking the credibility of the content and the purpose of an investigation (Polkinghorne, 2007, p. 472). Narrative researchers have argued that social sciences need to develop ways to access how people experience meaningful life events that fall beyond the scope of the conventional modes of validation.

This transactional relationship between the individual and culture is highly relevant when considering the aspect of narrative 'truth'. Narrative approaches differ in both their analytic

preferences and perspectives of knowledge. Some stress that the result of a narrative study should be generated through collaboration between respondents and the researcher, and that the stories told are constructs of the narrative agreements between these two parties. This position might be criticized in that it makes it impossible for the researcher to hold a realist position, because the result would never represent an objective reality (Ojermark, 2007). Others argue that the results represent a narrative reconstruction of a lived experience in a social reality (Goodson, 2008).

Furthermore, there seems to be a split within narrative researchers concerning the aspect of scrutinizing and ensuring that narratives actually bring about elements of factual truth (see Fenstermacher, 1997; Phillips, 1994), while others argue that truth must be seen as floating or provisory, relying on social and communal acceptance of certain prevailing arguments in a specific culture (see Doyle, 1997). These two groups also seem to present separate research agendas. Those who support the importance of factual (historic) truth also seem to be more engaged with generating evidence-based and standardized policy programmes for school improvement (see Fenstermacher, 1997; Phillips, 1994). The other group supports the opposite position, arguing that evidence-based policy programmes undermine the importance of the context, history and culture in which the research narrative is situated (Doyle, 1997).

4.2.4 Methodological challenges and plausibility

How can the qualitative study of teachers' life histories contribute to making generalizations about them? The position of the life historian values the contribution of the individual subject and would argue that large samples are, in this particular tradition, not the ultimate aim. Life history research aims at acknowledging the complexity of the relationship between the individual and the society, especially with regards to the ways in which people tell their stories and situate their lives (Goodson & Gill, 2011).

Kvale refers to various forms of generalization in qualitative research, and states that *analytical* generalization, for example, involves creating a sound argumentation for how the findings in one study can be seen as providing the guidelines for what could happen in another situation (Kvale, 1987, p. 161). Additionally, Polkinghorne argues for the force of the better argument, which refers to an argumentative practice of validating knowledge claims (Polkinghorne, 1988). Consequently, it is a question of how well the researcher presents and argues the case of the individual and the society.

Taking a larger scale approach would produce more examples and variations. Yet, this particular study of the life histories of teachers is expected to generate interest in further studies into teachers' subjectivity, not merely act as a quantitative indicator or a theoretical construct. One of the intentions of the research is reflexivity on local perspectives in educational forums that open up the possibility to investigate ways to response to the institutionalized and socialized practices of schooling, that offer a more informed and relevant approach. One aspect of generating knowledge is the investigation of various competing arguments that are available and thus argue for the credibility of alternative interpretations (Polkinghorne, 1983). In the case of teacher research in Nepal, earlier I indicated the tendency of the research community to focus on facilitating the implementation processes of universal reform programmes that rely on accountability mechanisms and standardized measurement. Thus, the recognition of a competing argument for more independent research that recognizes the human aspect supports Polkinghorn's argument for alternative perspectives that seek to investigate local worldviews and traditions, arguing for subjective interpretations. Parts of the argument in favour of the life history enquiry lie within the claim that local stakeholders in Nepal express the opinion that being held accountable for the implementation of universal standards and practices reduces their freedom to act, think and respond in accordance with their own contexts (Awasthi, 2004; Bhatta, 2011; Bista, 1991). Furthermore, from an ethical standpoint, the methods should generate knowledge that enhances people's lives.

The research findings represent examples of local perspectives, while avoiding exacerbating the individual focus by pointing to social constructions. The force of the argument will subsequently depend on the how well the local perspectives are presented as a foundation for a more general discussion on Nepalese education. The study demonstrates variation in the human response to society and culture, indicating possibilities and agency, and subsequently predicts alternative cultural responses and changes. Nevertheless, it is somewhat dubious to claim that this research has empowering properties. What the life history approach does is to make teachers' accounts accessible in forums where, without the research, these accounts would not be part of the discussion.

The strong argument in favour of the use of a life history approach in this study is that the method allows the individual to present themselves as they want to through collaboration. The aim is to understand personal experience and take wider socio-historical concerns into account that might be taken for granted by the individual, who may be less aware of them. Through such an investigation, the individual is studied in relation to his or her biography, historical situations

and their interrelation. This particular study aims to describe and understand teachers' beliefs and ideals in relation to how they see their mandate as teachers in the Nepalese context. The teachers' stories are viewed in the context of a traditional Hindu education system and under the more recent influence of multilateral organizations in the Nepalese education system. The enquiry investigates the social purpose and socially inclusive practices of teachers that emerge in life stories in order to understand what teachers pursue, thereby creating a commanding storyline to articulate the beliefs and ideals of their lives and work. The study is interested in the way teachers narrate their lives, aiming to portray teachers as they themselves wish to present themselves, and explore the various teachers' responses to educational reforms. The stories are seen as accounts that are removed from life experiences, representing partial and selective commentaries of life events, which calls for a process of interpretation and ultimately documentation.

With regard to collaboration in the process of developing life history research, there is a danger that the researcher will lose critical and analytical distance from the interviewee and the narrative data, which might lead to a shadowing of less compelling aspects of teachers' lives and work. At the same time, one might argue that the collaborative element also enhances the trustworthiness of the interpretation and representation of the life histories, due to the reciprocal exchange that allows the respondent to disagree and discuss the researcher's analysis. In this sense, the approach might help to enhance the justification of the analysis, thereby making the final research product less open to criticism for being cohesive, deceitful and/or misrepresentative (Plummer, 2001).

Hellevik (1943) states that research validity depends on whether the enquiry finds out or measures what it initially proposed to do (p. 183). Kvale (1997) also argues that the issue of *validity* in qualitative research is concerned with the extent to which the research method investigates what it intended to investigate (p. 74). Similarly, Polkinghorne (2007) points to the argumentative practice of validating knowledge claims, referring to the sound argument of the enquiry (p. 476). Goodson (2008), however, maintains that *plausibility* covers in a more nuanced way what the life history method offers. Since the life history approach aims to explore how people make sense of life events, it implies the description of the multiple realities of informants as representations of the life concerned. In arguments in favour of life history research, these questions cannot be ignored. The methodological challenge posed by this particular study has its foundation in the lifeworld of individuals and their everyday language and argumentations. In this study, it is the researcher who must make a plausible knowledge

claim. Rather than using a term like 'validity', which is employed by conventional researchers, the soundness of the arguments presented by narrative researchers are described in terms of their *plausibility*.

When adopting a methodological approach that deals with subjectivities, an approach must be chosen that is looked upon by many as uncertain. This implies that the researcher carrying out a narrative research study has to construct a strong justification for the methodology throughout the different stages of the study. From the outset, presenting a comprehensive life history account of this investigation has required an approach that aligns closely with the teachers' lifeworld, which subsequently creates links to history, culture, politics and theory. The teachers' life histories create the personal foundations of the investigation, whilst the historical perspective places the study in its historical context.

However, a life story can be narrated, told and interpreted in multiple ways, ranging from an inauthentic fiction to a reliable reconstruction of lived events. Since one cannot escape the presence of a fictional element in life stories, the question is to what degree does the story appear plausible to the audience (Horsdal, 2012). Plausibility is very much determined by the degree of coherence and authenticity of the story. On the one hand, it is possible to construct coherence in an inauthentic story. On the other hand, an authentic story can be perceived as implausible due to how the story is told. A reliable story would have to account for both conditions—coherence *and* authenticity—in order to be considered plausible (Horsdal, 2012). Out of this emerges another problem: the narrative competence of the teller and the listener. The ability to interpret, understand and evaluate the plausibility of a life story is to a great extent dependent on how well the teller remembers and engages in a meaningful selection of fragmented lived events, and further connects them like a string that joins the past to the present and to predictions of the future. One might argue, however, that the plausibility also relies on the listeners' 'reading competence', which is related to his/her insights into and knowledge of how humans construct narratives in different ways and in different contexts. It is also reasonable to argue that such a competence cannot simply be learned through reading a handbook on the matter but is rather gathered and developed in an ongoing hermeneutical process based on reading, living and capacity to listen. Since the justification of my interpretation largely depends on my understanding of how people narrate their lives, it is thus relevant to acknowledge the challenge of representation in analysing individuals' stories as the basis for understanding certain groups in society.

According to Polkinghorne (2007), issues of validity in narrative research relate to how well the evidence is regarded as a portrayal of the participant's experiences, and he states that the gap between the actual experience and the narration of the experience is based on four sources: the limits of language, the limits of reflection, and the resistance and to complexity of the co-creation of text by the interviewer and the interviewee. In this sense, the trustworthiness and plausibility of an interpretation and representation of a life history must be justified with regards to both individual agency and contextual and relational matters. 'Truth' in a life story is then more a matter of 'who is telling the story', and what he/she acts upon, than it is an accurate account of what actually happened—the interpretation that is made of the story can be viewed as viable and grounded in the narrative data (Polkinghorne, 2007). As a researcher, one can only strive to make a solid argument for one's interpretation. Claims of plausibility can only be granted by the readers of the text and by those to whom the claim is addressed (Polkinghorne, 2007). Life stories are seen as partial and selective accounts of lived experience in text, which calls for a process of interpretation. The life history adds another layer of interpretation. This move from a life story to a life history involves many methodological considerations, the researcher's linguistic ability and cultural knowledge, including the social skills that are required in the particular context. This accentuates the personal and the individualistic nature of the methodology.

In terms of the actual interview situation, it is important to be aware of the cooperation between the informant and the researcher, perhaps even more so in a cultural setting that is foreign to many of the readers, as in this particular study. I would also point to the language of the interviews and the oral tradition in Nepalese culture. Teachers are historically considered articulate and expected to be good rhetoricians and public speakers (Bista, 1991). Nepalis are raised in an oral culture in which high-caste people are considered more educated and articulate. Traditionally, education was designed solely for high-caste and people with high social status; however, as other castes entered education and the field of teaching, these people began to use a higher caste form of language.

As for the transcription of the data in this study, many questions emerge concerning the use of language. The transcriptions were translated from Nepali into English, thus raising the question of skilful translation. Additionally, and perhaps trickier, is the question of whether translations of the original transcripts are justifiable, not only in terms of the words that were uttered, but whether the translations convey the essence of the expressions used and the stories told from a cultural perspective. For example, decisions were made when retelling accounts made in Nepali

that were based on particular cultural insights, in order to ensure they assumed a form that could bring out certain particularities in the setting, and secondly, be respectful and logical in English. I produced the English-language transcripts based on the interviews that were recorded in Nepali. The analysis and the reporting of the data must thus reflect a credible description of the interpretations and findings. My background is important in terms of possessing an adequate understanding of the Nepalese language, culture and context when handling the empirical data and interpreting and translating the interviews.

4.3 Central elements in the narrative research process

According to Goodson and Gill (2011), there is no definite procedure for doing life history research (p. 36). Rather, they suggest that there are certain stages in the life history construction process, and present some established elements that are necessary in a life history approach. These include the selection of participants, setting the scene and building trust, the interviews and the construction of life histories. In the following section, some elements of the life history approach that are relevant to this study will be presented according to the experiences that have been gained in the process of gathering and handling the empirical data. Thus, the stages of constructing a life history have been developed and modified in the process of uncovering the essences of the data, and to subsequently uphold a critical view of the process. As an analytical division, it might be said that principally, one has to relate to three main elements in a research process, namely the *researcher*, the *informants* and the *context.* In conclusion, the interaction between these elements will ultimately construct the process.

4.3.1 The researcher

Over a period of several years, I have gradually carried out life history interviews with teachers in Nepal. This study also includes documentation and accounts from many different sources that have informed my understanding of teachers and education in Nepal, including local interpretations of educational practices. The data collection was an accumulation of knowledge, primarily from the life stories that were initially constructed.

The personal and individualistic nature of the life history methodology calls for both the method and the researcher to possess certain characteristics, among them capability and trustworthiness. It might be argued that my insider/outsider perspective gives me both a distance and a closeness to what is investigated. Due to my position outside the caste system, and my Norwegian cultural heritage, family background and education, I maintain a certain distance from the subject matter. However, as emphasized earlier, the insider perspective from which I view teachers,

has, in this particular setting, its origins in my long history with the people and places of Nepal in my formative years, as well as connections to my professional life. The dynamics of these two positions, I would argue, gives me a unique insight into the phenomena under investigation, and the possibility to offer interpretations based on proximity and distance to the topic, as well as point to certain elements that might have influenced the participants.

My confidence in undertaking the task of investigating Nepalese teachers' life histories is rooted in my numerous interactions with teachers in Nepal over the years and my ability to relate to their lives through a somewhat common understanding (platform) of language and culture. I have come to appreciate that I have a rare opportunity to present an insider/outsider perspective in relation to both the world of a Nepalese teacher and the world of education in a western context. On different occasions I have been interviewed in the Nepalese media about my sense of belonging and loyalty to Nepalese culture and society ('Nepalki chhori Helen-Nepali Times', n.d.). At the same time, my insider/outsider perspective gives me a certain freedom from caste obligations, for example. The legal code of Muluku Ain (1854) declared that westerners were classified as impure, but touchable (Hofer, 1979, p. 45). However, the status of caste is not a rigid, fixed identity, but is socially negotiated, which means that the position and identity of me as a teacher, researcher and white person (*kuire*) who speaks Nepali, can be negotiated. I am categorized in terms of my status as a *bidesi* (foreigner), yet this position is not static. For instance, when interacting with certain people they might identify me as being one of them, depending somewhat on our relationship. Language also identifies the position of a person and the degree of intimacy there is in the relationship. By some close friends, I would be referred to as "ta" (you), which is the lowest form of a pronoun, yet also the most familiar, whilst at other times I would be referred to as "tapai", which is the more deferential form, depending on the situation. At the same time, my position as an insider, one who understands colloquial language and takes the cultural system for granted, engenders trust among participants and makes them open to holding conversations about their lives.

In the past, Nepalese society has had high expectations of foreigners (Bista, 1991) in terms of their ability to further the country's economic development. However, over the years, the local interpretation of foreigners has somewhat been nuanced by the country opening itself up to the outside world through increased access to foreign media and the growing number of tourists visiting from all walks of life. Additionally, an aspect of life in urban Kathmandu is the community of highly paid expatriates and/or volunteers who stay for short or long periods of

time in the country and impact the local economy and school systems. In particular, numerous international schools cater to expatriate children and well-off local families.

4.3.1.1 Multicultural children

With regard to the cultural identities of expatriate children, like myself, there are a range of international studies and a body of research that address the issue of mobility in children and their connection to two or more cultures. In particular, over the years an increasing number of missionaries, diplomats and employees of multinational organizations living abroad and accompanied by their children have sent their children to international schools, because they perceive the local education system as inadequate Children with these kinds of experiences of mobility are by some scholars described as Third Culture Kids (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). Individuals who have spent the majority of their formative years living in countries other than the home countries of their parents are described by some as having a sense of belonging to both (or numerous) cultures. However, these children often have no sense of total ownership of any culture, and tend to blend their experiences, thereby creating communality with others with similar experiences, thereby creating a third culture (Pollock & Van Reken, 2010). For such children, the notion of home is often associated with relationships rather than location (Hayden, 2012).

This might be true for a number of people who have spent time living in countries with different cultures; nevertheless, in this study I argue that the methodology that has been appropriated is fundamentally based on a cultural knowledge that is founded in location and relation. Tuan's (1979) description of a sense of space and place covers in a more nuanced way what I profess to culturally understand based on having spent my formative years in Nepal. He writes, "We can know a place subconsciously, through touch and remembered fragrances, unaided by the discriminating eye" (Tuan, 1979, p. 411). He argues that humans can accumulate a profound sense of place by repeated experience and ties to rites and celebrations. Places can be described not only as visible public symbols, but also as what he calls *fields of care*, in which places are described in relation to time, where time is of the essence to accumulate experiences and build up care, depending on human relations and emotions (Tuan, 1979, p. 411). In this sense, Yuan states that places are worlds that can be called forth by an intangible net of human relations.

My sense of belonging is a bodily, relational knowledge that was accumulated over time and in places characterized by strong human relations, rites and celebrations. Consequently, I

personally understand the world of Third Culture Kids. Growing up, I was also part of an international community in Nepal. However, all the hours spent playing in the dried-out rice fields with the neighbourhood kids, and singing to Narayan Gopal's love songs on the radio, contributed to forming a body of knowledge that constitutes a language that was developed at a particular time and in a place that most Nepali adults would recognize, and to which they would relate. This cultural knowledge forms the foundation of my life history approach and my confidence in interpreting and explaining what might seem self-evident to Nepalese teachers. This reality is what Schutz and Luckmann describe as the "everyday life-world" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, p. 3). We were born into a life world that existed before we came into it—a structured, social, cultural and historically given world. "It is the arena of our actions as well as what sets the limits" (Schutz & Luckmann, 1974, p. 6). These brief descriptions of my background point to a profound sense of belonging to two cultures. Nonetheless, when faced with the experience of entrusted relationships, with mutual trust comes—I believe—a certain responsibility to reflect on and share those parts of the larger narrative that are not often told. This feeling of obligation to give something back to the people that raised me is a foundational aspect of how the community I grew up in works, and explains my motivation to study teachers in Nepal.

Furthermore, I would argue that the role of a life historian demands an ability to interact with people and be approachable in a way that opens up possibilities to engage in conversation. The method calls for a certain capacity to listen beyond what is said and to be willing to share one's own experiences in life, particularly in a social setting such as Nepal.

This study of Nepalese teachers' stories of their lives and work is a study of human experience, as a result, the story of the researcher ultimately becomes interwoven in the process. Gadamer (1960) points to how individuals *project* meaning, in this case, into the stories that are influenced by the readers' expectations of the matter. These so-called initial meanings are revised through the narrative encounter. Therefore, there is tension between the initial meaning and the new meaning that emerges, which entails the one being receptive to the other. The hermeneutical undertaking is to question the text. Therein lies an awareness of our prejudices as listeners in meeting with the unknown, or with what is different, to resolve dissonances in order to broaden our experiences of the world. This implies that the story told is part of the many stories of the narrator's inner life, which again is part of the narrator's whole context. Therefore, Gadamer argues that the communality is what determines our understanding. The narrative encounter encompasses creating a new understanding that challenges our own

experiences and notions. Language is thus part of what shapes the way we think, act and speak; yet, at the same time, it can also limit us (Gadamer, 2008). The narrative dialogical process of eliciting stories of teachers' lives and work might thus bring new understanding through revealing the differences of horizons.

As for the writing up of such research, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) integrate these processes and suggest that the informant and the researcher construct and reconstruct stories of self through the process of storying. They propose a collaborative process of enquiry, and acknowledge the inter-subjective nature of the enquiry and the use of personal materials. As presented above, this study of Nepalese teachers' stories is closely connected to my own experiences in a particular context. Nevertheless, by including contextual data in life history research, events can be seen in a historical time of change, including aspects of their social construction. Goodson and Sikes point to this aspect of life history as different from what Connelly and Clandinin propose in their approach to narrative enquiry. Goodson and Sikes (2001) argue that locating these lived experiences within a broader social, political and cultural context makes the enquiry less self-absorbed and situational. From this point of view, my knowledge and background as a researcher is seen as a way to establish credibility in terms of my ability to access teachers' life stories from a particular point of view. The intention is not to incorporate personal writing into the interview situation to invite reflection on the inter-subjective nature of the enquiry; rather, the focus is on the life story that is told by the participant, and the triangulation of the life story by incorporating other documentations and personal accounts. The intent is to avoid being self-absorbed and situational, which can also be argued as the reason for taking a life history approach to this study. My stance as a researcher in the study has been to focus on how teachers present themselves—not to investigate or check if what they say correlates to their practice. The aim is not to scrutinize the so-called 'truth' of the story as it was lived, but to consider narratives as interpretations of self-understanding.

Subsequently, the standpoint would be to present what teachers articulate as relevant in the given context, supporting a life history approach, by incorporating other sources and accounts into the story in order to build an argument. The aim of the research is to avoid focusing on teachers' ability to deliver reform packages, and instead examine how they see their lives and work from a historical, social, political and cultural perspective while fulfilling global educational agendas.

4.3.2 The informants

Goodson (2011) argues that one of the main tasks for the researcher in selecting participants is to provide a spectrum of respondents, for example in terms of their age and gender. In this study, a variety of ethnic groups and castes are included as well, to avoid bias, a variety of informants were selected who were likely to have different views and experiences. Therefore, to ensure a wide range of representation, variation in the participants' ages and genders was preferred. Life stories were arranged and collected from various teachers living and working in various places in Nepal through local contacts in the community. The reason for selecting informants through other people involved in teaching in Nepal was to avoid personal feelings of obligation or exposure. Four teachers were selected from a mid-hill, rural district, by a government employee working as a teacher trainer for NCED (with whom I was acquainted because I had participated in a training session some years previous). Two other teachers, working in an urban setting, were selected by a teacher trainer at Kathmandu University with whom I had not been acquainted previously. A teacher trainer working for a Non-Government Organisation (NGO), with whom I was acquainted as a result of participating in a teacher training programme, helped me to find some participants from a remote hill area. Lastly, a teacher friend of mine from Gorkha introduced me to two informants from a district centre setting. The teachers that were selected were mostly from the mid-hills of Nepal, aged between their mid-twenties and their mid-fifties; some were women, and some were men, and all came from different ethnic groups and castes. The following table identifies the timeframe of the interviews with each of the participants.

Participant	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Rabina	January 2014	March 2015	May 2016
Damodar	January 2014	March 2015	May 2016
Krishna	March 2015	May 2016	
Sita	January 2014	March 2015	
Pemba	March 2015	May 2016	
Sarala	January 2014	March 2015	May 2016
Bhupendra	March 2015	May 2016	
Chandramaya	January 2014	March 2015	
Prakash	March 2015	May 2016	
Arjun	March 2015	May 2016	
Ram	January 2014	March 2015	
Prem	March 2015		

Table 4.1 The time frame of the interviews with the participants of the study

Since the aim of the study is to explore how teachers in Nepal make sense of and account for their lives and work in education, implies view that the social world is interpreted in different ways and results in the description of different realities. Therefore, the informants are engaged in interpreting the world from different perspectives and approaches, and the aim is not to find a fixed truth about what it is that is being investigated, or to try to select informants that represent a certain perspective on education (for example, teachers working on a project with a particular approach to teaching). Instead, an 'any old teacher would do' approach was taken. An alternative method would have been to select people from all over the country who represented each of the ethnic groups and castes. However, as Bista (1991) argues, since the teaching profession in Nepal has long been dominated by Brahmins, other ethnic groups entering into the profession have had the tendency to assume the traits of a Brahmin guru that are associated with the role and image of a teacher. In that sense, I would argue that it is possible to find certain commonalities across caste and ethnic groups in relation to the traits reflecting the cultural heritage of Hindu education. However, how individuals respond to the cultural heritage of education would perhaps depend more on their gender than their ethnicity. This explanation is based on my observations and interactions while spending a considerable amount of time in numerous educational institutions.

The various themes that emerged from the life stories led to a search for more documentation related to the themes. Life history involves the triangulation of different sources of data, where the focus is not to reveal the truth, but the personal stories that a person acts upon in their life. The procedure of collecting data places an emphasis on involving the participants in the analytic process by allowing them to collaborate with the researcher in the interpretation of their stories (Goodson & Gill, 2011). The way Nepalese teachers construct their identities is no longer simply related to caste, ethnicity or culture in a changing society. However, in the study of Nepalese teachers, the participants narrated their lives to achieve coherence by socially constructing themselves in an integrated way—for example, by upholding Hindu values. As mentioned earlier, many of the stories depict overcoming hardship through personal effort and endurance, even though life is more ambiguous and complex than that. Stories are often told to present certain values or particular views. Although a story is only partly an understanding of ourselves, it can identify certain aspirations and motivations of an individual. The meta-narratives of modernization pose challenges for teachers in the Nepalese context. A common aspect of Nepalese teacher identity has been described as being divided into two selves: a modern self and a gurukul self (Awasthi, 2004). These two selves have to negotiate an

individual's life projects in their search for meaning and some kind of coherence. Nash (2005) states that human narratives are perceived as central to construct coherence in life and allow for a certain structure of actions.

While writing up this thesis, the work in progress was presented to colleges at Kathmandu University (KU). The intention was to get input and feedback from educationalists working in in Nepal. During that time, I also held life history research methodology presentations at KU. On several occasions, I met with planners and policy makers at the Ministry of Education, and with NGO representatives working in education, who articulated critical views on educational policy formation, including its cultural impact on education in Nepal. These personal encounters were set in discussions of the global influence of child-rights approaches to education, and an awareness of the impact of culture and local cosmologies. However, my impression is that government officials tend to include and articulate the local epistemology and experience in their discussions on education, whereas NGO representatives tend to promote the global agenda exclusively as the cure for the ailments of development. This is an impression that has stuck with me.

4.3.4 Considering the context

Another arguably major part of the research situation is the cultural framework in which the enquiry is set. Firstly, some comments on the narrative characteristics and structure of the culture. Within the narrative tradition, there have been discussions as to the structure of narratives, as presented earlier. In the context of Nepalese society and culture, the way narratives are told tends to follow a certain structure.

4.3.4.1 Narrative characteristics and structure in the Nepalese context

Over the years, I have listened to a multitude of narratives told by teachers in formal and informal settings. Approaching narrative characteristics from a Nepalese perspective, one might incorporate certain processes of narrating, although not all stories are narrated similarly. However, some distinct forms of narrativity are often expressed. Many narratives refer to previous hardships (*dukkha*), which sets a kind of backdrop to how the person has, as a result of his or her ability to endure hardship (often with the guidance of a superior person), been able to attain a better life (*sukkha*). These narrative strands might be recognizable in the empirical data of this study.

People tell stories in particular ways for particular purposes, guided by the particular situation. The teachers in this study were asked to describe their own schooling, their entry into teaching

and how they experience their work. In this particular context, narrative forms within the culture tend to revolve around issues of hardship in life, *dukkha*, and the struggles of dealing with or overcoming hardship. Hardship and struggle are seen as normal aspects of life and it is perceived that it is through suffering and hardship that the person's subjectivity is created.

The implications of this generalized experience of dukkha, is that people come to actualize themselves in the process of overcoming constraints. Within the manner in which each individual deals with life's constraints, lies the scope to exercise agency. Narratives of suffering are often, in this social context, related to poverty or being wronged by someone. In their narration, the informants respond according to cultural and social norms that indicate the ethical and social negotiations of their individual agency. Poverty and cultural constraints create the conditions for the agency of the individual. In society, in general, labour is equated with dukkha, and avoided, if possible.

However, *sukkha*, which is the opposite of hardship, means living without struggle and work, which is considered fortunate (Bista, 1991). While in modern society, it is a struggle and an aim to find work (*jagir*) in general, nevertheless, the fortunate find employment that involves as little work or physical labour as possible. Considering the struggles associated with acquiring an education, traditional, hierarchical ideas remain prevalent by emphasizing discipline as the way to free oneself from desires and hardship. However, increasingly, education is seen as the key to upward economic mobility by opening up access to administrative jobs and hierarchic positions. The struggle to attain high exam results and test scores marks educational policies in ways that perpetuate historic social structures. With regard to the decisions people make, the informants commonly respond from the perspective of the social outcomes that might have been, by thinking of themselves in terms of their relations with others. The stories are told in social settings, guided by the informant's understanding of the situation, thereby giving them the opportunity to create an identity for themselves in the process, which is set within a particular context. The biographies are written from a schooling perspective and a cultural perspective at a particular time, based on a selection of memories that were recalled in the present and told to the researcher.

4.3.4.2 The relevance of life history research on teachers in Nepal

The focus of life history is to broaden the focus of personal experience to its socio-historical context and must be seen as one of many avenues of exploration in social science accounts. When reviewing contemporary studies of schooling in Nepal, little attention has been paid to

the impact of culture on education (Awasthi, 2004; Carney & Rappleye, 2011). Likewise, reports on the implementation processes of reforms tend to present teachers as barriers to their success. Teachers are thus reported as reluctant to change their ways (Parajuli et al., 2012, p.18). However, without situating these accounts within their historical and biographical contexts, it is impossible to portray teachers and understand what experiences are common to them without understanding if and why the commonality exists (Goodson, 2008). This is not to claim that teachers do not have characteristics in common in Nepal, but I would argue that there are differences in perspectives and attitudes that can be identified in personal biographies and historical backgrounds, and therefore there needs to be an integration of the situational with the personal and historical. This stance encompasses claims that teachers' previous life experiences shape how they view teaching, and that the Nepalese socio-cultural setting impacts the lives and work of teachers.

Examples of research that encompasses a socio-cultural and a personal perspective in the Nepalese context can be found in publications like those produced by Action Aid Nepal, such as *Listening to People Living in Poverty in Nepal* (2004). This collection of life history case studies advocates research on behalf of vulnerable groups in order to influence policy makers. Its analysis provides a broad perspective by focusing on individuals in their socio-political context with the aim of inciting political change. The study of poverty uses the life history method to reflect the life courses of people living in poverty, to show how individuals come to terms with life's constraints and how these relate to the wider social structure (Action Aid, 2005). Ojermark (2007) states that life histories can be used to inform how structure and agency intersect to produce the circumstances of people's lives. She also points to how life histories can generate counterintuitive findings that can stimulate new areas of research, which I would argue this study aims to do (Ojermark, 2007).

The life history approach has been shown to be useful when investigating and understanding the interplay between changes in society and individuals'/groups' lives and agency, due to the historical framework and contextual data in which the life stories are embedded (Goodson, 2008; Goodson & Gill, 2011). With this method, I am able to investigate and connect my questions to a wider historical and cultural context. Listening to teachers' stories about their lives and work allows me to incorporate a perspective of change in the Nepalese context, not simply how teachers currently position themselves in terms of international and national education policy.

As an example, in the field of international development there has also been a 'narrative turn' (Ojermark, 2007). The main research agenda for these scholars has been, amongst others, to find ways to give a voice to marginalized groups. The discussion of whether a narrative mainly functions as emancipatory or cohesive is relevant in this study for the reason that cohesive research narratives are often brought up in the debate over the heritage of qualitative studies. An example of a cohesive narrative is the stories of indigenous people that were collected and used by white settlers as a way of controlling and colonizing the local inhabitants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Narratives in this form have been strongly criticized by some theorists, who argue that cohesive narratives can function as a conservative social force that benefits the hegemonic power structures (see McEwan, 1997, p. 87). The view of narratives as solely cohesive has been contradicted by researchers who argue that narratives can be appropriated and understood in a more emancipatory manner (Goodson, 2008; McEwan, 1997). McEwan (1997) argues that narratives might be used in a positive and liberating way if the emphasis is placed on the narrating process itself, rather than on using socially repeated narratives, or grand narratives, to bind people to a system of belief. Following this line of thinking, one might also claim that if a narrative functions as cohesive, it has failed to scrutinize the telling and interpretation to a broader frame. Such decontextualized stories present a narcissistic potential through the risk of self-absorption as both a researcher and as a teller, fixated on one's own voice and assumptions (Goodson & Gill, 2011).

The use of life stories, often decontextualized, to offer examples of 'success stories' in international development programmes in order to generate support is controversial when used for the particular aims of international agencies or local governments. On the other hand, others (Ojermark,2007) would maintain that life histories can inform our understanding of, for example, poverty, in their potential to link the micro to the macro. The socially positioned story can remove, to some degree, the personal sense of responsibility for one's life to reveal that experiences can also be traced to larger socio-political and economic forces. In that way, some would argue that life histories can be used to portray how agency and structure interconnect to create certain circumstances (Action Aid, 2005). The question is what kinds of circumstances are portrayed to inform our understanding of poverty and how do they uplift marginalized groups? Some might argue that socially positioned stories, as empowering, are an illusion that works towards blurring the actual hegemonic power structures.

This study offers an approach that focuses on teachers' senses of their pedagogical mandate from a local perspective, rather than pointing to how teachers can better facilitate top-down

reforms, in a context in which multilateral organizations influence the Nepalese education system. In so doing, it distinguishes between research aiming at facilitating policy implementation processes and the more independent researchers aiming to generate local autonomy in order to reflect and act more in accordance with local challenges in a meaningful way.

4.4 The process of life history interviews

In the following, the process of eliciting life stories from teachers and developing life histories will be described and discussed.

4.4.1 Setting the scene and building trust

To establish trust in the interview setting, Goodson and Gill (2011) stress the value of being upfront with the participant about the methodological processes that will be undertaken. They state that:

> Sharing methodology not only empowers the participants to engage more actively in the research, but also reinforces the participants' awareness of the importance of their experiences and stories in the research and the significance of sharing and listening to each other's stories during the research interviews. (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 37)

According to Goodson and Gill (2011), building trust in a life history study is not a quick fix due to the duration of the research process. The method requires holding several meetings with the participants. However, in an oral and relational culture like in Nepal, conducting semi-structured interviews (as in this case) in order to ask participants to share their experiences of childhood schooling, and becoming and working as a teacher, was taken as highly culturally appropriate. All the participants spoke at length about their experience of life and work with hardly any need for additional probing questions to be asked. The majority of my material stems from openhearted conversations about the participants' life experiences and their current situations. The interviews were tape-recorded, but naturally, some conversations were not recorded, knowing that some details might be lost. I did not ask to observe any of the teachers in their classroom practices in order to 'check' the reliability of what they had told me, since that was not what I had set out to do. The intent was to listen to teachers' stories of what they believe to be important about their lives and work, not to fact check. The life histories are

perceived as representations of the lives they concern, although they cannot fully capture or recreate the experiences of a person.

The fieldwork was carried out in several phases. During the first phase, the focus was on meeting with the informants to listen to their life stories. Typically, I would meet with them at school or in their home. I did find in some cases that meeting with teachers in their homes influenced to some degree what was said. In one particular meeting, I could sense that the female teacher was affected by the possibility of her husband listening in on our conversation; subsequently, I suggested that we could meet at the school where she taught instead. On another occasion, a female teacher's adult son entered the room, which had a clear effect on what she discussed thereafter.

The informants were told that I speak Nepali and had lived and worked in Nepal for much of my life, and also that I was interested in understanding more about how teachers in Nepal experience their lives for my doctoral research. The dynamics of such an encounter is essentially difficult to explain, as it demands being able to get on with people and to be a person that people want to talk to (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 21). I would initially introduce myself and tell them a bit about my childhood spent in various places in Nepal, to which they could all relate, and explain how my parents had been involved in teaching in Nepal, just as I eventually came to be. Then, I would ask them to tell me about their childhood experiences of schooling, and how they came into teaching, and how they experienced teaching in their current position.

4.4.2 The interview

With a few interruptions, the informants would narrate stories of their childhoods and of becoming teachers, selecting episodes in their lives that they found to be significant to their lives and work. The aim of the life history interview is first and foremost to encourage 'flow' in the storytelling. Following Goodson and Gill's (2011) advice to take a 'vow of silence', as a researcher, I restrained my desire to interfere and question the respondent, thereby allowing them to sequence and develop their stories with as much freedom as possible. If the respondent is given time and space to narrate their own life stories without being interrogated, the degree of 'agency' is more likely to emerge.

The stories were transcribed in Nepali and were either sent or given to the informant at the next meeting point. The initial life stories were seldom adjusted or changed by the informants; the reaction was most often a positive feeling of pride reading about themselves. In the process of

eliciting teachers' life stories, the accounts were read by local transcribers and educationalists who checked the accuracy of the Nepali language in the written texts. The quality of the data was further presented to other teachers and educationalist as to the reliable reconstruction of the lived events. They found the stories to be highly recognizable and convincing, stating that they would not have been able to get people to speak as freely, in the same way, as was achieved in this study.

The subsequent meetings with the informants would centre on why certain experiences had been particularly important in their lives. For example, this could be regarding the importance of Hindu philosophy in their story, or what it was about Maoist ideology that had attracted the person. The aspect of the researcher's interpretations of the data, raises the question of whether the researcher's practice was credible. The issue of collaboration in the research design opens up a whole range of concerns in relation to the researcher's so-called 'specialist' position, and in this particular context, the researcher's position as a white, western, outsider. However, ultimately the empirical data depends on the nature of the conversation, whether it enhances an understanding of their situation in such a way that the accounts are made accessible to raise awareness of the storytellers, in a way that it would not happen without the particular study. When presenting some of the stories to a western audience (supervisor, co-workers), I have in this process realized that certain themes and methods of interpreting Nepali teachers could be perceived differently in a western context, therefore requiring further explanation for a western audience. For example, one of my supervisors interpreted one of the Nepali teachers as not being suited to work as a teacher because of his authoritative disciplinary approach towards his students; however, in a Nepalese context, he would be considered a respectable teacher.

The next phase of the interpretation was to contextually categorize the life story according to the themes that were brought up by the informant in the life story. These themes were elaborated on by the researcher by referring to other studies or sources in order to situate the story in its socio-political and historical context.

4.4.3 Developing life histories

Although Goodson (2011) only sketches methodical phases and not strict procedures, there are some elements of the development of life histories that he strongly recommends. The most crucial is the collaboration between the researcher and the participant, which follows a subsequent stage where I, as a researcher, have worked alone and undertaken a historical interpretation of the life story by employing other sources of data, like documents, testimonies

or documentaries. The collaborative phase is an extended interchange or narrative exchange in the dialogue with the life story teller, or, what Goodson refers to as a 'grounded conversation'. This dialectic and dialogical process of progressively connecting and understanding the single narrative in a historical context marks the transition from life story narration to life history collaboration (Goodson & Gill, 2011). As I see it, this aspect of life history research represents both a great strength and a potential weakness of the methodology. The strength lies in the ability of the owner of the life story to influence its interpretation, but at the same time therein lies a risk of bias in how the life story is both presented and interpreted, potentially reducing the researcher's ability to confront the less favourable portrayals of the teller's life. Entering the phase of life history collaboration is characterized by ethical dilemmas and questions of validity and authenticity. The question of how I will approach the different phases, from the life story narrative to the life history collaboration, must thus be related to discussions of research ethics and trustworthiness.

The researcher will constantly work to find a sound interpretation to historically locate the life narratives, which I in turn bring back to the owner of the life story in the collaborative phase, where the life history is developed even further. The first reading of a life story will only initiate a naïve understanding of the content and meaning. After several readings, I will begin to locate the themes and plots that structure the story. It is only after this process has been completed that one is able to start connecting the core elements in the narrative to a wider historical time and political context, as well as to social and cultural practices (see Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 86). The historical data will help me distance myself from my initial readings, allowing me to view the story from a different perspective. Over the period of my studies, I have returned to Nepal several times in order to meet with the participants and talk with them further. Upon meeting again, a second distanciation occurs when the participant reflects on my interpretations. This time, a distance to the initial life story is granted not only to me, as a researcher, but to the participant, thereby enhancing both our understandings of ourselves and each other. Goodson and Gill embrace this encounter, and emphasize that:

> The transformative potential lies in the creation of spaces in which the collaborators can also consider their (shifting) identities and shifting narratives. Conversations and stories are evolving all the time, and each hermeneutic/interpretive cycle brought about by the participant's experience of emotions and motivations will in turn re-structure their told experiences and understanding of the meanings embedded within them. Thus the narrative encounter pivots on relationships where meaning emerges between people in

social and historical particularity within dialogic environments. (Goodson & Gill, 2011, p. 86)

In the narration process, an opportunity to enter the life story from another perspective is also offered by the author's (mine and/or the participant's) anticipations of a future audience. In a sense, the intended readers are present in all narratives, all the way down to the choice of particular words, representing both those to whom the words belong and those to whom they are addressed. As a researcher, one should thus not only imagine how my representation of the life histories might appear to those to whom I intend to communicate, but constantly reflect on a wider audience. Keeping the 'unintended readers' in mind will help me express my intentions and interpretations more clearly, so that the chances of the life histories being misappropriated (like being used as evidence of certain practices) might be reduced.

4.5 Ethical dilemmas in life history research

As a researcher, I am obliged to follow certain ethical principles or ground rules set by ethical committees (NSD, 2018). These guidelines are often related to concepts of informed consent, voluntary involvement, participant risk, confidentiality and equitable participant selections (Plummer, 2001). The informants of this study were given a form which gave a short description of the intent of the study. The form also outlined the issue of confidentiality, informing that the stories would be confidential and not possible to relate to their home or workplace. They were asked to sign the form as an informed consent to participate and share their life stories in the study. The form was written in Nepali. These procedures were initially verified and checked according to the guidelines given by NSD ('NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data', n.d.).

Ethical dilemmas are often discussed either from a universalist or a situational relativist perspective. While the universalist seeks to uphold specific and absolute codes of conduct, the situational relativist claims that questions of ethics are contextually bound and thus have to be resolved as such. Instead of placing oneself as a researcher within one of these camps, one might, as an alternative to conducting research according to a set of rules and rights, consider moral concepts, as suggested by Plummer (2001). He refers to the five great ethical principles:

1. The principal of respect, recognition and tolerance for persons and their differences.

2. The principal of promoting the caring of others, what has been called, following many feminists, 'an ethic of care'.

3. The principal of expanding equalities, fairness and justice.

4. The principal of enlarging spheres of autonomy, freedom and choice

5. The principle of minimizing harm. (Plummer, 2001, p. 228)

Referring to the first principle, this enquiry is an attempt to represent and recognize the informants' deep-felt understanding of culture and life experiences. My interest in representing teachers in Nepal might be said to be closely related to receiving and wishing to respond with care, in the hopes of expanding fairness and justice and for people. However, one might argue that the fourth principle might generate some disagreement amongst some professionals within education in Nepal, by challenging ideas of the collective force as a main idea.

To adhere to these ethical guidelines, there is a need to be as open as possible about the intent of my project, while at the same time maintain my vow of silence so that the teller's story can emerge as much as possible without me interfering in the process. As I see it, the main ethical dilemma involves the possibilities that lie in the different opportunities that people have according to the global North and South divide. The role that I, as a researcher, might be given in this perspective can put me in a position of power and control, and ultimately allow me to use the information gained to further my own agenda

By listening to peoples' subjective experiences of life, as a researcher, there is a risk of ending up in a therapeutic or an advisory role. Additionally, there is a risk that the links I make between social structures and the life stories might leave participants feeling powerless, instead of in control of their lives. As a researcher, I must therefore approach the life stories with great humility, by maintaining an awareness that in any encounter with another human being, a part of his/her life is given to my trust (Løgstrup, 1997). How these dilemmas are dealt with will be a balancing act if one is to justify both the authenticity and the interpretation of the life histories.

Having this in mind, one might also take into consideration and reflect on issues like a person's personality traits or life situation. As an example, one of the informants felt less at ease in her home environment with her husband present, then when the interview was arranged in her workplace. In this sense the information would be of a different character if the interviews were only held in her home. Also, related to the issue of stories being selective accounts of life and work, will entail a consideration of what an informant highlights as significant or less relevant, or related to issues that one might want to cover up for various reasons. One might also take

into consideration, that some informants would consider revealing disciplinary acts as less acceptable to a foreigner and might cover such aspects in their accounts of life and work. Nevertheless, this would depend on the trust and open communication that was built in the meeting with the informants (Løgstrup, 1997). Amongst others, the enquiry is an attempt to critically view western approaches appropriated in a cultural setting that has evolved from different cultural foundations. Consequently, the study has an ethical dimension by way of intending to reduce the asymmetry between western scientific traditions and the local Nepalese perspectives. As Freire puts forward: "Solidarity requires that one enters into the situation of those with whom one is solidary" (Freire, 2008)

5.0 Portrayals of teachers

5.1 Introduction

The main part of this study is constructed around a presentation and discussion of the life stories of teachers in Nepal. Because the person's life story is the central starting point upon which the life history is based, the initial interview process aimed to encourage personal elaboration. Building on the initial life story, the understanding of the story is located within a historical context established through collaboration. This means enquiring into why stories are told in particular ways at particular historical moments in the story in order to locate their meaning. The main focus in this study is on the relationship between teachers' life histories and their ideals, beliefs and agency. Goodson, Biesta, Tedder and Adair (2010) have developed a framework for analysing life stories, with the analysis of narrative quality and the efficacy of the story, referring to the action potential in the story, operating as the main devices.

In the following presentation, two aspects of the framework for analysing life histories have been modified and emphasized at the end of each of the life histories: the narrative quality of the story and what has been described as the narrative character. These two aspects have been adapted in the process of understanding the essence of the data in terms of the ideals, beliefs and agency presented in the stories. The narrative quality has to do with the form and structure of the stories, highlighting the amount of detail and elaboration in the story and whether a story is mainly chronological descriptions of life's events or reflects a more analytical interpretation of one's life. The latter is related to the presence of an organizing principle within the life history that can be seen as an understanding of life and work, and hence can be taken as an indication of the narrator's ideals, beliefs and agency. These two aspects fall under the heading of 'Narrative Characteristics', which is given after each of the portrayals.

This presentation of life histories is limited to a selection of seven stories to get a sense of the storying and the main themes that emerged from the data. The selection was made based on the extent to which the stories provide substance to the development of the main themes of a social world of poverty, Hindu cosmologies, Maoist rebellion and education reform that have developed from the data. The life histories were grouped together according to how the stories were characterized by a continued engagement with traditional Hindu culture and cosmologies, Maoist ideology, or human rights ideologies, in particular. The range of responses emerged when juxtaposing systemic narratives and the life stories of teachers. Although it could be said

that the social and historical background is what creates a basis for all the stories concerned, some teacher accounts emphasize Hindu culture and cosmologies, while others highlight their engagement with Maoist ideology, while others again point to the importance of the human rights ideologies of the EFA in their lives and work.

This means that the life histories reflect different narrative qualities and characters in terms of the themes that emerge in the portrayals of teachers. Nonetheless, the portrayals shed light on the relationship between Nepalese teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency and their historical, cultural, political and social world.

5.1.1 Hope in education and a Hindu perspective

The following incorporates a background that sketches a social world of inequality in which people form a part and 'become' in different ways. The background of inequality grew out of the engagement with listening to stories. The apparent boundaries of poverty, of people living in poverty emerged as a perspective to understand teachers' life histories. When reading the life stories, taking a departure from the dominant understanding of poverty challenges how teachers' beliefs and agency are understood. The dukkha (hardship) of poverty that people face is indicative of the agency people have and the extent to which people are able to access resources. The cause of distress in the stories is set against a backdrop of dukkha associated with gaining access to the opportunity of becoming. The inequitable distribution of possibility is created through circumstances that deny people the opportunity to participate in institutions and have access to the resources that control their lives (Action Aid, 2005). The perspective formulated here is only indicative of teachers' lives, not a thorough outline of the causes of poverty. Instead, it indicates how poverty is perceived through people's relationships.

As we see in this study, individuals interact with schooling in ways that can lead to distress, but also to agency to access social status and resources. The predominant relationship of schooling to society is that of fierce stigmatization and competition, although people use the resources they have in various ways in order to negotiate their environment. In that sense, the well-being of an individual is closely connected to the control of knowledge and the space to act on the individual's knowledge and beliefs. However, such resources are exploited by powerful interests that constrain the agency of individuals.

In the lives and work of teachers, the knowledge and experience they acquire based on local understanding is used to persist under constrained circumstances. People are compelled to operate according to necessities that are constricted by institutions and structures beyond their

control. Yet, the experiences of teachers also reflect cosmologies and the realities of forces of previous lives affecting one's karma, representing larger dimensions within which the individual acts. In that sense, reflections on dukkha and poverty cannot be separated from the values and beliefs of people in a particular setting. Within this framework, the teachers' life stories encompass these processes, which affect them and how they persevere, which opens up possibilities for reflecting on the structures and processes that prevent people from accessing resources. However, and perhaps more importantly, it also creates possibilities for reflection on how people endure and act within constrained circumstances.

