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The Quest for Educational Inclusion in Nepal: A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children

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Abstract

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This thesis addresses one of the major challenges facing education systems in developing countries: that of how to include all children, particularly those from relatively disadvantaged communities. It looks, in particular, at the example in Nepal of children from the Dalit communities, a group known to be disadvantaged and often marginalized within the formal education system. In particular, the study attempts to investigate the barriers that prevent the educational access, participation and progress of these students at the secondary level.

This theme was investigated using an ethnographic approach, which examined people's life experiences and culture in natural settings (within schools and in their communities) using data collected through a series of interviews, and observations. It also involved an analysis of the relevant literature and policy documents.

What was found is that the reasons for children from the Dalit community being disadvantaged are many and complex. Broadly, they can be summarized as being, first of all, about the difficulties of implementing national policies, particularly in terms of making resources available and providing effective monitoring, even though these policies are very positive about the inclusion of these children. Secondly, it is about the expectations and attitudes amongst the various Dalit communities as to what they want for their children and young people, which are to do with tradition and culture, life styles and economic circumstances. Thirdly, these two sets of factors together put pressure on the schools, which have to find a way of dealing with the challenge of diversity and various expectations. In this way, this research provides some new understanding of the issues that bear on the education of Dalit children.

The knowledge gained through this research has practical implications for stakeholders: policy makers, teachers, and Dalit community members and social workers. It is argued that this would help to foster the improvement of policy initiatives and their effective implementation. It could also help to bring changes in the existing attitudes of teachers and Dalit communities that may have a positive impact on Dalit children's integration into education. Most importantly, it has brought a new way of looking at these issues that can be used to inform public debate.

The study illustrates the use of a methodology that might usefully be adopted by researchers carrying out research around similar themes in other developing countries. It might also be the case that the barriers that have been identified in Nepal would represent useful starting points for such research.

Declaration of Original Contribution

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

Copyright Statement

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Let me begin by briefly recounting two episodes in my life - both many years ago - that made me pause and think about the issues confronted by the Dalit community in Nepal.

While still a child myself, one evening, I was playing a game (locally known as *Kapaddi*) with a group of children at my village 'Adguri'. The group included both Dalit and non-Dalit children. When the game finished, we departed. It was dusk. I went home straight away but my grandmother stopped me from entering the house and said 'wait a minute' (keeping me outside of the front door) and she brought holy water (gold and water) and sprinkled this on my body and then only she allowed me to enter my home. At the same time, I became angry with her and said why did you put water on my body? She replied, 'you touched Dalit boys while playing (*Kapaddi*), therefore, you became contaminated (*ashudha bhais*); to purify you (make you *shudha*), I sprinkled holy water (*sunpani chharkeko*), and you have to understand it'. At that time, I was confused and could not understand anything, but it stayed with me, which is still fresh in my mind. It raised a lot of questions in my mind: why did she sprinkle holy water? How was I contaminated? How was I purified? What was wrong with them? And so on.....

Several years later, when I completed my bachelor degree, I got a job in the government office in Rolpa district. This was the first job in my life. One day, there was a meeting organized by the District Development Committee (DDC) in which I had an opportunity to participate representing my office. About 20 people participated in the meeting; one of them was from a Dalit community and he was sitting beside me. When an Office Assistant started serving tea/coffee for all the meeting participants, then I began to think, with a big dilemma: whether I have to drink tea sitting together with a Dalit or not. Until that time, knowingly, I had had no such experience, because the usual practice was that non-Dalit people often did not eat and drink anything touched or offered by Dalits. I was one of the followers of such tradition and culture, because I was from the higher caste group (Brahman family) and brought up accordingly. At the same time, I had to follow the instructions given by my parents and grandparents, which is normal practice. In the meeting room, I looked towards each participant to confirm whether each of them (non-Dalit) drinks or not. Then, again, I asked myself: should I drink the tea? What would happen if I drink tea with a Dalit? When I saw everyone was sipping then at the end, with a great dilemma, I also dared to drink but very unwillingly. Thank god, nothing bad happened to me, for the first time in my life drinking tea together with a Dalit. However, I

had a very unusual feeling during and after the meeting. It was an unforgettable moment for me -'whether or not to drink a cup of tea sitting together with a Dalit'.

These two experiences associated with Dalit people always remained in my mind, though I was not really aware of their significance for me.

Later, I had an opportunity to work in the education sector for number of years at the Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) in different technical schools, and training centres (under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education) where I needed to deal with disadvantaged groups. For example, when I was the Principal in the Karnali Technical School, Jumla (1995-1999), I had to deal with the quotas for training that are allocated for Dalits, girls and remote area people, because the government wanted to include them in Nursing courses, Engineering courses, and Agriculture Technician courses. At that time, the school used to produce middle level technical human resources in these three sectors. At that time, I had an opportunity to understand a little more about Dalits and their willingness to take part in the technical training, whereas the quotas allocated for Dalits were limited.

Eventually, I got a chance to go abroad for study. I knew when I got the chance what I should study was the education of the Dalit community. Therefore, I decided to take up the chance to get into the education of Dalit children through my PhD research. Moreover, it is my feeling that the research in Dalit education and their exclusion/inclusion can provide me with an opportunity to understand more about them, which gives me personal satisfaction.

Background to the Research

A major challenge facing many countries around the world is finding ways of including marginalised groups in basic education. Indeed, it is a central aspect of the United Nations 'Education for All' strategy. Considering this issue, this research was carried out in Nepal, and focusses on a group of children that are particularly vulnerable to marginalisation. Nepal is a multicultural, multilingual, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious community. These communities are of various sizes. Among others, the Dalits are one of the minority groups. Dalit children are the focus of this study, which concerns the barriers which they face in participating in education. Education is important not only for the enhancement of human skills with the purpose of increasing labour productivity but also for the intrinsic values it provides to people. It is widely recognized that educated people have a wider set of social and economic opportunities (Das and Hatlebakk, 2009, p4). The main aim of providing

secondary education is to help young people to develop their full human potential and ensure their place in society as productive, responsible and democratic citizens. Furthermore, education has been recognized as a powerful tool for upward social mobility, which can help to build an inclusive society by reducing socio-economic disparities (Chauhan, 2008, p217). However, in Nepal, representation of marginalized groups in the overall student body gradually decreases as one ascends the education ladder (DFID and World Bank, 2006), and the Dalit community is one of the most disadvantaged groups.

Defining 'Dalit'

There is a lack of definitional clarity about the term 'Dalit'. There is no generally acceptable clear definition (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p65; ILO, 2005, p9). Different people and organizations have defined Dalits in different ways. Mr Padam Singh Bishwakarma - former Chairperson of the 'National Dalit Commission' - states that Dalits are those who are religiously disregarded, socially oppressed, economically exploited, politically suppressed and educationally deprived (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p81). The Dalits are defined as that caste of people of Nepal who were categorized as 'untouchables'[1] in the *Purano Muluki Ain* (Old Civil Code of 1854) until the promulgation of *Naya Muluki Ain* (New Civil Code of 1964) (UNICEF, 2007, p2).

However, in the Nepalese context, in practice, the term 'Dalit' is understood as untouchables. Non-Dalit people often do not accept food or drink from untouchables, due to their beliefs about Dalit impurity and uncleanness (Folmer, 2007, p44); indeed, it is a defining feature of the normative caste system (Nightingale, 2011, p159). Dalits are placed at the bottom of the social hierarchy system. They are known generally by their last /family names in the country context, but it would be difficult to know and differentiate them for the foreigners. The exact population of Dalits in Nepal is not known, largely due to the absence of a generally accepted definition. However, the total population of Dalits according to the 2011 Census is estimated at about 14 percent.

Rationale of the Study

It is important to note that my research was carried out during a time of great political change in Nepal. The country was in a transition from a monarchy to a republic with a federal system. The 'federal' and 'republic' are both new systems for Nepal. In this context, the words 'identity and inclusion' have frequently been on the political agenda,

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[1] Untouchables: Those castes from whom water is not acceptable and whose touch requires sprinkling of holy water.

with specific mention of the inclusion of Dalits in society. This is generally felt to be advantageous for the Dalits. The main issue is how to establish the identity based federal states i.e. regions for the empowerment of marginalized ethnic/caste groups within the new constitution. However, the political context in which the constitution is being made is very much favourable to Dalit aspirations and demands (USAID, 2008, p5).

Nepal is in the process of reformation (Sharma, 2007, p16). After the popular people's movement-II of 2006, which aimed especially to build a just, prosperous and equitable society, eliminating the caste-wise, regional and gender-based disparities long rooted in Nepal, a social inclusion agenda has been strongly put forward by the government (Subba, 2008, p10). In the contemporary political debate of Nepal, inclusion has been a major issue, and this involves trying to rectify some of the injustices caused to Dalits. Dalit minorities themselves are also fighting for their own identity in a more organized way through the National Dalit Commission and other Dalit Welfare Organizations (DWOs). The new Nepal demands equality, liberty and social justice in all spheres of life (UNDP, 2009, p80). The interim constitution of Nepal 2007 has committed to restructure the Nepali state in order to promote inclusive governance and development practices, providing space to all people of the country irrespective of their caste, culture, language, gender and geographical settlements (Subba, 2008, p2). In this transition, decentralization of power and social inclusion are vital issues, because they have been major political agenda items reinforcing equity and equality. The Education Ministry has also realized and states that social inclusion and equity issues continue to prevail as the major concern across all levels of education delivery (Ministry of Education, 2009, p10). A study like this, which is focussed on Dalits' participation in education in this particular time of history, is especially important and relevant to the nation's needs.

Moreover, the major political parties of Nepal have made a firm commitment to ensuring full rights and social justice for the marginalized communities (USAID, 2008, p7). The donor community is also interested in addressing Dalit issues in education in Nepal (UNICEF, 2007, p18). Most importantly, social inclusion was high on the national agenda at the time of preparing the proposal for this research. However, without progress in education, social change is unlikely to happen. Therefore, exploring the factors that are hindering education is important. Although the constitution making process has been longer, it is expected that the forthcoming new constitution would be more inclusive and more democratic. In this context, inclusion of Dalits in education and society has become an interest of all political parties and civil society. Therefore my study in this context

seems the most relevant, because it may contribute to making new education policies after the promulgation of a new constitution.

Nevertheless, in the background of this political change, more than 13,000 people lost their lives between 1996 and 2006 due to the armed conflict between the Maoist rebels and Nepal's security forces (Carney and Rappleye, 2011, p2). In this post-conflict situation of the country there is heated discussion about the inclusion of previously excluded groups. Most importantly, in conflict affected situations, education is about more than service delivery because it is a means of socialization and identity development through the transmission of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes across generations (Smith, 2010, p1). Furthermore, all political parties have realized that Dalits are the most discriminated against and disadvantaged among others (see Chapter 2 for more details). Thus, Dalit inclusion has been one of the main political agenda items and researching their educational problems in this context is very important. Therefore, the changing political context has increased the significance of this research.

Research Problem

Dalits of Nepal are an educationally disadvantaged minority caste group (Stash and Hannum, 2001, p360; UNICEF, 2007, p10; Sinha, 2008, p7). Although the participation of both boys and girls has increased at various levels of education, there has not been the expected improvement in the access of Dalit children to educational services (Subba, 2008, p3). In particular, there is increasing evidence that Dalit children are far behind in secondary education as compared to primary. For example, in 2011, the proportion of enrolment of Dalit children in primary education (1-5) was 21.6%, which was encouraging; whereas the lower secondary (6-8) and secondary level (9-10) was only 14.3% and 9.9% respectively (DOE, 2011), which shows that their participation in secondary levels seems quite low and is falling drastically higher up the education ladder. (The 'proportion of enrolment' is the proportion of school children who are Dalit. The ages of school children in primary, lower secondary and secondary is 6-10, 11-13 and 14-15 years respectively). In this situation, exploring the factors that are preventing the education of Dalit children while pursuing secondary level is important.

Early dropout rates of Dalits are high and many children from the community are still out of school (Poudel, 2007). Why there is low retention of Dalit children in schools and what prevents them from accessing, participating, and achieving educational success are major concerns of this study.

Previous studies have revealed that Dalits suffer from several discriminatory and exclusionary practices and the legal requirement for non-discrimination has not been able to combat this discrimination and exclusion of Dalits from education and society (Poudel, 2007; Simkhada, 2008). In this context, how Dalit children are currently experiencing this discrimination in the school environment is another concern of this research.

Most importantly, in general, the academic research on Dalits is limited (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p62). Though some research has been conducted on Dalits, these studies are related to caste, culture, socio-economic and political conditions, health situation, and religion. There has been little research on education, particularly Dalit inclusion/exclusion at secondary level.

Against this background, my main research question focused on an exploration of the barriers to the educational progress of young Dalit children in education. So in this study, the research questions I investigated were:

1. What are the experiences of and views on education in the Dalit community?
2. What are the barriers preventing the educational progress of Dalit students in Nepal?
3. What can be done to improve their situation?

Outline of the Thesis

After understanding the background information on the topic, its research significance and problems, the thesis is organized in a series of chapters where each represents a distinct contribution to its overall direction:

Chapter One examines the context of international developments around the theme of Education for All (EFA). It defines and debates the key concepts: inclusion/exclusion and equity in education. It also explores barriers that are preventing the education of young people and children internationally, which then offers a framework for my analysis of the case of Nepal.

Chapter Two explains the national context, focussing in particular on relevant aspects of its history, political background, and government policies. This will be explained in various sections: general background information on Nepal, the caste system, history of Dalits' educational development, the performance of the Nepalese education system and the national understanding of inclusive education.

Chapter Three explains the rationale for the research design. It provides methodological discussions, discussion on methods of data collection and analysis and discussion on practical/ethical issues - which include sample selection, access procedures, and the trustworthiness of the research.

Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven present the findings obtained through interviews with policy makers, teachers, parents, and children respectively. Chapter 4 also analyses the current Government policies related to Dalit inclusion in education.

Chapter Eight discusses the main findings, presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. The discussion will be focussed mainly on exploring the barriers to the educational access, participation, and achievements of Dalit children in education.

Chapter Nine conceptualizes these barriers through a model; I have named it the 'Sandwich Model'.

Chapter Ten draws the conclusions of the overall research findings and presents the possible implications for the actors in the policy, community and schools.

Finally, the Endnote reflects on the research process, and ends with a final thought.

Chapter One: International Developments to Promote Education for All

The main purpose of this chapter is to place my study in the context of international developments and to introduce the agenda and the framework for the research. The chapter is organized into two main sections. The first section examines the context of international developments over the last 25 years around the theme of 'Education for All' (EFA). The second section explores 'barriers' that are preventing the education of young people and children internationally. Towards the end of the chapter, I develop a framework that is used in subsequent chapters to guide the presentation of my findings. Let us start by examining international developments around the theme of Education for All.

1.1 International Developments

In this section, I trace the history and development of the Education for All movement since 1990. I start with a brief explanation of how EFA relates to the rights of children and how it has evolved. Then I summarise the progress made, as mapped out in the EFA conferences from 1990 through 2000, and the EFA annual monitoring reviews. The issue of marginalisation emerges as a major challenge, raising a question, is the Education for All initiative really about 'all' children?

1.1.1 Education for All

'Education for All' is an inclusive phrase, which is directly rooted in campaigns for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) based on the principle that education is a fundamental human right of all citizens, of each country, as guaranteed by Article 26. In this context, Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU) also provides that discrimination based on any grounds, such as sex, race, colour, ethnicity or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinions, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation, shall be prohibited (Bartolo, *et al.,* 2007, P34). Thus, access to education is seen as a fundamental right for every child and is legally guaranteed in many countries in the world (Sarker and Davey, 2009, p1). Dake (2011) argues that education is an inalienable human right, because it allows students to critically understand their position in society and gives them the tools to perpetuate change in their own lives and communities. Nevertheless, Education for All and inclusion has become a part of a broader initiative to establish and support a culture of human rights in our society (Greyling, 2009).

In the 1990s, the world's education policies were developed under the coordination of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). UNESCO organised the first World Conference on the 'Education for All' programme in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, aiming to ensure that access to education is a human right. Its specific focus was on ensuring that 'all' children have access to basic education of good quality (UNESCO, 2005, p9). International efforts to promote EFA intensified following the first World Conference on Education for All with its slogan of 'EFA by the year 2000' (UNESCO, 1990).

Over the following decade, this was given further impetus by two major international conferences. First of all, the World Conference of Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain (1994), led to the 'Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action', which endorsed the right to education of every individual and renewed the pledge made by the first World Conference on 'Education for All' to ensure that right for all, regardless of individual differences (UNESCO, 1994). In particular, it focused on the future of special needs education in the context of the Education for All movement. Later, The World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal (2000) agreed the 'Dakar Framework for Action', which reaffirmed and acknowledged the commitment to achieving the Education for All goals by the year 2015 (UNESCO, 2000).

In this way, a series of efforts were made internationally to make Education for All a reality for young people and children. A logical consequence, therefore, is that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate against them on any grounds, such as caste, ethnicity, religion, economic status, refugee status, language, gender, or disability (UNESCO, 2005, p12). However, a bitter truth revealed by the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2010) is that, despite these international commitments, millions of children are being deprived of their human right to education (UNESCO, 2010, p136).

Therefore, the 'Education for All' slogan has remained a matter of international debate since its declaration, because millions of people are not going to school, most of whom are from developing countries (Ainscow and Miles, 2008; Miles and Singal, 2010). For example, it was estimated that some 57 million children were still out of school in 2011 (UNESCO, 2014, p40). The same report has estimated that 53 million children will remain out of school in 2015 if progress continues to be as slow as it has been in recent years, which is a great challenge to human society today.

Another aspect of EFA is that it is not simply about the problem of access, since those who are in school may not be receiving an acceptable quality education. Indeed, the Annual Monitoring Report of UNESCO (2013) revealed that there are about 250 million children that are experiencing poor quality education in the world today (UNESCO, 2013, p1). Therefore, on the one hand, there is a problem of access for all children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds in developing countries, and on the other hand, there is a challenge to provide quality education for those who are in school. In addition, although it is recognized that the education is a fundamental human right worldwide, the world community is still struggling to eradicate inequalities of class, caste, gender, race, and ethnicity through various policy framework initiatives (UNESCO, 2014, p13). However, the documents produced by the international movements explained above have encouraged national governments to initiate policies in an attempt to redress the balance and challenge the inequalities that have been occurred in many education systems (Rose, 2012, p2).

Alongside these developments, a separate movement has emerged. This promotes the idea of "inclusive education", which also argues that the major challenge facing educational systems around the world, in both developing and developed countries, is to include all children (Ainscow and Sandil, 2010, p401). In particular, this is concerned with ensuring that the most marginalized groups of children gain access to and participate in education (Ainscow and Miles, 2008, p30; UNESCO, 2013).

Bringing the thinking of these two 'movements' together, the research presented in this thesis is focused around the challenge of making EFA inclusive.

1.1.2 Making Education for All Inclusive

The first World Conference on 'Education for All' is considered a landmark conference in the development of thinking about inclusive education, according to Ainscow and Miles (2008). They argue that the idea of inclusive education has emerged through the realization that, even in wealthier countries, despite the resources available, many young people become marginalised and, as a result, leave school with no worthwhile qualifications. The Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education endorsed the idea of inclusive education and acknowledged that there are a large number of vulnerable and marginalized groups of learners in education systems worldwide (UNESCO, 1994). However, the idea of 'inclusive education' remains a matter of debate in terms of what it means and what it implies for policy and practice. It becomes even more "complex" because, it is argued, there is no one perspective on inclusion within a single country, or even within a school

(Booth and Ainscow, 1998). As a result, definitions of inclusion are debated, ranging from a focus on the physical placement of students in general education classrooms through to the idea that it must involve the transformation of entire educational systems.

Ainscow, Booth & Dyson (2006) argue that inclusive education is sometimes seen as being synonymous with Education for All. Further, taking a broader view, Bartolo *et al.*, (2007, p6) state that inclusion is a social phenomenon where children need to belong to the community not only within the classroom but also outside the classroom. It has also been argued that inclusion involves the recognition of the value of diversity, difference and individuality in school and communities (Ballard, 1996, p42; Vehmas, 2010, p87). Moreover, Veck (2009, p141) believes that inclusive education secures access to educational spaces for learners who would otherwise be excluded from them; listening to their voice is equally important to make them feel included in education. According to Vitello and Mithang (1998), the aim of inclusive education is to eliminate social exclusion that is a consequence of attitude and responses to diversity in race, social class, ethnicity, religion, gender and ability (cited in Ainscow, 2005, p109). However, inclusion is about a sense of belonging whereby all children feel valued and can make a contribution to their community (Ross, 2011).

Although inclusive education is defined by some writers in terms of overcoming barriers to learning and development for all children, in the context of Southern countries, it tends to fill what are seen as gaps left by EFA, and so focuses almost exclusively on disabled children (Miles and Singal 2010, p1). In some countries, inclusive education is thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Internationally, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001; Ainscow and Sandil, 2010, p401). After reviewing the American literature, Pant (2008) summarises inclusive education as a way to provide quality education for all children and youth, noting that it is variously described as mainstreaming, integration, full inclusion and regular education initiatives.

In countries of the South, inclusion is often perceived as a Western concept, and its implementation in education is far from easy, as policy makers and practitioners seek to make sense of different perspectives (Ainscow and Sandil, 2010, p402). Inclusion is therefore contested within and across educational systems, and its 'implementation' is problematic both in the countries of the North and of the South (Armstrong *et al.,* 2011, p29).

In the countries of the North, the idea of inclusion has frequently been framed almost exclusively by policy on school performance and measurable outcomes (Ibid, p38). In the countries of the South, the meaning of inclusive education is situated by post-colonial social identities and policies for economic development that are frequently generated and financed by international organizations. Post-colonial and post-colonial social identities refer to the effects of colonization and imperialism or the extension of power into other nations and people. The phrase post-colonial direction refers to a phenomenon developing after the colonial countries became independent. It means that even after independence, the countries of the North were able to continue their influence over the countries of the South by various means, such as direct aid or financing through international organizations. Post-colonialism also deals with conflicts of identity and cultural belonging as well as the social, political and economic relationships. While Nepal itself was not colonised, like other poor countries in the region, the mechanisms that maintained post-colonial influence also became important for the policy development and funding of national projects within the country. Therefore, the meaning of inclusion is significantly framed by different national and international contexts. However, the idea of inclusion continues to provide an opportunity in education and society in general to identify and challenge discrimination and exclusion at international, national and local levels (Ibid, p29). Nevertheless, the challenges associated with promoting and implementing inclusion across different countries around the world are complex and context dependent, warranting local considerations and solutions that are particular and indigenous to the uniqueness of each country, their systems of governance and education, their cultures and socio-political climates (Lim and Thaver, 2014, p975).

Armstrong *et al.,* (2011, p29) argue that education reform is seen as a key driver for achieving social integration and cohesion. Policy makers have become interested in wider issues of social inclusion and how education might play a role in promoting social cohesion that is increasingly diverse, socially and culturally. Governments are currently focussing more on equity, which has been recognized by the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 (UNESCO, 2010). If we look at the history of developed countries in the last 25 years more critically, they have a long history of having students in schools. However, this has not made a difference because it could not be equitable education for some children, otherwise they would be able to reach their full potential.

However, for some writers inclusive education is seen as an ambitious and far reaching notion that is theoretically concerned with all students (Artiles *et al*., 2006, p67), whilst its

practical aspect is contentious due to ambiguity in conceptual, historical and pragmatic viewpoints (Ibid, p65). Nevertheless, there is some rhetoric behind EFA and inclusive education in fulfilling the international commitments to deliver quality education for 'all' children (Miles and Singal, 2010, p2). They also argue that although the initial vision of EFA was broad and ambitious, the rhetoric of 'all' has so far failed to reach the poorest and most disadvantaged children, including those with disabilities. Thus there has been a debate in literature about how far Education for All is actually about 'all' children.

Ainscow and Miles (2008, p20) argue that the field of inclusive education is riddled with uncertainties, disputes and contradictions. They also argue that progress in relation to both the EFA agenda and inclusive education requires greater clarity about what becoming more inclusive involves. With this in mind, they conceptualize inclusive education as follows:

- Inclusion is concerned with all children and young people in school
- Inclusion is focussed on presence, participation and achievement
- Inclusion and exclusion are linked together such that inclusion involves the active combating of exclusion
- Inclusion is seen as a never-ending ongoing process

Given the circumstances in the context of my study, this wide ranging definition provides a helpful framework for my research, which is particularly focussed on the 'presence, participation and achievements' of Dalit children.

In summary, then, this study is about a challenging problem of the world and Nepal, particularly rural areas in Nepal, and particularly around a group of children who we know from history and statistics and from my experience are still, and always have been to some extent marginalized. Therefore, they require equitable treatment to enable them to be included. In this context, this study is about making Education for All equitable. By equitable, I take the definition of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as meaning it should be 'inclusive' and 'fair'. This is explained below in more detail.

1.1.3 Addressing Equity

As defined by OECD, equity in education has two dimensions: fairness and inclusion. 'Fairness' basically means making sure that personal and social circumstance should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential. 'Inclusion' means ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all (OECD, 2008, p2). A fair and inclusive education is desirable because of the human rights imperative for people to be able to develop their capacities and participate fully in society (OECD, 2007, p11). Nevertheless, equitable

education systems are fair and inclusive, and support their students to reach their learning potential, without either formally or informally pre-setting barriers or lowering expectations (Field, Kuczera and Pont, 2007 cited in OECD, 2012, p5). Cobbold (2011, p1) argues that equity should ensure that differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power or possessions.

Educational equity emphasises both equity in 'opportunities' and equity in educational 'outcomes'. If all students were alike, equity in education would simply be a question of providing equal distribution of educational resources to all young pupils and children (Opheim, 2004, P13). Analysing equity in education, therefore, involves studying access, participation, achievements and educational outcomes among students with different demographic characteristics in the education system (Ibid, p13). The needs of students differ; to obtain expected outcomes is likely to require unequal resources applied to different students.

The goal of equity in education outcomes is a more socially just one than the commonly advocated goal of equality of opportunity (Cobbold, 2011, p3). The idea of equality of opportunity is often seen as providing the opportunities to learn without reference to the outcomes. As such, equality of educational opportunity is a recipe for continuing inequity and is a fundamentally unjust principle (Ibid, p4). Gewirtz (1998) differentiates between the equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes, because 'equality of outcomes' seeks to ensure equal rates of success for different groups in society through direct intervention to prevent disadvantage, for example via positive discrimination or affirmative action programmes. On the other hand, 'equality of opportunity' is viewed as equal formal rights, equality of access and equality of participation. However, the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2010) rcognizes that 'fair' and 'inclusive' education is one of the most powerful levers available for making societies more equitable, innovative and democratic (UNESCO, 2010, p159).

Nevertheless, the spirit of equity is that everybody needs to be included and everybody is treated fairly. So, in the case of Nepal, is the education system inclusive and fair? As explained above, I am taking a definition of inclusion from the literature of being about 'access, participation and achievements'. Another helpful formulation from the literature is that we have to look at what are the 'barriers to access, participation and achievements'. Nepal is the case chosen for the purpose of this study, which is about making 'Education for All inclusive'. Therefore, I am going to adopt the definition from Ainscow and Miles, (2008) that focusses on access, participation and achievements of all.

1.1.4 Summary

So far, I have explained that my study is set in the context of the Education for All movement, focusing in particular on the issue of equity, which is about being 'inclusive' and 'fair'. We know that being inclusive means access, participation and achievements and we also know this requires a focus on barriers (Ainscow and Miles, 2008, p21). My research therefore set out to learn more about 'barriers' that make it difficult for some children and young people to gain access, participate and achieve.

1.2 Barriers

Let us look at this issue in relation to what is known about other countries internationally.

Let us look first of all, at general situations internationally and then I will look at two cases in a little more detail: South Africa and New Zealand, which are more similar to our situation. These cases give evidence of what barriers the children and young people experience that make it difficult to gain access, participation and achievements.

So I am looking at efforts in different parts of the world to promote Education for All. In so doing, I am seeking to understand the main barriers to access, participation and achievements of all and how these barriers operate. These may be different types of barriers that are experienced in different countries as they attempt to move towards equitable provision. However, the discussion in this section leads to a broad understanding of potential barriers to access, participation and achievements, which can give a framework for my analysis of the case of Nepal.

1.2.1 Problems Emerging in Different Countries

From reviewing the international literature and documents, I found the following types of problems which affect the development of equitable education systems for disadvantaged children: national policies, resources, household poverty, traditional socio-cultural beliefs and practices including gender disparity and caste discrimination. Now, I explore these problems in more detail.

Problems Associated with National Policies

Policy formulations on developing countries are often influenced by foreign aid agencies, which often underestimate the practical difficulties in the context that ultimately affects implementing new policies. Napier (2005, p62) has identified two major problems in

implementing educational policies in developing countries: i) the reform source, since reform or programmes are often imported from or imposed by dominant countries ii) the implementation issues relative to needs and realities on the ground that are often complicated by factors such as poverty, disadvantage, corruption, neo-colonial domination, foreign debt and rapidly growing population.

Developing countries face particularly acute dilemmas as they enact reforms to improve, modernize and democratize education. Napier (2005, p66) summarises the dilemmas and tensions between seemingly contradictory goals including quality (standards, performance levels) and quantity (delivery level, accessibility); centralization (top-down administration and control) and decentralization (devolution of some authority and control to regional or local levels, local choice); local needs (micro-level, in communities, schools) versus national levels (for the nation, overall); internal needs (specific to local and regional factors and capacity levels) versus imported ideas (global trends, such as technology and outcomes based systems); teacher problems (untrained teachers, dependence on expatriate teachers, surplus/shortage) versus high teacher-pupil ratios; neo-colonialism (sustained dependence) versus independence (that requires capacity); equity (such as in resource allocation and use) versus local autonomy (that can lead to sustained inequality); and continuity (selective, traditional cultural revival stability) versus change (modernization, progress). He further stresses that economic and political realities often dictate which forces prevail, and hence disadvantage in a developing country makes for vulnerability to a variety of forces such as financing, external aid and influences, corruption and compromised outcomes of reform (Ibid, p66).

Policy formulation and implementation are interpreted as complementary processes because inappropriate perception of the implementation process is often the cause of failure in achieving desired results from educational reforms or policy initiatives (Kiwia, 2013, p21). The basic problems of implementing educational reforms in developing countries are: the question of 'compliance' and the 'responsiveness' of different groups charged with implementing the reforms. In order to achieve the goals and objectives of the reforms, those charged with the task of implementation need to find ways of securing the support of the different groups of people in the adopting community or system within which the reforms are being carried out, and also need to gain the compliance of various agencies and institutions such as Government Ministries, voluntary agencies, the local elites and the beneficiaries of the reforms (Ibid, p18).

To take an example, the education reform in Tanzania appears unsystematic and is subject to frequent and abrupt changes, leading to non-attainment of the desired objectives. Nevertheless, reform is a social phenomenon, and the process of educational reform is a complex one which should not be studied through a fixed model of educational change (Kiwia, 2013, p20). Most importantly, an ambitious scope of a reform makes it difficult to bring about meaningful change in a system (Ibid, p22). Therefore, policies should not be over-ambitious, but should consider the availability of resources.

Resource Problem

For quality education, an effective learning environment is essential, which demands a variety of resources. We also saw in Section One that additional resources are essential to provide equitable and good quality education to all children. During the past, priority was given to increasing school enrolment rather than for learning. Now learning has become a major concern, because enrolment alone cannot guarantee a student's learning. Completing 5 or even 9 years of schooling in the average developing country does not necessarily mean that the students have become functionally literate in terms of basic cognitive skills. For example, the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group's report shows that 60% of students in South Africa are functionally illiterate. In other words, more than 60% of those who are in school do not reach a level of basic literacy in cognitive skills (Hanushek and Wobmann, 2007, p53). Therefore, there is a great concern about the learning environment in developing countries, which is largely concerned with the shortage of resources.

Booth and Ainscow (2002) have identified some barriers that limit the presence, participation and achievement of some learners such as: lack of resources or expertise, inappropriate curricula or teaching methods and attitudes.

In addition, poor infrastructural facilities, or lack of effective pedagogic support for acquiring linguistic, numerical and cognitive competencies adversely affect the schooling of disadvantaged children, for example, Dalits in India (Nambissan, 1996, p1011).

Household Poverty

From a cross-national literature review of sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, Hunt (2008, p7) states that household income is found to be an important factor in determining access to education, as schooling potentially incurs a range of costs, both upfront and hidden. These costs include school fees, uniforms, travel costs, equipment and opportunity costs of sending a child to school. Ashby (1985, p69) reported similar findings: that in developing

countries, by sending children to school a household incurs not only the direct expenses of schooling but also the opportunity cost of forgone labour and earnings.

Household poverty and livelihood systems in a family environment affect opportunities to receive equitable education. For instance, the educational backwardness of scheduled communities in India is generally attributed to poverty and illiterate home environments (Nambissan, 1996, p1011). Moreover, even when parents are similar on a variety of characteristics such as education, income, or race, there is an inverse relationship between the number of siblings and educational outcomes due to the necessity of resource dilution. This means that in a large family, a child receives fewer resources than in small families (Tikly, 2003, p758).

Similarly, a study conducted in Ethiopia shows that educating children from economically deprived communities is a great challenge because they have to face different hurdles in their daily lives (Giorgis, 2006, p5). In the poor community, poverty and survival related challenges exist that are a great challenge for their children's education. She further states that in developing countries, children's access to and quality of education are affected by survival strategies in the face of poverty, the capacity of parents to be involved in their children's education and poor quality schooling (Ibid, p17).

A study conducted in urban Pakistan states that poverty remains an important determinant of school participation. For example, poor households keep their children out of school due to their inability to afford the cost of schooling (Azid and Khan, 2010, p442). Similarly, a study conducted in Northern Bangladesh shows that poverty, child labour, and other factors such as ignorance towards education, language problems, cultural alienation and parents' seasonal migration account for the low rate of school attendance (Sarker and Davey, 2009, p1).

A study conducted in Egypt reveals that parental educational aspiration on children's participation in school is an important factor (Cochrane, *et al.*, 1986). Several American studies indicated that parental educational achievement is a significant factor in making decisions on an individual's education (Stafford, *et al.*, 1984, p606). The educational performance of each individual student is naturally influenced by stimuli from the parents and the environment (Opheim, 2004, p140). Similarly, in addition to the characteristics of the children and their families, community attributes form a larger contextual variable that also affects children's school leaving in Vietnam (Belanger and Liu, 2008, p51).

However, school dropout due to household poverty seems to be a continuous problem in developing countries. There are many factors associated with school dropout, including: *the individual*: poor health, malnutrition and motivation; *household situation*: child labour, poverty; and *school associated factors*: teacher's absenteeism, school location, and poor quality educational provision (Sabates *et al.,* 2011, p12). In particular, orphans, migrants, lower caste/scheduled tribe children and children from minority language groups in many but not all contexts experience disrupted access and are more prone to drop out (Ibid, p13).

A study in India (a slum area in Bangalore) has indicated that the income of the father was linked to the continuity and discontinuity of the child in school; with the fathers of most dropouts not employed (Hunt, 2008, p8). However, how people regard schooling and the importance placed on it might at times shape interaction between schooling, household income and dropping out (Ibid, p8). Likewise, perceptions of how education affects future prospects appear to affect retention in schools.

In India, the large number of children dropping out from schools and their relatively low achievement levels has meant that very few Dalit children actually reach high school. The main reason for dropping out is inadequate incentives for the education of Dalit children in terms of both value and coverage (Jeffery *et al*., 2004, p1020). In their study, Dalit parents (Chamar) said poverty was the single most important reason for withdrawing boys from school (Ibid, p972).

In addition to the above, due to family poverty, the scope and situation of employment opportunities determines the educational trajectory of disadvantaged children. For example, a study conducted in India - Bijnor district (Western Utter Pradesh) shows that due to the unsecured employment in the future, Dalit parents are beginning to withdraw from investing money in young men's education at secondary level or above (Jeffrey *et al.*, 2004, p963). The future opportunity to use an individual's education meaningfully through obtaining jobs and wages commensurate with his/her training and ability is seen as an important factor. For example, the history of Black American minorities' employment experience is most fully documented and well known (Ogbu, 1987, p318).

Socio-cultural Problems

In both Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, entrenched social biases prevent certain social groups from achieving equitable opportunities and outcomes in education (Subrahmanian, 2003, p1). Similarly, there are problems of equitable educational services in developed countries, although the nature of these problems is slightly different. For example, a study

conducted in the United States of America (USA) highlights that there have always been factors within schools and classrooms operating against minority children's social adjustment and academic performance (Ogbu, 1987, p319). Moreover, minority children's educational performance is affected by some of the socio-cultural dynamics (Ogbu and Simons, 1998, p183).What goes on inside the classroom and school is greatly affected by the minority groups' perceptions of and responses to schooling and that is related to its historical and structural experience in the larger society (Ogbu, 1990, p144).

Minorities face discrimination in various spheres of American life, such as discrimination in employment - usually through job ceilings, where minorities are often relegated to menial jobs and low wages; or political barriers through social and residential segregation, whereby children are often channelled into segregated schools (Ogbu, 1990, p150). In addition, the failure of school personnel to understand the cultural behaviour of minority children often results in conflicts that affect the children's capacity to adjust and learn. The social adjustment and academic performance of minority children is affected by complex and interlocking forces that are not limited to those of the wider society, of the schools, and classrooms (Ibid, p156). In this way, even in developed countries (such as America), minorities are denied equal access to good education. Therefore, socio–cultural problems and discriminative attitudes towards minority groups not only exist in developing countries, but also in developed counties.

In addition to this, gender disparity also continues to hamper progress in education (Burnett and Felsman, 2012, p5). In many countries, girls are less likely than boys to get into school (UNESCO, 2010, 109). The poor and females from an ethnic minority living in remote rural areas are marginalized in education. Being poor and a female, they carry a double disadvantage in many countries (Ibid, P141).

In addition to the above, there are some problems which are specially associated with the caste system, which is explained below:

Caste Related Problems

According to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) report 2004, there are 20 different nations where caste based discrimination is still practiced, namely: Algeria, Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Conakry, India, Japan, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Srilanka and Yemen (Baniya, 2007, p45). According to Human Rights Watch, it is estimated that there are 260 million Dalit people worldwide still living in segregation

and servitude because of caste based discrimination (Ibid, p6). However, the caste system is practiced dominantly in India because Indian society is highly stratified on the basis of caste hierarchy, religious affiliation, linguistic diversity and regional loyalty. Traditionally, Hindu society is divided into thousands of castes which reflect socio-economic, educational and cultural disparities (Chauhan, 2008, p217). Chauhan further states that even after 60 years of affirmative action, participation of the lower castes in higher education still does not match their share in the total population (Ibid, p218).

In the Indian constitution, Dalits are expressed as the '*Scheduled Caste*' (Chauhan, 2008, p219). Due to their work and rank in social hierarchy, they were labelled as 'untouchables' (synonymous with the current Dalits, meaning downtrodden), and thus were denied equality of opportunity in all socio-economic fields, including education (Ibid, p219). I will now briefly describe the problems of education of Dalits in different parts of India.

A study in Gujarat reveals that Dalit children are frequently made to sit at the back of classrooms, and the communities as a whole are made to perform degrading rituals in the name of caste (Arties *et al*., 2003, p9). The poor treatment in schools and loss of self-worth and dignity results in dropping out or poor performance in examinations, thus undermining scheduled caste students' opportunities to progress to higher levels of education (Sedwal and Kamat, 2008, p5). Similarly, another study reveals that in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Indian society, the parameters of gender, caste, class and region are crucial in determining access to different levels of education (Chanana, 1993, p69).

The existing values, beliefs and attitudes in India are working as barriers to ensure the full participation of all children in the curriculum and culture of their school setting (Singal, 2008, p1516). Another study done in India by Haq (1992, p461) finds that, despite modernization, higher castes continue to dominate educational opportunities, including teaching and other positions in schools and universities, and they are over–represented in the student body. Haq concludes that educational inequality is a function of overarching social inequality; the educational system mirrors inherent structures of values opposed to equalization of opportunities.

Likewise, a study in Karnataka shows that dominant castes continue to wield influence in education, for example, in the classroom; upper caste teachers provide unequal treatment to the Dalits including verbal abuse and physical punishment (Kaul, 2001, p62). Similarly, another study also supports the view that Dalit children are suffering from discrimination by teachers and other students (Desai and Kulkarmi, 2008, p249). Several Indian studies

reveal that there is great caste and religious diversity, which has had important consequences for limiting India's achievement in basic education (Chaudhary, 2009, p269).

Although the main reasons for Dalit exclusion from education are related to economic, social and cultural factors, the caste based society makes their integration and inclusion more difficult. In this regard, Rose *et al*., (2014, p38) argue that inclusive education will not be achieved until such time as the influences of poverty and the challenges associated with ingrained beliefs about peoples from Dalit castes are addressed. Nevertheless, increased formal education has given Dalit young men a sense of dignity and confidence at the village level (Jeffery *et al*., 2004, p963).

In addition to the above, the Department for International Development (DFID), formerly named the Overseas Development Agency (ODA) has conducted a study in 6 developing countries: Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Bangladesh, India, Jamaica and Vanuatu; it identified and summarised the following broad factors that affect the students' participation in education, though there are considerable overlaps between these factors: geographical, socio-cultural, health, economic, religious, legal, political/administrative, educational and initiatives (Brock and Cammish, 1997, p13). Another study also concludes that deprivations in a wide range of economic, social and political dimensions reinforce the systematic exclusion of poor and marginalized groups from the right to quality education in many countries (Subrahmanian, 2003, p1). In the same vein, Tapia (2000, p25) summarises how the learning and academic performance of Mexican American students are influenced by the interplay of economic, cultural, linguistic and educational factors. Tapia further mentions that the level of family stability and social and economic conditions of poor communities are the strongest factors affecting students' learning and academic achievements.

Now, let us look in more detail at the cases of two particular countries that illustrate the complexity of bringing real change in educational services in both a developing and a developed country.

1.2.2 The Case of a Developing Country: South Africa

In South Africa equitable educational development is mainly related to policy and resource factors.

Policy Factors

Prior to the democratic election in 1994, South Africa was ruled by a White minority that made up one fifth of the total population (Botha, 2002, p362). Since the establishment of a new multi-racial democratic government, the South African government has placed emphasis on the introduction of policies and mechanisms aimed at redressing the legacy of a racially and ethnically fragmented, dysfunctional and unequal education system inherited from apartheid (Cross *et al*., 2002, p171). At the beginning of 1997, the Ministry of Education introduced outcomes based education (OBE) [2] as the most likely system to operate at all levels of South African education and to address the issue of quality and inequality in South African education (Botha, 2002, p362). In OBE system both (what the learner should know and teacher expectation) focus on outcomes/results. However, less 'emphasis' is placed on what the teachers want to achieve, instead, teachers must adjust their expectations and instructional practices themselves so that all children can learn and achieve pre-determined outcomes. The education offered under the apartheid system specifically to Black learners was of a very poor quality (DOE, 1997, p8 cited in Botha, 2002, p362). In the new education policy, the previously advantaged school's curriculum (White school's curriculum) was continued in the previously disadvantaged schools: Black schools (Harley and Wedekind, 2004, p213). However, this widened the gap between the former historically advantaged and disadvantaged schools rather than narrowed it down ((Ibid, p211). This happened mainly because the inequalities and contextual realities of South African schools were overlooked while introducing new education policy (Ibid, p213-214).

In fact, Outcomes Based Education (OBE) in South Africa was heavily criticised, because it was an over-ambitious curriculum policy in terms of its implementation (Jansen, 1998, p321). Jansen argue that OBE was a political response to apartheid schooling, rather than one which was concerned with the modalities of change at the classroom level and the realities of the classroom life (Ibid, p323). Curriculum was changed just to give the

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[2] *Outcome Based Education (OBE) is a learner-centered approach where emphasis is not on what the teacher wants to achieve, but rather on what the learner should know, understand, demonstrate and become. Teachers and learners focus on certain pre-determined results or outcomes to be achieved by the end of each learning process and the quality of education should be judged by focussing on learner outcomes (Botha, 2002, p364).*

impression that the change was taking place and the expectations of the disadvantaged groups were being addressed, rather than to be implemented and practiced (Cross *et al*, 2002, p180). However, while introducing OBE, local cultural and contextual realities and capacities as much as implementation requirements seemed to be overlooked (Chisholm and Leyendecker, 2008, p203).

Jansen (1998, p321) has made a number of critical observations especially about the policy on OBE curriculum and reform; some of these are explained here.

Firstly, the language of OBE and its associated structures was too complex, confusing and contradictory and inaccessible for most teachers to give these policies meaning through their classroom practices. For example, to understand the concept of 'outcomes' required understanding of competencies, unit standards, learning programmes, curriculum assessment criteria, bands, levels, phases and so on. Teachers were not trained in all this terminology and they were not conceptually clear about this curriculum change (Ibid, p323).

Secondly, it was assumed and advocated that changes in the education system were essential to boost the economic growth of South Africa. In Jansen's words OBE policy was 'over-sold', which misguided and misinformed the teachers and the public (Ibid, p325).

Thirdly, the management of OBE was not supported by the administrators, which placed an additional burden on teachers. Actually, to manage OBE innovation, teachers are required to reorganize the curriculum, increase the amount of time allocated to monitoring individual student progress against outcomes, administer appropriate forms of assessment and maintain comprehensive records, but administrators did not realize these realities (Ibid, p328).

Fourthly, OBE as outcomes does not define content; it underestimates curriculum content but children do not learn outcomes in a vacuum. Curriculum content is a critical vehicle for giving meaning to a particular set of outcomes (Ibid, p328). Indeed, content was replaced by outcomes (Harley and Wedekind, 2004, p200).

Regarding the content of the curriculum, (Tikly, 2003, p171) states that in contrast to the highly content-driven approach characteristics of apartheid education, OBE leaves it up to individual teachers and schools to make up the content to meet the outcomes. The problem has been that schools are unequally equipped to buy the materials and to make up the content, as there is an uneven distribution of well qualified teachers (Ibid, p171).

Moreover, regarding the education policy in South Africa, Napier (2005, p83) reports that the curriculum changes and plan were ill-regarded and excessively influenced by foreign ideas, impractical for meeting real needs and haphazardly rushed into implementation without adequate teacher training and support. Napier further states that teachers resisted and feared adopting the new paradigm and OBE became a hated word. All the changes in educational policies in South Africa were implemented in a top-down fashion. Consequently, the matriculation rates declined for several years (Ibid, p83).

Napier (2005, p83) summarises how the curriculum plan and implementation strategies were re-designed and re-drafted frequently. The debate over policy implementation and reformulation in South Africa heightened some universal reform dilemmas, including too rapid change with inadequate training and support, lack of capacity, and inadequate information on micro-level realities. Napier further states that affirmative action bursary schemes, providing bus fares and books for disadvantaged students failed to be implemented at some local teacher training colleges, because administrators believed them impractical (Ibid, p83). Although the transformation in South Africa is under way, real success is patchy and uneven, still predominantly in progressive private schools and in the former White schools (Ibid, p84). This means that South Africa failed to develop an equitable education system and policy.

From a political perspective, Jansen (1998, p330) argued that it is important to understand OBE as an act of political response in which the primary pre-occupation of the state was with its own legitimacy. Therefore, policy changes could not bring visible changes in the schools. Similarly, OBE was primarily an attempt to push forward something innovative into the schools at all costs, in order to reclaim political credibility for the Ministry of Education which was criticised, within and outside of government, because it delivered little, and there was little concrete evidence of transformation in the schools (Ibid, p330).

Overall, the OBE curriculum largely comes from the white schools and the private schools. During apartheid, White schools were the leading schools to which the rich children went, and the curriculum they followed was more likely to be suitable to go to university. These schools were well equipped. After the removal of the apartheid regime, the national unity government did not study closely whether this curriculum was useful for the working life of Black people and their situations. That curriculum was actually useful for those who wanted to go to university; probably not only to the universities in South Africa, but possibly the universities in Europe and America. They not only did science and modern languages; they also did Latin and ancient history, which was necessarily the curriculum

that would be fit for everybody in the newly liberated South Africa. It seems less than reasonable to teach this curriculum to all South African children. Latin was not relevant to most children's lives, but it had some relevance to the White children because it was an academic qualification that would help them to take the next step in studying. However, it was not fit for those who wanted to go out to work when they finished secondary level. It is thus clear that African educational policies were carried out in a cultural and educational policy and developmental vacuum, in terms of African's people's everyday lives (Olivet and Jagusah, 2001, p113). In this way, despite the adoption of an inclusive education policy in South Africa, there was a disparity between the policy and practice in schools (Gous *et al.,* 2013, p2). Despite many efforts made, children continue to be actively excluded from the South African education system (Ibid, p2).

The experience of South Africa clearly indicates that large scale and frequent changes in the educational policies, without adequate preparation and support for the process of implementation, mean that educational success cannot be achieved. Moreover, the policies should be changed to address the real needs of key target groups rather than being excessively influenced by the politics and aid agencies. Impractical and more ambitious policies cannot be implemented. Similarly, the highly centralized system of policy making is difficult to implement in the real world because people do not recognise them properly. However, inputs and process are equally important in order to obtain expected outcomes from the policy changes. Such inputs and process require certain resources.

Resources

Poor availability of resources has been an important factor that has obstructed implementing policies in South African context. For example, Jansen (1998) argued that for outcome based education (OBE) to succeed, it requires trained and re-trained teachers, radically new forms of assessment (competency/performance based), classroom organization which facilitates monitoring and assessment, additional time for managing this complex process, constant monitoring and evaluation of the implementation process, re-trained education managers or principals to secure implementation, new forms of learning resources (textbooks and other aids) and so on; all of which require adequate resources which are lacking.

Jansen has summarised his arguments from a technical perspective: that OBE as a curriculum innovation has not taken adequate account of the resource status of schools and classrooms in South Africa. This further undermines the already weak culture of teaching

and learning in South African schools, and the administrative burden of change also limits the human resource capacity for managing such change. On simple technical grounds, therefore, OBE as a national curriculum initiative is likely to fail (Ibid, p330).

However, inadequate training of teachers to teach in an outcome based manner and the lack of financial resources to train these teachers efficiently and effectively are probably the most important problems for implementing the curriculum (Chisholm, 2000, 4-12, cited in Botha, 2002, p367). The impact of OBE cannot be equal in unequal conditions. There has been little recognition of this reality of South African educational life or acknowledgement of the additional requirements for successful implementation in resource poor schools (Botha, 2002, p367). In South Africa there is a lack of responsibility, dedication and commitment on the part of many teachers and learners (Ibid, p368). Christie (1999) points out that the curriculum was poorly planned and hastily introduced in schools, with teachers being insufficiently prepared, with inadequate resources (cited in Cross *et al.*, 2002, p181). Nevertheless, curriculum reform in South Africa brought several tensions such as the countries realities, conditions of actual practice in schools; expected outcomes; the capacity of teachers to translate them into reality and budget concerns; commitments to values such as equity, and so on (Cross *et al.,* 2002, p172).

Moreover, UNESCO (2003, p9) summarises how in South Africa, inequalities in a society, lack of access to basic services, and poverty are factors that tend to place children at risk, and contribute to learning breakdown and exclusion. The reality is that most schools in South Africa are in rural, under-resourced settings with challenges of poverty; on the other hand, there are fewer schools that would equate with schools in developed countries, having resources, access to technology and skilled people to support the school in general (Gous *et al.,* 2013, p3). Therefore, inclusive education in South Africa is neither about segregation, where children are educated in different settings, nor is it about integration, which is inclusion in name only; and a large number of children are still excluded from schooling in South Africa (Ibid, p15). Nevertheless, a financial constraint is one of the important factors that matters in terms of access to quality education (Yamauchi, 2011, p155).