The gurukul education system's aim of enlightenment and compliance of will was traditionally founded on the fulfilment of one's caste duty to society. The system acknowledged and created differences according to birth and caste obligations. The aim of acquiring spiritual knowledge was to improve the functioning of society, not to alter its existing stratification or to eradicate poverty. The continuation of the gurukul identity has left a mark on education as representing a gateway to higher status and high-caste values, which is in some ways contradictory to the Education for All global policy's aims of changing social structures through 'charity' and by eradicating poverty through education. Charity is less emphasized in Hindu philosophy when seen from the perspective of karma (Bista, 1991, p. 81); rather, the giver gains merit by giving. Taking this view, the 'do-gooder' is perceived as working on his karma, thus altruism can be understood as egoism. This emerges as a contradictory to the EFA aim of promoting child-centred education. The aims of child-centred education, mostly promoted in the government school system, might well be rejected by teachers and parents who perceive the methods as distracting from test results and the aim of schooling from their perspective.

While considering the conditions of poverty, reading the life stories entailed reflecting on the processes of poverty affecting the teachers and the strategies they had developed to overcome them. The portrayal of Rabina is an example of the experiences and realities of an individual facing poverty and distress. Rabina's belief in the transformative capabilities of formal education is demonstrated in her story. She acts within the boundaries and the possibilities of the institution to ensure her individual survival. She is, in some ways, allowed to transform the system insofar as she is able to improve its functioning, but she cannot influence its values and rules. Her self-expression has to exist within the prescribed boundaries of her role as defined by the institution. However, she can access resources and status through survival strategies that are directed by the framework of context. The cause of her distress is found within the

dimension of her agency to access and control resources, and in the kinds of relations within which this dimension occurs (Action Aid, 2005).

Her stories depict the belief that the more you suffer, the higher outcome you will receive at the other end of your trials. According to the Sankhya philosophy, everything in this world is painful and one must endure pain (Bista, 1991). In the traditional cultural context, the concept of the educated person, *padeko lekheko manche* (a person who can read and write), was typified as a person who had undergone the hardships of the gaining insight, knowledge and skills that gave them a position of respect and the authority to guide others. The concept entailed a person who possessed intellectual powers for ritualistic and ceremonial performance. An educated person was traditionally expected to take the lead in arguments and debates for the welfare of society, in order to guide and direct others. The actual physical labour of the work was for the uneducated.

Bista argues that the tendency has been for a newly educated person to assume the same high-caste values that reflect the social functioning of those in a superior position, but not for the sake of reducing difference. Education represents a structure for social mobility for the few who can access resources through the survival strategies set by the boundaries of the institution; however, as we can see, the values and the rules of the system still tend to perpetuate the historic social function of schooling, which is to maintain the status quo.

What counts as educated in the context of Nepal is, nevertheless, constantly being negotiated within the formation of society. The processes of the global educational policies being negotiated with the government promote new models of the educated person that both challenge and enable the maintenance of local perspectives. The educated person, promoted through the global aims of reducing poverty (as a result of literacy), is an agentic person within the parameters of increasing efficiency and performance. This person aims to challenge the status quo of poverty by acquiring an education that makes them competitive on the job market. The burden of structural inequality is shifted to the individual's capacity to overcome the hindrances. From this point of view, it seems failure is blamed more or less on the individual.

Modernization and the promotion of human rights have also introduced other versions of the educated person by perceiving schools as sites for opposing the hierarchical system of caste and gender inequality. Consequently, the conflicting agendas regarding the intended outcomes of schooling create a complex scenario when viewing education in the Nepalese context. The cultural reproduction of class and caste in education paradoxically presents an opportunity for

class mobility. However, since the values and rules of the system remain the same, it also offers an explanation for the persistence of structural inequalities in society. Yet, as we can see, access to schooling for a wider range of people presents possibilities for expressions of personal agency within these boundaries, although elevating one's status requires extreme perseverance. Similarly, the paradox remains apparent in the wider global policies impinging on society. Notions of human rights and egalitarianism operate in a top down manner and are accepted as a form of 'superior' received knowledge. Hierarchical structures restrict and prevent subordinates from accessing 'superior' forms of knowledge, which compels individuals to engage in severe self-discipline and suffer considerable hardship in order to endure or change their situation. It seems that any reflection on the premises of institutions most often appears in documentation regarding how to improve their functioning and increase their achievements, while the experiences of individuals who have to endure the system are reflected upon less often.

In these educational structures, the individual acts within the boundaries of the institution in order to find opportunities for agency and change. What follows is the story of someone who, by applying her own survival strategies, endured distress and poverty to become an educated and respected person in her community.

I was introduced to Rabina by a teacher working as a teacher trainer in the government in-service teacher trainer programme at the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED). He knew of Rabina through his wife, who worked in the same school as her. The school is known as a prestigious government school in an urban setting. Most of the students were on mid-term break when I met with Rabina in the school library. The room had shelves lining the walls with a few books and chart paper with previous project presentations that had been done by students. In the middle of the room, there was a long, wide table with well-used chairs along both sides. We sat at the lower corner of the table where there was a ray of January sunlight, so we could feel the warmth of the sun in the damp, cold cement room. A woman working as a peon in the school brought us sweet black tea and lingered awhile to see what was going on. Otherwise, we could only hear boys playing ball outside in the courtyard. Later when the interview transcript was sent to her Rabina's response was highly positive. She had read the transcript several times and had contemplated making a booklet of her life story to hand out to her students. Her reason for wanting to share her life story was to inspire her students to study and to give them an example of someone who had become successful through hard work. She also felt it would make her come closer to her students.

5.1.2 Introducing Rabina

Rabina is proud of her perseverance and ability to climb the social ladder, from once being a poor, helpless child to becoming a self-reliant, resilient individual and a confident teacher. She has a strong sense of purpose Her response to the many challenges that she has faced in life has been to overcome hardship through her own willpower and self-discipline. Private schooling had been out of reach for Rabina before she was given a scholarship after taking her SLC exam.

5.1.3 Rabina's life history

Rabina's account of her childhood is one of hardship and poverty. Initially, she introduced herself by saying that she was born in an ordinary poor family in an urban area. According to her mother, Rabina was her third child. She told me that this was something she had not shared with anyone before, "…*but why hide anything, now that I have come to tell my story?*" (interview 1, January 2014). Her mother's first two children, a boy and a girl, had died of cold soon after birth. She recalls several stories that her mother had told her about her own life. Rabina's mother had first seen her future husband outside of her parents' tea shop. He went there to drink tea and saw her playing outside. That was how they had met and fallen in love. Rabina's mother was married at the age of 14. Her mother's family had given her away when the matchmaker, the younger mother of Rabina's father, had convinced them of the security of his inheritance of property and land. Soon after the marriage she discovered that the relationship between the brothers in her new household was not good, and that her husband had a drinking problem. However, as her mother used to say, "*Women folk have to stay in their new home, you have to stay with your husband, you can't go back to your Maiti* [a woman's childhood home]" (interview 1, January 2014).

Because of the family's internal difficulties and her father's drinking problem, they moved to a different location where her father got a gardening job at the home of his brother's employer. Her mother did the housework there. Rabina described her father as a nice man, but one with a rapidly growing dependence on alcohol. She remembers that in the early days, he would bring her things to eat and that he used to pick her up and carry her around when he came home from work. "*He loved me*", she said (interview 1, January 2014). Nevertheless, at one point something changed. She recalls that he became more and more irresponsible and disruptive when he drank. Even though he managed to get a janitor job in an embassy, he was not able to keep it, and slowly the drinking took over everything. He spent all their money, having to pay back what he had borrowed from the liquor store, and eventually he was no longer able to provide for the family and became indifferent to their needs. "*He was never concerned about*

92

whether we had rice or vegetables to eat" (interview 1, January 2014). Rabina remembers looking at photos of him. "*He used to wear trousers like the Bollywood actor Amitab Bachan, he looked so sweet, like an Indian movie hero*" (interview 1, January 2014).

When recalling these events, she said that her mother had told her that she could not leave her husband even if he was a drunkard. A woman had to stay with her husband no matter what, so she could only endure her suffering. When Rabina's younger brother was born, he survived with the help of the eldest mother, who was her mother's elder sister, who took her mother to the maternity hospital at Thapathali. The eldest mother nursed her, massaging her with oil and feeding her so that she was able to gain her strength. Rabina remembers she was happy to have someone to play with growing up. She began noticing the other neighbourhood children going to school and started nagging her mother to send her as well. Her mother went to her brother-in-law to ask for help with her school fees, but he refused. The family had land, but the eldest brother had put it all in his name after his younger brother had started drinking. He had lied and told the property office that he did not have a brother when he had signed the property papers. "*Our economic condition was not good at that time. My mother had to take a job to sift sand for making cement at a building site nearby. She worked from morning to evening and earned 150 rupees*" (interview 1, January 2014). Her mother could only afford the entrance fee for a government school. Rabina recalls how the other children cried when their mothers dropped them off at school, but she never cried. She recalls that she seldom brought *tiffin* (lunch) to school, but that her mother would fry rice if there were any leftovers from the day before. She remembers how proud she was if she was lucky enough to have *CauChau* (noodles), and she shared with the other children.

"*I didn't do well in school the first years. I barely passed the exams with low marks*" (interview 1, January 2014). Her father often came home drunk, threw her books away and disrupted her studies. Her mother had to take odd jobs in people's houses, where she got their children's used notebooks. She took out the blank pages and sewed them together to make her daughter's schoolbooks. Even though her mother could not read or write, she followed up on her children at school "*like an educated parent*" (interview 1, January 2014). Rabina cannot recall her father ever paying his children's school fees or ever coming to the school. When her old teachers see her now, they ask: "*How could you become a teacher when you got so many beatings?*" (interview 1, January 2014). She often went hungry at school. Sometimes, her mother could only afford to buy a handful of rice at a time, so she would lie to the shopkeeper, saying: "*it's for the offerings to the Gods*" (interview 1, January 2014).

A turning point was when some student teachers came to Rabina's school. With their encouragement, she was able to earn the highest marks in her class. "*That encouragement has worked in me up until today*" (interview 1, January 2014). Because the school fees increased, Rabina's mother was not able to pay on time and her roll number was last on the register. It became increasingly embarrassing. It was only because her teacher convinced the principal to allow her to stay that she was able to continue with her studies, but she felt like an outsider. "*I felt like a crow amongst sparrows*" (interview 1, January 2014). She was not allowed to participate in the house wise competitions, because of her name not being on the register. The classes were represented by different houses and colours. Despite this, she decided not to let the embarrassment stop her studies and she kept at it. Her weakest subject was math, so she decided to make it her goal to become the best in math. "*I will make it my weapon and show everyone*" (interview 1, January 2014). Rabina was committed to making her life a success. The stories she told focused on the challenges she faced in the school system as a result of coming from an economically disadvantaged background.

She explains how she decided to tutor neighbourhood children, for a small fee, so she could help her mother. At that time, she was only in the seventh grade, and she remembers asking the lady in the shop nearby how much she would pay her to teach her children. She convinced her that she knew the textbooks and started teaching them from seven in the morning until eight. After that, she never had to ask for money for notebooks for herself or her brother. She recalls that her Nepali teacher once took her books and threw them away because they were the cheap kind and insulted her in front of all her classmates. "*He wanted to show himself as superior … He didn't care about what I had written, and only looked at the outside cover … He looked at the weakness of the outside and not at the capacity within*" (interview 1, January 2014). But Rabina was not to be intimidated. She went to his office to collect the notebooks that he recommended but told him that they were worth the same price as hers. After that, he started saying "timi" (more respectful term of the pronoun, you) to her rather than "ta" which is less deferential.

Until grade ten, she never found her teachers to be very supportive.

> *They would give the first, second, third students priority. If they understood the lesson, the teacher moved on to the next chapter. It is the culture here. It has to change. Students like us with problems, with nowhere to study at home, with uneducated parents, we are*

dependent on the school. If we had come from an educated family, we could have gone home to study (interview 1, January 2014).

Students like Rabina could not afford tutoring outside of school. The teachers were discouraging and told her "*you can't make it, nani, if you study like this*" (interview 1, January 2014). 'Nani', meaning young girlchild. She wanted to leave school because of the economic burden but was fortunate to be selected for a scholarship and was able to complete her final year. When she finally got the scholarship, she was a month late to start school. She remembers having to let down the hem of her skirt to make it longer, so she could wear it for another year. The others wore shoes of leather, while hers were made of plastic.

"*I tried so hard to understand the lessons, but when I came home my father didn't let me study*" (interview 1, January 2014). It was only after the lights were out that she was able to study by making small oil lamps by placing pieces of cloth in oil (*tukki*). In the morning, her face would be black with soot. "*We couldn't afford candles*" (interview 1, January 2014). Nonetheless, she did well in school and the teachers started supporting her. She came out top of the class in math. "*I had a lot of dukkha studying*", she says (interview 1, January 2014).

When asked to explain why she felt it was so important to study in our last interview, I interpreted her reaction as being taken aback by the question, as if she felt that the importance of education was a given. After her initial hesitation, she elaborates that the stories her mother had told her had had the most impact on her motivation to do well in school. Her mother would often emphasize the importance of schooling, particularly for girls. She would say; "*if girls don't study they will not have opportunities in society*" (interview 3, May 2016). Rabina refers to something else that she has heard being said:

> *if a man is educated it is for himself, but if a woman is educated her family and society will benefit. A woman can learn about what kind of role she can play in society and how to help her family move forward* (interview 3, May 2016).

She uses her mother as an example of a woman who had to face a lot of hardship because of her lack of education:

> *She would have been able to find a better job if she had been educated. Our living standards would have been different. But she fulfilled her responsibilities towards us as if she were an educated person, but at the same time, her lack of education did have an impact* (interview 3, May 2016).

Rabina explains that society looks at people differently according to how much education they have. People speak differently to an educated person, she says. They will think that they have to be careful with an educated person. She expands on this, stating that an uneducated person will fear that the educated person can understand the bigger picture, and that the uneducated person might also be at the mercy of an educated person. If a person is uneducated, it is assumed that you can speak to them without thinking and that they will sign papers without much consideration. She recalls having to sort out legal issues in the family, and the difference between when her mother went alone and when she took one of her educated children with her. Her relatives had attempted to exploit her lack of education when she had faced them alone, but with her children, she came with reinforcement.

> *Everyone needs education, but women need it even more. If a daughter fails her SLC exams, in our society, she is married off, if a son fails he is sent to work abroad, this is our system. For females to be self-dependent and feel that they can do something in society, to be a leader and show your own capacity, education is very important* (interview 3, May 2016).

Rabina takes another example from her mother's life to argue that her mother's first two children had died because of her ignorance of healthcare:

> *They might not have died had she had the concept of going to the hospital. She was not able to go to school and the effect of that is still felt in her life. The fact that she was not able to go to school has affected her whole life. If you want to do something you are dependent on others for even writing down a phone number, you have to ask them to write down what you want; you have to join your hands together to get help. There is nothing more embarrassing for a woman than to have to join her hands together to ask for help, in my opinion. So, education is very important. We don't need weapons. Education is indirectly a weapon. Whomever tries to dominate us, indirectly we can dominate them. There is power in words, the elders say. More than manual labour, educated people's words are more powerful to get things done* (interview 3, May 2016).

When considering the course her life took, Rabina goes back to her life as a student. After writing her SLC exam, she started looking for work. She found work in the tailoring business but realized that it required buying material to make the garments and had to give it up because of her family's money problems. When enquiring about her exam results, she discovered that the school where she had studied needed more teachers, so she convinced the principal to let

her teach. She worked there as a volunteer for six months. In the second interview, she elaborated on why she had taken the job as a volunteer teacher. She explained that she felt it was her duty to help the school where she had once been a student at a time when they were lacking teachers, rather than sit at home waiting to find study or job opportunities. The teachers there had helped her to continue her studies when her mother was not able to afford to send her to school. "*The feeling I had in me to help others to get an education came from that experience*" (interview 2, March 2015).

Rabina was known as the strictest female teacher at the school. She had been tutoring since she was 12; "*I was fourteen and a half when I stood in a classroom, with pride as a real teacher*" (interview 1, January 2014). She used to hit the children if they did not do their homework, and parents even complained. It was hard to maintain discipline with the large number of students in the class, and there were often as many as 50. The other volunteer teachers all gave up after awhile, but Rabina continued teaching.

She passed the SLC in the first division with high marks. "*I get irritated thinking about the Nepalese school system, we had to do all of the grade nine and ten courses in one year in order to take the exam*" (interview 1, January 2014). She wanted to go to college, but the fees were too high. So, she found a college with a scheme for girls that returned their initial school fees if they were able to earn grades higher than 65% in their exams. Rabina got her fees back by the end of the year. She went to college from six in the morning until ten, and then rushed back to the school where she was volunteering to teach. Later, she was offered a teaching job at the school where she had been volunteering. The principal offered her a salary of 3500 Rs. She could have leapt with joy, it was like a dream: "*I felt I was now a real teacher, a teacher with a salary*" (interview 1, January 2014).

She gave her first paycheque to her mother, and she remembers it made her mother cry. Her father had never put so much money in her mother's hands, Rabina reflects. Her mother could finally repay all her debts. Now that she was a grade teacher, Rabina had to wear a sari to school, and wearing that sari for the first time remains a vivid memory. Her mother had helped her to put it on, and when she entered the school compound, all the students gathered around her to see her in a sari. They gave her flowers that they had picked from around the school grounds and congratulated her. "*I had become like a 'thulo manche'* [a person with status and respect in society] *... A government schoolteacher can't earn enough money to build a house, but you*

earn respect. It is our lifelong wealth" (interview 1, January 2014). Moreover, Rabina reflects on her students, explaining that

> *Students' feelings of love and respect, even after you die, they will remember we had such and such a teacher ... a house can be there one day and the next day it might have crumbled, but the word teacher is holy* (interview 1, January 2014).

I ask Rabina the following question: "*You express pride in what you do and that you have excelled in your work as a teacher, how did you come to that?*" In response, she states:

> *I can say with pride that it has to do with my own efforts, my efficiency, enthusiasm, energy, and honesty. These qualities help me still today. I don't listen to other people's talk, I don't talk behind other people's backs, I don't dominate anyone. I walk my own path* (interview 2, March 2015).

She draws an illustration on a piece of paper to explain how she sees her achievements as a teacher. First, she explains her responsibilities towards the school's administration. Her duty is to teach and to have a good reputation as a teacher in relation to the administration and to protect the school's reputation. Second, she focuses on the students and on how to maintain a good reputation amongst the students, along with how to make them feel positive and maintain positive attitudes. She counsels parents and students and gives positive counselling to weak students. The key is to have a positive attitude. She gives an example:

> *Suppose my father and I are walking down a road. People with a negative attitude will say: look, a girl walking the streets with an older man, but the people with a positive attitude will say: it's a father and his daughter, perhaps. When I counsel students that are constantly worried about failing school, I tell them: First Attempt In Learning, FAIL— that is what they think, the teachers will scold them and say they will never get a job, but I say, Effort Never Dies, END—they say it is the end, but I say effort never dies, and they feel better* (interview 2, March 2015).

Rabina explains that teachers do not encourage weaker students to participate Their expectation is that the student will be wrong. By contrast, Rabina's students feel her positive attitude towards them. More than just learning the curriculum, she wants them to learn how to respect their parents and how to live in society. But, she argues that the reality in Nepal is that the students only come to school to study for their exams. She believes that the government has to change the focus in schools to include more practical knowledge. This, she maintains, will

impact the education system in a positive way. She has tried to modify the teaching culture by giving more practical exercises to her students after every topic she has taught. "*This has surprised many parents and teachers*", she says (interview 3, May 2016). She encourages the different houses to come up with models or diagrams to present the different chapters of the syllabus to motivate them to study. The group with the best result will be given a prize.

When reflecting on her teaching job, she said: *"I can teach science, accounts and math fluently"* (interview 1, January 2014). However, she feels the weight of having to cover the required coursework in class, though she sometimes lets her students have some leisure time to relieve the pressure. In terms of teacher training, Rabina regrets not having had the opportunity to be selected to participate in any training sessions. Teachers that are not permanent hires have fewer opportunities to get training. It was only after our third interview that Rabina had finally been selected to participate in a training session at the US embassy on the pronunciation of English words.

Rabina describes teaching in a government school:

> *There are both positive and negative aspects of teaching. In government schools, the number of students is high, but it depends on the attitude of the teacher. A teacher can feel that five students are too many to teach and wish there were only two. The teacher's job is to teach and not be distracted by other things. The teacher has to leave their personal problems at home and concentrate on being a teacher, not think about being someone's daughter or someone's wife, or about these problems or those problems. We must not be distracted by that. Once you enter the school gates, you are a teacher; you have come to teach students. You have to know that (interview 1, January 2014).*

She explains that government schoolteachers have a reputation for wasting a lot of time sitting around with their colleagues in the sun rather than teaching:

> *In government offices, there is the same attitude of arriving late and being irresponsible. In private schools, teachers are punished for being a few minutes late. A government schoolteacher can have an irresponsible attitude while working in government schools, but if they have a job in a private school, they are punctual and look smart (interview 1, January 2014).*

She believes that teachers would be more effective in their teaching if they were moved up a grade every year to challenge them to expand their knowledge and improve their teaching.

The parents still expect teachers to know all the content, "like a God". There is still the concept that students don't question the teacher's authority. Teachers often say, "are you more learned than me now, are you "bigger" than me? Sit down! ... even if teachers write mistakes on the board. There is no greater mistake than that (interview 1, January 2014).

This attitude has to change, in Rabina's opinion. "*There are so many formulas in math, I also make mistakes*" (interview 1). The attitude amongst most people is that if a class is silent, the teacher must have good discipline. However, the reality is that they are quiet because they are afraid of the teacher. That is her experience. "*When the students are afraid, it is difficult to learn*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Rabina describes her feelings about being a female teacher. "*Women are given fewer chances and lower priority to teach at secondary schools*" (interview 1, January 2014). This is something she finds frustrating. "*This is the most challenging thing I have faced as a teacher. Nepal is a male-dominated society. However much a female is educated, there is a tendency to dominate her*" (interview 2, March 2015). She is convinced that if you visited all the country's secondary schools, you would find maybe two to three female teachers amongst twenty to twenty-five male teachers. Other teachers see her as being outspoken on this topic, she says. She will raise her voice if she feels dominated. She feels that she knows what she wants, and she follows her own path.

Rabina finds it equally frustrating that you need social connections to get a job. The *afno manche* (through connections) system still prevails in Nepal. When she has applied for jobs in the banking sector, she has done well in the written application, but after the interview, she is never able to secure the job because of her lack of connections in the system. "*I have no source, force. The wrong people get the jobs, because they have source, force*" (interview 1, January 2014). Source, force is a common expression in daily language to signify knowing people who are perceived to have power and position in society. In the second interview, she elaborates on the topic of corruption. "*It is not enough to be capable in this society*", she explains (interview 2, March 2015). She maintains that people are dependent on their relatives and the *chakari* system, an informal system of securing jobs and promotions (Bista, 1999, p. 89). She refers to this system as demotivating, but necessary to follow. She illustrates this with a saying:

if you lower your bucket straight into the well, it will not fill up with water, you have to tilt it. People who are bent will be successful in this society. You can only sit and watch.

[Corruption] Chakri is in all walks of life in Nepal; if you are in line at the doctor's office, you are given priority if you know someone in the office. If you sit quietly and wait, nothing will happen (interview 2, March 2015).

Living in this environment means you have to adjust; however, you should try to not let it affect others too much, is Rabina's conclusion. "*You get fed up of being honest. It feels like when you boil milk, it comes to a point and it boils over*" (interview 2, March 2015).

A pivotal moment in Rabina's life was when her father died. She describes how she made a point of not crying in front of her students. "*There is nothing as shameful as crying in front of the students*" (interview 1, January 2014). She wanted them to understand that you have to be strong in times of hardship. "*I wanted them to learn that*" (interview 1, January 2014). Her brother had to sit his exams in a different room from the other students after their father's death since he was considered unclean and could not be allowed to pollute them. This belief still prevails in society. She was amazed that the principal at the school still upheld that kind of ritual. She had to manage all the practicalities concerning her father's death, but only the son is required for the cremation. "*Our Maharjan caste is very traditional*", she maintained (interview 1, January 2014). Rabina's dream is to start a scholarship fund in her father's name for economically disadvantaged children and those from low castes.

5.1.4 Narrative characteristics
Rabina had the capacity to tell detailed, complex and elaborate stories about her life. Much of what Rabina shared about her life was presented in descriptive terms, providing a chronological overview of her life by explaining the hardships of her childhood, schooling and becoming a teacher. Although her narration can be characterized as elaborate, and has a high narrative intensity, there is less analysis in her story, however there is judgment.

I conducted two initial interviews with Rabina because the first recordings did not turn out well, due to technical problems. After a lot of consideration over whether it would put too much pressure on her to retell her story, I decided to ask her to meet me again. She expressed no hesitation in agreeing to meet in order to tell me her story again, and so I met with her a second time. The thought-provoking aspect of this incident was the way she narrated the events in the same way the second time, and the sequences, the character and the structure of her life as she presented it was according to my notes and recollection closely the same as it had been previously. She appeared to enter into a narrative flow and the story proceeded in an almost rehearsed way. In the first interviews, she spoke for approximately one and a half hours,

encapsulating her childhood memories of life and schooling, and detailing how she became a teacher and how she experiences teaching.

A plot began to emerge that had to do with the importance of education to Rabina's story. She had gained social position through her efforts to do well in the school system. In later interviews, she deepened her account of why schooling had been so important to her story. The plot provides structure and coherence to her story and appears to be the driving force in the way she accounts for her life and the direction it has taken. In a sense, she moralizes her life story by using her life's struggles to teach her students to work hard.

The themes and issues that are related to Rabina's work as a teacher in the school system and her life are clearly linked to Nepal's culture of social hierarchy and emphasis on the importance of having connections within society. She was highly critical of how politics influence the government schools. She made negative judgments about how people are given positions in the school system based on their affiliation with certain people or political parties. Rabina refers to this as the chakari system in Nepalese society. It plays a critical role in the informal operations of organizational life. Bista (1991) points to this phenomenon as a negative factor in the administrative and political life of Nepal. With its parallels to the caste system, Nepal's society is based on systems of vertical dependency. This reflects the superordinate and subordinate relationships outside of the family that have been institutionalized. As Bista (1991) argues,

> Decisions are made, appointments determined because of pressing obligations formed through chakari and not as a result of an objective determination of what is best at the point. The entire social apparatus then suffers as critical positions are filled and governmental decisions made as a result of chakari. (p. 93)

For Rabina, the concept of who you know being a potential resource was to her a discoursing factor in her work as a teacher, feeling that being honest and hardworking somehow did not pay off: "*I have capability and experience, but it is not enough in Nepal*" (interview 2, March 2015). In her experience, teachers who were employed after her were given permanent jobs, regardless of their capabilities or education: "*They came to a house with relatives*" (interview 2, March 2015).

Her stories also feature elaboration, for example, by referring to the government's policies to change the SLC system from a percentage-based system to a system based on grades. She maintains that the education system is slowly being modernized, but that the content is the same

as it was when she took her exams, and that the rote learning system still prevails, even if teachers try to introduce new methods, like project work, and new learning strategies. She finds that students become less frustrated when studying for their exams if the teachers make the process less teacher-centred, by involving the students in group work and competitive activities between students. "*It comes under the modernization of the education system. But there are no vast changes*" (interview 3, May 2016). The unstable political situation in the country is something she points to as having an impact on higher education, in particular.

> *The unions in the colleges are hampering education. There is hardly any teaching going on there. There is politics in everything these days. At the school level, there is bickering about who should be the principal of the school and the administrative level influences the student level. The students start arguing which teachers. It affects the schools* (interview 3, May 2016).

A recurring theme in Rabina's stories is that women are not given the same opportunities as men. Her stories reveal her to rebel somewhat against established gender norms within the traditional education system, where male teachers are seen to be fitter to teach the higher grades than female teachers. She expresses how, through persistence and humour she has gained opportunities to participate in training courses and to teach classes at higher grade levels.

Rabina's story reflects on the experiences and realities of an individual facing poverty and hardship. These insights are situated within the reality of the individual's experiences and her relationships. They translate into the structures and processes in which she has been forced to play a part. Thus, reflections about self and agency cannot happen in isolation, independent of social values and translation into the institutions and processes within which individuals operate. Set against this backdrop, listening to Rabina's life story entailed engaging in a thorough and deep reflection on the processes affecting her and the strategies and solutions she developed to overcome them.

Belief in the transformative capabilities of formal education is mirrored in Rabina's story. Her emphasis on the importance of schooling is revealed in her commitment to do well in school. "*I knew I must by all means study*" (interview 1, January 2014). Schooling is associated with future opportunities and progress, as highlighted in other studies. To construct oneself as an educated person is a way to distance oneself from an underprivileged life and become associated with a lifestyle linked to that of the urban middle class. In Nepalese society, there is a general

belief that an academic education will help elevate one's social and economic status. The SLC is seen as a ticket to the job market.

Rabina recalls how she came to understand the importance of schooling:

> *It was when my mother told me stories of how women who don't study don't get opportunities that I started realizing the importance of schooling. They say: if you educate a man, it's for himself, if you educate a woman it is for society. I read that somewhere. If a woman gets an education, it's not only about how she can move forward, she learns about what her role can be in society* (interview 1, January 2014).

Her story presents a clear image of an educational system that demands the ability to memorize content in order to pass through the examination system, rather than give students the tools that they need for life. "*I know how hard it is to study*" (interview 1, January 2014). The system demands focus, hard work, discipline and obedience to the instructions given from the top. If you have the drive to learn the curriculum and answer questions correctly without distraction, you will be rewarded with grades that open doors to a higher social status and more opportunities, although an education is no guarantee that you will land a prestigious job.

Rabina knew what the existing structures demanded of her in order for her to progress in life and find a way out of poverty and away from social stigmatization. She is proud of her capacity to achieve a higher status in the social hierarchy: "*I have had belief in myself, which is why I am where I am today*" (interview 3, May 2016). She seems to have a clear understanding of how she managed to climb the social ladder from being a poor, helpless child to becoming a self-reliant, strong woman and a confident teacher. This is clearly a part of her ethos and belief as a teacher. From Rabina's perspective, if you doubt yourself, it is because you have not worked hard enough. You can always work harder, eat less and study more in order to achieve what you want. You can always do better. If you are content with your performance as a student, then you have not given it your all.

5.2 Hindu education

When seeking further insight into the stories of Damodar and Krishna, the importance of the role of the guru as the preserver of traditional values and culture emerged. These particular life stories allow for deeper probing into the historical background of Hindu education and the role of gurus in Nepalese society and education. These life histories present the foundational cultural

heritage of the other portrayals. The initial portrayals will therefore be rich in references to other sources in order to contextualize the interpretation of the stories.

As mentioned earlier, Hinduism is still the official religion of the majority of people in Nepal. Sharma (2002) states that much of what falls under the term Hinduism represents culture, which is why many are unable to reject the Hindu religion in its entirety (p. 37). Even people following other faith systems will accept the term Hindu in reference to their religion, and they will include both Hindu and tribal elements in their religious practices (Whelpton, 2005). Some scholars describe the state of most Nepali people as one of ongoing Hinduization, since the ethnic local languages and traditions have no particular value, and people feel that their ethnic identity is disadvantageous in a society that is highly competitive for jobs and survival (Gellner, Pfaff-Czarnecka, & Whelpton, 1997, p. 20). This is in spite of the government's efforts to commit to inclusion through its education policies, for example, through the provision of mother tongue instruction (MOES, 2002)

The life histories of Damodar and Krishna bear the legacy of the gurukul system of education in the context of a modern school system in Nepal.

5.2.1 Introducing Damodar

As is traditionally expected, Damodar fulfils the role of a teacher who directs and guides others in accordance with his position. He expresses kinship to gurukul values through his support of school practices, such as the maintenance of teacher–student hierarchies in the class, an emphasis on teacher-centred teaching and his longstanding opposition to the Maoist movement. Damodar has a strong teacher identity and faith in his ability to guide and discipline students at a particular place and time. He uses a range of positive and negative reinforcements to guide the individuals for whom he is responsible. He is someone with deeply held views and emotions. He refers to himself as talented in verse and rhetoric. Teachers with a strong sense of commitment and a sense of mission, like Damodar, are traditionally seen as an asset to the community. They have played important roles in decision making in the communities of which they are a part.

5.2.2 Damodar's life history

Damodar's family lived up the hill from the primary school in their village. He remembers his mother looking out for him when he came home from school in the afternoon so that he could help her carry water from the water source near the school grounds. He remembers that she would carry his books while he carried the water on his back. Damodar felt like he was living

in the shadow of his older brother. He recalls feeling neglected, somehow, as he always got his elder brother's hand-me-down clothes and shoes, and he had to cut out the remaining pages from his older brother's notebooks and sew them together to make books for himself. He explains his feelings of being the second child as representing part of a cultural phenomenon: "*In our culture, particularly, the middle child can feel a little harassed and I have felt that*" (interview 1, January 2014). Damodar's father never bought him new clothes. It was only when he was 15 years of age that he got a new shirt, which still has emotional value for him: "*and my mother acknowledged that this one is also my son, she said it was equally painful to give birth to this one and she bought a checked shirt for me for 17 rupees. I still have a piece of that checked shirt, you see*" (interview 1, January 2014).

In terms of his early schooling, Damodar remembers how his teacher taught them a few words in English when he was in grade four, first spelling out the words and then repeating and chanting each one: "*C O W... cow!*" To continue their schooling, the children of Damodar's village had to move away from home to study in the next village from grade six. At that time, most villages had primary schools that only went up to grade five. To attend school after grade five often meant walking long distances or moving the children to district centre schools. Even though Damodar was considered more talented, only his brother got the chance to enrol at school in the next village over. Damodar's father would not allow him to go to school after grade five, and he would have to stay home. He remembers his anger and how he had cried. Nevertheless, it just so happened that his brother quit school after six months in grade six and he sold his books and bedding. Damodar's brother decided that he wanted to join the army, so he worked harvesting millet for two days and earned 80 rupees, which was enough for him to go to Kathmandu. Eventually, he got a job in a canteen at the army barracks in Singh Durbar in Kathmandu, where he worked as a dishwasher. After some time, Damodar's mother started worrying about her eldest son and persuaded his father to go look for him. Damodar recalls how his father went to Radio Nepal in Kathmandu and declared his son was missing. Before 1990, the only radio station broadcasting from inside Nepal was the government-controlled Radio Nepal. Those living in the Kathmandu area and in the Therai towns had the best access to information at that time. Although people living in remote villages might only have access to a few radio sets, it was sufficient for them to send messages to the far corners of Nepal (Whelpton, 2005, p. 170). The search for Damodar's brother, Mohan, lasted six months. His father finally found him, after showing his photo to practically every household in the city centre of

Kathmandu. Near Singh Durbar, a guard recognized his picture and said: *I know Mohan, he is in the canteen* (interview 1, January 2014). Damodar's father then took his son back home.

By that time, Damodar had passed grade five, but after having seen his father's behaviour, he no longer wanted to study. He decided that he would run away with his cousin to India with 100 rupees in his pocket. It was common for the male population in the hill communities to combine seasonal work on the plains with agriculture in the villages. "In 1999, some 1.5 million Nepalese were believed to be in India, in addition to several more million people of Nepalese decent who had moved across the border earlier" (Whelpton, 2005, p. 123). Damodar and his cousin were offered jobs in a fabric and tailoring shop in one of the northern cities of India. They did not understand the language and were put to hard work that lasted late into the night. In the household where he worked, he remembers the beautiful daughter in particular. The first night, she gave him *rotis* (bread) to eat. He recalls eating 22 and still feeling hungry. He was just a child, and could not stay awake, so she took his hand and showed him where he could sleep. When he woke up in the morning, there were 100 rupee notes by his bed and he was confused as to why she had put them there. She said to him in Hindi: *yo paisa tumara he* (*This is your money*) (interview 1, January 2014). He was told to wash the dishes and was intrigued by the washing detergent, which he had never seen before. In his village, they had only used soot from the fire to clean the dishes before rinsing with water and letting them dry in the sun.

That is how Damodar ended up washing dishes in an Indian family's home. He was miserable and homesick. "*I remembered my mother's cooking*" (interview 1, January 2014), he said, and told his employers that he wanted to go to visit his cousin. They called his cousin, who had in the meantime found work 200 kilometres away, and then sent him on a train to meet him. Damodar recalls the relief he felt when he was able to speak Nepali again. Soon after, his father came looking for him and said he would let him go to school. But Damodar was not convinced and said to him: "*You only care about my brother, not me*" (interview 1, January 2014). His father then promised again to let him go to school, and so they returned together to Nepal.

Damodar and Mohan subsequently moved to the district centre, and Damodar's brother was given the responsibility of looking after him. He still felt like the typical second child and had to continue to wear his brother's old school uniforms and use his old school books. They rented a room in the bazaar and divided the household chores amongst themselves. Damodar cooked the rice in the morning and his brother cooked in the evening. After a while, he noticed that they did not have enough rice in the evenings, and Damodar found out that his brother had been

trading their rice for Yak cigarettes and cheap ice lollies in the bazaar. Unlike Damodar, Mohan showed no interest in his studies and was irresponsible with the money their father had given them. When their father came to visit after two weeks, Damodar told him, while massaging his feet, that he had not eaten because they did not have matches. So, when his father was leaving, he took Damodar aside and gave him 50 paisa, which Damodar later traded into five coins which he hid in the lining of his trousers. His brother became suspicious when he saw him with an ice lolly outside school the following day and felt his pockets for money. However, he was not able to feel the coins in the lining of Damodar's trousers. This is how Damodar recalled his life away from home with his elder brother. Damodar also emphasizes his interest in his schooling in his account of his childhood.

At school, he says he was known as "Chairman". On one of the first days that he attended class, his teacher asked the students to argue whether *kalam* (a pen, a symbol of knowledge) is mightier than *tarwar* (a sword, a symbol of power, weapon). Since no one volunteered, Damodar raised his hand, went in front of the class and gave a speech. He talked for so long that the teacher asked him if he would give her some time to speak as well, to which he replied: "*Our honourable Guruama* [female teacher] *will conclude this topic for us*", and then he sat down (interview 1, January 2014). That is how he got the nickname "Chairman". Damodar's passion for rhetoric and storytelling has been a lifelong interest. "*I know so many by heart. I eat stories and proverbs*" (interview 1, January 2014). His interest in stories and proverbs is well known in the district. He continues to talk about his schooldays in the district centre. He was a handsome boy and popular with the girls in school, he recalls. They would sometimes ask him if he would go with them to pick *kafal* (red berries), but he also remembers how strict his father was with him, and he was told to stay away from girls.

After passing the SLC exams, he told his father that he wanted to look for a job. At the time, some villagers from Ward 9 were looking to start a school in their village. The districts of Nepal are divided into different wards. To mention your ward number is common when introducing yourself to new people. He recounted the villagers' words: "*we need education, we are in darkness*" (interview 1, January 2014). The village was willing to raise the money it needed to pay him to come and teach—620 rupees a month, which was half of the salary that the government paid their permanent teachers at the time. He finally agreed to take the teaching job and participated in building the school that he later named *Jana Joti*—light to the people. The school was in a desolate place. Fifty children of all ages came to be enrolled. Most of the villagers had never had the chance to go to school, especially the young girls. There was a group

of girls of approximately 17 or 18 years of age who came to enrol in grade one. The practice at that time was to keep girls at home to work and to send boys to school (Bista, 1991, p. 128). This explains the advanced age of the girls wanting to attend first grade.

> *I was only a young man with a hint of a moustache myself. Accusations could arise in such circumstances and I felt it was difficult. Young girls my age had not gone to school like their parents, but they learned quickly. They learned "ka" "kha"* [the alphabet] *in one day. They were shy and couldn't look me in the face. There was no blackboard. So I had them write in their notebook.* (interview 1, January 2014).

After some time, one of the older girls suggested that they should have song and dance programmes on Fridays. The students raised money towards purchasing a drum and with money from his own pocket, Damodar bought a drum in Kathmandu. As the dance programmes commenced, the girls began "*looking him in the face*" (interview 1, January 2014) and started talking more freely, which made him uncomfortable. He was a strict teacher, and when lining up for assembly one day, a village girl came to school wearing glass bangles and eyeliner, so he decided to make an example out of her by giving her a beating that broke her bangles. At first, he was afraid that he might lose his job, but her parents supported him. He explained to the girl's father that he had beaten his daughter because he saw his students as his brothers and sisters. The girl's father had replied:

> *Master Nani the children are unruly, you are new and we see you as our own, discipline them but don't hurt their eyes or break their bones. Rid them of their bad habits. Beat them. Teach them to grade five, then they will be in their twenties and we will marry them off* (interview 1, January 2014).

The girl's father had expressed what is commonly understood to be the expected outcome of education in a Nepalese context: to become disciplined, obedient and respectful (Valentine, 2001, p. 220). Education is seen as a way to get children to learn good manners and to change children's behaviour. Participating in school activities is as much about socialization as it is about academic achievement (Valentine, 2001, p. 220). The goal of schooling, from the perspective of society as a whole, is in some ways to take over part of the socialization responsibilities of the family. Schooling is seen as a means of getting a job, but equally important is its role in enhancing one's social and economic position in society (Bista, 1991, p. 124). For girls in particular, education increases their chances of marrying into a more financially secure family. Arranged marriages are common practice amongst Bahun

(Brahmins)-Chhetri and Thakuri caste groups. Outside of these high-caste groups, arranged marriages are less common (Bista, 1991, p. 64). Nevertheless, sending girls to school is perceived as an investment in the future for families that can afford to do so.

Damodar continues to explain that after the first year, the school had to be expanded. The villagers agreed to add to the school building and he helped build the school in his spare time. The school could now offer classes up to grade three. He remembers one event where his students beat the neighbouring school in a quiz. "*I was the only teacher in the school, while they were three teachers. I taught Thakuri people, while they taught Chhetri/Bahun people. The Cheettri/Bahun are more clever than the Thakuri. The Thakuri caste is more straightforward, like the Tamangs*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Traditionally, education has been associated with high-caste people, like the Bahuns and the Chhettis. Other caste groups, like the Tamangs, are more often associated with practical and physical work (Bista, 1991, p. 96). Learned activities, such as reading, writing and engaging in debate, are seen as Bahun activities. High-caste people, like Bahuns, are known to be good rhetoricians and tend to disassociate themselves from practical work (Bista, 1991, p. 96). Members of the Bahun caste have traditionally led a different lifestyle than other castes and have been encouraged from childhood to focus on learning. Rather than engage in manual work, they aim for administrative jobs. The traditional activities of the Bahun pundits, like reciting texts and making speeches, are seen as a way to improve their social position (Bista, 1991, p. 78). Traditionally, education has been designed for high-caste people, and as Bista points out, newly educated people tend to see themselves as high caste (Bista, 1991, p. 128).

Damodar describes the inter-school event. He had walked with his students for six kilometres along a steep hillside. In front of a huge crowd of children, "*my children*", he explained, "*won the competition*" (interview 1, January 2014). After that, there was talk of how he was able to teach so well considering he was the only teacher at the school. People started questioning what the other teachers were doing when they saw his accomplishments as the lone teacher at a school with several grades. He got a lot of sympathy after that, he points out. In terms of his teaching methods, he says that he had learned what to emphasize and how to discipline from his own schooling and teachers. His childhood teachers would correct the students' work and their behaviour. From then on, he recalls how he never wanted to be anything other than a teacher, even if it meant having a low salary.

Traditionally, the Bahuns/Brahmins were the interpreters of religious and social laws and were entitled to take up teaching as a profession. This gave them a position of leadership in society (Acharya, 1996, p. 103). Subsequently, most teachers have felt responsible for their fellow villagers' needs and see their protection as part of their role as teachers (Awasthi, 2004, p. 312). Damodar expresses that he felt obliged to the community he was a part of, and felt that he should use his talents to serve the people living there. When there were disputes in the village, he helped solve them. He says he was the village's teacher, doctor, lawyer and scribe. "*The teacher has to play all these roles*" (interview 1, January 2014).

In retrospect, he recalls one of the roles he had as a mediator in the village. There was an incident where a 40-year-old man had enticed a young, naive girl to come to his house, where he had "*husband–wife relations*" (interview 1, January 2014) with her, but the girl ran away the following day and refused to return. The villagers assembled to hold a meeting to resolve the problem and asked the schoolteacher to attend. Damodar could not recall having been invited to attend a wedding feast, so he concluded that the man had taken the girl into his home without a marriage ceremony. At the meeting, he remembers there were over a hundred people gathered to hear the outcome of the dispute. He had taken the lead and asked the girl if she would return to the man that had made her his wife, but she refused yet again. He then asked the girl's mother to bring forward the gold and the clothes the man had given to her daughter. He then enquired: "*Dai* [elder brother]*, are these the clothes you gave her? Is this the gold you gave her? The ring? Is it all there?* (interview 1, January 2014).

The man had verified that it was all there, so Damodar proceeded to write out divorce papers in the formal style of language required for such documents and read them aloud to the people who were gathered. The villagers applauded his decision, but the girl's mother wanted the man to bow at the girl's feet. However, Damodar explained that he did not want to be part of that, because theirs is a male society where only women are expected to bow to men. "*There has been no record in society of a man bowing to a woman*" (interview 1, January 2014), he said. In front of the villagers, he stated to the mother: "*My broken hands have written words that they should not have written, my rotten mouth has read out words that should not have been spoken and my damaged eyes have seen what they should not have seen*" (interview 1, January 2014). He told them that he was not proud of having written out divorce papers, but that he had done it out of duty. He said that the girl could come and bow at his feet at another time that her mother could agree on, and the villagers applauded him for his words. When walking home from the meeting, the men asked him if he had not been afraid to take on all the responsibilities

of being a teacher in a village that was different from his own, but he replied: "*When I saw you, you didn't have horns or long nails and I knew you wouldn't charge me with horns*" (interview 1, January 2014). It is clear by how Damodar tells the story that he embraces the role given to him. Within the hierarchical social structure of Nepal, there seems to be little doubt that the social order of the caste system is legitimate. According to Bista, social regulations are not well internalized in a caste society, and sanctions are, for the most part, socially applied (Bista, 1991, p. 87). Consequently, the spiritual purity that Bahuns are perceived to have by virtue of their birth often puts them in a favourable position in village disputes.

Damodar shared many stories that described the different ways he had counselled people and offered his support. In school, he had taught the students about Gautam Buddha and his teachings. He specifically remembered one incident when he had taught his students that Buddha was not a god, and that he had died, like all men do. After that, his landlord's son stopped coming to school. When Damodar enquired as to why the child had not been to school, the child replied: "*if I study I have to die, and if I don't study I have to die. I won't go*" (interview1). He sat the child down beside him and said: "*If I had thought that I wouldn't study because I will die, then would I be your teacher?*" (interview 1, January 2014) He then used Buddha as an example: "*like Buddha, we can leave something great behind that is of value before we die*" (interview 1, January 2014). Damodar explains that he still sees the boy and knows that he is completing his bachelor's and has a job. "*I know how to convince children*" (interview 1, January 2014), he said, "*I am very strict, but if you feel my pockets, I always carry sweets. I think perhaps I have some in my pocket now*" (interview 1, January 2014), and he fishes out two sweets from his pocket. He says that if he sees a child giving trouble to his mother, he sometimes stops his motorcycle on the street to give the child a sweet. "*She might not have enough money to buy some*" (interview 1, January 2014), he reflects. Damodar points out that he is known as one of the strictest teachers in his school, but that the children like to be close to him. He says that it is commonly understood that there are few children in government schools, but he affirms that in his school there are lots of children in attendance. Damodar has to confront, on a daily basis, the demands of people who have problems. When some parents find it hard to control their children, they seek out Damodar for help from among the 14 teachers in the school where he works now:

> *Friendly, child-friendly, what is child-friendly? Teach me one time, children don't do their homework; Sir, the children don't do their homework. Teachers come to me to*

complain: nowadays, boys don't cut their hair; Sir, the boys won't listen to me when I
tell them to cut their hair, they grow their nails, Sir (interview 1, January 2014).