Overall, the main point of desiring an OBE curriculum is that the Black community used to say: for years, we had a second class education but the first class education was only in White schools. Indeed, there was a mistaken philosophy of following a White curriculum for all students, because education should be helpful to people to get jobs and suitable for their lives. What needed to be done was to prepare a national curriculum that met the

needs of children from different backgrounds. Simply taking a white school's curriculum and teaching that to everybody was unreasonable, because mostly previously disadvantaged (Black children) did not want to go to university, whereas initially this curriculum was targeted at White children who were rich and wanted to go to university. In addition, it is also important to note that implementation of an OBE curriculum in a resource poor school situation is difficult. In this way, although the new multi-racial democratic government changed its educational policy on a large scale in South Africa, it could not succeed in its implementation (Napier, 2005, p79).

1.2.3 The Case of a Developed Country: New Zealand

As we saw above, inclusion is a worldwide issue and a particular problem in developing countries. Now, let us examine the practical example of a developed country: New Zealand.

In New Zealand, the government is trying to integrate Maoris (an indigenous group of people) into the mainstream education system, which seems unsuccessful. For example, Maori students are far more likely to leave school earlier than their non-Maori peers. The Ministry's report on Maori education noted that in 2008, 43% of all male students and 34% of all female students who left school in year 10 were Maori (Controller and Auditor General, 2012). Nevertheless, the country has developed and Maoris have not, which is a complex situation.

If we look at the New Zealand Education Act 1989 (section 3), we can see that " every person is entitled to free enrolment and free education at any state school during the period beginning on the person's 5th birthday and ending on the first day of January after the person's 19th birthday (Ballard, 1996, p34). I will summarise below the main barriers to Maori integration in mainstream education, which are mainly focused on their tradition and culture (including language).

Tradition and Culture

Maori people have a strong claim to state resources for educating their children in their respective cultures (Ballard, 1996, p40). There were many projects implemented aiming to improve the educational achievements of Maori students in mainstream secondary schools, for example, the Kotahitanga-a research and development project to support Maori students. The first step is just recognizing their culture by looking at the ways of making a classroom a welcoming place for Maori children to bring their own culture into the

classroom, to engage them in tasks and activities which they are going to enjoy. Considering this, teachers in New Zealand adopted three approaches: firstly, a commitment by teachers to build caring and learning relationships and interactions with Maori students. Secondly, teachers committed to strongly believe that Maori students can improve their achievement. Thirdly, their students should be able to take responsibility for their learning and performance (Bishop *et al*., 2009, p738).

Teachers use the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) for the benefit of marginalized students (Maori and recent migrants); it creates a learning context which is responsive to the culture of the child. When the learners' own culture is central to their learning activities, they are able to make meaning of new information and ideas by building on their own prior cultural experiences and understandings (Bishop *et al.*, 2009, p741).

By 1997, all primary and secondary years and all learning areas except English were taught in Maori. By the end of the 1990s, with occasional exceptions, all staff members were of Maori descent in three schools (Combined primary and secondary schools). Ministry of Education regulations stipulated that all classes could be taught in Maori but the school was required to follow the same national curriculum framework mandated for all New Zealand schools (Harrison and Papa, 2005, p61). Reforms in the New Zealand educational system during the 1990s and early 2000s resulted in a national system that allowed each school board to exercise options for their school, but options were limited by policies set at the national level (Ibid, p61).

All educational agencies (such as the Ministry of Education who determined the policies, the Education Review Office, who conducted regular reviews of each school's operations to ensure that it was operating within national policy, and the New Zealand Qualification Authority, who conducted annual assessments of the progress of secondary school students) had a section staffed primarily by Maoris that dealt specifically with policies and practices that affected Maori students (Harrison and Papa, 2005, p61).

As mentioned earlier, each local school had to align its curriculum with the national curriculum framework, which included seven essential learning areas: language and languages, mathematics, science, technology, social science, arts and health and physical wellbeing. Most schools taught in English, with Maori or another language taught as a separate subject. However in 2003, there were 90 schools designated as immersion schools. [Immersion education is regarded as one form of bilingual education. New Zealand is one of the only national contexts that specifically distinguish between bilingual

and immersion education (May and Hill, 2005, p377)]. There also were 340 schools designated bilingual or schools with immersion or bilingual classrooms, so that 21,520 (14.1%) Maori students were receiving 31% or more of their schooling in Maori (Ministry of Education 2003: appendix 3 cited in Harrison and Papa, 2005, p61).

The European colonial literature contains 'comments on (Maori) intelligence' and claims that Maoris lacked knowledge and were waiting only to be enlightened (Salmond, 1985, p256 cited in Harrison and Papa, 2005, p62). Moreover, referring to a teacher's experience, Bishop *et al*., (2009, p738) state that Maori students are also not brought up better at home. However, 'most Maoris were interested, but not intimidated by manifestations of Western civilization, and they adopted European ideas and practices as it suited them' (Salmond 1985, p259 cited in Harrison and Papa, 2005, p62).

Based on the analysis of leading research studies, Professor Wally Penetito says 'there is unwillingness to change the cultural traditions of everything related to schooling such as curriculum, assessment, school climate, accountability, organization of school day, relationships with the community', which are the main barriers to Maoris' educational achievements (Controller and Auditor General, 2012).

Nevertheless, Maori people are strong in their own culture, which they want to practice in school environment. For example, in the Maori language, one verb 'ako' means both to teach and to learn. For teachers, teaching and learning are interrelated processes with no clear distinction between the formal curriculum and extracurricular activities. Staff members attempt to integrate learning experiences to promote the holistic wellbeing of students (Harrison and Papa, 2005, p63). When the immersion programme began in 1985, the primary emphasis was on the revitalization of the Maori language. There were few teaching resources available in Maori, so initial efforts focussed on translating English resources into Maori. The early result was a curriculum that was Western in many respects but was taught in Maori (Ibid, p63).

Harrison and Papa (2005, p63) state that during the last 25 years the Maori language has been introduced at all levels of the education system and in many other organizations and agencies. They also mention that in most regions, at least one Maori immersion school has been established with Maori language courses. A Maori language week is held every year, sponsored by the government and is celebrated nationally with a range of events.

As staff members became comfortable that students were receiving quality education in the Maori language, they looked at ways to foster the intellectual social, physical, spiritual and

cultural attributes of an ideal Waikato-Tainui person. Staff members believed that students need to be well versed and confident in their own history and ways of speaking, so Waikato-Tainui knowledge became a very strong focus over the years (Harrison and Papa, 2005, p64).

From the beginning of the immersion programme in 1985, it has been essential, for example, for visitors to be welcomed into the school community with formal welcoming ceremonies. The entire school participates in daily prayers in Maori at the opening of the day, before lunch, and at the end of the day. Teachers are addressed as Whaea (mother/ aunt) or Mathua (father/uncle) and classes are organized into three multi-graded groups as "extended families". Some instructional and social activities are regularly structured so that older students help younger students, reflecting the Maori value of the older siblings assisting and being responsible for younger siblings (Harrison and Papa, 2005, p64). Similarly, each year students and teachers participate in the major cultural events of King Movements. In arts, some students have completed traditional carvings and studied the reasons those carvings are appropriate for the school (Ibid, p64).

On the assumption that the Maori educational programme should focus on the holistic development of the social, physical, spiritual, and cultural attributes of students as well as their academic achievement, some school activities are not part of the curriculum although they are considered essential- these include *Kapa Haka* (Maori performing arts), speech competitions and sports. *Kapa Haka* is included in the programme of every New Zealand school with a Maori focus, but it is often misunderstood by mainstream educators, who have been quoted in the media saying they believe that *Kapa Haka* detracts from the students' academic achievement; Maori staff members, however, believe the opposite to be true: *Kapa Haka,* a condition of the mind, body, and spirit, contributes to children's holistic development, including their academic achievements (Harrison and Papa, 2005, p67). A variety of activities are associated with *Kapa Haka. Kapa Haka* performances are a part of every school event (end of the year prize giving, welcoming visitors and so on).

Harrison and Papa (2005, p69) observed that there are three types of academic theory around the educational development of Maori people. The first is regarding language maintenance (theories of language maintenance and language instruction have been of obvious benefit), the second is regarding underdevelopment (beliefs that tribe's economic development would improve if the tribe's educational levels increased) and the third is regarding the impact of colonization on indigenous peoples (John Ogbu talked about people who have been conquered. How does an indigenous group that is a minority group

dominated by an invader group assume its right to express itself as people and get its knowledge and ways of knowing to be of benefit to the country where they reside?).

Ogbu and Simons (1998, p158) observed that 'structural barriers and school factors affect minority school performance; however minorities are also autonomous human beings who actively interpret and respond to their situation. Minorities are not helpless victims' (cited in Harrison and Papa, 2005, p71). Nevertheless, Maori people want to retain their own language and culture. For example, many Maoris support the notion of parallel development, which includes education in early childhood centres, schools and tertiary settings where the language of instruction is Maori and the settings are designed and operated according to Maori culture (Ballard, 1996, p40).

The New Zealand government has made considerable efforts to integrate Maori people, but it appears that they actually do not want to be fully integrated because of their attachment to a traditional culture and way of life. Though they do hope to be as economically successful as the mainstream population, they do not want to be successful in the same way. The government is looking to integrate them very fully in education but they want their personal lifestyle, therefore it remains difficult for them to be integrated.

Nevertheless, Maoris are far behind in terms of educational attainments. The government is saying that we make it easier to you for coming to school, while Maoris are saying that this is not what we want. Maori people say that we want education that reflects our culture and our own traditions. For example, for Maoris, education within a Maori setting helps to overcome the educational disengagement so frequently seen for Maoris struggling within mainstream institutions (Hook, 2007, p1). Nevertheless, they are very strict with their own culture and language which has made it difficult for them to achieve educational success.

The government have a strong commitment to include the Maoris in everything, which is happening in education in New Zealand. On the other side, the Maoris are very keen to have an education system for their children; but unfortunately, they have slightly different ideas about what an education system is. So, naturally, the mainstream of education is about helping to develop people so that they can participate in the New Zealand economy, will be able to get jobs and will be able to study further and so on. However, Maoris are not saying that they want to do all those things, but they are saying, we have a distinctive lifestyle; we have a long history; we have our own culture and traditions; we have our own language; and we think education should maintain those things.

It is not that they cannot be included; it is that what is needed is a model which allows both to be included in those parts of education. It is a vital to educate all to the degree they want to be, but at the same time, to recognise that there will be additional areas or additional content, which Maori children want to learn. So for example, Maoris preferred to see their children learning the traditional language and English, and then learning English as a foreign language. Now, of course, if you grow up in New Zealand, you will be much better off learning Spanish and German or Chinese than learning Maori but it is the only place to speak Maori. In this context, it is difficult to put Maori in the curriculum. On the other hand, if you are from a Maori group, you could prefer your children to be taught Maori, not Chinese, nor German. Therefore, it is unfair to them, which is the weakness in the inclusion movement. Indeed, if there could be for example, say 80% of the curriculum that was the same, and 20% different, that would keep everybody happy. Nevertheless, treating all the same is not fair.

They want mainstream education but they want to reflect their own culture in mainstream education, they want to preserve and protect their own language and culture, which is not surprising. They want their children to develop their own language within the education system. However, they do not want other people to learn Maori.

1.2.4 Some Reflections

If I summarise the above two very different cases, we can see how difficult it is to maintain inclusion in education. From the analysis of these two cases, it can be seen that it is as much to do with the 'context' as the idea, because these two cases are in very different contexts: one in a developed country context (New Zealand) where there is no lack of resources and support, but they have a cultural problem; and the other is a developing country context (South Africa) where there is a lack of resources to implement policies.

There are problems of including educational services both in South Africa and New Zealand which has made the situation more complicated than expected. Different countries have their own contextual problems for the inclusion of children in education. Regarding the South African case, change processes were not communicated to most of the teachers; change was not supported with adequate resources and the changed curriculum could not address the real needs of the targeted group of people, the real stakeholders in policy change processes were not involved and the policy changes based on imported ideas did not work. Further, the change was politically motivated rather than having a strong political will to implement it in the real world. Teachers had no adequate knowledge about

the changes, such as knowledge on outcome based education, which created anxieties in them and resisted the whole change process. It ended with the failure of policy change and it could not include the targeted group of children in mainstream education.

Similarly, regarding the New Zealand case, Maori people want to practise their own culture rather than following the mainstream education. They want to preserve and protect their own language and culture. They want their children to develop their own language within the education system. Despite considerable positive efforts, adequate resources and free education provision up to 19 years of age, many Maori children cannot be included in the mainstream of education, mainly due to their adherence to the cultural traditions of their people. Nevertheless Maori people do want change, but not to be assimilated into the general population.

Nevertheless, there is a problem of access to quality education in developing countries due the lack of resources and firm commitments to developing and implementing need based policies. On the other hand in developed countries, there are problems of socio-cultural adjustments of minority people within the classroom, school and society because of their strong commitments to preserving their language and culture in educational institutions.

1.3 Summary of the Chapter

In the first section, we looked at the world history of the Education for All and inclusive education movements. We investigated inclusion through looking at human rights and rights for different groups. We also looked at the definitions of inclusive education and its debates worldwide. I chose a wide ranging definition of inclusion: 'access, participation and achievements of all' as a framework for my study. We looked at the concepts of equity and equitable education as adopted by OECD countries which focus on fairness and inclusion. We also looked the outcomes of these movements by linking these to the marginalisation of children as a challenge worldwide, especially in developing countries. Thus, what we have learned so far from the reading is that there is an international human rights movement which makes inclusion a priority in many places in the world, but it is hard to bring the change about; the reason is that it may or may not work. This means that it is as much to do with the 'context' as the idea.

In the second section of this chapter, I discussed the problems generally in the situation internationally; then I looked at two practical examples of diverse countries in a little more detail i.e. South Africa and New Zealand. Thus, from the examination of international patterns, there seem to be broadly six types of difficulties involved in moving education

systems in a more equitable direction. They are: ***policy, resources, tradition and culture, household poverty, language, and caste discrimination.*** This is the framework of potential barriers that I am using to look at the evidence collected in Nepal. So my question in this discussion is: are these the barriers we see in Nepal? Are there different barriers? Or do some of the barriers not apply in Nepal? Now, in the next chapter, I will explore the national context, which will enable the reader to further understand my research findings.

Chapter Two: The Context of Nepal

Like many other countries, Nepal is in a process of expanding provision of education for previously marginalized children through attempts to develop more inclusive policies and practices. In carrying out my study within this national context, I was influenced by the ideas I summarised in the previous chapter, in particular the international efforts on Education for All and inclusive education movements. At the same time, I was also influenced by the context of Nepal itself.

This chapter provides an account of this context, focusing in particular on relevant aspects of its history, political background and government policies. In providing this account, I keep in mind the apparent commitment to integrate members of the Dalit community into the society and education system. What matters to me is whether they are being included in education. This led me at the outset of my research to formulate the following rather open research questions:

1) What is the situation in relation to Dalit education at the moment in Nepal?
2) Are there any factors that seem to be inhibiting their educational progress?

To explain the national context, I organize the chapter into the following sections: the general background information of Nepal; the caste system, and associated problems; history of the Dalits' educational development; the political environment; the performance of the education system and the national understanding of inclusive education. The explanations made in these areas led me to further revise my research questions, as I explain towards the end of the chapter.

The chapter uses policy documents, research articles, reports and publications on the chronology of development over last few decades. It also draws on analyses and evaluations of the performance of the Nepalese education system, which have been provided by externally credited or reliably informed international bodies, such as the World Bank, UNICEF, Asian Development Bank, UNESCO and so on. Let us start our discussions on the context through the general background of the country.

2.1 General Background of the Country

Nepal is a landlocked country, located between India on its east, west and south and China on its north. The country is geographically divided into three distinct regions: Mountain, Hills and Terai (low plain land). Based on the Census data of 2011, its population is

26,494,504 (CBS, 2012, p1). Nepal is culturally and ethnically diverse, where 126 ethnic/caste groups live and use 123 languages (CBS, 2012, p4) with different dialects. Nepal's economy is primarily based on agriculture, which contributes 34.7% to the gross domestic product *(*Department of Agriculture, 2015*)*[3]. Nevertheless, remittances also contribute significantly in the national economy, which was 28.8% in 2013 (World Bank, 2014). Youth unemployment is a growing challenge for the country. According to the Government's Department of Foreign Employment, a total of about ½ million Nepalese youth left Nepal for employment abroad in the year 2013 (2070*BS)* (Baruah and Tuladhar, 2012). A long period of political deadlock has made the country unable to attract investment to create employment opportunities. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, the country is in a post-conflict context, due to the 10 years (1996 to 2006) of armed conflict between the Maoist rebels and Nepal's security forces. Nepal then went through a great political transition from deeply rooted monarchy to republicanism in 2006 through the efforts of 19 days people's movement- II. The details of the political change are given in a later section in this chapter. Now, the country is in the process of making a new constitution for a federal republican democratic Nepal, which aims to promote a more inclusive society.

2.2 The Caste System

When we talk about Dalits, the caste system comes to the forefront and one cannot escape without introducing it. Caste refers to an endogamous group with a common name and origin where membership is hereditary and linked to one or more traditional occupations (Bode, 2009, p15; Chanana, 1993, p70). Caste is a traditional social stratification of the people belonging to the Hindu religion in which status is ascribed by birth (Action Aid, 2005, p2). It is maintained in Nepalese society through the practice of intermarriage restrictions (Ibid, p5).

Historically and perhaps based on division of labour, Nepalese society was divided into four major occupational classes known as *Varnas*: *Brahman*, *Kshatri*, *Baishya* and *Sudra* (Manusmriti, 2069*BS*). Among them, *Brahman* (teachers, scholars and priests) was at the top of the hierarchy. *Kshatri* (kings and warriors) had the responsibility of protecting society from external threats and held second position. *Vaishya* (traders and producers of wealth) who ranked third would take care of the economy and supply of food. *Sudra* (service providers) had the responsibility of serving the upper three classes: this fourth

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[3] Department of Agriculture (DOA) has cited this figure from the economic survey (2069/70*BS).*

section was placed at the bottom in the caste hierarchy system where Dalits belong. Nevertheless, Dalits are a particular caste group in South Asia, largely in Nepal and India where the manifestation of their social exclusion is very similar (World Bank, 2007, p7), since Hinduism is a major and dominant religion/culture followed closely in both nations. However, it is clear that in the past, Hindu religious law and customary law supported inequities and the exclusion of occupational castes (Asian Development Bank, 2005, p3). Regarding the caste system, Tapia (2000, p25) argues that caste carried racial connotations, in that its social construction can be traced to the Hindu Doctrine of creation, as *Varna* implied colour. Caste and class are sometimes used interchangeably although class is taken as an open system and caste is taken as a closed system (Kharel, 2010, p28). However, caste is a widespread social custom, which is often blamed for the disparity in education for Dalits (Inferiori, 2010).

Under the caste system, Dalits in the past often suffered from restrictions on their use of public amenities, deprivation of economic opportunities, and were neglected by the state and society (Bhattachan *et al*., 2009). The caste system is based on purity and pollution, with the lowest rank being considered untouchables and discriminated against in water taps, wells, temples, wedding ceremonies, feasts and festivals; they also suffered residential segregation (Action Aid, 2005; Bode, 2009, p15). Hence, one of the worst aspects of the caste system and discrimination against Dalits in Nepal is the practice of untouchability (Baniya, 2007, p47). It is argued that the Brahminic notions of purity and pollution played an important part in the construction of untouchability (Lohani, 2007). In Nepal, caste based discrimination has victimized about 4.5 million Dalits who are considered ritually impure and untouchable (Baniya, 2007, p46). Nevertheless, caste is the fundamental basis of power hierarchy and social segregation in Nepali society (Timsina, 2011, p202).

Caste based discrimination is an everyday reality which still exists in Nepal (Bennett, 2005, p26; Cameron, 2009, p242). It is also noted in government offices, corporations, private companies and NGOs (Bhattarai, 2004, p309). Dalits are usually excluded from any local level organizations, such as school management committees, and are treated as illiterates and drunkards, who cannot contribute to the welfare of society (Bode, 2009, p16), and they still get low respect in some areas (Kharel, 2007, p57). A study conducted by United Nations International Children Emmergency Fund-UNICEF (2007, p13) indicates that a key element of social exclusion of Dalit children from education is the extent to which discrimination is practised by teachers. In addition, the so called high caste

teachers do not want Dalits to become teachers, because they do not want to perform the traditional gesture of giving them respect. They also do not want to eat and drink together with them, as is the custom among teachers. Competent Dalit teachers are discouraged from occupying higher executive positions in schools (Shrestha, 2002). The caste system in many ways institutionalized the process of exclusion (DFID and World Bank, 2006). Dalits don't feel socially equal with non-Dalit groups of people and have no courage to protest against such discriminative behaviour; they reluctantly accept these things as their fate (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p66).

Dalits per se are not a homogenous group. According to the latest figures from the National Dalit Commission (2014), there are 26 sub-groups registered as Dalit in the National Dalit Commission (see Appendix-1 for the list of these sub-groups). A trend of hiding the real ethnic /caste background has been emerging over the years after 1990, which has been creating further difficulties when the solutions for a particular sub–population are sought (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p65). In this context, the total population of Dalits is also debatable. The Dalits believe that their total population is actually at least one fifth of the total population of the country (Bhattarai, 2004), which is contradicted by the Census data of 2011, which gives a figure of about 14%. The caste based discrimination exists on two levels: i) Discrimination between Dalits and non-Dalits ii) Intra-Dalit based discrimination (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p63), which means that the Dalits themselves practise discrimination among their own group (UNICEF, 2007, p3), which has added an additional barrier to social inclusion. Dalits can be categorized into three broad regional groups: i) Dalits from the Hills ii) Dalits in the Newari Community iii) Dalits of Terai origin (UNICEF, 2007, p3; Dahal *et al*., 2002, p62-65). Those Dalits whose origin is in the hills and mountain region are Hill Dalits; those whose origin is in the Terai region are known as Madhesi Dalits, and some Newari communities around the Kathmandu valley are known as Newari Dalits; but Newari Dalits do not want to fall under the Dalit category. Hill Dalits are dominant groups in terms of population and politics (Vishwakarma, 2004). They also benefit from the language because they use Nepali at home, which is the official language as well as the language of teaching and learning in public schools. On the other hand, Madhesi Dalits are discriminated against by not using their languages, such as Awadhi, Bhojpuri, and Maithili, in education (UNDP, 2008, p32).

Along with caste disparity, there is also great gender disparity. Females in Dalit communities face triple discrimination in their daily lives - as a woman, as a Dalit and as a Dalit woman (Bhatia *et al*., 2004, p20). There is gender discrimination in education: for

example, parents typically find it more difficult to see the benefits of educating their daughters compared to their sons (Pherali, 2011, p144). Therefore, the gender based hierarchy of Nepali society has contributed to depriving females of gaining equal access to education (Ibid, p144). Literacy rates for girls in rural areas are still lower than urban areas, due to many factors, including poverty, distance from school, demands of household labour and early marriage (Bhatia *et al.,* 2004, p20). Moreover, Action Aid Nepal has identified 205 forms of caste based discrimination in Nepal (IIDS, 2008), which is more prominent in rural areas. Therefore, the disparity in access to education is alarming in rural communities (Acharya, 2007).

Caste based discrimination and untouchability is one of the reasons that Dalits are lagging behind in education (Bishwakarma, 2009, p43; Bishwakarma, 2011, p12). Nevertheless, throughout history, Dalits have either been denied or have had poor access to education; therefore they lag behind other social groups in terms of educational attainment (UNICEF, 2007, p10). Although several ethnic and caste-based groups in Nepal have been denied equal access to education, Dalits are the most marginalised one (Pherali, 2011, p143). Nepalese schools continued to embody socially and culturally prejudiced values and have institutionally legitimised the inequitable practices in the education system (Ibid, p136). Nevertheless, the Dalit issues are embedded deep in the social structure and the psychology of both institutions and individuals (UNICEF, 2007, p1).

Rasaili (2004, p34) and Simkhada (2008) claim that due to the discriminative arena and seating practices Dalit children's participation is marginalised and disempowering. For example, seating arrangements were routinely segregated and Dalit students physically placed away from teachers and other caste peers, which has contributed to the situation that Dalit children are the least successful in school, have the lowest enrolment rates, the highest dropout rates, and lower attendance and achievements rates than other castes.

Dalits are among the poorest groups in Nepal (Folmer, 2007, p46) with a poverty rate of 46% compared to the national average of 31% (Subba, 2008, p10). Poverty and educational exclusion are the results of the hierarchical prohibition on property rights, occupational choice and educational participation (Poudel, 2007). Although Nepal is an agriculture based country, 23 percent of Dalits are landless and 48.7 percent have less than 0.1 hectares of land (Kharel, 2007, p57). Moreover, the poverty of the Dalit children informed teachers' conceptions of them as underprivileged and deficient in ability to learn because of their socio-economic as well as caste position (Simkhada, 2008). It has been claimed that in failing to acknowledge the differences between Dalit and non-Dalit children, the

public school system has reproduced and reinforced the social divide between them. The hereditary association between socially excluded status and ascribed occupation is one way in which poverty is transmitted across generations (Kabeer, 2006, p12). Sometimes parents have been unable to pay school fees or buy books and/or stationary, school related expenses, only to have their children be forced to drop out in a few years and work to support their aging parents and/or their younger siblings and themselves (Cox, 1994, p99). Dalits in Nepal are not only economically marginalized but also discriminated against by the non-Dalit groups in many areas of social, cultural and political life (Bhattarai, 2004, p309).

Discriminatory practices against Dalits and their exclusion from educational opportunities continue in both India and Nepal, despite the legal provisions in the constitution, various government acts, policies and plans (UNICEF, 2007, p17). The government's educational policies and programmes have failed to recognise the impact of a hierarchical and fragmented social reality which has contributed to educational differences between caste groups (Simkhada, 2008). Simkhada further states that the Dalits' status, associated with caste-hierarchy, is a socio-cultural construction transmitted from generation to generation: to belong to an untouchable caste is to hold a separate identity of not belonging within the communities of other castes, which has made it extremely difficult for the Dalits to escape the identity of being 'impure' and the deprivation and sufferings related to this.

Summarising previous studies, Subba (2008, p13) states that the traditional practices of untouchability, and caste based discrimination; high poverty incidence; landlessness; economic and social discrimination; and very low access to policy decision making levels are the main issues behind the exclusion and deprivation of Dalit communities in Nepal. Educational studies from Nepal have suggested strong caste effects on school participation; for example, high caste households were considerably more likely to send their children to school (Stash and Hannum, 2001, p358). They concluded that caste and ethnicity continue to affect children's educational opportunities in contemporary society (Ibid, p376). Some Dalit participants in a study conducted in Jumla (remote mountain region of Nepal) stated that one of the reasons for not being able to attend school was the discrimination by non-Dalits, nevertheless, this situation has improved for the current generation (Kohrt, *et al.*, 2009, p266).

2.3 History of Dalits' Educational Development

The history of the Dalits' educational development can be classified into three main periods: i) before 1951- the pre democratic era ii) the demo-panchayat era 1951-1990 and iii) between 1990 to 2015 - reinstalment of democracy (1990) and transition from monarchy to the republican (2006) era. In what follows, I consider each of these in turn.

2.3.1 Before 1951 – the pre-democratic era

In ancient Nepal, there was no proper institutional system of education. Oral tradition and apprenticeships were the means of educating children (Koirala, 1996). From the *Vedic* periods (6000-4000BC), the Hindu *Vernasram* introduced a kind of institutional system. *Varnasram* is a social framework of Hindu society, which signifies division of labour, placement of social hierarchy and normative expectation of roles (Bhargava, 1989). The *Varna* rules do not allow *Sudra* (Dalits) to study the *Vedas* and other *Sastras* and knowledge (Gautam Sutra-12; Prashrit 2058BS; Manusmriti 4-80, p81 cited in Paudel, 2007, p108). In the ancient Hindu Gurukul education, the education was selective and discriminatory according to *Verna*. Three *Verna - Brahman*, *Kshatriya* and *Vaishya* - had access to education but the *Sudra Verna* (Dalits) were excluded. The *varnashram* duty therefore shows a deliberate denial of schooling to *Sudra* groups (Dalits) because of their prescribed duty, service to people of other castes (Koirala, 1996, p49). Thus the Dalits could not get any place in traditional schools to become literate and they were explicitly denied access to knowledge of religious texts, as they were not allowed to touch or read the books or even to listen to the words when read by others (Koirala, 1996, p51-52). In this way, for centuries the state paid no attention to providing mass education outside the *Varnashram* system.

Before 1951, only 2% of Nepalese people were literate, and there was little system of formal education, which was limited to rulers (Rana families). The Rana regime remained for 104 years (1848-1951) as an autocratic system. Thus, before 1951, the development of education in Nepal as a whole was restricted not only for Dalits but also for other non-Dalit groups (Dahal *et al.*, 2002, p27). Nevertheless, in Nepal's history, educationally, Dalits were the most oppressed population (Bhatia *et al.*, 2004, p3). This period, therefore, was the most unfavourable era for the Dalits' educational development.

2.3.2 Between 1951-1990 – the demo-panchayat era

Only after the dawn of democracy in the country in 1951, did political openness and Western types of school give Dalits access to formal education for the first time in their lives (Koirala, 1996, p53); but again the high caste people, holding onto tradition, resisted the Dalits' admission to school. When they started to go to school, they had to confront a lot of problems from their peers in the schools and classrooms. In schools, Dalit students had to experience sanctions up to capital punishment for touching their non-Dalit peers, which is explicitly shared by a teacher in Chapter 5 (p108). Although the mass schooling began to expand after 1951, the inequality in participation in schooling based on gender, caste and language continued to exist; no special arrangements were made for girls, Dalits and linguistic minorities (Devkota, 2002, p27). At that time, due to the practice of caste-based differentiation and untouchability, very few Dalits participated in education.

During this period, Nepal experienced democracy only for 10 years, from 1951 to1961. In 1962 the Royal family regained political power and ruled for about 30 years (1962-1990) in the name of the Panchayati system (which was a party-less system*). During this period, the king exercised unconditional power, but Nepalese people could not use their democratic rights freely. However, there were some changes in the life of Dalits, particularly after the introduction of the New Legal Code in Nepal in 1963. The law abolished the caste structure as a whole and in front of the law nobody could claim superiority to another on the grounds of race, caste, or creed. In many social and public occasions, rules against eating food and drinking water with low caste members, particularly with Dalits, were relaxed (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p67). The 1963 Constitution guaranteed all Dalits access to education in government schools and colleges. The government also introduced free primary education up to grade three in 1974. In the Panchayati period, official Nepali national culture has been described by many observers as consisting of 'Nepali language, Hinduism and Monarchy' (Valentine, 2001, p101). In this way, the education system again focussed on legitimising a certain culture and values, but it could not narrow down the social differences and caste hierarchies. However, in this period, caste based discrimination and untouchability were removed from legal documents, Dalits started going to schools and some improvements in Dalit enrolments in education were made.

2.3.3 Between 1990-2015 – the re-instalment of democracy and transition from monarchy to the republican era

This period includes two important political changes in the country: re-instalment of Democracy in 1990 and transition from Monarchy to Republicanism in 2006. This period is the most dynamic period for the development of Dalits' situation educationally, socially and politically. Since 1990 - when the parliamentary democratic system was re-installed through people's movement-1st (the system that was initially instituted in 1951 and replaced by the Panchayati system in 1961), Nepal made tremendous progress in broadening access to basic education. The net enrolment rate, which measures the extent to which children are enrolled at the age appropriate level of schooling, increased from 57 to 72 percent between 1995/96 and 2003/04 (World Bank, 2007). There were large increases in the net enrolment rates of Dalits, middle castes and other Janajatis such as Tharu, and Tamang.

After the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990, political parties emphasized the need to address the concerns of Dalits and other marginalized groups (UNICEF, 2007, p19). Dalit issues became issues of national importance and interest (Kisan, 2005, p191). The 1990 Constitution, Article 11 (4) declared that 'no person shall, on the basis of caste, be discriminated against as untouchable, be denied access to any public places or be deprived of the use of the public utilities, and any contravention to this provision shall be punishable by law' (Government of Nepal, 1990).

In 1991, the first National Education Commission (NEC, 1991) was formed, which considered the linguistic and cultural diversity of Nepal and suggested that primary education should be taught in the mother tongue. The Commission identified caste and gender disparities in the education of women, physically and mentally disabled people and economically and socially disadvantaged communities. Following the line of the NEC 1991, the High Level National Education Commission (HLNEC, 1998) suggested changes in relation to gender, caste, language, ethnicity and cultural diversity (cited in Poudel, 2007, p111).

By realizing the importance of education for the development of Dalits in Nepal (Dahal *et al*., 2002, p65); the 1990 Constitution had provided extensive protection and measures of positive discrimination for Dalits, such as reservations in 'education and employment' (UNICEF, 2007). To enhance educational access for Dalits, the Government of Nepal created various programmes and schemes such as scholarships to all Dalits, and free

education to all Dalits up to secondary level. Scholarships for Dalits, which were begun in 1996, have been popular for a number of years (Ibid, p23). The government of Nepal has provided the main intervention in the education sector for addressing social inclusion. Moreover, The Local Self Governance Act 1999 provides for the elevation of the backward and Dalit communities and guarantees distributive justice in all fields of state mechanisms of the country. Section 28 (1) *Gha* mentions the provision of scholarships to students of backward and marginalized communities (Ibid, p23-24).

In the Ninth National Development Plan (1996-2001), the need for reservation of scholarships and at least one teacher in schools from the downtrodden community was recognised (Dahal *et al*., 2002). Similarly, the Tenth Plan (2002-2007) clearly stated that free education up to secondary level would be provided to all Dalit children and the scholarships they received would be increased (NPC, 2002).

For the inclusion of Dalits, the government established the Dalit Development Committee in 1997 and the National Dalit Commission in 2002 under the Ministry of Local Development. The National Dalit Commission is the most important legal body through which Dalits are represented in the government. Although its objective is to create an environment favourable to the Dalit community's opportunity to enjoy equal rights, self-esteem, services and privileges to other social groups in Nepal's human development index, one of its strategies is to implement free and compulsory education for the Dalit community in the bid for 'Education for All' (National Dalit Commission, 2014).

The state has enacted the rule for providing scholarships to the poor and marginalized groups. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) distributed scholarships to these groups. The scholarships are not limited to secondary level; under rule 10 of scholarship rule 2003, there is a provision for open contest for the selection of appropriate candidates, while under sub-rule-3 there are 10% quotas for women, Dalits and indigenous groups for higher technical courses such as Medicine, and Engineering. In order to qualify under rule 12 s/he who has obtained 60% shall be eligible to receive a scholarship. But the rule states that for Dalits, indigenous groups and women, 50% shall be the criteria for candidacy (UNICEF, 2007, p24). So the 'positive discrimination' in scholarship provision in higher education has been used to encourage this group in education.

Under Nepal's Interim Constitution (2007), the state is obligated to provide free education to all Dalit children up to secondary level. Free education includes direct costs of schooling (for example, free text books, and no fees for admission, tuition and examination). Nepal's

School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) 2009-2015 aims to improve access, equity and quality within the education system to meet the EFA and Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) with an emphasis on the out of school population (Ministry of Education, 2009). Nepal's educational structure is also in the process of transformation from four layers: primary (grades1-5), lower secondary (grades 6-8), secondary (grades 9-10) and higher secondary (grades11-12) to two layers: basic (grades1-8) and secondary education (grades 9-12). The government began this process after 2009 when it had begun to implement the School Sector Reform Programme 2009-2015 (Ministry of Education, 2009).

The Three Year Interim Plan (TYIP) 2007-2010 adopted a rights based approach for social transformation. It promoted the universal enjoyment of the rights to education, health, social security and employment, because Nepal had adopted a human rights approach to educational development. This interim plan ensured that excluded groups would have unhindered access to basic social services such as education, health services, water and sanitation, food and social protection, gainful employment and other productive resources (Subba, 2008,p9). One of the strategies of the Three Year Interim Plan was to initiate positive discrimination and reservation in education, and particularly for Dalit empowerment and inclusion 13 thousand million (Nepalese currency) was allocated to invest through different ministries (Ibid, p16). In this way, the Government of Nepal is committed and has already initiated various programmes in line with inclusion (Sharma, 2007, p16). In this way, the political elite, policy makers, social reformers and academics agreed that disadvantaged groups, Dalits being the most disadvantaged; have to be given access to education as the means of becoming integrated into modern Nepalese society (Simkhada, 2008). Despite all these efforts and agreements, there is little evidence of improvements in their participation in education and attainment, particularly at the secondary level (Department of Education 2011-Flash Report II; UNICEF, 2007, p10). The Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme- UNDP (2004, p48) shows that 'government- subsidized education has benefitted primarily the privileged', and 'exclusionary institutional arrangements' are not able to change existing discriminatory practices of schooling. Nevertheless, Nepal has started many affirmative actions for the inclusion of Dalit communities and to bring them into mainstream education and society. This is the most suitable period for the educational and social development of disadvantaged groups in general and Dalits in particular.

2.4 Towards a More Inclusive National Political Environment

King Gyanendra attacked democracy by imposing authoritarian measures and declared his direct rule in 2005. This created an alliance between the parliamentary parties and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). They agreed to organize popular mass demonstrations under the leadership of late Girija Prasad Koirala (leader of Nepali Congress), which forced the king to step down from his authoritarian position in 2006. When the people's movement-II ended the king's direct rule over the country in April 2006, then Dalit issues were further highlighted. On April 1, 2007, the ruling eight parties formed an Interim Council of Ministers through political consensus including five Maoist Ministers. The main agenda of the seven party alliance and the Maoists was to hold the Constitution Assembly (CA) Election. The CA is the body of representatives authorized by the Interim Constitution 2007 to draft a new constitution for Nepal that would undo the concentration of political, social and economic power in people's hands and make the society inclusive and democratic in the widest sense (Murphy, 2007). Murphy summarises how the people's movement-II brought changes in three things in Nepal. First, the abolition of the monarchy and the declaration that Nepal was a secular country, completely changing its status as the only Hindu Kingdom in the world; second, the successful process of bringing the Maoists into the political mainstream; and third, the assertion of their rights by the marginalized sections in a call for an inclusive society.

Nepal is now at the crossroads of political transition from a Monarchy system to a Republican system and has been striving to constitute an inclusive and democratic constitution. After the overthrown of the Monarchy system in 2006, Nepal has adopted a new policy of federalism, which is expected to promote units of decentralization, inclusivity and provide better administration. At this political juncture of change, all political parties are channelling their efforts towards the welfare of Dalits and other disadvantaged groups.

Unfortunately the first Constitutional Assembly (CA) could not promulgate a new constitution due to the conflicting demands and interests of different political groups. When the first CA failed to make a new constitution, the election of II CA was held on the 19th of November 2013. The second CA election in a row is probably a new practice in the world's political history for the same purpose (making a new constitution). In this political transition, Dalit leaders and Dalit advocators are raising their voices loudly for their identity, inclusion, self-esteem, dignity and social justice. Therefore, the Dalit communities are expecting radical socio-cultural changes in society. In other words, Nepal is in political

turbulence in terms of raising the issues of Dalits and other disadvantaged groups. There is a great aspiration of Dalits and other disadvantaged groups of people for the transformation of society through inclusive policy and practices. Government organizations (GOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) are working proactively for social engineering. Nevertheless, Dalits and other disadvantaged groups are gaining unanticipated support from national and international communities and organizations.

Moreover, the big three parties: The United Communist Party Nepal Maoist (UCPN - Maoist); Nepali Congress (NC); and the Nepal Communist Party-United Maxist and Leninist (UML) - have stated the following common agenda in their election manifesto of II Constitutional Assembly (CA) election: free school level education (up to grade 12) and compulsory basic education (up to grade eight); increase investment in education to 20 per cent of the national budget and guarantee education to the poor, Dalits, females, disabled and other marginalized children (Ghimire, 2013). These political commitments indicate that a journey towards the inclusion of disadvantaged groups is to be expected.

Since the mid-1990s social inclusion has become an increasingly important agenda for development. In the Ninth plan, (1996-2002), it was focussed on the capacity development of the disadvantaged people, provision of restoration in scholarships allocation of portion of the grant in the local government budget for the uplifting of Dalits and it proposed the establishment of a *Dalit Coordination Committee* in every district. The National Dalit Commission has been engaging in policy and programme formulation for Dalits' advancement. All Dalit members are nominated in this autonomous body. It is attempting to prevent the violation of human rights of Dalits and mitigate the discrimination and social exclusion. The Local Development Committee is entrusted with the responsibility for implementing some of the Dalit specific government funded activities, for example, to implement scholarship programmes for secondary and higher education (IIDS, 2008, p60). The Government has also formed its district chapters in all 75 districts under the District Development Committee, assuming that local Dalit people would have access to resources and the decision making process through these chapters.

Nepal's Tenth Plan (2002-2007), which is also the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), recognizes the importance of inclusive development (NPC, 2003). This strategy has focussed on mainstreaming excluded groups to ensure equitable access to all and providing targeted programmes to the hard core poor. These measures include employment for Dalits, preferential treatment in foreign employment, a sensitization programme against untouchability at local level, scholarship programmes for Dalits, housing programmes for

homeless Dalits, skills promotion for income generation training to improve and modernize their traditional occupations, arrangement of leasehold forest within community forests for Dalit forest users, provision of grants to poor Dalits for micro-irrigation, provision of a focal point in government agencies, provision to enact new special laws to abolish all discriminatory provision, and mandating political parties to nominate Dalits at each level (UNICEF, 2007,p21). In this way, considering Dalits as the most disadvantaged and oppressed group in the context of Nepal, increasing attention from the government has been paid for more than two decades to including Dalit communities in education and society through its laws, policies and programmes. Particularly, The Ninth Plan (1996-2001) and Tenth Plan (2002-2007) contained a Dalit targeted plan outlining the objectives, policies, strategies, and programmes for Dalits and other disadvantaged groups (Bhattachan *et al.*, 2009, p14).

2.5 The Performance of Nepal's Education System

Despite many efforts made to improve the Nepalese education system, the low level of learning achievements and persistently high dropout and repetition rates are lowering the continuation of children's education, which has challenged the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system (Ministry of Education, 2009, p10). The World Bank (2007, p17) reports that Nepal's education system suffers from poor instruction, outdated and misaligned curricula, lack of teaching materials including text books, teacher absenteeism, poor infrastructure and particularly lack of accountability and low parental involvement. Similarly, UNICEF (2007, p29) reports that there is less financial investment by the government in education in Nepal, although a high proportion of funding is allocated to education (about 16% of the national budget); because of the country's failure to raise adequate revenue, it is very donor dependent (Ibid, p30). The proportion of donor funding in the basic education sub-sector was 21% for the fiscal year 2004/05 (Ibid, p18). Nevertheless, there is a greater involvement with substantial influence of the aid agencies in national educational planning (Bhatta, 2011, p18).

A review of school education in 2006 found in their survey of 1000 schools that the student classroom ratio was 37:1 nationally but 50:1 in the Terai region (UNICEF, 2007,p12), which was more crowded and not convenient. Due to the limited budget available in education, much of it is spent on teachers' salaries and less money remains for improving teaching and learning. In this situation, schools are expected to generate their own funds to make up for any shortfalls, which results in schools charging fees, despite the national

policy of free education. This creates a problem for schools catering to poor, disadvantaged communities like Dalits.

Inadequate access and low participation, low retention of children at all levels, low levels of educational quality, inequalities in relation to various regions and social groups, limited managerial capacity, inadequate institutional support and financing are major problem areas in Nepal's education (Carney, 2003, p91). Furthermore, increasing enrolment and quality of secondary schools, particularly their relevance to the labour market, is another challenge for Nepal (World Bank, 2007, p7). Despite the increasing proportion of trained teachers, teaching methods are still not adequately child friendly and tend to focus on rote learning (UNICEF, 2007, p13). It is also reported that the allocation of resources, the effective management of funds, and implementation of policies are a major problem in the Nepalese education system.

Although the government is committed to providing quality education for all children and spends about 16% of Nepal's total annual budget in the education sector, in practice, more than 50% children fail in the national exam i.e. School Leaving Certificate (SLC). For example, 58% of examinees failed in the SLC exam in 2013 (2069 *BS*). In terms of examination results there is a big gap between the public and private schools. For example, in 2013 only 27.97% students passed in the SLC from the public schools, compared to 86.68% from the private schools (Thapa, 2013; Sharma, 2013). Among the total of 547,165 examinees taking 2013's SLC exam, 76% were from public schools and the remaining 24% from private schools (Neupane, 2013). Neupane further states that people largely blamed the country's politicians for the growing failure of the public institutions. A study conducted by Simkhada (2008) revealed that for example, the School Mangement Committee (SMC) chairperson's undue political and bureaucratic interest and interference constrained, rather than facilitated the head teachers' roles of school management. In addition, the Sharma (2013) reports that the government always try to conduct a fair National Board Examination, but it is not completely fair in practice; if it was made completely fair, the existing SLC results might be further down.

On the other hand, all the human resources of the Ministry of Education, Department of Education, Regional Educational Directorate, District Education Office, School's Inspectors and Resource Persons are involved in the improvement of government schools. Most importantly, there are almost 200,000 teachers of different natures involved in the public schools and 85% of the education budget is spent in school education alone. Despite these efforts and investment, the SLC results could not be improved, which is a great

challenge for the country (Sharma, 2013). However, there is a moral duty to look seriously at why more than 70% of students could not get through the SLC examination in the public system, which is a great issue of national policy concern.

Thapa (2013) questions and comments as follows about the accountability on the poor SLC results: despite a good number of qualified and trained teachers, it is interesting that public schools do not meet our expectations, compared to the private schools, which have less qualified teachers. However, the government has no supervisory role, but picks some incompetent teachers as resource persons and deputes its school inspection work to them. Astonishingly, the school management committee rarely discusses their performance even after the SLC results, when a maximum number of students failed in mathematics, Science and English. When nobody bears responsibility for poor results, how can one expect improvement? Thapa has summarised the possible causes of poor educational performance: firstly, the lack of dedication and more significantly accountability on the part of the teachers in public schools, who have grown ungovernable with no supervision either from the government or the school management committees and guardians concerned. Guardians refer to the parents or grandparents of the students. Secondly, the intrusion of local politicians in school management committees, who bear no accountability for the welfare of the academic institutions, but have contributed heavily to the deteriorating situation of government schools around the country. Thirdly, people working in the Ministry of Education have not done their job properly. Fourthly, the guardians, who are not required to pay any fees to the school for their children, are some of the major roadblocks for the functioning of the public schools in Nepal (Thapa, 2013).

Similarly, Neupane (2013) comments further about Nepal's education system: the country's education policy over the past decade has resulted in a gradual disempowerment of value, skills, and knowledge based education; the major contributors are the political instability, brain-drain and weak implementation of laws and policies. In public schools, the classroom intervention is inadequate. However, he also suggests that they must be provided with minimum enabling factors, such as an adequate number of subject qualified teachers, and availability of text books. There is a shortage of around 1000 teachers in secondary schools throughout the country (Neupane, 2013). The blame game is on, with teachers not accepting the responsibility and shifting the burden to indifferent guardians; and more worryingly, the school management committee are not at all interested to know what led to the poor results. Nevertheless there are some exceptional public schools that

are doing fairly well, such as Gyanodaya secondary school, Bafal, Kathmandu, who consistently produce good results (Thapa, 2013).

Moreover, there is a problem in achieving the expected learning outcomes, especially among the poor and most marginalized groups. For example, a study conducted in Nepal by the Department of Education in 2011 has revealed that the learning of 60% of the students is poor and weak (Sharma, 2013) in terms of availability of resources and examination results.

The opening of private schools began during the sixth five year plan period (1980-85) and the policy was expanded in the seventh five year plan (1985-90). The system of private schools and differences between private and public schools have continued to widen disparities, because this policy only encouraged private schools, but did not encourage public schools to compete with the others (Poudel, 2007, p188). After the political changes of 1990, Nepalese bureaucrats and policy makers were still heavily influenced by a centralised curriculum, national examinations and bureaucratic control (Ibid, p196). The main concern is that the private schools have been discouraging public educational practices. For example, in the case of Nepal, educational managers, school teachers, policy makers, political leaders, bureaucrats and the higher and upper middle classes seem reluctant to support public education, as they send their children to private schools (Ibid, p 202). The private sector largely serves the non-poor, because their fees are 10 times higher than those of public schools, which is not accessible for poor people. They have higher pass rates and higher completion rates than public schools and use English for instruction (World Bank, 2007, p20). Regarding the obtaining of good test scores, Thapa (2013) states that the proprietors are all in all and can function the way they like and the teachers are quite vulnerable and they seldom grumble, fearing the possible loss of their jobs. Therefore, they are forced to be dedicated. In this way, a handful of private schools in the country, in the name of quality, are exacerbating the divide between the advantaged and the disadvantaged (Neupane, 2013). Nevertheless, privatization is sadly a part of the inclusion problem, but by and large Dalit students do not gain access. So privatization is an example of one of the ways Dalits are excluded. However, privatization is not the focus of my enquiry.

Since the 1950s, educational policies have been influenced by bilateral and multi-lateral aid agencies, such as the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Japan, United Kingdom, and United States of America (Poudel, 2007, p196). However, despite the contradictions, competition and diverse interests of donors, the

World Bank has been playing a dominant role in policy formulation. The World Bank's ideologies of competition and privatization have included aid conditionality, which has created a number of contradictions (Ibid, p196). Therefore the highly centralized policy making process and top-down implementation disconnect the main stakeholders: parents and communities (Edward, 2010), which affects the school's management.

2.6 National Understanding of Inclusive Education

In line with the government's commitments to achieving the national goal of 'Education for All', policies based on the concept of inclusive education were introduced in four districts: Banke, Udayapur, Kavre and Sindhupalchwok in 1999 (Phuyal, 2008, p132). Under the EFA five year programmes (2004-2009), Nepal has adopted inclusive education as one of its key strategies for implementation (Pant, 2008, p36). For their common understanding, the Department of Education, Ministry of Education has developed the following definition of inclusive education through a national seminar organized in March 1-2, 2003:

> *"Inclusive education is a process of developing an educational system that ensures the opportunity for receiving education in a non-discriminatory environment in their own community by respecting the multicultural differences. Inclusive education believes on the principle that all children can learn if they are given appropriate environment and support to address their needs and recognizes the importance of the ownership of the community in schools. Inclusive education is a strategy to identify those children at national and local level who are in danger of dropping out from the school due to lack of essential appropriate environment and support and learning to fulfil social, cultural and educational needs of all children"* *(Pant, 2008, p36).*

The Department of Education (DEO) has identified 'Dalits' as one of the main target groups for inclusive education, as well as girls and women, children with disability, minority ethnic groups, street children, children affected by conflict, children affected by trafficking and sexual abuse, children severely affected by poverty, children of bonded labourers, children in jail, children infected and affected by Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Aquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), child lepers and child labourers (Pant, 2008, p37).

In Nepal as in all other countries, inclusive education is much debated in terms of its meaning, form and functions (Phuyal, 2008, p132) and it has been noted that policy makers are not yet ready to internalize the concept (Pant, 2008, p36). The problem is that inclusion can simply turn out to be rhetoric, much talked about but little practised (Sharma, 2007). Actually, efforts in the social inclusion field are generally seen as initiated and controlled

by donors, with little ownership from the government at all levels down to the schools (Bhatia *et al.*, 2004, p10). Interestingly, the people who develop and execute education policies, develop curricula, write books and speak about educational inclusion, with some exceptional cases all send their children to private schools. In this context, their stated commitment to a more inclusive education seems insincere (Poudel, 2007, p212). Nevertheless, principally, inclusive education enables children to learn without making any discrimination between them in terms of ethnicity, caste, handicap, minority or impairment or whatever of that kind (CERID, 2008, p3).