If his students are unruly, Damodar is not afraid to strike the child on the cheek until their skin breaks—even in front of their parents. Once, he took a pair of scissors and cut the hair of a boy in an unbecoming way, even though he knows how to cut hair, just so the children would know their boundaries. Now, he said, no boy comes to school with their hair too long. He works within the school environment to find solutions to answer the many problems regarding maintaining discipline. He recalls the following exchange:

I enter the classroom: Why didn't you do your homework?

Sir, my mother and father had a fight, I haven't eaten rice, I haven't done my homework.

It is all speeches. You have to understand their psychology. Perhaps they felt too lazy to do their homework. It might be that their parents drink and fight. But the reality is that some mothers beat the father and some fathers beat the mother. Look here, is there no need for a friendly home environment? It cannot only be school friendly. Is a teacher a contract worker? No, he is not (interview 1, January 2014).

There are a range of reasons for why students might not have done their homework, but Damodar feels there cannot be an environment of friendliness in school that is not recognized in the home environment.

He goes on to discuss the teacher training in which he has been participating for the past few days. The in-service training programmes are mandatory for government schoolteachers to ensure the implementation of the Education for All reform programmes. The involvement of district education offices (DEO) has been seen as crucial to execute these reforms (Awasthi, 2004, p. 55). Resource persons from the DEO have the task of providing teacher training that can align teaching practices with EFA goals. Amongst education personnel in the districts, there has been some ambivalence about the EFA approach. It has been expressed that there is a gap between the intentions of the centre and the reality of the districts, which have in many ways maintained the traditional way of teaching (Awasthi, 2004, p. 58). It can also be argued that decisions regarding educational development are taken through dialogue that is mostly between aid agencies and high-level Ministry of Education officials, which results in the government implementing content that has been pre-determined by aid agencies (Bhatta, 2011, p. 23).

What Damodar thinks is relevant to discuss in the training is how to teach the curriculum and how to solve the problems that teachers are facing:

> *Since yesterday, I have been arguing with the trainers. What kind of training do you provide? I have been teaching for 23 years. I can teach the trainers of these courses. I can teach them my subject. But, how to teach, what are the problems, have you solved these problems? If we were able to solve these problems, they need not have come, we don't need their compensation money for coming here* (interview 1, January 2014).

Teachers receive some compensation (100 rupees) for attending training sessions. Damodar points out that he has been teaching for 23 years. His ability to speak up can convince all 60–70 teachers participating to leave the training session if it is not relevant for their needs, he explains. He said he was prepared to take responsibility for that. There is a Nepalese saying that he recalls: "*Did you wash the clothes, wife? Smell them and you will know, husband*". He continues: "*Did you participate in the training? Yes, I did ... As long as you smell of soap, it doesn't matter if your neck is filthy*" (interview 1, January 2014), he says.

About the funding for these training sessions, he emphasizes that it comes from donors, not from the Nepalese government's budget. He expresses his opposition to this and his concern for how the money is invested. "*We might lack material wealth, but we are rich in people*" (interview 1, January 2014), he points out.

In the Basic and Primary Education Project II (BPEP II), the goals of improving the quality of education in primary education include the adoption of different approaches to teaching, like grade teaching, as well as developing new textbooks (BPEP, 1999). The current challenge for teachers, Damodar emphasizes, is the new curriculum being introduced. In grade six, there are new textbooks. He questions why the teachers were not given relevant training on how to teach from the new textbooks before they were introduced in the system. In his experience, the texts about historic events are too difficult for the students to understand. The words are too difficult and it is hard for them to grasp the meaning of such texts. "*It is like, if I say something to you, but I can't explain why I said it. What is the meaning of that?*" (interview 1, January 2014). He has found the introduction of grade teaching in the system to be rewarding, and challenges other teachers to do grade teaching; he believes that it is how a teacher should work to build up the student's knowledge. It means that the same teacher teaches most subjects in a class and the teacher follows the class to the next grade. He knows from experience what the students might get in their exams, and makes sure that they know what they need to know to pass their SLC

exams. With grade teaching, he can ensure that the students have been taught the topics required for each level. "*You should not walk the path others dug, you should dig it yourself*" (interview 1, January 2014), he says.

Damodar describes himself as an honest man with strong opinions. He is a religious man, he does not drink alcohol or chew *suppari* (tobacco). He speaks his mind when he feels things are not right. "*We are dependent on donor money, but it is not spent in the right places*", he concludes (interview, January 2014). The teachers have become lazy, he says, because of their involvement in politics and are thus protected by their party affiliations. He believes it is one of the main reasons for teachers not doing their jobs. To make the point, he asks his students if they want to become political leaders. If they do, he tells them to come and hit him in the face because it is how the political leaders are, he explained. If a teacher carries a politician's bag, he will be provided for. He thinks the leaders lack discipline and character and warns his students of the pitfalls of holding positions of power.

Damodar points out the many challenges facing teachers working in an environment in which there are several different ethnic groups. The ethnic groups do not speak Nepalese fluently and have difficulty with pronunciation and grammar. The children speak different ethnic languages; but, as a teacher, Damodar has learned the local languages as well as Sanskrit. He believes there are examples of good teachers in his district, who he refers to as god-like figures. They understand the responsibility of being a teacher. However, there is a tendency amongst many teachers to expect others to do their jobs. In his opinion, there should be no more than one female teacher in a school. Female teachers are envious and distracted. This is what he has experienced in teaching. "*In teaching, if you don't think of the children as your own people, if the teacher doesn't take that into their heart, he/she can't teach*" (interview 1, January 2014).

During the Maoist uprising (1996–2006), Damodar was kidnapped four times. He describes the situation during the Maoist uprising as a time of division and distrust amongst the people. Teachers were kidnapped and harassed to take sides in the conflict. As Shields and Rappleye (2008) state: "The role of the teacher became deeply politicized as both Maoist and the Royal Army sought support for their respective ideological positions in the classroom" (p. 92). However, Damodar did not waver in his convictions. The Maoists in his area threatened to kill him if he did not obey their orders. He vividly recalls the event.

> *I shook hands with Dr Baburam Bhattrai in a place called Mato Sittel; they took me at*
> *night, after midnight. I am the son of a Bahun; they gave me three pieces of buffalo meat*

and some coarse rice, like millet and cheap lentils. Why should I eat that, a man who is about to die? I kicked the plate so it clanked against the wall and tipped over. Why did you do that? Look here, if you want to blindfold me and shoot me with a bullet, I am so-and-so's son. Until now, I have never eaten meat; let me never have to do that. Shoot me with a bullet, but cover my eyes, because if I look you in the eyes when you kill me, I will haunt you until you die. Their commander, who was a teacher that had joined the Maoists, got word of my abduction. He told the cadres it was a mistake to have taken me. Would it not have been a mistake if they had shot me? (interview 1, January 2014).

Damodar states that the Maoists wanted him to show his allegiance to their ideology by eating meat, which is considered impure by his caste. Divisions based on caste and ethnicity are described as forming the core of what led up to the conflict. "In particular, long standing divisions based on caste - a hierarchical system of social organization rooted in dominant interpretations of Hindu texts - was at the core of the social unrest that led to open conflict" (Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 93). In the Hindu system, there are certain activities that are considered appropriate for one's caste (Bista, 1991, p. 79). One perceives status in terms of purity and impurity (Douglas, 2003, p. 124). The system of caste purity is structured upwards. The most impure are the lowest caste. The system is stratified and "represents a body in which by the division of labor the head does the thinking and praying and the most despised parts carry away waste matter" (Douglas, 2003, p. 125). The hereditary division of labour between the castes is related to their purity. It represents the ordering of social hierarchy and is a symbolic system. For the Bahun, all the positions below are polluting (Bista, 1991, p. 71; Douglas, 2003, p. 125). The Bahun caste has spiritual purity by birth, and their purity can be contaminated by various factors, like eating meat or drinking alcohol, or it can be contaminated by other people. Their place in the hierarchy of purity is biologically transmitted—in that sense, the purity of food becomes important. On the one hand, food is produced by the efforts of several castes. To symbolically break away from impure contact, food for the Bahun must be prepared by pure hands (Douglas, 2003, p. 126). On the other hand, the meat of cows and buffalo is considered unclean for Bahuns to eat. For Damodar, to have eaten the food he was given would have represented a loss of caste status and would have symbolized an act of renouncing his caste's values. The fear of pollution is closely connected to caste identity, and challenging the caste system is perceived as an attack on society (Bista, 1991, p. 74).

Providing a great amount of detail, Damodar shares the story of another time that a group of Maoists came to his house. His wife went out to tell them that he had taken the last bus to the

next town, while he hid in the bedroom. Out of fear of leaving the house, he recalls having to relieve himself in a plastic bag. His uncle had been in the group of Maoists and they had said they had come to kill him. Following these threatening experiences, he felt he was given a new lease on life and so he decided to move to the district centre in order to feel more protected. After moving closer to the district centre, he was relocated to another school. However, after some time, a female teacher complained to the district education office that he had accused her of not doing her duty as a teacher. She said he had told her to stay in class and teach the lessons she was required to do. The district education officer had sided with the female teacher. This had enraged Damodar so much that he had taken a *kukri* (a traditional knife) and appeared in front of the district education office looking for the officer. Tensions were calmed by the staff there, and in the meantime, the issue was raised with the Ministry of Education in the hopes that he would not lose his government teaching job. Due to his wife's connections in the ministry, he was given a job at a different school.

During the People's War (*Janna Yuddha*), schools became battlefields for both sides of the conflict. Because schools represented the state and the local community, this put teachers in a difficult position (Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 97). Teachers were often seen as mediators between the interests of the government and those of the local communities. According to Shields and Rappleye (2008): "This gave teachers and administrators a degree of agency, albeit constrained to various degrees by the fear of violent reprisal. Depending on the local context, this included the ability to advocate moderation and restraint through negotiation, non-cooperation and deferral" (p. 97). In relation to the Maoists, Damodar argued that the villagers did not get anything from the Maoist movement other than violence, threats and injustice. Damodar expresses his view of the Maoist movement as oppressive. Even though he agreed several times to meet the Maoists' demands for food and shelter, in order to protect the safety of his community, he expresses his firm opinion of the Maoists: "*They never learnt the values of human life, the life of a dog seemed more significant and valuable than human life. Rather they destroyed and dishonoured culture, religion and tradition*" (interview 2, March 2015). He refers to his own experience of how the Maoists had not allowed him to perform a ritual on the anniversary of his father's death, as an example.

At the final interview, Damodar was asked what he held so deeply that he was prepared to die for it. Damodar had been put in a position where he feared for his life and he had expressed that he was prepared to die. He answered: "*Having strong faith in religion and in God, I never could*

accept what the Maoists ordered me to do and I always went against their behaviour and I used to criticize them" (interview 2, March 2015).

He continued to explain:

> *So the Maoists were sort of attracted to me and impressed with my way of leadership, my conduct, hard work, honesty, dedication, responsibility and commitment, and they wanted to make use of me for their political movement as a good cadre who could have taken a sincere responsibility for their political ideology. But, what I disliked about their* [Maoists] *behaviour and manner was that they killed and ate the cow. For me, the cow is considered as a mother, the goddess Laxmi, but they killed cows and made people eat what we believed to be holy (*interview 2, March 2015).

He opposed the Maoists even though he knew they might kill him. He felt it was his duty to disagree with them. The Maoists' burning of Nepali money with the king's image on it, and their burning and dishonouring of Sanskrit textbooks and moral education textbooks, he explains, were examples of the Maoists' disregard for Nepalese history and traditional cultural values.

Even after the transition to a constitutional democracy in 1951, deeply ingrained inequalities between indigenous ethnic groups and people living in rural areas persisted. Education was associated with the aim of developing a culturally homogeneous Hindu state (Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 94). The results of these inequalities led to the exclusion of various groups from society, which served to contribute to the outbreak of conflict (Shields & Rappleye, 2008, p. 94). Damodar argues that the Maoists labelled the current education system as bourgeois, and yet their own leader, Babu Ram Bhattarai, had earned a PhD and held a high status in society as one of the top architects in South Asia by going through the same bourgeois education system that they wished to overturn. Damodar believes that the moral education that students receive at school is a set of good ethics. These include: "*setting others free without any suppression, treating everyone with equal respect and dignity, loving youngsters and respecting elders, honouring God in the temple, showing respect to guests, following rules and regulations in everyday life, as well as living a healthy life*" (interview 2, March 2015).

Damodar is referring to a Hindu text from the Manusmriti about teachers: *Ya aabrinotya bitatham brahmana shrabana bubahau, Sa mata sa pita geyastam na druhyetkadachan* (see Awasthi, 2004), which translates to: "He should consider the man who fills both his ears

faithfully with the Veda as his father and mother and never show hostility towards him" (Olivelle, 2004, p. 102). Damodar explains:

> *Obeying mother* [maataa]*, pitaa* [father] *and guru are fundamental values of our society and culture. So, guru is formed with two different letters, as derived from the Sanskrit language: gu and ru. Here, gu means darkness and ru means take away or omit. Therefore, guru means someone who can take away the darkness and enlighten with brightness* (interview 2, March 2015).

He believes that his strong faith, dedication, determination and courage have allowed him to stand firm. He has learned that human beings should never sacrifice their fundamental life principles out of fear, he says. He points out that he has held many leadership positions, but that above all else, he is a teacher. "*Whereas I believe every teacher is first and foremost a teacher, then only someone else*" (interview 1, January 2014). In the Hindu Vedic tradition, the guru should be treated with respect and reverence and people should not doubt what the guru says. In the Vedic tradition, the guru's authority should not be challenged. Damodar's opinions reflect his firm belief in the traditional gurukul school system. His position as a teacher is equal to that of a leading figure in society. His distinctive roles as a Bahun and a teacher require a commitment to maintaining his caste status while also guiding and directing others.

The government school where he teaches now has 300 students and is known to be a good school. The classes are full and they have had to turn children away because they have no space to enrol more. Among the children who attend his school are those from communities that work along the highway, making gravel manually for road construction. He knows that some of these students have done well in their further studies. There are a variety of teachers in the school. Damodar has many stories of teachers who neglect their work, teachers who just make their students copy texts from their textbooks and others who smell of alcohol. He attributes much of the ongoing bad behaviour of many teachers to the slack attitude of the district education officers who rarely enforce the regulations. "*You can't weigh metal and gold on the scale at the same time*", he says. "*If the water source is unclean, the water in the water tap will also be polluted*" (interview 2, March 2015), he concludes.

The textbooks for grade seven have been revised and will be introduced next year. Damodar argues that the teachers need training on how to teach from the new textbooks. The language used in the texts is unfamiliar and different from the old texts. The textbooks that were introduced for grade six were not suitable for the age group for which they were intended, in

his opinion. "*It's like holding someone's throat and feeding them sweets*" (interview 2, March 2015), he says. The trainers do not understand the reality that teachers face in the classroom, is his conclusion. He finds them too inexperienced to train teachers, even with their PhDs and pedagogical theories. He is angered by some of the content in the textbooks. One of the Maoist leaders, Prachanda, is portrayed as one of the major leaders of Nepal. "*How can it be possible to portray someone who has killed 15000 as a major leader, and who, in front of their students, killed teachers tied to a tree?*" (interview 1, January 2014), he asks.

He believes that if the teachers did 20% of what they were taught in the training programmes, there would be few parents who would send their children to private schools. Teachers are given 100 rupees for participating in the training. He feels offended that teachers are being bought in that way and refused to take that kind of money. In response, he asks: "*kinne teacher ko jaat lai, ke ho Master ko jaat?*" (One cannot purchase the teacher profession? What is a teacher?), he said (interview 1, January 2014). He recalls something that he heard someone say about teachers when he was in India: "*second God he*" (the teacher is a second god) (interview 1, January 2014). His response refers to the Hindu religious belief that while a person is brought into being by their parents, it is the guru who gives life to their eyes so that the written word has meaning (Manu, p57, verse 146). In Sanskrit, guru means "*to bring from darkness to light*", he says (interview1, January 2014).

5.2.3 Narrative characteristics

Damodar's stories describe his personal experiences with a high level of narrative intensity. When he gives accounts of his childhood and his teaching experiences, his explanations are richly detailed. It seems easy for him to talk about his life. The first interview lasted for one and a half hours with few interruptions other than someone knocking on the door to serve tea. We had arranged to meet at a government training centre in the district centre where he lived. He did not need any additional questions to encourage him to talk about his life and work. Damodar's narratives are chronological accounts starting with his early years and going up until today. He spoke little of his own family life, which he did not seem to consider relevant to the topic of childhood schooling and his teaching experiences. Although I met his wife and children at a later interview, they remained in the background and left us to speak alone in their family home. Apparently, the stories that he told were excerpts from events that he selected in order to feature his life as a teacher. He showed feelings of deep emotion in the manner in which he spoke, and with the expressions he used. In particular, this came out in his references to his encounters with the Maoists. The public narrative of the Maoist insurgency and his stories of

his private experiences with the Maoists yield important insights into understanding both the public and the private narratives that he shared.

Damodar also expresses great dissatisfaction with the government's failure to limit the influence of politics on the teaching profession and to punish teachers who neglect their work. It is possible to see the basis of a framework for thinking about social and cultural systems within which Damodar lives and works. He constantly attributes the slack behaviour of teachers to the educational system that does not enforce discipline amongst the teachers. He believes in the mandate given to the teaching profession by the Hindu socio-religious stratification system prescribed by the Vedas, the sacred scriptures of Hinduism. Several times, he recites texts from the Vedas in Sanskrit to support his arguments.

The organizing principles upon which he bases his stories reflect traditional Hindu values that can be expected in this context. His stories have a sense of dramatic structure and are well crafted. The story of his abduction by the Maoists suggests a threat to his sense of stability. He expresses his strong commitment to and certainty in Hindu values and beliefs and expresses his opposition to a world plagued by difference and insecurity. His stories of teaching and his resistance to change can be interpreted as manifesting his disposition to social structures that were shaped by his culture and religion. His goal of socializing children to be respectful and disciplined is part of his responsibility as a teacher to protect and guide his fellow villagers. Damodar is angered by the lack of respect that the Maoists have shown towards deeply held values, perceiving it as not only an attack on his ideology, but as a threat that challenges Damodar's sense of self.

Incrementally, it seems that Damodar has developed an identity project of becoming a teacher. From this point of view, his background reveals important influences. It implies that Damodar's occupational career choice corresponds with a means of somehow asserting himself in his community. Damodar describes his childhood as being in the shadow of his older brother. He eventually finds favour with his father when acting as a responsible person. This emerges in the stories he told of how he handled the household money the brothers were given, and how he took care of his duties and his own schooling when living with his brother in the district centre. "*In our culture, the second child can experience a feeling of harassment. I felt that*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Damodar explains his feeling of neglect during childhood as a cultural phenomenon. This seems significant for understanding why there appears to be little resentment towards his parents in

his stories. He reflects on his upbringing as culturally conditioned, and therefore does not internalize the neglect as his parents' personal failure. It is implied that because of the economic conditions of the people living in rural areas, it is culturally expected that children have to make do with whatever is fit for use as a way to save money.

Once he takes on a teaching job, Damodar seems to slowly develop his self-esteem and gain confidence in his ability to teach and to take responsibility for his students. Stories of his first teaching job give the impression that his sense of accomplishment in teaching his students to the point that they could compete in an inter-school competition boosted his confidence. He recalls what people said after the competition: "*Damodar is the only one who teaches. He is the only teacher in his school. In this school, what have you been teaching? He went away with the prize*" (interview 1, January 2014).

In the small village school where he first taught, he had no colleagues to rely on and it was up to him to manage the school. His students were of various ages, and some were almost the same age as him. Therefore, it appears that is was increasingly important for him, as a teacher, to distinguish himself from the students and have a clear role as their teacher. For him, this seems to imply that his responsibility was primarily to teach the students to read and write. Secondly, his other focus was to set boundaries by disciplining anyone who got distracted from their studies. His strict approach was appreciated and supported by the parents in the village. He embraced the responsibility and he met the expectations that society had of him.

Teachers like Damodar have access to cognitive models within their culture. This provides the vital social and cultural scaffolding for Damodar's search for a theme within his life. "*I got sympathy. I taught. After becoming a teacher I recall how I had been inspired to become a teacher by my own teacher; what he emphasized, how he hit our cheeks*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Damodar has access to a range of role models in the form of his own teachers and in Hindu scriptures. His emerging sense of himself as a teacher should be viewed within the social context. Descriptions of his identity, belief and agency must be seen as a collaboration between the individual self and the social context. The continuation of a gurukul–shiksha (education) tradition is accepted by the community, despite the increasing influence of the west on Nepal's education system (Awasthi, 2004, p. 311). The traditional role of the guru was characterized by the guru's absolute authority over the pupil, who in return was obedient and loyal (Acharya,

1996, p. 103). If the pupil became indifferent to his studies, the guru was free to punish him (Acharya, 1996, p. 103).

Damodar appears to assume the socially expected role of a teacher who should direct and guide others in keeping with his position. He uses a range of positive and negative reinforcements to guide and control the individuals for whom he is responsible. The stories he tells of handing out candy to encourage or direct a child, and of cutting the hair of a child in an unflattering way to set an example, point toward explaining and justifying his role. The impression given is that he readily voices his opinions in village conflicts and disputes and is prepared to take action if necessary. He seems to embrace the role he has been given in the community, and the villagers appear to respect his position and role as the village teacher (guru). The villagers' positive reaction to how he set boundaries in the school and how he took a leading role in the village meetings highlights the importance of teachers in the local context as authority figures and shows that this is accepted as a normal way of life. Although the traditional roles of the guru are changing and social values are shifting, few question what the teacher says and does (Awasthi, 2004, p. 311). The current practice in schools of relying on rote learning and teaching to the test show that there is still this faith in the authority of the gurus, and an acceptance of rote learning in the school system in general (Awasthi, 2004, p. 311).

Damodar's own experiences of schooling featured memorizing the set government curriculum, and students were expected to have good self-discipline. The aim of schooling is to make good citizens through the exercise of self-control. Self-discipline, in the form of dedication, hard work and obedience, is understood as necessary to perform well in school and to serve as a foundation for adult life (Valentin, 2011). When telling his story, the centrality of the teacher is evident. Damodar recounted dialogue-based events where he was the principle actor, while other characters served his purpose. This highlights the importance of a teacher's autonomy to handle the contextual challenges of the wider community. He questions the focus on child centeredness in the school reform programmes and points out the importance of the relationship between education and society. He questions the relevance and impact of the child friendly approaches to education in the context he lives and works in.

Damodar seems to metaphorically "take the pulpit" when he describes the challenges he faces. At that point, he speaks as if he wants to make a statement to a wider audience about the need to recognize his students' social reality when developing reform programmes. As Awasthi also highlights: "Teachers, however, have shown resistance to implementing non-Nepali 'modern'

education in their schools owing to the fact that they see foreignness in Nepal's school education" (Awasthi, 2004, p. 311).

There is no doubt that Damodar is well respected, and that he is confident in his role as a teacher. He shares little regarding any regrets he might have had in his life or work. Somewhat in contrast to western ideals of showing character and strength through admitting to failure, in the Hindu stratified system of caste hierarchy, strength is presented as engaging in activities that are appropriate to one's caste (Bista, 1991, p. 79). Weakness is related to acting outside of the expectations of a particular caste. For a high-caste person, this might mean avoiding preoccupying one's self with material wealth and physical labour. Failure or weakness is most commonly attributed to others, or to circumstances, since life is believed to be more or less fated, which precludes the possibility of holding oneself accountable for one's circumstances (Bista, 1991, p. 82). The worldview of the west is not the worldview of the caste Hindus, says Bista (1991, p. 84). As an example, he describes how a busy person is seen as running errands for someone higher up in the system, which in turn signifies that he or she is not of high caste or high status (Bista, 1991, p. 85). A Bahun and a teacher have a position of leadership in society. High-caste people see little dignity in labour and having to work is associated with pain (*dukkha*). Instead, avoiding work is considered a good life (*sukkha*). Learnedness and ritual are important activities for the Bahun caste (Bista, 1991, p. 85). There seems to be little space for failure or weakness in Damodar's stories that portray him as strong and confident. His strength lies in his ability to engage in the activities that are appropriate to his caste and occupation.

Traditionally, the aim of gurukul education was the spiritual upliftment of the pupils. It is also believed that the guru can guide and orient people towards *moksha* (salvation) after death. The system has had social implications, and in many ways it has legitimized the caste hierarchy and has been "instrumental in preserving the traditional social structure" (Acharya, 1996, p. 105). Damodar's view of the cultural narratives of castes indicates his belief in certain objective and naturally determined differences between them. For example, he claims that the Thakuri caste does not have the same cognitive abilities as the Bahuns. "*The Cheettri/Bahun are cleverer than the Thakuri. The Thakuri caste is more straightforward, like the Tamangs*" (interview 1, January 2014)*.* From Damodar's perspective, as a teacher, he has to treat people differently according to their caste. Generally, he argues that people from certain castes are slower to comprehend than others, and therefore need more help and guidance.

Damodar engages with traditional religion by referring to Hindu scriptures, particularly those that relate to the role of a guru, to moral education and to the significance of the cow in Hindu tradition: "*The Maoist never showed their culture and religion honour. They killed and ate the cow which we worship as a symbol of mother Laxmi*" (interview 2, March 2015).

Damodar's use of repetitive phrasing multiple times when discussing the meaning of being a guru and a teacher suggests that such stories were well rehearsed. His life story points towards someone who has been able to exert, to some degree, control over his life: "*Therefore, I have always lived with my dignity, beliefs, values and faith without fear of their* [Maoist's] *threats and torture*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Damodar comes across as being an idealistic person, and he attributes these ideals to his Hindu values and the gurukul tradition. The confidence that he expresses might imply that he is someone who has been able to achieve agency in his life and work through the support of his community. This suggests that in his community he is respected and perceived as a leader and a spokesperson. To a certain degree, community support has enabled him to maintain the ideals that seem to remain constant throughout his stories. Although these stories appear to be more or less finished plots and do not suggest that he is in the process of remaking the stories he tells about himself, there are indications that he is disillusioned with the new reforms and the current political situation. However, it is also apparent that he is somewhat unwilling to change himself in accordance with the direction the reforms are taking, unless the community changes in the same direction.

Damodar has a local reputation for speaking up and voicing his opinions. This was also how the government official who introduced him to me described him. When attending the compulsory teacher training programmes, Damodar is not afraid to criticize the government's attempts to improve teaching in schools. He describes how he argues with the facilitators and questions their authority to teach teachers about teaching in a particular setting. It could be argued that his confidence in speaking out against the facilitators is rooted in the authority given to him by the Hindu scriptures as a teacher, along with the acceptance and faith of the community in gurukul values. He questions facilitators' authority, given the social circumstances.

What the teachers need instead, he claims, is the government to inform them of the content and curriculum that is required in relation to the testing system. The teachers themselves know how to teach, he states. In his opinion, how he and other teachers teach is reasonable and

understandable and contextually appropriate. His identity as a teacher seems to be closely linked to the values of his community and remains detached from the new reforms within his profession. The stories of his encounters with teacher trainers in the reform system indicate that in these situations he is most likely perceived as a threat to the system, rather than as a guru with a mandate to teach.

The same resistance to modifying his own way of thinking is also apparent in Damodar's descriptions of his encounters with the Maoist movement. In a way, it seems like his religious identity restrains him from investigating the conflicting interpretations of how he perceives himself and how the Maoists portray him, considering both sides perceive one another as being oppressors. In relation to education, the Maoist struggle for equality between the ethnic groups and castes collides with the gurukul tradition, where compliance of will under the guidance and authority of the guru is the only path to enlightenment and salvation. While Damodar justifies his cultural position as a Bahun by serving the people through the wisdom of the Vedas, the Maoists reject adherence to any religion that reveres a person whose position and welfare depend on the efforts of another. His struggle is a somewhat universal one, reflecting the constant battle between the privileged and the unprivileged. The constant schism between nature and culture, where the unfortunate person is left to physically toil and endure the hardships of nature, enables the more fortunate person to cultivate themselves spiritually and intellectually away from the hardships of manual labour. In a traditional sense, to acknowledge this schism means that Damodar is challenged to broaden or adapt his religious belief system, particularly in relation to the rigidity of the hierarchical principles of caste relations.

Awasthi argues that the traditional role of teachers has not been taken into account in plans and programmes for educational reform in Nepal and therefore "most plans could not yield desired results" (Awasthi, 2004, p. 312). Teachers like Damodar, who have a strong sense of commitment and mission, are traditionally seen as an asset to the community. They play an important decision-making role in the communities in which they form a part. Bhatta (2011) points out that in the reform processes, teachers are treated as standardized performers of tasks, mostly as defined by powerful aid agencies (p. 23). Standards-based reforms are standardized and not tailored to the personal, emotional and cultural side of teaching; they are not attuned to the missions and commitments that motivate teachers throughout their lifetimes (Goodson, 2008, p. 61). Instead, the teachers are treated as agents of the system, complying with the orders given by others and closely monitored as to the level of their performance.

The focus of Damodar's life story is the choice between the identities and roles that are available within the cultural setting for someone with his background and talent. The stories he told described how certain courses of action opened up to him that illustrated the nature of his ideals, beliefs, agency and identity. His embrace of a guru mandate to teach and guide others seems to have led to a well-defined course of action. The storyline draws on a meta-narrative within the framework of a Vedic tradition that incorporates the individual in a wider interconnection of meaning. His personal ideals and beliefs can be pursued, but within the frame of the contextual meta-narrative. There is evidence of personal agency in his courses of action, particularly in how he responds to the opportunities he is given. The foundational Hindu culture appears to offer security in terms of facing social change. However, the open exploration of potential courses of action would also entail a continuous process of becoming. As Awasthi (2004) outlines: "Such changes are possible if the 'identificatory habitus' of Hindutwa is employed for enlightenment and self-awakening (Awasthi 2004, p.313). He further states; " Harmonization within the framework of Hinduism is not unattainable provided that the dominant groups demonstrate commitment to change themselves from 'within'" (Awasthi, 2004, p. 313). In the case of Damodar's success stories detailing his life and work as a teacher, there is a rich narrative capital with which to develop new identity missions within the framework of Hindu culture.

5.2.4 Introducing Krishna

Krishna upholds the virtues of a holistic approach to education represented by hard work and a reverence for life and social ideals, together with spiritual values. He believes that imparting these virtues to a child forms their strong individual character in terms of attaining self-discipline and developing a feeling of social responsibility. The sources of these values are the ancient Hindu scriptures, the Vedas, Upanisadas, Brahmanas and the Puranas, that have formed the underlying philosophical beliefs of educational practices in Nepal.

5.2.5 Krishna's life history

Krishna was born in a remote village in the far west of Nepal. When speaking of his childhood, he starts by describing his father as a highly educated man. He goes on to describe how tragedy struck the family. Soon after Krishna was born, his mother died, and even though his father was known as a wise and knowledgeable man, he lost his sense of responsibility for his children. He left the family home and became like a *sadhu* (a holy man, an ascetic). This explains why Krishna was not taught or educated for most of his early childhood. "*I didn't recognize any of the letters in the alphabet until I was 11 years of age*" (interview 1, March 2015), he explained.

At that time, his uncle took him to India and left him at a *gurukulum* (ashram), a school for orphans. It was a type of residential school in India where the students lived with a guru. These schools served as primary educational institutions before British rule. However, at the time that Krishna was taken to India, the gurukulum was also a place to send a child who had no immediate family to take care of him. At the gurukulum, the students paid their way by helping with everyday chores. Krishna explains that at the gurukulum, the children were fed only once a day. He remembers that the discipline was strict, and even though the children would have liked to sleep, he said that they had to get up at four-thirty in the morning and studied by the dim light of oil lamps. Nevertheless, he saw himself as fortunate, since he was enrolled in grade eight after only two years of study.

> *With a lot of dukkha all at once, because the gurus said that I had studied well from the start, they enrolled me in grade eight. After I was admitted in grade eight, I did well there too. Until I was eleven years old, I had not gone to school, and in two years I was in grade eight. I passed my SLC when I was 15* (interview 1, March 2015).

Krishna passed his SLC exam in the second division with good marks, and was able to continue his studies. He eventually completed his bachelor's in India. At that time, he fell in with the wrong crowd, but fortunately, he was able to complete his studies before returning to Nepal. Upon returning to Nepal, he knew nothing of his father's whereabouts. A friend encouraged him to go to university in Nepal because of his talent for studying, and so he decided to study the Nepali language. He had previously studied Sanskrit in India: "*The mother of the Nepali language*" (interview 1, March 2015), he said. For him, it was easy to study Nepali because of his Sanskrit studies, and he passed his master's exams with 75%. He got a degree in 2044 (Nepali calendar); he stated: "*it has been 26 years since I did my master's degree*" (interview 1, March 2015).

Krishna describes himself as a person who was afraid to speak in front of people, a person with a very low self-esteem. "*I was beaten a lot as a child by the gurus, it was common to beat children, it led me to have very low self-confidence*" (interview 1, March 2015).

Later, he learned that his father lived as a sadhu in Chitwan and had built a temple there. He decided to pay his respects to his father, and he remembers that his father was glad to see his son again and was proud that his son had completed a master's degree. "*Now that you have found me, stay here and I will build you a house*" (interview 1, March 2015), he had said. Krishna recounted that he himself had no possessions at the time, but apparently, his father had

gained some wealth and was able to give his son a house. He explained that his father remained in his own quarters by the temple, and Krishna was given a house and was later married. Given the circumstances, he stated that it was time to find a job, so he started looking for a teaching job.

> *For me, teaching was the obvious option. I had no money to think of other job opportunities, everyone tried to find a teaching job. It was the traditional way of thinking. I also thought the same, that now I will have to find a teaching job. There was a vacancy at a school and I went for the job. I was to teach grade nine. In the class, there were students taller than me. I was only 21, 22 at the time. When I saw the students taller than me and the crowd in front of me, I became scared. I was not able to teach* (interview 1, March 2015).

Krishna recalls that he had taught his first lesson at a level that was too high for the students. The principal had asked the students about his teaching and they had said that they could not understand what he was trying to teach, so the principal told him that he was unfit to teach. This led him to feel like he had no capacity to do anything. He lost his confidence, gave up teaching and did nothing for two years. He remembers that during that period, he spent most of his time with his friends and played carrom. After his children were born, his wife tried to persuade him to find a job, but according to Krishna, he had lost his confidence in his ability to work. His father encouraged him to overcome his fear and he finally applied for a job on a campus in one of the hill towns of mid-Nepal, 23 years ago.

> *For my first lesson, I had to teach sex education. I had just read about Sigmund Freud and Jung and the students in grade twelve understood the lesson that I taught. When the school committee representatives asked the students how the new teacher taught, they all said: He taught us very well* (interview 1, March 2015).

The committee members were impressed with how well the "child teacher" could teach. He recounts that he weighed 42 kg at the time, due to the scarcity of food during his childhood. However, Krishna explains that he was selected from amongst the older and more experienced applicants to teach at the school. This, he says, had a tremendous effect on his self-confidence. From then on, he felt strong and confident to teach. The students, he says, used to say:

> *There has never been a better guru at our school than Krishna guru. They still say it today. I write poetry, I am known as a national poet. My poems are in grade four and*

five textbooks and there is talk of selecting some of my poetry for the plus two text books (interview 1, March 2015).

He continues to reflect on his struggles in life and on what his childhood experiences taught him. "*I learned from life that the hardships you encounter as a child have an effect on you for the rest of your life. But, with the encouragement of others, one can overcome these obstacles in life*" (interview 1, March 2015).

He recalls that there was a foreigner who was the principal of the school where he taught, who had told the other teachers that she was impressed with his teaching. He was later told this by his friends, he remembers, which had a lasting effect on his self-confidence. Krishna's reputation for being a good teacher led him to apply for other jobs. He says he was selected for new teaching jobs because of his talent for teaching, and states that he enjoyed teaching from then on. Krishna explains that he taught his classes by using stories, relevant examples and humour to explain the lessons. "*My grammar is very good, because I have studied Sanskrit*" (interview 1, March 2015), he says. Because of his past education in the gurukulum school in India, he could teach Nepali well. He goes on to explain how Sanskrit was developed by a great philosopher who created Sanskrit grammar using 1700 formulas. "*I know them all by heart*", he says, "*that is why I can teach all the grammar well in Nepali*" (interview 1, March 2015).

In discussing his personal life, Krishna states there were times when he went down the wrong path. Throughout his teaching career, he developed a drinking problem. He used to think:

> *I have a good reputation, I shouldn't drink, but I couldn't stop. I used to pray. Oh, God, I would come home drunk, Oh God let me not do this. What am I doing? I am on the wrong path. I used to say to myself, I won't drink, but again and again I would drink. I couldn't stop. I drank for almost four years. But I didn't eat meat. Nobody in my family eats meat. My children also don't eat meat. When looking for a bride I looked for someone from a family who didn't eat meat. So, when I quit drinking, I fasted for a whole week. I punished my body and only drank water. That's how I overcame my bad habit. I have not had a drink for about 13 years now* (interview 1, March 2015).

Nevertheless, he feels his teaching career has been successful. The students respect him and like to be close to him and talk. In his classroom, the students are from various backgrounds, homes and cultures; some come from educated families, some come from uneducated families, some are from wealthy families, while others are from poor backgrounds. Their thinking might

be different depending on their backgrounds, he says, but he tries to be considerate of their different experiences and tries to understand their mindset. When asked about the community in which he is working, he says that the small town was the headquarters of the district, so in that sense the place has been perceived as more developed than the surrounding communities. However, when the district headquarters was moved to another place, many of the educated people left the area and the less educated people remained. People from a low economic status formed the community, yet some of the trades people have prospered and have managed to send their children abroad for their education. Some have managed to study at university and have earned PhDs, while others have found jobs in foreign countries. Because of this, teachers are perceived well by the community, he states. Overall, however, Krishna concludes that people living there are not well educated. Nonetheless, people respect the teachers and greet them in the street and invite them in for tea. When they see him, they ask: "'*Have you eaten, guru? Come and eat with us'. I sometimes do. That's how it is. It's ok*" (interview 1, March 2015).

When asked about his family, and whether he lives with them, Krishna replies: "*No, my children went to school here, my wife was also here, but she did not have a job. Later, she got a job near our home. My children did ten plus two here, I have four children*" (interview 1, March 2015). He expresses his pride in his children and explains how they have been educated. One of his children has completed a master's degree and got married. Another of his children is in Calcutta, India, working as a nurse. "*I get support from my children*" (interview 1, March 2015), he says. His son is a well-known singer in those parts, he says.

Krishna is still closely connected to the temple his father built in the Therai. His father was given a lot of money by the powerful Rana families in Kathmandu to do their *puja*, their ritual prayers to worship certain deities or to celebrate different events. Although a puja can be done by a Hindu alone, some pujas require the presence of a priest who is well versed in the procedures and hymns of the specific puja. The importance of a puja to a family's prosperity explains why Krishna's father was sought after by the rich and influential families in Kathmandu. The Ranas ruled Nepal from 1846 to 1951; their rule was marked by tyranny and economic exploitation. The Ranas would occasionally display their wealth and power by parading influential people on ornamented elephants through the streets of Kathmandu on various state events and at particularly auspicious times. Krishna had heard his father describe such an event:

The Ranas put him on an elephant, that's how they respected him, there was a place called Sankhamul in Kathmandu, where he was made the main spiritual leader, this is what he told us, we don't know much about that, the Ranas had asked him to stay, but he had declined, rather than working under their pressure, he wanted to be free. He moved to Chitwan, and his followers went with him, and asked him if he would agree to build a temple. With their funding, they built an ashram [a place for religious retreats in Hinduism, often the residence of a guru] (interview 1, March 2015).

Krishna's father was obviously a well-reputed man known for his spiritual insights. He describes his father in his later years as being hardworking and punctual. He would get up at precisely 2:30 every morning and would never let anyone clean his dishes or do his work. Krishna says that his father had foreseen his death and told them that he would die in water. Without further explanation, Krishna confirms that he did. Krishna describes his feelings of despair when his father died. His friends and gurus had tried to console him by asking him: "*Babu Krishna, you are well educated, why are you in such despair, this is part of life, we will all have to leave one day. Why so sad?*" (interview 2, May 2016). Krishna had told them that he knew of no one else with such wisdom to whom he could turn for guidance in life. The professors at the university could not answer his questions with such wisdom, the way his father could, and from then on, he said, he would have to find his own way. Krishna believes that his father had an unusual ability to memorize texts. He explains that people would go to him to ask what had been written at the time of their birth, when they had lost the papers, and he could tell them what was written for each individual from memory. This clarity of mind, Krishna explains, was due to his pure spirituality. This, Krishna says, gave his father the ability to foresee the future. Krishna, has continued the tradition of doing pujas for people in the area. When he goes back to his home near the temple his father built, he explains that people come from far and wide to get mantras from him for their spiritual upliftment. A "mantra" is a sacred word or phrase believed to have spiritual powers. Mantras are by many considered sacred formulas for personal rituals that are effective after certain initiations, Krishna explains.

When asked if he had felt any resentment towards his father for leaving him as a child, he answered that if he had not been taken to India and instead had continued to stay in his village, he would have spent his life there and would never have had the education and the life he has now.

In the area where I was born, my friends are still there, some are in Saudi, they have a lot of hardship, they haven't had the opportunity to go to school. My uncle left me there [in the gurukulum]*; I had a lot of hardship, with hardly anything to eat, when I saw others eating sweets on the street, when I saw fruit I would have liked to eat, but couldn't, I overcame that hardship. Though there was the opportunity to go bad, even at that time, somehow God* [Bhagwaan]*, maybe it was my father's prayers for me, led me on the right path.* (interview 2, May 2016)

Krishna writes poetry and has written a poem about the role of a teacher that he offers to share with me. He recites/chants the poem to me in a form of classical Sanskrit that he translates into the common Nepali language in the second interview. The following is my translation of the poem into English:

Though the teacher is well educated and knowledgeable, he is able to teach in a way that young children might understand; I bow my head to such a guru.

The person who does things for others, for the poor, for the ones who have little knowledge and have few skills. The person who brings hope and upliftment, that person is a true teacher; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who knows how to respect well-regarded people, but also knows how to respect the disadvantaged; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who has an open mind and is not only stuck in traditions and old ways; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who brings a person who has lost his zest for life, back to life again; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who knows literature, music and art and makes students spellbound with dance and song; who takes away the darkness of hardship/trouble; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who does not take any sides but follows what is truth, whose speech and voice is like poetry; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who enters the heart of the children, and who tries to understand their feelings and their spirit; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who teaches skills with love and affection; who helps bring out the talents of each child; the one who says to the child: there is a lot of potential in you; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who knows life is full of flowers as well as thorns; who is not distressed by the fact that in life there is good and evil; I bow my head to such a guru.

The one who not only knows how to care for the practical needs but also the spiritual needs of the individual; who is a light where there is darkness; I bow my head to such a guru (interview 1, March 2015).

In the original form, the verses were eloquently recited following strict rules regarding the number of syllables in each line, which gave the right rhythm for each verse. The poem has connotations to the Hindu mantra that most Hindus know by heart: *Gururbrahma Gururvisnu Gururdevo maheshwarah, Guru sakshat parambrahma tasmai shree gurave namah* (translation: Guru is Brahma [the creator], Guru is Vishnu [the preserver], Guru is Shiva [the destroyer of evil], Guru is the supreme god, to whom everybody must bow).

The mantra illustrates the status of the guru in Hindu tradition. The gurus possess the same qualities of the divine trinity of the Vedic gods: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Like Krishna writes in his poem, he bows his head to such a guru that possesses qualities that create space for learning and hope (Brahma). He bows his head to a guru that know how to preserve traditions and respect what is worth respecting, without being stuck in old ways (Vishnu), who is not distraught by evil and powerlessness (Shiva), but follows the truth. Additionally, Krishna refers to the Vedic principles of balancing body, mind and soul as the ultimate aim of education: "*The one who knows literature, music and art and makes students spellbound with dance and song*" (interview 1, March 2015). A key concept in Hindu education is that of *Brahmacharya* (a self-disciplined life), which is a period of education emphasizing yoga and meditation as part of a system of practice with the aim of attaining *moksha* (Kashalkar-Karve, 2013). The individual is seen as an essential element of the whole, needed in order to establish relations between *puruswam* (person) and *prakritim* (nature).

Krishna also talks about the guru who accommodates the practical needs of the child as well as the spiritual. Hindu education aims at equipping children for a spiritual and moral life, through practising self-discipline and being reminded of their obligations to society. The most important idea of the ancient system of education was that of developing the mind and soul of man (Kashalkar-Karve, 2013). Similarly, on the topic of the guru–shishya relationship, Raina (2002) points to various Hindu texts and concludes that:

> *the heart of any learning process, be it academic excellence, spiritual attainment, or development of the inherent potentialities, it is the relationship that exists between the guru and the shishya that matters. It involves the dynamic interplay of personalities, the central one being that of the teacher and the taught.* (Raina, 2002, p. 191)

Krishna highlights this feature in the gurukul system of education of the teacher "*who says to the child: there is a lot of potential in you*" (interview 1, March 2015).

Additionally, there are references in the poem to the meaning of the word *guru* (Sanskrit: गुरु). In Nepali tradition, the word guru has a contextual meaning which is far more complex than simply 'teacher'. "The guru was to make himself superfluous—such was the great vision of teacher as revealed in the magnificent teachings of the Upanishads" (Raina, 2002, p. 179). The guru is more than someone who teaches a specific subject or possess a type of knowledge. The word embraces someone who is a counsellor as well as a parental figure that helps mould their pupils' values and points to what makes life meaningful for the here and now and for life after death (*moksha*) (Raina, 2002, p. 184). It is also claimed that the term guru means the one who drives out the darkness of ignorance. Krishna highlights this aspect of the teacher's role as someone who "*is a light where there is darkness; I bow my head to such a teacher*" (interview 1, March 2015).

Krishna gives me a book of nationalistic poems, as he calls it, that had just been printed, and he adds that he has also written several poems for children over the years. The poems, he says, aim to encourage children as they are growing up. He explains that he hardly slept during periods of inspiration when he produced various poems and literature. The poem dedicated to the teacher reflects the Hindu ideals of the teacher as a model for students, imparting knowledge and values through cultivating in each student an individual and social sense of living in society.

When asked why Hinduism is so important to his story, Krishna explains that he believes that people are in the world to do something worthwhile, and that the aim of education is to equip the child to lead a spiritual and moral life, wherever their path may lead.

> *I believe, according to Hindu philosophy, that humans have lived 84 lakh lives before entering into the world as humans. This body has to do something significant, but what is that significance? It is to find God* [Ishwor]*, but before attaining that, there are four things: dharma, artha, kama and moksha. It is our life's most important purpose* (interview 2, May 2016).

Krishna refers to the *purusartha*, which are key concepts in Hinduism that reflect the objectives of human pursuit. The four purusarthas that lead people in the right direction are: *dharma* (moral values and an ethical life), *artha* (material prosperity, economic values), *kama* (desire, often implies sexual desire, also passion and senses) and moksha (peace, liberation and self-actualization). These are the four goals of human life in Hindu philosophy, Krishna states. He continues to explain that dharma is not religion. In the local context, dharma is commonly used as the word for religion. However, religion is only an attribute he explains. Dharma is like the flow of water. It is the dharma of water to flow. The fire burning is the dharma of fire, he said. The dharma of humans is to do for others, to acquire knowledge, to share that knowledge and to lift up others, he states. He concludes that there are two things that everything comes down to: "*It is a sin to harm others, to do right by others is dharma*" (interview 2, May 2016).