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the national context in which I carried out my research. In particular, I have dealt with the general background of the country; the caste system and associated problems; the history of Dalits' educational development; the changing context of the national political environment; the current performance of the education system; and current understandings of the idea of inclusive education.

My analysis of all of this, alongside my review of the international educational context in the previous chapter, led me to think further about the purposes of my research. As I have explained, at present the idea and implications of inclusive education remain a matter of uncertainty within the national policy discourse. At the same time, the inclusion agenda remains a hot political issue, particularly addressing the problem of Dalit inclusion. In particular, are we managing to include Dalits in the reforms in education that are currently taking place? Or perhaps we are in a similar situation to that facing black children in South Africa, or Maori children in New Zealand, despite the efforts made by their governments to include them.

As far as I have been able to determine, little research has been carried out regarding Dalit education in Nepal. For example, we know little about why enrolment levels of Dalit children in secondary education are far below that of primary education. Meanwhile, Nepal continues to be under international pressure from UNESCO, and its programme initiatives, such as Education for All (Jomtin, 1990), inclusive and special needs education (Salamanca, 1994) and the World Education Forum Dakar (Senegal, 2000) movements, because it is one of the signatory countries of these global movements. As explained, all of these developments aim to promote human rights and establish cohesion in the wider society through inclusive education and are committed to achieving the Education for All goals by 2015 (Subba, 2008, p4). Furthermore, Nepal has additional pressure from other

donor organizations for the inclusion and inclusive education because of their budgetary contributions in the education sector.

These concerns about the situation in my home country led me to reconsider the research questions presented at the beginning of this chapter. Having considered the official position, what interested me was: what do things look like in practice? In other words, what interests me is what Dalits are really experiencing, what they think, and what they have to say about their experiences. With these purposes in mind, my revised research questions became:

1. What are the experiences of and views on education in the Dalit community?

2. What are the barriers preventing the educational progress of Dalit students in Nepal?

3. What can be done to improve their situation?

Of the three research questions, the first two were essentially empirical, and data addressing these could be extracted directly from participants. The third one is not a question I have sought to answer simply from the data collected, as I was not confident that participants would be able to answer this directly. I noted what people said, and added a process of deduction, seeking to make sense of what people said in light of what I already knew from my research into the policies and the literature. So I did not pose this question to the participants, but rather I reflected on everything I read, heard, observed and analysed. Question 3 was therefore addressed through reflection on the data that emerged from questions 1 and 2. The initial Question number 1 was revised at the time of data analysis when I was moving back and forth between the literature review and discussion of the findings because the general 'situation' of Dalit education was clearly reflected in the literature.

In the next chapter, I explain how I planned my inquiry in order to address this agenda.

Chapter Three: Planning My Inquiry

In previous chapters I discussed issues arising from the existing literature about programmes to serve equitable education development for all, and I also discussed the problems confronting the international communities generally and the particular cases of particular countries. I have also explained the larger context of the changes taking place in Nepal, which precipitated this study.

The review of the literature indicated that there was a gap in research knowledge regarding exactly how Dalits are experiencing their education at secondary level; what factors are obstructing their educational progress; and how Dalits' educational exclusion can be translated into inclusion. There is little known about the main stakeholders' experiences and their opinions/views on the issues confronting Dalit education. Knowledge about inclusion, exclusion and equity would enable better understanding of whether existing policy and practices are effective or need changes. Thus, this study aims to develop an understanding of the barriers to access, participation and progress of Dalit children in Nepal.

The main purpose of this chapter is to describe and justify the methodology used to investigate the research questions identified. The chapter will discuss the overall research design. Any research design includes the overall approach to be taken and also detailed information about how the study will be carried out, with whom and where (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p64). The critical skill in research design is to decide upon questions that are important and then to choose research methods that will answer those questions as unambiguously as possible, given limited resources (Slavin, 1984, p16). In other words, the choice of using any approach is determined by the research questions and purpose, rather than by the prior preference of the researcher (Bazeley, 2007, p2). The literature review provided a home for the research questions, and the research questions guided me to choose the research approaches and methods. Therefore, I will start by reminding the reader of my research questions. My first question was about how Dalits feel and think about education. The second question was about the factors inhibiting progress in educational development; and the third question was about finding ways to address these problems. However, question number three is not an empirical research question, but drawn from my reflections on questions 1 and 2, and provides some suggestions regarding current problems.

1. What are the experiences of and views on education in the Dalit community?

2. What are the barriers to prevent the educational progress of Dalit students?

3. What can be done to improve their situation?

Of course, to address these questions, I needed to get different kinds of data from those which are in the public domain. I needed to find methods to collect data directly from the members of the Dalit community. I thought that Dalit children and their parents were the best persons to provide relevant information to answer the above research questions. I also thought that the teachers' experiences with Dalit children and their views on the Dalit community could contribute significantly to answering these questions. Therefore, I decided to explore the barriers that are limiting the access, participation and progress of Dalits through the lived experiences of Dalit children, the views of their parents and of their teachers.

To organize and explain my research plan, I have divided this chapter into different sections: overall approach to the study; gaining access and sampling of research site and participants; procedures for generating data; analysing the data; trustworthiness of the research and ethical considerations.

3.1 Overall Approach to the Study

For clear understanding of the overall approach to the study, we need to know about methodology. Methodology is about ways of interpreting the world. In other words, it is about the philosophical stance that informs the paradigm I want to live in and write in. When we discuss research paradigms there are always questions of ontology, epistemology and methodology. Assumptions about these three issues together form the 'basic belief system', the philosophy underlying social research that has implications for the selection and validation of a particular research method (Brewer, 2000). Ontological and epistemological assumptions guide the researcher to select the particular research method; the research questions and the nature of the social settings where the research is being carried out are also instrumental in the choice of particular research methods (Holiday, 2002).

Social research is often categorized into two basic models: a 'natural science model' and a 'humanistic model' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Brewer, 2000). The 'natural science model' is based on a positivist/post-positivist, experimental and empiricist philosophy. This model is mainly based on the ontological premise that there is a real world 'out there' that can be studied, measured, and generalized about in an objective and precise manner, independent

of the observer's influence (Brewer, 2000). Such a research style tends to be based on data collection through questionnaires, surveys, schematic observations, experiments and so on (Brewer, 2000). This model assumes that understanding is value and context free, and emphasizes the significance of the generic nature of the findings (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). This model is commonly known as the quantitative approach.

On the other hand, the 'humanistic model' is oriented towards a non-positivist, constructivist, naturalistic and interpretative paradigm. This model of social research is based on the ontological premises of naturalism, examining multiple and subjective realities, that are constructed and re-constructed through the interaction of researcher and researched (Brewer, 2000). It requires face to face interactions and a close relationship between researchers and researched (Ibid, p33). It investigates and responds exploratory and descriptive questions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; (Creswell, 2007, p39). Researchers using this approach recognize that understandings are value-laden and context-bound (Creswell, 1994, and Griffith, 1998). It can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from quantitative data (Silverman, 2000, p8). The derived outcome of the research is not primarily the generalization of results, but a deeper understanding of experiences from the perspectives of the participants selected for study (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p44). Such research is carried out in natural settings and contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p39). The naturalistic ontology suggests that realities are "wholes" that cannot be understood in isolation from the context. This research has explored participants' views and experiences in the school, classroom and Dalit community contexts. The interpretation element that flows throughout the process of research (Creswell, 2007, p231) is informed by these contexts as well as the responses. The researcher should adopt an attitude of respect or appreciation towards the social world where participants experience the issue or problem under study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p7; Creswell, 2007, p37); and the participants' views are valued (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p44). Therefore, this study embraces the 'humanistic model', which is commonly known as the qualitative approach.

Every approach has its own advantages and disadvantages. The problem of a qualitative research approach is that it is done chiefly with words, not with numbers; words are 'fatter' than numbers and usually have multiple meanings (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p56). Nevertheless, a qualitative approach was selected as the most appropriate design for the investigation of my research questions, because these are principally concerned with capturing participants' direct experiences in their natural settings in order to produce a

'thick and rich' description (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Patton, 2002). This approach is designed to provide in-depth description (Merten, 2005, p229). It is also argued that an in-depth analysis is more likely to generate new knowledge and deeper understandings, as it tends to go beyond what everyone already knows (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p25).

Thus, the research journey regarding the issue of Dalit children's integration into education began with the selection of a qualitative research approach within the interpretive paradigm (Denscombe, 2003). The research questions identified required a qualitative interpretive approach to data gathering and analysis. I am not investigating issues which have a single answer, nor am I trying to measure anything precisely. What my questions seek to do is to increase understanding and shed light on the issues which are inhibiting the educational access, participation and progress of young Dalits. To do this, I felt the qualitative interpretive paradigm was most appropriate. This accepts that multiple realities exist, and that universal truth is hard to find. The key idea behind this approach is to learn about the problem or issue from the participants' perspective.

Before talking about the procedures for generating data, I briefly describe the procedures of gaining access and sampling of research participants and research sites.

3.2 Gaining Access and Sampling

3.2.1 Access to Schools and Participants

At first, two senior officers of Ministry of Education were contacted informally via telephone calls to discuss the purpose of my study and clarify the procedures for accessing the schools. They shared their knowledge in this regard and recommended me to contact the District Education Office. During my summer trips to Nepal in June 2011, although it was an unexpected visit (due to family reasons), I established relevant contacts in the district. I met one of the officers of the District Education Office, who helped me, explaining the process of gaining access to the schools for conducting research; and he also suggested the appropriate schools, based on the distribution of Dalit communities.

Gaining access to the research setting and participants, and obtaining formal permission to carry out an investigation were vital (Holloway, 1997, p20). The decisions of the District Education Officer (DEO) and school head teachers were the keys that opened the gates of public schools to this research. My first access point was the District Education Office (DEO). My past work experience under the Ministry of Education for about 14 years was a strong basis for accessing the District Education Office and its staff. When I visited the

District Education Office and talked about my research and its purpose, I got a rapid response from an officer to whom I was previously known. So this personal link helped me to get written permission without delay. This written official permission from the District Education Office helped me to meet the school head-teachers. When I handed over a copy of this permission letter to the school head-teachers and shared my research purpose, they also expressed their willingness to participate in my research and to provide the necessary support. All the head teachers of the selected schools granted written permission to conduct research in their schools without creating any problem. Indeed, most of them expressed their interest in taking part in my research themselves.

Regarding access to the research participants, school teachers and other staff helped me to identify those children who were selected as research participants for the study. They also provided the home addresses of these children. Based on this, I met with Dalit parents in person and talked about my research purpose and invited them to participate if they wished to. I also explained that I was a student, I was doing my PhD, and that everything would be anonymous and confidential. From the very beginning, many parents were open and interested in taking part in my research, but some parents, on the other hand, seemed suspicious about me and were hesitant. However, when I explained who I was, what I was doing, and why I was doing it, they then agreed to take part in this research and became very open later on.

Furthermore, my presence in the field was both as an insider and an outsider. I was an insider in the sense that I am Nepalese and come from the same district where this research was conducted. Therefore, I have some insights about broader Nepalese community culture. Being a native, I speak Nepali and understand Nepali culture well enough to negotiate my way into communities and schools. Moreover, I was familiar with the locality, which helped me to travel alone using a bicycle, and also to be able to interact freely with the local community.

The contradiction is that I have great interest in the Dalit community, but I am not in it. I am clearly an outsider. I had my experiences not their experiences. So the complexities of my own identity affected the research in various ways. I am an upper caste, middle class, educated Nepali man who is studying in the United Kingdom. In this sense, even though I am a Nepali citizen, I was viewed as representing the United Kingdom (UK) and with this perception came both expectations and prestige. I felt that my UK education might have been an important factor in persuading the respondents to be cooperative. The researcher-

informant relationship brings into play dynamics of race, gender, class, nation and age (Adams, 1999, p323).

3.2.2 Gaining Trust and Establishing Rapport

I was aware that keeping good relationships with the participants could have important consequences for the subsequent course of the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p58). Indeed, rapport encourages informants to talk about their culture (Spradley, 1979, p78). Rapport refers to a harmonious relationship between researcher and informant, which develops a basic sense of trust and allows the free flow of information. Consequently, I tried to develop warm, close and sincere relations with the research participants, particularly the Dalit parents and their children. I had to use some strategies to create a rapport with these people and gain trust from them; so for example, I accepted the things that Dalit people offered me, such as tea/coffee or drinking water. For them, this was a way of testing upper caste people's stated ideals of equality and opposition to caste discrimination. The usual traditional practice in the caste system is that upper caste people do not accept tea/coffee or cooked food or drinks offered by people from the Dalit community. Sometimes, I took the lead and asked for a glass of drinking water myself. So while I was researching them, my respondents were also testing me. Actually, they wanted to see whether I was sincere when I used to ask for a glass of water myself; I noticed that at first glance, for a moment, there could be silence or confusion, and raised eyebrows, though gradually they grew comfortable, and ready to share their stories with me more openly. Relationship building was therefore an important aspect of effective interviewing and obtaining good quality data from the participants.

3.2.3 Selection of Research Sites

This research was conducted in Nepal. The reason for choosing to do the research in Nepal was based on the fact that I was familiar with the Nepalese education system and Dalit communities. I was interested in exploring in-depth the educational issues of the Dalit community, who have been socially oppressed and educationally deprived people in the context of Nepal. Because it was a small-scale research study, one education district was selected as the context for the study site, where sufficient diversity within the Dalit community could be found. The Flash Report-1 of District Education Office-DEO, (2011) revealed that there were 145,981 students enrolled from grade 1-10 in school year 2010/2011, of which 27,578 were Dalits (18.89%) in the Kapilvastu district (see the enrolment details in Appendix 2). This indicated that a large number of Dalits reside in this

district and that was the main basis of selecting this district for my research. In addition, regarding the ideal study site, Marshall and Rossman (1989, p54) argue that it will be found where entry is possible, where there is a high probability of a rich mix of many of the processes, peoples, programmes, interactions or structures of interest, and where the researcher can define an appropriate role and be assured of good sampling. Kapilvastu district fitted all of these criteria.

Kapilvastu is situated in the South-West part of Nepal, which is one of the most backward Terai districts of the country. This location is suitable for farming. Agriculture is the normal occupation of rural people. In addition to agriculture, the Badganga River has been a strong contributor to the district economy which passes through this district. Every day, hundreds of poor people in the area work on the banks of this river, screening sand and beating stones for a living. The Banganga River is highly productive of sand/stones. Almost throughout the year (except for two months in the rainy season), many people in the nearby villages go to the bank of the river and screen sand and beat stones. They sell these products locally and earn good amounts of money. Mostly, those who are poor have no adequate land for farming, and no other employment opportunities carryout this activity for their living.

Kapilvastu district is thus an economically disadvantaged area, with a highly diverse profile of caste/ethnicity, including about 81.1% Hindu, 18.2% Islam, and 0.75% other religions and the main languages spoken are estimated as: 71.3% Awadhi, 16.4% Nepali, 10% Tharu and 2.3% others (DEO, 2009, p3). The records of the District Development Committee-DDC (2010, p21) show that 21.9% of males and 19.5% of females get married between 10 and 14 years of age. Moreover, this is a typical rural area with poor infrastructure development and low levels of economic activities, where various groups of Dalits live, which gave me an additional basis to select this site for my research.

So, this research was conducted within a Village Development Committee of Kapilvastu district, where there were three public secondary schools operating. These schools are government funded and are currently assigned as 'community managed' schools. Although these schools are situated very close (within the range of 1 ½ to 2 kilometres of distance from each other), there is great diversity in the population in general, and the Dalit population in particular. The range of Dalits in this area gave me a strong basis for selecting these schools. The main groups of Dalit children studying in these schools were: Sarki, Gaine, Darji, Sunar, Pasi, Dhobi, Lohar, Harizon and Raidas. In addition, when choosing schools, a consultation with some of the District Education Officials brought the

suggestion that these schools were the best place for me to carry out this research for two reasons: one was the higher representation of different categories of Dalit communities and the other was ease of access and transport. Of course, a larger sample could have been better, but because of the problems of time and resources, this was as much as one person could do. Anyway, the numbers were not crucial because I was looking for insights, not a quantitative summary.

For research purposes, these three schools are named Bagmati secondary school, Narayani secondary school and Lumbini secondary school, which are coded further as A, B and C respectively during the analysis. The names of these three schools are pseudonyms. A brief description of each school is depicted below in table 3.1, which includes the total number of students, teachers and School Management Committee (SMC) members and the Dalits' share in each.

Table 3.1: Schools' features in terms of students, teachers and SMC members

Name of School	Students		Teachers		SMC	Members
	Total	Dalit	Total	Dalit	Total	Dalit
Bagmati secondary school	801	46	20	1	9	0
Narayani secondary school	475	83	14	0	10	1
Lumbini secondary school	1193	37	21	0	9	0
Total	**2469**	**166**	**55**	**1**	**28**	**1**

Source: Schools' Records (2012)

Schools' records (2012) show that more than fifty percent of teachers in these schools are temporary appointments.

3.2.4 Sampling of Participants

There are no general strategies for sampling in qualitative research, because of the great variety of research approaches, purposes and settings (Punch, 2009, p162). Qualitative researchers usually work with a small number of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p27; Cohen *at. al*., 2007, p201). The context of the study can enhance the value of the data (Walker, 1995, p3). It is essential for the researcher to locate the best informants because of the limited number of participants (Powney, and Watt, 1987, p49). All these principles were kept in mind while selecting study samples.

The selection of the sample depends upon the focus of inquiry and researcher's judgement as to which subjects will yield the clearest understanding of the phenomena under study (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p56). In my research, I used two types of sampling

method: purposive and random sampling. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2007, p125). The main purpose of this type of sampling is to ensure the information gathered addresses the purpose of the research (Johnson and Christenson, 2004, p220; Punch, 2009, p162)). In other words, the researcher picks a sample that can be expected to answer the research questions and aims to obtain illuminative and rich information from these people (Johnson and Christenson, 2004, p362). Purposive sampling enables the researcher to satisfy his/her specific needs in a project (Robson, 2002, p261). The aim of this sampling was to maximize information gathered, not to facilitate generalization (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p202). At the same time, random sampling is considered the most unbiased and representative approach. More explanations about this sampling are given below.

In this research, the sampling of research participants was done in two stages: In the first stage, 20 Dalit students (15 regular and 5 dropouts) were selected. They were selected from secondary education (grade 6-10) and were aged between 10-17 years or above. First of all Dalit students were identified and listed through the scrutiny of attendance registers and with the help of school teachers. Then, I divided these into two groups, a boy's group and a girl's group, and I chose 5 Dalit students from each school (3 from the girl's list and 2 from the boy's list) randomly, considering that random sampling helps to select an unbiased and representative sample for the research (Cohen *et al.,* 2002, p99). (I prefer to call it stratified random sampling, because the sample was drawn from two strata). To do this, I wrote the name of each individual boy and girl on a separate piece of paper and put these into two separate boxes and stirred them well. Then, I picked 3 from the girl's group and 2 from the boy's group. I repeated the same process in all three schools. For the selection of dropout students, I followed the school teachers' recommendation, because it was a rare chance to access them in their village. They recommended those dropout students who were still living locally. The main purpose of selecting dropout students was to discover why they had dropped out, while others remained in school.

Similarly, the sampling at the second stage was conducted based on the macro level analysis of the data collected from the 20 Dalit students. From the macro level analysis (repeated listening to audio-recorded interviews and reading of transcriptions) I found some gaps between the education of the Hill and the Madhesi Dalit Communities. I also found some gender differences emerging. These two issues guided my selection of the sample for follow-up.

Therefore, for the further in-depth investigation, I selected 8 individuals from within the 20 sampled students. This sample comprised 4 Hill Dalits and 4 Madhesi Dalits, which included two boys and two girls from each group. This combination included 6 regular and 2 dropout students from the original sample. In this way, 8 students were followed up for further illustration and deeper understanding of the important issues. The balance of this selection helped me to make some comparisons between the Hill Dalits and Madhesi Dalits, although this was not in the original plan. This second stage selection was purposive, in that the sample was drawn from the population of 20 in a deliberate or targeted way, according to the logic of the research (Punch, 2009, p359). The goal here was to enable detailed exploration of the research objectives (Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2006, p139).

So in the second stage, along with these 8 Dalit students, their parents (8) were also interviewed, to discover their views on the education of their children. In addition to this, 6 teachers (2 from each school) were also interviewed to capture their views and perceptions on Dalit children's education. Teachers' views are especially important, because all the teachers live locally and can clearly understand the everyday life and culture of the Dalit community. Teachers who had long teaching experience with the Dalit communities (at least 10 years) were purposively selected as key informants. Especial attention was given to including any Dalit teachers available in the schools, because their experiences and views were important, as this research was related to Dalits. While selecting teachers, either head teachers or deputy head teachers were also included. The main purpose of selecting key persons was to obtain rich information from a few significant informants. Full details of the sample selection and methods of data collection can be seen in Appendix 3.

3.3 Procedure for Generating Data

For generating the data, initially, two methods of data collection attracted me: ethnography and case study. Ethnography attracted me because I wanted to get inside the minds of my participants and the case study attracted me because I wanted to see views in the round.

Both these traditions influenced me in my choice of data collection methods, but I was not trying to produce case studies of any particular school or individual. Therefore, I chose ethnography as the best method. Although I chose ethnography, I was still not trying to produce an ethnographic account of what is like to be a Dalit child; but I was trying to answer particular research questions through investigating the lived experiences of Dalit

children and the views of their parents and teachers, and observing the teaching and learning processes in schools. Thus, looking at my research questions, I decided to use interviews and observations, which are often used by ethnographers, as the best methods to generate the necessary data to answer my research questions.

3.3.1 Defining Ethnography

Ethnography is an approach to social research based on first-hand experience of social actions within a discrete location with the objective of collecting data that conveys the subjective reality of the lived experiences of inhabitants' (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p16) According to Brewer (2000, p6), ethnography is 'the study of people in a naturally occurring setting or field by a method of data collection which captures their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher particularly directly in the setting in order to collect data in a systematic manner, but without meaning being imposed on them externally'. Thus, ethnography is an approach to doing social research by looking, listening, and thinking about social phenomena (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p230).

Ethnography in educational institutions is based on participant observation and/or recordings of everyday life in natural settings (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995, p15). It typically deals with the culture of a school community and is concerned with the educational context (Merriam, 1998, p14). Merriam highlights that the history of the neighbourhood, socio-economic factors, the communities' racial and ethnic make-up, and the attitude of parents and school officials towards education would all be important considerations in an ethnographic study (Ibid, p14-15).

Thus the above definitions reveal that ethnography is a central way to investigate issues related to human beings, their behaviour, experiences, feelings, and perceptions. Since ethnography adopts a method of collecting data from first-hand experience, it requires the researcher's direct involvement in the field. The researcher goes to the field for extended periods of time, watches the everyday activities of the inhabitants, and often participates in common activities, while observing and interviewing participants. This is concerned with the subjective realities of people and how they constitute and construct their social world (Delamont and Atkinson, 1995; Brewer, 2000; Pole and Morrison, 2003; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). These definitions show that in an ethnographic method, researchers go directly to the research field, where the context can help them to understand underlying meanings and practices. An important aspect is the natural setting for data collection, which generally conveys the subjective meanings of people.

3.3.2 Rationale for Using an Ethnographic Approach

The ethnographic approach to research is common to and accepted within the study of educational institutions and processes, as it is across the social sciences (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p11). In this approach, shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and languages of participants are examined, which represent an entire cultural group (Creswell, 2007, p68). Any group of people who share goals, customs, rituals, objects or events is considered a 'culture' (Spradley, 1979, p1980). In this study, Dalits are considered as an important socio-cultural group that is educationally and socially disadvantaged in the context of Nepal.

The ethnographic method draws on multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2007, p231). In this research, I used interviews, observations, and documents analysis for the data source. Ethnographers often work with transcriptions of what teachers or pupils say, and observations of what they do, and also with documents about educational institutions' policies and practices (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p20). The ethnographer participates overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions and collecting relevant data (Punch, 2009, p125). Indeed, observation is the ethnographer's opportunity to listen, watch and record what people say and do in special educational settings and timeframes. Therefore, observation is crucial to ethnography and entails extended involvement of the researcher 'in the field', that is, the researcher immerses him/herself in the everyday lives of those being researched. Though not strictly ethnography, nevertheless, I spent nine months in the research location, visiting the schools and Dalit communities, and observed and interviewed people and recorded the relevant activities held in the classroom and audio-taped the interviews. I tried to understand the real experience of Dalit children in the classroom, and I tried to understand their context: everyday life, not in a lab, or in texts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995, p2).

So, earlier in this chapter, I have explained that the methodology choice is to do with ways of viewing the world, and that the way we view the world influences the way we observe it, collect data about it, which in turn influences the way we understand it. I was interested in understanding what is going on, what people think, what they feel, what they do and why, which led me to choose a broadly ethnographic approach because my methodological standpoint was to try to see it through their eyes. Some ethnographers understood ethnography itself as fieldwork (Burgess, 1984; Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998), which suggests that there is an inseparable link between the methods and the

methodologies of the research. In an ethnographic method, socio-cultural aspects are explored and interpreted using various kinds of data including observations and interviews, which are collected in real life situations in natural settings. My interviews allowed me to tap into their thinking and their realities, and my observation allowed me to create my own reality to compare with this. For example, as I observed the classes, and talked to the children, I felt that Dalits were overlooked, but the teachers did not think they were. There will be such contradictions because I gathered individual perceptions. The ethnographic approach helps to point to the differences and understanding, as well as offering an explanatory account of what is going on. It allows for teasing out differences. As mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, I was not looking for truth, I was trying to capture each individual's own reality.

Therefore, technically, I did not produce ethnography, because I did not follow research participants continuously, but I used an approach derived from the work of ethnographers. I used many features of the ethnographic methods. I used observations and interviews in natural settings that ethnographers often use to collect data and understand their culture and every day activities. As we saw above, what ethnographers try to do is go out and portray the world as it is understood by the people they are observing. In other words, ethnographers go to the natural setting and live with the community and talk to people and observe them, learn from them, their culture and they write about it, which I did. I looked at the world in terms of their own belief system and their culture. So, I was seeing it from their points of view.

I like ethnographic methods because in Nepal, we have policies, and we know about these policies, but it is quite clear that these policies are not working (see Chapter 2, p60). So my study was trying to find out why these policies are not working, and that is what my questions are related to. I was trying to understand why, although these policies say Dalits should be integrated in schools, it is not working, even though a series of laws and policies were formulated to support them (see Chapter 2 and 4). What I was trying to do is tap into a series of realities as people perceive them, but I was doing this study on my own, so what made sense was for me to talk to teachers, to talk to parents, and to talk to children themselves. I did not expect what they told me to fit precisely together, but I was able to tease out these different viewpoints about the reasons why it is not working. Then I hoped that I could make some suggestions about how we could get it to work better. To do that, I had to find methods that would allow me to see what was happening and understand it from the viewpoints of the people involved. So, I conducted observations to see what was

happening, and I talked to people to understand their viewpoints about what was going on. What I watched and what they told me gave a better sense together. For example, I saw that the Dalit and non-Dalit children were eating and drinking together; Dalit children were sitting on the front desk mixing with the non-Dalit students. They also said yes, of course, we all do, even the teachers eat together with Dalit children. It was not like this when I was a child, but now nobody seemed to mind doing this in schools. Thus, to a degree, the policy is working in school and the children are integrated socially in school, but perhaps not educationally. Basically, it is not social practices which lead the children out, but the pedagogic practice. It is really good and encouraging that there is social integration, but actually I was looking for equal opportunities for educational access, participation and success. To understand and explain these things, I needed ethnographic methods. Observation gave confidence to tell the story very simply. It was important because I needed to be able to see what is going on. Thus, employing one's eyes and ears to understand what is going on in any setting is a major focus of qualitative research (Silverman, 2011, p113), and the ethnographic method is possibly the best way of doing it.

Thus, I have explained the naturalistic paradigm; sample selection and access procedures and ethnographic approach to fieldwork, now I will describe how I organised and how I gathered data, through interviews and observations in the field.

3.3.3 Organising of the Field Work

The fieldwork for this research was conducted between October 2011 and June 2012. To carry out my research and collect the necessary data from the field, I divided my fieldwork plan into two phases: In the first phase, all the preparatory work for the interview and observations were made, such as revising the interview schedules, making relevant contacts and gaining access to the research sites. At the same time, I also collected documents and literature related to caste hierarchies, educational policies and practices, and the historical perspectives of Dalits. Then I carried out interview programmes with a sample of Dalit children, who are the main focal points of this study. In this phase, the data were collected during the period between October and December 2011. In the second phase, I carried out classroom observations and conducted interview programmes with more children, parents and school teachers. In this phase, the data were collected between February and June 2012.

3.3.4 Developing and Revising Interview Schedules

When I arrived in Nepal for the formal field research, I carried out two major activities: I talked to several policy makers and also conducted two focus group discussions. The main purpose of these activities was to understand the broader views on the issue and revise the interview schedules. Therefore, I started my field work with revised interview schedules, as after my pilot phase I evaluated what I was finding out, and so measured the usefulness of my instruments and modified them. That helped me to ask more relevant questions of the Dalit children, their parents and school teachers in the main study.

I spoke to several policy makers, including the Chairman of the National Dalit Commission and a Member of Parliament, to understand their views on the policies related to Dalit children's education. These people represent both the Dalit and non-Dalit communities. These were key people who were knowledgeable about Dalit issues related to education. Through the telephone contacts, I arranged to talk with these people and shared the purpose of my research. I then visited their respective offices at agreed times for the talks. I used unstructured interviews because the unstructured or open-ended interview is most common in qualitative research (Silverman, 2011, p161). These people not only answered my broader questions (such as: what are the main issues in Dalit education in Nepal?; what are the current policies/ programmes and problems associated with them?). These people also helped me to find some important documents and literature useful for my investigation. The main aims of talking to these people were to get a wider overview of the research issues, and to help to formulate the right questions in the interview schedules drafted for Dalit children, their parents and school teachers.

These conversations were carried out for 45 minutes to one hour and audio recorded. The conversations were led by the interviewees, and I mostly listened. However, I asked questions from time to time to explore further and also asked few questions which came to my mind during the conversations.

In addition, I conducted two focus group discussions: one in school with the teachers and the other in the Dalit community with the parents. As suggested by Silverman (2011, p207), there should be 6-8 people in a focus group. I involved six participants in each focus group. As a researcher, I played a facilitator's role in the discussions rather than a questioner (Silverman, 2011, p162). Pole and Morrison, (2003, p39) explain that the focus group can be used in order to explore specific sets of issues in educational settings. They are considered appropriate when the intention is to explore a 'focus' within a broad subject

or set of issues (Resell *et al.*, 2002, p2; Silverman, 2011, p207). Here, the discussion was focused on the broader views around the Dalit children's access, participation and progress in education and its associated problems. Moreover, the focus group discussion is also useful for developing an interview schedule (Flick, 2002, p120; Punch, 2009, p147). The main purpose of the focus group discussions in this research was to revise, re-formulate and develop the interview schedules. The focus group with the teachers was conducted in a school (after school), and the focus group with the parents was conducted in a Dalit settlement on a lawn (open ground) in the evening. Both the focus groups were audio-recorded. The key issues obtained through focus group discussions with teachers and parents gave me more specific ideas, which were utilized to revise and re-formulate more relevant questions in the interview schedules to answer my research questions. However, the focus groups were conducted as a part of a reconnaissance exercise that helped to revise and develop my interview schedules.

Thus these two activities - talking to the policy makers and conducting focus group discussions - made me more confident about what to ask in interviews. Preparing different sets of questions for the interviews was an important stage of the research process, especially in terms of what the participant was going to talk about and relevance of the conversations (Dingwall, 1997, p58). After revision of the interview schedules, I went ahead to carry out my main study.

3.3.5 Data Collecting Through Interviews

The interview is a very good way of gathering people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations, and constructions of reality (Punch, 2009, p144). It is considered the most appropriate method to identify experiences, perceptions and opinions (Robson, 2002, p288). Many workers in the field of social science have suggested approaches to the interview method (Powney and Watts, 1985; Silverman, 1993; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000).

Interviews can be classified into three broad categories: structured, semi-structured and un-structured. Both unstructured and semi-structured interviews are commonly used in educational ethnography (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p30). I mainly used semi-structured interviews, which are flexible and open-ended, allowing the researcher a 'level of flexibility', and the opportunity to listen actively and establish rapport with the participants (Silverman, 2006, p110). A semi-structured interview schedule allows informants to express themselves at length, and it offers enough shape to prevent aimless rambling

(Coleman and Briggs, 2002, p149). It allows a lot of space to receive a wide range of breadth and depth of information on the topic (Robson, 2002, p278). The use of open-ended interviews generates 'direct quotations' from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge (Patton, 2002, p7). Moreover, open-ended questions allow the researcher to probe, clear up any misunderstanding, test the limits of the respondents' knowledge, encourage cooperation, and help establish rapport (Cohen *et. al*., 2007, p357). Probing also helps to elaborate, confirm and clarify what the research participant is saying and adds richness to the data (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994).

As explained above, most of the interviews I conducted were semi-structured, because I used interview guidelines which helped me to stay focused on the subject area in an attempt to encourage a natural response. There was no specific order or sequence of questions and I also probed the emerging themes. I conducted all the interviews myself and did not use any assistant or mediator. I could not feel any language barriers between the research participants and me, as they could speak Nepali, and those who were from the Madhesi Dalit group occasionally spoke their first language, 'Awadhi', which was not problematic because I understand it, although I am unable to speak it fluently.

As mentioned earlier, before taking the interviews, the purpose of the research was explained and consent was taken from all research participants. In the case of children, the interviews were conducted in the presence of their parents to avoid any kind of possible risks: sensitive issues (personal/family related) or any stress /anxieties created. The interviews with the children were conducted with the parents rather than with the teacher so that they could share their school experiences openly. However, parents were interviewed individually on a one to one basis. Some Dalit parents requested me to hold the interview with their children on Friday evening or Saturday morning, because it would be easier to meet the parents and children together at home. The interviews with the Dalit parents and children were conducted in Dalit community contexts: in the porch of their house or front yard garden rather than in school.

Interviews with the teachers took place after the classroom observation, which helped me to clarify some things that were noticed during classroom observation. Most of the interviews with the teachers were organized after school time, though some teachers were interviewed during their leisure periods. The interviews with the teachers were conducted in a separate room or in the school garden within the school premises. All the interviews with the children, parents and teachers were audio recorded for later analysis. The interviews were conducted in Nepali, the official language of Nepal, which is also the

language of teaching and learning in schools. The interview schedules used as a guide are attached in appendices 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8.

3.3.6 Data Collecting Through Observation

In addition to the interviews, I used observation because it is the central method of data collection in the ethnographic approach (Denscombe, 2003; Pole and Morrison, 2003). Gold (1958) introduces four different roles for the observer according to the degree of his/her participation: the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant and the complete observer (Adler and Adler, 1994, p379). The participant as observer role is implied in a situation where the observer participates by developing appropriate relationships with informants as well as observing and recording informants' activities (Burgess, 1984). The participant observer becomes a complete participant when s/he is already a member of the group or becomes a genuine member of the group during the course of his /her study (Adler and Adler, 1994, p380).

My role in the classroom remained 'participant as observer'. The participation in the school and classroom will be as observer where the researcher's identity as a researcher is openly recognized (Pole and Morrison, 2003, p23). Participant observation may be overt or covert (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). In this sense, my relationship with the research participants was overt, since I negotiated my role of researcher with them. Nevertheless, in naturalistic observation, observers neither manipulate nor stimulate the behaviour of those whom they are observing, and the observations are therefore relatively unstructured (Punch, 2009, p153-154), which I followed in this research. I did not wish to use pre-determined categories and classifications, but to make observations in a more natural, open-ended way. However, to ensure the recordings of the relevant information, just to remind myself, a list of important points was developed (see Appendix 9).

In participant observation, there are three primary elements: a place, actors and activities in each set (Spradley, 1980, p39), which can be seen in classroom observation. Robson (2002, p311-312) proposes four uses for observation in social science research:

1) as an exploratory tool, perhaps in an early phase of research, usually in an unstructured form.
2) as a supportive or supplementary method to triangulate against other data sources, such as interviews.
3) as a primary method in a (usually descriptive) study.

4) as part of a multi-method case study, alongside supplementary documentary analysis

This study used observational data for the second purpose, which helped me to supplement and triangulate against interview data. Observation was made in schools and classrooms to explore how teachers and peer groups treated the Dalit students and how they participated in teaching and learning processes. Observation was helpful to understand what happens within classroom situations, what methods and resources are used in the learning process. I also observed the seating arrangements, physical facilities, and the availability of teaching and learning materials. The observational data were recorded in the field notes (Spradley, 1980, p33); this record builds a bridge between observation and analysis. Moreover, the observation not only produces great rigour when combined with other methods, it also yields depth and /or breadth; and enhances consistency and validity (Adler and Adler, 1994, p382).

As mentioned earlier, during classroom observations, my role was 'participant as observer', which allowed me more time for observation and note taking. In naturalistic research, the social world is studied as far as possible in its natural state, undisturbed by the researcher (Punch, 2009, p125). Therefore, I took my seat at the back of the class. I did not interact with teacher or students during classroom observation, because I did not want to disturb the teaching and learning process.

Nevertheless, in this research, interviews were the major tool for data collection but observations helped me to supplement against interview data. The combination of observation and interview enriched the quality, because using the observational data to inform and guide qualitative interviewing can lead to very rich and high quality data (Punch, 2009, p156). The classroom observation allowed me the opportunity to listen to teachers and students and watch them in a natural setting.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Observational Data

Robson (2002, p310) notes the potential strengths and weaknesses of observation as a data gathering method. He emphasizes the usefulness of observational data to triangulate other data sources, pointing out how often there are 'discrepancies between what people say they have done or will do and what they actually did or will do'. This will be particularly relevant to this study, where comparison of interviews and observation of participants' behaviour would be central in building a clearer picture of whether discriminatory behaviour in the classroom exists and if so how Dalit students experienced this behaviour.

Apart from observer bias, Robson (2002) notes two key disadvantages in observation in a social setting. One is that in the presence of an observer, participants' behaviour may change: for example, the teacher can treat Dalit students in an unusual way in front of a 'stranger'-observer. Also, the preference of an observer can distort participants' behaviour: for example, a smile, or overt note making in response to a student or teacher action, may affect subsequent behaviour from a participant who feels the scrutiny is possibly judgemental.

3.3.7 Data Collecting Through Document Analysis

In addition to interviews and observations, I used documentary sources of data as well. Documentary data might be used in various ways in education research; it can be collected in conjunction with interviews and observations (Punch, 2009, p159). Obviously any study which involves the scrutiny of policy will involve a certain level of documentary analysis. So we need to know about policy and how it is disseminated, how it influences local policies and practices and how it is reflected in school policies and practices. Here, the intention was to review policy documents to produce a picture of how Dalits are featured or not featured in the policy documents at national and local levels, which will provide a relating point for the empirical data. The analysis of such documents, and empirical data collected in the field, helped me to understand the problems of integration of Dalits in education and wider society. Therefore, the information obtained from the document analysis was utilized during the discussion of the findings. In addition, the data gathered from the interviews, observations and document analysis would help in triangulating the results. The documents used in this research can be seen mainly in Chapter 4, although some were used in Chapter 2 to make the national context somewhat clearer. Some examples of such documents are: The Constitution of Nepal (1990), Interim Constitution (2007), policy documents of the Ministries and other agencies of the government of Nepal, the World Bank, UNESCO, UNICEF, and UNDP. The sources of these documents are the websites of these institutions. Some important documents were also collected through direct visits to different offices, such as the National Dalit Commission, Jawalakhel, Ministry of Education, Singha Darbar, District Education Office and District Development Committee, Kapilvastu.

Let me summarise the relationships between the above mentioned three sets of data obtained from the different sources: interviews, observations and documents analysis. Although I used all three sets of data, my greatest focus was on the field data from schools and communities that revealed the Dalit voices and their perspectives. However, all these

sources are overlapping parts of data that were used to supplement the Dalit perspectives. Nevertheless, the interviews provided an enormous amount of data, although some observation data were drawn on in the discussion of the findings.

3.4 Data Analysis

Before coding and categorizing the data, I will repeat how I recorded the data in the field. As suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson, (2007, p147), if possible, interviews should be recorded by using audio-recording devices rather than relying on field notes. I tape recorded all the interviews, using a mini-audio-recorder that was unobtrusive (Spradley, 1979, p73). On the other hand, I also took notes of my classroom observations, because note taking during classroom observation is the ideal way of recording observational data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p141).

The process of qualitative data analysis takes many forms, but is fundamentally a non-mathematical analytical procedure that involves examining the meaning of people's words and actions (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p121). In naturalistic inquiry, data analysis is a contextual and continuous activity which starts from the interview and observation process (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p11). Nevertheless, analysis of any kind involves a way of thinking. In this research, data analysis was computed through the inductive form of thematic analysis; the process is similar to the grounded theory approach, which is briefly explained below.

Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analytic method (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). They argue that thematic analysis offers an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to analysing qualitative data, which is a very useful method of data analysis in qualitative research. This method searches for themes or patterns, in relation to different epistemological and ontological positions. Braun and Clarke also argue that in thematic analysis researchers need not subscribe to the implicit theoretical commitments of grounded theory, if they do not wish to produce a fully worked-up grounded theory analysis (Ibid, p81).

Similarly, grounded theory also seeks patterns in the data, but the goal of grounded theory analysis is to generate plausible and useful theory from the phenomena grounded in the data (Mcleod, 2001 cited in Braun and Clarke, 2006, p81). However, grounded theory seems increasingly to be used in a way that is essentially grounded theory 'lite'- as a set of procedures for coding data very much akin to thematic analysis (Ibid, p81).

The way I worked was very much influenced by my understanding of how grounded theory is produced, because I was looking for meaning within the data, which bears some similarity to the inductive form of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The inductive approach of thematic analysis is a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions (Ibid, p84). They termed it a 'data-driven' approach. So I am particularly influenced by Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, doing thematic analysis which is grounded in the data.

Coding and categorising: I initially coded the content of interview data and then significantly reduced the number of codes as I searched for potential themes from these codes. I again reduced these codes in order to try and draw out the dominant themes from the data. These ideas influenced the way I worked. I was looking at educational barriers in a specific context.

As stated earlier, the analysis was approached through inductive inquiry, which begins with interview data and then seeks to discover patterns. For this study, I worked through a two stage process: transcription and translation of the Nepali interviews into English. Transcriptions and translations both provided opportunities for further familiarization with the data. These processes, although time consuming, were beneficial, in that they helped me to be intimately involved with my data. Moreover, translation required a sharp eye for context and intended meaning. I was aware of preserving the integrity of the text while translating. I consulted Nepali-English Dictionaries and English-Nepali dictionaries to control for mis-translation, although one cannot deny that the researcher's interpretation will influence the data. Moreover, no matter how proficient one may be in both the languages (Nepali, English) something may be lost during the translation process.

Nevertheless, although data were coded inductively, it is important to note that a researcher cannot altogether free himself from theoretical and epistemological commitments, and data are not coded in an epistemological vacuum (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p84). The processes of codes and themes development are explained below. This example is drawn from the data obtained from the interview with Dalit children.

In this case, before transcribing and coding the interview data, I listened to the audio-taped interviews several times, which helped me to become familiar with the subject matter discussed during the interviews. Then I transcribed the audio-taped interviews in Nepali, (see the example of Nepali transcripts in Appendix 10), which took a long time. Although it took a long time, it was useful to understand the data, and that later helped me in coding,

developing themes and interpreting the data. I read and re-read the transcribed data several times to conceptualize the text for the development of initial codes. "We cannot analyse our data unless we read it: how well we analyse data is depends on how well we read it" (Deys, 1993, p87). Therefore the reading in qualitative data analysis is an active process. Then I started coding; at the beginning of the coding process, I unitized/chunked (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) the data by selecting the text which makes sense. Unitizing the data here means giving certain meanings to certain "data bits". When all the transcribed data were unitized, I checked again and again whether relevant and important data were missing or not, and whether the names for the unitized data were most appropriate. A number of times, I revised the descriptors given to the bits of data to clarify further.

At the end of unitizing the data, 112 initial codes emerged. At this stage, I found same codes for different bits of data. In this situation, I put the data together within the same code. Similarly, when the data having the same meaning were merged together, the total number of codes came further down to 87. When I repeated, and looked closely, I decided that some of the codes were similar in meaning, so I reduced them further. I tried to bring the similar codes together. When all the similar codes were merged together, they were reduced significantly and came down to 22, from which 6 broader themes emerged. During this process, some of the codes were re-named; for some of the data, new names were given and some were deleted, again because the data had the same meaning. During the process of reduction of codes, the same data bits were sometimes used to illustrate different codes, for example, "I go to school in each alternative day. My parent told me to go to school in each alternative day because I have to take care of my brother and sister (they are 3-4 years old); one day my sister takes care of them and the other day I do" which is used in two codes: 'causes of absenteeism' and 'a large numbers of children'. Then I tried searching for potential themes from these codes and gathered all data relevant to each potential theme. After collating codes into potential themes, I started checking whether the themes worked in relation to the coded extracts and also revised and re-named these themes. The details about the codes, themes and associated data used are given in Appendix 11.

Next, I gave transcripts, codes and themes to a native speaker who is an expert in qualitative research and also familiar with the research context. The purpose was to make sure that important information was not missing and that the coding was done appropriately, which would help to increase the validity of the research. The native speaker asked me again and again about the purpose of the research and research questions before

checking transcripts and codes and themes. He provided some minor changes to some codes. For example the code "teachers' quality" was changed into "low quality teaching". He also provided some suggestions for changing the data bits from one code to another code which looked more relevant. For example "Now, I cannot pay monthly fees, grandparents have become old, maternal uncle and aunt send money just for food/survival"- this was changed from the code "poverty" to the code "poor financial situation". When all the suggestions had been incorporated, I translated this work into English. Then the data were presented and analysed under these themes. The same process was also adopted to develop codes and themes from the data obtained from other stakeholders: parents and teachers. In this way, all the data obtained from the teachers, parents and children were presented and analysed under the developed themes in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 respectively.

Data analysis is an iterative process and it gave me an opportunity to interact more with the data and become more familiar within it again. At this stage of analysis, research questions are partially answered- what are the barriers that are hindering the access, participation and progress of Dalit children's education. Still the research needs to question the interview data further. Therefore, there was a need for further discussions to fully answer the research questions, as I explain in Chapter 8.

3.5 Trustworthiness of the Research

Trustworthiness is an important feature of qualitative enquiry, relating to both the rigour of the methods and the credibility of the data and the analysis (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p153). It refers to the extent to which one can have trust or confidence in a study and its findings (Robson, 2002, p553). Robson says that to obtain credibility in the research, data should be triangulated from different methods and sources (Ibid, p175). Collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods, is what triangulation involves (Maxwell, 2005, p112). Triangulation thus gives added depth to the description of the social meanings involved in a setting (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p183). For example, in this research, data was validated by confirming and triangulating data from several sources, such as interviews, observations and document analysis. Furthermore, teachers, students, parents, and policy makers were all used as sources for the data collection. Thus the research has explored the individual realities to shed light on the problems of access, participation and achievements of Dalit children in education.

Moreover, trustworthiness depends upon how the research is designed, carried out and reported (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p64). This poses two questions: to what extent can we place confidence in the outcomes of the study? And do we believe what the researcher has reported? Cohen and Manion (1998, p318) state that checking validity will increase the trustworthiness of the research. Perhaps the most important way of achieving greater validity is to minimize the amount of bias. For this purpose, I situated my role as one that should check to minimize my own bias first. Audio taping of interviews also helped to reduce researcher bias from the perspective of recording everything that was said. The most complicated aspects are translation and interpretation. Translation is something that could affect the validity of the research: the researcher will need to consider all the possible biases that can arise, for instance when data is translated the interpreter could change the real meaning (Sheeny *et al.,* 2005). In this research, I needed to translate the data from Nepali to English. To reduce bias, I used a Nepali and English dictionary. I thus tried to use all possible ways and to be careful regarding true meanings while translating and analysing data.

Trustworthiness is concerned with the 'believability' of a study, and the degree to which a reader has faith in its credibility (Lankshear, and Knobel, 2004, p366). In this regard, I was cautious about the extent to which the data were sufficient to answer the research questions. Sufficiency refers to the amount of data collected for a study and the quality of evidence provided to support interpretations in relation to research questions (Ibid, p366). To enhance the sufficiency of the data, several data collection techniques and sources were used, so that the data collected were rich and overlapping in detail. However, the trustworthiness of the study is cumulative, because it was built up over the course of conducting and reporting the study. In addition, the researcher was aware that the 'logic' of the research questions i.e. theoretical framing, data collection and analysis designs and its justifications and appropriateness, could all increase the coherence of the study. Therefore, justifying the research design decisions was another way to strengthen the credibility of the study (Ibid, p368). For this purpose, I have cited previous research and the methodological literature in support of claims about the usefulness of the design or methodological decisions made.

For both individual interviews and observation, rapport-building with participants is considered very important (Mertens, 2005, p387). If they trust the researcher, there is a better chance to receive true information from the participants. A good relationship was established with all informants, using good communication skills such as asking good

questions and listening intently (Merriam, 1998, p23) and I was also curious to know more during interviews. In addition, I adopted a distinct strategy of drinking tea/coffee or water served by the Dalit participants, which became very effective in establishing good relationships and gaining trust. This has been explained in detail in the earlier part of this chapter.

Lankashear and Knobel (2004, p363) note that the researcher can use two criteria to evaluate the quality of qualitative research: trustworthiness and communicative validity. The ideal of communicative validity is to present readers with carefully argued interpretations and claims together with evidence to support them. The 'evidence' in this research is largely rooted in quotations obtained from the informants. To achieve the communicative validity, I have tried to ensure that readers feel that research arguments are coherent, logical and substantiated. Asking other researchers to read and evaluate drafts of one's research report is another useful strategy for maximizing the communicative validity of the study (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p366). For this purpose, I gave my discussion chapters (Chapters 8 and 9) to a colleague knowledgeable in the research field and context, and who is also an expert in qualitative research and Dalit context, and provided a lot of feedback suggestions which were incorporated. In addition to this, the full report was read by my two supervisors.

However, trustworthiness is a matter of concern to the consumer of inquiry reports (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p328). A detailed description of the research process has been presented, which provides a basis for judging the credibility of the study (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p145). An extensive and careful description of the time, place, context, and culture is known as a 'thick description' (Merten, 2005, p256), which helps to increase the transferability of findings. The researcher has tried to give a 'thick description' as far as possible, especially on the data collection and analysis processes.

To ensure reliability in qualitative research, examination of trustworthiness is crucial (Golafshani, 2003, p601); however, the reliability of information in qualitative research is always questionable because it is hard to get consistent results. In this context, the trustworthiness of qualitative research is still the subject of much debate (Robson, 2002, p 168). Therefore, qualitative research has its limitations regarding generalizability (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p56) although Lincoln and Guba (1985) have claimed that it can be transferred to similar situations. Nevertheless, while conducting this research, research integrity was maintained, which included the consistent adherence to a set of ethical

principles in which clarity, accuracy and truth was always looked for in the presentation of research findings (Parse, 2001, p20).

3.6 Ethical Matters

Qualitative research cannot be value free: it must be ethically conducted and ethically reported (Soltis, 1996, p256). A qualitative researcher faces many ethical issues that surface during data collection in the field and in analysis and dissemination of qualitative reports (Creswell, 2007, p141). Of course any study like this, and perhaps particularly the study of a minority ethnic caste group struggling to secure equal treatment, has a number of ethical considerations. In this context, the understanding of research ethics and research protocol is important. Firstly, the research proposal went to the ethics committee of the university; the process through the project was approved. There were other practical issues, such as certain limitations as to where I could carry out this work. Some of these related to my own situation: where I live and where I can reach, what my resources were; others were with to do with local relationships, like who was willing to speak to me. Moreover, research was still not considered a priority in Nepal. I spent a considerable amount of time and effort in explaining the project and had to convince people of the importance of the research, especially the Dalit parents and their children in the Dalit settlement.

Nevertheless, consent was obtained from each participant, the ethical implications of this study having been made clear (Miller and Bell, 2002, p55). Regarding Dalit students' participation, consent was sought from their parents. Before gaining consent from the parents, detailed information about the research was provided verbally. The information written in the information sheet was thus initially explained verbally, which helped them to understand what was written when the information sheet was provided to them later. All participants were reassured verbally that the study would under no circumstances disclose their true identity, and they were informed of the goals of the research. As explained in the consent letter (Warren, 2001, p89), all research participants were informed that participation was voluntary, and that they could withdraw at any time (Miller and Bell, 2002, p54-55). By doing this, I ensured that the rights of the participants were respected and that their privacy was neither assaulted nor exploited (Sieber, 1993). Thus, in this research, the protection of participants is ensured through careful measures to preserve confidentiality and anonymity. To protect the anonymity of participants, only code numbers or code names were used to identify them when recording and writing up the data. For detailed information, see the consent form and information sheets in Appendices 12 and 13.

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In addition, I ensured that the interests and wellbeing of participants were not harmed as a result of the research (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004, p101). Regarding the classroom observations, I was fully aware that there must not be any disturbances to the teaching and learning process, especially due to my presence in the classroom. Considering this fact, I always remained at the back of the classroom during classroom observations. Time for the interviews was planned according to the interviewees' convenience; in the evening, in the morning or weekends or, if within office hours, during break time. However, research ethics are ubiquitous, and permeate all aspects of the study where openness is essential to research quality (Soltis, 1996, p247).

3.7 Summary of the Chapter

This chapter has explained the reasons why qualitative methodology was used to answer the research questions. The chapter also justified the ethnographic method used; how data was collected through interviews, observations and document analysis and how data were analysed; what ethical and practical issues were considered and dealt with, including the selection of site, samples of schools and research participants, and the question of trustworthiness and ethical matters. Thus, it has provided detailed explanations of how I planned, organized and conducted fieldwork, collected the data and analysed the findings from my research. It has also explained how I tackled the practical difficulties that I had to face and established the relationships with the research participants.

In the next chapter, I will begin to present the findings themselves, starting with the documentary analysis and policy-maker interviews. All the finding chapters will be organized under different thematic headings that emerged from the interview data. However, Chapter Four will be organised slightly differently: firstly, it will be organized into three themes emerged from the analysis of law/policy/programme documents. Secondly, I will present law/ policy makers' views individually because they were from very different backgrounds.

Chapter Four: National Policy Context and the Policy Makers' Views

This chapter is based on an analysis of policy documents and interview data obtained from law/policy makers. The first part of the chapter begins with an analysis of educational policies/laws associated with Dalit inclusion in education. The second part describes the views of law/policy makers about the impact of these policies on the issues of Dalit educational development. It is important to note that although the initial plan was to include the law/policy makers' views only to revise interview schedules, later on; I used them in the main study because they gave me very good data.

The first part analyses primarily the recent policy texts that give an account of protection and support provided to Dalit inclusion in education. It is therefore introduced with some current important legal/policy documents that seem relevant to the education of children from the Dalit community. The main documents explored here are: The Constitution of Nepal 1990, which was considered a democratic and more inclusive Constitution at that time. Similarly, the Interim Constitution 2007 is considered the most recent and the most inclusive Constitution of the country. In addition to these core legal documents, I analyse the government's periodic development plans, particularly focussing on the Tenth Development Plan (2002-2007) and Interim Development Plan (2007-2010), which are the most recent and progressive policy documents in terms of inclusion of Dalits and other disadvantaged groups and their integration in education. In addition to these legal/policy documents, I will focus my analysis on the provisions made in educational policy/project documents, for example: EFA National Plan of Action 2001-2015, EFA 2004-2009 Core Document, and School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) 2009-2015. Beside these, some other documents that are relevant to Dalit education are also included in the analysis.

Based on these core documents, the first part recounts the story of recent legislation, policies and programmes/projects to create more opportunities and wellbeing for the Dalit communities. The changes occurring in the policies associated with Dalit children's education are summarized below under the three themes: legal protection, providing incentives and opening opportunities.

4.1 Legal Protection

In Nepal's history, Dalits as lower caste people were greatly discriminated against in the local social system. The stigmatization of 'untouchable–caste' for them was the most critical form of discrimination because there was no legal protection against the discriminative behaviour of the non-Dalit community concerning untouchability. In that

situation, they were deprived of access to many social institutions such as entering the temples, using the wells for drinking water. In the long history of Nepal, they seem particularly unfortunate, because they were not even allowed to enter the educational institutions. The caste-based discrimination was not declared illegal in the Civil Code until 1963 and it was not made punishable until 1990. Now, however, Dalits have adequate legal protection. For example, Article 11(4) of the Constitution of Nepal 1990 states that:

> *"No person shall on the basis of caste be discriminated against as untouchable, be denied access to any public place or be deprived of the use of public utilities. Any contravention of this provision shall be punishable by law" (Government of Nepal, 1990).*

Furthermore, in the Interim Constitution 2007, Article 14 (1) offers compensation to victims who are affected by any form of untouchability and act of racial discrimination. For example:

> *"No person shall, on the ground of caste, descent, community or occupation, be subject to racial discrimination and untouchability of any form. Such a discriminatory act shall be liable to punishment and the victim shall be entitled to compensation as provided by the law" (Government of Nepal, 2007).*

These two legal commitments in the constitutions of the country may have raised their self-esteem and dignity, which may have brought a feeling of equality into the life of Dalit communities. Now, in the eyes of the law, Dalit people are equal to non-Dalit people.

Regarding access to education, the government has adopted a rights-based approach to educational development. Under education and cultural rights, Article 17(2) of the Interim Constitution 2007 (which is the most recent main legal document) has protected children's educational rights up to secondary level, which is clearly reflected in the following statement:

> *"Every citizen shall have the right to receive free education from the State up to secondary level as provided for in the law" (Government of Nepal, 2007).*

Providing free secondary education for its citizens, particularly for disadvantaged groups, was an important step in the Dalits' life. In addition to this, for the higher level of education, the government has made special provisions to support Dalits and other disadvantaged groups. For example, in Article 10 of the state policies, the government has made an arrangement of reservations to meet their aspirations of receiving a higher level of education.

"The state shall pursue a policy which will help to uplift the economically and socially backward indigenous ethnic groups, Madhesis, Dalits including marginalized communities, and workers and farmers living below the poverty line by making provisions for reservations in education, health, housing, food security and employment for a certain period of time" (Government of Nepal, 2007).

In addition to this, aiming to bring a rapid change in the education situation of Dalits and other marginalized groups, the Government has adopted a 'positive discrimination' law in Article 14 of the state policies of the Interim Constitution.

"The State shall pursue a policy of making special provision on the basis of positive discrimination for the minorities, landless, squatters, bonded labourers, people with disability, backward communities and sections, and the victims of conflict, including women, Dalits, indigenous tribes, Madhesis and Muslims" (Government of Nepal, 2007).

These constitutional arrangements have provided strong legal protection for the educational development of Dalit children. Most of these provisions have been made during the process of political transformation in the country. For example, in 1990, there was re-establishment of democracy in the country; and in 2006 the country transformed from Monarchy to a Republican system, and the Interim Constitution 2007 is the product of this. Most importantly, Dalit communities were intensively involved and are happy to take ownership of this change. Based on these legal arrangements, the government has been able to develop some plans, programmes and projects to support Dalits through a number of incentives.

4.2 Providing Incentives

The first attempt at education planning in Nepal is the report of the National Education Planning Commission (NEPC-1954), which was the base for the formulation of the education policies in the first five-year plan 1956-1961 (Government of Nepal, 1956). Only after the fifth five- year plan (1975-80) did the government start providing some incentives by waiving tuition fees at primary schools and creating a number of scholarship quotas for the Dalit children in primary school. The tenth five–year plan (2002-2007) then announced the provision of scholarships to all primary schooled Dalit children and the same plan extended the scholarship to secondary schools on a quota basis. Only from the tenth five year plan, therefore, was government attention drawn towards the secondary education of Dalit children.

However, the government has made a provision to waive the fees up to 10th grade for the students from Dalit and other disadvantaged communities. In addition to this, the

government introduced some new policies, such as the provision of scholarships in private schools for students from Dalit and other disadvantaged communities, and also introduced transferring public school management to the community (NPC, 2002). The assumption is that these new programmes will contribute to increased participation of Dalits and other deprived populations in education.

The Three Year Interim Plan (2007-2010) also continued its focus on Dalit children's education and the government has made a list of commitments to incentivise in both monetary and non-monitory forms and developed the following programmes:

- For Dalit students enrolled in primary to secondary levels, stipends and other incentive schemes will be set up.
- In the existing hostels, proportionate lodging for Dalit students will be allocated.
- For non-Nepali speaking Dalit children, measures to provide education in their mother language will be taken gradually.
- Committed to monitor the stipend and grants allocated to the Dalits and also monitor to ensure the caste discrimination practice within the school is stopped.

Similarly, EFA National Plan of Action 2001-2015 (MOES, 2003) and EFA 2004-2009 Core Document (MOES, 2003) have treated the Dalits as a special focus group. For example, the first strategy of EFA 2004-2009 regarding improving access and equity was:

> *"To provide incentives to both students and schools. The aim of these incentives (in the form of, for example, scholarships, food for education, uniforms, etc.) is to help overcome the various social and economic obstacles faced by girls, children from Dalit families, poor and indigenous children, children with disabilities, children affected by HIV/AIDS, children affected by the insurgency, and other marginalised children".*

However, the social inclusion and equity issue remained problematic. For example, the government's School Sector Reform programme (SSRP) (2009-2015) has realized and mentioned that social inclusion and equity issues continue to be the major concern across all levels of education delivery (Ministry of Education, 2009, p10). The government's free education policy could not be free; therefore, in its strategy, it has specified free secondary education as: at least no tuition fees and no registration fees. Similarly, to provide support for secondary education, the government introduced incentive schemes to ensure access to and completion of secondary education for Dalits, marginalised groups, disabled children, girls, and children from economically poor households (Ministry of Education 2009, p 23).

Furthermore, considering that Dalits are economically and socially most vulnerable in the country, for the purpose of SSRP, all Dalit children are defined as members of a vulnerable community (MOE, 2009, p4) and a Vulnerable Community Development Framework (VCDF) has been developed. Its main objective is to facilitate and reinforce the use and application of the SSRP strategies and interventions aiming to increase inclusion of the vulnerable groups in education (Ibid, p5). One of the strategies is to provide a certain amount of scholarship money to 'all' secondary level Dalit children.

4.3 Opening Opportunities

In the ninth five-year plan (1996-2001), at least one teacher in schools from the disadvantaged community was mandatory (Dahal *et al*., 2002). This has provided a number of teaching opportunities to those Dalits who have completed secondary or higher level education. The Nepalese government adopted strategies to achieve Education for All and equity in its school system. 'Education for All: National Plan of Action' states that these strategies included the provision of incentives for both students and schools, the recruitment of female teachers and teachers from Dalits and indigenous and disadvantaged communities, the adoption of inclusive education, and needs based literacy programmes, with some income generating activities for the parents (MOES, 2003). Similarly, the tenth five- year plan (2002-2007) has also encouraged both the government and non-government organizations to open up employment opportunities to the Dalit communities through the following commitments:

- The participation of the Dalit communities in the education centres is poor. It will be increased by appointing Dalit females if available and in case they are not available, other male members from that community will be appointed to school teaching posts.
- I/NGOs will be encouraged to use more service of Dalit and oppressed communities by recruiting them in the posts to the greatest possible extent as well as in the local level programmes related to them.

The tenth five year plan had also made a policy to reserve a scholarship quota to Dalit students for higher studies including technical and vocational institutions in-country and overseas. In this way, not only the secondary education, but the entire Dalit community is gradually receiving the priority in higher level of education opportunities.

The existing policy documents clearly show that there have been many efforts made, especially in the last two-three decades, to improve the life chances of Dalit communities and other disadvantaged groups. They are about access, they are about support, and they are about opportunities. This has contributed to a significant increase in the enrolment of Dalit children in primary education. However, this has not been seen equally in secondary and higher level education. Many of the policy pronouncements are still not translated into practice, as seen in Chapter 2. Bearing all these facts in mind, I will now recount what I heard from a number of Senior Officials I spoke to about these policies. The above findings and analysis were based on policy texts. However, as a researcher I wanted to investigate the real world. So first I talked to policy makers about these documents, and asked what they thought about these policies and practices.

4.4 Policy Makers' Views on Education Policies

We knew that there have been many efforts made in the last two or three decades to address the agenda of inclusion of Dalits and other excluded groups in education. I will describe policy makers' perceptions, but separately, because they are from very different backgrounds, including a Senior Officer of the Ministry of Education, Chair Person of the National Dalit Commission and Member of the Constitution Assembly. Below, I will tell their story regarding the impact of the above policies on Dalits' access, participation and achievements in education. While presenting policy makers' views, attention will also be focused on the strengths, difficulties and challenges in the policies.

Pramod

Pramod is a Senior Education Officer, working in the planning division, Ministry of Education. He has more than 20 years of work experience in education planning and management. He is from the non-Dalit community. He has the following views on the impact of education policies on Dalit inclusion.

He stressed that there have been many policies and mechanisms developed to support Dalit education from primary level to higher and technical education. Some of these support initiatives are direct and some are indirect. However, he realized that although the scholarship is given to all Dalits up to secondary level, its amount is very small, and is inadequate to meet their minimal educational needs. According to him, the Ministry of Education has allocated separate quotas of scholarships to the Dalits as reservations in higher education for which only the people from Dalit community can compete.

Regarding scholarships for secondary education, he sees other issues; for example, some Dalits feel they are oppressed if the scholarship is given in the name of 'Dalit'. If it is provided in the name of poverty, they feel less oppressed because there are many poor people in Nepal in all communities, both Dalit and non-Dalits. He gave an explicit example that, due to this reason, one of the Dalits has returned the scholarship money to the school, when he was on school monitoring in a district.

Similarly, he raised an important issue regarding the provision of scholarship to all Dalits as follows:

> *"Giving scholarship support to all Dalits is not justifiable because there are some rich Dalits who have big properties and live in the city areas. All Dalits are not lagging behind and it would not be logical to put them all together into the same basket because there are some elite groups within the Dalit community. In this context, all Dalits may not require scholarship support for their children's education".*

He claimed that in general, there is no systemic problem of access to education up to secondary level. These days, none of the policies obstruct the Dalit students from continuing with their education, except for their attitudes and awareness about the educational values.

Regarding the teaching jobs for Dalits, he clarified the selection process and said the Dalit candidates get extra incentives in general and Dalit women candidates in particular. At the same time he realized that there needs to be increased numbers of Dalit teachers in each school.

He also raised an issue in the lack of clarity in the reservation policies and he suspected that it may bring unexpected problems in the future:

> *"There is a great debate going on about the policy of reservations. Now, reservations are made to the different groups of people such as Dalits, people of remote geographical regions, and Madhesi people and so on. It is not specified in the policy in how long and up to which level the reservations will be provided for".*

He also stressed his concern that some Dalit families are still not aware about the existing support programmes provided for them. Though these programmes have reached the school, they are not well communicated to all Dalit families. He further clarified that although the necessary information is given in the Newspapers, it is not easily accessible to them. So he realized that there is poor communication in disseminating necessary information related to Dalit inclusion in education and society.

His experience shows that, to some extent, the practice of untouchability still exists in Nepalese society even though it was removed from the law in 1963. Its intensity has reduced significantly. He further highlighted that in school, there is no caste based discrimination or untouchability in activities held, although it still exists outside the school communities in rural areas.

Lata

Lata is one of the 601 Constituent Assembly (CA) Members in the parliament in the 1st CA. She is a well-educated law maker representing the Dalit community. She has the following views on the impacts of educational policies on children's education in her own community.

First of all, she disagreed that education is free for all Dalit children up to secondary level and said:

> *"The political leaders are more rhetorical than real because they say that education is free for all Dalits up to year 12, but it has not been free up to that level. In practice, it is not totally free even up to year 10. Schools are collecting money from the students in different ways directly or indirectly in the name of exam fees or registration fees and so on".*

She also did not agree that the scholarship money given to Dalits is being utilized for children's education:

> *"Regarding the Dalit scholarships, in many cases, children do not get anything from it when it is handed over to their parents. Because, they spend it to fulfil their own immediate needs rather than buying school uniform and stationery for their children. Therefore, the education cannot be received by handing over the money to their parents. They should be provided with resources not cash".*

She suggests that the government should act as a guardian for the children of poor families. They need to be kept in the hostel and be provided with all types of facilities including food and clothes, so that they can get proper education with a full stomach.

She made explicit comments regarding the Dalit's economic condition:

> *"I have seen that because of being unable to pay exam fees, some Dalit children are dropping out from school. However, all of them are not in such conditions because some Dalits are financially able to educate their children themselves. Dalits should be categorized in different groups in terms of their economic conditions because all Dalits are not poor. Therefore, poor Dalits need to be identified first and they should be provided with adequate amount of scholarships that can be sufficient to address their minimal needs. The support should be provided to the poor Dalits and not for all Dalits".*

Although some scholarship quotas are allocated to Dalits for higher level education, she expressed great concern about the complexity of the application process by saying:

> "There is a long and complicated process of applying for Dalit scholarships, for example, scholarship for MBBS (medical science) study. During the application process, Dalit applicants must come to the capital city from the various parts of the country more than three times which is not financially practical especially for those who are from poor families".

She also commented that some of the Dalit related programmes are not helpful in their children's education:

> "I have seen that some Dalit children have to take care of goats and pigs which are distributed for Dalits under the poverty reduction programmes. Indeed the distribution of these livestocks has negative impact in children's education because in the absence of parents at home, their children are compelled to take care of the livestock instead of going to school."

According to her experience, the problem of untouchability has not been eradicated yet from society though its intensity in practice is reduced. She stressed that the caste based disparity may have a great psychological impact in the education of Dalit children. Due to this reason, 'they are less likely to establish a close relationship with their teachers who are from a non-Dalit community'. In this context, she appreciated the government policy of one Dalit teacher in each school. During interview, she expressed her belief and said it can create a model for the Dalit communities and can help them to be motivated towards education.

She has two different views on the level of caste discrimination in two educational provisions: public and private, which is very complex:

> "In private boarding schools, there is no discrimination at all because they have paid money for their education but in public schools, some kind of discrimination in some places still exists, particularly in rural areas".

In addition, although the policy is to provide employment opportunities for educated Dalits, she shared her comments on it as follows:

> "There are growing numbers of educated but unemployed people in the Dalit community. It is a reality that the mentality of fear of not getting a job even after having education is prevailing in them. Dalit communities always raise a question of educated-unemployment. Therefore, uncertainty of employment opportunities even after being educated is a big challenge for educating Dalit children".

Thus, she observed that on the one hand, the existing provisions made for the Dalits are not enough. On the other hand, these need to be revised and implemented effectively in the real life situation.

Bimal

Bimal is the Chair Person of the 'National Dalit Commission'. He is also from the Dalit community. Officially, he fights for the welfare of the Dalit community with respect to policy development. The National Dalit Commission is the top body lobbying and advocating in favour of the Dalit community. He is a well-educated person who is coordinating and working together with other government organizations, aiming to develop a Dalit-friendly policy for their integration into education and mainstream society.

He made explicit comments broadly about the existing situation of government policies as follows:

> *"Nepal has signed in all the national and international conventions and treaties but it is not proactive to that extent to prepare necessary Acts, Rules, Regulations and Policies to address the caste and class related problems and for ensuring the human rights of all citizens. However, at the moment 'Untouchability Act' has been approved by the Parliament and the National Dalit Commission Act is under discussion".*

Remembering the history, he expressed his anger with the state as follows:

> *"Until about a hundred years ago, Dalits were really deprived from access to education because they were not allowed to enter schools. In Nepal's history, the political system was not favourable for their educational and social development because the feudal system prevailed in the society. Now, Dalits are asking compensation from the government about the states' bias held on them in Nepal's history".*

Regarding the untouchability problem in school, he commented:

> *"There is no problem of untouchability in the schools of Kathmandu valley and other Municipalities but it still exists in remote and rural areas such as Karnali Zone, hill districts of Far Western and Mid-Western regions".*

Regarding free education policy, based on his knowledge, he summarised the situation as follows:

> *"The education up to secondary level has been free. Now, Dalits are also studying in schools. Up to the basic education, they are getting some scholarships for their educational support. In addition to this, in some areas, particularly in remote districts, the government has also provided snacks to attract Dalit children into education".*

He also shared his views and presented the data on the scholarships provided by the private educational institution to his community:

> *"Dalits are studying in public school and not in a private one but recently the government has made a policy in which the private boarding school should provide scholarships for 10% students who are Dalits, Madhesi, and conflict affected families. Though this scheme is very good, the process of getting this scholarship is complicated and unfair for Dalits in which repeated follow up and intense communication to the principal is required which is beyond the capacity of most of the Dalits scattered in different geographical areas".*

However, he observes a big gap in policy and practice and suggested that the politicians should be honest in the implementation of their commitments. He also agreed that there is a lack of awareness in most of the Dalits about the facilities available to them. Therefore, he suggested launching several campaigns that must be organized by the state through the heavy mobilization of media such as Television, Radio, FM, Newspapers, and Magazines.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the current provisions made in the laws, policies, and programmes targeting Dalit access and participation in education. It has also presented the views of law/policy makers on the existing policies and practices.

Indeed, many policies have been formulated to support Dalit children's inclusion in education. In general, all the policy makers have a positive impression of existing educational policies. However, they think that these policies seem more rhetorical and less real in terms of implementation. They expressed their concern that the political and legal commitment only in the documents is not enough to address the Dalits' educational problems, but the implementation is equally important.

All three law/policy makers agreed that the amount of scholarship money is very small, which hardly covers the student's stationery costs; it cannot cover the school uniforms or food. They also agreed that all Dalits are not poor, only the poor Dalits should be provided with additional facilities, not all Dalits, though it would be challenging to differentiate them. They also agreed that the caste based practices in society are decreasing, although they are still found sporadically in some rural and remote areas.

The Dalit law maker strongly disagreed with providing scholarships in the form of cash to the parents; rather she suggested providing them in kind, such as uniforms and stationery. She also disagreed that education at secondary level is free for Dalits, because they have to pay indirectly as registration fees or examination fees and so on. Regarding the

reservations either in the jobs or in scholarships in the higher education, the education policy maker has expressed his concern in relation to time frame - how long it should be provided. He also suggested that this should be specified in the policies otherwise reservations may bring a great debate in the future. The law maker expressed her views on the practice of caste based discrimination which is quite complex: there is lower caste based discrimination in private schools than in public schools because they pay for private education.

Overall, the information presented in this chapter suggests that existing policies have a positive impact on the inclusion of Dalit children in education. However the implementation aspect of the policies seems weak.

The following chapters examine teachers' views, parents' views and then children's experiences. The voice of the children is placed last, because it is potentially most important in terms of understanding their experiences of school, even though it proved to be much more difficult to gain rich data from them. As I will explain, they were sometimes nervous, inhibited, and shy in the interviews, often speaking less compared to the teachers and parents. I should add that teachers and parents gave me a lot of interesting explanations and speculations around the issues that were the focus of my investigation.

Chapter Five: Teachers' Views on Dalit Children's Education

This chapter presents the views of the teachers on the problems of access, participation, and achievements of Dalit children in education. It also includes their perceptions on the Dalit community's thinking in education and their own attitudes and behaviour towards them. This chapter begins with brief introductions of the teachers who participated in this research. It then reports the perceptions of these teachers of various aspects of the education of Dalit children, particularly on pressures that marginalise them within the school system. It tries to explain briefly the similarities and differences expressed in their views.

Choosing the Teachers

As explained in the methodology chapter, in this research, six teachers from three secondary schools participated in the interview programme. All the teachers that participated were highly experienced in the teaching profession, except for one who is himself a Dalit, who had only got a teaching job in recent years. The main reason for choosing interviews with well experienced teachers was to get more informed information on the research issues.

The conversations with head teachers were helpful in identifying the sample of teachers. Similarly, I considered their willingness to participate in an interview, because this is one of the most important criteria for the selection of participants. While making the selection, I thought that the views of Dalit teachers are important because this research is concerned directly with the issues of education of Dalit children. However, I could not find any further Dalit teachers in these schools. Consequently, I interviewed five Non-Dalits and only one Dalit teacher.

All the non-Dalit teachers who participated had long teaching experience, ranging from 10 to 35 years, and their views are significant because they are permanent residents in the same area. Therefore, they are both known to and know about the Dalit community. On the other hand, the Dalit teacher had only four years of teaching experience because he had only got this opportunity four years ago. The detailed explanation of the selection process has been described in the methodology chapter.

The teachers I interviewed were Raju, Gopal, Moti, Ramesh, Kabita and Radha[4]. Among these six teachers, Raju is the only one who is from the Dalit community and the rest of them are from the non-Dalit community. Out of these five non-Dalit teachers, Gopal, Moti, Ramesh and Radha have long work experience and are approaching retirement and Kabita had 10 years of teaching experience. The retirement age in Nepal is 58 years. However, I included teachers from different social backgrounds and both genders.

A detailed in-depth interview was conducted with each of these teachers and each interview lasted for an hour or more. All interviews were audio recorded which helped me to capture everything they had said. The audio recordings also made it possible for me to listen to them again and again while transcribing and analysing the data. I listened to these interviews repeatedly to ensure my understanding of the data. When I had transcribed the interviews, I also read the transcriptions carefully several times, which helped me to identify the relevant codes and themes.

Twenty one apparently relevant codes emerged, from which 7 major themes developed when I merged them together based on shared factors. The final themes are: caste and culture, parents' educational awareness, attitudes and behaviour, socio-economic problems, pedagogical issues, teachers' attitudes and behaviour, students' interests and social acceptance. (The detailed process of coding and theme development has been explained in Chapter 3).

In what follows, I explain in detail what I found out about each of these themes separately, looking at views that were common across the samples as well as noting differences that emerged.

5.1 Caste and Culture

How the caste-based or other cultural practices influence the education of Dalit children is examined here. The data clearly reveals that though some caste system practices remain prevalent in Nepalese society, the influence of such practices has reduced significantly. When I asked a teacher (who has more than 30 years of teaching experience) to explain to me the caste based social practices carried out in the school, he started by sharing the experience of his 'own student life' as follows:

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[4] *All the names mentioned here are pseudonyms which are used to protect their right to privacy.*

> *"There was a system of punishment for Dalits, if they touched non-Dalit students or their belongings. We used to sit separately on the mats that we carried ourselves from home and one day, a Dalit friend touched me. At that time, I had a vial of ink with me and I could not take it back home because it was touched by a Dalit. The price of that ink at that time was two paisa which was charged to that Dalit student as a punishment for touching it. At that time, we could not enter our house without sprinkling holy water for the purification of touch. Now, such practice is almost eliminated" (Moti: non-Dalit teacher, school C).*

In the same way, when I asked a similar question of another teacher: "can you share the changes occurred regarding caste based discrimination in your school?" he replied in the following way:

> *"A few years ago, Dalit students used to sit on one side and non-Dalit on the other side separately in the classroom but now, both sit together"*

> *"Until recent years, Dalit students did not want to touch the water which the teachers were going to drink but now we eat and drink together. We eat and drink together when a Dalit comes to my house. A few years ago there was a custom of sprinkling water if touched by Dalits. Now, it is eliminated" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

These comments suggests that caste based discrimination in the school context has reduced drastically, because Dalits and Non-Dalits are both now comfortable drinking, eating and sitting together, which was not possible in the past.

When I asked Raju, the Dalit teacher, about the extent to which caste based discrimination currently exists in his school; he replied that there were no caste based discriminatory practices in school. He gave me several examples of this:

> *"I don't feel discriminated against by non-Dalits; there is no discrimination in our generation based on caste in the school. But still, there are some problems of caste based discrimination in the local society"*

> *"In the current situation, the Dalit students should not have to face discriminative behaviour through their treatment as untouchables by both teachers and non-Dalit students. Similarly, a Dalit teacher like me should not have to be segregated from the non-Dalit teachers"*

> *"There is no effect of untouchability concerning the education of Dalit children in our region. In the school, there is no practice of untouchability at all. I have never experienced the caste based discrimination and untouchability in school"*

> *"I have not experienced nor seen any discrimination while cooking, serving, sitting and eating with non-Dalit teachers because we are doing it together. I don't know in their heart and soul whether they are doing this willingly or unwillingly"*

Like the Dalit teacher, several non-Dalit teachers also claimed that there were no caste based discriminatory practices in their schools, as shown below:

"There is no untouchability problem at all because there is an assistant staff (support staff) member in school who is a Dalit and I am from Brahmin community (higher caste group). We eat everything he serves us. In my village, during the feast and festivals the Dalits serve food to non-Dalits. They have access to the temple where they go and pray" (Moti: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

"There is no problem at all between the Dalit and non-Dalit students because they work together, sit and eat together, and talk together" (Ramesh: non-Dalit teacher, School C).

".........There is nothing between the Dalit and non-Dalit students about untouchability because they get their food with each other and they eat without any hesitation" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

"A Dalit boy has opened a hotel near the school and he sells some sweets as well. Both the girls and boys from the school go there and eat a lot of food such as Chaumin, Fried Eggs, Matar, Chatpate and so on. There is nothing regarding caste matter" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

"There is no untouchability problem; all students drink the water from the same bottle. For many Dalit students, they don't know that untouchability even happens" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Here, both Dalit and non-Dalit teachers are in agreement that, in the current times, there are no caste based disparities operating in the teacher and the student communities.

Nevertheless, although the Dalit teacher gave a number of examples which demonstrate that there are no caste based activities held in the school environment, at the end, he expressed some doubts by raising suspicion of willingness and unwillingness of Non-Dalit teachers to embrace equality, saying that he was not sure whether they no longer discriminate because of a real change of heart or were just doing what was expected.

Some Contradictions

Despite the claims by teachers reported above regarding caste matters, there were some comments that suggested things were less clear cut, which is reflected in the following comments.

"In the school premises, no one feels that there is any caste based discrimination among teachers at all except one Madam - she tries to escape from where there is eating and drinking activities taking place. All the teachers except a Madam eat and drink food served by the Dalit students. She is an old generation teacher and is going to be retired soon" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

Other comments create further doubts about the non-discriminatory climate in the school.

"...There was another situation, in a farewell party, non-Dalit students were assigned for cooking and more often Dalits were involved in preparing those items in which the water is not used" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

"...But, when we asked the students to bring the water, we ask non-Dalit students rather than Dalits. Discrimination is not seen overtly but it is in dormant condition. It is not totally eliminated; therefore it may raise its head at any time" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

Several other teachers explained situations which could also create some doubts about the non-discriminatory practices. For example:

"...There is no problem of visible (dekhinegari) caste based discrimination in school, though; it may be within the soul. In summary, we can say that there is no visible problem of caste based discrimination within the school premises" (Moti: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

"All the teachers sit together with the Raju Sir (Dalit teacher) and eat together, it has been three years. I don't eat anything in school, even water; I stopped eating in school by pretending that I am not well. There is a custom of going to picnic, it is the teacher's picnic but I don't go there. When students leave school, students want to have huge celebration; students take the initiative to organize it. Last year, they sacrificed two huge goats (Khasi) for meat and at the end 3 Dalit children went to the front and started serving food, teachers started eating silently but I went home without telling anyone (sutta), except for me, all the teachers ate" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

"Within school, they don't feel any inferiority complex, and among the student community there is nothing at all because they sit together and eat together. Teachers also do not practice untouchability in the way that it can be noticed. What I do at home - it is my personal matter but in school, I eat food which is served by Dalits" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Given these comments it is hard to believe that there is no caste based discrimination left in schools. They suggest that there remain some kinds of feelings of caste based disparity among the teachers' community, though it seems covert or slightly indirect. As Gopal indicated, the caste related attitudes are found more in the female teachers than the males. Apart from this, Kabita also expressed her views that the teachers are playing dual roles regarding caste based practices because they show different behaviour in different places, such as at home and in school.

The following excerpt implies that there is also a generational difference in the caste matter:

"In those families where there are elderly people, it is still difficult taking Dalits home and eating together. But in school, there is no problem of eating with them" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

Interestingly, caste based disparity exists not only between the Dalits and non-Dalits, it seems to arise still within the Dalit community as well. For example:

> "There is a clear hierarchy within the Dalits. Kami is higher than the Damai, there is no marriage held between these two sub-castes, they have an untouchability problem between them. We don't often see Dalits talk about the gap within the Dalits. They only think that the Brahman and Kshatri are their great enemies. They don't think that they should eliminate the discrimination held within their own caste" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Beside the caste based practices, there was evidence of some gender based cultural issues arising in education. For example, one teacher related that the girls are affected more than the boys by the traditional cultural practices. Particularly in Madhesi Dalit families, there are still some restrictions on their daughters going out from home. Although some improvements have been made, they have no freedom to learn through exposure to new places, with their friends and teachers together.

> "In the Madhesi Dalit community, there was a custom that after 14 years of age, their daughters used to be accompanied (chaperoned) by their brothers or guardians but now they come to school themselves, and participate in different social activities, talk together even with the boys while coming out from their houses. However, their guardians still do not allow them at all to participate in educational tours and visit programmes, in which they have to stay out overnight" (Ramesh: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

Regarding gender issues a teacher shared her perceptions as:

> "This is a patriarchal society; therefore they try to educate their sons but they arrange a marriage for their daughters" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

In addition to the above, there are other issues associated with marriage. A teacher expressed his views about this issue:

> "In the past, in the Madhesi Dalit society, the marriage used to be confirmed by the parents when a child was in the uterus of their mother and they used to get married when they had reached 4-5 years of age. Now, the situation has been changed, they have become more aware and have started delaying children's marriage until when they have reached 13/14 years of age" (Ramesh: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

These comments suggest that although some improvements have been made about the age of marriage, it appears still to be a problem. In this context, the slope of the educational ladder facing the Madhesi Dalit girls seems challenging, as it is hard for them to pursue education after marriage.

5.2. Parents' Educational Awareness, Attitudes and Behaviour

The positive thinking of parents regarding their children's education is important. When I talked to the school teachers, they raised some issues about the attitudes of Dalit parents towards their children's education. One teacher expressed his view that some of the Dalit parents do not realise that the educational investment is worthwhile for them. He explained this as follows:

> "Students need to buy two extra books which are not provided free by the government because these are recommended by the school itself. Parents are not buying these books for their children due to which some Dalit children might have not come to the school. Similarly, there are some cases in which parents do not buy stationery for their children, as a result they might be absent in school. The main thing is that some Dalit parents have the mentality that their own income should not be spent on children's education" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

Not only that, he further highlighted that some of the parents misuse the support they obtain for their children's education from the state or other organizations. In this regard, he made the following comment:

> "The scholarship money should not be given to the parents because some of them misuse this; for example, some guardians received scholarship money one day and next day they drank alcohol from that money and came back to school to fight with the teachers".

Several teachers have expressed similar views which show that Dalit parents have less interest in their children's education because they send their children to school for a particular purpose, but maybe not for 'education'.

> "Dalit children come about 10 days in a crowd during the time of distribution of scholarships, and after that their numbers reduce significantly" (Ramesh: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

> "Most of the Dalits are interested more in money rather than education, because during the time of distribution of scholarships, they come to the school for a few days then they will show no interest at all. The majority of them have no interest in education though there are very few who are good and have interest too. In my school, I have seen the same Dalit register here, Jhanda school, Laxmanghat School and in Jagadishpur School too. Until the distribution of scholarships, they go to each school for a few days alternately then they do not care about their education" (Moti: non- Dalit teacher, school C).

> "When the scholarship is given to the parents to buy school uniform and books, when they return back to home with the scholarship money from the school, they start enjoying that money by having chicken and alcohol. On the other hand, their children have no shoes, no bag, no uniform, no note book, and no pen. I have seen

myself that they were carrying a Kukhuro (chicken) in their hand while returning home with the scholarship money" (Radha: non Dalit teacher, school A).

"Parents come to receive the scholarships money and spend it for other purposes, the students get neither dress, notebooks, nor sandals.....then students are less likely to come to school because they feel embarrassed. This is a big problem among Dalits" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Regarding the presence of Dalit children in school, Kabita commented with the data:

"At the time of receiving scholarships, Dalit children become regular in school for a few days, then gradually stop coming to school. Their presence in the class is only 30-35%" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

These comments suggest that most of the Dalit parents have a very low level of understanding about the value of education because sending their child to school is to obtain money rather than to receive education. The parents' role is crucial in ensuring their children attend regularly in school but it seems problematic here.

The public schools are considered to be responsible institutions to provide education for marginalized groups, therefore the poor, Dalits and some other ethnic groups often send their children to public schools. In the opinion of a teacher, these people often have negative attitudes towards education:

"Except one or two parents, they don't care about whether their children go to school or not. Parents never come to school and ask about their children's performance; particularly those parents who send their children to a public school. They don't follow up their children's education in the school" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

"Those who are conscious about their children's education and have positive attitudes, they send their children to private boarding schools but the guardians of those children that go to public schools have negative attitudes, negative thinking and have a careless attitude towards education. Therefore, even if we prepare a new policy, it is difficult to implement it" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

A similar view was expressed by another teacher:

"Only those children who have low economic status, low educational awareness and don't know the value of education will come to this school. If the children just go to and come from school then that is enough for them and they are happy with this; they don't care about what they learn. Now, there is some awareness in them, and as a result fewer children remain at home" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

A teacher summarised the Dalits' reality in the research location as follows:

> *"If we see the current situation of Dalits, they are uneducated, not able to make plans, only think about the present, and they feel that they are inferior. They don't know where the world is now, they are happy with the situation where they are now. They drink more, smoke more; following the bad behaviour (kulat), give less value to education, just enjoy their life with the alcohol. However, now, they are coming up slowly (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).*

Similarly, another teacher added something more on Dalits' thinking and feeling about themselves and education that reveals to what extent they give value to their children's education.

> *"They have the feeling of inferiority complex, we are small so what can we do. They also feel that education is for the Brahmin and Kshatri, not for them" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).*

For educational success, regular attendance and punctuality in the class is essential. When I asked Moti: how often are the Dalit children present in the school, he replied:

> *"..... some of the Dalit children come to school once or twice a month".*

Regarding the presence of the Dalit students in school, several teachers have negative experience.

> *"Most of the Dalit students are not regular in school because they have no intention to develop themselves and improve their standard of living through education" (Moti: non-Dalit teacher, school C).*

Regarding the causes of their absenteeism a teacher said:

> *"Most of the time, they stay at home and just play with the unschooled children, and also parents have no interest to send their children to school; it's like a tradition (sanskar). Instead, they send them out begging (in case of Gandharva), they send them for work, beating stone and screening sands, but they don't send them to school" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).*

Apart from the above, although the teacher- parent relationship is essential to provide a positive learning experience for the children, a teacher expressed his own experience with some Dalit parents that can have a negative impact on the children's mind-set.

> *"In the name of Dalit's right to education, some of the Dalit parents feel that the teachers are like a herd man of a flock of sheep, and are scolding the teachers randomly. Their children learn this negative attitude from their parents and gradually their children are less likely to respect their teachers because that type of nature has developed in some children" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

A teacher highlighted the differences: that although the habit of drinking alcohol is found in both Hill and Madhesi Dalits, the intensity is found more in Hill Dalits, and therefore, the Hill Dalit children are affected more than the Madhesi Dalit children by it.

"There is a custom of drinking alcohol in Madhesi Dalits but not to that extent in which Hill Dalits drink. However, as compared to other castes, Dalits drink a little bit more" (Ramesh: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

Moreover, some of the Dalit parents tend to be less careful about balancing the earning and spending. A teacher said that the concept of saving their income for their children's education is far from their thinking. For example:

"Most of the Dalit people work as labourers throughout the day and spend all of their earnings in the evening by eating and drinking (alcohol) and quarrelling with each other. They do not even think about how to educate their children and how to manage their own future life because they have not realized and understood the value of their life. Therefore, they never think about saving their income" (Moti: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

Although parents' interest in children's education is crucial, the comments below reveal that very few parents take an interest in it. A teacher mentioned the frequency of contact of parents with school teachers about their children's education, saying:

"In general, Dalit parents do not come to school to ask about the education of their children except some elite Dalits such as Ram Bahadur Gandharba" (Radha:non-Dalit teacher, school A).

(The person she described is a politically active Dalit and a member of the school management committee as well).

Another teacher commented on the behaviour of Dalit parents, saying:

"In fact, there is a lack of good traditions (sanskar) in the home. At home, some parents do not tell their children to study; they don't know how to choose appropriate words while treating children. They use swear words; they don't come to additional coaching classes even if it is free. There is no awareness in Gandharbha village (tol) and Loribagiya, they screen sand and make love and run away. In fact, there is a great effect of the surrounding environment and culture" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

She also shared her perception about the Dalits' thinking about education as follows:

"They have no higher level of awareness; they don't think that education is for knowledge, self-esteem, to be a real human being. Maybe they could think this, if they were economically secure. They think that education is only for getting a job. They also see the surrounding environment; they are also observing the country's situation. They say politicians are making their belly flat (earning money) themselves but they are doing nothing for poor people, which has made them pessimistic and depressed because the unemployment problem is as it is".

She further describes the Dalit parents' thinking on education like this:

> *"They don't expect that their children can be a big person, as they think that it is enough for them if their children can read and make general calculations (samanya her hisab). So they think that 5 - 7 grade education is enough for them. They cannot see education as a means. There is an expectation gap".*

These comments reveal that parents have limited expectations from education for their children. However, Dalit parents may have low expectations and offer little support, but even so the teachers' attitudes towards parents in the Dalit community seem negative, and based on stereotypes.

5.3 Social Acceptance and Recognition

The recognition issue was mainly raised by a Dalit teacher, who thinks it is very important to motivate Dalit communities towards education. Regarding the social recognition of educational achievements, the Dalit teacher explained to me that the society does not want to accept the ability of Dalits and they try to place them aside. He further explained that some people still think Dalits should be kept at the bottom. Some non-Dalit people in the society seem jealous of the recent achievements of the Dalits. He gave me an explicit example which was related to him.

> *"One day, a non-Dalit teacher said to me 'you have passed Master Degree therefore you became bigger than us'. At the same time, I questioned back to him - are you ready to accept me and my educational achievements? The non-Dalit teacher replied to me saying, No, you are not really better than me, it is because of the culture"* (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).

Regarding acceptance, a non-Dalit teacher thinks that Dalit communities have an inferiority complex about their social status. He thinks that one of the main problems of Dalit education is the tradition of feeling inferior because they think that they cannot reach places and positions where other castes can reach. In this regard, he described a common saying of Dalits as follows:

> *"Dalits usually say we are not going to be a Doctor or an Engineer therefore as long as we are able to read and write, it is enough for us so we don't want to educate our children any more"* (Gopal : non-Dalit teacher, school B).

This indicates that the non-Dalits believe that Dalits expect less from education and give less value to the educational achievements.

Raju, however, who is a Dalit teacher, feels that non-Dalits fear the social acceptance of their achievements. On the other hand, Gopal sees the feeling of hesitation in Dalits themselves as one of the main problems holding back achievement and social acceptance.

5.4 Socio-economic Status

The comments below demonstrate Dalits' relative poverty. During the interview, Gopal told me that most of them do not own any properties (agricultural land) of their own and they have fewer opportunities for earning their income. In this context, in the search for employment, both parents and children seek a range of alternatives for their survival:

> *"In the past, only the male Dalit parents used to go to Gulf countries in search of employment. These days, the female members are also going there and this has hampered their children's education more because children go out of track in the absence of their mothers" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

> *"There is an increased level of dropouts of Dalit children in lower secondary and secondary level because the children would have grown up and matured, some go to foreign countries for employment, some go to India, some work locally and some get married. Boys seem to drop out more compared to the girls" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

> *"Some Madhesi Dalits work as bonded labourers (haruwa). They think that if the children work, they can get at least some money but if they go to school, they will have no money at all. This is the reason why they are not going to school" (Ramesh: non-Dalit teacher, school C).*

> *"In case of Gandharba (a group of Hill Dalits), some school aged children visit door to door and village to village to ask for money by singing songs. Some of them go to break stones on the bank of the river and loading trucks with sand to make pocket money and when they have money at an early age, they get involved in smoking, drinking, quarrelling, using swear words and so on. They are learning these things from their parents and neighbours because they have seen them" (Gopal : non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

He further explained the reasons for absenteeism as:

> *"One day, I asked a Dalit student, why didn't you come to school yesterday? He replied saying the food was not prepared. Again, I asked further questions saying why it wasn't prepared. He replied saying that his mother was making alcohol on the stove, due to the fear of degrading the quality; she did not take it out from the stove. Therefore, I could not come to the school because I had nothing to eat"*

There is a custom that some Dalit people prepare alcohol at home and sell it locally for their survival. However, the above comment revealed that the parent's priority is for earning rather than for their children's education.

Gopal further described that, generally, there are greater numbers of children in Dalit families. In this context, when the parents go to work, the elder children are compelled to take care of their younger siblings instead of going to school.

"While I questioned Dalit students 'why were you absent yesterday', they replied saying that they had to take care of their brothers and sisters" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

A similar view was expressed by another teacher:

"Dalits don't come to school; parents have to go to work so children have to take care of their siblings. Sometimes, parents asked them to come back from school earlier. Sometimes, they come to school on alternate days" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

She further highlights the relationships between the economic conditions and educational achievements and summarised the other reasons for Dalit children's exclusion from education:

"Dalit education is linked to the education of parents and the economic condition of the family. They would have more children. Although they are coming to the school up to year 4-5, they start leaving school when they have reached year 7 and 8. Some of them marry and leave school early, some of them go to India for labouring work, some join the army and police as well" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Regarding the drop-out and low attendance levels of Dalit children another teacher presented some data as follows:

"Mostly drop out occurs more at grade 5 and grade 8. When 10 Dalits were admitted in year 1, 50-60% Dalit students have left the school when they have reached year 5. Some leave when they reach year 8 and only 20-30% remain by the time of reaching year 10" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

In addition to the above, Gopal told me that although the government policy suggests 'the education is free for all Dalit students up to secondary level', nevertheless it is not translated truly into actual practice because they have to pay some fees from which the school pays the salary of some teachers. He said for some families, paying fees is also difficult:

"For years 9 and 10, we charge some tuition fees. However, the policy of free education is not fully implemented yet" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

Regarding the free education policy another teacher expressed his views as follows:

"Although it is said education is free for all Dalits up to year 10 at national level, at local level money is collected from students instead of providing free education. At a theoretical level, education is free but at a practical level, a lot of money is needed for them, for example exam fees, registration fees. Until last year, they needed to buy the text books as well" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Due to the family poverty, some Dalit parents are compelled to send their children to do labouring work in foreign countries. For example:

"A Dalit parent (female) sent her son to India to work while he was studying in year nine and married off her daughter (Sumitra), saying: I can't only feed myself as I have to feed the whole family only through my work so I needed my children to work too" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Another teacher expressed her view about the linkage between poverty and education as follows:

"If there is no proper arrangement to supply food, shelter and clothes in the family, it is hard to improve their educational situation even if the education is completely free" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Of course, in terms of family economy, not all Dalits are the same. For example:

"Some Dalits also started to send their children to private school, for example: Kalu Sarki (Dalit) has sent his son to private boarding school now. Two or four people who are a bit more aware about education have started sending their children to private boarding schools such as Parijat, Annapurna, Bhu Pu Sainik, Horizon, Gyanajyoti" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Another teacher expressed her views on the need for scholarships and said:

"Kalu Sarki (Dalit) is rich, so he does not need any scholarships. It is not necessary to give scholarships to all Dalits on a lump sum basis. Those who are able to pay their fees themselves, it may not be needed for them" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Pointing to the Dalits' situation, she further stated that:

"One or two Dalits go to private boarding schools, but the rest of them go to public schools"

This indicates that some members in the Dalit community are taking some interest in investing in the education of their children, though these were not included in my sample, which was focused on the mainstream community using public education.

Moreover, the following comment indicates that those Dalits who are economically better off receive a lot of benefits from other Dalit support programmes, but the poor do not.

"When we talk about inclusion, government and NGOs have brought a lot of programmes, but only rich Dalits (Dhani /Tathabatha) benefitted, poor Dalits have got nothing, there has been a class formation within Dalits" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

In this way, although Dalits in general are poor, they are heterogenous and the distribution of resources/support for them is not equitable, which is unfair to the poorer Dalits.

5.5 Pedagogical Issues

Logic suggested that effective learning is less likely without a good learning environment. In this regard, the Dalit teacher reported that there is inadequate space in classrooms, which has made students uncomfortable in reading and writing. For example:

> *"Sometimes, students say that it is too crowded in the classroom because of small rooms for a large number of students, but they have never said that they could not get a seat in the front row" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).*

Another teacher raised a similar issue about the facilities required to support the teaching and learning process. For example:

> *"There are no facilities and equipment available according to the demand of the curriculum. Due to the limited rooms, there is no practical session held. In English listening class, there is no tape to listen; the book is the sole teaching material. Sometimes, teachers and students may need reference books but there are none" (Radha: non Dalit teacher, school A).*

Similarly, another teacher summarised the current problems faced by her school as follows:

> *"Actually, we have no computers to use for the students, also lack of shelves for storing books and we are also lacking a science lab and library. We should have a projector but haven't got any and also there is a lack of audio-visuals. Mainly, we have no adequate class rooms, 80 students have to sit in a class which is crowded. We could not have managed to put ceiling fans in each room which is essential in summer. Like that, due to the lack of budget we have no school boundary wall, lack of bench, desk and furniture - which ever we have - they are very old and weak"(Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).*

In addition to the above, Raju commented on the difficulties of doing homework and said most of the Dalit students cannot do their homework themselves and they do not get any support from their parents because they are illiterate or have little education.

> *"...often Dalit students do not do their assignments at home but they copy from those students who have done it" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).*

Gopal told a slightly different tale about their homework.

> *"Most of the Dalit children are frequently absent from school. When they have been absent in previous days, they don't know about their homework, but those who are regular to school do their homework" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

Regarding the checking of students' homework, Gopal highlighted that the government has not supplied an adequate number of teachers to schools; therefore, teachers are compelled to take lessons for the whole day and have no spare time to give feedback individually on the students' assignments.

> *"....in higher classes (secondary level), teachers have no leisure period. Therefore, they pick up 1 or 2 students' books randomly and only check their homework but no one else's".*

Interestingly, the Dalit teacher explained that because of the lack of child focused and welcoming teaching and learning environments, children are less likely to go to school. He said:

> *"If there was a child friendly environment, all the children could have come to school because they would enjoy being in school more than at home or in their surrounding community" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).*

Although a good relationship between teacher and student is important to create a good learning environment, the Dalit children are in situations less likely to build a good relationship with their teachers. In this regard, a teacher explained:

> *"In the poor families, when the children have grown up, they need to help in domestic work and income generating activities. They give less time to their studies which results in low educational performance from them. In this situation, teachers are compelled to scold them which gives them mental and physical pressure, which results in the student feeling hesitant and ultimately makes their relationship even more distant" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

Another thing is that all the teachers in that school are from the non-Dalit community. In this context, there may be some difficulties for Dalit children in building a good relationship with their teachers.