Every human must become a guru in their own way, he said, to take away the darkness. "*That is the meaning of gu-ru*" (interview 2, May 2016), he says. The older person must take away the darkness for the younger, is his explanation. The elder has experience and can lead the younger out of darkness. The elder teaches the younger by setting an example not only by what a person says, he states. This, he says, leads the person to act in a certain way to fulfil his dharma. Humans are given the freedom to acquire wealth (artha) and physical well-being (kama), but it should be achieved in a virtuous way (dharma) in order to attain life's ultimate goal (moksha), Krishna states. He further explains that if a human initially seeks to earn money without understanding dharma, he will become selfish and money oriented. If the path of dharma, artha and kama is followed, a person will find moksha, or peace—this is Hindu philosophy, he says. "*Therefore, a teacher must follow this path. It is what I believe*" (interview 2, May 2016). For Krishna, teaching is much more than presenting the content of the subject he

is asked to teach. "*I spend maybe 15 to 20 minutes on the given textbook lesson, then I go on to talk about other things related to life*" (interview 2, May 2017).

5.2.6 Narrative characteristics

It would seem that Krishna has had little control over the events of his life. He was able to describe key events in his life that led him into teaching, and he was also able to elaborate on their significance and meaning. It is apparent that reflecting on particular experiences is a central feature of his story. His account of his life is characterized by a high level of intensity. The stories he told were more on the evaluative end of the spectrum. There is the presence of a strong plot within the way in which his narrative is structured. The plot of Krishna's life story is his identity as a Hindu. This identity connects to how he explains and presents himself as a teacher, which is primarily from a Hindu perspective. In the story, what Krishna constructs about himself is presented in a chronological way. However, his Hindu identity works as the centre from which events in the story derive meaning. Events in his life either led him away from his core identity or brought him closer to it. In Krishna's story, the plot functions as an evaluative principle as well as an organizing principle for what happens in his life. The importance of this plot is clearly something that he has become aware of through complex processes of experiencing hardship, as well as by being reunited with his father and overcoming his feelings of low self-worth. It was something that not only had a significant impact on the events of his life, but it seemed to have also impacted his perception of life and how he made sense of his life's events. Krishna's life's events are somewhat positioned and evaluated in relation to his Hindu beliefs. The plot seems to remain relatively stable in Krishna's story and his sense of direction and purpose emerges at the point in his life when he gains his footing and confidence in teaching. From then on, the experience of mastering the teaching situation became a point of reference in relation to the importance of the encouragement of others.

Because the life story of Krishna is storied around a clear plot, this serves as an example of someone with a life narrative that is more than a life story. In terms of his core identity as a Hindu, the life narrative reveals something of what Krishna has learned from life. The Hindu philosophy of dharma, artha, kama and moksha has been an important vehicle for him to make sense of his life. Krishna's sense of his Hindu identity has clearly had an impact on his life and work as a teacher. His story shows that there are readily identifiable experiences that he had that informed his life, such as gaining self-discipline and finding one's self-worth, and these enabled him to pursue his career. Krishna's understanding, which he has developed over the years, is inseparable from his context, his social background and his family. His stories of

gurukulum schooling and Sanskrit education reveal how he acquired some of the skills and competencies that qualified him to become a teacher. His early schooling and his first encounters with teaching offered spaces for reflection on his life, which has had significance for the development of his sense of 'self'. When considering the values that he portrays in his poem about the teacher, the ideals presented reveal the ethical stance from which he evaluates his profession. His values can be traced to core Hindu beliefs and traditions within his context.

In his stories of gurukulum school life and his comments on the hardships he encountered while there, for example the hard work and scarcity of food, some of the origins of Krishna's beliefs are revealed in following dharma to find artha, to find kama, in order to finally one day be liberated. Krishna's case reveals not only an ongoing process of learning from life's events, but also how such learning is expressed through poetry and teaching. His insights into what is important to him provide him with the criteria to make decisions at significant moments of transition in his life. The action potential in Krishna's story lies more in how he has responded to his life's events than whether he actively chose the events that happened to him. This has remained a means for living his life, which might be said, derives from Hindu philosophic traditions of karma, however responding with one's fullest potential without harming others. Dharma provides the basis for how Krishna understands ideal educational associations as well as his desire for everyday educational approaches. Krishna's educational thinking is not predominantly a public matter, but rather an activity that begins with the individual, the self. For him, the self is not a liberal concept; rather, the self is realized through dharma: through self-actualization and obligations to society and to God. Dharma is the basis for a plurality of selves and interconnected selves, thus suggesting that education begins with the potential of each individual to develop according to his or her talents and in connection with others, not according to the demands of the economic or political demands of the public domain.

5.3 The Maoist movement

The stories that Sita and Pemba shared about their lives are grouped together, since both stories are characterized by a continued engagement with questions pertaining to the meaning and interpretation of the Maoist movement in Nepal. Their initial life stories started a conversation about what it was about the Maoist movement that had attracted them. This potentially led to a movement from the original life stories to the interviewer and the storytellers bringing in new understandings and data to develop located life histories. Thus, becoming aware of how the teaching profession is politically and socially constructed. The broader narrative of the Maoist movement has particularly affected Sita's and Pemba's beliefs and identities as teachers. These

beliefs concern both societal aspects as well as individual experiences that have played a part in developing their beliefs in social justice for marginalized groups in society.

The revolutionary movement opened up possibilities for people to express their criticism and challenge the rigidity of the hierarchical principles of caste and power structures that are inherent in the inequitable distribution of control between the urban elite and rural areas of Nepal. In the next section, I will explore the emergence of the Maoist movement in Nepal.

The Maoists challenged the image of the peace-loving Nepali through the narrative of a violent history, by arguing for the need to engage in a violent struggle for social transformation, if necessary (Fujikura, 2003). As for the universal topic of the class struggle between the privileged and the less privileged, the Maoist movement represented an acknowledgement of the plight of the unfortunate. As presented earlier, the Maoist 'People's War' in Nepal began within a democratic political context through members of Marxist left-wing parties. The Maoists of Nepal adopted the ideology of Prachanda Path. The Maoists in Nepal were said to have been inspired by the Communist Party of Peru (Shining Path), referring to the ideology of Marxism, Leninism, Maoism and Gonzalo Thought. Central to the ideology was a revolution to gain control over rural areas and eventually urban centres.

Pfaff-Czarnecka argues that the rise of the Maoist movement needs to be seen in light of Nepal's unsatisfactory path toward democratization, as it was perceived by the majority of the population (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997b). Democracy represented for many the 'democratization' of corruption that had marked the previous era (Whelpton, 2005, p. 201) The uprising against the government was fuelled by a deeply held mistrust of a corrupt and inefficient government (Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997a).

Various viewpoints, perspectives and positions emerge on the topic of the Maoist movement. There is a wide range of literature on the historical events that led up to the Maoist insurgency and on how the Maoist movement impacted Nepali society (Hutt, 2004; Pfaff-Czarnecka, 1997a; Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). In all, few would dispute that the People's War had its roots in general discontent with the democratic reconstruction of society after 1990, and its failure to improve the conditions of the oppressed and marginalized.

In comparing the Maoist movements in Nepal and Peru, Marks and Palmer (2006) argue that the revolutionary stimulus did not originate amongst the marginalized population in the countryside. The Maoist movement was bought to the rural areas by individuals from the

outside who saw themselves as mediators with a vision for a more equitable society based on the Marxist–Leninist–Maoist principles. The insurgency in Nepal started in the 1990s in the poor rural areas of the mid-western part of the country and was led by two key figures: Pushba Kamal Dahal (Prachanda) and Baburam Bhattarai. The two main leaders of the movement were high-caste Brahmins with academic backgrounds. It can be argued that the Maoist leadership coming from the elite is consistent with global patterns (Marks & Palmer, 2005, p. 102). Since the narrative of victory had to be convincing enough to stir suppressed people to action, the imagery and language used in Maoist rhetoric had to appeal to the history and the predicaments of the people. Pfaff-Czarnecka (1997b) describes how the leaders of the movement traversed geographical and social distances to mobilize local people to engage in a class struggle. The class struggle in Nepal was distinguished more by ideology than by seizing control of the means of production. In the rural contexts of Nepal and Peru, the Maoist movement singled out the peasants as their revolutionary force, contrary to the European historical experience of the industrial workers' struggle.

While there is an abundance of literature on historical analyses of the Maoist movement, there are also studies that explore women's support of the rebels (Leve, 2007; Lohani-Chase, 2014; Manchanda, 2004; Valente, 2011). Leve (2007) proposes that women who supported the rebels saw the absence of development as a form of violence and joined the movement to improve the situation of the marginalized as a continuum of their involvement in community development programmes. She argues that women did not see development as a form of violent imperialism, like the Maoists argued, but rather blamed politicians ('democracy') for the violence that occurred and not the Maoists. Leve claims that women's support for the Maoists embodied a critique of neoliberal democracy: the rights of the individual. Their support of the movement was based on a morally grounded obligation to the community that entailed making a personal sacrifice for the community, not for the sake of self-actualization (Leve, 2007). The community development programmes gave anticipation of improving living conditions in the rural areas. The programmes appealed to peoples' desire to participate and mobilize; however, they also led to aspirations that democratically elected politicians could not fulfil. Party politicians liked to be seen as the patrons of local development projects, nevertheless, the constant changes in government made it difficult for them to deliver any real change in the country's aim to improve living conditions (Whelpton, 2005, p. 200). Similarly, party politicians seem to treat ordinary citizen as unqualified to participate in any real debate, thus competing for votes on account of their programmes, sometimes selling an image that is detrimental to responsible behaviour in

order to gain enough power to win the right to govern. Within education, as an example, many marginalized children were given scholarships to go to school, but the problem with the education system was that it sparked hopes of gaining economic mobility that Nepalese society could not meet.

Other articles investigate how the insurgency impacted education and how education indirectly contributed to increased tensions (Pherali, 2011; Shields & Rappleye, 2008). Various research articles argue that because the education system in Nepal has become more or less based on a western model of education, it devalues the diversity of local knowledge and value systems (Fujikura, 2003; Mikesell, 2001). In this historical setting, a range of responses emerge when juxtaposing systemic narratives and the life narratives of teachers. In the following, two teachers' narratives that draw on the societal script of the Maoist movement will be presented.

Sita and Pemba's stories present two different encounters with the Maoist movement, but they share similar experiences of feeling disillusioned with Nepal's democratic political processes. Sita was actively involved in the Maoist uprising. Her involvement was in some ways a continuation of her involvement in development programmes in her community. Her support of the Maoist uprising is rooted in the belief that her involvement could be socially beneficial for marginalized groups in society and is less a means for self-actualization. Although her ideals seem constant, she has experienced a great deal of disillusionment with the direction of change in Nepalese society. Sita remains faithful to her belief in the possibility of sustainable development taking place within marginalized groups, which was formed many years ago, but sees her action potential as reduced to a minimum by how society has taken a turn.

5.3.1 Introducing Sita
The first time I met Sita was at the school where she worked. I was introduced to her by a teacher friend of mine who knew her from the village they had grown up in. He had told me that she was a person whom he deeply respected, but that he was concerned for her well- being. Sita left her class to a fellow teacher and arranged for us to sit in the principal's office, away from the noise of students chanting. She was quieter and somewhat more reserved than I had anticipated. Her rather passive recounting of her life's events gave me the impression that she accepted her life as having already been lived. Many years earlier, I had heard about her sister, since my teacher friend had once told me how he had used 'source force' (connections higher up in the social structure) to get her sister out of jail in the aftermath of the Maoist uprising.

5.3.2 Sita's life history

Sita's life story reveals her to be someone who has experienced the deep emotions of dedication and also conflict. The stories of her involvement in developing the village she grew up in are full of references to commitment and pride. However, there is a profound transition that takes place in her life story. She was one of the leaders of the Maoist movement during the uprising, and at the end of the People's War she faced charges, along with Maoist leaders Baburam and Prachanda, for her involvement in Maoist activities. On the first occasion that I met Sita, she seemed to be disheartened by the events of her life that had led her to work at a boarding school on the outskirts of Kathmandu without the security of a permanent job. Her radical transition from Maoist leader to traditional housewife was hard to make sense of at first. However, upon learning Sita's story, the apparent contradiction in this shift, both in terms of her values and expected roles, diminishes.

Sita is from a remote village in the middle of Nepal. When she was growing up, daughters were not typically sent to school, she explains. However, Save the Children had a project in her village that supported marginalized groups in society by paying their school fees and buying stationary for low-caste children so they could go to school. It also raised awareness of girls' rights to education. This explains how she got the opportunity to go to school. "*When I became old enough to understand, I got a chance to go to school in grade one. I did well in school; I was mostly first girl in my peer group*" (interview 1, January 2014). Subsequently, the villagers started raising money to provide secondary education at the school and students were able to do their SLC exams in the village. This was in 2048 (Nepali calendar). Before the results of the SLC exams came out, Sita was involved in various projects in the village with the encouragement of Save the Children. Women organized groups to secure clean drinking water and to protect the surrounding forest. Sita was the secretary of one of those groups in the community. She describes some of her responsibilities at the time:

> *I was only 17 when I became the secretary of the village forestry committee. I was also involved in the newly established medical centre, where people could come for simple medical treatment, as well as in literacy classes for women in the village. Save the Children provided some funds for literacy classes for women who could not recognize the letters of the alphabet. The women's committee gave me the job of teaching the women to read and write. I taught the women how to write letters and to keep simple accounts for their small businesses in the evenings. I became well liked and most people knew who I was in the area* (interview 1, January 2014).

After passing the SLC exams, Sita got a job at the same local government school that she had attended. At that time, the country was experiencing political unrest. Sita explains that there was a violent uprising against the government by the Maoists. She recalls how the unrest affected the village and how there came to be a divide between the villagers and the police. Whelpton (2004) offers an explanation for why a split developed between villagers and the police in the rural areas of Nepal. Apart from representing the central government, he explains it in terms of central police recruitment, implying that the police had become detached from the local communities in which they were posted (Whelpton, 2005, p. 206).

With little comprehension of the wider political climate, and only an SLC qualification from a village school, Sita felt it was difficult for her to assess the situation beyond what she had witnessed in her village. She explains that the headmaster of the school was involved in politics in a small way, and because of that, the police started coming to the school and later attacked the village. This resonates with other people's testimonies and documentation of police violence. Whelpton (2005) points out that the police had a common tendency to respond to threats by lashing out more or less randomly (p. 207). In retrospect, Sita sees that the police provoked a situation that forced people to choose between the government (police) and the people's movement in the villages, instead of convincing people to join forces.

Sita explains that the police distrusted the villagers after they had started creating village committees and becoming more active in organizing themselves. However, the Maoists saw the village women's groups as places to recruit members for their cause. These groups were perceived by the Maoists as well organized and active in bringing about change in their communities. Sita states that the Maoists intentionally used these groups for recruitment and information. She felt she was in a way coaxed into the movement by Maoists who came to these women's groups. Their rhetoric was that this uprising was inevitable. In this atmosphere, Sita recalls how the Maoist leaders started recruiting people from the various village development committees. "*They would come and convince us, and tell us about the situation in the country, and in a way, we had no option*" (interview 1, January 2014). She describes her feelings of frustration and despair:

> *It was like being stuck in a deep hole and not knowing where to turn. We had to make a choice between the government and the people's movement. This was the scenario. The situation had been muddled and we had asked ourselves how we could make this into some kind of system. The question was what to do with the marginalized groups in*

society. I give credit to Save the Children for creating a situation in which people were able to raise their voices, fight for their rights and participate in bringing about change. This awareness that we got from the NGO motivated us to carry sand and stones together to build a school for ourselves. These activities gave political groups a way into our society and we became Maoists (interview 1, January 2014).

When explaining what had led to her involvement in the movement, Sita refers to literacy as part of her quest to understand the reason for the political framework of the time. She explains how she searched for answers to understand how political movements came about, and the reason for the uprising against the government. Sita describes how the Maoists convinced the villagers that the movement would bring about social justice for the poor and that the uprising would lead to political stability. "*At the time, we recognized that there was a political crisis and unemployment, there was scarcity and our needs would be fulfilled, there would be stability, there would be opportunities for education, everything would be ok, they convinced us*" (interview 2, March 2015). A collection of documents show that the Maoists capitalized recognized the frustration people felt with the situation in the country (Hutt, 2004; Thapa & Sijapati, 2004). There was broad sympathy with the Maoists' long-term aims; however, acts of violence on both sides often made villagers regard both sides as unwelcome intruders, while considering the Maoists to be less disruptive (Leve, 2007, p. 148; Whelpton, 2005, p. 207). Whelpton (2005) also uses the traditional culture of submission to authority to explain how the Maoists ensured allegiance to their cause (p. 206). Reflecting on why Sita became part of the rebel movement, she indicates that it was partly in response to what authority figures in her community had encouraged her to do: "*When we were young, whoever said something it was right. At that time, what the teacher said, what the important people* [thulo manche] *said, was good*" (interview 2, March 2015).

Sita's talent for leading and teaching others soon gave her a position in the Maoist movement. Circumstances led her to become known as one of the leaders of the People's Uprising in her area. However, her involvement in the uprising created a dangerous situation, she explains. The situation became violent, and even though the issues that the Maoists raised were relevant and important, she explains that she had begun to fear for her life. The uprising intensified. People were killed and bombs went off in various places, she describes. Sita recalls how she contemplated leaving the movement after it turned violent.

I wasn't able to do it … In their [the Maoists'] *language I was a traitor. In my language, I was afraid that I might be killed so I ran away. That was the reason I came to Kathmandu. What would be left if I'd died? I was not prepared to just die for the cause. That was my analysis. What will come from me dying? I will ruin my family and die, leaving only death and destruction* (interview 1, January 2014).

Sita does not elaborate on the time she spent as part of the Maoist movement. Out of respect for her decision, her story goes on to describe what happened to her at the end of the insurgency. Sita explains how, at the end of the conflict, she was taken to court by the government, together with the other high-profile Maoist leaders, like Baburam Bhattrai. The experience also involved getting her sister out of jail for having joined the Maoists. She recalls how she had to find influential people she knew in the community who would be able to convince the police of her sister's innocence. They had argued that her sister had joined the Maoists without fully understanding the consequences and subsequently she was released.

Following her decision to leave the Maoists, Sita went to Kathmandu and started thinking about finding a job. She felt that people labelled her as a Maoist, since she had left her career for several years. This made her intent on continuing her studies. She completed her master's in English and got a job at a private school just to be engaged in something: "*I took the job just as a means to survive*" (interview 1, January 2014). However, her experience of teaching has been less than satisfactory, she elaborates. Her qualifications have not given her teaching jobs that reflect her credentials. "*Initially, I got a job at the primary level, and it has stuck with me*" (interview 1, January 2014). When there were openings for other teaching positions, she applied, but the posts were filled by people from certain political backgrounds and with particular affiliations. People were hired for their political views, not their accreditations, she explains. This she ascribes to the government's corrupt and inefficient system of placing unqualified people in various positions for political purposes. She has worked for over 22 years as a teacher, but she still does not have a permanent job. "*I have no satisfaction from my profession*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Sita's experiences reflect information provided by the Teacher Service Commission (TSC), which is responsible for the central selection and recruitment of teachers. The TSC has not announced any vacancies for new permanent posts in public schools since 1995. As of now, teachers are recruited on a contractual basis, through school management committees. Teachers are deployed in permanent, temporary and contract allocations. According to studies submitted

to the Department of Education in 2012, political interference and nepotism in the school management committees is common. This has had an impact on the recruitment and employment of teachers. Khanal (2011) states that the decentralization policy has brought about several undesirable outcomes, including favouritism and corruption, which have been detected in the transferral of teacher selection from the local level (p. 778).

Sita maintains that the education system is unable to meet international standards, and it is unable to cater to the needs of students living in a rural setting. "*In the area where I grew up, students are not given an education that prepares them for life there, nor does it equip students to meet international standards*" (interview 1, January 2014). She says that she might sound pessimistic, but she states that the education system is not able to deliver an education that satisfies international norms, nor an education that is applicable in the local context. As documents from the Ministry of Education state, the shift in education in recent years has placed an emphasis on an education that reflects "competency-based learning" for a global society (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2006, p. 4). "Now, these global targets have become the central reference points for developing all education-related national policies" (Bhatta, 2011, p. 22). Consequently, Nepal's ability to create its own visions for education in the country is limited.

In Sita's opinion, there is little respect shown for teachers' abilities in the school system and people are frustrated. She maintains that teaching as an occupation should be respected:

> *We produce the manpower to fill the great positions in society. As a teacher, I was the product of that system. Some became engineers, some doctors. One of my students, who I taught in grade six, is a well-known engineer in my district, and I feel proud of that. I have had a job that has lifted up people. I have guided students to follow a good path. I feel I have done a good job in that sense. But the government has not had respect for or properly evaluated our work. I have bitter and sour experiences of teaching, but it is too late to change my profession. The system is in chaos but what can I do?* (interview 2, March 2015).

With regard to the poverty that most villagers still endure, she relates it to her own experiences of hardship (*dukkha*). Sita describes how she used to carry dung from the cows and buffalo on her back to fertilize the fields. She remembers how they cultivated the fields with their own physical strength, with no modern equipment. "*It's only about survival*" (interview 1), she said. People work for a whole year to have enough food for three months, so there is a lot of hardship,

she concludes. To get a job or earn a daily wage is of vital importance for people living in the villages. She recalls how she had to convince her parents every year to let her go to school when she was young. Even though schooling has given her opportunities to find employment, there are few alternatives to find employment other than teaching. "*I had thought that teaching would somehow be charming, when it was not charming there was no other option*" (interview 1, January 2014). She points to the importance of employment in such circumstances and calls for a debate on what kind of education the country needs so its citizens can find employment. "*The country is in turmoil and education is a part of that turmoil*" (interview 1, January 2014).

She continues to describe the situation after the Maoist uprising had ended. The Maoist leaders formed the Maoist Party and became part of mainstream politics. In 2006, after a coalition of political parties was formed, the parties united in ending the monarchy; however, the amount of time it took to hold elections for a constitutional assembly created a great deal of frustration.

Sita reflects on how, in the aftermath of the conflict, the Maoists gradually lost their influence in bringing about the change that had been anticipated by their supporters. She connects the political scenario to her own lack of opportunity to practically implement what she believes to be the right thing. She relates: "*Practically, we could not go to the field, maybe because of our culture*" (interview 2, March 2015). She continues to explain,

> *I had been so involved in community development, in preserving the forest, in restoring clean water to the villagers and improving literacy. But people are still illiterate, they are still poor, there is still a need for clean drinking water, but I did not continue to think about solutions to those situations. My focus became here, that is maybe what happened to the political leaders of the Maoist Party. Whatever you endured when you were in the field, you forget whenever you have access to facilities* (interview 2, March 2015).

Thus, a transition occurred after the conflict: people who had been underground during the conflict became a part of an urban setting and consequently become preoccupied with an urban lifestyle. They had to look for other opportunities and became busy with their personal affairs, she recounts. From Sita's perspective, this affected people's motivation and they become less involved in the community and more preoccupied with themselves. She gained access to facilities like clean tap water, electricity and transportation. "*You become egocentric. It has to hurt me if someone is injured*", she laughs, "*we are not worried about our society*" (interview 2, March 2015).

She describes how invigorating it had been to be a part of the development of the village in which she had grown up. Her experience of these projects was that of sustainable development and not corruption. Sita states that the forest around the village is still protected and stands out as an example of those initiatives. In the second interview, she elaborates on why she thinks that the initiatives of Save the Children inspired the community to build schools and create committees to develop the village area. She elaborates:

> they [Save the Children] were in the field, they started awareness programmes; you see, the people who were not aware were able to become aware, the investments arrived directly. When government aid was sent, it was old, unsuitable and got diverted (interview 2, March 2015).

In her opinion, the conflict between the government and the Maoist uprising hampered these efforts to improve the situation in the villages.

She attributes the failure of the Maoist movement to government corruption. Similarly, Shields and Rappleye (2008) point out that the reasons for the outbreak of violence had been perceived as "aggravated by the failure of the democratic revolution of 1990 to deliver tangible gains to the rural poor and by disillusionment with corruption in the capital" (p. 92). The prevalence of corrupt practices is in Sita's opinion the reason why the political vision of the Maoist movement was undermined when the party was accepted into mainstream politics.

> The uprising was not a success and talking about the system, it is a corrupt system. Whoever enters into the system seems to forget where they came from, why they were aiming to go there in the first place and the leaders forgot to be sincere (interview 1, January 2014).

She sees no reason to be involved in politics anymore; for her, that is in the past. The aim of the uprising, to change society, had failed.

> I have lost my interest in politics. If I had believed it was possible to do anything within the system, then it would have been worth getting into. But it is not possible to do anything. There is nothing I can contribute within the system (interview 2, March 2015).

When asked to share her opinion regarding the aim of the Maoists in the education sector, Sita explains:

I really liked their vision, it was like this: whatever manpower was needed in a particular area, was the kind of product that was to be produced. Like in my district, we grew tea, to be able to produce tea, you produce manpower that can produce tea and can stand on their own feet—this was the kind of education that was needed, it was a relevant approach, but not possible to make happen (interview 2, March 2015).

Sita expresses that she was impressed with the Maoists' vision for education, particularly in relation to their promotion of vocational education, which she believes would prepare students well based on the situations in their villages. She explains that children growing up in a farming community would be taught a curriculum that included these aspects of life. However, she concludes that it was not possible to implement at that particular time and in that setting.

We became like in a trap, we had to come together with everyone [other political parties] *and there was no way around international norms. It was maybe how it was. At the time, I became less involved. I was not involved in any politics after I left the movement.* (interview 1, January 2014)

The debates on education in the political arena centred on the conflict between the Maoist initiatives for more locally relevant curricula and the international standards for education, she states.

There was this whole debate about international norms and that we couldn't prioritize local issues like that but be able to meet the international standards. After that, I lost interest in those debates. (interview 1, January 2014)

This led Sita to distance herself from politics. In the years leading up to the Maoists entering into a coalition with other parties, she says she was "*labelled a colour*" (red for Maoist) (interview 1), but she lost interest and was discouraged by the corrupt system. She ascribes her loss of motivation concerning politics and educational issues to how her qualifications have not been valued in the system. Either she feels she has to be discredited for not being a qualified teacher, or she has to be treated as a professional, she states.

She believes that people have to want to see change from within. "*The most important thing is people's nature, there are many good philosophical principles, but it depends on people's behaviour. If our behaviour is bad, if we only preach good principles and ideals, but do not behave accordingly, what happens? Nothing*" (interview 2, March 2015). She concludes that she sees no hope for change.

As we continue to talk, she explains how things are more or less the same for the low-caste and marginalized communities. The only reference she can make to any programme that has impacted the lives of marginalized groups has been Save the Children's community development programmes when she was young. Nevertheless, she believes that the democratic process has opened up freedom of speech in society, she states.

I ask Sita how it is that so little happens when there is a whole range of people and organizations involved in bringing about change for the marginalized, to which she replies: "*Maybe people were involved because they knew or didn't know of the situation, but it has not resulted in much*" (interview 1, January 2014). People involved in development work have to sincerely want to see sustainable change and not be in it for the money, she says. However, the people involved in development work are not as committed as they once were, she claims. "*You have to forget about your own need for having a house, what will be best for me, my children, what will be fun. They must be committed. Not just pick up the pay, become a board member and think about entertainment and making a name for yourself*" (interview 1, January 2014).

When asked why people are not currently revolting against the misuse of aid money, Sita says that "*most people don't know … The government sign papers for Education for All. But have we reached those goals? Is everyone educated?*" (interview 1, January 2014). However, as she has said, she has witnessed herself that it is possible to work for change. "*There has been nothing that has inspired me more than Save the Children's project*" (interview 1, January 2014).

On her involvement in teaching, she expresses hope that she teaches children to become good citizens. "*The school is a reflection of society. Discipline is hard to maintain. Society has hardened, the children hear of many bad things*" (interview 2, March 2015). She finds this influences her work as a teacher. Children are easily distracted and maintaining discipline is difficult, she states. "*The social feeling is disappearing. It's more about me, selfishness, it's about what is easy for me and what is best for me. People have been diverted by those things, by what is best for me*" (interview 2, March 2015). The hope she had placed in the Maoist vision of the upliftment of the marginalized and the eradication of poverty was for her an inspiration. What she came to realize was that in the power centre of the country, in Kathmandu, people were easily distracted by seeking out entertainment and taking their children to extra activities and being part of the cyber world. "*To find the country you have to come to Kathmandu, that's*

the situation now" (interview 2, March 2015), she says. She relates these feelings of detachment to her own life:

> *I think of earning more money, so I can go where I want. I left the village. I could have done a lot in my village, but I didn't. There is a plus two school in my village, I could have taught there. They don't have an English teacher there. Why am I not doing this myself? How can I criticize others? I could do something in my place. I have lost that spirit. I have social interest and worry for our society. But I am not involved in a practical way in the field; I have my family and my job. I became busy earning money. Nepal has become like that* (interview 2, March 2015).

Sita married into a wealthy family and has had to adjust to being a *buhari* (daughter-in-law) She lives in a traditional (hierarchical) setting with her in-laws, and has to fulfil the traditional role of a woman. Her life revolves around her two daughters and extended family. Her daughters go to a private school. "*I could have taken my daughters to the village, told them to be part of a forestry group, been part of getting tap water to the villagers, be involved in literacy classes, I can't do that to my children*" (interview 1, January 2014). She says they have not experienced hardship like she has—they have parents who provide for them, they have the benefits of living in a city. "*You can't just tell them a story of hardship, they have to experience it for themselves*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Sita describes how globalization is having an impact on education. There are a variety of reform programmes within the educational system, so she draws a comparison between the preconditions of these programmes and how poverty prohibits these programmes from functioning.

> *Globalization has made us sign papers and treaties. But we are not able to fulfil these treaties. Many children come to school without having eaten. We talk about child-friendly education and education for all. But the child with an empty stomach is not interested in studying. If the child had been fed, he could focus on his studies. To fulfil the child-friendly approach, there has to be a place for that. In America, these needs might already be fulfilled, and so they have created these agendas and issues* (interview 2, March 2015).

She explains that the students are expected to meet the international norms. This is what she thinks the SSRP (School Sector Reform Program) is trying to aim for. Regarding the SSRP,

Sita says that they have good intentions, but that the teachers are not often capable of teaching the curriculum, because they have obtained their positions through connections or party affiliations. Her concerns are echoed by Pherali (2011): "*The massive investment in education proposed in the SSRP is unlikely to affect the legacy of politically-driven violent insurgency or the system's longstanding deficiencies and the longstanding structural inequalities it perpetuated*" (p. 61).

The government drafts policy guidelines on how to conduct and implement Education for All in child-friendly educational environments. The government accepts the terms of such policies, but Sita implies that it is impossible to implement them. She supports her conclusion by referring to the increasing prevalence of boarding schools in the country: "*70% of the students go to boarding schools now, only 30% are in government schools*" (interview 2, March 2015). Boarding schools have for the most part emerged in society as institutions that aim to deliver good results in the SLC exams. She says this has broadened the gap between the haves and the have nots, between the parents who can pay and those who cannot; however, the competition—the SLC exams—is the same for all. "*Who is humiliated? Whoever has parents that cannot afford it and send their children to government schools, that is who is humiliated*" (interview 2, March 2015). She concludes: "*The system does not reduce discrimination, it perpetuated it*" (interview 2, March 2015). The outcome of such a system, she says is, "*humiliated workforce*" (interview 2, March 2015).

5.3.3 Narrative characteristics

Sita initially provided a chronological overview of her life by sharing how she came into teaching in her village and describing her experiences of teaching in Kathmandu. The first part of the interview was short and mainly focused on the frustration she felt regarding the corruption in the government's employment of teachers. Vacant posts are often filled by party sympathizers and her master's degree in English has not given her access to a job in higher secondary schools, where she is qualified to teach. She asserted that teaching in itself is rewarding, but that the system eroded any kind of satisfaction she might have with her occupation. Sita proved to be an articulate participant and spoke eloquently about her responses to the changes that have taken place in her life. She gave her accounts with high narrative intensity, and her stories are full of analysis and evaluation. It seems that in some ways, her story comprises a public narrative about poverty and political instability and a more private narrative that gives clues to understanding the former:

My own children go to private schools. Most government officials don't send their own children to government schools. The curriculum in schools does not cater to our society. It is a marks-oriented system to compete in the international system. I cannot take my children back to the village and involve them in the local development committee. It was because we grew up there that we felt the inspiration to participate in developing our village. For the children growing up now, what we experienced is like a fairy story. It doesn't make an impression on them to hear such stories. They have to experience it themselves, the hardships, then they will understand and act accordingly. But they have walked the paved streets of Kathmandu and have electricity and water and transportation. They have what they need (interview 1, January 2014).

The identifiable plot in Sita's story seems to be her belief that social justice for the poor will ultimately lose when faced with the political and traditional structures that allow nepotism and injustice to flourish in Nepalese society. The vividness of her stories of being a part of changing society for the betterment of its people explains her political understanding and beliefs. Such beliefs were realized in the village development projects. The origins of these constructs and beliefs that informed Sita's social and political thinking can be located in these early experiences. However, in the second interview, she points out that her recruitment into the People's Movement was not a well-thought-out decision but was influenced by the cultural and social structures of which Sita was a part at the time. The awareness-raising activities of development agencies that rest on certain ideals of empowering women might explain why, in certain areas, the Maoists received a high level of support (Hart, 2001). Sita's story resonates with the argument that Leve (2007) proposes, which is that women's involvement in the Maoist movement was a continuum of the goal to achieve a better situation for the poor

From the stories Sita shares, it is possible to see the construction of a framework for thinking about the social and political situation within which she describes her affiliation with the Maoist movement.

There was a political crisis and instability and we were convinced that things would get better, we were children, students, we thought that maybe something will happen and we joined. There is no other reason. But we realized later that it was something they said but didn't do. I don't believe in any parties anymore. After understanding and analysing the situation, they have not been able to convince the people and fulfil their needs, no one has succeeded in that. When we were kids we believed what we were told,

what the teachers and "thulo manche" [respected people] *said was right* (interview 2, March 2015).

Sita was able to talk about her life and work within both a personal and a political framework. There is a consistent theme throughout Sita's interviews that reflects her belief in justice for the poor, but the tone somehow changes midway when her clear ideological beliefs shift to show someone who has become disheartened. Her ability to self-reflect has made her somewhat disillusioned. With an awareness of herself and her potential to act, she nevertheless becomes somewhat passive. An example of this is the lack of influence she feels she has on her situation and those of her family and country. In her stories, there are many levels of reflection and analysis. On one level, she describes the events of her life and the society of which she is a part. On another level, she explains her own perceptions and experiences of what happened, and finally she reflects on how others might perceive her and the society in which she lives.

> *I have lost my faith in the system. It is not possible to do anything. It is even hopeless to get a permanent job, even with the right qualifications. There are great philosophies that can inspire, but what if people can't act on them? It is all ruined. It has to come from within. What about the poor and marginalized? Nothing has changed for them. There is no work. The low castes are still in the same situation. The only place in Nepal where there are any opportunities is in Kathmandu, but only for the few. The only change is that people can speak their minds more freely. The projects that Save the Children did were the only attempts that I have seen that helped the poor to stand on their own feet. The attempts that we see now from the international organizations are full of people in it for their own careers and job prospects If you have a true interest in developing society, you have to really want to see change* (interview 2, March 2015).

Sita talked about various themes within her professional and political life, yet at the same time there were aspects of her life that she did not elaborate on in the same way. Although she now lives a traditional family life, she seemed to see little relevance in talking about her feelings regarding having once been a social activist and now being a traditional wife and mother with an extended family. She was forthcoming about her past and her present situation of working as a teacher but needed to be encouraged to continue speaking about her life and work. The amount of consideration and examination that went into her answers suggests that her critical standpoints are the outcome of personal experience and her analysis of the public narrative at a particular time and place. In some ways, she also made a distinction between her private self

and her public self. She speaks about her family and how her family life in Kathmandu has distracted her from her social activism. In her youth, she had been part of improving the conditions of her community; she had mobilized groups to participate in bringing about change but had had to see it fail. In her story, she compares her situation with the political scenario of a society in which when activists become politicians, they get distracted by the pursuit of their own personal gain. Yet, at the same time, her belief in justice for her community is still deeply held, but she has been disillusioned by the existing power structures and by mainstream politics.

In the aftermath of these events, Sita entered a period of detachment from public life and found herself engulfed in a traditional family setting which in many ways contradicts the Maoist vision of equality. She reveals little of her personal thoughts on how this transition has affected her personally, other than her explanation of how people who have fought for something can lose their beliefs. However, there are some traits or features in her descriptions of herself that make her shift from a Maoist leader to a traditional housewife more comprehensible. In her role as a Maoist leader, her main agenda was her community. As a housewife, her life revolves around the needs of her family. Engaged as a teacher, she has fought for and become disillusioned by the cultural and structural corruption that erects barriers to the accreditation of Nepalese teachers' actual professional certification. She has carried out all these different roles while maintaining an external focus on other people's needs and interests, neglecting her own in the meantime.

Sita's narratives involve analysis, evaluation and even theorization, but somehow her stories do not seem to lead to a focused action. She still has concern for the marginalized groups in society but seems unable to respond to the call for action in relation to her beliefs. She has sought a life detached from action. It appears that reflection has become an end in itself. "*Practically, we are not able to go to the field, maybe it's our culture*" (interview 2, March 2015).

Sita expresses her awareness of the unjust situation of the marginalized people living in her neighbourhood and in rural areas, but she points to cultural and personal factors that prevent her from taking action in relation to what she believes is right. For Sita, it seems that the detachment between action and narration makes her unable to formulate a plan of action. The account that Sita shares reflects her frustration and incomplete mission. Her descriptions reflect a desire for more personal agency and capacity to deliver on a course of action, but due to the circumstances of her life and the social and political context, a new course of action seems indescribable.

5.3.5 Introducing Pemba

I first met Pemba in the village where he works as a government schoolteacher. We met at school and he agreed to talk to me in one of the empty classrooms. It was a Friday, and at most government schools, Friday afternoons are reserved for games outside on the school grounds. With little hesitation, he told his life story, of how he grew up and how he became a teacher and of how he finds his work as a teacher. The next time we met was in Kathmandu. Pemba had driven for several hours on his motorbike to come into town to attend a meeting at Kathmandu University, where he is currently doing his master's in education. I suggested we meet before his meeting, in the garden of the place where I was staying, to avoid the noise of the traffic in the city. When meeting him for the second time, I wanted to probe into what it was about communist ideology that had attracted him, in order to get a sense of how important it was to his story.

Pemba is a committed social activist in his community. He has a strong ethnic identity and raises the issue of ethnicity and school participation. Pemba is deeply concerned with questions regarding what is educationally desirable, particularly within the rural context of Nepal. His main argument for a more practical and relevant education is the lack of job opportunities in the country and the loss of manpower to foreign countries. He believes that communism offers a better system of governance for marginalized groups in society by making the government more accountable to its citizens.

5.3.6 Pemba's life history

Pemba was born in a remote Tamang farming community. He grew up in a large family. "*From one mother we were eight brothers and two daughters, together a ten-child family*" (interview 1). His parents were farmers and they lived off the land, according to what they were able to grow on their small farm. "*My father had neither a government job nor a salaried job*", (interview 1, March 2015), he explains. He recalls that his family experienced a lot of hardship just to have enough food and clothing. His father took occasional jobs during the harvest and when extra labour was needed in the community for the construction of new houses. This helped to put food on the table. His older siblings were not able to go to school. It was only when his older brothers found manual labour in Kathmandu that they could afford to send Pemba to school. "*There were few from the Tamang community who went to school*" (interview1, March 2015), he explains. Teachers in the local school had to be brought in from communities with higher school participation.

This resonates with studies of education in Nepal that suggest the strong effects of caste on school participation (Stash & Hannum, 2001, p. 358). High-caste groups have had long traditions of passing down knowledge and skills in literacy in the fulfilment of their social and religious roles as priests (Stash & Hannum, 2001, p. 359). Subsequently, members of higher castes have had better educational opportunities, including better chances of obtaining teaching jobs and other positions associated with education and status (Stash & Hannum, 2001, p. 358). The teachers in Pemba's school were high-caste who originally came from the plains bordering India, or from across the border. His earliest memories of school are of his teachers and the school environment.

> *Our teachers taught us in a loving way. In particular, there were teachers who came from the Terai, teachers from Madesh. They loved us and taught us in a very interesting way. They used to tell us stories and they knew how to create an attractive environment for children* (interview 1, March 2015).

At that time, there were no pre-schools or private schools in the village, so he started in grade one at the local government school. He relates his positive experiences of going to school with having been taught by friendly teachers and his academic aptitude. In most school competitions and exams, he was first in his class, which made his parents and brothers very proud. However, this meant that his parents felt that they had to send him and his younger brother to school at any cost. In those days, Pemba recalls that there was a system of paying school fees, which meant that even though the fee was small, a family had to have some income in order to send a child to school. Stash and Hannum (2001) point to the effects of poverty on school participation. As it was in Pemba's case, the tendency is for families with little extra income to use the few available resources they have to enable at least one favoured child to be educated, while access to formal education is delayed or denied to other children in the family (Stash and Hannum, 2001, p. 357).

Pemba passed the SLC in 1992. To attend further education, he had to move to Kathmandu where he went to college and studied science. After completing college, he took a job as a science teacher in a school near Kathmandu, where he worked for a couple of years, until he heard about a vacant post in the local government school near his home. He worked in the local government school for a few years, until he got a job as the principal of a newly opened private English-medium school in his village. The principal of the private school had gone to America to do his PhD. At the time, the school could only offer primary level classes; however, as the

principal of the school, Pemba took the initiative to add on secondary level classes and could then offer students the possibility of taking their SLC exams at a private institution in the village. During that period, he says he "*brought out 10 batches of students completing their SLC exams*" (interview 1, March 2015). The local government school had by that time added classes up to college level and plus two. "*There was a demand for me and I was transferred there again*" (interview 1, March 2015), he explains. After some years, he was again transferred to the school where he currently works: *Buddha Bhawan Mabhi*, the Home of Buddha Secondary School. He points out that all the different transfers to various schools in the district have given him a lot of experience in teaching. "*I have significant experience in the field of teaching. I taught for many years. I worked in many schools. I have taught many children*" (interview 1, March 2015), he states. He explains that this long involvement in education initially made him aware of children's needs but has also given him insight into the various communities and backgrounds that the children come from. Based on this experience, he expresses his belief in giving children the opportunity to approach learning in different ways according to their individual needs. He says: "*teaching children, you have to understand children's psychology. It's the only way to do any real teaching*" (interview 1, March 2015).

He goes on to discuss the community in which he is currently working. Initially, he states: "*I am a Tamang*" (interview 1), referring to the ethnic community that surrounds the area where the school is located. The children in the school are mostly from the Tamang community. He sees many challenges when it comes to schooling in the Tamang community.

> *Children drop out of school. The school doesn't guide the children, doesn't counsel them, the children don't understand what schooling is, what the importance of education is, and they are not able to understand. Only the government says: teach child-friendly, teach child-friendly, but there are no teaching materials, extra materials; what the individual child needs, the government does not provide. The schools are facing their own hardships. But it is idle words. They* [the government] *say we provide free education, child-friendly education. They make us participants, but they are not able to implement these ideas (interview 1, March 2015).*

According to UNESCO's National Education Support Strategy (UNESS) 2008–2013, enrolment in primary schools in Nepal reached approximately 90% in 2007, whereas only 35% of the students completed secondary education (UNESCO, 2008). Poverty, child labour, child marriage as well as corporal punishment and failing exams have been identified as reasons for

children dropping out of school (Wagle, 2012). A study by Stash and Hannum (2001) identifies Tamangs as considerably less likely to enrol in school, reflecting their low status and low income. Likewise, Tamangs are less likely to complete primary education than children of higher castes (Stash & Hannum, 2001, p. 370).

Pemba describes the current scenario in education in Nepal in terms of the government's overall aim of an Education for All agenda that promotes a child-centred educational approach in light of most teachers' traditional methods:

> *They* [the government] *give teachers training, make the teachers participants. But to implement this, real implementation has not been possible, they are working, working in their own way, traditional type of teaching is what they do, the Sirs. They do the trainings. They are given training every year. Sometimes twice a year. The government invests in teachers, but for teachers to invest in the children, the classroom environment and school environment is not there* (interview 1, March 2015).

The government promotes the concept of free education and child-centred approaches, but Pemba's experience is that teachers teach in the traditional way, maintaining the teacher–student hierarchy in the classroom, and emphasizing rote learning and strict discipline. When asked why teachers continue teaching in the traditional manner, he argues that the government keeps implementing new policies too rapidly into the system. Teachers are not given sufficient time to adapt to the new policies before the government promotes new ones, he says. His impression is that the government more or less randomly adopts new policies as it sees fit for to meet its own particular ends.

Pemba goes on to talk about the government's in-service teacher professional development programme (TPD).

> *I was also a participant in the training. In that particular TPD training, to do the TPD you have to understand every child's psychology, research each child, what kind of teaching will each child be able to adopt, the trainings are conducted in that way. But teachers are not teaching according to each individual child's psychology. Overall, most teachers teach in the same way, with the same technology, with all the children in the same classroom. What the child does or doesn't do is of no interest, only that they pass the tests.* (interview 1, March 2015).

Pemba points out that the history of education in Nepal bears the legacy of the elite dominating educational processes. This is in line with what Ragsdale (1989) has argued, that the expansion of education to people other than the elite has failed to consider how education could be made applicable and sustainable in terms of the needs of marginalized populations, as in the case of Pemba and his community. Ragsdale (1989) claims: "Nepal's small, elitist system of education had been expanded without regard for its suitability to the country's needs", leading to its functioning as a 'psychosocial adornment' rather than offering a system which produced citizens able to contribute to the country's economic development" (Ragsdale1989, p. 15). Pemba maintains that the education system does not meet the needs of the population in terms of adapting to its varying socio-economic contexts.

He argues that the system is producing educated people, but once they are educated, there are few job opportunities for them. "*People are educated, but there is a problem of unemployment*", he says, "*the government produces, the schools produce, the colleges produce educated people, but where to put them?*" (interview 1, March 2015). He refers to the flow of Nepalese going to the Middle East, like the Gulf States, to find employment. "*When teachers like us have taught them, they should be able to be of use in their own country, find work, why not work in the field of agriculture?*" (interview 1, March 2015), he asks.

This resonates with research on the migration of Nepalese youth seeking foreign employment. A study by Bhattrai (2005) indicates that the main reason for people seeking employment in foreign countries is Nepal's socio-political instability—factors like poverty, conflict and lack of opportunity in Nepal push youth to leave their communities. Furthermore, the study points out that migration to the Gulf States, Malaysia and other South East Asian countries is a fairly new phenomenon in the Nepalese context. What is also noteworthy in the study is the class distinction amongst labour migrants: poor people seek employment in India, or the Gulf States and Malaysia, whilst people with more wealth or higher education try for opportunities in places like Japan, the USA or Europe. The review concludes that foreign labour migration has resulted in a shift in Nepal from an agricultural-based economy towards a remittance-based economy (Bhattarai, 2005). Pemba argues from an educational point of view that what he refers to as "un-skilled people" are being produced through the school system. From this perspective, Pemba doubts the validity of what students are learning at school since so few of them seem to be able to find employment in Nepal.