> *"Due to the traditional concept of caste based discrimination, students are less likely to keep a close relationship with the teachers because Dalit students want to stay away from the teachers" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).*

In addition, in Nepal, the common practice is that the same lesson plan is prepared to teach all categories of students no matter whether they are high, medium or low performers. This system does not favour the low performing students. The Dalit teacher thinks that compared to non-Dalits, Dalit students are often the low performers needing additional support.

> *"The lesson plan is the same for all students in the class. In this situation, some students understand the lesson and some don't" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).*

When I learned from a teacher that school 'A' had achieved poor results in the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) exam as compared to the other two schools, I asked a Dalit teacher of the same school: why does this school have poor results in the National Level Board exam (SLC) this year? He replied….

> "…. the examination centre was changed this year where there was no chance of cheating. Students sometimes expect support from their teachers' in the national board examination and the teachers also intend to facilitate them which was not possible in the new exam centre. Students did not prepare well for the exam and they did not think that it was their responsibility and were careless about their studies. The school leadership must be stricter in the management of teaching and learning processes" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).

These comments suggest a very critical situation in the assessment system which is more likely to be unfair; and the school leadership were also unable to successfully create an effective teaching and learning environment in school. He thinks that the head teacher can have a greater role to increase the quality of teaching and learning environment in school and to maintain discipline in students.

Regarding the poor results, another teacher critically explained the situation linking it to school management and leadership as follows:

> "In this school, the quality is reduced even though there is availability of trained, qualified and good teachers. There is loose leadership, a lack of proper administration and management, not bold leadership, less strictness and more flexibility in leadership. However, the standard of the public school is getting lower" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

On the other hand, according to Ramesh, the Nepali language is a barrier which makes it much harder for the Madhesi Dalit children in reading and writing because it is their second language.

> "When the students go home, they speak Awadhi language which is their mother tongue. The language makes it difficult for them to ask questions and answer questions asked by the teachers in the classroom. However, understanding their lesson is not that difficult for them but they feel some difficulties in replying" (Ramesh: non-Dalit teacher, school C).

5.6 Teachers' Attitudes and Behaviour

During one interview, the Dalit teacher explained to me about how communication takes place between the teachers and the students in the classroom.

> "Teachers have frequent contacts and interactions with students who are bright (good performers) in their studies because they ask questions and do their homework. On the other hand, the low performing students want to be as far away

from the teachers as possible and are not interested in their studies. As a result, there is less chance of having a good relationship with their teachers" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).

A similar view was expressed by Gopal when it came to the tendency of preferential treatment towards the students who are performing well.

> *"The relationship between the teachers and the students depends on how much effort the student makes. There is a good relationship between the hard working students and the teachers, more chance of meeting frequently, getting more appreciation from the teacher for their success and getting thanks from the teachers. On the other hand, for the low performing students, teachers pay less attention. In fact, this should not be happening but it does"*

> *"Teachers often scold the low performing students and they get the physical and mental pressure"*

> *"If a Dalit student is talented, he/she leads the whole class including non-Dalit students; there are many cases in this school".*

Seen from the above abstracts, the low performing students get less encouragement and support from their teachers than the high performing students, which is absolutely opposite to the equitable treatment that the students deserve.

The positive attitude and behaviour of the school teacher is important for students' learning and motivation. From the following comments, it seems that although most of the teachers are positive and responsible, one or two are less responsible regarding students' learning and achievements.

> *"Most of the teachers are professionals who make a lot of effort and are always on time in their classes and are fully responsible and accountable in teaching their subjects. On the other hand, one or two teachers in the school are careless when it comes to their duties; they do not come to school or classrooms on time, assign a lot of tasks to the students, do not make any effort themselves, do not encourage their students to study and are just passing their time" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).*

Another teacher defended the secondary school teachers and complained about the primary teachers:

> *"Particularly in secondary level, teachers feel more responsible and know about the professional ethics and have fear of the parents and society and there is a chance of students making complaints if they don't do their jobs properly. However, it is found that some teachers go to their class a bit late and come out a bit early. On the other hand, one or two teachers are careless in their duties: they do not come to school or classroom on time, assign a lot of tasks to the students, do not make any effort themselves, do not encourage their students to study and are just passing their time by watching their wrists to see when the lesson finishes. Similarly, some teachers lock all the students inside the classroom and look*

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towards the headmaster's room through the door and windows so that the head teacher doesn't catch them not doing their jobs properly and pass the time just looking through the window. This is specially found in lower classes at primary level where the teachers feel less responsible for the students' education" (Moti: non-Dalit teacher school C).

From the above comments, it is seen that several teachers agreed on the unprofessional behaviour of some teachers in their schools. However, no matter what level of teachers they are, being a teacher requires them to be more careful in their behaviour.

Similarly, Radha expressed her dissatisfaction about the attitudes and behaviour of some of her teacher colleagues; her comments were critical:

"Panels are separated among teachers based on political ideologies, some panel groups are not happy with the current leadership. Nobody obeys (terdainan) the head teacher. Today, three teachers did not come to school; even the head teacher did not know that they are not coming. They actually do not want to support the head teacher. Some teachers are intentionally not helping instead playing a role to make the existing school's leadership fail. Some teachers go to the classroom unwillingly by saying that we have to fail the current leadership and school administration" (Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

Here, the teachers' politics is not only affecting students' education and learning but has also created difficulties in its management.

On the other hand, teachers are not trained well about how to treat students equitably in the teaching and learning process, which affects the low performing students more, as explained earlier in this section. Some more examples are provided here:

"Actually, we could not pay attention to low performing students. In most of the government schools, there is a custom that teachers often don't care about the low performing students and say they don't know anything; there is no tradition of asking why they became low performers" (Kabita: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

When I asked a question about her leadership in this school, she replied:

"I am learning, I have neither taken head teacher's training, nor had the opportunity to take part in any workshops or seminars. I was a qualified teacher; I was concerned only with how to teach effectively by understanding the psychology of the children. Now, I have to bear the thousand types of responsibility so I need some opportunity to learn and then I can learn something from the experience".

She realized that she needed some training to improve her leadership and management skills because she is lacking in these.

5.7 Students' Interests

Experience suggests that student interest and motivation is one of the important factors for learning and educational success. In this regard, one teacher explained that the Dalit students have demonstrated very negative attitudes and behaviour with him. He described his own experience with a Dalit student as follows:

> *"I teach year nine (B) students, where there are only four Dalit students and they are not regular in class and they do not want to take my class. They go out from the classroom before I enter to teach. They come to school just to get money. When I persuaded them to understand the value of education, they just listen while I'm talking but do not implement it. On the other hand, in year eight, there are a few Dalit girls who are a bit more regular in my class" (Moti: non-Dalit teacher school C).*

Clearly, Dalit girls are better in their attendance and punctuality than boys.

Similarly, a Dalit teacher reported that although the students' motivation is one of the important aspects for learning and achievements, some students are less motivated in their studies. What the Dalit students said to him was shared by a Dalit teacher as follows:

> *"Some Dalit students are not sincere when it comes to their studies and they say that it is their age to relax rather than to study" (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).*

Raju further told me that in a high school environment, when they are growing up, students become less disciplined and it is very difficult to control them. In this regard, he described a current incident which had happened in his school.

> *"There was a dispute between the boys and the girls because boys had teased girls. Teachers tried to resolve this dispute within the school but they were unable to do this and as a result, police took all the boys involved and hit them a lot. The main leader of them was a Dalit who was studying in year nine".*

On the other hand, the same Dalit teacher thinks that because of the development of new technologies, the students' minds are diverted from their studies to entertainment.

> *"The modern technology such as television and mobiles has affected children's education because their attention is towards watching TV programmes rather than their studies. Similarly, when they get a mobile phone, they engage more in Facebook, games and football rather than in their studies (Raju: Dalit teacher, school A).*

As Gopal related earlier, most of the Dalit students have little motivation to do their homework, if the students do not perform the given tasks, the learning cannot take place.

"When the students don't do their homework, teachers ask them and shout at them therefore they are less likely to go to school when they have to submit their homework" (Gopal: non-Dalit teacher, school B).

However, all the teachers interviewed are agreed that in general, the Dalit children have lower levels of motivation and less interest in teaching and learning processes and some of them have a disciplinary problem too.

One teacher commented on the thinking of Dalit children. For example, Radha expressed how Dalit children seem very pessimistic about their likely educational achievements. She explained the reason why Dalit children are less likely to continue their education. According to her, Dalit students have said to her:

"At the end, we must go to foreign countries for labour work. We are studying only because the school is near our house. Even if we study, there is no future in Nepal because there are no employment opportunities; we must go to foreign countries to work. Now, Dalit children are clearly saying that my brother studied but what did he get, nothing? He went to a foreign country. What happens when we study, my brother studied but he had to go to a foreign country. There are many such Dalit people who say that what do you do after study, even if you are educated you don't get a job"(Radha: non-Dalit teacher, school A).

She further said that:

"In Gandharbha, they usually terminate their education after 7 or 8 grades of education. In the last 28 years, I saw that only 2 passed intermediate level education (equivalent to A level).

Overall, Dalit children seem less optimistic to progress through education. They have limited ambitions to progress through education in general and Gandharba families in particular. Clearly, they have less hope to get jobs after they get educated.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter explained the teachers' views on Dalit children's education. The data revealed that caste-based discrimination has reduced significantly in school. Although all teachers claimed that there is no longer caste based discrimination taking place in school, some individual teacher's behaviours indicate that it has not been eliminated altogether and still appears indirectly in covert forms. However, there is little evidence of any form of caste based discrimination among the student community. The early marriage system has significantly hampered the educational progress of girls, which is more marked among Madhesi girls. Due to the continuous practice of old tradition and culture, girls are often discriminated against more than boys in access to educational opportunities.

On the other hand, Dalit children are often absent from schools due to the inadequate support of the parents, as they take less interest in their children's education. Homework is another contributing factor to the absenteeism of some Dalit children. All the teachers agreed that most Dalits have a low level of expectations regarding educational achievements. Those who are giving a high value and a positive meaning to their education are very few in number. However, all the teachers interviewed have a common view that one of the problems in the educational progress of Dalit children is parents' lack of responsible attitudes regarding their children's education, which is probably due to their own lack of education.

Another problem limiting Dalits' progress in education is the low social value given to their educational achievements, as we saw in a Dalit teacher's case. Moreover, Dalit children have low levels of motivation towards education, due to the difficulties of getting employment opportunities after they become educated.

In addition, all teachers interviewed agreed that the education of Dalit children is affected by the poor economic circumstances of their families. However, all Dalits are not the same in terms of their economic situations, as some people in this community started sending their children to expensive private schools. Moreover, larger family size has also affected the Dalit children's education, either through the need to care for siblings or through the need for additional family income.

Ineffective pedagogical practice in public schools also limits effective learning, which has more effect on the Dalit children because almost all go to public schools and they have a less conducive environment at home for learning. Ineffective pedagogy is partly due to lack of resources in schools and lack of appropriate training for the teaching staff. Teachers' politics sometimes creates difficulties in school management and leadership that ultimately affect the children's education. Moreover, the treatment of low performing students is unfair and inequitable, through which again Dalit students are affected more than others. In this context, a head teacher asserted that there is a lack of appropriate culture and knowledge among teachers.

In the next chapter, I will present the parents' views.

Chapter Six: Parents' Views on Dalit Children's Education

In the previous chapter, I explained the general views of teachers regarding the Dalit children's education. Now in this chapter, I explore the general views of the parents, as well as their views on the education of their own child. Therefore, I have chosen those eight parents whose children were considered as the focal point of this study. The names of these children and their relationships with their guardians are given in Table 6.1. The detailed descriptions about these children are given in Chapter 7. Let me introduce the parents of these children.

Parents

'Parents' in this study refers to either the children's own parents, or their grandparents. The grandparents are taken as a parent because some children are living with their grandparents and they are their guardians. So, whilst I carried out interviews with parents, which means with the father or mother, in the case of those children who are living with their grandparents, the interview was taken with their grandfather or grandmother.

All the names stated here as mother/father or grandmother/grandfather or children are pseudonyms that help to protect their identity.

Table 6.1: Relationships between the parents and children

Parent	Relationship	Children	
		Name	**Madhesi/Hill (origin)**
Santosh	Father	Anibha	Madhesi Dalit
Shila	Mother	Suntali	Hill Dalit
Sunil	Father	Sarala	Madhesi Dalit
Tribeni	Father	Trilochan	Madhesi Dalit
Tara	Mother	Tekendra	Hill Dalit
Sarita	Mother	Surya	Madhesi Dalit
Rita	Mother	Sumitra	Hill Dalit
Dipa	Grand mother	Dipu	Hill Dalit

As explained in Chapter 3, all interviews were audio taped and transcribed, aiming to capture everything we talked about. From this transcription, 28 apparently relevant codes emerged. While searching for themes from these codes, they came down to 9 final themes. I summarised the data obtained from my interviews with these parents in relation to these emergent themes which suggested potential barriers to the access, participation and achievements of Dalit children in education. The major themes identified were: economic

conditions, parents' attitudes and behaviour, expectations from education, cultural contexts, community environments, individual reasons, public and private provisions, communications and school environments.

6.1 Economic Condition

Being an agriculture based economy, the majority of people in Nepal have their own land for farming; but in the case of the Dalits, particularly in the research location, most of them have no land or very little land for farming. Their economic condition seems very weak. One example of evidence for this is given below:

> *"We are maintaining our life from my husband's earnings and I also sometimes work on a daily wages basis in an agriculture farm of neighbours such as planting and harvesting paddy crops. We don't have our own farming land" (Sarita-Mother of /Surya/, Madhesi Dalit).*

Here, Sarita's husband works constructing buildings locally, which is the main source of their family income. Another parent explicitly shared his story as follows:

> *"I do farming in other people's land because I have very little land (Kacche two Bigaha). See, I don't know what to tell you about our poverty situation and what kind of situation I am educating her (pointing to Sarala). I have no house. Everyone in the village have their bricked (pakka) house. I have no such house - I have a small cottage from which water leaks in the rainy season. Not only that, I have neither a water pump to drink water nor a toilet at home" (Sunil-Father of /Sarala/, Madhesi Dalit).*

In a similar vein, a Dalit parent summarises how the economic situation of her community impacts on children's education:

> *"Some Dalit children have such conditions that if they don't work themselves, they will have no food to eat, some go to work outside the village, and most of the children go to the bank of a river instead of going to school" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).*

Here, there is a big river near the research location which is an opportunity for the poor people to work on screening sand and beating stones for gravel and sell it locally to earn money to maintain their life where most poor people work.

The comments below reveal that Dalit parents seem to be expecting their children to earn from an early age instead of sending them to school for education. The following extracts clearly illustrate such situations:

> *"In our caste (jatma), we no longer have any agriculture land. When the children studied in year 4-5, they are grown up, and then they would start earning through*

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labour work. When they start earning, they say now they don't need education" (Santosh-Father of /Anibha/, Madhesi Dalit).

"I already told you, the main reason of irregularity in school is expectation of money from children by sending them to screen sand and hammer stones" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"Those children who have studied up to year six -seven or above, they can earn money by working in the river which is the expectation of their parents. Parents also say to their children, 'let's go to load a truck, if four of us go to load the sand into the trucks, we can earn 1000-1200 Rupees" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"Parents take their children to the river expecting that they can earn money for them; sometimes parents say to their children, 'it's OK for me even if you do not go to school today. In that situation, children become happy if they don't have to go to school because they are children" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

In addition to the above, one of the Hill Dalit parents expressed similar views but in a slightly different way which is concerned with the low level of their financial capacity to invest on their children:

"Rich people can give money as demanded by their children but poor people cannot. The rich people can give 20 Rupees even if a child asks for only 10 Rupees. But on the other hand, when 10 Rupees is asked for by a Dalit child, we cannot even give 5 rupees. My Grandson told me the same thing and said that you neither provide snacks nor give me money. Then, I scolded him a lot by saying - do you want to compare with others? Sometimes, I used to give 1 or 2 Rupees. When he has got money then he used to be happy to go to school and if not, he used to say I don't want go to school and instead he goes to play with those children who are not in school. This has happened exactly the same in case of my grandson. He used to play goli and khota (children's games) that ultimately led him towards dropping out from school. I see that Dalit children pay more attention to money in fact. They should have money with them to eat more in school. The situation is showing that the money could be the biggest matter for the poor" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

Moreover, it is seen that due to the poor economic situation of the family, Dalit children are compelled to do a lot of work to support their family, which has prevented them from studying at home. Since they had to work, it was difficult for them to engage with homework. In this context, casting doubt on the exam results, a Dalit child shared his feelings with his mother which she shared with me during the interview:

"Tekendra was saying to me a few days ago, Mummy! I could not do well in my exam because you have assigned me a lot of chores to do at home. I don't know what happened to my results this time'" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

Replying to my sub-question (what does Tekendra do at home?), she replied, saying,

> *"Tekendra needs to cook food, sweep the floors, cut grass for animals: take buffaloes, oxen, and goats for grazing and also help in the farm in peak seasons"* *(Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).*

While answering my question about why Dalit children are more irregular in school**,** a Hill Dalit parent replied by sharing her own experience of secondary school:

> *"Irregularity in school is closely linked to the economic situation of the family. For example when I was studying in high school and when I was ready to go to school, my father said to me - I have asked and approved your leave from your teacher, come with me to beg for money (magna hidne). This was the situation at that time. I was not regular in school because I had become absent in school and the same thing is also happening here now"* *(Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).*

This suggests that some parents also use their children to beg in the villages with them. Begging is a culture of one of the Hill Dalit communities. However, they beg with singing songs with a musical instrument which is locally called '*Sarangi*'.

In this way, due to the family poverty, some parents encourage their children more on earning than in their studies. In this situation, the Dalit children often do not get a favourable atmosphere for their studies at home and sometimes they cannot be regular in school. Therefore, the above comments suggest that the Dalits' economic situation often does not support them to engage more on studies.

6.2 Parents' Attitudes and Behaviour

Dalit children not only have to confront the economic problem to maintain their life, some of them also have to face the mental torture or emotional behaviour of their own parents which may give them some psychological torture. For example, we can see this in the following extract:

> *"My husband committed suicide in 2058 BS and the main reason was the habit of drinking alcohol, unavailability of food at home and nothing to give to his sisters when they come to his house"* *(Rita- Mother of /Sumitra/, Hill Dalit).*

Here, from the Sumitra's father's suicide, she may experience a very discouraging situation psychologically in her study. Nevertheless, the origin of this type of negative thinking is rooted again in the economic situation of the family, as presented above.

Regarding the parents' behaviour, looking to her son (Tekendra), Tara told me that,

> *"His father drinks a lot of alcohol. We request him not to drink alcohol but he refuses it straight away and he never agreed on it. Therefore, there is no peaceful situation seen at home and every time a conflict occurs".*

"His (Tekendra) father drinks alcohol excessively and spends all the money he earns. He also quarrels with us and uses swear words even in front of my children".

"Tekendra might be stressed because his father drinks alcohol all the time, scolds them, does not speak in a good manner, and sometimes displaces us from our home by using filthy words and saying bad things. We could not convince him to improve his drinking habits. I suspect that his (Tekendra's) concentration in his studies might have decreased due to being stressed because of this reason".

Although the Dalit parents work hard and earn money, they (especially the male members) do not often utilize their earnings in the right places, such as the education of their children. A Hill Dalit parent, Shila gave a number of examples regarding the misuse of money as follows:

"Everybody shows an economic problem- they work hard and earn a lot but they do not utilize their earnings properly and because of this, they are lagging behind. They should realize it from the heart that we should improve our behaviour".

"What do you say - when they spend 15 rupees for alcohol every day".

"Parents go to the river and screen sands, hammer stones, fathers travel with a Sarangi (a musical instrument of Nepal) village to village and earn 200-300 rupees a day. Those who are unaware, they may get involved in bad habits (kulatma lagchhan) and spend all of their earnings themselves on alcohol and meat. Then what should their children do and this situation causes them to go away with frustration (bhautariar hidchhan) to find some work for survival".

"There is no proper leadership from the parent because they have no awareness. The situation of the children from such parents becomes the same as of their parents. For example, from the earnings, they spend all the money on alcohol, cigarettes and even on playing cards (tas ma) and do not bring their earnings back home".

So, there was much evidence suggesting that some members of the Dalit community could not value and utilize their earnings for the welfare of their children's or their own lives.

The following comments indicate that some parents in a Dalit community have less interest in children's education. For example:

"Sometimes for the formality, parents just say to their children 'go to school' but they don't care whether they went to school or not; that is the weakness of the parents" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"People in our community do not think that we should educate our children" (Sunil-Father of /Sarala/, Madhesi Dalit).

"Some parents have their own weaknesses because they do not want to send their children to school. Even if they sent them, they have no interest about their studies" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"In our village, it is also seen that the grown up children have never been to school due to the carelessness of their parents" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

When I asked why they didn't go to school, Shila replied:

"There are two reasons. One is they are greedy when it comes to money and the other is that their financial situation at home is also not good" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

Highlighting the parents' weakness, Shila summarises the general situation of their own community (Gandharba), which demonstrates a more complex range of situations concerning the Dalit participation in education:

"Well performing students always go to school. On the other hand, some go to school just to get scholarships, and there are such children who go to school once or twice a month too".

"Some children are regular and some are not. Our weakness is that from our village, children are not regular in school. It is the great weakness of the parents".

"When they hear that the scholarship is being distributed, all of our sons and daughters go to school otherwise they are not regular. It is our weakness. The main reason of being irregular in school is the carelessness of their parents".

Regarding the attitudes of the parents, Shila further illustrates her emotional expressions against the attitudes of her own community as follows:

"Other people are painting our home again and again but we are making fire continuously which makes it black/dark. Whatever the facilities we receive, it should be utilized properly in a right place".

She added;

"People in this community say one thing but act differently. If you look at this behaviour deeply (internally), it is because of a lack of awareness; if you look at this superficially (externally), they say, 'yes we have to educate our children because they become clever (knowledgeable) but in practice they don't do it so it is not transparent".

However, Shila further assesses and summarizes her community characteristics as follows:

"Our children do not like to go to school and follow the same thing that was done by their fathers such as drinking alcohol in an early age, getting married at an early age, smoking at an early age, eating rotten (sadegaleka) things, not remaining hygienic at and around the home, not keeping their home and garden clean. Because of these reasons, socially, we have become lower and Caste wise, we are also in a low position. This is the reason why we have been in a low position. So we have to improve our behaviour ourselves rather than protesting at others" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

On the other hand, we can see some positive attitudes and behaviour which are emerging in some parents towards the values of education. For example, despite many problems, some Dalit parents seem really committed to their children's education, which is illustrated in the following excerpts:

> *"I want to educate my daughters until I can support them. Teachers also said to me that if your daughters continue their studies, it is a great chance for them to get a job as a teacher. Therefore, even though I have to sell my property, I want to educate my daughters" (Santosh-Father of /Anibha/, Madhesi Dalit).*

Talking of her son (Tekendra), Tara said,

> *"He is doing well in his studies; therefore I am telling him that I will educate him at any cost. If he continues to do well in his studies, I must educate him at least up to year 12. If he still takes interest for further education, I will educate him even if I have to sell a piece of land (paddy field). However, I want to see him be a doctor so let's see what happens".*

Similarly, despite his severe economic poverty, Sunil has a strong desire to educate his daughter.

> *"We do agriculture and plough land. We cannot afford higher education. However, I want to educate her (Sarala) up to year 12" (Sunil-Father of /Sarala/, Madhesi Dalit).*

He further stressed his commitment to educating his daughter as follows:

> *"If she does not fail in her exams, I will educate Sarala further. I am also supporting her for her personal tuition by paying NRS 300 per month. I gave some paddy for my daughter to sell and she bought some books with it".*

Here, despite extreme economic poverty, Sunil expressed his strong commitment to educating Sarala. He also feels regret that he could not educate some of his children and said:

> *"I have six daughters and a son. I could not educate my first and second daughters because there were no people to do work and due to poverty, I could not educate them. Now, four of my daughters are studying in school".*

Expecting the daughter's better future, he further said:

> *"When I see others, I think that my daughter should also study and if educated, they can go wherever they want. I am educating them through the earnings from my labouring work. I think that like me, my daughters should not be compelled to do labouring work for someone else.*

Similarly, we can see many positive commitments from several Dalit parents about their children's education in the following examples:

"We could not study more (just year seven), therefore we want to educate our children to that level wherever it is possible or they could get success so that they can be employed or they will have something better" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"I do not keep her at home instead of going to school because if they stay at home they may not stay disciplined and wonder about in the village" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"Though I have not studied much, I want to make my children's future better" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

Here, we can see how some Dalit parents were inspired to educate their children; but the way they view the benefits of education vary, as can be seen in the excerpts below:

"Those who have education, everything is open for them. There is nothing greater than education. I don't know how to write my name. Education makes it easy to understand and speak about different things" (Rita- Mother of /Sumitra/, Hill Dalit).

"Those who have studied more have got jobs but those who could not study, have gone to India and disappeared there and some are ploughing land" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

"My elder daughter was not even able to see the face of school; therefore I want to educate these three children. Showing Sumitra, I am still telling her to continue with her education. Being a Dalit, she can get a job in organizations which are working around; another also has got it. Jamai (son –in -law) also said that he will not prevent her from receiving education. There is a bicycle at home, which she can use to travel to and from school" (Rita- Mother of /Sumitra/, Hill Dalit).

The changes occurring in the Dalit community can also be seen from the conclusions drawn by a Hill Dalit parent about the overall educational situation of Dalit children in their own community in the following way:

"However, previously there were many children who were not going to school but now many are being educated" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

In this way, we can see the dichotomy in the views of Dalit parents in their children's education: some parents are loyal towards children's education and some are less interested. Those who are more positive, they realize the value of education at some level in relation to opportunities for employment, empowerment in terms of communication and building self-confidence. On the other hand, those who are less concerned with the education of their children, are less aware and are still not able to realize the importance of education for their children and wasting their earnings.

6.3 Expectations from Education

How parents view the importance of education has a crucial role in educating their children. The following comments suggest that parents seem less aware about the importance of education although they link it to the availability of job opportunities within the country context.

> *"People in our community say that they don't get jobs so why trouble to go through educating their children. Some people say that even if they studied, they still have to do the same labouring work throughout their life. The great thing is fate, nothing happened from education for us. Some people also say that they don't get jobs even if they educated their children even up to 10-12" (Tribeni-Father of/Trilochan/, Madhesi Dalit).*

A Hill Dalit parent explained that in their community, there is a pessimistic thinking; they have the feeling of inferiority complex, which has been obstructing them for educating their children. She explained her community thinking and situation as:

> *"Everything is due to the lack of awareness. It is about the thought and thinking. There are poorer people than us in other castes but their thinking and thought is good but in our caste there are no good thoughts and thinking. There is a common saying- what does the education do for us (padhera ke hunchha)? Such type of thinking should not be held within us" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).*

On the other hand, some people in the Dalit community still feel they are discriminated against, based on caste, in terms of receiving employment opportunities. The following is an example of this situation:

> *"Even if we educate our children, they don't get a job. Once, a Dalit had to leave his job due to belonging to a lower caste" (Tribeni-Father of/Trilochan/, Madhesi Dalit).*

Similarly, the comments below also suggest that some feel they are discriminated against because they do not get favoured and they are powerless and they are less optimistic of getting a job.

> *"There is always a backup support for rich people but not for the poor. Therefore, nothing has happened when the poor study. Now, without source- force (power), nothing happens, nothing happens without the support from aaphno manchhe (nepotism and favouritism), therefore he (Dipu) did not take an interest in his studies to that extent" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).*

In addition, the following expression not only illustrates the discrimination between Hill Dalits and Madhesi Dalits in terms of getting employment, it also shows an indication of discrimination between the Madhesi and Hill people:

"Nepali people (Hill people) get the job but we don't get the job. It is the truth"
(Tribeni-Father of/Trilochan/, Madhesi Dalit).

Here, Triveni, a Madhesi Dalit parent, is not feeling that he is from the Nepalese community; therefore they have less expectation of getting a job compared to the Hill Dalit community.

In this way, many Dalits seem less optimistic regarding the future job opportunities that the educational achievements can bring. Some Dalits feel that there is no favourable situation for them to get jobs. Therefore, they seem less optimistic that their children can make progress through educational achievements. This type of thinking of parents does not encourage their children towards educational access, participation and achievements.

6.4 Cultural Contexts

I heard how, sometimes, discriminative behaviour exists between the sons and daughters, due to the male preference culture in the Dalit community. For example:

"Expecting a son, I have six daughters" (Santosh-Father of /Anibha/, Madhesi Dalit).

"In our village, there is discrimination between the son and daughter. For example, the son goes to a private boarding school and the daughter goes to a public school" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

"In a family, there are two daughters and a son. These two daughters are going to a public school and a son is going to a private boarding school, is not that discrimination Sir? There are two families in our village who are discriminating and we are advising them not to do so" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

Although most of the Dalit children go to study in a public school there are some who go to a private boarding school too; but there is a low chance for female children to study in private schools as compared to the males.

"There should be equal eyes to see a son and a daughter but in some families, it is not like that. In general (motamoti), daughters go to public schools and sons go to a private school. Such practice is also found in this village. It is not only found in this village, but also found in other villages" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

Not only this, the following comments suggest that people think that the ultimate goal of a daughter's life is to be confined at home and within household chores rather than doing anything else. Some people do not see any value in educating females. For example:

"In our community, people say that there are no advantages of educating their daughters. At the end of the day, they need to do the household chores" (Tribeni-Father of/Trilochan/, Madhesi Dalit).

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In this way, female children seem to be discriminated against in various ways even within their own families, and they do not get priority in terms of receiving education.

Beside the son preference culture, marriage culture is also considered as a potential barrier in relation to Dalit children's education. For example, a Madhesi Dalit parent has expressed how the conservative thinking about grown up girls seems to be one of the main reasons for early marriage in the Madhesi Dalit community.

> "In the case of daughters, people in our community say that when the daughters are grown up, there will be less chance of getting them married because they think that there might be something wrong with that girl therefore she is still unmarried. In our community, people also think that if the boys and girls sit together, talk together in such situation, it is impossible to save their prestige. Therefore, in our caste, parents want to arrange the daughters' marriage at an early age" (Santosh-Father of /Anibha/, Madhesi Dalit).

On the other hand, a Hill Dalit parent is not interested in an early marriage system but due to other reasons and beliefs, the early marriage happens. For example, Sumitra's marriage happened due to the following reasons:

> "In actual fact, I did not want Sumitra to get married for the next two years because she was too young but I could not refuse the person who asked for the marriage proposal because he was a trustworthy relative. Considering the fact that the intention of the marriage proposal was for the better future of my daughter, I took it positively and could not reject this marriage proposal. Another thing is that I believe that the first proposal is often good for the future therefore it should not be refused without genuine reasons. I thought that it is hard to get a good boy who does not smoke cigarettes and drink alcohol. I also thought that the boy is really very good and we should not miss this opportunity" (Rita- Mother of /Sumitra/, Hill Dalit).

She further clarified the reasons for the early marriage of her daughter and said:

> "The proposed boy also has some agricultural land for farming and a good house for living in. The marriage proposal had come from a nearby village which is good for both Sumitra and me because I can help her and she can help me at the time of difficulties and sickness in the future".

Moreover, the comment below suggests that it is not particularly difficult to continue education for the married females in Hill Dalit community because they may get support from the family.

> "Sumitra said to me that Jamai (son-in law) is also encouraging her to continue with her education either in Jhanda School or Gajeheda School. He himself also has passed year nine education" (Rita- Mother of /Sumitra/, Hill Dalit).

However, educating children after marriage creates other problems; for example, married girls themselves may feel shy with their peers and teachers, which pushes them out from the education although the family is still ready to continue their education. For instance:

> *"She (Sumitra) left school just after the decision I made about her marriage. Sumitra told me that due to the early marriage, I don't want to have to speak about it with my teachers and friends because it is shameful for me and that is why I don't go to take science exams and left school. Sumitra suspected that the teachers and peers may tease her asking why she married at such a young age (14 years) so what could she say to them? She said, I have no answer for them"* (Rita- Mother of /Sumitra/, Hill Dalit).

Female education after marriage in a Madhesi Dalit family is even less likely to happen because they may not get support from their family, which can be seen in the following comments:

> *"Her (Anibha's) husband has said to her that if she became educated and got a job, she can dominate him. He already told Anibha not go to school. He has said that if she goes to school, she cannot go to his house"* (Santosh-Father of /Anibha/, Madhesi Dalit).

Thus, there is a complex situation about the girl's marriage in relation to their education.

However, female education after marriage in the Hill Dalit community is less likely to be affected compared to the Madhesi Dalit community. The early age marriage in the Madhesi community is mainly due to the belief that there will be less chance of getting married when they have grown up; but this type of social stigma is not attached to the grown up girls in the Hill Dalits. For example, when I asked a Hill Dalit parent about what you say on whether a grown up daughter should not be sent to school, she replied,

> *"I have never heard this kind of thing before. This is the first time, I have heard of a thing like this now from you"* (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

Nevertheless, there is a different culture associated with the early marriage in the Hill Dalit community, which is termed elopement. In the elopement culture, the boy and girl usually go away from home and carry out their life in their own way or girls go to the boy's home and live there for the rest of their life. We can see evidence of elopement in the following excerpts, extracted from the interview with Shila (Mother of Suntali, Hill Dalit):

> *"When they are growing up, they seem to be leaving school which is generally found in boys. If it is found in girls, it is due to elopement because they look for a boy (elopement- poila janchhan) at the age of 14 or 15".*

> *"In a large scale, there is a custom of elopement by the daughters (jane chalan chha). They go with a boy at the age of 14-15, what should we hide the incidents of*

our neighbours. In our caste, about 40% go with boys themselves in an early age. They usually go between the age of 13 to 15 or 16".

"Law permits marrying after the age of 18 years for the girls but here, there is a culture of elopement (poila janchhan) at the age of 13 or 14. This is the situation here".

These comments suggest that female education is generally affected because of marriage, no matter whether they are from Madhesi or Hill Dalits community, though its nature and the level of intensity is dissimilar.

Despite the different cultures and belief systems on early marriage, some changes in the Dalit community have been occurring. The following comments explain this:

"Now, I am aware that my third daughter is in year five. I will get her married only when she completes year 10" (Santosh-Father of /Anibha/, Madhesi Dalit).

"I have not made her think about marriage and that I will do it only when she finishes year 10. After marriage, she needs to go to her husband's home and they have to work there. After marriage, education is not possible for her" (Sunil-Father of /Sarala/, Madhesi Dalit).

This type of cultural transformation can be seen in relation to female education which has made it possible for some girls to receive education.

Overall the above comments suggest that there is a culture of early marriage in the Dalit community in general and the Madhesi Dalit community in particular; however, the nature and cause of early marriage differs. In the Madhesi Dalit community, the culture of traditional belief on grown up girls seems to be widely dominant. The nature of marriage system in this community is arranged marriage. On the other hand, in the Hill Dalit community, the early marriage happens in the form of elopement, which is closer to the love marriage culture in which girls find the boys themselves, rather than arranged marriage. Thus, the system of early marriage culture, no matter what its nature, has adversely affected the education of Dalit girls directly or indirectly among both Madhesi and Hill Dalits.

6.5 Community Environments

Many of the comments of parents suggested that there is an adverse effect of neighbourhood in the Dalit children's education from their own community. In particular, Dalit children are more likely to be influenced and affected by non-schooled children and their behaviour. For example:

"The environment is not good here (in our village) - children are not educated, don't go to school, just walk here and there, listen to songs in their phones, singing songs and drinking alcohol. In this situation, children may learn bad things from them and say that he does this; he does that which leads them to be undisciplined" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"Some children skive (bhagera aauchhan) from school and come back to the village and play with non-schooled children" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"Main reason of (dherai jaso karan) not going to school is because they are playing with the children who are not in school. In my observation, one of the reasons why students drop out from school is because the older children do not go to school which has a negative impact in the younger ones" (Dipa: grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

"Children are following those friends who are not going to school, because of the friendships with such fellows; children are less likely to want to go to school" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"Due to the bad fellows among the neighbours, it would have a great influence on the children (chhimeki kharab bhaepachhi thulo dhoka hudo rahechha). The children follow the same thing that others are doing. Neighbourhood effect is a great effect. If the parents of each child would have told them that you should not just play, my children may not want to only play" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"If there is a bad person in a community, they influence others the same way by playing with marbles, playing cards and he always goes around in the villages to find his friends (pointing out to Dipu) and does not come back if we beat and scold him" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

These comments suggest that the Dalit children have a less conducive educational environment in their own community. Unschooled children in their community in particular have a great negative impact on the education of schooled children and their behaviour.

6.6 Individual Reasons

Although the parents are fairly interested in their children's education up to a certain level, the comments below suggest that some Dalit children have problems with themselves and have little motivation towards education.

"In some Dalits, children themselves do not want to go to school even if their parents want to send them" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"It is also found that children go from home but do not reach the school and if they reach the school, they disappear at snack time but they return back to their home only at the time when the school closes. "When I said to him (Dipu) that, 'why don't you go to school - all of your friends have been going', but without any

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reaction, he becomes silent (chuppa lagchha). He did not go to school because of his own decision" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

His silence indicates that Dipu has no interest in education.

A similar situation is found in Surya's case. His mother says:

"Surya did not take interest in his studies, he did not study at all at home and he refused to go to school" (Sarita-Mother of /Surya/, Madhesi Dalit).

She further says:

"We had an interest to educate all of our four children up to year 10 but what should I do? We really wanted to educate him (Surya) and tried all means to motivate him to send him to school but he did not want to go at all" (Sarita-Mother of /Surya/, Madhesi Dalit).

Regarding Surya's education, his mother expressed his unwillingness like this:

"We believe in fate so if he (Surya) studies, he can have more knowledge and can live a good life and if not, it may be due to his fate" (Sarita-Mother of /Surya/, Madhesi Dalit).

In contrast, some well performing students are continuously engaging with their education as well as in extra-curricular activities. They seem to be regular in school and work hard at home as well. For instance:

"She is regular in her school. Even if she has no food to eat, she wishes to go to school" (Sunil-Father of /Sarala/, Madhesi Dalit).

"Suntali studies at home for 2-3 hours if she has any spare time. Being a farmer, we are always busy" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

"He is good in his studies and has been receiving second position three times and third position last year in his class. He studies by himself at home so there is no need to tell him to study. He studies in the morning as well as in the evening. He does his homework first when he comes from school and then continues with his studies after dinner. He also teaches his sister" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

She further expressed her happiness about her son's education by saying:

"He is dynamic and multi-talented, participates in extracurricular activities such as art competition, essay writing competition and received second position in both competitions and got prizes such as coloured pencils, toothpaste, brush, jeevanjal, cash 200 (NRS). He bought a T-shirt from the cash prize. He also plays football and volleyball" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

Here, Sarala, Suntali and Tekendra are well performing students and Surya and Dipu are dropped out students. The above comments revealed that low performers are less likely to

engage in their studies than high performers, except for Dipu because he was good in his study as reported by his grandmother:

> "He never failed in any grade while he was in school. He was a good student in his class in terms of educational performances" Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

When I asked why did he (Dipu) stop going to school? She replied:

> "Teachers might scold and beat him because he didn't do his homework because he does not come home at all instead he only plays with children that don't go to school, and always goes to the nearby villages instead of doing homework at home" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).

Thus, the above comments reveal the complexities of the situation of students: some are good achievers and some are low achievers. The interesting thing is that some good achievers are not taking more interest in their education due to the carelessness of doing homework, and continuous contact with unschooled children. This reflects how the surrounding environment affects the children's educational success.

6.7 Public and Private Provision

People in Nepal generally perceived that the private education is considered a good quality education compared to public education. Some parents in the Dalit community are also interested in sending their children to private schools, but their financial situations rarely permit them. As a result, they are compelled to choose public schools for their children.

> "For a year, babu (Tekendra) was kept in a Bhupu Sainik private boarding school. When I became sick, a lot of money was spent on treatment so then I had to withdraw and bring him back to a public school" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

> "Now, private schools are taking a good market in education. It requires paying 5000-6000 Rupees during the time of registration. Those who have no capacity to buy medicine, - even Paracetamol - how can they educate their children in private schools"? (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

When I asked a question - why did your child receive a lower position in his class this year?

A Dalit parent replied:

> "He (Tekendra) told me that some students that he needed to compete with came to his school from a private boarding school and were excellent in English" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

Here, in the private school, the English is the medium of teaching and learning but in public schools Nepali is used for the same purpose. In this context, the competence in English language is incomparable between the two provisions.

On the other hand, although the public education is said to be free for all Dalits, it incurs some costs for them indirectly. Nevertheless, it is cheaper than private education. A Hill Dalit parent explained her interest in sending her children to private schools, but due to family poverty she was compelled to send her children to public school. The following example reveals this situation:

> *"Above year seven, we have to buy a book, which is not provided by the government. It is used in school especially to compete with private schools which is in English medium, and other books also require buying. From the perspective of the competition with the private schools, public schools have also provisioned to use Tie, Belt, and Shoes. If we had been able to buy all these things, we could have afforded to keep our children in the private schools" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).*

All these new provisions in public school increase expenses which has affected the poor people more. However, the provision of public and private education may create a gap between the poor and rich people, producing two different categories of people.

6.8 Communications

Although the communication between the parents and teachers is important, the comments below reveal that poor communication occurs between them, as well as between parent and children:

> *"I don't know because often I do not go there (school). I used to go once at the time of distribution of scholarship to make a sign (finger print) and during the time of registration. I have nothing to do there or what to tell them when going there. The school has not invited me at other times and situation" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).*

In contrast to this, those parents whose children are engaging well in their studies communicate more with the teachers. They also visit schools more frequently to understand about their children's educational performance. The comments below also illustrates that an effective communication takes place between the teachers and some parents whose children are performing well in their studies.

> *" I talk to the teachers from time to time about the children's education. Teachers say that Suntali is very good in her studies, she is polite and everything is good with her but they say that your son is under performing" (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).*

> *"Yes, I go and contact the teachers from time to time and ask about the children's studies. They say that his (Tekendra) performance is OK but he is losing his marks. This year I went to school three times. I also attend meetings in school when I am invited but I could not attend the last meeting because I needed to pay back Perma (culture of exchanging labour) for harvesting paddy crops in her neighbourhood"* (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

> *"Sometimes, I suggest to the teachers that it's not enough just to say "children, study"; you need to teach in such a way so that children can understand the lesson well"* (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

However, Suntali and Tekendra are both well performing students, which can be seen in Chapter 7. They are also the children of literate parents.

The communication between the parents and children is equally important to understand the teaching and learning experiences of children in school. Some Dalit children are less likely to share their experiences with their parents. Sometimes, they do not even like to listen to their parent's enquiry about the teachers and ignore them straight away, which is illustrated by Dipa in the following comments:

> *"He did not talk about school related things to me and kept it within himself".*

> *"About the teachers, Dipu did not say anything so maybe he thinks that we cannot understand anything about the school related things because we are illiterate (like a blind person)".*

However, some children seem to be more interested in their studies and they often share their school experiences with their parents.

> *"Sometimes, Suntali says that teachers have given this type of assignments/homework but I can't solve this. In that case, if I know, I guide her to resolve this; if I don't know this, I suggest that she ask her teachers"* (Shila-Mother of /Suntali/, Hill Dalit).

> *"He talks about his studies and shares what he did by saying, 'today teachers taught this, and we studied that'. He also says that today 'this happened in school, my note book finished, I have no more pens'. Then I give him some money to buy this"* (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).

It has been mentioned earlier that Tekendra and Suntali are both well-performing students in their class and their parents are literate too. This indicates that more frequent communication occurs between the literate parents and school teachers, compared to completely illiterate parents. The children of literate parents seemed to be more engaged in their education. However, most of the Dalit parents were illiterate.

6.9 School Environments

The comments below illustrate how children seem to be studying in under-resourced teaching and learning environments including insufficient computer technology. Based on her daughter's reporting and her own experience, Shila explained the school's situation:

> *"Children are lacking in computer skills because there are only two computers in the school".*

> *"Children say that there is no jug for drinking water in school. Sometimes, teachers say that there are no sweeping materials and sometimes, they say chairs are broken. We have been supporting for these things considering the teachers request".*

Apart from the problem of resources, several parents reported that the teacher's motivation in teaching profession is likely to be lessened. This can be seen in the following comments:

> *"The teaching and learning is not that good, the students skive (bhagera) from school and go home in the middle of the day. Teachers say to us that we have to tell them to study at home too. Children say that teachers are talking and sitting in their office so the students keep continuing to go home one after another and the classroom sometimes become empty at the end" (Rita- Mother of /Sumitra/, Hill Dalit).*

> *"Teachers teach with low level of motivation (tolmol garne garchhan) and take 10 minutes rest after each fifteen minutes of teaching. I am really surprised because of how tired they are" (Shila-Mother of/Suntali/, Hill Dalit).*

> *"Children say that there were no classes held today. Sometimes, they say that the teacher did not come to the class and sometimes, they say teachers do the official work in the office room and do not come to the classroom to teach us" (Dipa-Grandmother of /Dipu/, Hill Dalit).*

This last comment was made by Dipa, based on the information obtained not from Dipu her grandson; she obtained this information from her granddaughter who is studying in year nine.

Similarly, a Hill Dalit parent commented on the behaviour of a headmaster like this:

> *"Everybody says that school is OK but now, it is heard that the head teacher is paying less attention in teaching and learning processes and it is also heard that the head teacher often does not come to school and sometimes even for 4-5 days in a week. We should not be liars but we heard this. Students say that even though head teacher comes, she engages only in administration. Children say we don't like this" (Tara-Mother of /Tekendra/, Hill Dalit).*

Here, this data can give some sense of de-motivation in their roles of leadership.

Apart from the above, the following comments suggest that homework is another important issue for the education of Dalit children. A Hill Dalit parent spontaneously shared the experience of her son regarding homework and its associated action carried out against the carelessness on the homework/assignments. Although only her daughter (Suntali) is included in this study not her son, a Hill Dalit parent (Shila), shared a story herself about the assignment of her son as:

> *"One day my son had not done his homework and as a punishment, he has to sit down and stand up repeatedly many times by holding unto his ears and the teacher had beaten him 2-3 times with a stick. However, I did not complain about anything to the teachers, thinking that he would be aware about doing his homework next time. He had shown me the muscles were swelled up (somla utheka thiya) due to beating and he also said to me that he was in pain due to him sitting down and standing up for many times which was done in front of his classmates. I said to him that it is good; if you could have done your homework you would not get any punishments from the teacher. It is your fault so your teacher did right".*

Here, these comments suggest that the teacher and the parent both believe that the children can be disciplined through punishment instead of caring and giving them love and support.

In addition, she also raised her concern on the quality of teaching and complaints to the teachers by saying:

> *"The main weakness of our teachers is that they don't bring their own children to those schools where they teach. This is the main problem that I have seen. See, they send their children to a private boarding school and teach others, which is a big problem. This is what has been happening considering the case of each teacher. No teacher keeps their children in their school".*

The parents concern is that if there had been quality teaching and learning in the public school, teachers also could have kept their children in their school rather than sending them to private schools.

However, there are some problems found in school. They are ranging from lack of resources and lack of teachers motivation to the lack of effective leaderships.

6.10 Conclusion

This chapter explored the views of the parents on how Dalit children are experiencing their education and what factors are affecting their educational access, participation and success in education. This chapter also explained how the Dalit parents see the values of education for their children. Due to family poverty, they might not be regular in school, even if they are present in school; they have nothing to eat during lunch time, which demotivates them

from going to school. They will have no time to do their homework at home because of domestic workload. They are not regular in school because they also have to work for earning income to support their family. Despite their wish of educating their children in private school, some Dalit parents are compelled to withdraw their children from the private schools due to their poor economic situation. Some children's education is affected due to the negative attitudes and behaviour of their parents, because the parent's interest is focussed on earning rather than the learning of their children as their expectation from the education is low.

The cultural context is more complicated; through this girls are affected more due to the son preference culture and early age marriage culture. In addition to this, due to the unconducive educational environment in the Dalit community, schooled children are affected by unschooled children. There are some gaps in communication between teachers and parents and between children and parents about school related matters. Nevertheless, there are some parents who have some exposure to schooling and are positive, and do communicate to the school teachers; but such parents are very few in number. Some parents raised the quality issue in public schools by highlighting that none of the teachers bring their sons/daughters in public school which they think is a great concern for them. Some parents raised some issues not only relating to teachers' behaviour and their de-motivation in the teaching profession, they also raised the issue about the effectiveness of school leadership as well. In this way a range of factors are affecting the educational access, participation and achievements of Dalits.

The next chapter explores the live experiences of Dalit children about their education.

Chapter Seven: Dalit Children's Experiences of Their Education

This chapter explores the Dalit children's empirical experience of their education, which is indeed the focal point of this research. There were two phases of data collection from them. In the first phase, I interviewed 20 students and subsequently, in the second phase, I focussed on 8 students from within the 20 sampled in order to explore emerging issues in more detail. For this purpose, I interviewed the parents of these eight young people and also their teachers, which has been presented in the previous two chapters. Although this research is focussed on these 8 children, the views of all 20 children have been used in this research as evidence.

As explained in Chapter 3, the interviews were conducted with the help of the interview schedule as a guide. All the interviews were about 20 to 30 minutes' duration and were audio taped. All the interviews were transcribed and coded. The detailed process of transcribing, coding and theme development was explained in Chapter 3.

As mentioned above, these eight young people include four of Madhesi origin and four Hill Dalits, which has also balanced the gender. The following table depicts a brief description of these eight children.

Table: 7.1 Brief introductions of the eight children

Name	Gender	Age	Grade/year	Regular/ dropout	Madhesi/Hill (origin)
Anibha	Female	15	6	Regular/drop out	Madhesi Dalit
Suntali	Female	14	7	Regular	Hill Dalit
Sarala	Female	17	10	Regular	Madhesi Dalit
Trilochan	Male	16	10	Regular	Madhesi Dalit
Tekendra	Male	14	8	Regular	Hill Dalit
Surya	Male	16	6	Regular/dropout	Madhesi Dalit
Sumitra	Female	14	7	Dropout	Hill Dalit
Dipu	Male	14	6	Dropout	Hill Dalit

Due to the focus of this research on these eight children, first of all I will introduce them briefly by categorizing them into two groups: currently enrolled students (regular) and no longer enrolled students (dropped out). Regular/dropout means, when the first interview was conducted, they were in school, but when I interviewed them the second time, after a couple of months, they had dropped out.

Regular Students

Trilochan

Trilochan is the youngest son in his family, with a brother and three sisters. He is a year ten student who has been ranked in first position in his class since year five. He is aiming to be a teacher after the completion of Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.). He has been continuously refusing to get married although his parents have been trying to get him married since he was in year five. He has a strong belief that after marriage, continuing education is not possible. Agriculture is the main occupation in his family. Being a Madhesi Dalit, they speak Awadhi at home, which is their mother tongue as well. The main difficulty he feels in his school is writing long answers to questions in Nepali in some subjects.

Sarala

Sarala is studying in year 10 and was also born in a Madhesi Dalit family. Although she is from a Madhesi Dalit family, she is still unmarried. She is determined that she will get married only after the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) pass (like the GCSE in the UK). She is aiming to be a teacher in the future. She has a brother and six sisters in her family and she is the third one. She feels difficulties when speaking in Nepali, which I experienced with her during the interview. The main occupation of her family is agriculture. They have no adequate land of their own for farming. Therefore, they are farming in their neighbour's farm land from which they get 50% of its production, which is called *Bataiya*. Her parents are illiterate and are living in a simple cottage that leaks during the rainy season.

Suntali

Suntali is currently studying in year seven and ranked first in her class when she was promoted from year six to seven. She aims to be a doctor in the future. She was born in a Hill Dalit family but is living in the Terai region because her parents migrated to Terai from the Hill district. She has only one younger brother, who is studying in the same school in year five. Her mother has received year seven education and her father has also passed year seven of school education. To some extent, her mother guides her in her education, which she had expressed during the interview.

Tekendra

Tekendra is studying in year eight. He is aiming to be a doctor in the future. His father has received year ten school education and his mother has also schooling experience up to year three. The main occupation of his family is agriculture. Sometimes, his father works as a labourer in a local rice mill on daily wages basis. Tekendra has been ranked second or third in his class. His parents are committed to educate him as much as he wishes. He is a fortunate child of a Hill Dalit family who has received good scholarship money that is given to one of the best students in the school. However, the economic condition is also considered to award this scholarship. On the other hand, he also has to do a lot of work at home to support his parents.

Dropped out Students

Anibha

Anibha is a year six student who was aiming to receive at least year 10 level of education. I knew her aim when I interviewed her the first time while she was a regular student in her school. Unfortunately, because of her marriage, she could not continue her education and dropped out from the school because she could not get support from her family. She is the second sister out of six, and was born in a Madhesi Dalit family and her parents are illiterate. She was compelled to get married early while she was only 14 years old, which led her to terminate her education.

Surya

Sixteen year old Surya dropped out from school when he failed his year six exam. He started his education late, when he was nine years old. He feels ashamed to continue his studies again in the same year. Surprisingly, his parents are still ignorant of the reason for his dropping out from school. After dropping out, he has worked as a labourer with his father in building construction work. He is the first son in his family and has two younger brothers and one younger sister. His family have no land for agriculture. His mother is a housewife but sometimes she works as a labourer on a daily wage basis in her neighbours' farm. His parents are illiterate and they have never been to school to understand the reason for their son's dropping out.

Sumitra

Sumitra's early age marriage compelled her to terminate her education. She got married at the age of 14 because of family pressure, particularly by her mother and relatives. She could not confront the reasons of an early marriage with her peers and the teachers, so she decided to drop out from school. Her father committed suicide when she was four years old; therefore her mother has looked after her since then. She is from an extremely poor family and they have no land for agriculture and are living in a small cottage built on public land. Her mother earns money by hammering stones and screening sand at the bank of a river and selling it to the local market. She is one of four children in her family. Her elder sister had never been in school in her entire life. Her elder brother dropped out from school while he was studying in year nine and went to India to earn money to support his family. She left school when her mother decided to arrange a marriage for her. However, Sumitra used to go to school regularly and she was good in her studies because she had never failed from grade one to grade six. She never wanted to stay at home, even if her illiterate mother sometimes requested her to. She always appeals to her mother not to keep her at home and to let her go to school.

Dipu

Dipu is a recently dropped out student of a Hill Dalit community. He was good in his studies because he had never failed in any of the exams. He is living with his grandparents since his parents had begun their second marriage and went away from home. His illiterate parents left him at the age of four and since then, he has not received any support from them. Now, he is 14 years old and is living with his grandparents in a small cottage constructed on public land near the jungle because they are landless (*Sukumbasi*). They are maintaining their life through the wages of his grandparents who do labouring work on a daily basis in their village. They are also farming a piece of land of their neighbours, from which they get 50% of its production (the system is called *Adhiya).* Although his grandparents wanted him to continue with his education up to year 10, he decided to drop out from school when he was at the end of year six. After dropping out, he grazes animals for his neighbours. Though he is still young, his grandparents were planning to send him to India for employment and earning for their support.

I will now summarize the data obtained through the interviews with these children. The major themes emerged from the children's interviews were: pedagogical environment;

language; teachers' attitudes and behaviour, student dropout, caste tradition and culture and family environments.

7.1 Pedagogical Environment

In the research location, the weather is very hot almost all round the year except for two months in winter, which demands a ceiling fan for cooling purposes but there is no such facility available in each classroom, which has made it difficult to sit and learn in a very hot classroom environment. Surya expressed strong dissatisfaction towards the school management.

> *"Though they have collected RS 80 from each student, there is no fan in the lower level classes" (Surya: dropped out student, Madhesi Dalit).*

Similarly, an adequate space is important for learning but due to the lack of physical space, students are compelled to sit in a big crowd, which is inconvenient. For example, a year ten student shared his experience of year nine as:

> *"In a small room there were 90 students, so it was very difficult to adjust. There were lots of students that were admitted in a class which made us unable to write because it's too crowded" (Trilochan: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).*

Apart from the physical space, students have a problem with exposure to new technology. Anibha was very excited and eagerly waiting to touch a computer for the first time in her life.

> *"Till now, I have never touched a computer but after three days, I am going to touch it for the first time in my life" (Anibha: Madhesi Dalit student).*

Not only are there concerns about the new technology, the children have to study in an extremely under-resourced teaching and learning environment:

> *"There are no adequate desks or benches and there is no proper management of educational materials. For example, in the English listening class, there is no tape recorder or other equipment to listen" (Trilochan: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).*

Apart from the above, there is a culture in Nepal that to keep the students in discipline, students are generally given physical or mental punishments by their teachers. The punishment is often taken positively by the guardian and students. The punishments are given to them especially when the students do not answer the questions asked by their teachers and if they do not do their homework assigned to them.

> *"If a student could not answer the questions that were asked by their teachers, they beat the students" (Anibha: Madhesi Dalit student).*

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In this regard, Suntali, a Hill Dalit student responded like this:

> *"If we don't answer the questions then obviously we get beaten by the teachers. Sometimes as a punishment, they tell us to make our body into a shape of poultry (murga), sometimes they hit us on our palms using a stick and madam slaps us across our faces sometimes".*

The punishment culture and its perception have also been explained in parents' views in chapter 6 as well. However, punishments may not always have a positive impact on children's education.

7.2 Language

Nepali is the medium of teaching and learning in public schools in Nepal, which is the second language of Madhesi communities. The following comments revealed that Madhesi Dalit students face some difficulty in communication, interaction and understanding of their lessons in the classroom:

> *"I find speaking Nepali a bit difficult, but not that difficult for understanding but some words in Nepali are difficult. Sometimes, it is difficult for me to understand but I can understand most of these words"* (Anibha: Madhesi Dalit student).

> *"For me it's a bit difficult to talk and discuss in the classroom"* (Trilochan: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).

> *"It is not that difficult to understand Nepali but it's a bit difficult to speak in Nepali"* (Sarala: regular student, Madhesi Dalits).

In addition to this, the comment below also indicates that the language has made it difficult for them in writing in some subjects.

> *"I ask more questions in Population, Education and Social Science subjects because I feel bored when it comes to these subjects. I have less motivation in these subjects because there are long answer questions. It's a bit difficult for me because it has to be written more in Nepali"* (Trilochan: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).

Another Madhesi Dalit student (Jitendra) shared his language difficulties like this:

> *"At home, we talk in Awadhi because Nepali is a bit difficult. I have some problems with Nepali. I have not asked any question till now (Year 8 student) because I am not good at speaking in Nepali. I feel ashamed while asking questions so I don't ask any questions. I have a fear of failing in Nepali".*

Most of the Madhesi Dalit students shared that speaking Nepali is more difficult than understanding and writing it. In this way, Madhesi Dalit children are affected by the language used in teaching and learning processes. However, none of the Hill Dalit children reported language difficulties for them as they speak the same language at home and in

school. Therefore, the medium of language used in the learning process is an incentive to the Hill Dalits compared to the Madhesi Dalit children.

7. 3 Teachers' Attitudes and Behaviour

Although treating their students equally is the general responsibility of each teacher, some Dalit children have had different experiences with some teachers.

> *"While the teachers are teaching, they always focus on the high achieving students (tatha bidhyarthi) and pay more attention towards them. They ignore low achieving students (kamjor bidhyarthy) and pay less attention towards them or show indifferent behaviour. I did not like this type of teachers' behaviour at all. For example, the teachers respond immediately and happily while the question is asked by high achieving students but they used to show either indifferent behaviour (nasunejhai garchhan) or dominating behaviour while asking questions by low achieving students" (Sumitra: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).*

Regarding the issue of teacher's unequal treatment, she gave a specific example -

> *"Teachers behaved unequally for example Purna sir (name changed) gives more attention to the first, second and third ranking students but for others, he used to say you don't listen carefully and gives less attention while teaching".*

Interestingly, the best performing student (who has been ranked first in his class for five years in a row) also made similar comments, which confirm the findings further.

> *"Some teachers used to respond to students' questions rapidly and happily if asked by a good performing student and show indifferent behaviour when asked by the low performing students. So teachers cannot show equal behaviour towards all of the students" (Trilochan: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).*

Moreover, students have also made a few comments on their teachers' other behaviour, such as punctuality in the classroom:

> *"Sometimes teachers come late in class and I don't like this. For example, Kamal Sir (name changed) often comes late in class. He does not come immediately after the bell rings" (Suntali: regular student, Hill Dalit).*

> *"A few of the teachers (kohi kohi sir haru) sometimes come late in my class" (Anibha: Madhesi Dalit sudent).*

Apart from this, some teachers are not confident in teaching their subjects, which has raised the quality in teaching. For example:

> *"Some teachers do not answer the questions that are being asked by the students. They say I will give the answer tomorrow but they don't. I don't like this" (Sarala: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).*

Regarding the teacher-student relationships, I asked the following question -

Which teacher do you like the most and why?

One of the Hill Dalit students replied:

> *"Raju Sir (name changed) loves me the most because he advises me about my studies and about my future and gives me homework" (Tekendra: regular student, Hill Dalit).*

This indicates that a Dalit student receives more care, encouragements and support from Dalit teachers because Raju is from a Dalit community.

In this way, both Hill and Madhesi Dalits students noticed and raised questions on their teachers' professionalism although; most teachers have no such problems.

7.4 Students Dropout

Some Dalit students end their studies due to failing the final exam. For example, Surya was compelled to leave his education, mainly due to failing in the final examination in grade six.

> *"When I paid the exam fee, the teacher said that you've failed. Then, I did not go to school. This was a shame for me. They did not call my name during attendance, so, I asked Aaitabari sir, no one asked me to come to the school, so I left" (Surya: dropped out student, Madhesi Dalit).*

Similarly, carelessness in doing homework assigned to the students may be one of the reasons for school dropout. If the students do not do their homework, they usually get punished by their teachers, which can be seen in the Dipu's interview.

> *"I left the school without any reason, without any reason (tyasai). I have no interest about my studies".*

> *"In school, Sir /Madam used to really like me and care about me when I used to do my homework, if not they used to beat me".*

In this way, punishments to the students are closely related to homework done or not done by the students, which consequently contributed to school dropout.

On another occasion, when I asked him-

Do you want to continue with your education if you could get good financial support?

He replied:

"In fact I dropped out from school because of my own reasons; therefore I don't have any wish to go back to school again, even with whatever support I would get" (Dipu: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).

Here, it seems that he is not interested to continue with his education.

In addition to the above, some Dalit students have discipline problems. A Madhesi Dalit student (Trilochan) expressed a general view about the Dalit students like this:

"Some students don't have any prestige because they don't study. A few students don't even stay in the classroom when the teachers are teaching".

In this way, some students have discipline problems where they ignore their teachers who are teaching in the classroom, some are low achievers and some have difficulties in doing homework, which all contribute to pushing the students out of schools.

7.5 Caste, Tradition and Culture

The following comments reveal that, to some extent, there is still a problem of caste based practices among the teachers' community, particularly in the older generation. A Hill Dalit student (Tilak) shared his own experiences of discriminatory acts of some teachers:

"There is no caste-based discrimination among the students, sirs, and new generation miss but one or two old madams have such feelings. For example, in a farewell party of grade ten students, one or two madams went home without eating because of the fear of the food touched by we Dalits".

In this regard, Sumitra had also shared her own experience about the incident in a picnic programme.

"Some teachers used to go away while eating food because of the fear of touching me which I think is a bad treatment to the Dalits. But, I have no particular experience within the school premises in this regard" (Sumitra: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).

In addition to the caste matter, due to the traditional culture of early marriage, many girls are hindered from access to educational opportunities. For instance, Sumitra could not continue her final exam at grade seven, which was a bad day for her in which she stopped going to school.

"I was married when I was in grade 7. At that time, instead of taking the final exam, I was compelled to leave school without completion of that exam" (Sumitra: dropped out student, Hill Dalits).

There are different forms, ways and belief systems about marriage culture in different Dalit communities. Regarding the marriage of females, the Madhesi Dalit community have their

own beliefs and traditions, which has further hampered the education of girls from the Madhesi community. How Anibha reacts about their traditions and culture:

> *"Most people in Deshi community (madhesi people) think that when a girl has grown up, it would be difficult for her to get married because people suspect that there is something wrong with that girl and they still believe that educated people are bad in their characters".*

> *"Due to the culture of early marriage, our castes do not allow us to carry on with further level of education".*

In addition to this, due to the patriarchal society, it is not easily digestible that the level of education of a wife is higher than her husband which is clearly reflected in the following comments:

> *"There is a conception in our Madhesi society that if the husband's level of study is lower than the wife's, there is a chance of female domination" (Anibha: Madhesi Dalit student).*

Female domination in a family is considered against the culture established in Nepalese society. Due to this type of traditional belief, after marriage, attempting to go to school in the families of some Madhesi Dalit seems very difficult. For instance:

> *"My In-laws and my husband beat me very badly while I was requesting them to allow me to go to school and attend my final examination" (Anibha: Madhesi Dalit student).*

Regarding the education of girls, I asked Trilochan, a Madhesi Dalit student: Why did your sisters not study in school at all?

He replied:

> *"There was orthodoxy that if girls go to school, village people demoralize them by saying that they will go to or go with the boys. So if they stay at home, they will have fear from their parents and they won't behave badly (bigradainan)".*

Regarding early marriage, Sarala also has been facing a similar problem, but she is determined not to get married at an early age and she is quite aware that after marriage, she cannot continue her education, and she said:

> *"When I finish year 10, I will then get married. My sisters got married at a very early age therefore they could not get educated at all because they had to go to their husbands' home" (Sarala:regular student, Madhesi Dalit).*

In this way, the comments above revealed that early marriage is one of the main barriers for the educational access of Dalit communities in general and Madhesi Dalit communities

in particular. The strong traditional belief systems in Madhesi Dalit communities are the main obstacles for accessing educational opportunities, particularly for the girls. The above data also indicates that the Madhesi Dalits seem to be more conservative in following their traditions and culture.

7.6 Family Environments

Economic poverty is seen in the families of many Dalit children and as a result, they are compelled to engage in earning activities to support their family instead of focusing their attention on their studies. In this regard, Sumitra thinks one of the reasons for her poor performance in education was her family poverty.

> *"At home, I had to spend most of the time in earning rather than in studying and as a result, my educational performance became low. For example I had to engage in earning activities in weekends and holidays to maintain our family life. I used to work often with my mother together in the bank of the Badhganga River" (Sumitra: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).*

Many Dalit children have to perform a lot of chores at home along with their education which may lower their concentration on their studies. For example:

> *"I have to do a lot of work at home; therefore I have no time to study" (Tekendra: regular student, Hill Dalit).*

When I asked a question- what do you do at home?

He replied:

> *"I cook food such as rice, vegetables; cut grasses for livestock; graze livestock and also help in farming".*

When they start earning, their parents encourage them to earn money rather than encouraging them in education.

> *"My grandmother knows how much I earn from my work because she takes my wages; I graze 3 buffaloes of someone else's. I take care of three buffaloes every day" (Dipu: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).*

Surya also engages in earning activities:

> *"I do labouring work at the place of building construction. Nowadays, I do labouring work along with my father at Bodgaun" (Surya: dropped out student, Madhesi Dalit).*

In addition to doing domestic tasks and engaging in earning income, some Dalit students have to take care of their siblings, which prevents them from being regular in school. When I asked, are you going to school regularly? A Hill Dalit student (Shilpa) replied:

> *"I go to school on each alternate day. My parents told me to take care of my brother and sister. (They are 3-4 years old.). One day my sister takes care of them and the other day I do".*

Some Dalit children are unfortunately unable to get love and care from their parents because both the parents made a second marriage and left their children. This situation may hurt them and develop a feeling of frustration and unhappiness in them. Dipu shared his own feelings like this:

> *"When I see my friends walking together with their parents, it makes me think how good would it be if I could have been together with my parents. Sometimes, I feel very unhappy not being together with my parents" (Dipu: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).*

Similarly, some Dalit children have to face the problems created by their parents. For example, although Tekendra is a well performing student in his class, he has to confront a lot of problems in his family and expressed his frustrations and worries as follows:

> *"Though I am interested in my studies, I have less interest now because my father does not earn money. These days, he has stopped going to the Rice Mill and instead he is continuously drinking alcohol every day. When he drinks alcohol, he goes away from home at any time even at night too. Sometimes he sleeps in the jungle, he talks with him-self, does not come back home and day before yesterday, he fell down into a pit of a Crasher Mill" (Tekendra: regular student, Hill Dalit).*

Like Tekendra, Dipu has to face the problem of his family breakdown and as a result, he is living with his grandparents and they are taking care of him.

> *"Father married again with someone and went away and mother also married again with someone and went away as well. I am living with my grandparents" (Dipu: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).*

Not only that, although he is living with his grandparents, he is very worried about the misuse of money earned by his grandfather.

> *"My grandfather earns a lot of money but he finishes most of it by drinking alcohol" (Dipu: dropped out student, Hill Dalit).*

Moreover, a Madhesi Dalit student expressed his difficulties and said that even during the time of the 'National Board Exam' they had to perform several activities at home instead of focussing on preparing for their exam. For example:

"Because of my SLC exam this year, I don't do anything else except take care of oxen, bringing grass to them, feeding them and go to harvest paddy on holidays"(Trilochan: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).

As with Trilochan, Sarala is a candidate to take the National Board Exam (SLC) in the immediate future; but she is also experiencing a similar situation at home and she is performing a lot of domestic chores:

"I cook food for the family members, clean the pots and wash clothes of my parents and sisters" (Sarala: regular student, Madhesi Dalit).

In this way, on the one hand they are struggling with their family poverty at home, on the other hand, despite the government's 'free education policy and scholarship provision for all Dalits', they still have to pay school fees and some of them have not received scholarships. For example, a Dalit student said, "I have been paying tuition fees from grade 6" (now in grade 9). Regarding scholarships a Dalit student commented, "I only got a scholarship at grade 3, after that I haven't got any scholarchip" (now in grade 9). Similarly, another Dalit student commented, "I haven't got a scholarship from grade 7 to grade 10".

However, due to the economic poverty, Dalit children have to do a lot of work at home or engage in earning activities beyond their studies in school. Some Dalit students do not get proper love and care from their parents and some parents show bad behaviour (alcoholic), which affects children's education directly or indirectly. In addition to this, school related expenses added an additional burden to them in the face of poverty.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has explained the Dalit children's experiences of their education from the point of view of their families. In particular, it has illustrated their difficulties at school and home while pursuing secondary level education. They have to face numerous difficulties related to their traditional culture and belief system that affect their educational access. Dalit girls in particular are compelled to leave their education due to their early marriage culture. Moreover, they also have to perform a lot of domestic tasks, sibling care, and farming activities along with their education. Some of them are also involved in earning activities to support their family, as some of the parents believe less in the educational achievements of their children.

The findings presented in this chapter reveal that these students are often compelled to study in an under-resourced school environment. In the school context, Dalit children in general have less interaction and communication with their teachers, which demonstrates

the relationship gap between the students and teachers. Madhesi students in particular have to face language difficulties in the classroom, as their mother language is different from the language used in teaching and learning processes. Due to the language difficulties, Madhesi students sometimes have to face ambivalent situations in the classroom. Dalit students have made some complaints about their teachers' behaviour and attitudes, such as their inequitable treatment in the classroom, as they give positive and quick responses to the high achieving students and indifferent reactions to the low achieving students, through which they are affected. Some students also noticed that one or two older generation teachers do not have positive attitudes about caste, which is reflected when they were not willing to participate in the farewell party and picnic programme. Some students also noticed the teacher's poor punctuality in the classroom, although this is the case with one or two individual teachers. Some Dalit students are compelled to terminate their education due to their low educational performance as they could not pass the final exam. In conclusion, early marriage; homework difficulties; heavy workload due to family poverty; adverse family/ neighbourhood environment; and low educational performance are the factors that are affecting the educational access, participation and progress of Dalit students at secondary level.

The next chapter draws the evidence presented in Chapter 4, 5, 6, 7 together in order to address my research questions. The explanation is made in respect to the three major themes which have emerged from these four chapters. In developing this analysis I link my findings to the literature I reviewed in Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter Eight: Discussions of the Findings

In the previous four chapters, I presented data obtained through interviews with various stakeholders and from documentary analysis. Now, in this chapter, I discuss these findings and the challenges related to the education of Dalit students. More specifically, I analyse factors that act as barriers to educational access, participation and progress and also analyse the experiences of and views on education in the Dalit community. First, I revisit my initial research questions.

Returning to the agenda

When I started my inquiry, my research questions were:

1. What are the experiences of and views on education in the Dalit community?

2. What are the barriers preventing the educational progress of Dalit students in Nepal?

3. What can be done to improve the situation?

This chapter addresses the first two empirical questions, while the third question will be tackled in Chapter 10.

This chapter is organized around findings relating to Question 2. In answering Question 2, I draw also on data collected in response to Question 1. So to answering these questions the chapter is organised in three main sections, which emerged from the analysis of the findings. In the first section, I discuss government policies, noting how they have not contributed as expected to improving the educational provision for Dalit children. In the second section, I discuss community attitudes and factors in the community environment that are less supportive of the educational progress of Dalit children. In the third section, I focus on school related factors that are less supportive of the education of Dalit children.

Before starting my discussions, I would like to remind the reader about the historical exclusion of Dalits, which was explained in Chapter 2. Before 1950, Dalits had no access to education at all. It was only after the dawn of Democracy in Nepal in 1951 that they had access to schooling for the first time. Particularly, since 1990, the government has been trying to make Nepalese society fairer and more inclusive. In this connection, the state has developed a number of policies in favour of Dalits' inclusion in education, which have been explained in Chapters 2 and 4; but in practice, there is no simple way to bring this about. Although their access has been gradually improving, they have had to overcome many hurdles on the way. The findings suggest that these hurdles are largely associated with policy, the Dalit community itself, and school practices.

8.1 Understanding Policy Barriers

This section argues that education policies have not contributed sufficiently to the inclusion of Dalit children in schooling. The discussion is based largely on an analysis of policy documents related to the Dalit community and on the views of the policymakers which were presented in Chapter 4. However, the experience of teachers, parents and students is also considered where this seems relevant. When we look at barriers and the policies, the main problem for educational inclusion seems to be the 'implementation gap', as explained in the findings chapters. Therefore, I begin the discussion with the implementation gap.

8.1.1 From Policy to Practice: the Implementation Gap

The discussion starts from the lack of resources/financial difficulties to support the implementation of the free education policy. It then moves towards the problems associated with scholarships; employment opportunities; language difficulties and assessment system.

A series of policies explained in Chapter 4 seem to show a clear commitment to fostering greater equity and participation in the education system. These policies include many good ideas, but as I spoke to people I began to realize some of the reasons why they are not being effectively implemented. In particular, Dalit law/policy makers have argued that although political parties in Nepal have given high priority to education, with several commitments to improving this sector, there remain doubts about how they will fulfil these commitments (see Chapter 4). For example, regarding educational rights, the Interim Constitution 2007 provided that every citizen shall have the right to receive free education from the state up to secondary level, but this is far from being achieved even after more than 5 years[5]. Free education for all Dalit students up to secondary level is particularly emphasized in a series of laws/policy/programme documents (Chapters 2 and 4), but due to inadequate financial support from the government, schools have found it difficult to make this happen, as explained in Chapters 5 and 6. Importantly, although one of the strategies of the National Dalit Commission is to monitor to ensure the provision of free education for all Dalits, this is not effective either.

Despite the free education policy, schools are collecting registration fees and examination fees from all Dalit students. The amount of registration and examination fees is larger than

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[5] This is calculated until the time of data collection 2011/2012.

the amount they receive as Dalit scholarships. So in this context the policy of providing Dalit scholarships does not make a practical impact, but is merely political rhetoric. One of the reasons behind collecting money from the students is the inadequate supply of teachers from the government. It was found that in many cases, the school management committee (SMC) uses this collected money to provide salaries for additional teachers who are locally recruited on a temporary basis, as more than 50% of teachers are on temporary contracts (see Chapter 3). Such teachers are sometimes compelled to teach on half salary; one can easily imagine teachers' poor motivation to impart quality education in this situation. Nevertheless, this so-called free education is not free for poor families, because the system only waives monthly tuition fees and provides basic text books to the students; the scholarship includes a small amount of money which is not enough to cover the cost of school uniforms or food or stationery. The family also has to bear the opportunity cost of schooling their children. In other words, it does not compensate for lost labour to these families.

However, scholarship provision has contributed towards increased student enrolment; but it is still hard to say to what extent this provision contributes to the retention of the Dalit students at school. Thus, without providing adequate resources and support, giving an equitable education to the Dalits is hard to achieve. This limitation does not allow the state to provide equitable education to the poor people as defined by OECD (2008); simply put, the government is failing its citizens.

There is, as explained in Chapters 4 and 5, a strong view amongst policy makers and school teachers (both Dalit and Non-Dalit) that not all Dalits require scholarship support, because some can afford the expenses required for their children's education themselves. However, the government policy says scholarship money should be given to all Dalits regardless of need. Providing scholarships to those who are not in need seems irrational; instead the scholarship money could be increased by the same amount for poor Dalits, which would be more equitable and rational. This means that policy makers and school teachers should recognize that Dalits are not all homogenous in terms of their economic conditions. Nevertheless, scholarship policy has not been a debate-free policy because there are a number of gaps in its clarity. For example, there is a debate about whether scholarships should be based on social exclusion, economic need or merit (Vaux *et al.*, 2006, p14). Thus, the scholarships for 'all Dalits' have caused controversy, because they are based on caste rather than people's economic conditions and needs. Providing financial support to poor people, no matter whether lower caste or higher caste, would be more

equitable for educational access, because the country is looking to promote a fairer society. Therefore, the policy should address fairness for each disadvantaged group.

Policy documents make a strong commitment to monitoring the impact of Dalits' scholarships (see Chapter 4, p97), but the practice does not indicate that a viable monitoring system is in place, because some Dalit children have not received the scholarship money yet, which may be either due to the opaque distribution system or due to them missing the registration process for the scholarships in school.

The most important and critical point is that the support given for the education of Dalit children is not properly utilized for its intended purpose, as reported by several policymakers, teachers and parents (see Chapters 4, 5, and 6). In this situation, a Dalit lawmaker strongly suggested that cash should not be given to the parents (see Chapter 4, p 101); instead, school uniform and stationery, food, and hostel facilities should be provided by schools, to ensure the money was spent appropriately.

The scholarship provision for 10% of students in private schools allocated for Dalit, Madhesi, and conflict affected families, is a good idea. However, the process of obtaining this opportunity is quite complicated and unfair to the Dalits, as reported by the chairperson of the National Dalit Commission in Chapter 4, p104. Dalits cannot present their claims strongly in front of the principal and school management because this requires personal skills that are beyond the capacity of most Dalits in their current socio-psychological conditions. In this context, the scholarships are less likely to be obtained by Dalit students. As a result, other, non-Dalit groups gain more benefit from this provision compared to Dalits.

Similarly, the quota reserved for Dalits in higher education is much more complicated and is not straightforward to access, demanding a series of journeys to and from the capital city, which is beyond the capacity of poor Dalits scattered all over the country, as explained by a law maker in Chapter 4, p102. In this situation, making the application process possible at district level would be a more convenient and practical solution for poor Dalits. Nevertheless, providing inclusive education requires an equitable distribution of resources and support.

The priority for employment opportunities in the teaching profession for the Dalit community is important and appreciated. The tenth plan (2002-2007) document says that the participation of Dalit communities in education centres will be increased by appointing Dalit females, if available; and where they are not available, other male members from that

community will be appointed to school teaching posts. However, this policy is not implemented at all in the research location, because there was not a single Dalit female teacher appointed in these three schools, although there were many young female Dalits looking for teaching jobs. School teachers reported to me that there is no budget or vacant position available to recruit them. Although there is recognition in policies of the need of increasing the number of Dalit teachers, it was not practised in the research location at the time of data collection (2011/2012). The main principle behind the 'at least one Dalit teacher in each school' policy is that Dalit children can get more understanding, care and encouragement from a Dalit teacher and it is easier for them to interact and communicate with the children, as explained in Chapters 4 and 5. Another reason for making this policy may be that it will produce role models for the Dalit communities.

Moreover, educated unemployment is a crucial issue, as highlighted by all the policymakers, school teachers, Dalit parents and their children (see Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7). In general, the uncertain situation of employment opportunities, even after receiving education, is a big fear for Dalits, which can be one of the important factors in demotivating them in education. However, many Dalit parents shared their frustration that it is hard for their community to find jobs, although as noted a few elite Dalits (*tatha batha)* have better prospects. Furthermore, there is no equal access to Dalit related support. Some elite Dalits (*tatha batha*) may have benefited from Dalit related programmes/projects, but the poor Dalits are still excluded from access to information about such opportunities, as noted by several teachers and evidenced in Chapter 5, p119. In this context, the government should develop a policy to identify poor and marginalised people within the Dalit community and they should be provided with appropriate incentives/support.

Furthermore, the Interim Constitution 2007 provisioned that each community shall have the right to receive basic education in their 'mother tongue', as provided for in law; and each community residing in Nepal has the right to preserve and promote its own language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritage, but this policy exists only on paper. For example, none of the three schools included or started to teach in a mother language, although there is high ethnic diversity in the research location with mother tongues other than Nepali. We clearly saw in Chapter 7 that Madhesi Dalit children have to face language difficulty while participating and learning in the classroom. How Madhesi children are experiencing language difficulties is explained in detail in section three of this

chapter. Nevertheless, in the government's under-resourced situation, implementation of this policy is not easy.

In addition to the above gaps, there are some inadequacies in the policies; for example, some of the government policies intended to support the Dalit community have even affected them negatively. For example, some poverty reduction programmes (such as distribution of goats and pigs) launched in the Dalit community have negatively impacted the Dalit children's education. Although their purpose was to improve the economic situation of the family to support them, unfortunately, some Dalit children were compelled to take care of the livestock rather than going to school, as explained in Chapter 4, p102.

Moreover, it is seen that low achieving students will have few choices, so when they fail in a grade, they feel reluctant to continue their education in the same grade and they are not promoted either. Once they fail, there is no policy of re-examination except some options given in Grade 10 (SLC). In such a situation, there are no other options for them except to terminate their education. Several teachers reported in Chapter 5 that, among others, more Dalit students fall into this low achieving category. The appropriateness of education policies can therefore be questioned, due to the continuous termination of Dalit children without the completion of secondary level education. Consequently, they are deprived of access to educational opportunities.

Overall, this study has revealed that despite good policies to support Dalits, many of these policies remained untranslated into practice, some are inadequate, and others are irrelevant. The expected change in the education of Dalits, and other disadvantaged groups, could not be achieved. At this point, I am reminded of the South African case (Chapter 1), because there was a big gap between the policy and practice due to the lack of resources and commitment of the politicians, bureaucrats; and also some policies were irrelevant to their real life context.

In addition to the factors above, one of the important aspects of Dalit exclusion from access to quality education is the privatisation of public education, which is explained below.

8.1.2 Marketization of Education

Since the evolution of private schools in 1980, disparity in education has been widening in the country, as explained in Chapter 2, p62. Independent private schools are unaffordable for most of the Dalit population. In this context, the overwhelming majority of Dalits study

in public schools, which are the only accessible place for them. The quality of public education is considered poorer than that offered in the private schools in terms of two perspectives: the overall academic performance in private schools is significantly higher than in public schools in terms of examination results; and the medium of instruction in private schools is English, which is an additional advantage for further education in the globalized world. The School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination results (2013) show that private schools are more than three times better in terms of students' results and test scores than the public schools, as explained in Chapter 2, p60; but access to these private schools remains beyond the capacity of most of the Dalit children. Moreover, after graduation from public school, it may be difficult for them to compete with those who have graduated from the private schools, which works against inclusive education. Thus the divided (public and private) provision of secondary education is creating a huge gap and disparity between the education of the lower socio-economic classes and high and middle class students.

However, the reality is that due to the failure of the government to provide adequate schooling facilities, the privatization of educational facilities is increasing and expanding. In this context, making the school's education inclusive for all is more complex, ambiguous and challenging. In Nepal, as elsewhere in the world, the marketization of education has increased the number of private schools and accelerated withdrawal of many rich and middle-class students from publicly funded schools. Marketised education policy has created differences and stratification in education and has encouraged selection based on economic status. In this way, the emergence and expansion of private schooling has been working to maintain a new form of educational exclusion in the name of quality education.

Public school teachers in the research location also recognized that the education quality of public schools is lower than the private schools. This is shown by the fact that, surprisingly, all the public school teachers send their own children to private schools in the same locality (see Chapter 6, p147), where two private secondary boarding schools are operating. In this case, public school teachers are receiving considerable criticism from the local community and society in general. In this context, there should be great concern in the government about improving the quality of public education.

8.1.3 Impact of Non-education Policy

The policy implementation problem does not exist only in the education sector, but also in other sectors that affect the Dalit children's education. For example, legally, children below 14 years of age should not be allowed to work, but many Dalit children are sent to work when they are 10 years or above. Similarly, the national law (General Codes, 1963, 12th amendments, chapter 17, no.2) suggests that marriage between a boy and a girl is not permitted below 18 years of age (Nepal Law Commission, 2020*BS*). However, early marriage is heavily practiced in the area, for example, Anibha and Sumitra were compelled to marry at 14 years of age, which ultimately pushed them out of school and deprived them of access to educational opportunities (see Chapters 6 and 7). However, breaching the government laws and policies seems common. So the government passivity in enforcing existing laws and policies has contributed to Dalit exclusion in education. The main challenge of the early marriage system is its wide acceptance by the community and society. This indicates that the cultural tradition is more powerful than government laws and has prevented many young Madhesi Dalit children from gaining access to education. In this context, the government should actively work to implement policies by creating awareness in the community and monitoring implementations, but it has been turning a blind eye and remaining silent.

A similar situation is seen concerning caste discrimination and untouchability. For example, it has been more than 50 years since caste discrimination and untouchability were removed from the main Civil Code of Nepal, but it is still prevalent in Nepalese society. Thus, social rules are seen to be stronger than government laws and policies. If the society does not accept it, a law cannot work on its own. In such a situation, a change is required in people's attitudes, rather than changes only in the laws and policy, which are difficult to enforce. Therefore, this study argues that changes only in the laws/policies cannot be justified if the society is not aware of them, or does not accept them, and the state does not pay serious attention to implementing them. Indeed, policy as a text has no meaning, if it is not practised in the real world. However, the local socio-cultural complexities remain influential elements in implementing policies at school and community level.

8.1.4 Impact of Unstable National Politics

The impact of prolonged (about two decades) unstable national politics is visible at school level; as a result, the right candidates are less likely to be selected in the School Management Committee (SMC), with subsequent impacts on the monitoring of teaching

and learning in school and its management. The school management committee is not capable of managing teaching and learning processes, because several members of the committee from the local community have poor experience of education management and poor academic qualifications, but they may even chair the committee. As teachers and parents in informal talks shared with me, the selection of incapable and incompetent members in the SMC has often been seen. This is mainly due to political influence, as the political parties want to show their power rather than improve the teaching and learning in the school. In this context, the monitoring of teaching and learning processes is becoming weaker in public schools. In fact, SMC members are not well trained or qualified, and often have inadequate knowledge and understanding about how to deal with school related problems and create a good learning environment for children. Although all the above problems affect the whole of the school system and all the children, Dalits find it harder to cope, being the most disadvantaged community. Consequently, the problems associated with inadequate schooling affect the Dalit children more severely as they cannot get any academic support at home.

I came to know from the interviews with the teachers (Chapter 5) that due to politics, there is a lack of teamwork with the teacher community, and they are divided into different informal groups according to their political ideology and their affiliation to the national political parties. These groups remain politically active and sometimes challenge the school leadership and become less cooperative.

The crucial thing is that, due to the influence of power and politics, the best performers have less chance to be employed as school teachers, especially those who are recruited locally on a temporary basis. People at local level are clearly identified by their affiliation to the national level political parties and their ideology. Those political parties who are in power (central or local level) often influence local issues, such as teacher recruitment. They are often interested to recruit person 'X' or 'Y', whose political ideology is matched with their own, rather than selecting a competent and qualified person through a competitive selection process. As we saw in Chapter 3, more than 50% of teachers were temporary in each school. Although competent teachers are essential for quality teaching and creating a learning environment for learners from diverse backgrounds, including marginalized, vulnerable and poor communities and conflict affected societies (UNESCO, 2013, p3), still it is less likely that competent teachers would be selected.

In addition, the country's unstable political situation has impacted negatively in generating employment opportunities. As stated earlier, the lack of job opportunities seems a big

challenge for motivating Dalit children in education in Nepal. The prolonged instability of national politics is responsible for this, because there was no secure and favourable environment for investment in businesses and industries to create job opportunities for the young people.

8.1.5 Lack of Effective Community Participation

In Nepal, policy making is heavily influenced by foreign aid agencies, as explained in Chapter 2. Preparing policies in such a way raises doubts about addressing the real needs of people, securing their participation and assessing the available resources and capabilities for implementation of the new policies. One of the major components of EFA is considered to be the participation of local people in management, with this assumption of increasing local participation included in donor conditionality. As a result, the government has started to hand over public school management to the local community, which is confusing and contentious, not only among teachers but also among parents and community members (Poudel, 2007, p191). This reveals several inconsistencies among the aims, policy statements and practices regarding the inclusion of Dalits in education. Handing over the management to the community is a form of decentralisation; the decentralization itself is good for better management. Actually, decentralisation is seen as a present day fashion, a result of donor pressures and uncoordinated personal interests, perceptions and understanding of the issue (Parajuli, 2002, p96, cited in Poudel, 2007, p192). Nepal is receiving financial assistance from multinational donors, including the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, various United Nations agencies and several bilateral donors such as Denmark, Finland, Norway, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. However, since the 1980s the World Bank's ideological rationale has heavily influenced Nepalese education policy and practices (Poudel, 2007,p197). In fact, to understand the complexity of the decentralisation initiatives five things need to be analysed: work culture, accountability, information, resources and sustainability (Davies *et al.*, 2003), but this has not been done properly in Nepal, while handing over the school management to the local community. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 7, public schools are operating in an extremely under-resourced situation. The local management of schools is very weak and does not have sufficient power, and there are a number of questions of 'capabilities' and 'will' in the local community. Therefore, foreign ideas may not always fit the context. As we saw in a similar situation in South Africa, the education policies in the 1990s were excessively influenced by foreign ideas and were impractical for meeting real needs of local people (Napier, 2005, p83). Although

decentralisation was used in South Africa in the post-apartheid era to try to develop an accountable and democratically governed school system, there were few resources within the school. The changes made were 'top-down' and as a result, Matriculation results declined over several years and subsequently, all the changes made were unsuccessful, as explained in Chapter 1.

From the above discussion, it is confirmed that although government policies may be empowering in theory, implementation in the real world is very patchy. There is a huge gap between the policy and practices, despite international pressures for education as a human right; education for all; quality education for all children; equal opportunity for all children; inclusive education and so on. There are numerous legislation and policy initiatives that relate to the inclusion of Dalits, which we saw in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, but they have generally not brought the expected changes. Policy should not be only political rhetoric; rather it should be focused on bringing real benefits to the children. Actually national policies were made in a vacuum because there are not enough resources to support policy implementation. As a result, Dalit people seem frustrated with the government's commitments, as they are not implemented effectively. Policies seem quite ambitious and too idealistic, because they are politically motivated and not focused realistically on what could be resourced and implemented. Fewer policies for which there is universal agreement and which can be resourced and monitored would be better. However, in the government's under-resourced situation, providing equitable education for the Dalit communities is challenging, and the weak national economy makes this much more difficult to secure. Although EFA has a number of positive aspects for the inclusion of Dalits in education, the efforts towards equitable treatment in education have not been adequate and effective. However, only an equitable educational system can provide fairness and social justice for marginalised and disadvantaged groups, as explained in Chapter 1.

Overall, some policies are simply inappropriate, and even where policies are appropriate, they are not being properly resourced. Some policies are not implemented and even when being implemented, little has been done to educate people about why they should support the implementation of those policies. So there is a whole range of factors around the way policy is failing to move practice. Not least, after the initiation of private education, public education does not get priority. The State has become weak and is not accountable for the monitoring of teaching and learning process and policy implementation. An unstable political situation in the country has further affected the public school management. While

the situation is improving, education for some Dalit children is not improving fast enough, due to weak implementation of existing policies/programmes and inadequate resources.

A second major source of barriers lies in the community, and I discuss these in more detail below.

8.2 Understanding the Barriers Related to the Community Context

In this section, I report what seem to be the most important barriers emerging from a discussion of the wider Dalit community environment. The discussion focuses on how community related factors also prevent the progress of Dalit children's education. I deal mainly with the impact of the local culture and traditions that come from this group, how family poverty affects the educational progress of this community; how the parental awareness and expectations from education affect the children's education; and I also discuss how Dalit children face homework difficulties.

8.2.1 Local Culture and Traditions

One of the important community factors that impedes the education of Dalit children is the prevalence of an early marriage culture, which is transmitted from generation to generation. Girls are particularly affected because, after marriage, their education is often not supported by the family. Madhesi Dalit girls are affected even more than the Hill Dalit girls, due to their stronger belief in their tradition and culture. For example, Anibha (newly married) could not attend her final exam in year 7 because she was prevented by her own family. Her community's belief about early marriage (as explained in Chapters 6 and 7) means that parents often worry and suspect that they may not find a good husband for their daughter if they intend to marry late. This community also suspects that there may be some 'defects' in the girls if they are late in marrying. In addition, they have less trust that education can make the girls' behaviour better; rather they believe the opposite. Thus, this type of conservative thinking and belief system in the community is a challenge for educating Madhesi girls at secondary level or above.

Early marriage is not only found among Madhesi Dalits; there are some cases in Hill Dalit communities as well, but the reasons for it are different. One example is Sumitra's case which is explained in detail in Chapter 6. She was compelled to marry at the age of 14 while she was studying in year 7. After marriage, she felt shy because of her early marriage and stopped going to school, though her family was still supportive of continuing her education. In addition to early arranged marriage, there is an elopement culture among Hill

Dalit communities which is accepted by their community at some level. As described in Chapter 6, about 40% of girls marry through elopement in Gandharba families, which is often practised between the age of 13-15 or 16 and above. The main reason is that it saves parents the expenses of a wedding. However, after elopement, they often stop going to school. It is difficult to think about equitable education in the context of these cultural attitudes and the ingrained community environment. The data presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 consistently show that early marriage culture is dominant amongst Dalits, particularly in the Madhesi Dalit community, which is very strongly rooted in its cultural traditions.

After marriage, the role of a new spouse brings psychological stress and creates social identity and family responsibility which is not an encouragement to continue their education, which we saw in the case of Anibha. In this way, children, particularly girls, are trapped tightly in the chains of a traditional culture and belief system which limits educational access, participation and achievements. On the whole, the social acceptance of different forms of (early age /forced/elopement) marriage culture, which puts pressure on girls to leave school, is the main challenge for Dalit girls' inclusion in education. Nevertheless, although the parents arrange their children's marriage at an early age for a good reason, it has negatively affected their educational achievements.

Furthermore, in a male dominated society, it is not considered usual for the wife's level of education to be higher than the husband's; because of the fear of female domination (see Chapter 7). This perception is guiding the educational trajectory of Dalit girls. In a patriarchal society, there is a saying that female domination is unusual (*pothy baseko suhaudaina*) and is not easily accepted by the society generally; although gradual improvements can be seen. In this connection, male dominated Nepali society is less supportive of the welfare of females. The disparity in access to quality education by gender is alarming, as evidenced in the data obtained from parents' interviews in Chapter 6. For example, due to the 'son preference' culture, the school selection for their children is based on gender: private schools for boys and public schools for girls, which is against the spirit of inclusive education.

In addition to the above, due to the cultural taboo, some Madhesi girls are deprived from participating in educational tour programmes freely, even if they are in school (Chapter 5, p111). Moreover, some people in the Madhesi community take it as a status issue and demoralize those families who have sent their grown up daughters to school, as we clearly saw in Chapters 6 (p138) and 7 (p158). In this way, the deeply rooted cultural attitudes and

belief systems towards women have made it hard for girls, which has an adverse impact on the education of large numbers of Dalit girls in Nepal.

Nevertheless, let us draw some differences between the Hill and Madhesi Dalit groups: elopement culture is prevalent in the Hill Dalit community, which is rarely seen in the Madhesi Dalits. The Madhesi Dalit community seem more conservative than the Hill Dalit community in terms of educating their daughters. From a cultural perspective, Madhesi Dalit children have suffered more than Hill Dalits regarding access and participation in education. After marriage, continuing education is more difficult for Madhesi Dalit girls compared to Hill Dalits. For example, in Anibha's case, when she tried to attend her final exam she was beaten very badly by her parents-in-law and her husband (Chapter 7, p158). On the other hand, Sumitra (Hill Dalit) was permitted to continue her education even after marriage, although she did not continue because of other reasons. There are some differences in gender attitudes which are dominant among Madhesi Dalits; for example, when girls do participate in education, they do so in a much a more restricted manner than boys. But the girls from the Hill Dalit community have more freedom in this regard. However, some Madhesi Dalits have now started to think about educating their daughters up to year ten, because they learnt from the Hill community people who allow their daughters to attend school without any hesitation. Now, some Madhesi Dalit girls are taking the initiative themselves to motivate their parents to continue their education, which we saw in the case of Sarala who determined to marry after grade 10 pass (Chapter 7).

Moreover, due to the presence of out of school children in Dalit communities, they have a negative effect on schooled children, and as a result some Dalit children left school before the completion of their current cycle of education and instead they just play in the village with non-schooled children. So, there is an effect of the neighbourhood environment on educational success or failure of children. For example, Dipu's continuous association with unschooled children led him not to do his homework and gradually increased his unwillingness to study and ultimately caused him to drop out and consequently become a buffalo herdsman like his non-schooled friends who are older than him (Chapter 6). One other reason for his dropping out may be the lack of strong family support and encouragement at home. Moreover, teachers also noticed that some Dalit children were found to be drug addicted, due to association with friends who were bad influences, which made them less disciplined in school (see Chapter 5). In addition, we also saw in Chapter 6, p117 that some parents send their children out begging rather than sending them to school, as singing and begging is their culture, particularly in the Gandharbha families.

Thus the analysis of several cultural aspects of the Dalit community, reminded me of the Maori in New Zealand. Education offers them a way to be much better off and bring them out from adversity, but they do not see things that way because they often place greater value on their own traditions and culture. Similarly, Dalits say we want to be better integrated, we want to have the same opportunities, but they rarely think they should give up their deep rooted culture and tradition and the Dalit mind-set. This Dalit thinking is very similar to Maoris in New Zealand, because it is not possible to be fully integrated while keeping the tradition and culture intact. This means that they need to change. However, this is an area where we need more research.

8.2.2 Poverty

Although agriculture is the main source of their livelihood in the area, most of the Dalits do not have their own land for farming; those who do, have very little, which is inadequate to feed their family members. Interview data showed that Dalits are struggling throughout the year for their survival and have poor quality of life (Chapters 5 and 6). They have insufficient regular income to meet their daily expenses. The family poverty compelled these children to work at home, in agriculture/livestock farming, taking care of siblings rather than giving their attention to their studies. It is a bitter truth that in a poor family situation, children cannot give adequate time to study at home because their parents must go to work to earn a living. If the parents go to work, children can have food to eat in the evening, but if the parents stay at home, children may not get any food to eat. In this context, some children are compelled to remain at home to look after their siblings instead of going to school (Chapters 4, 5 and 7). Some parents have exported their children to foreign countries to work instead of educating them; for example, we saw in Chapter 5, p 119 that Rita sent her son to India while he was studying in grade nine.

In fact, the lifestyle of the Dalit community in these areas demonstrates their poverty, as they are living in cottages, or unbricked or partially bricked houses, with no drinking water or toilet facilities at home (Chapter 6, p129). Moreover, most of the Dalits live a hand- to-mouth existence. Most people in this community do not have resources to fall back on; therefore their life is a constant battle. In such a situation, earning an income is more important for them than anything else.

Although some Dalit children suffer more than others, most people in Dalit communities have few choices for their life. Therefore, money matters more to the parents than their children's education. Some Dalits cannot afford the cost of schooling; although the tuition

fee is free for them, they have to pay registration fees, examination fees and stationery costs as direct costs, and the opportunity cost of schooling as an indirect cost, where the family has to lose the income their children could generate if they were not in school. In this way, the expectation of opportunity cost of schooling is also associated with poverty (Ashby, 1985, p69). As explained in Chapter 6, when the children reach secondary level, their parents readily compromise the children's education for the income they can generate. Thus the tendency of taking children as a source of income at a very early age is a challenge to Dalit inclusion in education. The lack of immediate benefit also reduces their desire for education, as most Dalits do not gain any tangible economic gains from their education. The returns from schooling require several years of engagement outside the household economy, which makes poor households reluctant to send their children to school (KC, 2007, p287). Dalits often see their schooling in terms of employment opportunity, which is rarely available in the current situation in Nepal. Nevertheless, the children from higher income and better educated households are more likely to complete all levels of schooling than poorer children (World Bank, 2007, p7). Few Dalit parents in the rural community received any long term quality education and they are also among the poorest groups in Nepal. In this context, some parents willingly sacrifice their children's education for the income they can generate. They are consequently less likely to complete secondary level education. In this way, many of the barriers are rooted in the country's widespread rural poverty, but full reduction of poverty can come only through national economic growth (Shrestha *et al*., 1986, p521), which is weak.

It is widely accepted that poverty is one of the factors leading to poor educational outcomes internationally (Raffo *et al*., 2009, p341; Save the Children, 2012). Educating children from economically deprived communities is therefore a great challenge, because they have to face different hurdles in their daily lives (Giorgis, 2006, p5). Inequities often hamper the educational achievements of people from lower socio-economic backgrounds (OECD, 2012, p13). Thus Dalits' poor family situations contribute to poor educational performance, as reported by school teachers in Chapter 5. If we examine the South African case, inequalities in a society, lack of access to basic services and poverty are factors that lead to children being at risk, contributing to learning breakdown and exclusion (UNESCO, 2003, p9). This echoes the similar situation that exists in the lives of most of the Dalits in Nepal.

Despite all these hardships and a demanding work schedule, some children do finish school, acquire qualifications and go on to obtain work. However, there is a perception that

this still does not benefit them as much as it should, because there are institutionalised prejudices in the work place amongst other members of the community. A Dalit teacher explained in Chapter 5 that there is a problem of social recognition of their educational achievements in the workplace. So the Dalits' current low motivation in education depends not only on the current unfavourable job market and their poverty, but is also linked to the likely future situation within the job. Most importantly, this makes it very hard for them to progress if only a very few have a job. In this context, they have a perception that education does not deliver much for Dalits, because they still face prejudice in the work place.