Pemba maintains that there are many reasons behind the government's failure to provide a relevant curriculum for the people living in Nepal. He argues that there has been ongoing political instability. In particular, he refers to the constant power struggles between politicians in the media, and he finds their indifference to the needs of the people to be the most troubling. This political instability, he points out, is disturbing the whole country. As an example, he refers to the process of writing a new constitution. He lists the multitude of meetings that have been held by the constitutional assembly. "*This is the seventh constitution that the politicians are trying to agree on*" (interview 1, March 2015), he says. There have been two elections to decide on a legal constitution. "*The members of parliament have been paid for all these years, however, they cannot agree. There is no guarantee that they will be able to agree this time either*" (interview 1, March 2015), he states. Conflicts between the leaders of political parties have been the main reason for the lack of progress in deciding on a new constitution, he maintains. Ghai (2011) confirms Pemba's observations and states that power struggles, particularly between the upper-caste elites, rather than policy issues seem to be the reason for the postponements. The elite seem to be fearful of losing power and position; however, the new constitution is aimed at providing possibilities and opportunities for Nepal's marginalized groups.

Pemba also points out that the educational policies that are promoted by the government are imported from a variety of countries:

> *They look at the US educational policies, they look at the Japanese educational policies, they look at Switzerland's educational policies, they look at India's educational policies, they look at very good, very advanced countries' educational policies, the government imports these policies, but they are not able to implement these into their own country* (interview 1, March 2015).

What he sees as the reality on the ground is that ultimately the focus in schools is on ensuring students pass the exams. He argues that the government does not invest in education. If the government were to invest in education, Pemba suggests that the child-friendly approach should be firstly modelled in a few districts to investigate how such an approach would work in a particular context. In his opinion, the random adoption of educational policies seems to lack vision concerning the overall aim of education. The aim of the current education system seems to him to be more geared towards educating students for employment in Europe and foreign countries, like the US, or for more advanced Asian countries.

Pemba argues that there is not a lack of resources in Nepal. "*We are rich in resources*", he says, "*we have lots of water, but it is not in use*" (interview 1, March 2015). The country has not fully utilized its hydro power resources as an income-generating stream, he points out. He concludes that the government's inability to develop the country's resources has left the people in a difficult situation. High rates of unemployment and the lack of skilled labour have left the majority to live in poverty. "*Dependency on others is part of life*", he says, "*one or two of the family members find work, mostly in foreign countries, and five, six others depend on their income*" (interview 1, March 2015). With no government unemployment benefits, people are dependent on each other for their survival.

> *It has become hard for Nepali people to raise their living standards. As a teacher, I am able to understand how things are, and manage my family. Perhaps, in the country's population, I am among the 5–10% that is able to do that. However, a large percentage of the population hardly knows how to manage their families, how to better their situation, what kinds of education their children need, what are the needs of the nation, what type of education is needed, which sector needs what kind of education—most people don't know that. They trust the system and say that their child goes to school, they go and come home from school, but how they study, what they study, they don't know. If they pass, they are happy, but what they have passed and what skills they have, what do they know? What skills do they have and where do they fit? The parents don't know, the teachers don't know, the government doesn't know* (interview 2, May 2016).

When asked about the political views that he had expressed earlier in the conversation, Pemba shares: "*I was impressed by communism*". Pemba goes on to explain that it was the principles of communism that attracted him to that particular political view. His interest in politics was initially stirred when he was in grade eight. At that time, a multi-party system was implemented in the country. Initially the multi-party system was introduced after the fall of the Panchayat system, the single-party system. However, the introduction of the multi-party system is also considered the reestablishment of democracy in the 1990s. These political changes were to have a lifelong effect on Pemba. Moreover, his story depicts how early in his life he began to see a communist ideology as a way to be liberated from oppression based on caste and ethnicity. He recalls how the political leaders and elders in the community came to his school and explained the principles of communism, which he believed would put an end to discrimination:

All are equal and have equal duties, these were the kind of principles we were taught, in that sense there will not be some who are rich and some who are poor, everyone will be equal, it will be good, everyone will have work and have a good life. Why should we not be happy, share in happiness? (interview 2, May 2016)

The leaders of the communist movement at the time, Mithadan Sharma and Poudel, who were the 'front-line leaders', came and held speeches in Pemba's community. "*I became convinced, and was guided by these principles*" (interview 2), he says. Pemba's experience of Maoist leaders coming to his school is an example of how the Maoist leaders traversed geographical and social distances to mobilize local people. When he was old enough to vote, he voted for the Communist Party in the elections. However, there were conflicts within the party that led to fractions within the movement, which eventually led to the Maoist uprising. The Maoist insurgency lasted for 10 years. "*Many people were killed, there was a lot of suffering*" (interview 2, May 2016), he says. In 2005, a peace agreement was negotiated between the political parties and the Maoists. The monarchy was abolished and the Maoist Party came to power through elections, but as Pemba recounts, the Maoists were not able to fully implement their ideology and fulfil the commitments they had made to the people. Pemba believes that this had to do with the opposing parties' destabilizing power struggles and undermining of the Maoists' initiatives for change. He explains that there is a culture in politics to try to ensure that opposing parties' initiatives fail. This, he claims, has led to the political instability that the country has seen in recent years.

Pemba discusses how the Maoists made a lot of promises to get the people's votes, but they were not able to fulfil their promises once they were in power. Consequently, he explains that the Maoists lost the elections and are now one of the minor parties in the country. Despite this, he still believes in the principles of the Maoist movement. "*In my heart I believe that this country needs communism*" (interview 2, May 2016), he says. Although there are many branches of communism and different parties, he votes for the UML, the United Marx and Lenin Party, which in his opinion is neither an autocratic party, nor a very democratic party, but is rather somewhere in the middle. He relates his views to Buddhist philosophies of a middle way, the way that Buddha taught after his enlightenment, which he received while sitting under a tree near a river in India. Pemba explains that Buddha taught people rules to live by, but as he clarifies, the people were not able to follow all the rules and so Buddha had to give the people a middle way by which to live. For Nepal, he says that the UML is like a middle-way party, just like the Lord Buddha taught after his enlightenment.

When asked about the Tamang community, Pemba explains how the rulers of the different dynasties of Nepal excluded the Tamangs from any benefits that the rulers might have bestowed on them. The Tamang community was not involved in any of the main administrative sectors of government. The reason for this exclusion, he explains, was that the Tamangs were the largest ethnic group in the country and the rulers were afraid that if this group were to become self-aware and educated, they might threaten the power centre. The Tamangs had little knowledge of the government system and were left out of any decision making. Pemba states: "*they became blind*" (interview 1, March 2015). He believes that enlightenment comes through education, for most people. He relates this to how being excluded from going to school had affected his own six brothers. In his opinion, they were not aware of the importance of education to ensure their advancement in society, and they had no elders to guide them as to the importance of education. The Tamang community continues to be mostly illiterate, he says, only the most recent generation has started to go to school. Stash and Hannum refer to Tamang children as less likely to enrol in school, and also refer to their similarly low levels of primary completion (Stash & Hannum, 2001, p. 370). Nevertheless, Pemba expresses pride in being Tamang, and takes particular pride in the fact that the current generation of Tamang children has started to go to school. "*By coming to school, the Tamang children can at least learn to be part of civilization and learn how to take care of their personal health and to live in a healthy environment*" (interview 2, May 2016). He believes that access to schooling gives children the chance to at least become literate, and to also have the chance to learn about basic healthcare. He says that wherever he goes, he shares his ideas with the community. "*I feel love for them, I share my ideas with them, and if they can't afford to go to school, I support them according to my ability. In this way, I believe that the Tamang community must move forward*" (interview 2, May 2016), he says.

Pemba explains that the Tamang community is based on farming and keeping livestock. "*This is their strength, but how to use it in a more scientific way, to make better products, to get a higher income, they have little idea*" (interview 2, May 2016), he says. In his experience, most Tamang farmers have little knowledge of how to improve their living standards through farming. His desire is for the community to have the option of vocational training in order to improve farming practices and to give people a way out of poverty and backwardness. He says:

> *If they were given a way out, if there was a road map for that way, if we were able to implement it, that would have been great, imagine what it would mean for people, I feel*

strongly about that. When will the government ever listen, however, one person's voice will not make a difference (interview 2, May 2016).

Pemba expresses his vision of a practical orientation in education based on the capabilities of the community. He envisions how students could learn about organic farming in school and practice it in their own surroundings. What worries him is that children go to school and receive a "*skill-less*" education. When asked about how Tamang students do in the current test-oriented, competitive school environment, he says that there are only a few Tamangs who pass their final examinations. He regrets to say that most Tamang students fail the SLC exams. Among the very few who pass, occasionally they get teaching jobs in the community if there is a vacant post. The students who fail are left to survive by farming their land.

When travelling to the remote village where Pemba currently lives, there were noticeably few young men in the fields or along the road. Upon enquiring about the absence of young men in the area, the owner of the local tea shop responded that most young men had left the community to look for work in "*Arab desh*"—in the Middle East. Pemba confirms that there is a brain drain in Nepal. He further explains that when the men start sending money from abroad, the families that can afford it tend to send their children to boarding schools in the capital, Kathmandu. Some are able to get permanent residency in foreign countries and take their children abroad in hopes of a better future, he states.

A study by Stuhaug (2013) on the impact of migration on individual households and the community in Nepal indicates that the effect of investing remittances in education can "possibly facilitate prospective local development because a better education can increase the future generation's capabilities to become agents of change" (p. 115). However, it remains to be seen whether the remittances invested in education in boarding schools in Kathmandu will have a positive effect on the local community where Pemba lives. Following this line of thought, it raises the question of education as life transforming—not only as a means to better one's own economic situation, but to raise the level of awareness of the value of education in a more holistic way. Pemba has been, by his own account, fortunate to have made a living out of the schooling he received. He views his life from a wider perspective, reflecting on his journey from a life in poverty to his current elevated living standard that can be maintained by virtue of his government teaching position.

Looking back at his own childhood, he recalls the hardships most vividly. He can still remember the experience of having little to eat apart from *dhido* (millet porridge) with garlic and chilli.

I never forget that, and I shouldn't forget. A person who has been poor in childhood and becomes better off shouldn't be too happy, the hardships of childhood still remain a reality for those left in poverty. There is no reason to look down on anyone, no reason to be proud, because I came from the same place (interview 2, May 2016).

Pemba has gone from being poor to becoming relatively well-off in his community. There are still many in his community who remain in the same situation that his family was in when he was growing up. He is well aware that the support of his brothers is what gave him access to the job opportunities that now sustain his family.

Pemba is concerned about his people's lack of love for their community. People move out of the rural areas and leave Nepal if they get the opportunity. He sees that many try for residency in other countries. "*There should be some love for their motherland*" (interview 2, May 2016). However, for the lack of love for their country, he blames the government. Pemba argues that the government is not able to meet the basic needs of the citizens, and subsequently people do not trust their government. Stuhaug (2013) confirms Pemba's observations that the structural constraints in the Nepalese context make it difficult for villagers to build viable livelihoods in their own communities (p. 114). However, as Stuhaug (2013) also points out, there are signs of migrants showing concern about local development and who have supported community projects (p. 116). When asked how the community responds to initiatives to develop rural areas, Pemba says that people living there are always hopeful, like when the Maoists spread hope of change for the poor through their new ideologies. However, he says that this is no longer the best approach. He believes that regaining trust in the government cannot be achieved through political rhetoric, but through giving people skills and the opportunity to develop their skills in order to find scope to improve their livelihoods. When educated people like him stay in the rural areas and work alongside farmers to improve their livestock, agriculture and water resources, it has a positive impact on the community. Pemba has seen this happen. People's beliefs in politicians have been lost. Even though the potential positive effects of remittances can be recognized in rural areas, there is always the risk of households becoming dependent on migration to meet their basic needs (Stuhaug, 2013, p. 116).

When asked if he has been able to implement some of his ideas regarding taking a more practical approach to education in the government school that he currently works in, Pemba states that the school administration and the community environment does not permit him to try out his ideas. He can discuss and advocate for these ideas on the side, but the course and the curriculum

166

guides his teaching. He is told to follow the teacher's guide and teach the text provided with examinations in mind. "*It is exam oriented; it's about passing our pupils*" (interview 1, March 2015). He has to adhere to the system or he will be blamed for the students failing. "*There are exams after three months, six months and yearly exams*", he explains. "*Education here is impracticable*", he laughs. "*But I cannot do anything about that as a teacher in the government school system*", he says. "*If I don't teach to the exams I will fail as a teacher. This is what is expected of me as a teacher in the government system*" (interview 1, March 2015).

5.3.7 Narrative characteristics

Pemba's account is characterized by a high level of narrative intensity. The narratives are detailed and elaborate. Pemba describes, explains and evaluates the events of his life and the socio-political situation of the country. He describes the hardships of his childhood and of his people. He explains how his academic achievement gave him job opportunities and status in his community. Furthermore, he evaluates how the current situation in education fails to meet the individual child's needs in order to create a sustainable system of education geared towards the country's development. "*I am not satisfied with the situation in education*" (interview 2, May 2016), he states. In Pemba's account, there are signs that suggest he is a person who spends a lot of time contemplating how his community could achieve sustainability based on its capabilities. In the last interview, he explains how he has had contact with a fellow Tamang who has successfully established a tea plantation in Darjeeling. Pemba has initiated a meeting with the tea grower and a group of farmers from his own community to discuss the possibilities of starting tea cooperatives in his village.

His vision of other ways of living and working that would be sustainable to enhance the quality of life for the poor and marginalized seems to be an organizing principle and the plot in Pemba's narrative. For Pemba, education should reflect what might be sustainable in the context. This means a curriculum that responds to the needs of the country's people and its development. Working with the local farmers provides Pemba with a place and a space for developing the capabilities of the surrounding communities to improve their living standard. There are indications in Pemba's reflections that he is aware of this plot in the way he expresses his belief in a communism that promotes equity. When asked in the second interview about why he was attracted to the principles of communism and why he had these visions, he upholds his belief in the equal opportunity of every human being and the government's duty towards all its citizens, regardless of their caste and status, to ensure they have opportunities through education and employment.

Some people are very rich, and others are extremely poor; some are on the streets. There are street children who roam the streets hungry, while others live an indulgent life and can move to other more developed countries and try for permanent residency. From the bottom of my heart, I believe in communism, because it talks of equality. In communism, the government treats the individual citizen equally. However, here the law does not apply to the rich and the powerful; they can pay their way out of any wrongdoings. In real communism, this would not be tolerated. Irrespective of where you live, in the cities or in the rural areas, in the Himalayas, or in the foothills, or in the Terai, the government would view people equally, in real communism (interview 2, May 2016).

The life story of Pemba is somewhat chronological in the way he accounts for his life, beginning with his childhood and up to the present day, but he also speaks thematically, bringing up themes like ethnicity, current educational policies, his own political convictions, migration, sustainable development and education. His stories depict a range of themes that encompass his engagement with questions of meaning and interpretation of the Maoist movement. Following the themes that come out of the data, a wide range of literature allowed for an enquiry to be made into why his stories were told in particular ways at particular times. Examples of such themes are Pemba's concern for the flow of migration out of his community and into the Middle East, due to the few job opportunities in the country. Pemba relates the migration of men to foreign countries to the bleak situation for income-generating activities in Nepal.

In Pemba's view, migration is deeply connected to issues of an irrelevant curriculum that only prepares students for bureaucratic and managerial jobs. He argues that it is an alien system of education that devalues the rural and the local practices and the knowledge of the villagers that subsequently forces them out of the villages and out of the country. He contends that the Maoist focus on vocational schooling is a more sustainable form of education in Nepal. There are a range of articles that raise the issue of the migration of Nepalis to foreign countries and the impact that migration has on rural areas of Nepal (Bhattarai, 2005; Stuhaug, 2013). Additionally, Pemba also raises the issue of ethnic groups and school participation in Nepal. He suggests that there is a strong caste effect on both educational opportunities and job opportunities and argues in line with the Maoists' demand for more equal opportunities for ethnic groups within the hierarchical social system of caste to improve education. This resonates with much of the research that has been done on ethnic groups and school participation (Stash & Hannum, 2001; Wagle, 2012). His account is to some extent theorized in the way he presents a theory of a government's responsibility to provide for the basic needs of all its citizens.

A consistent theme in Pemba's story is his vision of a more relevant curriculum to ensure Nepal's future is sustainable. From his point of view, changes in the system have to come from the government. His conclusion is that as an individual, one can do very little, even with the best of intentions. In his opinion, the system sets the boundaries for individuals to act. He attributes the successes in his life and work to his own efforts in school, for the most part, as well as to the support of his family. Failure to achieve what he believes to be the right thing to do is blamed on external factors, like the government's lack of initiative. In an analyses of "commonsense psychology" with which people explain life's events, Mayer (2002) sites that people tend to attribute human behaviour to internal causes; for example, a person's disposition to act in a certain way, or to external causes that affect the person's situation (see Myers, 2002, p. 81). Pemba attributes his ability to initiate change in his community to internal causes but blames the educational system for his failure to act according to his beliefs in his profession.

This is particularly the case in the school system as he sees it. Even the Education for All policies that promote a child-friendly approach are somewhat overshadowed by systems of knowledge that prioritize western examination systems and certification. He expresses frustration over the academic and test-oriented focus in education. From his point of view, a misfit knowledge system teaches students to not value local practices and to have unrealistic ambitions that can rarely be achieved in reality. The content of the curriculum is imported from another system that requires different knowledge than the context of Nepal necessitates. Subsequently, educated and resourceful youth are pushed out of the country instead of using their capabilities within the country. Pemba promotes a view of education that is not sustainable for children living in an agricultural setting. In his critique, he also criticizes the cultural heritage of the gurukul tradition of education: "*Overall, most teachers teach in the same way, with the same technology, with all the children in the same classroom. What the child does or doesn't do is of no interest, only that they pass the tests*" (interview 1, March 2015). He expresses that in the educational heritage of Nepal, there is already an acceptance of a test-oriented practice that resonates with western knowledge and certification systems. Somehow, the two approaches share a belief in testing the pupil in accordance with a given standard. However, the difference in the two systems lies in their orientations: the gurukul orientation towards spiritual enlightenment versus the western scientific knowledge-based orientation. Pemba seems to prefer the child-centred, Education for All approach, in his ambition to see a system of education that caters to all children's individual needs within a given context. He believes that the curriculum should mirror what is sustainable in Nepal. Nevertheless, Pemba does not seem

to find space within the current school system to act according to his beliefs. As a result, he sees himself tied down by the system and is unable to teach according to his beliefs. Although his visions for an equitable society remain constant, he appears to be disillusioned with the direction of change in his profession. Pemba is true to his ideals. His engagement with socio-cultural issues has not been restricted, which indicates that he can distance himself from events in order to avoid becoming personally disheartened.

The space where Pemba can promote his ideas is in the wider community of farmers, where he has initiated several projects to improve crops and invest in income-generating activities. In his community, he finds ways to break away from established patterns of life. He has broken free from his family's narrative by climbing the social ladder and securing his economic status by holding on to his government teaching position. This has enabled him to create a course of action and achieve a successful identity project. In his professional context, in a government school setting, Pemba is on the other end of the spectrum. There, he says he is forced to accept the given circumstance and becomes somewhat passive in the lack of opportunity to change the system. He believes the struggle is too great for one individual teacher to fight and chooses to voice his beliefs outside the professional arena.

5.4 EFA and western educational influences

In the following are two portrayals of teachers who emphasize the importance of EFA and the western, modern education approach in their lives and work as teachers. Sarala expresses what the child-friendly school programmes has meant for her life and teaching practice, while Bhupendra's statements of philanthropic concern expressed through his involvement in private schooling raises the issue of profit-oriented social services within education.

5.4.1 Introducing Sarala

Sarala is a dedicated teacher who has experienced a transition from being a traditional gurukul teacher to becoming a modern child-friendly teacher. She expresses her belief in the new methods and is content in her work. Her stories refer to important guiding figures in her life that have been responsible for shaping who she has become. Although she has faced hardship and ill health, she is now a "model teacher" in her district.

5.4.2 Sarala's life history

Sarala is the eldest of eight children—seven girls, followed by a boy. Her father was educated and had an administrative job in the forestry department in the district municipality. He used to say that he was not able to give his children wealth, but his aim was to give them an education, so they could stand on their own feet. All the children were born in 18-month increments. Sarala remembers her mother suffering from poor health, and how she, as the eldest daughter, had to take care of her siblings. She would wash their faces and comb their hair and cook for them, as well as cut grass for the cattle, before going to school, sometimes instead of finding the time to eat. Her grandmother would lovingly remind her: "*You have to eat or else you will die* [*ta eti kha natra tai morches*]" (interview 1, January 2014). The villagers used to say: "*Your mother only gave birth to them, you are their mother*" (interview 1, January 2014). Although her mother was poorly, Sarala expresses her gratitude for her: "*we are still able to say mother even at our age, and see her with our own eyes, it is because of our father, he is a very understanding man, he is like a god. He loved his wife and equally his children*" (interview 1, January 2014).

The school she was sent to was close to her home. Her memories of school are of strict discipline and rote learning. If the students were not able to memorize their homework, the teacher would make them hold heavy stones and stand on one foot as punishment. He would beat them with a stick if they could not hold still. She was so afraid of the teacher that even when she saw him after school, when tending the goats, she would run and hide. After grade three, the village children had to go to a different school farther away, and she recalls that her father let her have a coin (*ekh mohr*) to buy tea and bread in the local tea shop. When Sarala was still at school, her mother contracted meningitis when her brother was 18 months old. Sarala wanted to leave school to take care of things at home, but her father would not let her; even when she failed her exams, he made her go back to school. He got her cousins to come and convince her not to leave school. They did well in their studies and they told her: "*Nani, you have your life ahead of you, there is nothing as important as education to stand on your own feet*" (interview 1, January 2014). So, after having left school for a year, she went back to study. Before the SLC exams were held her marriage was arranged. She was 19 years old. In her new household there was no electricity, unlike what she was used to, and she remembers the hard work on the farm. Amongst all the chores she had to do, she had to walk for hours to cut grass for the many cows that they had. Her home environment was not as loving as what she was used to. "*The love you get in your Maiti* [a girl's childhood home], *you won't get in your new home*" (interview 1, January 2014), she said.

Her father visited her new household to convince them to let her continue her studies. Her in-laws complained that she used up the paraffin when studying at night. Sarala remembers being annoyed with her father for compelling her to go to school. All throughout her childhood, he had pressured her to go to school. Now that she recalls his persistence, she wants to cry. She finally resumed her studies and went to the village for tutoring classes. It meant that she had to get up four in the morning. She would fetch water, smear fresh mud and cow dung on the floors to clean the house, and rarely had time to eat. Since childhood, she had felt it was destined that her life would be full of suffering. She came to realize that she had been married off to a man who showed little concern for her and who had no interest in education. However, she finally passed her exams and continued working in the fields.

At that time, she remembers that there were elections in the country, and through her father's position and connections to party members, he found her a part-time job in the municipality. She was relieved to get away from the hard work at home. "*Anything that could give me relief from cutting grass was fine by me, I was happy*" (interview 1, January 2014). She continued working until she had her first child—a girl.

Her husband expressed little love for her; he left early in the morning and came home late from working in the fields. When she became pregnant again, she contemplated abortion. Her mother and grandmother convinced her to keep it and said they would raise the child if necessary. There are only 13 months between her two children, she explains. When she delivered her second child, her mother-in-law said she was lucky it was a boy or else she would not get any food. "*If you had had a girl, you would not have been given food, you had a son, eat!*" [*La chori paeko bhae, khana paundina this, chora pais, kha*] (interview 1, January 2014). Sarala remembers how she felt at the time. "*My body went cold, what would my situation have been if I had had a daughter?*" she wondered (interview 1, January 2014).

At that time, there were new teaching jobs allocated for her area by the government and so she took an entrance test to apply. Her father had done well in the elections, and because of his good reputation, people in the municipality respected him. They had also witnessed his daughter's hardship and how she had carried heavy sacks of rice to the mill in the district centre. There were secret dealings within the municipality to give Sarala a job. This led to her getting a teaching position, but because of politics and inside dealings, her job was allocated in a far-flung location. It was a difficult start for her teaching career, but again, her father managed to get her transferred to the school where she has worked for the past 20 years.

Sarala was often unwell, and her in-laws threatened to marry their son off to a new wife if she did not carry her weight. "*Who will do the job, are we your servants?*" (interview 1, January 2014), they had asked her. This led her to become depressed. She withdrew from people and was worried for her children's future with a father who did not care for them. It reached the stage that she was convinced she was going to die. She wanted to die. Her father came to enquire as to what was wrong with her when she did not go to work. When he saw her situation, he said he would do anything to make her well and took her to see many doctors. "*They checked me for TB, cancer, and so on, but the doctors could not figure out what was wrong with me*" (interview 1, January 2014). She recalls her father walking in front of her with all the X-ray cards going from one hospital to the next. Finally, her father realized that she was depressed and took her to see a psychiatrist. She remembers the doctor asking her if she wanted to die, which was how she felt, but she could not express it. "*He said: do you want to die? And I felt amazed, he was truly a doctor!*" (interview 1, January 2014). From that moment on, she was confident he would make her well. When she sees that doctor now she feels she owes him her life. She respects him like she does her own father. She describes her father as an educated and well-connected person. He knew where to find the doctor that saved her life. "*They are both like Gods to me*", she says (interview 2, March 2015).

Sarala becomes visibly emotional when discussing her family's problems. She explains that there was a dispute between the two families about her situation and that her in-laws accused her parents of taking her back. "*Are you looking for compensation?*" (interview 1, January 2014), they had asked. When she regained her health, her father encouraged her to return to her husband's house, but promised to take her back if things did not work out. She cried the whole night, but somehow felt relieved after that. Sarala became more confident from then on and was ready to face her in-laws. Her father sent women from his office to enquire about her situation, and she remembers that they came to the back of the house to ask after her. Another reason for her to stay strong while living in her husband's home were her six sisters, whom she was afraid might not get married if her father's reputation was tarnished. "*I could not ruin my father's reputation. He was ready to give his life for me and I decided I was going to endure staying in my new home or live off the salary I earned from teaching*" (interview 2, March 2015). When her father-in-law died, the situation with her mother-in-law deteriorated even more. While she was in the forest cutting grass, she would worry that her children would go to school hungry with her mother-in-law taking care of them. She remembers her heart pounding as she rushed to the school with her children's tiffins to feed them something during their lunch break.

However, her situation subsequently improved when she was able to sell some land and move to the district centre with her children to further their education. Her children are doing well now, she explains. Her daughter works in a bank and her son is still in college.

Upon reflecting on her teaching job, she says; "*I taught the way I was taught in school, I taught like that for nearly 10 years*" (interview 1, January 2014). The culture at that time was that the more afraid the children were of the teacher, the better disciplined they were. "*The stricter the rules the better; we would carry a stick and a pen. Our belief was the more pain, the more they learned*" (interview 1, January 2014). Sarala's older students still remember how painful her discipline was.

> *Oh my God, how badly I feel about how I impacted them … The children now will have a different respect for me when I am old, perhaps. The students I had before had respect for me too, yes they did, but in a different way. They remember how I would squeeze their fingers to make them repeat the content by heart, they remember the punishment. In a way, I was close to them, but at the same time, the children were afraid of me.* (interview 1, January 2014)

Sarala recalls how the students would study particularly hard for her class because she was so strict. Some Scottish volunteers who visited her school had wondered why all the teachers carried sticks. She had told them that it was not possible to keep discipline without a stick in the classroom. "*Now the government states that teachers are not allowed to carry sticks in the classroom, we are not allowed to punish in that way, and furthermore, we are not allowed to fail a child. These are the policies now*", she explains (interview 2, March 2015).

The new reforms introduced new concepts, like grade teaching to create a friendlier environment. The principal at her school decided to introduce this into the lower grades by role modelling this new practice. After six months, he added a male teacher to help him grade teach. However, after a year, they decided that it was a job better suited to women and mothers, so they made Sarala the grade teacher. They had claimed: "*it's not for us, it's a mother's job to take care of the young ones, a woman teacher can do it*" (interview 1, January 2014). Sarala was frustrated at first with the new concept that had been introduced. "*In the beginning, the grade teaching was like controlling a horse without reins, it went where it liked*" (interview 1, January 2014), she exclaims. She found it hard to manage, as there was no fixed timetable.

After a while, Sarala was given the opportunity to attend a training programme for grade teaching that was run by UNICEF and the municipality. She was able to leave her children and went to an 11-day training programme. Her daughter had been cooking food for the family since she was a small girl, so they could manage without her, Sarala explains. The trainers made them do activities as if they were children the whole time that they were there. The activities felt manageable and she was motivated to try them out in her teaching. However, most of the other male participants seemed to not be motivated by the training programme. "*It's like being bitten by a mad dog*" (interview 1, January 2014), they said. They were not motivated to spend time with the students for the amount of time that was required according to the new methods, and the increased responsibility did not interest them, she explains. For her, the concept of children learning through play-based learning was a new way of managing the classroom without the fear of punishment. "*Imagine how it would have been if we had had the chance to be taught like that!*" (interview 1, January 2014), she exclaimed. When she found it hard to manage, she would remind herself of the trainers at the training programme and felt inspired by their guidance and advice. She was impressed with the way the methods did not resort to punishing the children the way she was used to.

> *It didn't require threatening to lock the child in the toilet or verbally threatening them to do what you wanted them to. I realized that that only hampered learning; we had ourselves experienced in the training how we had played and done the activities. If we could play and learn, why can't children? I started looking forward to trying it out in my own classroom.* (interview 1, January 2014)

At first, the parents would complain if she did not send lots of homework home with the child. They understood it as though the teacher did not care about teaching. They would complain: "*What to do, we thought the teacher had gone to training to improve, but it seems she doesn't care and there is no homework*" (interview 1, January 2014). Sarala felt she was stuck in the middle. On the one hand, she had been trained that way, but on the other, there was doubt as to the effectiveness of the methods. Upon the difficult times, she recollects: "*Just as my father had supported me in my childhood, the principal helped me*" (interview 3, May 2016). When she was sick, the principal had told the students that they should say: "'*God may she be well'. He cared about me and appreciated the role I played in the school*" (interview 3, May 2016). The principal supported her with the materials she needed to replicate the activities she had learned in the training programme in her school. She would lie awake at night thinking of what activities she could do.

After some time, Sarala gathered her students' mothers to hold a meeting to explain that the children had to bring food with them to school, look neat and clean and keep the classroom tidy. She explained that it was the first stage of learning. When the children became used to a clean environment at school, then they started wanting to enjoy the same environment at home. From then on, the mothers were more positive. Sarala has implemented most of the activities that the training programmes suggest, like class rules, job charts, group seating, news sharing, etc. She enjoys the closeness she shares with her students and recalls how her grade one students came to her home with biscuits when she was ill. She was moved by that experience and remembers how she used to hope her teacher would stay home for a long time when he was ill. "*The children are happy and myself, I am happy*" (interview 1, January 2014). However, she feels that she still has not had enough training on the concept of group work, which she hopes she can learn more about from the government's in-service teacher training programmes. She gives examples of how some children become overconfident with the new methods, because of the cultural expectation of maintaining strict discipline, but she upholds her faith in the child-friendly methods. She expresses satisfaction with what she has achieved and is proud of the respect she has gained from the students and parents. Her school is now a model school in her district.

5.4.3 Narrative characteristics

Sarala's story is a detailed and chronological account of her life. She describes major events in her life as the eldest daughter in a large family, in her marriage, as a daughter-in-law and of her life as a woman and how she entered into teaching. Sarala was emotional when she talked about her married life and how the difficulties she had faced had led to her depression. She expressed her deep gratitude for the support of her father, doctor and even her principal. She came out of her hardship a stronger and more confident person with their guidance. In the third interview, she elaborated on the importance of support from superiors when engaging with the changes in her life. Her account is lengthy and detailed. She describes her family and work and explains the reasons for why things happened; she evaluates the difference these events have made in her life and in her work. It is not difficult to discern a high intensity in her story.

There is a clear suggestion that an organizing principle guides the selection of events that she shares that make up her life story and gives them meaning. The plot of Sarala's story seems to revolve around the importance of influential people in her life that helped her gain her footing and stand on her own two feet. For Sarala, this guidance and support meant that she would comply with the instructions of her superiors. There is an indication in the interview that she is

aware of these organizing social principles. In the second interview, I tried to probe deeper into the importance of support from superiors in her story. She elaborates: "*you won't go anywhere without the support of influential people in our society*" (interview 3, May 2016).

When we meet in her home for the third interview, Sarala hides the transcript of her story when her family is present. Her husband is also there at that time. Because of their daughter's wedding, their son has insisted on his parents living together again because of the social stigma associated with living separately. Sarala's daughter had been married off to a family in Kathmandu, which seemed to please her. Her daughter had only met the man once before the wedding, but he had been persistent, and so she had agreed to marry him. At our last interview, Sarala is preoccupied with family matters, and for various reasons she can only meet me in the late afternoon. Her daughter is visiting from Kathmandu, and since it is getting dark, she is worried about her daughter returning to the city. There were rumours of a *bandha* (a strike), and Sarala hopes I will take her daughter with me in the taxi I have hired. I find that she is busy, so we decide that she will read the summary of her life story that I have written, and we will speak later on the phone to get her thoughts on the content. The next time we talk is over a very bad line. After the major earthquake in April of 2015, I called to find out how she was. She was living outside in the open, huddled together with her family and neighbours for fear of aftershocks.

Sarala vividly recounts parts of her life that reveal some of the hardships associated with finding herself as a daughter, a woman, a mother and a wife, and finally, as a teacher. She describes the circumstances that have shaped her life and how she has responded to them. In her story, there is a lot of pain related to unmet expectations of being looked after, loved and cared for by important people in her life, like her husband and in-laws. "*My father loved me, in my new home they didn't*" (interview 1, January 2014), she says. As a child, she was taken care of by her father and guided and directed as to what to do. Consequently, she was obedient and willing to follow his directions. She later lived with a family that provided insufficient protection and guidance. This led to her depression and apathy: "*I felt like it was destined that I should only have hardship*" (interview 1, January 2014).

An understanding of Nepalese cultural traditions is crucial to gaining a comprehensive understanding of Sarala's story. The depth of Nepal's social hierarchy is fundamental to understanding her social action. The worldview of a social hierarchy helps contextualize Sarala's responses to her life's circumstances and her understanding of human existence in that

particular place and time. The Hindu Dharmashastras, such as the Manusmriti, state that women should be under the control and supervision of their fathers until marriage, under the control of their husbands after marriage, and then under the control of their sons after the death of their husbands (Bista, 1991, p. 63). It is still common practice to arrange marriages in Nepal, particularly for the high-caste groups, like in Sarala's case. It is also common practice for high-caste groups to marry at a young age. Having sons has traditionally been important to maintain ritualistic practices for a better afterlife and for old age security. As we can see from Sarala's experiences, women are expected to work hard and work on the farm, as well as do all the domestic chores. She carries out the duties that are expected of her as a daughter and a wife to the full when she is taken care of and protected, but falls into a depression and becomes apathetic when she feels uncared for. Because she grew up in a family that appreciated and loved her, without this love and protection she could not fulfil her duties. Her inability to carry out her duties led to threats of being replaced by another wife, and of getting less food if she could not produce a son. Sarala articulated how she felt at that time: "*If I had given birth to a daughter, what would my situation have been?*" (interview 1, January 2014).

Sarala refers to her father as a godlike figure for educating his daughters and for being responsible for their security. Her example reflects the importance of parental guidance in Nepalese society and the dependency on parents that it creates. The importance of fathers is not expected to diminish, either ritually or socially, throughout a child's life. Paternal dependency may well exist independently of caste (Bista, 1991, p. 89). Nepalese society is based on systems of vertical dependency that run parallel to the caste system, but are also somewhat separate from it (Bista, 1991, p. 89). The potential for paternal substitution often extends to vertically dependent relationships outside of the family and into the mainstream of society (Bista, 1991, p. 89). Sarala worked at a school where the principal wanted to implement the child-friendly reforms instructed by the government into classroom teaching. He trusted her to learn these methods and practise them in her classroom. She did this so well that she has become a model example to show how these methods can be practised in schools. She describes how the other participants in the child-friendly training course saw the reform initiatives as useless, "*like being bitten by a crazy dog*" (interview 1, January 2014). By contrast, Sarala found the course meaningful and inspiring. She was ready to follow the instructions had she received and was ready to implement the new reform initiatives.

The desire for a supportive environment was an important theme in Sarala's story about her life. The key turning point in her life and work as a teacher was when she was introduced to

child-friendly teaching methods through the in-service teacher training programme. Her implementation of the new child-friendly methods were made possible with her principal's relentless support. Thus, her own experiences of the importance of a supportive environment might be something that she recognizes in the child-centred methods. However, we also learn from her narrative that the male participants did not respond to these new methods in the same way that she did. Being a female teacher might partly explain why she was more receptive to the reform programme. As Bista (1991) explains, women are more often under the supervision and control of male family members and are more likely to recognize the importance of a supportive environment when having had the experience of both. Moreover, the male teachers' reaction to the teacher training might also be understood from a cultural perspective. A traditional cultural system that prioritizes the nurturing of boys over girls does not necessarily create a need to seek alternatives to the status quo.

At first, the new perspective on her role as a teacher presented Sarala with many challenges when it came to introducing these new teaching methods. Parents became sceptical of her teaching after she had attended the training programme. In examining her transition from a traditional gurukul teacher to a child-friendly teacher, one might wonder if Sarala would have been able to overcome these hurdles if it had not been for her previous experiences teaching her the importance of support. Stories of local resistance to her newfound role as a child-friendly teacher suggests that Sarala's experiences alienated her from her colleagues and the community for some time when changing her approach to teaching. She has since learned ways of dealing with the cultural context by convincing parents to collaborate with her new methods. This has resulted in a more or less supportive community, she reports.

It is apparent from the negative reactions of the male participants to the training programme and the parents' reluctance to accept her initiatives that introducing new methods into a cultural context like Nepal requires teachers to have inner conviction and dedication. On the other hand, a wholeheartedly convinced teacher facing these kinds of challenges might risk estranging themselves from their own environment if they do not take into consideration the existing cultural system and expectations of the community. Sarala does not elaborate on these issues, but it raises certain ethical concerns as to what the introduction of western methods means for a teacher that is expected to represent these radical principles alone in a traditional cultural setting. It also raises questions as to who should be the legitimate author and founder of the professional values and ethics of teaching in the local cultural context—teachers, the government or bilateral organizations?

5.4.5 Introducing Bhupendra

Bhupendra's life story goes beyond the description of daily events and teaching. He explains and evaluates how he has lived and worked in a society in transition. These experiences of balancing between the new and the traditional has given him a confidence and self –assurance in adapting to new circumstances. His story is characterized by a high level of narrative intensity and by continuous reflection and evaluation of the changes taking place in society. What makes Bhupendra's story particularly interesting is the way in which his sense of self provides him with flexibility to engage with new situations in society. In this sense his story presents the issues of flexibility in meeting with change, however a flexibility founded on a deep sense of a cultural foundation.

5.4.6 Bhupendra's life history

Bhupendra grew up in the urban area of Bhaktapur. His father was an army officer. Bhupendra explained that his parents were originally from the countryside of Dolakha, but because of the uncertainty of his father's postings to various parts of the country, the family decided to have their base in the city. Bhupendra lived there with his mother and siblings. He recollects that he was sent to a well-regarded school in the community from the age of three and a half and was considered to be an average student, with an average score in his school performances. *"I didn't fail any classes or got very good grades, it was okay, there were no worries that our son will fail"* (interview 1, March 2015), he said. However, he recalls that he was boisterous and mischievous in school. And one of the things he remembers from his early days in school was that he actually did fail social studies in grade four.

Yet, what stands out in his memory is that he had a talent for math. In particular, he remembers that he could do quick head calculations. From grade five he was shifted to another school where there were fewer students. At that time, he concluded that he did fairly well in school. Looking back, he reflects that it was the extracurricular activities that shaped his personality, particularly his participation in debate programs. Participating in these activities got him prizes in school and in interschool debate competitions as well as in national level debates. His talent for speech and debates motivated him to partake in school, yet at the same time these activities diverted him from school work. *"School went well, but I didn't get a high percentage in my SLC exams. Maybe 70 percent"* (interview 1, March 2015), he said. The SLC exams are the 10th grade final examinations and a student has to pass eight subjects to have passed the SLC exams. The examination is evaluated on a percentage score where the total score is 100 and the pass score is 32. The students are rated in first, second and third division according to the score

on their exams. The SLC exam is the gateway to higher education as well as an important credential for entering into the labor market. The percentage in the exam has been a matter of great concern for the future of students and families.

Bhupendra argues that in Nepal there is too much focus on people's academic achievements and the percentage that the students get in their exams. Nevertheless, his studies continued on an average level. He later decided to do his bachelors in Math, but as he argued, because of the ever-increasing complexity of the subject and his social nature he took five years to finish a three years course. Another reason for his lax attendance in class was his involvement in student politics, he stated. He recalls spending minimal time studying for the exams with the aim of just passing the subject. He continued to explain that he later moved to Kathmandu because he needed to get away from his immediate surroundings and his involvement in politics. However, as he said, looking back he doesn't regret the time he was politically active. Bhupendra points out that his involvement in politics was a milestone in his life. During those years he gained a wide social network. This social network proved to be beneficiary in many ways also for his current work in the field of education. He stated that he gained a good reputation in the social arena and access to various social networks. Many of the social connections that he got during his political career has helped promote his school and has made it a well-known school in the community.

He recalls how he came into teaching;

"In Nepal people don't plan to become a teacher. At home there was talk of me becoming an army officer. I tried for the army, but at the final stages I failed in the last interview. I had left my studies and had time on my hands. A friend of mine ran a school and told me they needed a person in the administration and a math teacher to teach morning classes" (interview 1, March 2015).

He took the job for lack of other options at the time, he recalled, and he started teaching in the primary section since he wasn't qualified to teach secondary level. Since the school only had morning classes, he took additional part time teaching jobs in other schools. Initially, he said that he felt awkward having to teach student older than himself, but after gaining some experience, he increasingly enjoyed teaching and of now he says; *"I enjoy every class. I never miss a class even if I am ill I go to school. I rest when I go home"* (interview 1, March 2015). After nine years he still works in the same school where he began his teaching career. He explains that the previous owner of the school wanted to sell it since he already owned another

school. By then, Bhupendra knew the inside workings of the school and the administration, so he was given first priority to buy the institution. He took up a loan and subsequently took over the running of the school. About his school, he explained that the primary aim is to cater to drop out students.

"What we see is that most classrooms are heterogeneous in Nepal. The aim in most schools is to cater to the few high achieving students who have a chance to pass the exams. The 40% students who fail are not given any importance. The reasons for drop out in schools are many. It has to do with family problems, economic reasons and past educational failures that discourages students from continuing their schooling. The students who come to us are weak students; they are from a similar range of students" (interview 2, May 2016).

He describes the success of the educational institution that he runs, on factors like the homogeneous student group that come to the school; "*In homogenous groups, students feel more at ease to ask questions, they don't feel embarrassed in front of more talented students like they do in regular classes"* (interview 2, May 2016), he argues. He upholds that it is easier to teach a group of students who have had similar achievement rates previously and he finds them to be more unified in the classroom and do better in a homogenous environment. In his school, he points out, the students are taught the basic concepts of the subject that will help them pass at a minimal level of 32 percent, rather than having to sit in classes where the aim is to get the best possible marks at 90 percent, he said. He looks back at his own life and his way into teaching;

"*Because of my own lack of success I joined teaching, I didn't plan to be a teacher, it was not my passion but after becoming a teacher I have helped others become successful. I have gathered students who have failed their exams and helped them pass. It makes me happy and the society seems to value what we do as well. When you have the administrative responsibility of a school you get very involved at all levels. My wife says; if you had to choose between me or the school, I think perhaps you will choose the school. I tell her that I was involved in the school long before* her*"* (interview 1, March 2015*),* he says and laughs.

Bhupendra believes that one of the reasons for his ability to have a position as principal of a school, has been his regular school attendance as a child, including his father's army background. He never dropped out of school. Even as a mischievous student he did the assignments that they were given in school and he always did what was required of him, he points out. Another aspect of his schooling was that teachers liked him, and they were kind to

him. When he passed SLC he remembers that the principle described him as one of the best students to have in school and one of the most mischievous. Nonetheless, his guardians never heard any complaints about him, he says. These experiences have kept him in contact with many of his own teachers over the years.

When reflecting on his profession, he argues that many teachers tend to be pessimistic of their own profession and tend to see the more positive aspects of other people's work. As he said, he has never travelled outside Nepal, but thinks that being pessimistic about one's own profession, applies to most people. Furthermore, he argues, that the social status of teachers in society might have been better, as well as teacher salaries, but for him, teaching has been rewarding and enjoyable. He has a Master in Mathematics and he teaches Math's at various levels in his school. Apart from teaching he is mostly occupied with the administrative part of running the institution. Predicting the future, he believes that he will be a part of the teaching profession his whole working life and his plans are to run a college if the opportunity comes up. His wife used to work in a social organization, but currently teaches in a college. He jokingly says that his son seems to have predispositions for numbers like himself, and a preference for board markers rather than writing in notebooks. Comparing his own schooldays and how students are taught today, he says; "*There is a huge difference in how I was taught in school and how I teach. The teachers we had would carry a stick and threated us to study. Classroom practices have changed in Nepal*" (interview 2, May 2016).

He continues to reflect on how the school practices have changed with the more recent influences of human rights concepts into the Nepalese society;

"*Even if you want to beat a student you can't. The human rights concepts coming into the society has lessened corporal punishment traditions in schools. The students are aware of their rights now. When I was in school the teachers would say; study or choose your punishment! If you failed to do your homework you were beaten, if you failed your exams you were beaten, if you didn't memorize the lessons you were beaten. The teacher would carry a stick and threaten the students. Corporal punishment was the ultimate remedy for all the educational problems. You can ask any teacher about this. Before, if you failed your exam you were beaten, what you see now is that if you fail your exams you are given extra classes. Isn't that a big change? Now the weaker students are given tuition classes if they don't understand the subject matter, before you were threatened that you wouldn't get food if you didn't learn the lessons by heart. There is change in the education system*" (interview 2, May 2016).

Bhupendra explains that he is currently studying appreciative inquiry for his master's thesis. He explains his choice of topic on his own educational experiences; *"My understanding is that if you treat the student in a positive way you get positive results"* (interview 2, May 2016*)*. Accentuating his point, he recites from his coursework in the appreciative inquiry methodology course; *"..if you look for problems, you will find and create more problems, if you look for successes, you will find and create more successes"* (interview 2, May 2016). His thesis is about appreciative pedagogy in mathematics which he states is a new field of inquiry in Nepal. He is only aware of two PhD studies based on appreciative inquiry done in the country. The aspect of focusing on students' resources gets him into many discussions with his teacher colleagues. He explains; "There *are many teachers who ask me; you talk about not scolding the students and not beating them and not showing their mistakes, how is it possible to improve the classroom? How it is possible to handle a class focusing on the positive aspects?"* (interview 2, May 2016).

These discussions, he places in a broad perspective, pointing to schools in remote areas that face extreme conditions; *"In some remote areas, schools don't receive text books on time or even have desks and benches in the classrooms, in the rainy season the classroom roof leaks, there are many problems, it is wrong to talk about pedagogy in that kind of environment"* (interview 2, May 2016*).*

However, he upholds his faith in the appreciative approach to teaching; *"We can start in a small way by appreciating the students and valuing them and positively reinforcing the students. In that kind of an environment you can create successes. I have that experience in my school, fifty to sixty percent of the students are able to pass SLC exams. It's not all of the students who pass, but the ones who do, had failed previously"* (interview 2, May 2016).