8.2.3 Parental Awareness and Expectations from Education

Data in previous chapters demonstrate that parental awareness of the value of education seems quite low, due to various reasons. The most important one is illiteracy. As we saw in Chapter 6, most of the Dalit parents in the research location are illiterate, which did not allow them to provide educational guidance for their children. It also reduces their interest in education, as they know little about schooling. Low levels of educational awareness and interest among parents is a contributing factor to irregularity of school attendance, failure to submit homework and dropping out from school of their children.

Some Dalit parents see no value in spending money on children's education (Chapter 5, p 112). They are often reluctant to invest even small sums in their children's education, because they often ignore the future benefits of schooling versus the upfront cost. Moreover, the government investment (scholarships) hardly reaches supporting children's education, because some parents spend this money to fulfil their own needs. They often do not use their earnings in the right place and misuse their own earnings too (Chapters 5 and 6). All these parents' behaviours are heavily influenced by their own lack of education, which is one of the major barriers to their children's educational progress.

The data presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 also revealed that the value of education to most people in the Dalit community is confined to living rather than for life. Dalits' aim in education seems either to be able to read and write, or to be employed for a living. Although they take education as a tool for employment it is rarely available, and as we saw in Chapter 2, about half a million people go to foreign countries for employment each year. The data obtained from the Dalit parents highlight that even if job vacancies are available in the country, there is huge competition, which they think is beyond their access and capacity (Chapter 6). It is important to note that insecurity of employment opportunity in

the country is a great fear or frustration which is a probable contributor to Dalits' demotivation in education. Therefore, the weak job market in the country remains a great threat to retention of Dalit children in secondary or higher levels of education. If we look back to Chapter 1, a study conducted in the Northern part of India (bordering Kapilvastu district) has shown that due to the poor employment prospects, Dalit parents are beginning to withdraw from investing money in young men's education (Jeffrey *et al*., 2004, p963). The caste systems in Nepal and India are similar and the same situation can be observed in Nepal. For the same reasons some Dalit parents refused to invest even a little money in their children's education, as reported by the teachers in Chapter 5.

More generally, Dalit parents in the areas have very low expectations for their children. As one head teacher asserted in Chapter 5: 'Dalits usually say we are not going to be a doctor or an engineer, therefore as long as we are able to read and write, it is enough for us, so we don't want to educate our children any more'. Similarly, in the Madhesi Dalit community, a parent asserted that it was important to contextualise the low expectations of parents, given ongoing discrimination against Dalits (Chapter 6). The view that there is a lack of quality employment opportunities for Dalits was given empirical evidence in the study when a Dalit teacher shared his own experience of how non-Dalit colleagues reacted when he was awarded his Master's degree. With low anticipations of education, parents are often reluctant to buy school books or stationery for their children.

Nevertheless, Dalits are aware of the importance of education at some level, because they are sending their children to school at least up to primary level, so that they can read, write and make a simple calculation, which helps them to carry out their day to day lives. Although the benefits of education are manifold, understanding its multiple values is far away for most of the illiterate parents. This means that education seems to have a very limited and practical meaning for most people in this community, which is very highly instrumental. They treat education as a tool only for obtaining a job. If education is viewed as for life, it can be a powerful means of social change, social mobility and integration in the caste structured Nepalese society. Furthermore, education may open up windows of opportunity, help to enlarge their knowledge, and make them more self-confident. However, the data presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 reveal that most people in the Dalit community are not able to realize all the benefits that education can bring. Nevertheless, although some people think that education is for living, others think it is for life and some say it is for both. For those who have a hand-to-mouth existence, its value may be limited to their living, which is not uncommon in developing countries. Ideally the purpose of

education should be for life, therefore educating their children is important. Indeed, a higher level of education helps to generate higher earnings, better health and a longer life (OECD, 2008, p1). Although the Dalit community places low value on education, their attitudes are beginning to change towards educating their children, the level of educational awareness is increasing and their aspiration for education is positive. However, their level of expectations from education is still very low.

8.2.4 Attitudes to Homework

Most teachers say Dalit children are not able to complete their assignments themselves, nor do they get much support from their illiterate parents. There is no after-school support programme either, and private tuition is not affordable for them. So, doing homework is seen as one of the main hurdles for the Dalit students, which contributes indirectly to their absenteeism that leads them to gradually drop out as they fall further behind in their studies. Homework without guidance for low achieving students is one of the main challenges for Dalit inclusion in education. For example, when Dipu dropped out from year six, one of the reasons might be the punishment for homework not done, as reported by his grandmother (see Chapter 6, p143).

Furthermore, when Dalit children do attend school, especially in rural areas, they must balance their schooling with an often demanding work schedule, as explained earlier in this chapter. Given their workloads and the lack of broader family support for education or capacity to assist with education, it is not surprising that Dalit children struggle to complete homework. Also impeding the completion of homework and leading to absenteeism is the broader community environment, which includes many non-schooled children (see Chapter 6). Thus, not completing homework is problematic not only because it means additional learning is limited, but also because it means that students are then reluctant to attend school as they fear being punished in the classroom. In this way, the fear of punishment for homework may also cause them psychological discomfort and might create unwillingness for schooling and a distant relationship with teachers. In this context, the ways teachers treat the students regarding homework should be taken seriously, because Dalit children require additional support and caring behaviour from the teachers, considering their unfavourable family environment. Nevertheless, it is important to note that expecting homework to improve performance may threaten equity, if children do not have parental support (OECD, 2008, p5).

The discussion so far has argued that there are a range of community related factors which prevent the educational access, participation and progress of Dalit children in Nepal. Long standing socio-cultural beliefs and traditions within the communities are a major contributor to their marginalisation. For example, early marriage culture and greater gender discrimination have particularly affected the education of girls. Both are higher in Madhesi Dalit than Hill Dalit communities, which tend to curtail their educational opportunities. The employment opportunities are limited to farming which is seasonal and subsistence. In this context, Dalit parents and their children are compelled to work every day they can, simply to live. Therefore, without considering socio-cultural and economic factors, it will not be possible to adequately address inclusion of Dalits in education.

The impact of the parents' illiteracy has been seen in children's absenteeism in school, misuse of scholarship money, more rigidity in tradition and culture in relation to girl's education, and very limited expectations of education. Moreover, due to illiteracy among parents, it is also hard for them to understand and internalise the real values of education, which is an additional challenge. Similarly, the study has found that the majority of Dalit children appeared comparatively less motivated towards education, which might be a consequence of their habits, socio-economic situation and limited family support, tradition and culture and neighbourhood environment. In this way, Dalit children and their parents have, therefore, adjusted their expectations according to the educational, economic and socio-cultural capital they possess. However, although an equitable education system can contribute to addressing this complex situation, it is also challenging to provide equitable education to marginalised groups in the strong traditions and cultural contexts.

Of course, the reality is that equity in education is not only problematic in developing countries; it is problematic in the developed world as well, which we saw in Chapter 1. For example, there is no problem of resources in New Zealand, but Maori people are not receiving equitable education in terms of educational outcomes and they are struggling in the mainstream institutions (Hook, 2007, p1). The main problem in New Zealand is that Maori people want to maintain Maori values and Maori culture in educational institutions. Therefore, it is seen that barriers to equitable education are sometimes entrenched in a specific context and culture. This is a reminder that Dalits, particularly Madhesi Dalits, should not be as strict as Maori people in New Zealand about their traditional beliefs around marriage culture and gender issues, if they really want to be integrated in mainstream education at secondary or above level.

Next, the discussions move towards a third group of barriers, which are related to the schools themselves.

8.3 Understanding the Barriers Relating to the School Context

In this section, I discuss the school related issues that are largely rooted in the previous three chapters and link these to the reviewed literature as and where it is relevant. I also draw on observations that I made in the schools and classrooms. I explain these issues by splitting them into the following sub-headings: inadequate resources, caste discrimination and untouchability, and language problems.

8.3.1 Inadequate Resources

The public education system is very much squeezed: under-funded, struggling to cope and trying to deliver new education entitlements, but without the necessary resourcing and adequate preparation. As a result, most students in public schools suffer from the shortcomings of the system. As we saw in many examples in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, public schools are operating in an under-resourced environment. Those who go to public schools are often forced to be accommodated in a small space in the classroom for sitting, reading and writing, which is overcrowded and uncomfortable. In some classrooms, it was really difficult to write because of the crowd, which I saw during classroom observation. These schools are not supported with modern technology for teaching and learning purposes, such as computer facilities; audio-visual equipment; science labs; and library facilities. In addition, I have seen in my classroom observations that all the teachers rely heavily on a textbook for teaching. Most importantly, the crucial thing is that the government has not supplied an adequate number of subject qualified teachers.

As reported in Chapter 5, teachers have a heavy workload at secondary level; as a result of this, they are unable to provide feedback on students' homework individually. Sometimes they have no leisure period, because they have to teach all seven periods. The heavy workload does not allow them to prepare their lesson plans. From my observations in the classroom, I came to know that mostly teachers use a one way lecture method, although some teachers occasionally asked a few questions. My observations also reflect that the domination of the very formal and traditional lecture method could not engage students for learning and understanding, as students were talking while the teacher was giving a lecture. I did not see any group work/activities during my classroom observations, although some teachers occasionally used to give an individual written task. In brief, the pedagogy is

limited in public schools, which was not adequate for learning, understanding and skills development.

Teachers often do not have time to perform formative assessments and make corrections of students' individual work, due to their heavy workloads, so instead, they rely on summative assessments, which are held twice a year. UNESCO International Bureau of Education (IBE) believes that the balance of assessment should emphasize to a greater extent teacher-designed, classroom-based formative assessments, aimed at improving teaching and learning processes, rather than focussing only on summative assessments. Summative assessment is useful only for policy analysts, ministry officials, inspectors, curriculum developers and educational researchers (UNESCO, 2013, p3). Those students who fail in the final summative assessment cannot be upgraded. In that situation, they do not wish to continue their study in the same grade again because they feel embarrassed and humiliated. Therefore, Dalits who are reported by their teachers as poor performing students become victims of this type of assessment system, and deprived of educational opportunities, which we saw in the case of Surya in Chapter 7.

On the other hand, students and their parents both raised some questions and concerns about teachers' punctuality and course completion: 'are teachers not required to complete the course of their subjects in a given timeframe? What have they been doing in the classrooms?' These questions indicate that Dalit parents are not satisfied with the work of some teachers. Moreover, as students reported in Chapter 7, teachers are heavily involved in meetings and official work instead of being proactive in teaching. However, a teacher has to control 50-125 students in a classroom without the help of any assistant teacher, and sometimes they have to take all seven periods in a day, which is very difficult for them. It is hard to see how they can do better. In this way, in public schools, the resource situation is a major challenge that hinders student learning and teachers alike.

We saw a similar situation in the South African example, where, due to inadequate resources and training support, the policy changes in the education sector could not be implemented and were not successful (Chapter 1). The reality is that most schools in South Africa are in rural areas, in under-resourced settings with challenges from poverty, and only a few schools compare with schools in developed countries, having resources, access to technology and skilled people to support the school in general. Correspondingly, a large number of children in South Africa are still excluded from schooling (Gous *et al*., 2013). Thus, from the comparison, it seems that lack of resources is a common problem in

developing countries, which is one of the main barriers to the progress of disadvantaged children, as public schools are becoming only for the disadvantaged groups.

Nevertheless, training is important and should not be underestimated, but due to the lack of resources the main stakeholders (teachers, head teachers and school management committee members) do not get appropriate training about meeting their responsibilities. For example, one head teacher was worried that they had not received any kind of school leadership and management training nor have they had a chance to participate in workshops and seminars so far (see Chapter 5, p124). Therefore, expecting good quality education in under-resourced school situations is unrealistic. Another head teacher (Chapter 5) highlighted that there is no monitoring system in place because of the lack of adequate numbers of teachers. Sometimes, he himself has to teach seven periods in a day. In this way, the schools available to Dalit children are disadvantaged in terms of staffing and facilities, which has contributed to the marginalisation of the Dalit children, as most of the Dalits study in public schools.

8.3.2 Caste Discrimination and Untouchability

An important contributing factor to the negative educational experiences of Dalit children is ongoing adherence to caste-based practices by some teachers. Data in Chapters 5 and 7 reveal that caste-based discriminatory attitudes of non-Dalits in the school context are mainly revealed in relation to a lack of willingness to share food and drink with the Dalits. In this regard, some Dalit students have shared their own experiences of discriminatory acts of some teachers (see Chapter 7). Actually, not accepting food or water offered or touched by Dalits is due to beliefs about Dalit impurity and uncleanness, which is a defining feature of the normative caste system, as explained in the introduction of this thesis.

Moreover, physical and relational divisions between the Dalit students and non-Dalit teachers will negatively affect Dalit children's education in a range of ways, as they are likely to have less communication and interaction with non-Dalit teachers, which was reported by several teachers and a policy maker. Without strong teacher-student relationships, one cannot expect interaction between them, which affects learning and understanding the lesson. However, students from the Dalit community are often prevented from participating meaningfully in a range of school related activities. For example, at school picnics or farewell parties, they are sometimes forced to the side-lines, not permitted to cook or serve, and isolated while they eat (see Chapters 5 and 7). Such types

of social biases indeed prevent social groups from achieving equitable opportunities and outcomes in education (Subrahmanian, 2003, p1).

Most distinctively, this research has found that there is little caste discrimination in reference to the idea of untouchability amongst the young generation i.e. the student community themselves. As far as I could determine, Dalit children did not feel caste based discrimination in the classroom from their teachers and fellow-students during lessons. Interviews and classroom observations both revealed that Dalit students and non-Dalit students work together, sit together, share their food and eat/drink together without any hesitation (see Chapters 5 and 7). It was confirmed that there is no discrimination between the Dalit and non-Dalit students when I saw that they were sharing their food and drink without hesitation. This study therefore, revealed that based on caste, Dalit students in school are not discriminated against by non-Dalit students at all. However, as we saw in Chapter 7, one or two Dalit students observed some acts of discrimination from one or two older generation teachers in the picnic programme and farewell party, as they did not wish to take part, which is an indication of the generation gap in caste matters.

School teachers are taken as an important change agent in rural schools. However, some individual teachers explained in Chapter 5 that they are playing a double role in the matter of caste and untouchability. For example, at school, most of the teachers advocate that there should not be any kind of caste based discrimination in school; but at home, they say this is a private matter. Directly or indirectly, the caste structure of Nepali society has some impact on full integration. In that situation, it would be hard for them to feel a sense of 'belonging', which may have some psychological impact on them, and create frustration and non-engagement in their studies.

Perhaps Dalit parents do have low expectations and offer little support, but even so some teachers' attitudes towards parents in the Dalit community seemed rather negative. A female teacher seemed to show some prejudices, a kind of stereotype. Mostly teachers talked a lot about the parents rather than children, possibly displacing some of their responsibility for Dalit students. On the one hand, they are saying, there is no discrimination in the school; but there is still some discrimination in society. On the other hand, one female teacher was not very comfortable about caste matters, and another teacher said 'outside the school what I do is my own business'. I can see myself that in schools things have changed a lot. But even though schools seem to operate largely without prejudice, it was obvious from the discussions with the teachers that there are still very strong attitudes in the community and society, which makes full integration difficult.

Although some parents in the Dalit community are uneducated, provide little support to their children, and spend school scholarships on alcohol, others are not like that. Teachers also talked about problems with the children: they do not come to school regularly, do not seem motivated, and are less ambitious. There are some cases like that, but probably poor non-Dalit children are also like that as well, which they did not mention. Thus there are more latent prejudices. Although on the surface there have been changes, beneath the surface things may not be so, the attitude of some teachers is still very deeply rooted. Nevertheless, the caste matter in a school context seemed substantially reduced, which argues that there is progress.

One perspective of caste-based discrimination is closely linked to hygiene and sanitation, because generally, Dalits are labelled as 'dirty' or 'not clean'. A lack of awareness on health and hygiene is partly blamed for the caste disparity, which is realized by some Dalit parents (see Chapter 6, p133). In this context, the caste system has deeply marked the distribution of knowledge within Nepali society. Similarly, Dalits' traditional life style and eating habits require *sanskritisation*[6] in order to be 'equal' with the high caste community (Sriniwas, 1977 cited in Koirala, 1996, p122). Once it is recognized that their behaviour is not the 'reason' they are untouchable, the behaviour which contributes to them not living their full potential as human beings can be addressed (Ibid, p122). As explained above, in the current situation, untouchability can be understood by non-Dalits as an act of refusing to eat food and drink offered or touched by Dalits, which is a major concern of Dalit students in the school context. Moreover, *sanskritization* is also linked closely to the languages they use in daily life in their family and community. The use of vulgar words in the family and community also contributes to apparent bad behaviour in children*,* which is noticed by several teachers and acknowledged by some Dalit parents as well (see Chapters 5 and 6). Children's discipline in educational progress is important, which is also associated with how they were brought up in the family and community and what languages they have learned and used in their daily life.

Furthermore, it is also found that caste discrimination is associated with the economic condition of the people. Interestingly, a Dalit law maker in Chapter 4, p102 reports that in school, there are differences in the level of discrimination; for example, caste-based discrimination is less in private provision because they pay fees for their education, and on the other hand, in public provision, discrimination is higher because the education is free for them. This indicates that those who can invest in education and are economically

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[6] Sanskritization: a programme to change their food and liquor consumption habit and language use and any other behaviour which contributes to their own oppression (Koirala, 1996, p123).

stronger experience less discrimination than those who are poor, which is a very difficult situation and is a crucial issue that should be addressed and needs to be investigated further.

In addition to caste discrimination, Dalit children have to face differential treatment from their teachers based on their educational performance, though this is unintended. For example, teachers gave encouragement only to the responses of the high achieving children, which made it possible for these teachers to ignore Dalit children, as most Dalit children are low achievers, as several teachers reported in Chapter 5. Due to the culture of 'preferential treatment' to the high achieving students, in several cases low achieving students feel they are excluded, especially when teachers show indifference when they ask questions, as reported by Dalit students in Chapter 7. Nevertheless, equitable treatment is essential to unlock the creative, innovative and critical potential of the Dalit children. Additional support to the Dalit children in the classroom is required to offset difficult family situations. In this context, although equity in education should ensure that all students reach at least a basic minimum level of skills without obstacles of personal and socio-economic circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin, and family background (OECD, 2008), this is still far from the case with Dalit education in Nepal.

8.3.3 Language Problems

Another barrier limiting the education of Dalit children is that of language. This is particularly marked in Madhesi groups. If we look at Chapters 5 and 7, we can see that most Madhesi Dalit students demonstrate ambivalent attitudes in the classroom because Nepali, in which they are less competent in both speaking and writing, is the language of teaching and learning. They speak 'Awadhi' at home. This also makes it difficult for them to write long texts in Nepali. It is a well-documented and recognized that there is a strong link between the educational marginalization of children and discrepancies between the official language and the language spoken by children at home (UNESCO, 2010, p149). As explained in Chapter 7, language is an important factor for the Madhesi Dalits, which has prevented them from interacting better in the classroom and questioning and answering questions. However, the level of interaction between teachers and students may influence students' feelings of acceptance and participation or engagement in the classroom.

Language is a powerful tool in shaping thought about abstract domains (Boroditsky, 2001, p1). The language barrier causes the students difficulty in communication with the teachers and peers to seek solution in their difficulties. Consequently, they will have less

participation and engagement in the classroom, which reduces their leaning. Although communication is an important part of learning, most of the Madhesi children were confronted by problems with verbal as well as written communication in the classroom. However, on the other hand, Hill Dalits are not similarly disadvantaged, rather benefitted, because they speak Nepali both in school and at home.

In summary, I have argued above in this section that the findings from my study revealed that the improvement in caste matters has contributed to Dalit children having an equal experience of schooling, as there were no caste based disparities found within the classroom. I also found no segregation and discrimination in seating arrangements in the classroom settings: both Dalit and non-Dalit students were well mixed and had good relationships. They were also happy to share food and drink between them, which is a big transformation in the new generation, as this study has shown. Therefore, it is very important to note that caste-based attitudes and practices were not observed among the student community. This means that Dalit students are not discriminated against by non-Dalit students. This suggests that there have been some changes in beliefs and attitudes amongst the new generation. In contrast to this, Dalit students continue to experience some caste-based discrimination in different occasions and activities from some old generation teachers, although these experiences occur outside the classroom and in extracurricular or farewell programmes organised by schools. It is important to note that most probably, the current discrimination is the result of the historical legacy of caste-based disparity against Dalit people, which prevails more in rural areas (Action Aid, 2005, p4). Nevertheless, most of the teachers were ready to change and had no problems about caste matters, though one or two older teachers do not want change, but actually they are not major problems, as they are going to retire soon. However, the schools' under-resourced situation appeared problematic in providing equitable education to the Dalit children; although the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2010) has asserted that working towards more equitable forms of education is a condition for the development of an inclusive society. Moreover, language is also seen as a barrier for educational participation and learning for the Madhesi Dalit children in particular.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the barriers that hinder the educational progress of Dalit children in Nepal. From the overall analysis, it appears that the education of Dalit children is affected by various interconnected factors, rather than a single factor. In particular, the combination of 'community' and 'policy' related factors are putting pressures on schools

(see Chapter 9). Therefore, without addressing the multifaceted barriers entrenched in policies and communities, schools cannot work effectively. The tendency to look at only the formal education setting of the schools, without considering factors around the policy and community, is not sufficient to ensure the inclusion of Dalits in education. Inclusion is not solely the responsibility of schools; they alone cannot develop a more inclusive society (Ross, 2011). Thus, to understand inclusion in education, it is important to understand the barriers beyond the school gates that reside in the policies and family or community environment. In the face of all these barriers, making 'Education for All' inclusive is really challenging.

The next chapter moves from the empirical data to a broader conceptualization of the problems and barriers, which I hope will facilitate both discussion and further research into this issue. The next chapter will be based on the barriers explained in this chapter. It will explain how policy and community factors put pressure on schools, and how this makes it difficult for schools to move forward in providing education for disadvantaged children.

Chapter Nine: Towards a Conceptualisation of the Problem Facing Schools in their Efforts to Educate Dalit Children

In the previous chapter, I discussed the barriers preventing the access, participation and achievements of Dalit children in education, which was mainly based on the empirical data. This chapter moves from the empirical data to conceptualising the problems facing public school systems in their efforts to educate Dalit children. The discussions in this chapter will be based on Chapter 8. It explains the 'model' that has emerged from this research.

9.1 Understanding the 'Sandwich' Model

From this research it is clearly revealed that public schools are being squeezed between two forces, one of which is pressure to implement the national policies produced by the government, while the other is pressure from within the local community. Although these pressures sometimes overlap and often combine, it seems sensible to consider them separately as they are nevertheless distinct. I attempt to summarize the most important of these pressures in the diagram below, which shows the school, where I found some evidence of practices likely to inhibit the inclusion of Dalits, hemmed in by pressures from above and below.

Local Community

The term 'community' is confined not only to the Dalit communities, but also includes people belonging to other different caste/ethnic groups, who are illiterate, uneducated, and have little interest in and low expectations of education. Some of these groups adhere strictly to traditions and cultural practices that directly obstruct their children's education, such as the practice of early marriage, or refusal to allow children to participate in educational tours and visit programmes - teenage girls from the Madhesi groups are particularly constrained. However, increasingly the public schools are becoming a place for children who come largely from backgrounds of this kind. Children from these backgrounds are often less engaged in their studies and have poor attendance records in school. These children cannot get much educational guidance/support from their parents as they are mostly illiterate/uneducated; and they do not get much encouragement/motivation towards education either. Some parents even have negative attitudes towards schooling, which is another problem. For example, some people will not spend scholarship money for their children's education, and others are not ready to invest even small amounts of money to buy notebooks and stationary for their children, as their expectations from education are

low. Such parents often have less contact with the school, which indicates that there is a poor relationship between the school teachers and parents in relation to their children's education. Despite this, the parents in these communities are still interested to see their children attain high test scores, which is surprising and somewhat contradictory. Not only this, they will often show dissatisfaction with the school if their children fail the examination. Schools still have to work with the children from these backgrounds and characteristics, though they are hard to deal with. And this problem is increasing, because people in the local community become more dissatisfied with local public schools when results compare unfavourably with those from the more privileged private schools.

Sadly, the pattern is that those groups in the local community who are economically in a better position, such as teachers, local officials, local political leaders, business owners and other elite groups who are literate and educated, place a higher value on the education of their children. These people, who can provide educational guidance and support for their children, and have positive attitudes, increasingly send their children to private schools.

National Policy

There are a number of national level policies formulated to include Dalits in education, but due to the lack of resources and effective monitoring system the implementation of such policies is very weak. Mainly due to the inadequate number of subject specific teachers and inadequate budget from the government, public schools are compelled to collect money directly or indirectly from all students, including Dalits, to be able to operate. Schools often use most of this collected money to provide a salary to the teachers who are recruited temporarily. In this context, the 'free education for all Dalits' policy is limited to a piece of paper.

Similarly, the scholarship provision to all Dalits is a very good policy for the inclusion of Dalits in education but the amount provided is nominal (annually 400-500 Nepalese currency, equivalent to about £3), a negligible amount that merely helps the government to show they have provided scholarships to all Dalits while practically it hardly covers the student's stationery costs. Moreover, having at least one Dalit female teacher in each school is a very good policy to increase the participation of Dalits in education, which was provisioned in the 10th national development plan (2002-2007), but there were none in the research location until 2011/2012. From the school records, I could not find even a single female Dalit teacher in any of these three schools, or male Dalit teachers either, who were employed under this provision.

The country is supportive enough to produce a series of policy commitments, particularly in a time of political change, but less supportive of their implementation in the real world. The perpetual change in government has also contributed to producing new policies but not contributed much to implementation. For example, during the last 7 years (2008-2015), there were six governments headed by six different Prime Ministers from different political parties. Similarly, the country is in a new constitution making process. This will probably bring yet more new policies to address the inclusion of disadvantaged groups of people.

In this way, the government has increased Dalits' expectations through these policies, but schools are unable to provide these opportunities to the Dalits due to the unavailability of necessary funding from the government. Thus, although the Dalit related policies are very supportive of the inclusion of Dalits in education, they remain largely rhetoric. In this context, providing inclusive education to the Dalits and other disadvantaged children as expected in the policies is difficult.

Public schools are operating in an under-resourced situation; as a result, a teacher has to handle 80-90 students in a classroom. Sometimes, teachers have to take seven periods in a day without having any break and they do not get any assistant teacher either. Schools are not supported with library facilities, computer labs, science labs, adequate amount of furniture, ceiling fans and so on.

Due to the political influence in schools, some teachers demonstrate careless behaviour which is not supportive to the school management, and ultimately affects children's education. For example, some teachers' absence from school without giving prior information to the school administration affects children's education, as classes remain without teachers. Unfortunately, head teachers cannot take any disciplinary action against them, as they are supported by certain political parties that they are associated with.

Moreover, aiming to make the community more responsible the government has transferred school management to the local community and given some responsibilities, such as recruitment of teachers on a temporary basis. Although decentralization / devolution are good ways to increase local participation, it seems impractical to make this change without adequate assessment of work culture, accountability, level of readiness, and necessary information/communication and local capability and resources. The School Management Committee (SMC) was not found effective in school monitoring and maintaining discipline in schools and creating a conducive learning environment for the children; rather, sometimes those members who represent the local community create

difficulties for the school leadership and interfere in the fair selection of qualified and competent teachers. On the other hand, transferring the school management to the local community in an under-resourced situation is not compatible with the inclusion of Dalits and other excluded groups. Moreover, school teachers have limited knowledge about the concept of inclusive education and the need and importance of equitable treatment to the disadvantaged children. Generally, they understand that the children's access to the school is the inclusive education. At this level of understanding, it is not possible to practice inclusive education within the classroom in teaching and learning processes as they focus less on educational participation and outcomes. They are not effectively trained about inclusive values and practices and the need for equitable and fair treatment to the disadvantaged children. In addition, public school teachers are still adopting dominantly a very traditional method of teaching techniques i.e chalk, talk and text book. This type of teaching technique is not enough for imparting quality education. In this context, disadvantaged children are deprived of quality education as they are compelled to go to public schools. Not only this, the marketization of education leads the policy makers' attention and focus towards the private education, as they send their children to the private schools, considering that private education is better than public education in terms of educational performance. At the same time, they are always interested to see the high pass rates and good test scores in the examination results of the public schools, which is more complex. Nevertheless, marketization of secondary level of education is one way of excluding disadvantaged groups.

Not only is there a gap in policy implementation, there are many inadequacies in existing policies as well; for example, Dalit scholarship money is nominal, and cannot cover even minimal educational needs or food or compensate the opportunity cost of schooling. On the other hand, it is not justifiable to provide scholarship money to all Dalits (some of whom can afford educational expenses); instead the amount can be increased for the poor Dalits who are in real need, which would be more equitable.

It seems that policies are formulated unilaterally without considering where the necessary resources to support the implementation process will come from. Nevertheless, public schools are in fact mandated to enrol children from the marginalized community; and they have to work and achieve this purpose between the government rhetoric on policies and the diverse levels of community expectations in an under-resourced school situation. Schools consequently find themselves sandwiched between pressures created by the conflicting

expectations of government policy on the one hand and those of community members on the other.

These two sets of factors related to 'national policies' and 'local community' are pushing public schools from opposite directions, which has created pressure on them. Public schools are therefore squeezed between the diverse levels of expectations of national policies and local community as they receive more pressure than support from both sides. Public schools, therefore, are in a tension in the middle, and they have been facing more criticism of their performance in terms of examination results and test scores (see the 'Sandwich' model depicted in figure 9.1).
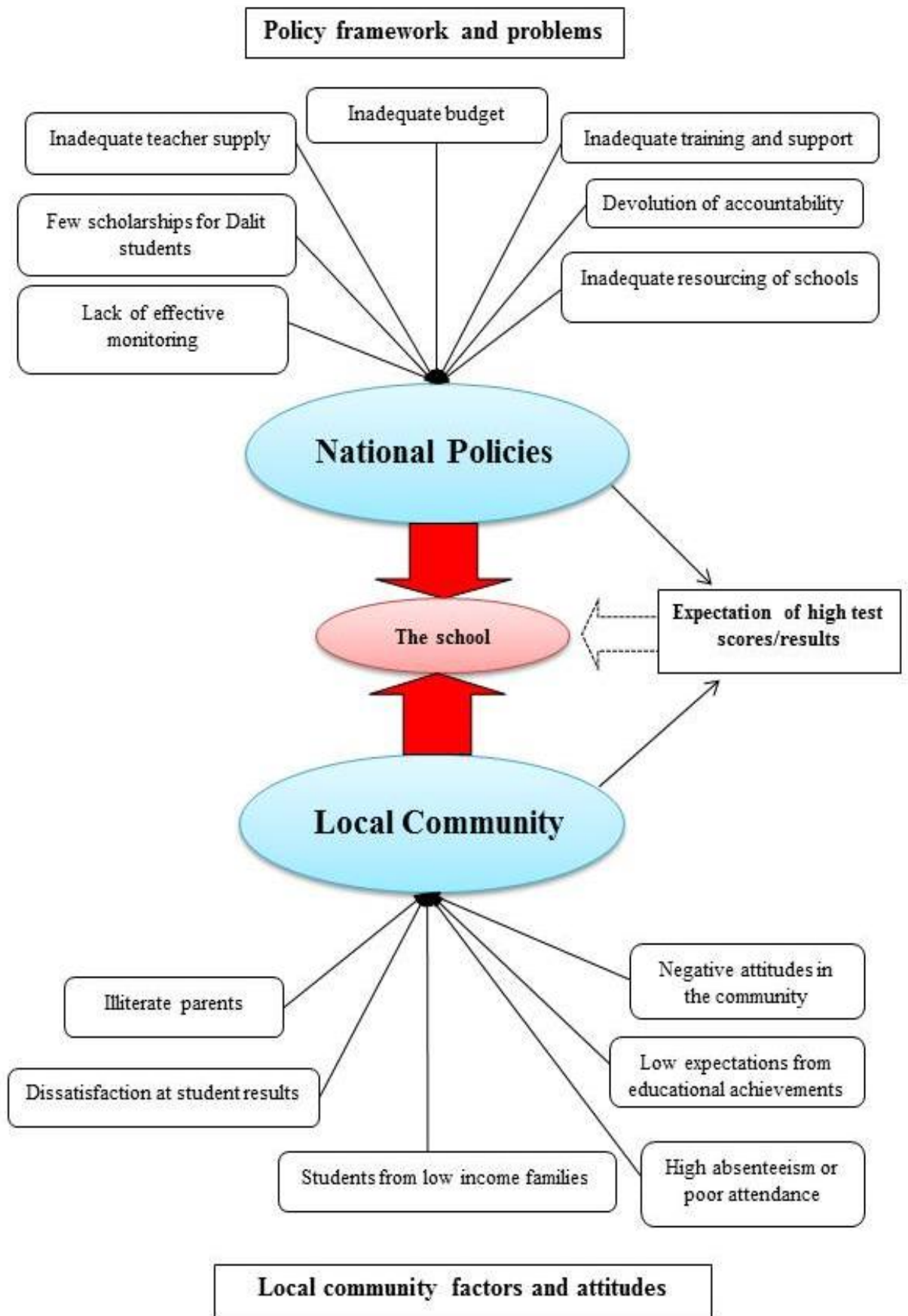
Fig: 9.1 The 'Sandwich' Model

9.2 Explaining the Components of 'Sandwich' Model

The diagram above attempts to conceptualize the forces acting on schools as a 'Sandwich' model which has emerged from this research. As we see in figure 9.1, policies are pressurising from the top, while the communities are not satisfied with the school performance and are exerting pressure from below, and schools have to work in the middle to satisfy both. Not only this, public schools have received poor financial and other support from the government on the one hand, and on the other hand, they have received little cooperation from the community, because they are not capable of providing proper support and resources. Not only this, parents in the community do not send their children to the school regularly. Schools are thus becoming victims in the middle between the policy and the community, but they are still providing education to those who cannot afford expensive private education. Clearly, it is always easy to criticize the teachers for specific failings, but there are other genuine reasons for not producing good students' results in the final examination, which are explained here.

Although public school teachers are criticized by comparing the students' final results with those of the private schools, this is unrealistic, because it is not the schools; it is the children with different characteristics and family backgrounds. Public school teachers have to work with pupils whose parents refuse to buy even one or two books for their children, and some of them expect to earn money from their children instead of providing them with education, while some parents spend children's scholarship money to fulfil their own needs rather than to support their children's schooling. So teaching those children who are not supported well by their parents and producing good results from such children is challenging. In other words, public schools have to enrol children from a poor academic background, who are often irregular attenders in school, do not do their homework, their parents are illiterate and are not capable of guiding them, their economic conditions are poor, and most of the parents have a deep-rooted traditional cultural mind-set and some have negative attitudes. These situations cannot be controlled by the school teachers. In this context, I want to challenge those who continually criticize only the teachers, because parental support and children's background account for a lot in producing good results. I argue that this is an important issue which should be debated so that it will bring a change in the way of thinking about the school performance. The root causes of children's absenteeism and dropping out from school often lie beyond the teacher's control. Although the role of teachers is vital, the roles of the parents cannot be underestimated and most

importantly a great responsibility is borne by the school management committee, which is incapable of managing resources to create a learning environment and maintain discipline in public schools. The management committees show little interest in creating a good learning environment, rather wishing to work on politically vested interests. For example, sometimes the chairperson of the school management committee puts pressure on the school to recruiting new teachers who belong to same political grouping rather than helping the school to select the most competent and best-qualified candidate. So working on children's welfare / benefit could be a matter of secondary interest for them. Moreover, as reported in Chapter 5, there is no teamwork among the teachers, due to the differences in their political ideology. We also saw in the same chapter that although some teachers are less supportive of the school leadership, schools cannot take any action against them because they get political protection and excuses. Teachers' conflicting political allegiances clearly have a negative impact on the education of public school's children, as some teachers are absent from school without information, some leave school in the middle of the day to participate in political meetings/ programmes, and as a result some classes remain without teachers. Most importantly, informal group formation within the school disturbs the teamwork, which affects the effective management of teaching and learning processes. Who is responsible for creating such a situation? Who should address this problem? These are indeed great questions and are linked to the fragile national political situation. A degree of political uncertainty still exists in the country, which has affected school management, including teachers' attitudes and behaviour. Therefore, this is where there is a problem.

On the other hand, although often having fewer facilities, private schools operating in the same location have gained the trust of local people in terms of producing better results for students. In this context, the independent school leadership and management seem important, because in private schools there is no direct political influence on school management and leadership; they can work independently. Most importantly, private schools enrol children from literate or educated parents who have positive attitudes towards education, their children are often regular in school, the family have better economic conditions to support their children, they are often liberal on traditional cultural practices, and children often do their homework; some parents can provide academic guidance and support as well. Moreover, parents who pay for private schooling trust the school, even though they are not sure what the private schools are doing. In such a situation, private schools do not experience the same tensions with parents. In this way, public schools seem squeezed, but the private schools are not.

Furthermore, in private schools, children from the more privileged socio-economic families generally succeed, because they have expectations to succeed and gain better results. In the public schools, they have a mixture of people, including those who often do not want to attend school, and the success rate is lower. In private schools, parents sacrifice to pay expensive fees, but not in public schools. In addition, the household education is valued, because educated parents are saying to the children education is important, and they are saying we pay for your school, therefore you must concentrate in your study and of course they support and ask: have you done your homework? In this way, private schools are getting the best parents and the most motivated children, therefore private schools are more successful. On the other hand, there will be a group in the public schools whose parents do not take much care, whose children themselves do not care, and they just want to be doing something else. Both parents and children in public schools are less willing towards education. In this context, there is no big astonishment about the poor examination results in public schools.

I argue, therefore, that educational inclusion should be re-inforced beyond the school gates in policies and communities rather than constantly blaming only the school teachers. At the same time, although there are other factors associated with quality, the teachers' role and commitment cannot be underestimated or overlooked. They should be more accountable, and accept their responsibility for what happens within the classroom. It is essential to re-think from the policy level how it is possible to make school teachers more responsible for creating an environment for student learning, rather than causing them stress through continuous criticism by saying that they are not doing well in the classroom. There is no doubt that the teachers' role is vital and all the teachers should be accountable for students' poor results and the way they are teaching and behaving needs to be changed too. The teachers' role and their professional ethics are crucial to nurture students' ability to make their future better. In principle, each student has the ability to perform well, but learning can only be expected if students get proper support from their teachers and parents, and a favourable environment both in school and home.

Nevertheless, changing the school is not the most difficult thing; the most difficult thing is persuading politicians to propose sensible and properly resourced policies with realistic timescales, and firm commitments for implementation. On the other hand, Dalit communities must be persuaded to develop realistic expectations and recognize that they need to change the way they think and act if they really want to see changes in their lives.

Schools would be able to move forward and could be doing more if they received proper support from the government and community.

The real problem in the public school system is that these schools are increasingly only for disadvantaged children (there are other children who are also equally disadvantaged, but I am not investigating them). It is hard to get an equal chance in education if you are from a disadvantaged background, especially because of the community attitudes and because of the lack of resourced schooling. The policy makers should be more realistic, considering the limited availability of resources, which is going to be the case; the underlying big issue is the economy. It is very hard to develop public education because of the country's poor economy. Of course, resources are closely linked to the national economy, and in the last 20 years, the economy has not been moving forward as it should.

I am very much aware that many components in the 'Sandwich Model' seem common problems affecting all pupils, but nevertheless they disproportionately affect Dalits. In other words, some components are exclusive to the Dalits, but others affect both Dalits and others. In this regard, a couple of examples are given here: there are not enough teachers, which affects everybody; but there are not enough Dalit teachers, which particularly affects Dalits. Similarly, in many aspects, the lack of appropriate training for the teachers affects all students; but one of the aspects in which they are lacking training is how to cope with and how to implement inclusion in the classroom, which affects the Dalits more. Moreover, there is no effective monitoring system, which affects the whole system; but part of that is monitoring whether the policy on Dalit education is being implemented, and again, that affects the Dalit children more. Therefore, schools definitely need better monitoring of various aspects, but one of the reasons for better monitoring is making sure policies related to Dalits' welfare are being implemented.

There are expectations of high quality education from both the policymakers and the community. This means that people expect high test scores from the schools. It is hard to produce the expected results from the existing community attitudes towards education and their level of expectations from education, and the government's under-resourced policy situations. Mostly, the 'Sandwich' model is about two sets of pressures on the schools: policy and community. Thus schools are squeezed, and they need 'support' rather than pressure to make them more effective.

All people expect the schools to produce high test scores, theoretically we are talking about equality, access, equity and transforming social attitudes and developing inclusive society.

In practice, everybody is looking at 'test results', which is why the private sector is developing rapidly, because the private sector is largely able to avoid these problems.

The pressure on the schools is from outside, but of course schools are not entirely without weaknesses themselves. There are problems in schools, but the problems in schools are themselves often related to shortcomings in policy: lack of qualified teachers, not enough teaching materials, not enough space, little appropriate training, no effective monitoring, no qualified SMC members and political interference and instability in the country and so on. Schools can perhaps share responsibility with the policy shortcomings in some areas, such as improving teaching methods; and schools can share with the Dalit community responsibility for the enforcement of law/policy expectations through effective communication.

Nevertheless, schools are between a rock and hard place, because it is easy for policy-makers to say it is the community's fault, and easy for the community to say we have got policies but they are not implemented. On the other hand, schools cannot get children to attend regularly, schools cannot only employ skilled teachers, and they have few choices. Thus, relatively in this model, of course, there are some problems in schools but the main source of the problems is in the policies and in the communities. Therefore, the model demonstrates the ways in which policy and community put pressures on the schools that contribute to the poor educational outcomes for Dalits.

In fact, this 'Sandwich Model' might have a wider relevance. Looking back at the situation of the school, it is in an uncomfortable position between policy and community expectations. If it is looked at more widely, there are the problems of integration of Dalit children into the educational community and the society which is in a similar situation. What can be observed is a process of social change, but any social change takes time. At the moment there are many policies about change, but policies themselves change nothing. For example, caste based discrimination and untouchability was removed from the law in 1963, but it still exists. However, what is underlying is that there is a real rate of change in communities which is taking place because changes in the system are always much slower.

We can see that many problems are created because of policy and its implementation failure; and on the other hand, we clearly see attitudes and practices, customs and traditions in the community also make difficulties. Of course, when I did my investigation in schools, I found there were problems, but they are caused by either policy or community, consequently affecting schools. Looking at what had been said previously about the

problems, for example teachers' attitudes, I did not find much evidence of that either. Looking at people not accepting one another, I did not find much evidence of that. Here, I am not saying there are not problems in schools, but I am saying the problems in schools are to do with poor policies, lack of funding, lack of resources, lack of proper training to the teachers. What I found in schools was that the teachers and head teachers were very ready to implement these policies. Actually, there do not seem to be problems between castes in the classroom. Children from both Dalit and non-Dalit communities accept each other quite readily. Schools are quite positive in many ways; but forces outsides are causing problems within the schools. We cannot blame the schools for having large class sizes, overcrowded classrooms; lack of library and lab facilities; it is the government who are not making enough buildings, schools and facilities. Although there are some problems in schools, the question which is to be addressed is where they come from.

I found that the attitudes of the teachers were reasonably positive, but of course the reforms place pressures on schools. Teachers' concerns were about resources, and they did not see any discrimination in classrooms. When I observed classrooms, I saw teachers were treating Dalits well; they were treating students of different social groups equally, but they nevertheless focused on difficulties surrounding these children when talking about them. The schools were more equitable than I thought they would be, but they did not talk about equity in those terms. They just talked about entitlement and supporting students. Schools are seem to have more inclusive attitudes, but even though they were more inclusive, because of the problems from outside, many children were not able to do as well as they could. There is no doubt that teachers feel the Dalit community has attitudes towards schooling that are harder to deal with, but the problem is in the community, not in school.

Although government policy is to support educational entitlement, there is a lack of resources to do so. The 'Sandwich Model' demonstrates that pressures from outside, from policy and community, are causing problems and creating tensions in schools rather than providing adequate support for them. Most teachers seem dedicated and well-meaning in their own way, but they need appropriate training and support to improve their attitudes and behaviour and become more effective in teaching in more equitable ways. Therefore, teachers need to be updated regularly; at least they should get training on how to treat children equitably, fairly and in an inclusive manner.

9.3 Summary

As a general principle, in a time of social and political change, the pressure on school systems is always very great. In such context, a number of policies have been formulated to support marginalized groups, and as a result, people in the community have high expectations of the schools. On the other hand, these expectations are not met at the required level, which has made people dissatisfied and frustrated. This reminded me of the situation of South Africa in the 1990s (Chapter 1). While I observed and talked with teachers, I found that most of them were doing their best as they saw it. Regarding caste, only one or two teachers showed the kind of old and traditional attitudes which were holding things back. Mostly, they were very much accepting the changes, but still, changing in attitudes is really hard. Those who are hesitating to accept the change about caste are in trouble themselves, because people are pointing them out. Although schools are the agents of social change, they are the victims too, because they are facing difficult situations and pressures from both national policy and local community. If we look at the 'Sandwich Model', we can see that schools are pressurised by the policy from the top and community from the bottom. The important point is that they are not pushing in one direction; rather they are pushing in opposite a direction, which has created tension in the schools. In this way, schools have to face so many problems which are created externally by policy and community.

However, the study revealed that the public education in Nepal is still under-funded by the government, under-supported by the local communities, in which many disadvantaged children have to suffer, and the teachers are criticised (often with good reason) for the students' lack of motivation and poor results. This is not to say that there are no problems in schools, but in order to bridge the policy and practice gap and to produce a better result to satisfy all stakeholders, schools need adequate resources and support from both government and community. At the same time, the teachers' commitment and dedication cannot be underestimated because 'great teaching brings great results'. Nevertheless, the continuous criticisms of public school teachers in relation to student's poor results are problematic, because the mechanisms of training, motivation, support and regular monitoring of teaching and learning processes are not in place. There are ineffective government policies and practices and inadequate understanding and support from the local community: they have not fulfilled their own roles and responsibilities. On the other hand, it is equally important to note the characteristics of children, their regularity in school, their socio-economic and cultural background and support system in the family.

On the whole, schools have to bear the continuous pressure of policies from the top and the different expectations of parents, students, and civil society from below. Although most policies and plans from the government are rhetoric, and the community is not as supportive as it should be, schools are moving slowly towards inclusive education. Nevertheless, schools are doing better where they have capacity and resources, and they are becoming more inclusive, and the overall situation is improving, albeit rather slowly. Clearly, if the policies were well-resourced, effectively implemented and monitored and community actions remained more supportive, it would be easier for schools to work more effectively to produce better outcomes.

Although a small scale study, the in-depth nature of the research has shown how the inclusion of Dalit children in education in Nepal is influenced by a complex range of interconnected factors. In particular, it has revealed how the barriers they experience are not only located within classrooms but also found outside the school gates, within national policies as they are implemented, as well as in families or local communities. If the education of Dalit children is to be improved, the schools need to be able to do their job effectively. Therefore, we must be able to recognize the factors surrounding the school which are making the schools' job more difficult.

Thus, I have proposed the 'Sandwich Model' as a broader framework for conceptualising the barriers to the educational progress of disadvantaged children in the public school system. One outcome from this research is an attempt to conceptualize the problem in a new way as well suggestions about how to begin to remedy this situation. Its central purpose is not to come up with a definitive account of the barriers to the education of disadvantaged children but to start to map the territory in order to initiate a productive debate which might usefully inform the work of education policy and practice. Clearly this 'Sandwich Model' needs further clarification and explication, but my interest is mapping out the territory in a relatively loose way in order to start discussion. I argue that there is a tension in schools between the policy and community pressures acting on them. To move forward, policy makers and communities should closely work together with the schools rather than constantly criticizing them. This way of thinking would contribute to including disadvantaged children in education more fairly and equitably.

In the concluding chapter I will focus on the third research question and summarise what I think might be done to improve the situation.

Chapter Ten: Conclusion and Implications

This chapter primarily focuses on two areas. First, it begins by summarising the key elements related to the barriers that prevent educational progress of children, discussed in Chapter 8, and provides suggestions for how the 'Sandwich Model' can be used as a basis for addressing the issues caused by these barriers. Second, it addresses the third research question: what might be done to improve the Dalits' educational situation? However, the chapter begins by outlining the limitations of this study.

10.1 Limitations

This was a small scale study, confined to a single district of the Terai region of Nepal. This means that the findings need to be viewed with caution, because the participants may not necessarily be representative of all Dalits that are spread across the country and even within the district. However, it is important to bear in mind that this was an exploratory study investigating the challenges of Dalit education in the rural school context. Effort was made to obtain a representative sample of all categories of Dalits who resided in the research location, in order to gain a balanced portrait of their real life experiences. It can also be reasonably expected that there would be similar responses in a similar context to this research. Since this research highlights the barriers faced by the Dalit students, the views of the non-Dalit students are vital, which are not included in this research; however, the views of the non-Dalit teachers are included substantially. Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn are specific to the context, as this research was conducted in the area where Madhesi Dalits and migrated Hill Dalits reside. Even though this research has included Hill Dalits and Madhesi Dalits and made certain comparisons, a comprehensive comparative study in diverse regions, locations and different group contexts would also be useful. This is because these people are heterogeneous in terms of their language, culture, and their geographical location.

Despite the limitations acknowledged above, the picture that this study paints of barriers to the integration of Dalit children into the public education system is important.

10.2 Main Barriers to the Progress of Dalit Children's Education

This study showed that there were a number of important barriers that restrict the educational development of Dalit children in education. These include the following: community tradition and culture; family economic poverty; illiterate parents and their low

level of awareness and expectation from education; attitudes to homework; inadequacies and gaps in implementing government policies; increasing numbers of private schools; lack of job opportunities within the country; the unstable national political situation; lack of effective community participation in school management; practice of caste discrimination and untouchability, use of different languages at home and school, lack of physical and human resources in school, lack of necessary knowledge and skills in teachers to treat the disadvantaged children in more inclusive and equitable ways, and lack of using different approaches and teaching techniques to impart quality education.

I have conceptualized these barriers in the form of the 'Sandwich Model' (Chapter 9), which shows that schools and teachers are pressed from above and below by forces beyond their control. Realistically, I find it difficult to regard teachers as being wholly responsible for the lack of educational progress of Dalit children. Although it is a general view that the public school system is failing, and it is still true that most of the disadvantaged children are being educated in public schools, many barriers to educational progress lie outside the schools themselves, though it is easier to attach the problems to the schools. However, it is not my claim that the schools are perfect, but it would be reasonable to assert that schools can only really be held accountable for what they do. It is equally important that the actors in the policy and community have roles to play, and they need to look at how they are performing their roles. The findings indicate that the Government has many sound policies, but they are not really being implemented, even though they are intended to address the problems of disadvantaged groups and to foster educational inclusion. These policies are not fully implemented partly because of a lack of resources, partly because of the lack of skills and partly because of lack of political will and commitment. Nevertheless, although resources are tight, there is no excuse for the lack of political will.

Through this research, I have better understood and gained more insight into the (Dalit) community. As I stated at the beginning of the thesis, my interest began when I went to a meeting and found myself sitting next to a Dalit and tea was served. I thought to myself: 'am I allowed to drink with this Dalit' because this was contrary to how I was brought up. When I reflect on it, my responsibility as a researcher is to try and see through their eyes. Now, I have researched their problems, I have gained a much better understanding of why the Dalit community think and feel the way they do. When I talked to them and mixed with this community, I could see why they feel the way they do. As a result of engaging with Dalits, I realised that 'I am part of the problem', so the non-Dalit people like me have to change the way they think and behave. For this to happen, we need more people sitting out

and drinking tea with them; this can be a good starting point for Dalit inclusion in education and society. It is easy to understand why they did not get jobs because they did not get equal opportunities. Such situations have resulted in reducing their motivation and expectations of education. All these things are easier to understand, but there is still a need to find ways to change attitudes and become more positive towards educating their children.