He describes how he is different from other teachers in his approach to teaching; *"I don't teach the way the teachers taught them before, saying that this student will fail, however much we teach them they will fail and put them in a corner as punishment. I say, it is possible to teach this student. I take them from the corner and put them in the center. There are students who pass, maybe not a hundred percent of them, but my fifty percent achievement is a hundred in a way. I value these students. Because of their success the society values me"* (interview 2, May 2016).

I asked him about the background of his students.

"Many of my students are from families that cannot afford to go to daytime schools. They come to us in the mornings to study and work during the daytime. Some students are from middle class families but don't want to study or go to school. Some of the student are from rural migration, due to economic instability or security threat, but mostly it is due to a family member working abroad to support the family and this enables the children to go to schools in urban areas. There are some urban schools that will not admit children from rural areas and treat them as third-class citizens. These students come to us" (interview 2, May 2016).

Bhupendra's description of his student group, paints a picture of the market in the private education sector. The fact that over half of the country's students fail their SLC examination is linked to the discrepancies of government and private schools, where private schools have a much higher pass rate, varying from 29 percent in government schools to 80 percent in private schools (Caddell, 2006). Every year the result of the SLC is published, billboards and newspapers carry announcements of admission to private schools portraying their success students achieving top marks in the examinations. The hopes and aspirations that private schools tap into is considerable. However, the main discussions concerning private and government run schools, centers around issues of education and profit, as well as the opportunities offered by private schooling claiming to run 'social services' or providing opportunities for the elite (Caddell, 2006; Carney, 2003). Nevertheless, private schools present themselves mainly by their academic achievements in SLC examinations and by their provision of English as the medium of instruction in spite of Nepali being the national language in the Education Act (Carney, 2003). In terms of the community, the private schools tend to have an autocratic management style that is perceived as the way to succeed academically.

Interviewee: How do you handle students who neglect their work?

"The academic level of the students is pretty much the same, but their backgrounds are different. Like in most schools there are students who misbehave. Students are mostly afraid of me as the head teacher. When I enter a classroom it becomes silent as if someone died…If there are students who misbehave or otherwise neglect their work we council them, if that doesn't work we might beat them a little, but not like they are used to from other schools" (interview 1, March 2015).

He gives an example of an incident he faced some time ago;

There were some students who failed to bring their books to school, a couple of boys and a girl student. Generally, I don't beat girl students. The problem is that if I don't beat girls I will seem to be biased, and if I don't beat any of the students it's not possible in this condition. I was in doubt, If I punish only the boys I will be seen as biased, if I don't punish them I will have a discipline problem, so I struck them all on the cheek. The next day I had a call from the brother of the girl student who requested to talk with me about the incident in a threatening way. When I arrived at the school my staff warned me that the episode with the students had been negatively exposed in the community and that I should not meet with the brother in the school area since it might turn violent. I had no choice but to face the problem and contacted the police for protection. The police were requested to wait outside the school compound in case there was a problem. The brother arrived at the school with a group of men. There were threats and accusations of mistreating and of sexual exploitation. I listened and replied that these kinds of accusations will be counterproductive for his sister in society if word comes out that someone had treated her in an improper way. I told them that I had had to punish all the involved students or I would seem biased in a school setting. I was able to convince them and because of that the girl was embarrassed to come to school and left soon after. Social issues and gender issues like these are a part of being a teacher. It was a threatening experience and also a learning experience. It was one of the worst experiences I faced" (interview 1, March 2015).

He explains that at the end of the SLC exams the school arranges a party for the students. He usually asks the students about what they found positive and negative in the years they had attended the school. What he finds surprising is that the students who never got any punishment during the academic year reply that you shouldn't give punishment to the students and that they feel harassed. But the students who got the most punishment reply that if they were not punished they would never come on track." *These are contradictory experiences to the human rights approaches*" (interview 1, March 2015), he says.

Bhupendra remembers an inspiring story of a female student. She had failed in her exams and for ten years she stayed home and saw her friends go to college. The chance of going to college had opened up better prospects of marriage and job opportunities for her friends. She decided to go back to school and joined the morning classes in Bhupendra's school. She worked hard and by the support from the teachers she passed her exams in first division. Bhupendra recalls how she had cried and thanked them for their support.

He states that his main responsibility as a teacher is to make his students capable, since his institution caters to "*needy*" students he argues that his work involves a social aspect. He also states that his work has an aspect of humanitarian responsibility. Some of his students are in dire conditions and he says that it is his duty to help them get back into mainstream education.

Interviewee; What do you think that the educational system can do for the students?

Bhupendra points out that other countries might see things differently, however in reality, he says, in the Nepalese context, education is for getting a job. He refers to a text he has read; *Education is for life not for livelihood* (interview 2, May 2016). But, he concludes, education is for finding employment ("jaagiir khanu"). He continues to address the issue of segregation in education, arguing the need for an education that caters to all kinds of students, from all walks of life and backgrounds. Education should have relevance to students' lives, but as he states, education in the context does not bring change in people's lives. Another aspect of education in the Nepalese context is the gap between the conditions people live in and modernity. Education should bridge the gap, he says. *"Before people believed in evil spirits, in modern society people don't accept that explanation, society is dynamic, and education must be a bridge between the two",* he argues. "*Education needs to give people a vision for the future, both on a personal level as well as on a societal level"* (interview 2, May 2016). His students have dropped out of education previously, he wants to see some kind of transformation in them, however simple, even by the way they dress to their attendance in school. A student of his had once told another teacher that Bhupendra had never hit him, however, the student had said that he was scared by the sight of Bhupendra, nonetheless the student had said that he would bow to Bhupendra's feet, in respect. This particular student had been expelled from his previous school and was described as hopeless. Since Bhupendra heard this comment from another teacher, he took it to heart, he says. *"This verifies my existence and I feel proud"* (interview 2, May 2016). He explains that society is in a transitional phase; *"We can't be totally traditional, and we can't be totally modern"* (interview 2, May 2016). In the classroom he says; *"Before we taught by beating the student, (piti, piti paDayo), now democratic practices have been raised in education, social justice issues have been raised"* (interview 2, May 2016). However, as he argues, it is not enough just to raise the issues, there has to be an environment to implement it in, including the children's home environment. As to his involvement in the private sector of education, he points to the importance of values in running a business; *"It is not bad to run a business, however to misuse business is wrong, parallel to business are social responsibilities,*

to use business to eradicate bad practices in society, it becomes more than a business" (interview 2, May 2016).

5.4.7 Narrative characterisitics

Bhupendra is an articulate and well-educated man, capable of making a variety of responses to the interview questions. The notion of being good with numbers featured as a central theme in his stories of his formal education. Additionally, his talent for speech has enabled him to establish contacts and good reputation in society. The knowledge and skills needed for teaching and administration were featured in his formal education and extra school activities. Although his identity in politics was important in the way in which he told his story, the plot that organized his story had more to do with his experience with teaching as a way to use his talents and a way to earn a living. When he got involved in teaching and the management of an educational institution his life got direction and purpose. To some extent his narratives were theorized by the way he caters to drop out students to make the question of market orientation in education more meaningful. In this sense it can be said that his approach is a justification of earning a living from the market by means of offering education to student who had failed in mainstream education. His stories serve to prove some line of explanation for his choices. When talking of his dealings with the students in his school, he refers to his studies of appreciative inquiry to explain the importance of positive reinforcement in teaching and learning. He relates this approach to more recent right based and child centered approaches to teaching entering into the society. While on the other hand, he refers to culture and society and traditional education when having to enforce negative reinforcement to guide and council students.

The plot in Bhupendra's story remained relatively stable, the recognition of his core identity was the outcome of a learning process. With Bhupendra the sense of direction emerged when he joined a private educational institution as a means for earning, which, from then on, became his main reference for reflection. It is clear that reflection has played an important part in his life, by what he does for a living and his choice of topic for his Master study. Stories of contradictory nature gives insight into the nature of Bhupendra's reflections. ("*These are contradictory experiences to the human rights approaches*" (interview 1, March 2015). He found reading the transcripts of his life story to be inspirational and expressed that he only knew of famous people who had their biography written. In considering the outcome of his life and work he referred to a colleague who had told of how a student had valued his approach in education. Bhupendra has managed to overcome some of the constraints of society with his capacity for reflection and evaluation in the opportunities that have risen in his life to develop

his narrative. His story of failing the army test and having to find work elsewhere, appears to have made him able to reconstruct his life. Within private tutoring Bhupendra's aspirations evolved and the person he might be in the field has become more ambitious. The values that frame his enterprise reveal a normative and ethical stance form which he evaluates his life and work from. From his experiences of positive encounters with teachers and the community there are traceable lines to his belief in positive inquiry in education. In stories of later events in his school, when dealing with students who misbehaved, Bhupendra demonstrates a more traditional authoritative approach. These experiences of balancing between the new and the traditional has given him a confidence and self –assurance in adapting to new circumstances. This learning has translated into action to make decisions at important parts of school life. It is in the response to such events that the significance in understanding the action potential of Bhupendra's story lies. This has been the means for how he has lived and worked as a teacher in a society in transition.

6.0 Discussion and contextual considerations

6.1 Introduction

The discussion and contextual considerations emerged from the empirical data to present a perspective to further examine the teachers' narratives. One of the purposes of the discussion of the Nepalese context is to try to frame the study within the teachers' socio-historical context, while also recognizing that these ideologies and policies are refracted in personal ways, focusing on both structure and individual agency.

This chapter outlines considerations of context related to the research questions and the conceptual framework that has grown out of the data. Over the course of the study, major revisions to the text and the theoretical approach of the enquiry were undertaken. The examination of the empirical data shows signs of a progression related to the structure of the study and possible theoretical approaches. The initial understanding and interpretation of the text has had to be revised and developed in response to the inadequacy of western theoretical concepts when considering parts of the material, while also viewing other parts of the material from a set of different perspectives.

Ideologies, like the Maoist movement and the human rights approaches of EFA, have left a particular mark on the socio-political processes in the historical traditional Hindu social setting in Nepal. The life histories of teachers appear to reveal how individuals that have lived and worked in a predominantly Hindu society have related to the Maoist ideology and uprising and the EFA movement that have entered their society. Subsequently, the decision in this study to focus on aspects of the social phenomena of change and stagnation grew out of a combination of the life story data and the literature that was used as supporting documentation. All the teacher participants of this study reflect on efforts to change their society. Some highlight the impact the Maoist uprising has had on their life and work, and others describe how they understand and interpret global educational policies. Krishna's story is, however, the exception, as he seems to be mostly concerned with the importance of Hindu education in itself. Thus, it became somewhat empirically apparent that processes of change in society had come to occupy

a prominent part of the stories and affected the historical documentation of the society through which they were told.

Similarly, in the background looms a concern with the foundational issue of poverty that Rabina's portrayal exemplifies, and apprehension regarding the status of Hindu religion in terms of the analysis of subjective experiences of social action to which most of the teacher participants refer. The life stories reveal the apparent hope amongst ordinary people for living conditions to improve, yet the stories also disclose how people have been subdued in the name of ideological visions of a better world. The phenomena of hope for change and better living conditions are tangible in most of the life histories presented in the study. However, there is also disappointment associated with the stagnation of society. The stories show how people mobilize efforts to participate in movements for change for a better society, like in Sita's case, but they find that these processes are diverted, or taken over, by the powerful interests of the elite. Sita points to how these processes tend to revert to traditional hierarchical social structures and lead to corruption. The interpretations are presented in terms of power relationships located in the deep-seated corruptive and bureaucratic practices of the political power of the urban elite.

In the following, teachers' stories of action will be discussed in relation to context in order to combine a view from below with a focus on structural strategies within society that might lead towards a meeting ground where action and theory are discussed (Goodson, 2008). As was presented, it seems that how the teachers made judgments about the Maoist uprising or the EFA movement suggests that they are describing a phenomenon of a civilization being impacted by new ideas of critical thinking and human rights for the individual, set within traditional hierarchical social structures. In particular, these two ideologies represent efforts to change (in this case, the traditional Hindu society); however, they are described as partially failing to make any real impact on society as a whole. Thus, over time there has developed a need to distinguish between ambitions to influence and change the context through the Marxist movement of the Maoists and the EFA reforms founded on western concepts of equality and democracy, and Nepal's Hindu cultural heritage.

While acknowledging the vast amount of potential theoretical approaches through which to view teachers' lives and work in Nepal, the empirical data discloses a particular apprehension regarding the social transitions experienced by the informants. The changes appearing in society, along with the underlying continuity of Hindu traditional social forms reflected in the life histories of teachers, have been influential in the selection of Karl Popper's theoretical

analysis and the formation of the discussions and considerations of the framework of the context. The two ideologies of the Maoists (Marxism) and the EFA movement, that have been highlighted in the data, will be viewed as founded on western concepts, while the Hindu society will be considered as grounded in a different worldview. Therefore, distinctions will be made regarding how one might view the Maoist and EFA models.

Based on the western origins of these ideologies, the Maoist/Marxist and the EFA models will be examined using a theoretical framework developed by Karl Popper. The reason for using Popper's framework is that his approach understands ideologies as phenomena and can be used to determine whether ideologies have the capacity to provide universal answers to social development. Karl Popper's socio-philosophical analysis in his book, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (2002), describes the character of ideologies as having tendencies of being both liberating and/or oppressive, by way of open and closed social forms. The open and closed social forms, he describes, might shed some light on the foundations and aims of particular ideologies entering the Hindu society found in the teacher narratives presented in this study. It should be mentioned that Popper's theories were developed in a western context; nonetheless, it is interesting to see how ideologies aiming at more equality might be viewed from a western theoretical perspective in order to study their success or failure.

6.2 Karl Popper and *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (2002)

Karl Popper's book, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (2002), sketches some of the difficulties faced by civilization when transitioning from tribal societies towards more open societies, when the critical powers of the people are set free. Popper maintains that these transitions have made it possible for the rise of revolutionary movements that often revert to totalitarianism, mainly because rulers and philosophers can turn against the possibilities of democratic social reconstruction.

Popper defends the cause of democracy and criticizes those who he believes were among the main intellectual enemies of democracy: Plato, Marx and Hegel. As controversial as his interpretations of Plato, Marx and Hegel may be, many critics would agree with his rejection of the collectivistic herd instinct and the demand for strong charismatic leaders (Armbrüster & Gebert, 2002). The concept of open/closed social forms emerges from Popper's criticism of ideologies and makes a point of describing what should be avoided in social transitions. His main aim is to reveal the enemies of democracy and describe how patterns of thinking can lead to closed forms of society, rather than attempting to describe procedures for how to create open

forms of society. An open society, from Popper's perspective, constitutes a society where critical powers of people emerge (Popper, 2012, p. 218). His notion proposes that 'closed' patterns of thinking are adverse to more open, liberating social forms (Popper, 2002, p. 190). The concept of open and closed societies presupposes, however, western concepts of democracy as open social forms and collectivistic ideas of not questioning ultimate truths as closed social forms.

In the following part, I investigate how Popper's concepts of open and closed social forms might be used as a point of reference in order to highlight how apparently large-scale movements for change and development have not had a significant impact on Nepalese society. First, a brief presentation of the background to Popper and *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (2002).

6.2.1 The context of Popper

Popper is for the most part associated with the falsification principle, which implies his scepticism of universal theories. His book, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945/2002), was first published after the Second World War and the division of Europe into eastern and western parts. According to Popper, these societies paved the way for patterns of thinking through which collectivism and the possibility of ultimate truths are highlighted. Popper points to the unintended consequences of ideologies and policies in social life. His book has become well known outside of academia, particularly in the realm of politics; however, in western social and political sciences there is a disagreement as to its relevance. Although, some would argue that problems of closedness are always a matter of concern (Armbrüster & Gebert, 2002).

Popper argues that what we need are open societies, in which those who are affected by policies can criticize them and their rulers. In closed societies, rulers are immune to criticism and have an attitude of knowing what is best for the people; but, as Popper argues, the rulers do not know what is best, since many things cannot be known. He argues that in an open society, rulers should engage in activities that can be closely monitored, and they should be prepared to listen to criticism and subsequently revise their policies in the light of what has been learned through a continuous process. In that sense, the open society is characterized by the ability of the people in it to criticize the policies of the rulers, along with the rulers' willingness to take these criticisms seriously and act on them. For Popper, openness does not refer to the openness of institutions alone, but to the mindset in which people operate in society (Popper, 2002, p. 218).

Although the open society has never been fully realized, and might be viewed as a utopia, an open society would most likely have its foundations in democratic traditions.

As presented by former Czech president, Vaclav Havel, in the preface of the book, Popper's daring ideas on politics have had a particular impact on parts of the world that might be characterized as having traditions of closed societies, such as in Eastern Europe (see preface, Havel in Popper, 2002, p. xi). Armbrüster and Gebert maintain that the idea of moving towards an age of an open society is read with a certain hope and optimism (Armbrüster & Gebert, 2002). Popper assumes that people tend to favour their collectivistic instinct, which he believes could subvert the struggle for freedom in a society. He is seemingly doubtful of scholars who are in favour of large-scale collectivistic social planning founded in the knowledge accumulated throughout history, and argues that the unintended side effects are possible to curtail (Popper, 2002, p. 464).

Those who claim to be able to predict the inevitable course of history by understanding the historical developments of the past, he states, might just be instrumental in bringing about what they prophesy. However, they must cease to prophesy and instead become the makers of their fate (Popper, 2002, p. 556). Popper argues that to hold a society together, you need a tradition of criticism, based on respect for the individual and free speech. In his work, Popper argues that civilizations aiming at equity and freedom have often been betrayed by intellectual leaders (Popper, 2002, p. 281). Their influence is liable to discourage those who fight totalitarianism, as Popper implies in the introductory chapter, which might be a reaction against the strain of our civilization and its expectations for personal responsibility.

Popper (2002) argues that tribalists who hold that certain things are taboo, and that certain things cannot be questioned, are the primitive enemies of the open society (p. 95). The more sophisticated enemies of the open society are intellectuals like Plato, Hegel and Marx (Popper, 2002, p. 279). However controversial, his criticism points to how some intellectuals profess to have a universal knowledge of how society should be run, and how such intellectuals impose this idea on everybody else.

Plato, Marx and Hegel, Popper argues, present similar approaches to an open social order, while expressing the tendencies of being closed in form. Popper's claim that Plato, Marx and Hegel were the intellectual predecessors of totalitarianism may be controversial; however, it highlights the inherent threat of societies being betrayed by intellectuals in their struggle for liberty and freedom. Armbrüster and Gerbert (2002), in reference to this point, maintain that

the threat is particularly strong from those who draw on patterns of history and seductive ideas of admiration for authority with totalitarian concepts of equality that legitimize actions.

Rather than develop a conceptual outline for an open society, Popper's approach is a defence of democracy Armbrüster and Gerbert (2002). With Popper's concern for the rise of totalitarian regimes, his analyses of these ideological systems attempt to investigate principle elements of what constitutes what he calls closed societies. Armbrüster and Gebert (2002) argue that the criticism of Plato, Marx and Hegel that Popper puts forward is mostly an expression of a passionate defence of democracy; by using a style of everyday language in line with his own demands for clear and open communication, he makes it more accessible.

Although his critics would label Popper's reproach of these icons as selective and provocative, his clear disdain for the collectivistic instinct and demands for charismatic leaders for people to follow them, stands out as a matter of continuing importance. Bearing in mind Popper's seeming antipathy for the outcome of these ideologies, the main focus borrowed from Popper's analysis, in terms of the theoretical considerations presented in this study, is how he conceptualizes the concept of open/closed.

Popper's closed and open forms of society reflect certain patterns of thought that can be categorized as follows:

- The open society constitutes a democratic society where the critical powers of people emerge and is characterized by the ability of the people to criticize the policies of the rulers.
- The closed society is seen as reflecting a pattern of thought that features a collectivistic mindset and assumes there is an ultimate truth.

In more open societies the group mentality, or herd instinct, is seen as conflicting with the need for individual freedom and liberty. Closed forms of society denote a return to what Popper describes as conformity to a way of thinking or behaving in which loyalty to one's own tribe or social group is given the highest priority. Collectivism is characterized by forms of closed thinking, in which things are not questioned, but accepted as what stabilize the collective group's well-being. However, despite acknowledging that the fundamental question is whether the individual or the collective should come first, this approach tends to view a society in which the individual is taught to serve the collective as restricting the individual's freedom. When these tendencies are enforced by intellectuals who assume a position of inhabiting ultimate

truths to be accepted collectively, people's freedom to think, respond and act in accordance with their own experiences and understanding is reduced.

6.3 Attempts to change Nepalese society

I view the Maoist model and the EFA model as having been introduced into Nepalese society in an attempt to change it, and here I will consider them from an open/closed perspective. The two categories of meta-narratives found in the life histories of teachers are seen here as founded in different cultural settings than that of a Hindu society. The rise of revolutionary movements in Nepal, like the Maoist movement, has been attributed the people's disillusionment with democratic social reconstruction and the Hindu hierarchical system (Pigg, 1992; Whelpton, 2005). On the other hand, the global policies of EFA aim to reduce poverty and promote human rights policies in society.

In the interviews, the teachers describe tendencies toward and ambivalence to freedom and coercion in the ideologies they encounter. The tendencies of these ideologies and value systems to either liberate or oppress are highlighted by way of applying the two analytical categories of open and closed. Popper's socio-philosophical analysis of ideologies as having both liberating and/or oppressive tendencies will be investigated by using his open and closed concepts, before considering the foundations of the Hindu cultural system.

I will try, in this next section, to provide a frame of reference to view the two significant ideologies that have affected teachers' narratives in this study. Popper's social philosophy of open and closed ways of thinking applied to processes of change in Nepalese society may allow for insight into whether certain ways of thinking in movements for liberty and freedom have had the tendency to regress into more authoritarian and closed social forms. While accepting that Popper's explorations were developed under different social conditions, the theoretical approach will be applied nonetheless to explore how ideologies entering traditional societies, which may appear to be open to critical thinking and individual freedom, can actually be seen as closed models.

6.3.1 The Maoist model and the open/closed perspective

The opposition between the elite, ruling in the 'old' way, and the oppressed classes, who wanted to free themselves from the 'old' way, created the conditions for revolution. In Nepal, the decision to initiate a mass uprising might not follow the prescription of a classical revolution; however, with the democratic movement came demands from ethnic groups for inclusion and equity in society (Pigg, 1992; Whelpton, 2005). The reaction of the state was, nevertheless,

insufficient to properly recognize the concerns underlying the demands. The Maoists tapped into the ethnic discontent and decided that democratic processes of holding elections could not resolve the issues of discrimination against and oppression of ethnic groups in society, thus they resorted to violence. The longstanding hegemony of one Nepalese language and the Hindu religion and culture—promoted as nation building—was perceived as suppressing other religions, languages and cultures, thereby undermining any real national unity.

In retrospect, one could speculate whether the Maoists' support of the ethnic groups represented a genuine attempt to address the issues they faced, or if it was tactic to gain political power (Thapa, 2002). However, the strategy would not have been successful if it had not been supported by the ethnic groups. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, an interesting aspect of the uprising is the fact that the leadership mostly consisted of high-caste Brahmins from the elite urban centre. This, it might be argued, was one of the contributing factors to explain why state power remained in the hands of those of high caste even after the peace agreement was made.

As outlined earlier, community development programmes gave people hope that living conditions in rural areas would be improved, thereby creating space for more open social forms. At the same time, Nepal's infrastructure and education, to some extent, improved access to urban areas, thus making people more aware of social inequalities. Similarly, political participation made people more politically aware and critical of political power struggles and their effects on destabilizing governance. As Thapa (2002) points out, during the insurgency, politically aware youth who knew that the education system was poor, were themselves afflicted by poverty, and who had little hopes of finding employment were more likely to join revolutionary forces aiming to topple the elite few.

Due to the Maoists' appeal to humanitarianism and the fight for equality, many were attracted by their stand for freedom against oppression. However, their antipathy towards violence lessened people's commitment to their cause in the end. The increasing attacks by the Maoists in the hills swayed mainstream political parties to give the police, and later the army, wide-ranging powers against the 'terrorists', thereby expanding the insurgency ('Whose Army-Nepali Times', n.d.). Regrettably, some would argue, the king, who might have played a mediating role at that time, was killed in the royal massacre the same year.

The peace agreement in 2006 drew the Maoists into mainstream politics, but the transition was marked by power struggles between moderate and revolutionary forces, with some wanting to have access to political power while others wanted to uphold the revolutionary ideology

(Ishiyama & Batta, 2011). The effect of joining mainstream politics has been described by many as an adaption and a regression to the elite culture, signifying corruption and autocratic leadership, and a lack of democratic culture (Panday, 2012). The seizure of political power by the Maoists through violent means attracted anti-humanitarian interests to the political struggle that diverted the aims of their ideology in order to take hold of a corrupt and inefficient government. In the post-conflict context, the Maoist aim to implement inclusive practices in education that could have opened up the possibility to develop new courses of education seems to have become lost in the encounter with the closed hierarchical system, which they had professed to topple. Consequently, Nepal's government regressed to the old political power struggles amongst the elites (Panday, 2012).

The ambivalence towards returning to mainstream politics after the Maoist uprising has been perceived in some ways as joining forces with those they had set out to conquer. Thus, many would argue that by joining mainstream politics, the Maoists' failure to bring about any real change in society has led to a return to traditional social forms of conformity to a way of thinking and acting in loyalty to certain social groups (Panday, 2012). Subsequently, the Maoists have complied with a system that prioritizes the stability of certain social groups' positions, thereby pushing aside the humanitarian and critical use of reason in order to join the elite (Panday, 2012). Likewise, resorting to violence in the quest for change points to the defects that produce anti- democratic tendencies that Popper (2002, p. 414) highlights as going against open forms of society. These ambiguities have played into the hands of the Maoist movement in Nepal as an offensive weapon by leading to anti-democratic tendencies. As we see in the Nepalese context, compromising certain of the Maoists' revolutionary aims, in exchange for entering into politics immediately stopped the violence.

Taking Popper's open/closed perspective, the Maoists' goal of a less nationalistic curriculum that would highlight local participation and the rights of marginalized groups was a call for more open forms of education, in terms of Popper's view of individual freedom and critical thinking. The 'new democratic schools' discouraged competition among the students and emphasize vocational training and local production, thus steering the education system away from what had been traditionally elitist. The rights-based, inclusive educational strategies forwarded in the Maoist curriculum represented the opportunity to develop different courses of education, on some levels compatible with the EFA aims of equity and inclusion. However, there appears to have been little investigation into what the Maoist policies might have added

to the traditional educational system or to the new global policies in relation to what might be educationally desirable within the given context.

Rather, the differences in how the various political parties and the donors envision education have created tensions between these centres of power, closing the door to any critical debate over open forms of education. One reason for this might also have been the donor agencies' narrow focus on schooling as a technical problem, neglecting the opportunity to take a broader view of education by embracing cultural and pedagogical perspectives, as proposed in some ways by the Maoists (Shields & Rappleye, 2008). The missed opportunity might be said to relate to the way in which schools were used by the Maoists as an ideological battleground during the uprising, where they instigated tensions and violence ("Whose Army-Nepali Times," n.d.).

As we have seen, in times of change, the instability that these changes provoke may lead to a fear of freedom, and what Popper (2002) describes as closed social forms, thereby creating a situation where notions of stability seem more attractive than those of freedom. The hardships and instability associated with freedom demands new responsibilities for people venturing into unknown territories, creating a space whereby leaders can use the sentiments of fear and instability to undermine freedom as a way to return to an authoritarian social order. As an example, we have seen in the Maoists' transition into mainstream politics that fear of instability can lead to consensus, mostly for the sake of stability than for the needs of the people.

However, this argument could possibly divert attention away from the bigger issue of the fundamental mistrust of people's critical thinking capabilities by the groups in power. The predisposition to mistrust people was enforced by the government and donor agencies' tendencies to assume a position of possessing ultimate truths to be accepted collectively. If Marxist ideology were to generate an open society, as Popper describes, it would assume a dynamic between the leaders and the people based on trust in people's critical thinking capabilities.

Seen from a closed perspective, it could be argued that the Maoist model failed because of its escalating use of violence and ultimately succumbed to the traditional elite power structure. However, the open/closed approach to understand the failure of the Maoist model in the context of the teachers in this study would perhaps miss a crucial point—the failure of the Maoist ideology to resonate with the traditional Hindu foundational structure of society. Many appear

to have complied with superficial elements of Maoist ideology while maintaining a sub-culture that was deeply rooted in Hindu ideology.

From a western, democratic and human rights perspective it might be argued that Marxist ideology represents that of a closed social order, because of its tendency to conform to a collectivistic mindset and ideas. However, its failure to make any real impact on Nepalese society seems to be less rooted in its aim for more equality, and more as a result of its collectivistic approach. The cause of the Maoists' failure to have any real impact on society could be said to lie within parameters outside of an open/closed perspective, based on their democratic ambitions that differ from a western perspective of equality.

When trying to understand what might resonate with or be rejected by the ideological foundations of a Hindu society and a Hindu educational philosophy, other perspectives will be investigated in the following sections. First, the global policies of EFA that impinge on the lives and work of teachers will be examined from an open/closed perspective, similarly arguing that the concepts are used within a cultural framework of western approaches.

6.3.2 The EFA model

If we now turn to the context of global educational policies in this investigation, the role of aid agencies is vital to understanding change and schooling in Nepal. In the upsurge and aspiration of developing universal primary education, Nepal increasingly diverged from its own visions of education to conform to global influences. As Bhatta argues, after Nepal committed to the EFA and the Millennium Development Goals, these global targets became the central reference point for developing educational policies (see Bhatta, 2011, p. 22). After 1990, Nepal committed to the World Declaration on Education for All, which marks a shift from the local to the international in terms of gaining support from the United Nations and the World Bank. The global policy reforms pursue the aim of equity and access to education by reducing illiteracy and universalizing inclusive, child-friendly primary education. Education policies have increasingly been adjusted in accordance with the agendas of international donors.

Some argue that the institutionalized "development" of education in Nepal has primarily been led by western development institutions and must be understood within the framework of post-colonialism (Carney & Rappleye, 2011, p. 3). Since the 1950s, the education sector has been a significant recipient of aid to finance development programmes. As Bhatta (2011) argues, the agencies have increasingly become powerful and monolithic and they more or less dictate the implementation process of global educational agendas. As a result, important decision-making

regarding Nepal's educational development is limited to aid agencies and high-level officials in the Ministry of Education, which means that few people at the school level can effect change. In reality, Bhatta (2011) argues, it is only an illusion that the government has any ownership of the agenda, because the content has been pre-determined and transmitted into the system by powerful aid agencies. The growing use of pressure by aid agencies to ensure the Ministry of Education's conformity has resulted in national development plans being produced through "substantial negotiations with aid agencies within the parameters of the global education targets" (Bhatta, 2011, p. 23).

EFA is a result of the cooperation of various organizations, specifically the World Bank and human rights agencies, like the UN, and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. This collaboration has created an educational policy flow that mixes marked, human rights, learning and juridical logics. As described by Steiner-Khamsi (2014), the phenomenon of lending and translating foreign policies, referred to as "policy borrowing", indicates transferring "best practices" and analysing the impact of such practices on policies (p. 154). From this point of view, the World Bank, OECD and international organizations engage in the policy borrowing of best practices, while researchers are concerned with the analysis of such cross-national educational transfers (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p. 154). Nevertheless, Steiner-Khamsi argues that policy borrowing is always selective—choosing particular policy agendas that are closest to the social logic, and attaching local meaning to the global policy (see Steiner-Khamsi, 2014, p. 156). The policy borrowing groups, such as the World Bank, OECD and international organizations, borrow concepts and arguments from each other, creating a mixture of logics. The global educational policies are thus bound up by a fusion of marked and human rights logics, prioritizing new public management and individualized notions of rights. As Autio puts forward, these global educational policies advocate standardization, teaching to the test and accountability in combination with concepts of child rights and learning-friendly approaches (Autio, 2014).

An example of how the EFA visions have been operationalized can be found in the toolkit *Embracing Diversity: Toolkit for Creating Inclusive, Learning-Friendly Environments (ILFA)(UNESCO,2005)*. In 2004, UNESCO offered a 'universal EFA design' for teachers in the Global South to emphasize the importance of inclusive education, and to give them user-friendly, practical tools to ensure the EFA aims were met (Harris, Miske, & Attig, 2004, pp. 1–2). The ILFA toolkit was presented as practical and user-friendly methods for teachers working in diverse classrooms and communities (UNESCO, 2005, pp. 1–2). A similar toolkit has been

developed and addressed to suit a Nepalese context (Kafle, Tiwari, Poudel, Pant, & Prasad, 2007). Such toolkits use a step-by-step approach, reflecting a belief that teachers will be able to replicate the methods relying on a shared conviction of following child-friendly approaches. The 'universal design' of the toolkits implies a principle held by UNESCO, that by following these methods, a child- friendly school environments can be 'transmitted' to all. By giving teachers procedures to how they can implement child-friendly education, the one-size-fits-all methodology is based on ideas of human rights and 'what works' particularities, operationalized into best practices. Similarly, the booklet design presents the traditional or local as being wrong in comparison to the EFA as right, thereby leaving little room for alternative courses of action. Since the EFA global targets became the central reference point for developing educational policies in Nepal, one might argue that teachers have implicitly been held accountable by EFA standards.

In another example, a pilot study was carried out by the Finnish Embassy on behalf of the Ministry of Education in Nepal, entitled: *Understanding School Processes in Nepal: A School Level Status Study of Policy and Practices of School Sector Reform Program* (SSRP). The report was designed to report on SSRP activities on a school level (Parajuli et al., 2012). The SSRP is based on the EFA principles of the right to education, gender parity, inclusion and equity (SSRP, 2009, p. 2). The pilot study revolved around different aspects of policy provisions in the local context, with the aim of improving school processes. According to the report, local stakeholders were not acquainted with the provisions and the researchers claim that there seemed to be confusion and apprehension towards the policy provisions:

> local school actors have not internalized the policy in provisions, and there is misunderstanding regarding the intents and the procedures of different activities. More critically they are found not very serious and enthusiastic in understanding those provisions; and thus making their implementation problematic. (Parajuli et al., 2012, p. 18)

The lack of relevance of the school programmes explains teachers' indifferent attitudes towards the policy provisions according to the report, even though the teachers claimed that the main barrier was the lack of government support (Parajuli et al., 2012, p. i). Throughout the report, the local stakeholders are reported to be more or less bound up in the traditional ways. For example, the schools mainly focus on infrastructure, the parents focus on traditional examinations, and the policy documents emphasize the importance of learning environments.

The report also points out that teachers talk about child-centred learning, but in practice rely on delivering lectures (Parajuli et al., 2012, p. 19).

These reports assume an attitude that there should be a shared agreement and conviction towards the policy programmes, since the lack of implementation of policies are overall explained by the local "bleak situation" (Parajuli et al., 2012, p. i) and the stakeholders' traditional ways. The researchers call for a more mutual and appropriate accountability governance system (Parajuli et al., 2012). The interpretation of the report is that the Nepalese teachers are viewed by the researchers as "change agents", however without any government mandate to raise their voices to improve service delivery (Parajuli et al., 2012, p. 20). The focus of the pilot study is, nonetheless, on the lack of implementation, not evaluating if the policy programme's aims of rights based education, inclusion, gender parity and equity is recognizable in a Nepalese context. Teacher's responses are interpreted for the most part as due to "laziness" or a lack of understanding.

Descriptions provided by independent researchers, such as Bhatta (2011), Bista (2008) and Carney and Rappleye (2011), take a different approach. Bhatta's (2011) research shows that educational development decisions have mainly been made by aid agencies and high-level Ministry of Education (MOE) officials, who have then simply informed the stakeholders of the outcomes. This cooperation has been characterized as the Ministry of Education being accountable to the donor agencies, rather than to teachers, students and parents, thereby creating an illusion of ownership of the programmes. However, the government holds local communities accountable for the implementation processes (Bhatta, 2011, p. 15). Bhatta's reflections support the findings of the ILFA toolkit and the pilot study report, in that teachers are merely instructed and seen as deliverers of the EFA policy.

The uncritical adoption of imported systems and values within the modern educational programmes must be seen in their historical context and as part of the hierarchical structure of society. Thus, a policy programme, like the ILFA toolkit, is likely to be accepted because of the social hierarchical structure of Nepal. As mentioned earlier, local social anthropologist, Bista (1991), argues that "it is not principally the presence of foreign aid that is corrupting, but fatalism and ascriptive values and readiness to accept these hierarchical systems that is the legacy of the hierarchic caste attitude" (p. 148). From this perspective, in some aspects the hierarchical system seems to resonate with the top-down way in which the EFA is promoted in the system, and the neoliberal 'new public management'.

The EFA policies have been described as a western 'model', failing to recognize the national local context (Vorapanya & Dunlap, 2014). Similarly, the implementation of the EFA goals has been labelled arrogant and dictating national educational policy (Le Fann, 2014, pp. 45–46). The conclusions of both the pilot study and the independent researchers on the lack of consideration of local realities in the EFA policy's implementation, also correspond with the *2011 Education for All Global Monitoring Report*. This report shows that barriers to achieving EFA goals had been largely underestimated, and that the 'translation' of idealistic worldviews had failed to match real-world experience (CapEFA, 2011).

In evidence-based policy and practice, 'knowledge' is rationalized into a form of transportable commodity, thereby instrumentalizing teaching into a mere delivery service, and turning school quality into a question of the effectiveness, transparency, standardization and accountability of the result and progress of the 'delivery'.

6.3.3 EFA model and the open/closed perspective

As argued by Popper (2002), these kinds of unintended consequences of policies are associated with authoritarian systems of operationalization. What we see in this description of the Nepalese context of global influences on education is the attitude of policy makers professing to have universal knowledge of how societies should be run, and the belief that this can be imposed on systems and people. Popper does not believe in large-scale universal ideologies, and argues that to hold a society together, you need a tradition of criticism based on respect for the individual and the ability to exercise free speech. His ardent reproach of collectivism and the idea of conforming to ideas of ultimate truth is based on their curtailing democracy.

Thus, returning to the open/closed perspective, the exploration of policy and research documents reveals paradoxical tendencies to want to open up to new educational forms, while at the same time operating in closed standardized forms. On one level, in the EFA aims of inclusion and human rights, human beings are regarded as capable of changing their environment, attitudes and behaviour. People are perceived as capable of striving for justice and equity. Diversity is embraced on both individual and community levels and is not seen as an obstacle to development or change. This suggests that an objective, decontextualized truth about what 'works' can be 'pre-ordered' and discovered, as well as transported and applied in other settings. Viewed from a Popper perspective, closed ways of operating are revealed in the conformity to collectivistic ideas and assumptions of what Popper might call 'ultimate truths' for all to follow. These assumptions seem to enforce the legacy of hierarchical structures and

prohibit any recognition of other perspectives, thereby promoting standardization, instead of embracing diversity and inclusion.

By viewing the EFA model from an open/closed perspective, the closedness appears in EFA when the space for critical thinking and individual freedom is reduced through conformity to universalistic ideas of ultimate truths for education. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier, the open/closed perspective assumes a western, democratic, human rights perspective, implying anticipations and hopes of democracy. Following Popper's argument, the more sophisticated enemies of the open society, it could be argued, have become the policy makers of global architectures who profess to have universal knowledge of how the educational system should be run, believing that the blueprint can be imposed universally.

As was argued in relation to the Maoist model, if the EFA approach were to generate an open society, as described by Popper, it would require a social capacity to interact based on assumptions of equality and democracy. Both the Marxist and the EFA approaches would thus require a foundation of a western world view in terms of the development of schooling.

In this respect, Popper's concepts of open and closed social forms lack direct relevance when considering the cultural grounding of a Hindu society. Viewing a Hindu society using a set of predefined western concepts would assume a similar worldview that would undermine the cultural grounding of this investigation. Therefore, as argued, Popper's concepts of open/closed should be used to view the phenomena of Marxist and human rights ideologies entering a Hindu society

The theoretical considerations regarding ideologies entering Nepalese society do not propose that any theory can grasp the social world or change it in any single way. Thus, noting the dichotomy that an open/closed concept presents, and also realizing that the two open and closed variables of the ideologies under investigation cannot fully describe the complexity of social processes. From the open/closed perspective, it might appear that the standardized global educational models have led to a closed model in their failure to encompass local experience and knowledge. One might, however, assume that given the hierarchical structure of Nepalese society, the social structure would facilitate top–down standardized implementations that would impact and change the traditional way of teaching. As examined earlier, research shows that these programmes have had little impact on classroom teaching. The lack of widespread change in classroom teaching seems to be explained by the policies' failure to resonate with the social grounding of Nepalese society.

The following presents an attempt to highlight an alternative approach to the above by using local Hindu perspectives.

6.4 Hindu foundational perspectives

Bearing in mind the complexity of social processes in light of religious and cultural values, this study of teacher narratives in Nepal is particularly interested in how Hinduism has set the stage for educational development. This study is concerned with highlighting individual experiences of social processes related to Hindu culture and interpretations of the global influence on education. In this context, it is increasingly significant to consider the social and cultural environment that can be regarded as the basis for changes in society. In terms of Nepal's cultural base, Hinduism might be said to have established the foundational structures of how the western influence has been perceived. It becomes somewhat apparent that the Maoist uprising and the EFA model presupposed this common foundation of a Hindu cultural system.

The study explores how individuals manoeuvre in society and proposes to elaborate on the thought patterns that create the foundational basis for individuals to make judgments about the ideologies that they encounter. Teachers living and working in a predominantly Hindu setting seem to embrace, reject or remain somewhat indifferent to the ideologies that are part of the environment. This study examines what constitutes the social and cultural basis for what is taken for granted by the teacher participants in their encounters with movements that have attempted to change their traditional way of life.

When investigating teachers' lives and work in a Hindu cultural setting, the concepts of open/closed are inadequate to evaluate a Hindu model. To adopt a concept of open/closed to describe Hindu culture would imply interpreting the Hindu society using a western set of concepts. This would presuppose a Hindu model becoming *open* by the way of people's ability to criticize authority and becoming democratic in form, while becoming *closed* would assume an orientation towards a collectivistic mindset regarding assumptions of ultimate truth.

Describing the Hindu culture as closed, according to a set of western theoretical concepts, would imply taking a western and external perspective on teachers' lives and work, with the expectations of a democratic social perspective. Therefore, applying an open/closed perspective to a Hindu worldview would only reveal the inadequacies of these two concepts. Subsequently, it would assume interpreting a Hindu model according to western ambitions of democracy to explore whether the ambitions were achieved, thereby undermining the aim of the study, which is to develop localized theoretical perspectives considering a Hindu worldview. An attempt to

understand teachers' perceptions of life and work in a Hindu cultural setting entails that the conceptual framework for investigating teachers' perspectives should be sought within a Hindu worldview.

The local theoretical (cosmological) perspective of Hindu society takes a localized viewpoint to investigate teachers' perspectives in Nepal in their encounters with global western ideologies. These kinds of perspectives are situated within a worldview that considers concepts like the following:

- material/spiritual
- impure/pure
- sukkha/dukkha
- inferior/superior
- individual/collective

I will examine the internal characteristics of Hindu society in Nepal and look at how Hindu traditions of education might foster tendencies towards inferior/superior, material/spiritual clean/unclean and individual/collective perspectives. The concepts found in Hindu cosmology are presented below in a brief outline to create a basis for viewing the empirical data of this study. The purpose of outlining some basic concepts in Hindu cosmology is to establish the foundational perspectives through which to analyse how teachers judge the new educational models.

6.4.1 The Hindu material/spiritual perspective

The sacred texts of the Hindu dharma were handed down, transmitted and amplified by the high-caste Brahmins who were the established guardians and teachers of tradition and dharma (Brockington, 1996, p. 54). Dharma is a term that encompasses much more the term 'religion' in the western sense. Hindu dharma appears to have influenced almost all faith systems in the region. Although colonial rule in the Indian sub-continent destabilized faith systems and weakened oriental characteristics, Nepal seems to have maintained its identity with Vedic traditions. Because of Nepal's remote location, and the fact that it did not fall under the British Raj, its perpetuation of the Vedic tradition has been strong. Hindu dharma, in the local context, is defined as a system that governs the universe in its entirety. Dharma is received as a "code of conduct" that ensures harmony between life and nature and salvation in this life and the next (Awasthi, 2004, p. 85). Dharma is defined as the law of nature. People believe that everything in the cosmos has its own system. The dharma of the sun is to give light, the dharma of the soil

is to give growth, the dharma of the farmer is to supply food and the dharma of the guru is to enlighten pupils (Awasthi, 2004, p. 89).

Gurus, predominantly Brahmins, were considered to be the guardians of dharma and intermediaries between the this world and the spirit world (Manu, verse 155). In a traditional Hindu society, gurus hold a central place in the Vedic tradition and "their superiority within the caste hierarchy depends on their traditional command of religious learning as given by their monopolistic right to teach, study and recite the authoritative Vedas" (Fuller, 2004, p. 18).

A key concept in Hindu education was that of brahmacharya (a self-disciplined life), which is a time for education, emphasizing yoga and meditation as part of a system of practices with the aim of attaining moksha, or salvation (Kashalkar-Karve, 2013). The individual was seen as an essential part of the whole to establish relations between puruswam (person) and prakritim (nature). The four purusarthas, which are key concepts in Hinduism, that lead people in the right direction are: dharma (moral values and an ethical life), artha (material prosperity, economic values), kama (desire, often implies sexual desire, also passion and the senses) and moksha (peace, liberation and self-actualization). Dharma, artha, kama and moksha are claimed to be the four goals of human life in Hindu philosophy.

6.4.2 The Hindu pure/impure perspective

As was mentioned earlier, the pure/impure position of superiority forces some groups in society to depend on the other caste groups' efforts to maintain their welfare, signifying in some ways a universal struggle between the privileged and the less privileged. In some ways, the struggle signifies the constant schism between nature and culture, where the unfortunate are left with the physical labour and hardship of nature to enable the more fortunate to cultivate themselves away from the hardships of nature. To acknowledge this schism would mean to challenge deep-seated religious belief systems, in particular in relation to the rigidity of hierarchical principles of caste and group relations.

Traditionally, in Hindu society education was seen as the prerogative of the high castes as a means for guiding the others in society. Education of the high castes was directed at the soul, which in turn determined self-control, economic abstinence and purity. In his work, *Homo Hierarchicus*, Louis Dumont (1970) argues that the fundamental principle of the hierarchical caste system is the opposition between the pure and the impure. Although some might exaggerate the prominence of the concept of pure/impure, ritual purity and pollution is indeed of utmost importance for many Hindus in the Nepalese context. The Brahmins are considered

the purest caste, and the Sudhras the most polluted, and all those in between are ranked according to their purity.

6.4.3 The Hindu sukkha/dukkha perspective

Elaborating on the spiritual/material perspective, concepts such as sukkha/dukkha signify how individuals might situate their lives in terms of happiness and hardship, as related to spiritual and material welfare, in a Hindu worldview. Singh et al.(2017) refer to studies that distinguish between the concept of happiness in a western context, as associated with a high positive affect (enthusiasm), and in the East Asian context, as more related to low arousal of positive affect (peacefulness, tranquillity), thus pointing to the meaning of happiness as varying across cultures. By attempting to define happiness according to the concepts of sukkha/dukkha, they state that something experienced as favourable is sukkha, and unfavourable experiences are considered dukkha. Along these lines, the concepts are defined in various ways in ancient Hindu texts, from short-lived happiness to eternal happiness, physical/psychological happiness and happiness associated with higher levels of consciousness. The argument being that in Hindu philosophy, happiness is not something you pursue, but it is part of the process of life that you might discover by way of higher consciousness. Dukkha is thus associated with afflictions caused by false knowledge, egoism, attraction and clinging to life (Singh, Raina, & Sahni, 2017). Unhappiness is associated with the physical and the physical environment, or the acts of Gods. Consequently, one must reject material goods because material goods perpetrate pain. In general terms, it could be said that any kind of work is associated with pain (dukkha), and therefore people should avoid work and seek happiness (sukkha), but that would imply living without having to work (Bista, 1991, p. 79).

Many people situate their lives according to sukkha/dukkha when reminiscing about significant life events. In Leve's studies of women in rural areas, she points to how women refer to dukkha as suffering, illness, hunger, cold, fear, sadness, hurt and obligations of life (Leve 2007). By contrast, sukkha is seen as the opposite: good health, food, clothing, security and community. She highlights that dukkha is more than something external that impinges on someone's life, it is also what creates the conditions of action and experience. It is as if dukkha is perceived as normal and, in some ways, produces subjectivity. For women in marriage, pain and power declare themselves in a girl's life, by the way a girl has to leave the safety of her home to be given away to her husband's family, described as a transition from sukkha to dukkha. Through childbirth and hard work, women are actualized in the process of being constrained. It is by

managing the dukkha that a woman exercises agency, depending on whether she acts culturally competent in ways that are moral and tactful (see Leve, 2007, p.153).

6.4.4 The Hindu inferior/superior perspective

The caste system has become integral to the Hindu cultural system of hierarchical relationships. In the Bhagavad Gita, the Lord Krishna claims that the four castes were created by God himself based on the quality and division of labour. The caste groups are believed to have evolved during the Vedic period. Those who studied the Vedas and who taught them were Brahmins, those engaged in security were Kshatriyas, and those who engaged in various other occupations, including agriculture and looking after animals, were Vaisyas. Sudhras were the untouchables, caste-less, who handled unclean things (like dead animals). It was believed that Brahmins fulfilled their duties by gaining knowledge, and the Kshatriyas by exhibiting courage, the Vaisyas by gaining wealth and the Shudras by the virtue of their birth. From this perspective, the caste system has defined a division of labour and duty in Hindu society, and some occupations are still considered caste-specific. Although most occupations in modern sectors of the economy are caste-less, many occupations recruit disproportionately from particular castes (for example, butchers, carpenters, tailors, pottery worker, sweepers, etc.).

Although fundamental rights of all citizens of Nepal are guaranteed by the Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal (1990), Shudras, the 'untouchables', who are known as Dalits in Nepal, have in many cases still been the victims of exploitation by high-caste people around the country (Koirala, 1996). In spite of the protective legislation passed in 1990, discrimination against 'lower' castes remain deeply ingrained in social life.

The premise of the caste system is that each person is contented by fulfilling their caste duties and keeping to one's place, to ensure the stability of the whole. When caste is viewed as different parts of the body as creating a whole, the collectivistic is aligned with altruism and humanity. In order to maintain stability in the system, each caste must fulfil its duties. The traditional caste system implied that while groups of individuals experienced inequalities in the division of labour, they rendered their services to society as part of a greater body. The argument was that when fulfilling their caste obligations, people are biologically equal in some aspects, and unequal in others. Gray and Hughes (2015) state that Gandhi defended the equality of men using the reciprocal connectedness between God and all humans through Hindu thought. Accordingly, Hindu philosophy grounded Gandhi's politics, emphasizing universal equality, responsibility and interconnectedness (Gray & Hughes, 2015, p. 385). The unity of a natural

order and biological equality in the interconnectedness through God forms a pattern of thinking that connects individual equality to the superior/inferior perspective within education.

In the Hindu educational tradition, the guru is recognized as a symbol of respect and people are not supposed to question what the guru says. The fundamental belief in the guru is an institution founded in the Vedic tradition (Awasthi, 2004). Gurus are regarded as the principal source of knowledge and wisdom. Gurus established a continuum between the past and present by passing on the divine knowledge (Awasthi, 2004). Gurus knew the Vedas by heart and recited them to their pupils. According to Hindu mantras, the guru is like god, he is Brahma (creator), the guru is Vishnu (preserver) and the guru is Shiva (destroyer of evil forces). People in Nepal show great respect to their gurus, as influenced by these religious arguments.

In the traditional education system, gurukul–shiksha, neither students nor parents question what the teacher does and says. As Awasthi (2004) states, this faith has provided a basis for the rote learning in the school system in general, and gurukul–shiksha has played an important role in shaping society in conformity with the Hindu Vedic traditions that define caste roles. Within the Hindu system of learning, the Brahmins appropriated the system with the support of the ruling classes. In practice, the Brahmins, as the interpreters of religious and social laws, had ideological control and held a position of leadership in the community. In that way, the Brahmins have maintained their hold over society by depending on the passivity of the labouring classes (Acharya, 1996).

Brahmins, as gurus, continued to fill most teaching positions as the Nepalese government made an effort to expand the school system. Schools were opened to the lower castes, and learning activities, like reading and writing, became a way to identify with high-caste status. With the new globally influenced educational system, education was becoming a symbol of status in Nepal (Bista, 1991, p. 124). In many ways, education is not necessarily looked upon as a means of acquiring intellectual fortitude or technical skills. The mentality of the religious tradition, wherein education is separated from any practical application and considered useful only as a means of attaining a higher social position, is not always conducive to the pragmatic programmes proposed by development organizations (Bista, 1991, p.137).

The traditional Hindu description of a guru has been portrayed as an ideal to strive for, which reflects what the historical context and culture of Nepal perceives as important personal traits for a teacher and a guru. The Hindu concepts and texts illustrate the importance of the guru in the local context; but, as Awasthi (2004) points out, "because of increasing influence of the

west on the Nepalese education system, the traditional roles of Guru are changing and values are eroding" (p. 94). However, Raina (2002) argues, "Though the guru-shishya relationship is changing in its nature and form, still, there is something perennial about it. In many respects, the traditional nature still retains its resilience and force which has made it survive and become acceptable" (p. 195). This is echoed by Awasthi (2004): "The present practices in the Nepalese school system show that there is a tacit agreement between teachers and the community for the continuation of the *Gurukul* tradition of education" (p. 93).

Nevertheless, the collective, caste and group (*afno manche*) traditions prevail as the foundational structures of Nepalese society. The long-established traditions of the caste system still appear to be pervasive because of their connection with Hindu codes and social structures. The collective mentality of caste directs an individual's responsibility to the group, which tends to subvert individual freedom in favour of the interests of the family, group or caste. Similarly, the dominance of the Brahmin/Chhetri caste over the others has been perceived as the natural order to stabilize the whole, thereby justifying its religious and cultural position as one of serving the people through the authority given to it by the Vedas. Thus, the social order of caste and group, where people in superior positions are expected to possess ultimate knowledge to guide the others, provides immunity to criticism based on one's religious mandate or position.

The social hierarchy forms fundamental relationships in Hindu society. These relationships determine appropriate types of interaction within families and organizations in accordance with the individuals' relative superior/inferior positions. Appropriate ethical principles for a given relationship according to superior/inferior are considered in order to respect the superior, who assumes the role of resource allocator. Those who assume the role of the superior should make decisions, and those who assume the role of the inferior should adhere to the principle of duty, obedience, submission and loyalty in following the instructions of the superior (Hwang, 2001).

Major revisions of the text and of the theoretical approach in chapter 6 has been made in response to the inadequacy of western theoretical concepts when considering the cultural foundations of the study. The open/ closed perspectives from Popper's criticism of ideologies presents a way to view the Marxist movement in Nepal and also the EFA models based on the western origins of these influences. The local cultural foundations however, had to be viewed by a set of other perspectives based on a Hindu cultural heritage. In the following, a discussion of the portrayals will be presented.

7.0 Discussion of the portrayals

7.1 Introduction

The teacher portrayals offer a diverse dimension and perspective to research in the Nepalese context. The study was initiated with the intent of examining the life stories of teachers in relation to the context in which they were told. The findings necessitated a framework for discussing the data that considers teachers' understandings of context and provides a perspective to view teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency for their lives and work that is grounded in their experiences and environment. It is by investigating these potentials that we might come to understand the complexity of social forces and narrative responses and understand human agency and cultural transformation.

In the following, the conceptual framework will be examined in relation to the portrayals. Firstly, the main concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency will be revisited, then, the portrayals based on the Hindu conceptual framework will be considered. In light of the research on narrative characteristics, the portrayals included in the text will be in particular be considered based on their narrative styles. Consequently, the narratives are examined according to how the informants refract global educational policies in their cultural setting.

As referred to in chapter 4, this study has included 12 different life histories of teachers from which I have included seven in the main empirical data. To confirm the findings of this study I have in this chapter included a few quotations from the remaining empirical data. I refer to four of the other informants of this study to confirm the viewpoints emerging from the main data (p. 218, p.219, p.226, p.227, p.233, p.235). This is to highlight that the findings occur in the remaining data also. The use of quotations from the remaining data does neither interrupt or influence the core findings of the empirical chapter.

Teacher portrayals in this study include the first-hand interview data right up to the analysis that follows. As we know, no research process is without values. Analysis and interpretation will influence the study from the moment we start formulating a problem or hypothesize. Therefore, in the understanding of process, from description to analysis and conclusions, there is talk of overlapping faces, which makes it difficult to systemize and differentiate the themes completely. The analysis opens up the possibility of understanding and interpreting the data and the context in order to understand the teachers' experiences. This could consequently lead to a range of plausible answers and interpretations that are highlighted in the discussion of the

portrayals, that will to contribute to some conclusions of the research question and subsequently to pedagogical implications of the research findings.

7.2 Revisiting the main concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency

Interpretation and analysis is a process of revealing the concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency presented in the portrayals in relation to the research question. In this sense, the discussion is yet another move towards searching for meaning that entails systematic exploration. The reading of the text leads to a shift of perspective, between individual respondents' perspectives to differentiating themes and finding common elements in the narratives, which forms the foundation of what follows.

As mentioned in the conceptual framework of the study, the concepts of *ideals, beliefs and agency* are viewed as closely connected, intertwined concepts that are nonetheless differentiated by the following:

- Teacher *ideals* are considered deeply held values and visions for life and work founded in cultural heritage.
- Teacher *beliefs* constitute ideals negotiated in the uncertainty of life and work.
- Teacher *agency* is viewed as how beliefs become somewhat visible in action as a kind of reality testing, related to teachers' active contribution to shaping their lives and work. Thus, agency is viewed as a way to act on beliefs, and the interplay between beliefs and agency makes beliefs become somewhat visible in teachers' agency.

The initial finding in all the life histories of teachers appears to be the teachers' affinity to Hindu values and their traditional gurukul self. The traditional Hindu description of gurus has been portrayed as an ideal to strive for, and this ideal points to what Nepali historical context and culture maintains as an important personal trait of a teacher and a guru. These ideals are recognizable in all the teacher narratives.

When analysing the life stories of teachers in this study, the difference between ideals and beliefs emerges. The informants consider the ideal of upholding traditional Hindu values as important to maintain. However, the teachers express beliefs that are shaped by their cultural, social and political contexts, and related to pursuing aims of a more just society for the poor and marginalized. Nevertheless, when these ideals are, for various reasons, perceived as less likely to be pursued, the informants act on what is considered in this investigation, as ideals. Investigating teacher ideals, beliefs and agency is thus closely connected to how teachers define

and uphold the decisions that they make in their lives and work that might appear to contradict the beliefs that they profess.

For example, in Bhupendra's story, he upholds appreciative enquiry (a focus on the positive aspects of a student's character and capabilities) as a foundation for his work as a teacher; however, when he experiences a conflict of interest to maintain discipline in his school, he relies on more traditional, physical methods of punishment. This example shows how his ideals and beliefs might be differentiated through the story he tells. His *ideals* lean towards gurukul values that society still acts on, according to him, while at the same time he argues for and pursues 'modern' ideas of child-centred, rights-based education. His belief in the education system as a way to better one's social position through appreciative enquiry approaches becomes somewhat visible in his relentless agency to offer opportunities for 'drop out' students in society. However, in order for the students to succeed, he refers to the foundational principles of obedience, self-discipline and compliance of will, which in some ways form the basis of his success and that of his students.

The analytical position is that teachers act purposefully according to the structural, cultural and material means of the environment when confronted with the world of global educational policies. As presented in the portrayals, there seem to be three main socio-cultural influences that recur in the life and work narratives: Hindu heritage, the Maoist uprising and western educational policies. These systems reveal a distinctive context, which is in itself not extraordinary given the common overarching historical periodization of change, and the common topic of schooling and teaching.

Awasthi (2004) points to the teacher's gurukul selves and their western school culture selves. The tension between these two selves appears when teachers are faced with social challenges and have to act; then, teachers seem to have a tendency to act according to what is socially expected or enforced by their culture. For example, when Damodar finds his students to be 'slacking', his belief in gurukul values is expressed through his maintenance of teacher–student hierarchies, teacher-centred teaching and self-discipline. When he was confronted by the Maoists, he explains that he did not waver in his Hindu faith, nor in his dealings with the community. There he stood firm, secure in his mandate to guide and teach others as a teacher and a Bahun, Brahmin.

7.3 Considerations of the data from a Hindu conceptual framework

The teachers operate within a Hindu foundational structure with different ideals and values from the Marxist and EFA aims of equality and human rights. In the following, the life histories of the teachers in this study will be discussed by way of an analysis of how Hindu cultural perspectives emerge in their stories, by viewing the data through the Hindu concepts presented earlier:

- the *material/spiritual* perspective
- the *individual/collective* perspective
- the *inferior/superior* perspective
- the *impure/pure* perspective
- the *dukkha/sukkha* perspective

The two concepts of impure/pure and dukkha/sukkha, presented previously as part of the Hindu model, are less apparent in the data, although present in part of the individual life stories. Damodar refers to the impure/pure perspective in his encounter with the Maoists. One might also consider the impure/pure concept as related to education; hence, culture and the spiritual can be viewed as pure, whereas nature and the material are impure. However, these considerations are less articulated in the data, though they might be considered as part of the traditional cultural basis.

Sarala and Krishna, in particular, refer to the dukkha/sukkha perspective in their accounts of Sarala's life as a daughter-in-law and Krishna's as an orphan. These perspectives are used to contrast how their lives were with how they have become more harmonious and happy (sukkha), through their persistence and capacity to endure hardship (dukkha). The reward for persistence and endurance, or active contribution, to shaping their lives, is thus articulated by dukkha/sukkha concepts. In relation to education, one might also consider the concept of dukkha/sukkha, with the aim of education being sukkha. The sukkha found in being educated, or in enlightenment, comes from freeing oneself from the foundational dukkha of the physiological and material environment through the individual's capacity to persist and endure the hardship of education. Rabina's story of persistence and endurance to free her family from poverty somewhat embodies this perspective as well.

In the next section, the life histories will be analysed from the material/ spiritual perspective, as well from the individual/collective perspective and the inferior/superior perspective, as these

were the main recurring perspectives found in the data. These three perspectives seem to coincide with the emergent themes highlighted in the Hindu portrayals, the Maoist portrayals and the EFA portrayals echoing Hindu educational ideals of salvation, the strength of the collective and self-discipline to obey authority.

7.3.1 The material/spiritual perspective

7.3.1.1 The Hindu educational basis

As presented, traditionally the gurus were spiritual leaders who had a mandate to pass on the divine knowledge of the Vedas, which they knew by heart, from one generation to the next. In this regard, the gurus were the source of wisdom about this life and the afterlife. Within a spiritual/material perspective, the guru, as the intermediary between the world and spirituality, holds a central place of inhabiting *knowledge* to orient people towards enlightenment, and thus be liberated from physical/material things.

From this perspective the aim of education is knowledge of enlightenment (moksha).

7.3.1.2 The Hindu cultural foundations in the data

The data will thus be viewed on the basis of the mantra that most students know by heart, and to which both Damodar and Krishna refer, which describes the status of the guru: *Guru is Brahma (the creator), Guru is Vishnu (the preserver), Guru is Shiva (the destroyer of evil), Guru is God to whom everybody must bow.* The mandate of the guru is therefore to guide and teach others by the authority of the Vedas. Krishna exemplifies in his poem what he believes the traditional status and responsibility of a guru implies; what it means to be a creator, preserver and destroyer of evil in society. Based on the Hindu mantra, he states that a guru should possess qualities that create space for learning (Brahma), the guru should preserve traditions (Vishnu) and the guru should not be distraught by evil (Shiva). Krishna refers to these as the guiding principles in his life and work. Krishna articulates his affinity to Hindu values as expressed through his poetry and teaching practices. He appears to be a gifted rhetorician and a man with deep feelings for his community; these characteristics are similarly found in the story of Damodar.

As in the case of Krishna, distinctive Hindu philosophical thoughts emerge in the way Damodar argues for his role as a teacher in the community. For example, as influenced by the Hindu

scriptural emphasis on dharma (law, duty), his position is fundamentally drawn from Hindu descriptions of the dharma of a guru. The dharma of the guru is to guide and direct the sikshya, the pupil, towards the right and harmonious way of living to attain the ultimate goal of moksha, which is salvation. Like Krishna, Damodar emphasizes the importance of balancing body, mind and soul in traditional Vedic learning, and highlights the pursuit of the soul as the ultimate aim of education. In that sense, education is not predominantly a public matter, but rather an activity that begins with self-cultivation. This is not the same as the western concept of liberalism but is more of an approach to education that starts with an inward view on developing one's mind and soul in relation to the individual's obligation to society with the goal of moksha, or enlightenment.

The deconstruction of Damodar's sense of social purpose and commitment to teaching is somehow tangible in his story. He is a man who expresses his passions and has a clear mandate to teach based on his Hindu theistic ideals. One could say that Damodar judges his own success as a teacher and the failure of the global reforms based on the outcome of this central vision. Damodar finds support for his approach to teaching in Hindu thought and in the community. The heritage of the gurukul education system plays a central role in Damodar's resistance to and non-cooperation with these reforms. His talent for rhetoric and the mandate given to him by the Hindu scriptures gives him the space and authority to perpetuate the gurukul tradition of education. In particular, Damodar and Krishna highlight the importance of guiding and directing their students and their communities. One of the other informants Prakash supports this point, he told of his father's role as a teacher in the community, he said; *"my father was authoritarian and used to dictate others about what to do. People in the village would not question his decisions, nor our mother"* (interview 1, March 2015).

Damodar and Krishna's kinship to Hindu philosophy, and desire to share the ideals they find in Hindu values as guiding principles for life, are discernible in the narratives. The memory of socially and culturally inclusive school communities is a commanding storyline that transforms their passions and purpose into beliefs around which they organize their lives and work.

While the views of the teachers might vary, their roles as the intermediate of knowledge seem to dominate in their perceptions of what teachers should know and how teachers should teach. Damodar articulates his need for subject knowledge in the teacher training programmes, arguing that he has less of a need for child-centred teaching methods. He states that the teacher

trainers are inexperienced in the realities of classroom teaching, and that they do not understand the students' communities. Damodar expresses his confidence in his ability to discipline and guide the students in his community. Although he is sceptical of the content of the new curriculum, he wants to know it in order to teach his students in a way that is appropriate to their age groups.

In the Tamang community, Pemba articulates his concern for people's opportunities within the education system. He expresses feelings of responsibility to guide his community towards better and more sustainable living conditions. Similarly, he points to subject knowledge as the guiding factor for parents and teachers, when parents argue about why teachers have to teach to the test in schools. Aspects of content knowledge are echoed in Bhupendra's story as well, as he caters to the students who need extra support to pass the SLC exams. When it comes to disciplining students, he is guided by the gurukul tradition of self-discipline to attain the aims of education.

Krishna shows by example how he struggled to find the right level of content for his students in his first teaching jobs. However, as he mentions, for him, teaching eventually became much more than teaching the content of a subject; he spends most of his time talking to his students about things related to life. Damodar expresses similar views on his role as a teacher, relating teaching to social issues of poverty and caste. He views himself as someone who should guide children from marginalized backgrounds to improve their living conditions through self-discipline and endurance. Prakash, also shares these ideals and values that he finds in religion; *"It is not by studying holy books or praying at a temple that you find true religion. If the son of a poor family gets a job that is true religion. When a child drops out of school it is because he sees no advantage of education. Even if he studies he has no option than to sweep the streets and when he doesn't study he has to sweep the streets. It doesn't improve his situation. Why study then? There is no benefit of studying for the poor the way the system is now"* (interview 1, March 2015).

Teachers like Bhupendra, Sita and Rabina also spoke of their role in guiding and directing their students towards self- discipline. Chandramaya another informant supports this point;

"I know that I shouldn't beat children, but if we don't, they don't do their homework. But we have to praise them when they do. I sometimes had domestic child workers in my class and I would try to encourage them to study and told them they might be a "thulo manche", respected person, one day if they studied hard" (interview 2, March 2015).

Sarala recollects how the other male participants in the in-service teacher training programme were not motivated by the child-centred approaches presented. "*It's like being bitten by a mad dog*" (interview 1, January 2014), they had said. This implies their indignation and dislike of teacher training programmes oriented towards teachers becoming child-centred facilitators of methods and activities for learning. Their overarching sense of mission and vocation is in some ways at odds with the child-friendly reform programmes that have been implemented in the educational system. Sarala, however, makes pointed references to the importance of child-centred approaches, reflecting on how such approaches might have impacted her life if she been given the chance to learn this way as a child. She expresses satisfaction with the training programmes for teachers.

7.3.2   The individual/collective perspective

7.3.2.1 The Hindu educational basis

As mentioned earlier, dharma is recognized as the law of nature and as a way to navigate the course of life. Dharma explains how all parts of nature can live in unity and harmony, recognizing the collective as a strength. Education begins with the individual; however, the self is realized through dharma: through self-discipline and fulfilling one's obligations to society and God. Dharma is the basis for the plurality of selves and interconnected selves. Thus, this suggests that education begins with each individual's potential to develop according to his or her role and in relation to others, and less according to the economic or political demands of the public domain.

From this perspective, the aim of education is viewed as the collective as a strength.

7.3.2.2 The cultural basis in the data

The widening gap between village and city areas and the prevalence of poverty in society forms part of teachers' social, structural and material circumstances. People's disillusionment with the failure of the state to deliver on promises of democratic elections, sustainable development and an end to corruption in the governmental system, is identified in the stories of teachers. The Maoist struggle for change was founded in part on resentment of the uneven distribution of wealth and power in Nepal. However, the result of the struggle has been characterized by processes in which the underlying contested issues of social hierarchy have not been resolved. The fact that the elite continue to hold onto power, and that this did not change when the Maoists

entered mainstream politics, has prevented any real debate on issues of equity from taking place. The struggle to improve living conditions for marginalized groups in society, as promised by the Maoists, is echoed in Sita and Pemba's narratives. As presented, the predominance of a societal script featuring the Maoist movement influences the telling of Sita and Pemba's stories, as they place a particular focus on sustainable community development in rural areas.

Sita's story draws on the societal script of the aim of development agencies to empower women, and subsequently women's support of the Maoist movement (Leve, 2007; Lohani-Chase, 2014; Manchanda, 2004). However, Pemba's story draws on the societal script of ethnicity and school participation, which he argues raises the importance of vocational education for sustainable development in Nepal. His argument appears to be in line with the Maoists' demand for more equal opportunities for ethnic groups (Baral, 2011; Lohani-Chase, 2014). Both Sita and Pemba's stories depict a vision for a more equitable society. In their lives and work, they highlight the need for more sustainable education founded in the national and local contexts in order to improve the livelihoods of marginalized groups in society. They both have had positive experiences of sustainable community development projects in which they have personally been involved and which have given them insight into other ways of thinking and acting that challenge, in some ways, the gurukul system and global educational policies. Their visions for their communities are essentially stated in social terms, grounded in the marginalization of certain groups in society, which entails obligations towards the collective. They oppose an educational system that enables corruption and that allows for the marginalized groups in society to have fewer opportunities. They blame the government for the continuation of corrupt practices in society.

Pemba expresses deep commitment to the communist ideologies that he learned about in early childhood. His quest for better living conditions in the rural areas has in some ways been realized by his involvement in community-driven agricultural projects. However, in his life and work as a teacher, he has shown resistance to implementing foreign education practices into the school, arguing that the government must create the environment within the school system that these approaches require. His argument being that the government must provide the funds to modernize the school system, only then will the teachers follow the instructions given by their superiors in the hierarchical structure. Without the right conditions, he states that the teachers are likely to oppose foreign concepts of modern education and follow their own cultural understanding of teaching that is reinforced by the community.

Pigg (1992) reflects on how development, *bikas*, has been perceived in the rural context of Nepal as services coming from outside agencies and the government. Pemba returns to these notions of development as something the government must deliver. However, his ideal of equity for his people has led him to initiate development activities outside of the government school system, in his own community. In this sense, he conceives of himself in social terms, through his relations to his community, entailing a sense of moral obligation and deeply held convictions of identity and social justice.

Sita and Pemba both express strong feelings of discontent with the government and the educational reforms. Sita laments the school system: "*In the area where I grew up, students are not given an education that prepares them for a life there, nor equips them to meet international standards*" (interview 1, January 2014). She argues that the education system is neither able to provide education that satisfies international norms, nor education that is sustainable for the local context. Moreover, she has opted to send her own children to private school in the hopes of increasing their chances of passing the SLC exams. She highlights the injustice in the system, in how the poor are humiliated when they cannot afford to send their children to a private school to improve their chances of passing the exams. Sita expresses a desire to return to village life and continue doing community work; however, as she says, she is constrained by her family obligations.

Despite the commitment to rural development, there is recognition of an uneven distribution of benefits and opportunities between the rural and urban communities in the documentation of the life stories. However, as seen in Sita's story, it seems not to be the *absence* of development programmes in her village that leads her to join the Maoists, but rather the *success* of such programmes in her community. This is reflected in the works of Manchanda (2004) and Leve (2007), who propose that the inadvertent result of development activities was to encourage women to join the rebellion in search of empowerment through armed struggle. This contradicts the 'failed development' argument. Engagement with development as both an ideological and a practical belief emerges in the stories of Pemba and Sita, in particular.

Sita's story is intriguing in how she describes the commitment she once had to the Maoist movement, and how she opted to marry into a traditional Hindu family setting after the uprising ended. The experience she gained from attending literacy classes and community development programmes was at the time related to belief in equality and social justice, associated with collective reflection on and critical analysis of issues such as poverty, caste, gender, corruption

and the local environment (World Education, Naya Goreto: The Nepal National Literacy Campaign 1989). The curricula in these programmes were based on the ideas of Paolo Freire and adjusted to the Nepalese context by researchers at Tribhuvan University.

However, reflecting on her experiences after the rebellion, it is apparent that Sita has lost her faith in the democratization processes in Nepal. Rather, the promises of equality and social justice inherent in the development programmes and the Maoist movement seem to have shaped her vision for society. Her disillusionment seems to lie within the processes of democratization and the urban elite's indifference to the marginalized groups in society, which Sita refers to as the most damaging factor for community development in the rural areas.

Sita's story also reflects female identity, or perhaps female dharma, that entails being part of a traditional Hindu family life. As seen in her story, Sita does not propose personal freedom in her involvement in development programmes, against cultural values. Her involvement reflects a quest for equal opportunity to education and employment for the poor in the community. Her belief in social justice are embedded in her experiences of rural community development.

Leve (2007) states that after the concept of 'women's empowerment' became the focus of an international movement in the 1970s, it became the framework for development programmes that aimed to 'empower' women, initially from a Freirean perspective. However, Leve (2007) also points to a shift away from a focus on exploitation to that of a neoliberal consumer consciousness in the development programmes, where citizens began to be seen as empowered clients who were aware of their rights (Leve, 2007). Nevertheless, the two models draw on similar assumption of autonomous human consciousness in pursuit of greater rationality. Leve (2007) argues that the reasons for women's social and political involvement at the time of the Maoist movement are more complicated than just being the result of literacy programmes. She states that people are constituted through relations and social identity and thus value the social outcome of what their sacrifices help create. One way to look at Sita's story is to see her support of the rebels as indicative of a person who is grounded in her community and who sought a better social outcome than her involvement yielded. Her involvement was thus not just the result of becoming aware of an oppressive system and her rights as a citizen but founded in her social identity. This might explain why she returned to a traditional family life with her husband in a customary family setting after the peace process. Sita somehow does not promote individual freedom over foundational cultural values, which suggests that whatever commitments she made constituted in relations with others.

Similarly, Rabina's involvement in education might be seen as constituted in her family relations and social identity. Her relentless commitment to finding a way out of poverty through education and by improving her test scores, is with an aim of how her hardship, dukkha, will affect her mother and brother. Like Sita, her sacrifice comes from thinking of herself as a person who is part of a family and who values the social outcome of her efforts. Education offers the possibility of social mobility that proposes a view of education as an opportunity and less as an individual right. This view of education as an opportunity and not a right might explain the tendency to view schooling as a test of endurance and hardship rather than viewing it critically to find ways of changing it.

An example of the spectrum of perspectives is shown in the following figure 7.1, which illustrates the portrayals of teachers in the study according to a spiritual/material perspective and a collective/individual orientation. The pattern particularly shows the Maoist portrayals as material-oriented, but with a collective aim, which differs from the global policies for education with an individual rights orientation. Any simple conclusion that a linear spectrum may characterize is questionable; however, the mapping of portrayals indicates the collective mode in the stories with a more or less strong sense of spiritual orientation. The EFA positioning is along the lines of a more individual/material spectrum, aiming at protecting the human rights of the individual as a way out of poverty.
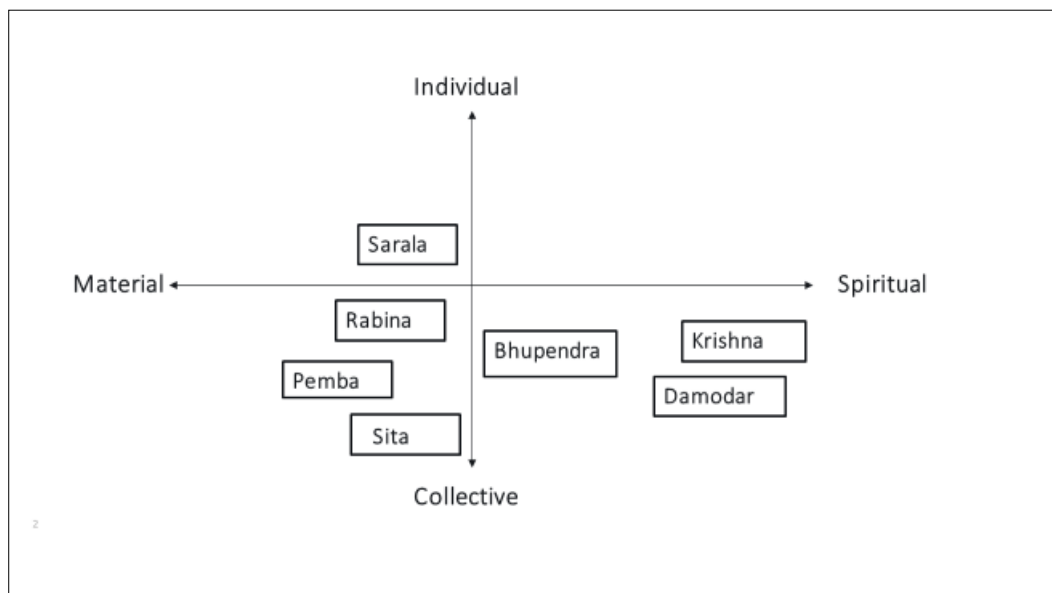

Figure 7.1 Portrayals in Material/Spiritual and the Collective-Individual perspective

7.3.3 The superior/inferior perspective

7.3.3.1 The Hindu educational basis

The key concept of Hindu education, which is to live a self-disciplined life with the aim of achieving enlightenment, entails the authority of the elders and gurus over the younger generations to guide and direct them towards the path to enlightenment. Thus, the superior position is characterized by guiding and allocating resources to the inferior. The inferior position is characterized by the principles of duty, obedience, submission and loyalty to the guidance of the superiors. The more general foundational principles of the superior/inferior position, when seen in the light of the teacher portrayals, provides the cultural foundations by which the teachers develop personal social strategies that are somewhat dependant on where and how they perceive their position in relation to their position as superior/inferior.

In this regard, the aim of education is viewed as following the guidance of a superior.

7.3.3.2 The Hindu cultural basis and the data

People in Nepal traditionally show great respect for the guru and do not question what the guru says (Awasthi, 2004). Bhupendra and Damodar's accounts of dealing with students slacking in their school work conveys the implicit expectation that teachers in the community will discipline children and ensure they maintain respect for the authority of teachers. The gurukul educational system's emphasis on the compliance of will under the guidance and authority of a guru, in order for the individual to participate in a knowledgeable way in public life, is upheld as an ideal to transcend and transform on the path to enlightenment. The personal traits of the guru are portrayed in Krishna's poem as ideals to strive for, which in due course will be rewarded with respect: "*I bow my head to such a guru*" (interview 1, March 2015)*.*

Bhupendra recounts a student's reverence for him as a teacher by how the student had expressed that he would bow to his feet out of respect. This example has direct connotations to the Hindu Manu code of Law scriptures that make reference to the practical and spiritual aspects of life, in particular in relation to how pupils should greet their teacher with respect by touching his feet (verse:119). The Hindu ideas and texts illustrate the importance of the guru in the local context. Damodar explains:

> *To obey mother* [maataa]*, pitaa* [father] *and guru are fundamental values of our society and culture. So, guru is formed with two different letters as derived from the Sanskrit language gu and ru. Here gu means darkness and ru means take away or omit.*

Therefore, guru means someone who can take away the darkness and enlighten with brightness (interview 1, January 2014).

In particular, the stories of male teachers depict a sense of responsibility to lead and guide students and the community in accordance with the aim of schooling, which is self-discipline.

Damodar expresses a need to learn the content of the new curriculum that has been introduced as the result of global influences on educational policies in order to increase his capacity to teach; however, he largely rejects child-centred teaching methods. In part, Krishna expresses his view on child centeredness by prioritizing what he believes to be higher ideals in life: fulfilment and enlightenment. In Bhupendra's story, there is a sense that he guides and directs his students along the path toward passing their exams. Similarly, another informant, Arjun, presents himself as a teacher who feels responsible for his fellow villagers and community, and this is reflected in his participation in a wide range of decision-making committees.

From the superior/inferior perspective, in the cultural setting, the stories of the male teachers in particular depict a sense of responsibility to lead and guide students and the community in accordance with the aim of schooling. Although the female teachers hold a respected position in the community, they also assume an inferior position to men. The inferior position entails a station of obedience, respect and loyalty to the authority and wisdom of the supposed (male) superior. As a female teacher, one has most likely been given the opportunity to teach as the result of family members or acquaintances exercising their authoritative positions of social superiority. The social position of female teachers is somewhat apparent in the stories of the women interviewed.

Although women are given respect in the Hindu scriptures, via female gods and the role of women in the family, the scriptures, nevertheless, seem *not* to recognize the independent role of women (Awasthi 2004, p. 103). Women are to be protected by their fathers as children, by their husbands as wives, and by their son as widows. Sarala, Chandramaya and Sita's stories reflect on these aspects of a woman's life. Sarala describes her father, doctor and principal as god-like figures for helping and guiding her to achieve a respectable position in society. As a result, women tend to hold subservient positions to men in society, although there is a great deal of variation in the status of women in different communities. Sita's involvement in community development and the Maoist movement highlights these variations of status within the community of which she is a part.

An important theme in Sarala's story is the significance of social position. As a female teacher, she adheres to the organizing principles of occupying an inferior position in society, following the guidance given to her by her superiors (her father and her principal), which has earned her a secure position and respect from her community and a reputation for being a model teacher by the aid organization working in her area. Her belief in her superiors, and her willingness to follow their guidance, 'saved' her from a life of depression and humiliation. Her belief has led her to build a life of pride and respect. Being a female teacher might explain her reception of the reform programmes, when compared to her male colleagues' opposition to them. As was mentioned earlier, when seen from a cultural perspective, the traditional system of prioritizing boys might also explain the lack of agency for men to seek alternative ways of being, in contrast to women who might experience these opportunities to climb the social ladder.

Sarala describes how she moved through transitional periods in her life by holding onto a consistent and coherent belief in prescribed way of life that delineated a clear course of action. She follows her father's guidance, and upon finding work, she embraces the child-friendly approach introduced by the principal of her school. Her openness and acceptance of the child-friendly approach gives her security and a social position that has driven her forward. This belief in prescribed course of action seems to create a foundation for her integration, and an identity project with a clear course of action.

Similarly, social mobility is reflected in modern schooling by how education has created a sense of liberation and offered the educated person a chance to take part in high caste activities. Bista points out how education has become a way for ethnic minorities and lower casts to partake in dominant cast group positions and values in society. As he argues, being educated implicitly means an eventual identification with high caste status (Bista, 1991, p. 78). Education has been assigned the role of promoting economic progress whilst at the same time, Bista says, by participating in school activities low cast members anticipate receiving the social benefits of high cast. Education in this sense can be viewed as another form of ritualistic behavior. The role of a teacher is open to people in inferior positions, by becoming a teacher then entails an eventual identification with high caste status. (Bista, 1991, p. 78)

Similarly, the life story of a female informant of the study Chandramaya, sheds light on the position that teaching provided her in society. Chandramaya explains how she sensed that her sister in-law felt inferior to her since the sister in-law worked in a shop and Chandramaya had a teaching job, which she explained was considered higher status than being oriented towards

earning money for their livelihood. She continued," I *liked when the children shouted Namaste miss when they were out playing in the streets. I enjoyed that respect. Teaching is a sacred vocation"* (interview 1, January 2014).

The story of Rabina sheds light on how space for agency is negotiated within the boundaries of social structures and institutions. She is allowed to acquire a higher social position by engaging in survival strategies, such as enduring and excelling within the school system. She can increase the functioning of the system; however, she can exert little influence on its values and rules.

Bhupendra's story focuses on the ability to choose an identity in a society transitioning from the more traditional to the more modern. His narration seems to focus on a description of the movement between the identities available to him as a teacher. He embraces the appreciative enquiry approach in teaching, representing a more modern approach, which leads to a well-defined course of action and personal development. The modern educational concepts seem to represent positive reinforcement in education, building on students' resources and individuality. His response to global human rights is based on how it adds value to his social service to students that have dropped out. The traditional concepts of education, however, come in handy when dealing with the more disciplinary issues in his school and the community. His philanthropic view on private education provides a clear storyline and sense of agency. He continued on the path that was already laid out by the founder of the school when he took over the institution, but that does not mean that he lacked the motivation to run the school. His story describes a person with confidence and personal agency and the capacity to learn new concepts and ideas. His belief in the importance of positive reinforcement in education underpins his educational project. He is clear about how to go about education in a transitional phase. Social mobility is a powerful influence on his life story, not only for him, but for his students as well.

The changing social and political context has redefined education by opening Nepal up to the outside world, which has in turn created an awareness of the potential for modern institutions and social forms to raise the living standards of people in general. Modernization has become more visible through aid projects, mass media, tourism and people's access to foreign countries. To be educated is to be modern, and literacy is associated with a better standard of living. For people, modernization has contributed to an opposition to the inequality of rural life and caste orthodoxy. The educated person values the social outcomes of schooling, and increased engagement with formal education has changed how people orient themselves towards the

traditional. On the one hand, they find a sense of pride in their ethnicity, caste and culture, and on the other hand they are 'fatally attracted' to the supposed superiority of the modern.

Another example of the spectrum of perspectives is shown in the following figure 7.2, which illustrates the portrayals of teachers in the study according to a spiritual/material perspective and along a superior/inferior orientation. The pattern particularly shows male teachers as superior-oriented, with a spectrum of orientation ranging from the more spiritually focused to the more materially focused in their vocation. Although female teachers might hold superior positions, the tendency would be to view their positions as less superior than those of the male teachers. When viewing the cultural basis, the Hindu orientation would appear as spiritual oriented, however inferior, while the EFA/modern positioning as superior – material oriented.
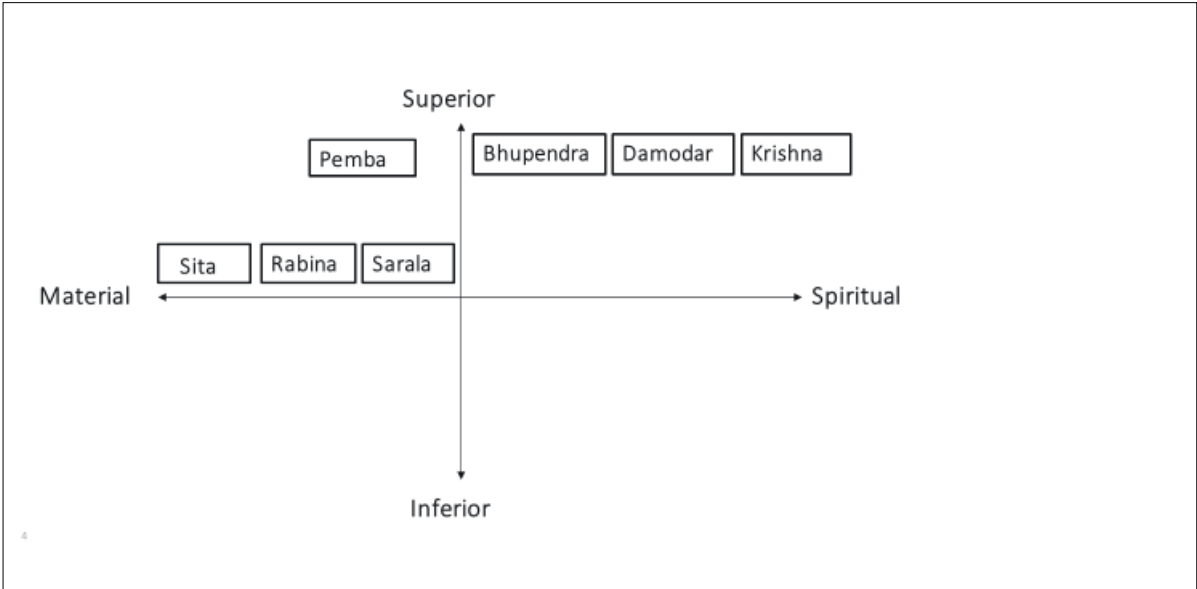

Figure 2 Portrayals in Material/Spiritual and the Inferior- Superior perspectives

The spectrum of perspectives in the next diagram, figure 7.3, illustrates the portrayals of teachers in the study according to a collective/individual perspective with a superior/inferior orientation. The pattern shows teachers as predominantly collective-oriented and superior positioned. When viewing the cultural basis, the Hindu orientation would appear as collective-oriented, and inferior, whereas the EFA/modern positioning would be individual-oriented, and superior.
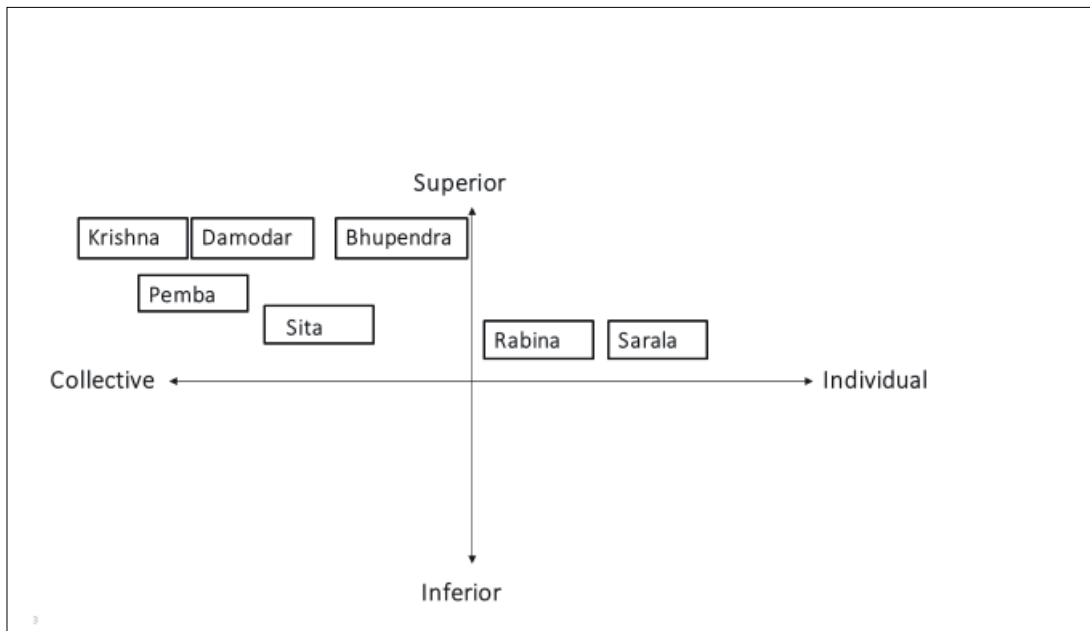
Figure 3 Portrayals in Collective- Individual and the Inferior- Superior perspectives

7.4 Stories of agency: Narrative styles

The question remains: What does this process mean for individuals? Some teachers seem content to deliver new initiatives, like child-friendly policies, and are prepared to shift and change. Consider the case of Sarala: it seems that she is prepared to adjust to the new contingencies, transforming herself into the kind of person that the situation demands. In her story, she states that she complies with the new policies through an internalized adjustment. Others, like Damodar, Sita, Pemba and Bhupendra, seem to adjust to the externally created demands of the global reforms, but nonetheless have their personal reservations about such actions. Krishna, however, does not refer to the new global reforms in his account of his life and work. Rather, he argues in favour of the knowledgeable position of the teacher (guru) as the main theorist in helping the individual to become socialized to culture and society through education.

7.4.1 Revisiting narrative styles: Elaborative and Scripted narratives

Recording the life histories of the teachers in this study allows for an increased understanding of the different styles of narrativity through the various ways that they tell their stories about life and work. The different responses to historical events and cultural foundations shed light on the individual strategies that the teachers employ in order to respond to experiences in their lives and social influences. This means enquiring into why stories are told in particular ways at particular historical moments in the stories in order to locate their meaning. As presented earlier, the narrative quality points to the form of a narrative, whether the narrative is of a more

descriptive form or an analytical account of life's events. Narrative character is related to the presence of an organizing principle within the life history, one that can be seen as an understanding of life and work, and hence be taken as an indication of the narrator's ideals, beliefs and agency.

Goodson (2013) maintains that stories tend to fall into one of two identifiable categories: either they employ a descriptive mode or a more elaborative style of storytelling. Thus, some life stories are of a descriptive nature, implying that they provide chronological descriptions of what happened to a person and reflect less analytically on life's events. These stories, he argues, tend to employ scripts that are available in the cultural setting, recounting what is accepted as something that happened (Goodson, 2013, p. 74). Other life stories are stories that are more analytical and reflective, which are described as more elaborative. Elaborative stories seem to develop new self-generated narratives when the communal narrative is disrupted, and elaborators tend to aim to function independently of the cultural setting (Goodson, 2013, p. 96).

Both the scripted and the elaborated characteristics of narratives seem to also be linked to the development of 'courses of action', or agency, if we are to understand its social significance. Therefore, Goodson (2013) states that scriptedness does not indicate the absence of agency, but that scriptedness can indicate limitations to agency, leaving little space for the investigation of personal agency. In a stable social environment, scripted narrators may express confidence in their identity; however, they might close off prospects of action in times of social change (Goodson, 2013, p.71–85). Stories of more elaborated, analytical reflection of life's events appear to be characterized by a guiding voice for life and work that seems to reflect more personal agency in spite of constraining forces. A main feature of elaborators is their concern to break away from established patterns of socialization, their storying involves autonomy with an aim of functioning independently (Goodson, 2013, p.96). However, one might say that scriptedness not only indicates limitations in terms of personal agency, but also indicates confidence in agency in an environment that facilitates it.

However, taking into consideration Nepal's Hindu cultural heritage, concepts such as elaborated and scripted narrative styles must be considered in the context of these cultural foundations and the examination of the individual's narrative style. The historical and cultural context sheds light on the individual strategies that teachers use to respond to educational reform. In the Hindu cultural heritage context, stories appear to fall into other identifiable

categories according to the cultural perspectives mentioned earlier: material/spiritual, impure/pure, sukkha/dukkha, inferior/superior and individual/collective.

Thus, the main aspect to be considered is the Hindu cultural foundation of society. In this cultural context, narrative styles must be viewed as grounded in a Hindu worldview, thus making use of what is available in the cultural setting. This would differ from the concepts like for example Goodson describes as elaborative narratives that tend to develop new self-generated narratives when the communal narrative is disrupted. The description of elaborators concern to break away from established patterns of socialization, with an aim of functioning independently has been developed in different cultural settings then presented in this study. Rather than developing self-generated narratives that tend to break away from established social patterns, it appears that the life stories that reflect analytical reflection and personal agency *use* the established social structures to develop courses of action.

Thus, the scripted, elaborator narrative categories seem not to cover the way in which the informants develop a course of action in a Hindu social setting. Both the scripted and the elaborated characteristics do not describe or cover how agency is understood or negotiated in a Hindu perspective. When examining the data by the way of scripted or elaborator, most all the informants tend to appear scripted by the way they employ established patterns of socialization. However, contrary to how Goodson categorizes narratives the stories in this study that appear as more analytical and reflective of life's events, seem to *employ* established Hindu social patterns as a way to develop detailed courses of action. If we are to understand it's social significance, by the way of the cultural setting, teachers accept or use the opportunities that are available within the context and their role as teachers to negotiate social changes and courses of action.

These cultural foundations set the stage for how individuals differ in their narrative styles. Thus, the ideals and deeply held values of spirituality, purity, sukkha, superiority and the collective are negotiated in terms of the uncertainty of life and work and become visible in agency through stories of action.

7.4.2 Narrative styles from a Hindu perspective
As seen in the data, the different narrative types derived from the storylines reflect a range of narratives. In the following, the life stories collected will be scrutinized according to their narrative quality and narrative character, while considering how the narratives employ the

cultural foundation to construct their stories. From this point of view, the narratives are investigated for the potential for a course of action.

The life stories show how teachers held on to their narrative character and sustained continuity and the dominance of a particular narrative character. The self-generated narratives that lead to a course of action and a life project is in the cultural setting, more related to the position the individual might have in the setting. The position is predominantly related to caste and gender expectations. The perception of position is founded in a cultural logic of how one is perceived as fulfilling one's duty within the collective.

The teachers' stories provide a socio-cultural setting that features an underlying theory of life and work. This might be said of the story of Damodar, in particular. His narrative provides an exploration of the traditional gurukul values in the context of the Maoist insurgency and modern educational reforms. His conceptualization of life's events and social changes act together with his desire for continuity. His desire for a coherent self is evident in the way he describes episodes he faced with the Maoist cadres, and later in his encounters with government teacher training programmes. These episodes provide examples of how agency is employed in various incidents in his teaching career and allows him to theorize his life. His identity as a Hindu provides narrative resources for his engagement with the changes in society. He responds to the demands of globalization according to his position as a teacher and a man in his community. His position as a teacher provides him with a mandate to guide and reflect on the good of the community. His clear course of action is found within his superior, spiritual position of a teacher. Thus, the teacher mandate provides him with a position to act according to his ideals, beliefs and agency. The additional life stories of Prakash, Arjun and Prem in this study, reflect similar examples of agency by the way they employ their position as teachers to participate in local committees and decision making for the betterment of the society.

In the case of Krishna, there is also a clear Hindu course of action to guide and teach his students by the way of Hindu values. However, in his narrative there is little reflection on the social changes and the demands of globalization in his context. His desire seems to be to uphold Hindu values in his life and work, and points with pride to the positive effects of these values and a desire for continuity. He refers to how these values have sustained him through the hardships of his life as an orphan and in his struggle with alcoholism. His knowledge of Sanskrit provided him with a way to earn an income and become a well-known poet in his society. His pride and appreciation of Hindu values are reflected in his story.

In the portrayals of Nepalese teachers, their narrative intensity might be put up against their inclination to delineate a course of action. Pemba's story involves intense narration and reflection that develops into a clear course of action. His story defines a life project linked to his community, background and ethnic origins. His desire to free himself from the expected social script of his ethnic group and make a new script captures an act of self-invention, by standing on the shoulders of communist ideology. Pemba has personally crafted a course of action in his ongoing reflection on his life story. He responds to the global influences on education through strategic compliance with the reform programmes; he accepts the changes but continues to teach in accordance with the cultural environment and what it allows. His response reflects the common conceptualization of human rights approaches, which is that they uphold the superiority of the outside western world of education, but the government should be blamed for its failure to implement the approaches. He sees himself as resourceful in his community by the way his teacher mandate provides him with a position of superiority.

The study of Nepalese teachers remains focused on the process of individual purpose in a context of changing institutional settings. Major changes are taking place in the role of teachers and in educational structures. These changes are paralleled by changes in the in-service teacher training programmes. Pemba speaks of in-service Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes that, in his experience, introduce methods that are not applicable in the existing government schools. The introduction of western models of education affects the balance between constraining institutional forces and individual purpose. Pemba finds himself somewhat restricted in his profession but finds ways to exercise his individual purpose outside the school environment, where he is able to use his social position to investigate alternatives for his community. The concept of social strategy emerges in the way in which teachers deal with contrasting situations. Pemba's strategy suggests compliance with the existing system, but his strong internal reservations imply his lack of faith in change occurring within the system. He appears to be disillusioned by how the government implements reforms and has lost hope for education in a more equitable society.

Pemba has developed a somewhat self-defined narrative that has led to a course of action in his community. He has constructed a successful identity project in the form of a vocation to improve agriculture in the surrounding farming areas. He has a similar drive to improve education in Nepal. However, the narrative constructions do not lead to a systematic course of action in his profession. In the educational system, he sees himself restricted to the extent that he responds with compliance to the test-oriented systems and expresses disillusionment with

the school system as a whole. As in the case of Pemba, teachers are expected to set their professional identities aside as curriculum makers and become curriculum implementers.

Nevertheless, the cultural logic of fulfilling the expected duties of one's position in the social structure is complex. The syncretic nature of Hinduism allows for flexible responses to new social situations, by means of adapting the new into the cultural foundation. Bhupendra's story moves in some ways between new western educational ideas and the Hindu gurukul education system. He demonstrates a flexible response to the modern that adds value to his life and work, leading to a clear course of action while also keeping to the gurukul heritage when the situation demands.

Another of the informants in the study, Ram, expresses a high narrative intensity however it does not seem to translate into a course of action. He returns to his open exploration of the political problems of Nepal in an attempt to describe the current scenario in the country, but somehow returns to the same problems without a course to implement a new narrative identity for himself. The narration is to some extent repetitive, focusing on similar events that do not lead to an exploration of himself or any clear process of becoming. His story shows how his position as a male teacher can have a closed dimension, meaning that his narrative involves analysis and theorization, however it lacks a strong sense of responsibility to his community. He is open to new narrative constructions and achievable courses of action but does not seem able to develop a course of action. He seems to have a clear overview of the current political situation; however, he does not present himself as a strong leader, like Damodar and Krishna.

Sita brings up similar feelings of disillusionment with schooling as Pemba. She also expresses disenchantment with her move to the capital city. In the city environment, her vision for a more equitable society has been eroded by the amenities of city life, she explains, by the ease of access to running water, electricity and food. People, she argues, have become indifferent to the suffering of others and they get distracted by their drive to acquire social status, rather than serve the needs of others. The corruption in the government system has made her disillusioned in her profession, as well. She has been unable to obtain a teaching position that reflects her qualifications. As a woman, she has also had to adapt to mainstream society, where she is expected to marry well and take care of her children and her in-laws. Her disillusionment goes somewhat beyond the government system, to encompass her own ability to act within the boundaries of the socio-cultural context.

The life story of Sita is particularly interesting in her rather disruptive quest for a micro-narrative of political involvement and her return to being a more descriptive narrator focused on survival. She somewhat gives up her social position and her narrative shifts away from one of 'striving to improve the community' to one of 'accepting things as they are'. These traumas in Sita's life highlight how social position and location affected her storying. It might also be argued that the traumas experienced in her life have contributed to her varied response as she confronted different settings and dilemmas. Her description of life in a village setting is initially highly optimistic, whilst her description of her life in an urban setting is more pessimistic. She seems disillusioned by the events of her life, the political situation in Nepal and the educational policies that, in her opinion, have no grounding in the context. Her response bears a resemblance to apathy, as her main concern has become obtaining the security of a permanent government job. However, one might ultimately propose that Sita seems to fulfil the position of a female teacher in her community, which provides her with the opportunity to participate in community development programmes and join the Maoist movement. Her female position might also explain why she was willing to settle for a traditional Hindu family life after the uprising, thereby fulfilling her duty to marry within her caste.

In that sense, Sarala appears to fulfil a position that is socially inferior to that of men, as she acts according to the advice and guidance of her superiors. The prescribed script delineates a clear course of action, recognizing the supportive environment of father figures in her life. She acts within the boundaries of the social structure of inferior/superior to ensure her survival. She can act within the system to enhance her position under the protection and the provision of resource allocators; however, she does not affect the system's values and rules. Her resource allocators have given her the opportunity to gain the position of a teacher in her community, which in itself defines a clear course of action. Her openness and acceptance of the child-friendly script gives her security and a social position that has driven her forward.

Rabina recounts her life story fairly descriptively, with a strong sense of personal vision to which she adds a course of action. The position of a female teacher has provided her with a course of action with the aim of achieving upward social mobility for her family. The story of Chandramaya, also discloses a course of action within the position that teaching has given her. The position has provided her with stability and consistency that has worked in the context of the stable community in which she has lived for her entire life. However, the female situation entails finding a position not only by the mandate that teaching provides within a cultural setting, but by means of resource allocators in the system.

The individual accounts highlight how the Hindu cultural identity provides teachers with narrative resources for engaging with changes in society. Their positions as teachers provide them with a mandate to guide and reflect on the good of the community. The course of action within all the narratives is found within the superior position of a teacher. Thus, one might say that the teacher mandate provides the informants with a position to act according to their ideals, beliefs and agency.

8.0 Towards a conclusion

8.1 Introduction

As mentioned in earlier chapters, teachers in Nepal have historically been at the forefront of national movements for political change and have felt responsible for their fellow villagers' needs and guidance. The experiences of such teachers in the villages of Nepal informed this study's approach to investigating whether the structural changes in Nepal have eroded such visions from the minds of its many traditional and committed teachers. The study aims to find answers to the following questions:

- *What are the experiences and self-understanding that Nepalese teachers have of their lives and work?*

This question forms the foundation for the next question, which is:

- *How do Nepalese teachers position themselves in terms of the influence of global educational policies?*

The latter question has been modified somewhat on the basis of how a traditional Hindu society presents other characteristics when interacting with external attempts to develop and improve, in this case, education in Nepal. Throughout the process of the study, its central issues have been modified in order to understand how a predominantly Hindu society deals with external influences.

When the life stories of teachers in Nepal are examined in relation to the influences of the EFA, there seems to be a shift in the way these life stories might be viewed. From a Hindu cultural perspective, the narrative style of most of the informants takes a position of guiding and directing others according to the mandate given to teachers by the community and their cultural heritage. The shift is less in terms of generating independent stories and more by way of employing the cultural foundations that are available in the context.

From this perspective, the stories reflecting the superior, spiritual position of teachers as provided by the Hindu mandate to teach seem to indicate more resistance to EFA; however, in most cases, this is by means of strategic compliance. As has been indicated, in the teachers' stories of their lives and work, they appear to accept the new educational policies as part of the western influence on society; however, they refract the new global policies through what might be appropriate within a Hindu socio-cultural structure. The following section will thus

investigate how the different teachers in this study respond to and refract the EFA global educational policies.

8.2 Responses to the EFA

What we have seen is that most of the stories maintain a dominant narrative character that gives insight into how life's experiences have led to continuity in a society experiencing transition and change. The meta-narratives of reform and change are somewhat refracted by contradictory accounts. The concept of refraction shows how responses to the EFA agenda differ depending on how individuals mediate these policies. It appears that when teachers are held accountable for the implementation of global policies, practices and standards, it reduces their freedom to act, think and respond in accordance with their own context. Goodson and Rudd state: "refraction in education may be seen as a change in direction arising from individuals' and groups' own beliefs, practices and trajectories that are at odds with dominant waves of reform and policies introduced into the field" (Goodson & Rudd, 2012, p. 36).

Confronted with the Nepalese heritage and gurukul tradition, the EFA model seems to be refracted as 'foreignness' to most of the local teachers. According to Awasthi, there appears to be a tacit agreement between teachers and the community to continue the Hindu tradition of education, thus splitting the teacher role into two typologies of selves: a traditional gurukul self and a western school culture self (Awasthi, 2004). Although teachers appear to accept the concepts of the modern school culture, due to the external pressure they face from central school authorities and forces of globalization, they still seem to have faith in their traditional Hindu values (Awasthi, 2004, p. 94).

Damodar, expresses his frustration with the EFA programme's complete lack of grounding in the Nepalese community:

> *Look here. Is there no need for a friendly home environment? It cannot only be school friendly. Is a teacher a contract worker? No. He is not... Is the teacher's occupation up for sale? What is the teacher's occupation? ...* [In Nepal] *A teacher is like a second god* [guru]. *He brings someone in darkness into the light* (interview 1, January 2014).

As Damodar puts forward, the narrow EFA agenda of child friendly education reduces Nepalese children's opportunity to succeed in life. He raises the issue of the local realities of poverty and finds that in his context it is necessary to teach children codes of proper conduct, in order for

them to participate in a highly competitive and hierarchical environment. Similarly, another informant, Pemba, articulates his view on the government's in-service TPD programme.

> *I was also a participant in the training. In that particular TPD training, to do the TPD you have to understand every child's psychology, research each child, what kind of teaching will each child be able to adopt, the trainings are conducted in that way. But, teachers are not teaching according to each individual child's psychology. Overall, most teachers teach in the same way, with the same technology, with all the children in the same classroom. What the child does or doesn't do is of no interest, only that they pass the tests.* (interview 1, March 2015)

He points to the demands of the community to teach to the test and the school administration's orders to follow the teacher's guide and teach the curriculum with examinations in mind. He states that he has to follow the system, or he will be blamed for the students failing. In the environment of perceiving education as a gateway out of poverty, he feels powerless to implement the child-centred approaches advocated by the EFA policies. "*I cannot do anything about that as a teacher in the government school system. If I don't teach to the exams, I will fail as a teacher. This is what is expected of me as a teacher in the government system*" (interview 1, March 2015), he says.

Sita recalls how, after the People's War, political debates on education centred on the Maoist initiatives for more locally based curricula, contesting the international standards for education. "*There was this whole debate about international norms and that we couldn't prioritize local issues like that, but be able to meet the international standards. After that, I lost interest in those debates*" (interview 1, January 2014). She refers to the impact of globalization on education through the numerous reform programmes and mentions the preconditions of such programmes in the context of poverty. Sita argues:

> *Globalization has made us sign papers and treaties. But we are not able to fulfil these treaties. Many children come to school without having eaten. We talk about child-friendly education and education for all. But the child with an empty stomach is not interested in studying. If the child had been fed, he could focus on his studies. To fulfil the child-friendly approach, there has to be a place for that. In America, these needs might be fulfilled, and so they have brought about these agendas and issues.* (interview 2, March 2015)

Sita argues that regardless of their good intentions, the reform programmes cannot succeed due to the cultural context. Bhupendra also expresses his feeling of dichotomy in terms of facing the issues of modernity in education. On the one hand, he is practising new approaches in his school, focusing on students' resources and abilities, but on the other, he is having to maintain an autocratic style of management that he finds the community expects of him. He reflects: "*These are contradictory experiences to the human rights approaches*" (interview 1, March 2015). His story reflects a position that is in-between the traditional and the new, having to negotiate his position on a daily basis.

However, Sarala embraces the new reforms, practising child-friendly methods in her work as a teacher. She was given the task of teaching the lower grades according to the EFA policies by the principal of her school, partly because she is a woman, and she gradually took to the methods that she was taught in the training programme. Nevertheless, as she says, few of the male participants in the child-friendly training sessions were motivated by it, claiming: "*It's like being bitten by a mad dog*" (interview 1, January 2014) . She relates her experiences of the child-friendly methods to her own childhood, imagining how a 'child-friendly' environment could have positively impacted her self-confidence.

In the stories of Krishna, there was little reflection on the impact of globalization on his life and work. He does not mention any contradictions with any new reforms; rather, he emphasizes the values of Hindu philosophy in education for enlightenment and a good life.

Although teachers, for the most part, seem to comply with the global educational reform programmes, and may focus on superficial features of the programmes, agency is reflected as a will to act according to deeply held ideals and visions in their work. Due to social constraints and their cultural system, teachers find solutions to their problems that comply with those demanded by the formal powers within the educational system. Teachers seem to have both a gurukul side to themselves, which is deeply rooted in their individual personality, and a western side to themselves, which is negotiated on the basis of constraining forces.

Thus, when taking into consideration the cultural foundational structures with which to view the narratives, the Hindu perspectives provide the social strategies according to which the teachers position themselves in relation to the global educational policies. When viewing these Hindu perspectives in relation to the EFA policies, the patterns indicate the differences in orientation.

8.2.1 The EFA model viewed from the spiritual/material perspective

When the traditional ideals of teaching and the EFA ideals of teaching are viewed from a Hindu spiritual/material perspective, the Hindu orientation to education is reflected as more spiritually oriented, with its aim of spiritual enlightenment. By contrast, the EFA perspective on education is reflected as more materially oriented, with its aim to reduce poverty by an 'effective' standardized methodology. Viewing the data from a Hindu perspective, the teachers tend to seek content for their teaching practices, while the EFA is oriented towards methods for teaching. Thus, the Hindu focus is on teachers providing content for self-cultivation and developing students' minds and souls in relation to their obligation to society, with the ultimate aim of moksha: salvation. On the other hand, EFA's focus is on standardized methods, as presented in the following figure 8.1.

Spiritual (content) (Hindu) ⟷ **Material (method) (EFA)**

Figure 8.1: The spiritual/material perspective on the EFA

8.2.2 The EFA model viewed from the collective/individual perspective

When presenting the EFA according to a Hindu collective/individual perspective, the Hindu orientation to education emerges as collective-oriented, with a focus on fulfilling one's duties as an obligation to the collective, whereas the global EFA perspective on education appears to be individual-oriented, focusing on the rights of individuals. In examining the data, the teachers express the value of the social outcome of education, while the EFA policies are oriented towards the individual's right to education. The Hindu perspective emphasizes fulfilling one's duty as a part of the whole, whereas EFA emerges as promoting the rights of the individual. This is presented in the following figure 8.2.

Collective (Hindu) ⟷ **Individual (EFA)**

Figure 8.2 The EFA model viewed from the collective/individual perspective

8.2.3 The EFA model viewed from the superior/inferior perspective

The implementation of the modern through the notion of superiority might imply the traditional as inferior. The notion of the EFA as being superior suggests people view global educational policies as a form of guidance and direction, on the one hand, and as a resource allocator on the other. By contrast, the local is characterized by actions of obedience, submission and loyalty to the guidance of the superior, implying a dependency on guidance and resources to fulfil the duties expected of it. Although the EFA might be *adopted* as a means to participate in the modern, nevertheless, in the Hindu foundational structure there seems to be a resistance to *adapt* the modern to the cultural setting. This would explain why teachers seek guidance to teach the new curriculum, and somewhat implicitly assume that EFA is a resource allocator, while strategically complying with the new global policies of EFA by way of a Hindu perspective and social structure. EFA's focus on universal truths of what works takes the position of the superior, thereby implying that it holds a position of guiding and directing others and that it allocates resources. The inferior position of teachers implies obedience and dependency on the resource allocator. This is illustrated in the following figure 8.3.

Figure 8.3 The EFA model viewed from the superior/inferior perspective

3.2.4 Conclusion and the way forward

This study investigates aspects of Nepalese teachers' lives and work through the portrayals of teachers that are situated within their historical context by enquiring into why stories were told in particular ways at particular historical moments. The contextual considerations and the conceptual framework of the study emerged from the empirical data to present a perspective to further examine the teachers' life histories. One of the purposes of the discussion of the Nepalese context is to try to frame the study within the teachers' socio-historical context, while also recognizing that ideologies and policies are refracted in personal ways, focusing on both structure and individual agency.

Over the course of the study major revisions of the text and the theoretical approach of the enquiry had to be taken in response to the inadequacy of western theoretical concepts when considering the cultural foundations of the study. The open/ closed perspectives from Popper's

criticism of ideologies presents a way to view the Marxist movement in Nepal and also the EFA models based on the western origins of these influences. The local cultural foundations had to be viewed by a set of other perspectives based on a Hindu cultural heritage.

In this study the concepts of ideals, beliefs and agency emerged gradually during the progress of analysing the empirical data. On an individual level, the empirical data required a nuancing of the concept of teacher belief as a framework for analysing the life stories of teachers. The concept of teacher belief applied in a broad sense made it difficult to use as an analytical tool to view the data. The phenomena of ideals emerged from the data as somewhat different from the phenomena of teacher beliefs. In situations where deeply held values were challenged, then it seems that agency appeared to be closely connected to ideals rather than beliefs. The differentiation of these concepts and phenomena have emerged from the examination of life stories of the teachers in this study.

Subsequently, the historical and cultural context sheds light on the individual strategies that teachers use to respond to educational reforms. From the cultural foundation of the study, narrative styles must be viewed as grounded in a Hindu worldview, thus making use of available courses of action in the cultural setting. It appears that the life stories that reflect analytical reflection and personal agency seem not to break away from established patterns of socialization, however employ the established Hindu social structures to develop their individual course of action. If we try to understand the significance of Hindu social structures and culture, teachers use the opportunities that the teacher role signifies in various ways to negotiate personal agency. These cultural foundations set the stage for how individuals differ in their narrative styles and also in the way they negotiate courses of action.

The close relationship between historical, social, cultural and political circumstances and the teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency might enable an understanding of stories of action within theoretical considerations of context. The ideals, beliefs and agencies of Nepalese teachers are founded in a Nepalese cultural heritage, thus requiring attention to cultural understanding when creating a framework for educational discussions and debate. This study is an attempt to present ways to create a platform for pedagogical work and school development by means of local and cultural understanding. The cultural foundations represent different values and a world view worth considering.

Cross cultural studies interfere with complex issues regarding approaches to understanding the foundations of pedagogical possibilities in a given society. Education reform is a multifaceted

matter in any society; thus, when aiming to develop education and implement reform on an international level, cultural insight and cultural understanding is required. The considerations of teachers experience of life and work has shown that the conceptual framework adopted from a western tradition is insufficient to reveal the foundational worldview and strategic positioning of teachers in Nepal. As an alternative, the study claims to present a contextual, cultural approach towards understanding teachers' ideals, beliefs and agency. Consequently, the enquiry presents an approach to understanding a pedagogical phenomenon and how external western approaches and concepts to understanding a Hindu cultural setting can be misleading.

The life stories of the teachers in this study gives insight into how the individual teachers embrace their teacher mandate to the fullest potential despite the substantial weight of the system. Thus, the core that withstands from this enquiry is that the teachers' vision and commitment to their communities, appear to not have been lost by the hardship, poverty and structural changes.

References

Acharya, P. (1996). Indigenous education and Brahminical hegemony in Bengal. In N. Crook (Ed.), *The transmission of knowledge in South Asia: Essays on education, religion, history, and politics,* OUP India (July 19, 2001), *98-118.*

Action Aid. (2005). Listening to people living in poverty: Collection of life history case studies. Books for Change

Andrews, M., Squire, C., & Tamboukou, M. (2013). *Doing narrative research*. SAGE Publications Ltd. London, UK

Armbrüster, T., & Gebert, D. (2002). Uncharted territories of organizational research: The case of Karl Popper's *Open Society and Its Enemies*. *Organization Studies, 23*(2), 169–188. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840602232001

Autio, T. (2014). International crosscurrent in curriculum theories and practices: Freedom, power and possessions of the subject. In W. F. Pinar (Ed.), *International handbook of curriculum research: Studies in curriculum theory* (5th ed.). New York: Routledge.

Awasthi, L. D. (2004). *Exploring monolingual school practices in multilingual Nepal* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Danish University of Education Copenhagen, Denmark.

Bamberg, M. (2007). *Narrative – State of the art.* John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam/Philadelphia

Baral, R. R. (2011). *Pedagogy of liberation: A case of Nepal Vol. 1,* pp. 65-77. Published by Nepal Policy Research Network. Retrieved from http://www.nepalpolicynet.com. Nepal Journal of Social Science and Public Policy

Barber, B. (1984). *Strong democracy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Behar, R. (1990). Rage and redemption: Reading the life story of a Mexican marketing woman. *Feminist Studies, 16*(2), 223–258. https://doi.org/10.2307/3177849

Bhatta, P. (2011). Aid agency influence in national education policy-making: A case from Nepal's 'Education for All' movement. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 11–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513283

Bhattarai, P. (2005). Migration of Nepalese youth for foreign employment: Problems and prospects: A review of government policies and programs. Youth Action Nepal (YOAC)

Biesta, G., Priestley, M., & Robinson, S. (2015). The role of beliefs in teacher agency. *Teachers and Teaching, 21*(6), 624–640. https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044325

Biesta, G., & Tedder, M. (2007). Agency and learning in the lifecourse: Towards an ecological perspective. *Studies in the Education of Adults, 39*(2), 132–149.

Bista, D. B. (1991). Fatalism and development: Nepal's struggle for modernization. Orient Blackswan.Hydrabad, India

BPEP. (1992). *Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) 1992. Basic and primary education component plan (1992, 1997).* Kathmandu: Ministry of Education.

BPEP. (1999). *Basic and Primary Education Project (BPEP) 1999. Basic and primary education project (1992, 1998): A synthesis of experience*s. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education.

 Brockington, J. L. (1996). The sacred thread: Hinduism in its continuity and diversity. Edinburgh University Press. UK

Bruner, J. (1987). Life as narrative. *Social Research, 54*(1), 11–32.

Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry, 18*(1), 1–21.

Byrne, S., & Shrestha, G. (2014). A compromising consensus? Legitimising local government in post-conflict Nepal. *International Development Planning Review, 36*(4), 435–453. https://doi.org/10.3828/idpr.2014.24

Caddell, M. (2005). Listening to local voices? International targets and decentralised education planning in Nepal. *International Journal of Educational Development, 25*(4), 456–469. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2005.04.010

Caddell, M. (2006). Private schools as battlefields: Contested visions of learning and livelihood in Nepal. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 36*(4), 463–479. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057920601024909

Caddell, M. (2007). *Education and change: A historical perspective on schooling, development and the Nepali nation-state. The Open University, Open Research Online* Oro.Open.Ac.Uk.

CapEFA. (2011). *Capacity development for Education for All (CapEFA).* Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/innovfair2011/docs/ecosoc_stand_amg.pdf.

Carney, S. (2003). Globalisation, neo-liberalism and the limitations of school effectiveness research in developing countries: The case of Nepal. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 1*(1), 87–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/1476772032000061833

Carney, S., Bista, M., & Agergaard, J. (2007). 'Empowering' the 'local' through education? Exploring community-managed schooling in Nepal. *Oxford Review of Education, 33*(5), 611–628. https://doi.org/10.1080/03054980701476253

Carney, S., & Bista, M. B. (2009). Community schooling in Nepal: A genealogy of education reform since 1990. *Comparative Education Review, 53*(2), 189–211. https://doi.org/10.1086/597394

Carney, S., & Rappleye, J. (2011). Education reform in Nepal: From modernity to conflict. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513274

Carter, K., & Doyle, W. (1995). Preconceptions in learning to teach. *The Educational Forum, 59*(2), 186–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131729509336385

Casey, K. (1995). The new narrative research in education. *Review of Research in Education, 21*, 211–253. https://doi.org/10.2307/1167282

Clandinin, D. J. (1985). Personal practical knowledge: A study of teachers' classroom images. *Curriculum Inquiry, 15*(4), 361–385. https://doi.org/10.2307/1179683

Clandinin, D. J., Pushor, J., & Murray Orr, A. (2007). Navigating sites for narrative inquiry. *Journal of Teacher Education, 58*(1), 21–35. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487106296218

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher, 19*(5), 2–14. https://doi.org/10.2307/1176100

Day, C. (2004). *A passion for teaching*. Routledge Falmer, London New York

Denzin, L. (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Devkota, S.P and Bagale, S. (2015). Primary education and dropout in Nepal. *Journal of Education and Practice,6*(4). Retrieved from www.Iiste.org ISSN 2222-1735 (Paper) ISSN 2222-288X

Do, Q-T. & Iyer, L. (2007). *Poverty, social divisions, and conflict in Nepal.* World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 4228. World Bank - Development Research Group (DECRG). Washington DC.

Dollard, J. (1935). Criteria for the life history: With analyses of six notable documents. *American Psychological Association. PsycBOOKS*

Douglas, P. M. (2003). *Purity and danger: An analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo.* Routledge. London

Doyle, W. (1997). Heard any really good stories lately? A critique of the critics of narrative in educational research. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 13*(1), 93–99. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(96)00039-X, UK

Dumont, L. (1970). *Homo hierachius: The caste system and its implications*. Weidenfeld & Nicolson. University of Chicago

Eck, K. (2007). *Recruiting rebels: Indoctrination and political education in Nepal.* Himalayan Research Papers Archive. Retrieved from http://digitalrepository.unm.edu/nsc_research/4

Edwards, R. M. (2011). Disconnect and capture of education decentralisation reforms in Nepal: Implications for community involvement in schooling. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 67–84. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513532

EFA. (2003). *Education for All 2004-2009. Core Document.* The Ministry of Education and Sports, Keshar Mahal, Kathmandu, Nepal.

EFA. (2005). *EFA global monitoring report: The quality imperative - UNESDOC Database* . UNESCO.

Emirbayer, M. and Mische, A. (1998). What Is agency? *American Journal of Sociology*, *103*(4): 962-1023

Eteläpelto, A., Vähäsantanen, K., Hökkä, P., & Paloniemi, S. (2013). What is agency? Conceptualizing professional agency at work. *Educational Research Review, 10*(Supplement C), 45–65. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2013.05.001

Fenstermacher, G. D. (1978). A philosophical consideration of recent research on teacher effectiveness. *Review of Research in Education, 6*, 157–185. https://doi.org/10.2307/1167245

Fenstermacher, G. D. (1997). On narrative. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 13*(1), 119–124. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(96)00047-9

Festinger, L. (1962). Cognitive dissonance. *Scientific American, 207*(4), 93–106.

Fitzgerald, T. (1990). Hinduism and the 'World Religion' fallacy. *Religion, 20*(2), 101–118. https://doi.org/10.1016/0048-721X(90)90099-R

Fives,H and Buehl, M. M. (2012). Spring cleaning for the "messy" construct of teachers' beliefs: What are they? Which have been examined? What can they tell us. In K. R. Harris, S. Graham, & T. Urdan (Eds.), *APA educational psychology handbook: Individual differences and cultural and contextual factors*, the American Psychological Association, volume 2 471-499, DOI: 10.1037/13274-019471-499

Fives, H and Gill, G. (2015). *International handbook of research on teachers' beliefs.* London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Floden, R. E. (1985). The role of rhetoric in changing teachers' beliefs. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 1*(1), 19–32.

Freire, P. (2008). *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc.

Fujikura, T. (2003). The role of collective imagination in the Maoist conflict in Nepal. *The Journal of the Association for Nepal.* Volume 23 Number 1 Himalaya Studies

Fuller, C. J. (2004). *The camphor flame: Popular Hinduism and society in India*. Princeton University Press.USA

Gadamer, H.-G. (2008). *Philosophical hermeneutics: 30th anniversary edition*. University of California Press.California/London

Gellner, D. N., Pfaff-Czarnecka, J., & Whelpton, J. (1997). *Nationalism and ethnicity in a Hindu kingdom: The politics of culture in contemporary Nepal*. Routledge. New York

Ghai, Y. (2011). Ethnic identity, participation and social justice: A constitution for new Nepal? *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights, 18*(3), 309–334. https://doi.org/10.1163/157181111X583305

Goodson, I. F. and Sikes, P. (2001). *Life history research in educational settings: Learning from lives.* Open University Press. Netherlands

Goodson, I. F.(1980). Life histories and the study of schooling. *Interchange, 11*(4), 62–76. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01810006

Goodson, I. F. (2006). The rise of the life narrative. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 33*(4), 7–21.

Goodson, I. F. (2008). *Investigating the teacher's life and work*. Sense Publishers. Netherlands

Goodson, I. F., Biesta, G., Tedder, M., & Adair, N. (2010). *Narrative learning.* Routledge. Oxon

Goodson, I. F., & Gill, S. R. (2011). The narrative turn in social research. *Counterpoints, 386,* 17–33.

Goodson, I., & Rudd, T. (2012). Developing a concept of 'refraction': Exploring educational change and oppositional practice. *Educational Practice and Theory, 34*(1), 5–24.

Gray, S., & Hughes, T. M. (2015). Gandhi's devotional political thought. *Philosophy East and West, 65*(2), 375–400. https://doi.org/10.1353/pew.2015.0051

Grossman, P. L. (1990). *The making of a teacher: Teacher knowledge and teacher education.* Teachers College Press. New York

Harris, R., Miske, S., & Attig, G. (2004). *Embracing diversity: Toolkit for creating inclusive learning-friendly environments.* UNESCO Bangkok. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED496229

Hart, J. (2001). *Conflict in Nepal & its impact on children: A discussion document prepared for UNICEF Regional Office South Asia*. Refugee Studies Centre, Oxford University.

Hayden, M. (2012). Third culture kids: The global nomads of transnational spaces of learning. In R. Brooks, A. Fuller, & J. Waters (Eds.), *Changing spaces of education: New perspectives on the nature of learning, (pp. 59-78) Taylor & Francis DOI:* 10.4324/9780203127568

Hellevik, O. (1943). *Forskningsmetode i sosiologi og statsvitenskap*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Hofer, A. (1979). *The caste hierarchy and the state in Nepal. A study of the Muluki Ain of 1854.* Universitätsverlag Wagner.

Holland, D. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* London: Harvard University Press.

Horsdal, M. (2012). *Telling lives: Exploring dimensions of narratives*. Routledge. London and New York

Huber,G.L Mandl, H. (1984). *Access to teacher cognitions: Problems of assessment and analysis*.UK and Canada

Hutt, M. (Ed.). (2004). *Himalayan People's War: Nepal's Maoist rebellion*. London: C. Hurst.

Hwang, K.-K. (2001). The deep structure of Confucianism: A social psychological approach. *Asian Philosophy*, *11*(3). https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1080/09552360120116928

Hyvärinen, M. (2010). Revisiting the narrative turns. *Life Writing, 7*(1), 69–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/14484520903342957

Ishiyama, J., & Batta, A. (2011). Swords into plowshares: The organizational transformation of rebel groups into political parties. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies, 44*(4), 369–379. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2011.10.004

Jain, G. (1994). The Hindu phenomenon. South Asia Books. India

Kafle, Tiwari, Poudel, Pant& Prasad. (2007). *Toolkit for inclusive education and child friendly school.* Nepal: UNESCO.

Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implication of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist, 27*(1).65-90

Kashalkar-Karve, S. (2013). Comparative study of ancient gurukul system and the new trends of guru-shishya parampara. *American International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.* , Arts and Social Sciences, 2(1), March-May, 2013, pp. 81-84

Khanal, P. (2011). Teacher management in a decentralised school context in Nepal: Fuelling tension and dissent? *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 41*(6), 769–784. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2011.592041

KOF. (2015). *KOF factbook education system Nepal.* Switzerland: KOF Swiss Economic Institute.

Koirala, B. (1996). *Schooling and the dalits of Nepal: A case study of Bungkot Dalit community.* University of Alberta. Canada

Kumar, K. (2008). Essentials for value education. *Indian Journal of Science and Technology,.*

Kvale, S. (1997). Interview. En introduktion til det kvalitative forskningsinterview. København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

Labov, W. and Waletzky, J. (1997). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. *Journal of Narrative & Life History, 7*(1-4), 3–38.

Lacey, C. (2012). *The socialization of teachers*. Routledge. London and New York

Lagemann, C. E. (2000). *An elusive science: The troubling history of educational research.* London: The University of Chicago Press.Chicago

Le Fann, G. (2014). Education quality and social justice in the Global South: Challenges for policy, practice and research. Routledge, Vol. 62.

Leve, L. (2007). "Failed development" and rural revolution in Nepal: Rethinking subaltern consciousness and women's empowerment. *Anthropological Quarterly, 80*(1), 127–172.

Liechty, M. (2003). *Suitably modern: Making middle-class culture in a new consumer society*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Løgstrup, K. E. (1997). *The ethical demand.* University of Notre Dame Press.USA

Lohani-Chase, R. S. (2014). Protesting women in the People's War movement in Nepal. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 40*(1), 29–36. https://doi.org/10.1086/676891

Madsen, U. A., & Carney, S. (2011). Education in an age of radical uncertainty: Youth and schooling in urban Nepal. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 115–133. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513589

Manchanda, R. (2004). Maoist insurgency in Nepal: Radicalizing gendered narratives. *Cultural Dynamics, 16*(2–3), 237–258. https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374004047750

Manu (Lawgiver). (2004). *The Law Code of Manu*. Oxford University Press. UK

Marks, T. A., & Palmer, D. S. (2005). Radical Maoist insurgents and terrorist tactics: Comparing Peru and Nepal. *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement, 13*(2), 91–116. https://doi.org/10.1080/09662840500347280

McEwan, H. (1997). The functions of narrative and research on teaching. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 13*(1), 85–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0742-051X(96)00029-7

Mikesell, S. L. (2001). The Maoist movement and the threat to democracy in Nepal. *The Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies, 21*(1).

Mishler, E. G. (1995). Models of narrative analysis: A typology. *Journal of Narrative and Life History, 5*(2), 87–123. https://doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.5.2.01mod

Mlecko, J. D. (1982). The Guru in Hindu tradition. *Numen, 29*(1), 33–61. https://doi.org/10.2307/3269931

MOE. (2010). *MINISTRY OF EDUCATION: A glimpse 2010.* Government of Nepal Ministry of Education Monitoring, Evaluation and Supervision Division Research and Education Management Information Section (REMIS).

MOES, (2002). *Human resource development plan: Preliminary draft.* Kathmandu: Ministry of Education and Sports.

Myers, D. G. (2002). *Social Psychology*. McGraw-Hill. New York

Nepalki chhori Helen- Nepali Times. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://nepalitimes.com/news.php?id=6545#.WjzAx9_iZPY

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 19*(4), 317–328. https://doi.org/10.1080/0022027870190403

NORAD. (2009). J*oint evaluation report of Nepal's Education for All 2004-2009 sector program*. Evaluation Report 1/2009. Oslo: Norad.

Ojermark, A. (2007). *Presenting life histories: A literature review and annotated bibliography* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. ID 1629210). Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1629210

Olivelle, P. (2004). *The law code of Manu (Lawgiver).* Oxford University Press.UK

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers' beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*(3), 307–332. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170741

Panday, D. (2012). The legacy of Nepal's failed development. In S. von Einsiedel, D. M. Malone, & S. Pradhan (Eds.), *Nepal in transition: From People's War to fragile peace*, Cambridge University Press.

Parajuli et al. (2012). *Understanding school processes in Nepal: A school level status study of policies and practices of school sector reform program report of the pilot of the study design.* Kathmandu: Embassy of Finland.

Parajuli, M. N., & Wagley, M. P. (2010). Comparative education and development: Reflections from Nepal. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 40*(6), 835–840. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2010.523262

Pfaff-Czarnecka, J. (1997b). Vestiges and visions: Cultural change in the process of nation-building in Nepal. In D. N. Gellner, J. Pfaff-Czarnecka, & J. Whelpton (Eds.), *Nationalism and ethnicity in a Hindu kingdom: The politics of culture in contemporary Nepal* (pp. 419-470). Amsterdam: Hardwood Academic Publishers.

Pherali, T. J. (2011). Education and conflict in Nepal: Possibilities for reconstruction. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 135–154. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513590

Phillips, D. C. (1994). Telling it straight: Issues in assessing narrative research. *Educational Psychologist, 29*(1), 13–21. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15326985ep2901_2

Pigg, S. L. (1992). Investing social categories through place: Social representations and development in Nepal. *Comparative Studies in Society and History, 34*(3), 491–513. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417500017928

Pintrich, P. R., Marx, R. W., & Boyle, R. A. (1993). Beyond cold conceptual change: The role of motivational beliefs and classroom contextual factors in the process of conceptual change. *Review of Educational Research, 63*(2), 167–199. https://doi.org/10.2307/1170472

Plummer, K. (2001). *Documents of life 2: An invitation to a critical humanism*. SAGE.

Pojman, L. P. (1986). *Religious belief and the will.* Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Polkinghorne, D. (1983). Methodology for the human sciences: Systems of inquiry. SUNY Press.

Polkinghorne, D. (1988). Narrative knowing and the human sciences. SUNY Press.

Polkinghorne, D. (2007). Validity issues in narrative research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 13*(4), 471–486. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800406297670

Pollock and Van Reken, D. and R. (2010). Third culture kids: The experience of growing up among worlds. Nicholas Brealey Publishing in association with International Press.

Popper, K. (2002). *The open society and its enemies.* New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Popper, K. (2012). *The open society and its enemies.* Routledge.

Raeper, W., & Hoftun, M. (1992). *Spring awakening: An account of the 1990 revolution in Nepal.*

Ragsdale, T. A. (1989). *Once a hermit kingdom: Ethnicity, education and national integration in Nepal.* Retrieved from https://www.cabdirect.org/cabdirect/abstract/19891871382

Raina, M. K. (2002). Guru-shishya relationship in Indian culture: The possibility of a creative resilient framework. *Psychology and Developing Societies, 14*(1), 167–198. https://doi.org/10.1177/097133360201400109

Rappleye, J. (2011). Catalysing educational development or institutionalising external influence? Donors, civil society and educational policy formation in Nepal. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 27–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513517

Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. SAGE.

Riessman, C. K., & Quinney, L. (2005). Narrative in social work: A critical review. *Qualitative Social Work, 4*(4), 391–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325005058643

Robert and Shenhav, D. Shaul. (2014). Fundamental assumptions in narrative analysis: Mapping the field. *The Qualitative Report, 19*(38), 1–17.

Rokeach, M. (1968). *Beliefs, attitudes and values: A theory of organization and change*.

Save the Children. (2007). *Finding hope in troubled times- education and protection in Nepal*. Save the Children Norway-Nepal and Save the Children USA-Nepal   Children's Environments Research Group.

Shaw, C. R. (2013). The Jack-Roller: A Delinquent Boy's Own Story. University of Chicago Press.

Schutz and Luckmann, A. and T. (1974). *The structures of the life-world.* London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd.

Scott, J. (2015). The promise, problems and prospects of research on teacher beliefs. In Fives & Gill (Eds.), *International handbook of research on teachers' beliefs,* London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Sharma, S. (2002). The Hindu state and the state of Hinduism State of Nepal. Kathmandu: Himal Book.

Shields, R., & Rappleye, J. (2008). Uneven terrain: Educational policy and equity in Nepal. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 28*(3), 265–276. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188790802270237

Shultz, L. (1989). Being and becoming a woman teacher: Journey through Nepal. *Gender and Education.*

Singh, K., Raina, M., & Sahni, P. (2017). The concept and measure of sukha–dukha: An Indian perspective on well-being. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health, 19*(2), 116–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/19349637.2016.1231604

Singh, M. (2013). Educational practice in India and its foundations in Indian heritage: A synthesis of the East and West? C*omparative Education, 49*(1), 88–106.

Skinner & Holland. (1996). Schools and the cultural production of the educated person in a Nepalese hill community. In B. A. Levinson, D. E. Foley & D. C. Holland (Eds.), *The cultural production of the educated person: Critical ethnographies of schooling and local practice* (pp. 273–299). Buffalo, NY: SUNY Press.

SSRP. (2009). SSRP. (2009-2015). *School sector reform plan*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal. Nepal.

Standing, K., & Parker, S. (2011). The effect of the 'People's War' on schooling in Nepal, 1996–2006. *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, 6*(2), 181–195. https://doi.org/10.1177/1746197911410376

Stash and Hannum, S. and E. (2001). Who goes to school? Educational stratification by gender, caste, and ethnicity in Nepal. *Comparative Education Review, 45*(3).

Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2014). Cross-national policy borrowing: Understanding reception and translation. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 34*(2), 153–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2013.875649

Stuhaug, L. U. (2013). *Migration and rural livelihoods in a Himalayan village. The impact of migration on individual households and community development in Nepal.* Retrieved from https://bora.uib.no/handle/1956/7287

Thapa anf Sijapati, D. and B. (2004). *A kingdom under siege: Nepal's Maoist insurgency, 1996 to 2004.* London: Zed Books.

Thapa, D. (2002). The Maobadi of Nepal State of Nepal, in State of Nepal . In N.M. Dixit, & S. Ramachandran, (pp. 77–99). Kathmandu: Himal Books.

Thomas & Znaniecki. (1927). The Polish peasant in Europe and America. New York: Alfred Knopf.

The World Factbook — Central Intelligence Agency. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/np.html

Tuan, Y.-F. (1979). Space and place: Humanistic perspective. In *Philosophy in geography* (pp. 387–427). Dordrecht: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-009-9394-5_19

UNESCO. (2005). *Embracing diversity: Toolkit for creating inclusive learning-friendly environments* U. A. a. P. R. B. f. Education (Ed.) Introductory booklet.

UNESCO. (2008). *National Education Support Strategy (UNESS) Nepal 2008-2013.* Kathmandu, Nepal: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Kathmandu Office.

UNESCO. (2009). *UNESCO. (2009-2014): History*. Retrieved from http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/leading-the-international-agenda/education-for-all/the-efa-movement/.

UNESCO. (2014). *EFA Global Monitoring Report 2013/4; Teaching and learning: Achieving quality for all.* Retrieved from http://en.unesco.org/gem-report/report/2014/teaching-and-learning-achieving-quality-all#sthash.uUcxnLKY.dpbs.

Unicef. (2006). *Child friendly school manual.*

Vähäsantanen and Eteläpelto, K. and A. (2009). Vocational teachers in the face of major educational reform: Individual ways of negotiating professional identities. *Journal of Education and Work, 22*(1), 15–33. https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/13639080802709620

Valente, C. (2011). *What did the Maoists ever do for us? Education and marriage of women exposed to civil conflict in Nepal* (SSRN Scholarly Paper No. ID 1898014). Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network. Retrieved from https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1898014

Valentin, K. (2006). *Schooled for the Future?: Educational policy and everyday life among urban squatters in Nepal.* IAP.

Valentin, K. (2011). Modernity, education and its alternatives: Schooling among the urban poor in Kathmandu. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 9*(1), 99–113. https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2010.513582

Valentine. (2001). *The paradox of schooling: The possibilities of formal education for squatter families in Kathmandu, Nepal.* University of Copenhagen, Institute of Anthropology.

Vorapanya, S., & Dunlap, D. (2014). Inclusive education in Thailand: Practices and challenges. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 18*(10), 1014–1028. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2012.693400

Wagle, D. (2012). *Dropout of children from schools in Nepal.* Retrieved from https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/269059

Whelpton, J. (2005). *A history of Nepal.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whose Army- Nepali Times. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://nepalitimes.com/~nepalitimes/news.php?id=7480#.Wkt779_iZPY

Wisdo, D. (1987). Kierkegaard on belief, faith, and explanation. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion, 21*(2), 95–114.