With regard to the schools, my 'Sandwich Model' illustrates that they are in a difficult situation. My research demonstrated how public schools are compelled to work within what I see as a series of tensions between the requirements of national policy and community pressure. The study has shown that barriers are rooted in policy and community, because the actors in the policy and the community have not fulfilled their own roles and responsibility properly; they simply expect high pass rates with good test scores from the schools. In this way, along with the teachers, the children from the disadvantaged groups suffered in the middle of the sandwich. However, the barriers are predominantly entrenched in policies and communities, which are external to the schools. Again, I am not saying that schools are perfect, but I am saying that they are under pressure. Indeed, there are problems in school which should not be underestimated and overlooked, such as lack of knowledge about inclusion and equitable treatment, lack of knowledge of using different approaches for teaching, lack of proper contact and communication with the community. In this sense, there are things schools could do. However, they need effective training in these areas.

Overall, the government needs to look at itself and what it is doing to address the situation and its role, and the community needs to take a look at itself and ask what it is doing. If the government and the community work together with the schools, then schools might move forward. When I started this research, I really had in my mind not just to find out what is happening, but how we can change what is happening. Therefore, the next section will provide some specific suggestions that can be implemented to support disadvantaged children's education.

10.3 Implications

In this section, I will make some practical suggestions for the policy, community and schools that can have a positive impact on the education of Dalit children and their inclusion into the mainstream of education and society.

10.3.1 Implications for Policy

One of the outcomes is the assessment model, which would not even cost much to change, but the existing assessment model reinforces Dalit children's notions and their parents' notions that schooling is not for them because this model brought lots of them failure earlier on. Therefore, the current assessment model implicitly contributes to marginalising children from education. For example, Dalit children who failed a grade examination hardly ever repeated the same grade, which means that failure in the examination was taken as an indication, by both the children and the parents, that schooling was not the best option for them. Different grading systems need to be developed so that they can be placed into different groups based on their educational performance rather than tagging them 'failed' and pushing them out from the schools.

The existing policy of free education up to year 10 should be completely free without charging them any kind of direct or indirect fees such as registration fees, examination fees, so that they do not have to take any financial burden. Providing scholarships based on economic situation rather than caste would be fair and justifiable to all poor people including Dalits, so that the emerging issue of fairness and justice in scholarship distribution will be resolved. Nevertheless, putting all Dalits into the same basket and providing a small amount of scholarship money to all of them is not equitable and fair, because some are able to spend themselves on their children's education, as presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Therefore, scholarship money should be provided to those who are in most need, but its amount should be increased to cover their minimum educational needs. It is important to note that it may increase inequity if we offer a common resource to all who are least in need of it (OECD, 2008, p6).

Similarly, we have to recognize the Dalit children's homework difficulties. The establishment of homework clubs after school would be beneficial to resolve their homework predicaments.

When people keep their children in school and therefore they want to train them to be employed as educated Dalits, employment opportunities should be provided on a priority basis, so that they can feel they would get jobs after they become educated. Most importantly, the current policy of at least one Dalit teacher in each school should urgently be implemented and the Dalit quotas in the teaching profession need to be increased.

In addition, after the completion of secondary education, Dalits should be provided with technical education and vocational training opportunities on a priority basis, especially for

those who are interested in this field, because this is an area that has comparatively more potential for employment. The contradiction is that this area is dominated by the private sector and is expensive. However, the government should facilitate the provision of scholarships for Dalits in both public and private technical and vocational institutions through revision of the policies and allocating more of the educational budget in this sector.

Furthermore, the government should create employment opportunities to address the current thinking of Dalits, the 'what is the point of education mentality', which is very pessimistic thinking. Therefore, job creation for the young people within the country should be a focal strategy of the government to attract and motivate Dalit children in secondary or higher education. Most importantly, the political situation of the country should be improved and settled to create a favourable environment for investment in business and industries that can create employment opportunities for youth on the one hand; and on the other hand, it would provide more revenues to the government that would help to increase the educational budget.

Therefore, all these things require revision of policy, policy changes and most importantly policy changes need to be properly funded and resourced. Policy for the sake of policy does not make any sense; only the resourced policies can be implemented. The continual declaration of a series of policies in favour of the Dalit community (including free education, scholarships for all Dalit students, appointment of Dalit teachers in each school, equal rights and opportunities, non-discrimination), is not enough for their integration. Therefore, policy changes require state commitments to enforce them across all levels in order to realise these policies in the real world. Most importantly, the government must respect their own laws and policies through implementation, which is a minimum responsibility of each state. It is interesting that since 1963, legally, there has been no discrimination based on caste and untouchability; yet after more than 50 years people are still breaking the law all over the place. Therefore, the first and simplest thing is that the government should make sure that its Laws/Acts are respected, and an independent body should be created to monitor the implementation of laws/policies.

Alongside this, we need to have more and better trained teachers. The training strategies such as inclusive education training for teachers can be introduced at the district level, so that they understand how to treat children equitably, and can realise why it is necessary to provide additional support for the disadvantaged children in the classroom. To improve the students' results, appropriate training should be designed and provided for teachers and

head teachers so that the teaching and learning would be improved through effective teaching and effective monitoring. In public schools, teachers are busy, but they are not very effective, although they are trying hard, often teaching seven periods in a day. They simply do not have enough knowledge, support, and appropriate training. It is the national system that has failed to prepare them properly; so what is needed is the right training and support systems. Even if there has been training for some teachers, it may not be the right training because their teaching has not changed. Training should be seeking to bring about changes in their attitudes and behaviour. Nobody actually tells them to change the way they are teaching, which is linked to the monitoring system which is not in place.

Therefore, an independent effective monitoring mechanism should be operated to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning processes in schools, rather than just to fulfil the government formality (picking up a teacher from one school and sending them to another school, as explained in Chapter 2, p61). The District Education Office often picks an incompetent teacher of one school as a resource person who inspects another school, which ends up without giving any positive impact in teaching and learning. However, it helps to the officials to show they are managing school inspection work.

If the government delegates school management to the local community, SMC members should also be trained and empowered to deal with the problems under their responsibility. If the 'school management training' could be provided to SMC members, they could play more active roles in monitoring and in school improvements. Moreover, teachers shared with me that the candidates for chairperson and members of SMCs who are selected from the local community are selected based on political majority or power rather than capability. Therefore, because of their incapability of understanding of teaching and learning processes, its monitoring and management, and only promoting political interests, they cannot make the best decisions for the children. The main purpose of the SMC should be to make the best decisions for the welfare of children, not for anything else, because children only get one chance. Nevertheless, education policy makers need to know the practical issues that cannot be resolved without some national review and reform and also without linking to the quality management in schools.

Due to the rapid expansion of the private sector, the public schools are becoming a place only for poor and disadvantaged people. In order to ensure equal educational opportunity, the economic condition of the Dalit groups, and the schools they have access to, needs to be improved. Nevertheless, public provision of education can foster equity if it counterbalances poor home circumstances at the outset of children's lives (OECD, 2008,

p6). The state can take the initiative and play a proactive role in this by providing job opportunities for the poorer families in the Dalit community and providing other skills development training that can help to generate income for them.

Most importantly, public schools should be provided with adequate facilities, bigger schools, more classrooms, and adequate numbers of subject qualified teachers, with a sufficient budget to facilitate the day to day teaching and learning process. For this the government should increase investment in public education. However, there is a wider problem about making public schools more attractive, which is an area that needs tackling. We can see the way things are at the moment: private schools are becoming more and more attractive, but the government have to stop this. In order to do so they need to be less flexible in expanding private education and need to make it more difficult for private schools to hire teachers. If the private schools have to take teachers from the public system then people will realize, it is not the teachers who make the difference. While comparing the examination results of public schools with the private schools, public school teachers are often criticized. Actually, if teachers of public schools were placed in private schools, they could produce better results. If this was done, people would realize that better school performance not only depends on teachers, it also depends on the background characteristics of the children and family environment. For example, a teacher left the public school and opened a private school in the same location, producing better results and successful.

Overall, the government has brought several good ideas and policies to support Dalit children, but these have to be delivered. The government policies should be carefully targeted, communicated, enforced and implemented at every level of administration, such as national, district and school levels. Unless the resourced policies are provided with the state's firm commitment to implementing these policies and a strong community support for the school, the anticipated goals of 'Education for All' and 'inclusive education' remain elusive and schools cannot move forward at the expected level. Nevertheless, it is essential to bring out the innate talents of socially oppressed Dalit children for the development of the country and their own. An equitable system of education for them is the only possible way of achieving this goal. The extra resources should be used to assist those families who are most in need and avoid labelling public schools as disadvantaged, which may discourage the main stakeholders: students, teachers, and parents. Most importantly, all the measures need to be properly funded and they also require better monitoring and evaluation to ensure policies are implemented well.

10.3.2 Implications for Dalit Communities

The research has clearly demonstrated that the level of educational awareness is very low in most of the Dalit parents; more efforts are therefore needed to create educational awareness, so that they can realise the unprecedented value of education and utilise the government facilities targeted for them. To help support their children, there needs to be parental education, which is necessary because most of the parents do not have the experience of schooling. Most Dalit parents do not know themselves how to help their children, because of lack of understanding of education and schooling. This means that they are sending their children into the unknown. In this context, Dalit parents need training and orientation about the multiple values of education from the academicians and people from the government and non-governmental social organisations. The learning outside the formal school system is equally important (UNESCO, 2013, p2) to create educational awareness in illiterate parents that will have a positive impact on children's education. Therefore, we need to establish a clearer understanding of the benefits of education within the Dalit community.

The traditional cultural mind-set, such as the early marriage culture, needs to be changed. The training on the disadvantages of early age marriage and its adverse impact on their education and health would be helpful, because the level of education is recognized as one of the important determinants of health outcomes in Nepal (Khanal and Simkhada, 2015, p42). This can be organized by the government and several non-governmental social organizations. In addition to this, the state's commitment and sincerity for the enforcement of existing laws on minimum age for marriage (18 years) can also be supportive.

The gender gap is reducing, which should be improved further through the equal treatment for sons and daughters, which is possible through the gender awareness programmes in the villages. Nevertheless, Dalit integration can only be possible when Dalits themselves change their existing ways of thinking, raise their level of expectations from education and send their children to school regularly, which requires more educational awareness raising programmes for the Dalit communities.

10.3.3 Implications for School Practice

First of all, the government need to organize better training for the teachers at district level. As a head teacher explained (in Chapter 5) there is a cultural way of teachers' poor support to the low achievers, which is opposite to the equity principle because low achievers require additional support and more encouragement than the high achievers. Due to

teachers' limited knowledge on the importance of equitable treatment in the classroom, this affected the motivation of low achievers. Therefore, teachers should be provided with training on equity, inclusion and inclusive values, and practices. It is even more important to have a more equitable and more open school system in relation to treating Dalit children, considering their unfavourable and non-supportive home environment. However, teachers need to become active in taking initiatives to support more inclusive approaches which enable marginalised groups and individuals to play a full role in their communities (Rose, 2011).

Similarly, teachers also need instructional skills development training, so that they can learn and apply different teaching techniques to support students' learning and understanding. In addition, the relevant training may contribute to improving attitudes and behaviour of teachers and maintain discipline in school. Moreover, teachers should not demonstrate their political identity in school in any way; their political interest does not contribute to the children's education and welfare at all. Instead, their continuous effort on professional development is important to impart quality education; it should be the biggest priority. For this, regular professional development training is required for all school teachers.

Head teachers are not doing anything differently because they are also lacking proper training and support, though they should lead by example. They should be developed in such a way that they can be a role model and icon; but they require leadership and management skills development training. A good leadership in school can play an important role in students' learning and achievements. There is evidence that much higher standards can be achieved only by developing the capability of leaders and educators (Bush *et al.*, 2010).

Barriers associated with the caste system influence the way Dalits feel and the treatment Dalits receive. Dual roles of teachers in public vs private life do not demonstrate their strong commitment to change about the caste matter. Similarly, the unwillingness of some teachers to participate in picnic and farewell parties together with the Dalit children is another problem. However, since the socio-cultural processes embedded in society have affected school practices directly or indirectly, openness of all teachers in this regard is very important.

As explained by a head teacher (Gopal) in Chapter 5, caste matters are obstacles to establishing good relationships between the teachers and Dalit students, which ultimately

affects their motivation and learning. Teachers need to know and understand the importance of teacher-student relationships on a student's motivation, learning and achievements. A teacher's interest and willingness to assist the Dalit children in school can play a significant role in motivating them towards education. The establishment of relationships based on recognition, respect, care, mutuality between the teachers and students is important to realize inclusion in education. Nevertheless, inclusive and equitable treatment requires a new way of thinking, which not only focuses on the practice, but also engages in addressing and challenging 'the thinking behind existing ways of working' (Ainscow, 2007, p6). Nevertheless, although caste discrimination and untouchability was legally abolished in 1950 in India, we still see particularly in rural areas that the prejudice against the Dalit caste is very strong; this is a contemporary reference (Roy, 2014). Therefore, although the situation in Nepal is encouraging, there is no guarantee of how long it will take to do away with caste discrimination and untouchability, which is deeply rooted culture in Nepalese society.

Moreover, if there could be a good relationship and frequent meeting and communication between the teachers and parents, teachers could persuade parents to send their children to school, and they could talk with parents about children's attendance and achievements. Schools can play proactive roles in this regard by providing space and opportunities for dialogue between school and parents, between and among parents, which is important to promote social interaction that can also help in building parent-school relationships that enable parents to gain more knowledge of their child's schooling. However, school should encourage a sense of belongingness amongst their students and parents. A continuous dialogue is required with those parents who want to withdraw their children from school without the completion of at least secondary level education. Therefore, schools need to target their efforts on improving communication with the Dalit parents and help develop home environments conducive to learning.

Overall, it is essential to bring change in the ways of viewing Dalits, considering that they are the same as non-Dalits. Without change in the people's attitudes, it is not possible to bring change in practice, even if the laws say all are equal. Therefore, both Dalits and non-Dalits need to bring the change in their existing ways of thinking and behaving to each other. Like-minded people who have positive thinking about the caste question from both sides (Dalits and non-Dalits) should work together without keeping any legacies of the past. To do this, they should sit and drink tea/coffee together, which can be a starting point for Dalit integration in education and society. All the school teachers in this regard can be

good initiators. At the same time, to make the education more inclusive, Dalit parents should be more careful and committed to make their children regular in school. In this way, a coordinated effort between the teachers and the parents is crucial to bring positive changes and improvements in Dalit education and their life.

Now, we are moving towards the endnotes that will address the overall reflections about the whole research project and end with the final thoughts of the researcher.

End Notes: Reflections and Final Thoughts

In this end note I reflect briefly on my research, its complexities and my experiences during the research process - the data collection and analysis; personal reflections; and final thoughts at the end. Let us start with how I disseminate research findings to the main stakeholders.

The contribution that this study has made towards understanding the barriers associated with Dalit children's education is a starting point. Much more effort to support Dalit children's education needs to be made by different levels of educational authorities and other social organisations that I presented in previous chapters. This study, therefore, has offered some practical suggestions to different stakeholders such as policy makers/ planners, school teachers and Dalit community members (see Chapter 10). Therefore, I would like to offer a copy of a short summary of the major findings in accessible places such as: central, district, and village levels. I will seek to produce this in a Nepali version so that a wide range of stakeholders can be benefited.

Reflections on the Complexities of the Research

There is a complexity of this research which came from my social identity and social position in a caste based society. In the caste hierarchical social context, none of my social identities, such as a Brahman (higher caste), educated, experienced as an officer in the education sector, and relatively better economic condition, are linked to the Dalit community. In this context, some important questions may arise concerning my work: how did I represent the voices and perspectives of Dalits in my thesis? How did Dalits trust me? In response to these questions, it is important to consider two things. The first is, while introducing my research at the beginning of this thesis, I presented my sustained interest about Dalit communities, which reflects my keen interest in understanding more about them. The second is how I established good rapport and relationships with research participants in the field (see the details in Chapter 3). For example, in Nepali culture, people you visit will often offer you a cup of tea/coffee or water. The widespread caste practice in the rural area is not to accept food and drink touched by Dalits. They looked very happy when I had water or sometimes tea at their home. I can feel that they felt honoured because I am from a higher caste and accepted drinks from them. This situation made them more open to share their stories with me and they might have felt me as a real friend and exploring about them. Dalit parents indeed accepted me easily in their world and took part with a great interest in my queries and questions.

Reflection on the Research Methods and Processes

I started my research journey thinking - I have a plan and follow it, but I found along the way that things change - I became wiser than at the beginning. My skills developed as I moved towards taking more interviews and able to explore more as the subsequent interviews were taking place. This means that one cannot learn without doing himself/herself; therefore, the 'learning by doing' is important.

My focus group with the teachers and parents worked very well. This technique may be used to inform the government when the government makes policies. It also reflected to me that a focus group might be more useful to generate good data, especially from the children, compared to an individual interview, as most of the children were sometimes inhibited and shy, sometimes nervous, and mostly they spoke less and said simpler things than my prior expectations. Probably, they could speak more openly within a group of children than individually; someone can use focus group technique in children's group.

My brief conversation with schools management committee members suggests that it might be a worthwhile topic for further investigation. Someone may investigate the school management committee members, asking about their contributions to the school's quality improvements and their views about teachers' roles and the school's situation. At the same time, others can investigate with the district level officials of the District Education Office to know more about their role in school monitoring system and its effectiveness.

The Dalit community was more diverse and they have many community problems. They were also different from one another. However, looking back, I could have spent more time looking at the attitudes and the behaviours in the Dalit communities in relation to the education of their children, which could have given a richer and additional flavour to my thesis. However, separate studies on each Dalit group might be more useful to explore in-depth the specific problems, as they are heterogeneous within them.

I spent more time in schools, but I could not get very good returns from my observations in the classroom. In my observation, I did not find any examples of Dalits that were being discriminated against. I also reflect that my interviews were much more useful than my observations because I obtained a number of things from interviews, but very few things from observations. Probably, I could have done more interviews with different people in the Dalit communities. Also at the same time, I realised that I had not really appreciated how long it takes to transcribe and analyse interview data. I wish I had more interview data but I do not know how I would have managed it. One thing I learned from this is that

actually analysing interview data is a much more difficult thing than survey and observation data because of two reasons: firstly, it requires a much more detail and in-depth analysis and secondly, it generates a large amount of text compared to other methods.

I started my inquiry quite naively, like many beginning researcher, with ambitious plans. Before I started, it seemed good to have multiple methods, which I wrote about at great length in my methodology, which was based on my reading and understandings about how previous researchers worked. I did in fact use an ethnographic method, because I went to the natural settings: schools/classrooms, Dalit communities, tried to understand participants' experiences and their culture by immersing myself with them, spending long periods of time in the field, and tried to understand the research issues from the participant's perspective. However, I did not write the research up as ethnography, because I mainly wrote up from my interviews. I learnt this from my experience. Actually, when I started to analyse my data, I realized that the most important data and the best quality data were captured in the interviews. Although in the beginning, I have said, I would have preferred to use a range of methods: interviews, observations and documents analysis, when I look back, I can see that I have been very heavily influenced by what people said to me. The other ways of collecting data did not influence me as much as the interviews did.

In the light of this reflection on my methodology I realized that the methodology I have been through did not turn out to be as helpful as I expected. However, observations in the schools/ classrooms and in the Dalit communities gave me the confidence to analyse, discuss and draw conclusions from the interview data and tell the story with high confidence. It particularly helped me to understand and verify the interview data through my observations in the classroom such as seating arrangements for Dalit and non-Dalit students and sharing foods/drinks between them. Seeing the observations and hearing the interviews with the various stakeholders also gave me a high level of confidence to draw the conclusion that there is no discrimination based on caste in seating arrangements and eating food/drinks between the young Dalit and non-Dalit students. If I had not used observations, it would be more difficult for me to tell this story at this level of confidence and drawing the conclusion. Regarding the policies, I obtained fewer data at local level as compared to national level policies, as the documentation is poor at school level. The policies which I found in the policy documents helped me to determine whether they are implemented in the real world. Mostly, schools try to implement the national level policies if the resources are available for them. In this way, although interview data were mainly

used to answer the research questions, observations and documents analysis was used to complement the interview data and build up the interesting stories with high confidence. It is also true that observational data were not presented as a data chapter as I obtained a limited amount, but used them in the discussion chapter as and where relevant. On the other hand, the data obtained from the document analysis was presented briefly in chapter four.

Were I starting this project again, knowing what I know now, I would probably spend less time looking for theoretical models before getting on with the field work. I would go to the field quicker, test out ideas about questions and data collection methods more than I did, to find out what works best. Addressing the practical problems and finding how to deal with them through experience might have been a better strategy, rather than sitting theorizing and trying to get everything perfect before starting field work. It took too long to get into the field. I discovered that fieldwork is quite a messy process, hard to plan tightly and control, and coupled to my lack of previous knowledge and experience of this kind of work, I was on quite a steep learning curve. Maybe I also spent too much time reading about issues to do with Education for All. So I went through a lot of messy descriptions to refine my ideas. The methodology approval process the university follows is a really long process and quite complex (particularly ethical approval) because they wanted me to write in rich detail about the research design and perhaps I was tempted to describe what I hoped to find out before I had started. Inevitably, I did not know what I was going to find out in the field. So I spent a long time writing the methodology, how I was going to do it, what a research design is and trying to get it perfect. In fact, when I started in the field I found that in the real world things are quite different. In reality, I could not implement the plan I had spent so much time refining, and as I pointed out in response to the questions, often things are not as expected. Sometimes, although I did not always realize this, the unexpected turns out to be important. By contrast, sometimes things that I had written a lot about were not important at all, and I was left wondering 'why did I waste my time doing that?' Therefore, I feel should I have got into the field quicker, writing up methodology as I carried out the research.

Personal Reflections

I researched and presented my research findings in this thesis; some of the things really either struck me or encouraged me to reflect not as a researcher but as a person. Let us start from something that I learned. It is a very simple but important thing which might be useful to other people. I can understand why the research ethics required filling in a risk

assessment before we go to do field work. The first thing that struck me was when I fell down into the 'irrigation canal' and thought 'if I had hit my head on a stone what would have happened to me'. That reminds me that a very simple but important part of doing research is making sure about safety even if we do take routine or planned interviews. Let us elaborate what happened to me while I was travelling in the field. One day, I was returning from a Dalit settlement by my bicycle, the time was about 8pm; all of a sudden, I fell down with my bicycle into the irrigation canal, which was about 8 to 10 feet deep where there were big rocks/stones on the bottom, which was dry at that time. Thankfully, nothing much happened to me except scratching legs and hands, and I saved my life without cracking my head, body or legs on the stones. This accident happened because there was no light on the road; it was very dark and there was no light in my bicycle either. It makes me think that I could have planned that interview on any other day, aiming to finish before dusk, but it was the interviewee's request to take the interview at this time. This incident flashes back time and again in my mind, anyone can imagine, 'if my head hit a stone what would happen', which is really frightening and an unforgettable incident to me, which happened during the data collection for my PhD (Picture: where I fell down can be seen in Appendix-14).

From the experience of this research, I came to the conclusion that despite the complexities of the problems with education, the process of social change has begun in the country, which I can see when I look at young people and their behaviour. Nevertheless, although at one level, within the school, things are different, on the other level, what we can see from the evidence is that the process of cultural change is really very slow. This reminds me that there will not be such difficulties about untouchability in the next generation.

It is also reflected that there is no clear definition of Dalits, we disadvantage them while defining; therefore there must be a great debate about who Dalits are and why they are stigmatised as Dalits because the word 'Dalit' gives a negative connotation. Therefore, it should be brought into public debate.

Final Thoughts: Working out on What Really Matters While Facing a National Disaster

This research focused upon Nepalese Dalit children and the barriers perpetuating their lack of educational success at secondary level. It was an attempt to begin to fill this gap by analysing the detail account of interviews, observations and analysis of literature and policy documents. The research findings have enhanced the understanding of the barriers

hindering the educational access, participation and progress of Dalit children at secondary level. The findings of the research have provided planners, policy makers and implementers with valuable insights for understanding, improving and managing Dalit education in a more equitable way. In addition, it has also contributed to the knowledge in international literature by publishing an article in the 'International Journal of Inclusive Education' (see the details in the cover page- Appendix 15).

The research was undertaken just after the people's movement in Nepal, when the country was in transition from monarchy to republic and engaged in the process of making a new constitution for the country. At that time, there was a huge expectation among Dalits and other disadvantaged groups about their integration in the mainstream society, with special attention to obtaining social justice from the state and society expecting equitable treatment in all sectors including education. Therefore, this is the right time to begin the restructuring of the educational system, policies and programmes that will be developed based on the spirit of the new constitution.

I have come up with a way of conceptualizing the barriers, which might be interesting in other contexts. This model can have wider relevance to look at the problems associated with the education of marginalised groups internationally. I reflect that my analysis of the 'Sandwich Model' will provoke more questions and stimulate new discussions about the problems in providing equitable and quality education for disadvantaged children in public school systems.

However, sometimes events overturn even the best of plan. A month before submission of this thesis, as I was revising my final draft, Nepal suffered a severe earthquake (25 April 2015), a national disaster requiring significant assistance from the international community. Not only were over 8600 people killed in this tragic event, but there was also devastating damage to social infrastructure, including school buildings. It is not clear what impact this will have in the long term, except that it makes everything more difficult. Clearly, when whole villages have been demolished, re-building the school will not seem a major priority.

The consequences of a disaster on this scale cannot be reflected in my research, because it was completed before the earthquake occurred. At the same time, in this situation, I cannot alter my findings, but there is no doubt this terrible disaster will make all suggested improvements more difficult to bring about. In recent years, albeit rather slowly, the country has been becoming a more democratic and more inclusive society. Now, however,

there is a new challenge of massive rebuilding in certain areas. In many areas whole communities have lost all they have. So it would be understandable if people prefer not to worry about the inclusive education issue, nor to concentrate on rebuilding these schools; but that is not right for the country's future, because what matters is that they build the 'inclusive' educational environment.

Consequently, while I have given some ideas about moving forward, obviously now a lot more needs to be done and priorities will necessarily change. However, now it is more important than ever to ensure that we do not through away the progress already made, and that we rebuild a more inclusive and equitable society. To begin this process, I make my own modest suggestions about where to start.

First, we must look at teacher training; the issue of ensuring that the importance of equality of access for Dalits and all other disadvantaged groups within national education system remains a key priority, and teacher trainers and the teacher training curriculum needs to reflect this. Ensuring sensible quotas from minority groups are part of this 'modernisation' of the teaching force is a linked priority

At the same time, as the Dalit communities are rebuilt, they too need to recognise that progress towards full integration cannot just be done for them, but requires some effort from themselves too. Dalit teachers in particular, whom they trust more, can take a lead here. I am not blaming Dalits, of course they are happy to have increased rights' to education because they did not have these previously, but alongside, they have also the responsibility to make sure their children are in school, because rights and responsibility come together. Teachers and leaders from the Dalit communities, as well as other minority communities who are similarly disadvantaged in the country, should come together to understand their roles in developing inclusive education and society require commitment from their communities, as well as actions from the government.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Dalit Castes Index (Scheduled Caste of Dalit Community)

S.N	Hill Dalit	S.N	Terai Dalit
1	Gandharba (Gaine)	8	Kalar
2	Pariyar (Damai, Darjee, Suchikar, Nagarchee, Dholee, Hudke)	9	Kakaihiya
3	Badi	10	Kori
4	Bishwakarma (Kami, Lohar, Sunar, Chunara, Parki, Tamata)	11	Khatik
5	Mijar (Sarki, Charmakar, Bhool	12	Khatwe (Mandal, Khang)
6	Pode (Deula, Pujari, Jalari)	13	Chamar (Ram, Mochi, Harijan, Ravidas)
7	Chyame (Kuchikar, Chyamkhal)	14	Chidimar
		15	Dom (Marik)
		16	Tatma (Tanti, Das)
		17	Dushadh (Paswan, Hajara)
		18	Dhobi (Rajak) Hindu
		19	Pasi
		20	Bantar
		21	Mushar
		22	Mestar (Halkhor)
		23	Sarbhang (Sarbariya)
		24	Natuwa
		25	Dhandi
		26	Dharikar/Dhankar

Source: National Dalit Commission (2014).

Appendix 2: The Enrolment Share of Dalit Students in Kapilvastu District in 2011

Levels	Total enrolment			Dalit enrolment		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
Primary (1-5)	57089	54011	111100	11370	10846	22216 (20%)
Lower Secondary (6-8)	13094	11897	24991	2213	1933	4146 (16.6%)
Secondary (9-10)	5329	4561	9890	733	483	1216 (12.30%)
Total	75512	70469	145981	14316	13262	27578 (18.89%)

Source: DEO (2011)

Appendix 3: Overview of the Methods of Data Collection and Sources/Sample

Phases	Methods	Sources/Sample	Purposes
First phase	Interview (unstructured)	Policy makers/politicians-3 (Senior Planning Officer from - Ministry of Education, A Member of Parliament and Chairperson of National Dalit Commission)	To identify broader overviews on the policy issues, develop and revise interview schedules
	Interview (semi-structured)	Students-20 (5 regular students from each school and 5 dropouts) **(Total=3 schools)**	To obtain major data about the issues
		N.B: Out of 20, only 8 students were followed in the second phase	
Second phase	Interview (semi-structured)	Follow up interview with 8 students, 8 their parents, 6 their teachers	To obtain major data and gives further insights and illustrations
	Observation	School/classrooms observation-54 hours	To check the interview data (what they said and how they acted (useful for discussion of the findings)
	Documents Analysis	Mainly policy documents	Useful for discussion and analysis

Note: According to my initial plan, the purpose of the interviews with policy makers was to develop and revise my interview schedules. When I found important and quality data from these people, I also used them as the main data during analysis.

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule for Regular Students

Name: School:

Class/grade: Male/female:

………………………………………………………………………………

How is your study going on?

How would you describe your future expectation from the study?

What are you planning to be in the future?

How would you describe the most difficult situation you have to face in the school?

Can you tell me your relationships with teachers and peer groups?

Have your parents got any schooling experience?

How much encouragement /support have you got from your family to carry out your study?

What are you thinking about your higher education (college and university level)?

What kind of family support do you think you will get for your further education?

What type of teachers' behaviour do you like/dislike?

What do you do when you don't understand and can't resolve the homework you have been given?

What is your comment on: 'There is a good teaching and learning environment in your school'?

Can you tell me any particular factor that you think is hampering your education?

Do you feel humiliation because of the different behaviours of teachers and students towards you?

What difficulties do you have to face in your school and classrooms?

How would you describe the caste -based practices/activities within the school?

Do you think these practices hamper your education? If yes, how?

How do you describe your understanding of the lesson you've been taught?

If you do not understand, do you ask questions?

How often do you ask question to your teachers and how do they response to your question?

To what extent do your teachers like to listen to your ideas or question?

Can you tell me about the seating arrangement in the classroom? (Random/biased/first come first choice or any other way?)

How do the non-Dalit peers behave /deal towards you?

How do you describe the behaviours of high caste peers in talking, sitting in and outside the classroom, eating/picnic, playing, drinking water, and canteen?

Can you tell me your likes and dislikes in school?

Do you think your classroom rules are fair? If not, why and how?

Do your teachers behave discriminatively compared to other high caste people at: teaching and learning activities, examination/evaluation, participation, punishment and delegation of authority?

What is your view that minimizes the caste differentiation?

What are essential factors which make the school environment more welcoming?

What do you do before and after school?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule for Dropped out Students

Name: School:

Class at the time of dropout: Male/female:

..

What are you doing after leaving your school?

Can you tell me what particular factor that led you to terminate your studies?

How did you make the decision to stop your education?

What initial response did you get from your parents when you stopped going to school?

How did you feel when you stopped your schooling but your friends did not?

How do you describe your educational performance while you were in the school?

Did you encounter any problem with your teachers/ staff while you were in school? If yes, could you tell me some of these ……..?

How much support did you get from your family when you used to go to school?

Can you tell me what types of behaviours you did not like from your teachers?

Can you tell me what types of behaviours you did not like from your peer groups?

How would you describe your relationships with teachers while you were studying in the school?

Did you experience any difficulties while working together with non-Dalit students? If yes, what are these difficulties?

What problems did you have to face in your daily life while going to school?

Could you tell me something that you liked/disliked in your school?

Did you experience any differential treatment from the teachers and peers? If yes, can you tell me some of these?

How would you describe the caste -based practices/activities within the school?

How frequently did you use to go to school? If irregular why?

How was the teaching and learning environment in the school?

Are you still interested to go to school? What support do you need and why?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

<div style="text-align:center">Thank you for your time!</div>

Appendix 6: Interview Schedule for Parents of Regular Students

Can you tell me something about your historical process of settlement in this location?

If you are immigrant, what are the reasons for the migration?

Do you have any schooling experience?

How is your children's schooling?

What do you say about your child's educational performance?

How much interest does your child have in his/her study?

Have you noticed any problem in your child's education?

What do you know about the problems that your child has to face in the school?

Do you think the teachers are providing adequate support for your child?

What types of teachers' behaviour does your child not like in the school?

What types of peer's behaviour does your child not like in the school?

What does your child say about the attitude of teachers towards your child?

What types of issues are being brought to you by your child from the school?

How much fees do you have to pay for your child's education per month? Or do you receive any scholarship from the school/organization? If yes, what type and amount of scholarships?

Do you have any difficulties of sending your child to the school?

Can you tell me your expectation from your child's education?

How would you describe the caste-based practices within the school community?

As a parent how do you assist your child?

What do you say about the school's learning environment?

Did any of your children drop out from school? if yes, what do you think are the reasons of school dropouts?

What are the major constraints in the children's schooling in your community?

Does the school call you in any of the programmes?

Do you participate in the school programmes/functions? If yes, how do the other caste people behave? If not, why?

How do you find the practice of caste based discrimination in the society?

How do you play your role to eliminate caste discrimination?

Would you like to add something else?

<div align="center">Thank you for your time!</div>

Appendix 7: Interview Schedule for Parents of Dropped Out Students

Can you tell me why your child is not willing to go to school? Did you ever try to understand their reasons?

How did you encourage your child to go to school? What was the response?

Can you tell me what particular factor made your child drop out from the school?

What is your opinion about the chances of your child re-joining the school?

Did you notice any problem your child encountered with the teachers or other peer groups in the school?

To what extent do you think you encouraged and supported your child's education?

What would you say about the educational performance of your child while she/he was in the school?

Can you tell me about the types of behaviours your child did not like from the teachers and their colleagues?

Can you tell me how much money you had to pay for his/her education every month?

Do you think the school teachers and the other students used to treat your child differently?

What types of teachers' behaviour did your child not like?

What is your belief on the education and educational qualification of your child?

Do you think your child could not receive adequate support from teachers and his/her friends?

What was your expectation before sending your child to the school?

What other reasons do you think were responsible for the dropping out of your child?

Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Thank you for your time!

Appendix 8: Interview Schedule for Teachers

How long have you been in the teaching field?

Are you a resident or a migrant?

How do you describe Dalit students?

How is the performance of Dalit students compared to non-Dalit students?

Do Dalit students perform their class and home assignments?

Can you tell me something about the learning attitude of Dalit children?

In your observation, to what extent do the Dalit parents give priority to their children's education?

How is your experience on the parents' awareness of their children's performance?

Do Dalit parents visit the school? Do you inform Dalit parents of their children's progress?

What do you say about the educational performance and achievements of Dalit students?

What is your observation about the interest of Dalit communities in education?

What is your experience about the difficulties they have for the continuation of their children's education up to secondary level?

How do you feel while dealing with Dalit parents/children?

Can you tell me how Dalit communities perceive the value of education?

What problems/issues do the Dalit parents raise while they talk to you?

Could you tell me the main reasons for the dropping out of Dalit students from the school?

What supports do you think are essential to reduce dropout problems?

How could it be possible to maintain regular attendance of Dalit students?

How would you describe the caste- based practices within the school context? (eating/drinking together?)

How do you differentiate between Dalit and non-Dalit students?

How do Dalit students understand the schooling?

How is the Dalit attendance in school?

Do Dalit students participate in school functions? If not, what are the reasons?

What is the situation of caste discrimination and untouchability?

What is your view about the school environment for Dalit students?

How do you describe the dropout situation in your school? Is there any differences between the Dalit dropouts and non-Dalit dropouts? if yes, what may be the causes?

How do you remark the repetition problem that can be found in Dalit students? What might be the causes?

How do Dalit students behave with the teachers?

How do Dalit students behave with their peers?

How do you describe the relationship between the Dalit and non-Dalit students?

Is there any hesitation in Dalit students in eating, sitting and drinking water with others? If yes what may be the possible reasons?

How do you find the participation of Dalit students in the classroom activities?

What is your view on regarding the constraints which prevent the Dalit students from enrolling, attending, continuing and achieving?

As a teacher, how would you address the problem of dropouts?

What is the role of the teacher to make the fair environment in the school?

How do you play your role in this regard?

Is there any cultural practice that affects Dalit education? If yes what are they?

What changes did you experience in terms of caste based practices?

What do you think about Dalit children being excluded from education?

What can be done to improve educational achievement in Dalit children?

Would you like to add anything else?

<div align="center">Thank you for your time!</div>

Appendix 9: Observation Details in School /Classrooms

The following events, activities and situations were observed:

Is any caste based discrimination activities in the classroom?
Are children segregated as Dalit and non-Dalit?
Are there any negative attitudes and behaviours seen towards Dalit students?
What are the seating, eating and drinking arrangements?
Is the discrimination visibly present in seating arrangement in the classroom?
Is any preferential treatment from the teacher between Dalit and non-Dalit students?
Are the Dalit students included by the teachers and their peer groups?
Is there any indifferent attitude towards Dalit students from the teachers/peer groups?
Is there any labelling and dominating behaviour from peers?
What are the teaching approaches adopted?
What are the learning materials used?
What are the physical conditions and learning facilities available such as classrooms conditions, computer labs, science laboratories, and library?
What is the situation of students' participation/interaction in the teaching and learning processes?

Observation schedule: This schedule was developed in consultation with the head teachers.

School's Name	School's Short Code	Observation Date	Observation Time
Bagmati Secondary School	A	22/02/12	10:00 to 4:00
	A	23/02/12	10:00 to 4:00
	A	24/ 02/12	10:00 to 4:00
Narayani Secondary School			
	B	26/02/12	10:00 to 4:00
	B	27/02/12	10:00 to 4:00
	B	28/02/12	10:00 to 4:00
Lumbini Secondary School			
	C	29/02/12	10:00 to 4:00
	C	01/03/12	10:00 to 4:00
	C	02/03/12	10:00 to 4:00

Appendix 10: Example of Abstract of an Interview Transcript (with a teacher)

शिक्षकसँग लिइएको अन्तरवार्ताको ट्रान्स्क्रीप्ट- नमूना

म: किन दलित जातीहरु शिक्षाको पहुँचबाट वञ्चीत हुन पुगे होलान, यद्यपी सरकारले थुप्रै सुविधाहरु दिने गरेको छ ?

गोपाल: एउटा त परम्परा पनि के रह्यो भने हामी दलित हौं (हिनतावोध), हामीले पढे पनि राम्रो ठाउँ पाउन सक्दैनौं भन्ने कुराले पनि काम गरेको छ कि जस्तो लाग्छ । अनि कसरी जीवन निर्वाह गर्ने (How to hand to mouth) मात्र भयो । सम्पत्ति पनि नभएको, आय आर्जनको संभावना कम भएको, जसले गर्दा खेरी अलि पहिले त परिवारले फिस तिर्न पनि सक्दैनथे । ड्रेसका कुरा भए । अहिले पनि फिस नलागे पनि, पुस्तक निःशुल्क भए पनि फिडिंगका कुरा भए , कापी कलमका कुरा भए, अर्को भनेको गरिवीका कारणले उनीहरुले परिवारलाई सहयोग गर्नुपर्ने । नितान्त यहाँको कुरा गर्नुहुन्छ भने खोला नजिक छ, खोलामा गएर गिट्टी चाल्ने, लोड अनलोड गर्ने, यसबाट उनीहरुले आफ्नो लागि सामान्य पकेट मनि गराउने, निर्वाह गर्ने गरेका छन् । पहिला पहिला त नितान्त कम थिए, अनि कम मात्रामा आउने गर्थे । अहिले भनेको केही केही सेकेन्डरी लेभलमा जाँदाखेरी घट्दै जान्छन त्यस्तो देखिएको छ । मुलतः एउटा त सदियौं देखिको पछौटेपन, एउटा चाहि सदियौं देखिको जातीय वर्णसंस्कार व्यवस्था त्यसले निम्त्याएको हिनतावोध, दलित मानविकता, गरिवी, जसले गर्दाखेरी स्कूल उमेरका केटा केटीले पनि घरेलु काममा सहयोग गर्नुपर्ने, परिवारको आय आर्जनमा सहयोग गर्नुपर्ने, बालश्रमिकको रुपमा काम गर्नुपर्ने । अर्को कारण अलि यौन स्वच्छन्दता जसले गर्दा चाडै उमेरमा विवाह गर्ने, ड्रपआउट हुने, गरिवीको कारणले ड्रपआउन हुने सामान्य देखिन्छ ।

म: उनीहरु जो आउँछन स्कूलमा, तिनीहरुको रेगुलारीटी कस्तो छ ?

गोपाल: रेगुलारिटी पनि, त्यसैभित्र पनि केही केही कन्सीयस फेमिलीको, कतै न कतै आय आर्जन भएका, केही शिक्षा हासिल गरेका फेमिलीको अलि कन्टीनियुटी हुन्छ । विशेषगरी कमाई गर्नका लागि बाबु आमा विहाने काममा जाने, राती मात्रै फर्केर आउने, बच्चा बच्चीको स्याहार सुसार नहुने, फेरी संस्कार कस्तो भने दिनभरि कमायो साँफ बसेर टन्न दारु खायो । खाएर आउँदा बच्चाहरु सुति सकेका हुन्छन । खायो खाएन, गयो गएन, उनीहरुलाई वाच नहुने भएकोले गर्दा पनि कुनै काममा इन्भल्व नभए पनि स्कूलमा नआउने त्यसले गर्दा एब्सेन्सी पनि धेरै हुने गरेको छ ।

म: दलितहरुले शिक्षाको महत्वलाई कसरी बुझेका छन् ? जस्तो आफ्नो बालबच्चाको शिक्षाको बारेमा उनीहरुले कसरी बुझेका छन ?

गोपाल: बुझाई त सकारात्मक नै छ, तर जव बच्चा भर्खर आमा वुवाको काखमा हुन्छन १०-१२ वर्षको उमेरसम्म बच्चाहरु राम्रै हुन्छन । प्राइमरी लेभलसम्म शिक्षाको महत्वलाई पनि बुझे जस्तो लाग्छ, कसै कसैले त बोर्डिङ्गमा पनि राख्ने गरेका छन, अनि बुझाई ठिकै खालको छ । हाम्रो बच्चालाई भर्ना गरिदिनु पर्यो भन्छन् । कहिलेकाहीं फलोअप पनि गर्छन तर समस्या भनेको जव बच्चा अलि ठूलो हुन्छ ऊ चाहि विग्रन थाल्छ किन भने परिवारको रेखदेख पुग्दो रहेनछ । त्यो नपुगेपछि बच्चा विद्यालयमा रेगुलर नहुने । उस्तै परे कामको खोजीमा भौतारिने । अनि यहाँ विशेष गरी गन्दर्भ जाती बढि छन । तिनीहरु सारंगी लिएर माग्न हिड्ने । कतिपय खोलामा गिट्टी चाल्न जाने, कतिपय गलत प्रवृत्तिमा लाग्ने किनभने बाबु आमाबाट सिकिरहेका हुन्छन । विशेषगरी सानै उमेरमा चुरोट, विडी तान्ने, रक्सी सेवन गर्ने आम प्रवृत्ति नै समस्या सूर्तीजन्य पदार्थ सेवन गर्ने, भाषिक शैलीहरु बोलीचालीहरु आश्लील खालको हुने देखिने गरेको छ । तर पनि अव गेजुवली उनीहरुमा पनि एउटा शिक्षा प्रति कन्सीयसनेस बढ्दैछ । छात्रवृत्ति आयो कि आएर खोजीनीति गर्ने गर्छन । पहिलापहिला त कस्तोसम्म रह्यो भने अभिभावक बोलाएर छात्रवृत्ति दियो, त्यो अभिभावकले त्यही पैसाले रक्सी खाएर स्कूलमा फगडा गर्न आयो त्यस्तोसम्म भयो । जुन उद्देश्यले सरकारले दिएको हो त्यो उद्देश्य पुरा नहुने भयो । त्यसो हुने भएकोले हामीले अनिवार्य रुपले ड्रेस किनेर लगाउनु पर्छ । तिमीसँग यो छैन किन्छौ कि किन्दैनौ भनियो, नत्र हामीले किनिदिन्छौं पनि भनियो ।

म: कस्तो फगडा गर्न आयो सर ?

गोपाल: फगडा भनेको चाहि स्कूल बाहिर कम्युनिटिमा भएका घटनाहरुलाई लिएर आउने, तिमिहरुले ख्याल गरिदिएनौ भन्ने, वेसरी मात्ने र मातिएको अवस्थामा फगडा गर्ने पनि गरे । कतिपयलाई त हामी अलि बलिया केटाहरु लगाएर, परिचर लगाएर कम्पाउण्डबाट बाहिर पनि पठाइयो । त्यस्ता घटना पनि भएका छन तर अहिले चाहि क्रमिक रुपमा सुधार भएको छ । हामीले पनि टाई, बेल्ट लगाउने, ड्रेसलाई पनि परिमार्जन गर्ने, विद्यार्थीलाई अनुशासनमा राख्ने, अनुशासन कायम गर्ने कुरामा हामीले केही सहयोग पाउने गरेका छौं । हामी घर दैलोमा जाँदा पनि सकारात्मक सोच पाइएको छ । तर अहिले के रहेको छ भने तिनीहरुको परिवारमा पनि पुरुषहरु त जान्थे, अहिले त महिलाहरु पनि कामको खोजीमा गल्फ कन्ट्रीहरुमा जाने गरेको पाइन्छ । घरमा आमा भएन भने केटाकेटी झन विग्रने रहेछ । त्यसले पनि हेम्पर गरेको छ । समग्रमा attitude मा परिवर्तन भएको छ तर त्यसलाई मेन्टेन गर्न सकिरहेको छैन । अहिलेसम्मको मोटामोटी यहि नै हो ।

म: हामीहरुले दिएको गृहकार्यहरु गरेर ल्याउँछन दलित विद्यार्थीहरुले ?

गोपाल: होम टास्क चाहि एक त यिनीहरु अनुपस्थित धेरै हुन्छन । अनुपस्थित भएपछि अघिल्लो दिन के दियो थाहा हुने कुरा भएन । रेगुलर हुनेहरुले गरेर ल्याउँछन । एज अ होल, टेन्डेन्सी अलि माथिल्लो कक्षामा गएपछि पढ्ने टेन्डेन्सी डिक्लाइन हुँदै जान्छ ।

म: किन होला सर यस्तो टेन्डेन्सी भएको ?

गोपाल: परिवारलाई आर्थिक सहयोग गर्नुपर्ने, दोश्रो भनेको अहिले उठेको जुन समावेशी- हामीलाई अधिकार पाउनुपर्छ भन्ने, सबैलाई गाली गर्ने । टिचरहरुलाई भेंडा गोठाला जस्तो सोंचेर गाली गर्ने, परिवारका सदस्यले अपशब्द प्रयोग गर्ने जसले गर्दा बच्चाहरुमा त्यो खालको सोंच पलाउँछ जस्ले गर्दा टिचरलाई हेर्ने दृष्टिकोण, आदर्शमय दृष्टिकोणमा कमी आउने, त्यसले गर्दा बच्चाहरु अलि जिद्धी स्वभावको, विद्रोही स्वभावको हुने त्यस्तो खालको पाइएको छ ।

म: बच्चाको पढाई सम्वन्धमा अभिभावकहरु चासो लिने, सोधपुछ गर्ने गर्न आउँछन ?

गोपाल: विशेष गरी सरकारी स्कूलमा पठाएका अभिभावकहरुले फलोअप गर्ने चलन नै छैन । हामीले विशेषगरी टर्मिनल जाँचपछि मार्कसिट बनाएर हाजिरी सहित शिक्षकलाई पठाएर घर घर पुऱ्याउने गर्दछौं । त्यसो गर्दा पनि खासै रेस्पोन्स नलिए जस्ता । अनि तपाईहरुले बच्चा बच्चीलाई नियमित रुपमा स्कूल पठाएर सहयोग गर्नुपऱ्यो , बच्चाको इम्प्रोभमेन्टको लागि हो भन्छौं । शैक्षिक सुधारको लागि भन्छौं । उनिहरुले त्यसमा हामीहरुले जानेको भएदेखि किन त्यसो गऱ्यौं र भनि उल्टो खालको अभिव्यक्ती दिने गरेको पाइन्छ । विशेषगरी फलोअप गरेको पाइदैन । माथिल्लो कक्षामा subject teacher हुने, जतिवटा क्लास त्यति शिक्षक, लिजर टाइम नहुने त्यसैले गर्दा कपि चेक गर्दा पनि छड्के टाइपको कहिले कस्को, कहिले कसको १-२ कपि लिएर चेक गर्ने गरिन्छ ।

म: स्टेशनरीको कमीको कारणले विद्यार्थी स्कूल आउँदैनन भन्ने कुरामा सरलाई विश्वास लाग्छ ?

गोपाल: कहिलेकाहीं हुन सक्छ । खास गरेर आफ्नो आम्दानीलाई छोराछोरीको पढाई लेखाईमा लगाउनु पर्छ भन्ने नै छैन । स्टेशनरी भनेर, ड्रेस भनेर र स्टेशनरी र ड्रेस भनेर सहयोग पनि गर्ने गरिएको छ । बच्चालाई देखेर, उसको अवस्था हेरेर यी सुविधाहरु १५०, ३००, ४५० छ । ४५० दिएका अभिभावकबाट दुरुपयोग भएर त्यसखालको अवस्था पनि पाइयो । सरकारले दिने भन्दा अतिरिक्त दुईवटा किताव किन्नुपर्ने हुन्छ । एउटामा स्थानीय भाषा भन्ने हुन्छ अर्को इङलीस ग्रामर भनेर दुईवटा किन्नुपर्छ । त्यो पुस्तक नकिनिदिए पनि बच्चाहरु स्कूल नआएको हुन सक्ने स्थिति पनि हुन सक्छ । राज्यले नदिने पुस्तकहरु शिक्षाको गुणस्तर वृद्धि गर्ने उद्देश्यले राखिएको हो ।

म: छात्रवृत्ती र मासिक शुल्कको बारेमा केही बताइदिनु हुन्छ कि ?

गोपाल: १-८ सम्मको केही पनि शुल्क छैन । परिक्षा शुल्क मात्रै लिन्छौं, वर्षको दुईपटक सहयोगको लागि । अर्धवार्षिक र वार्षिक परिक्षामा । कक्षा ८ को रु. १२०|- छ त्यो भनेको न्यूनतम नै हो । छात्रवृत्तीको सन्दर्भमा प्रति व्यक्ति ४००|- को हिसावले निकासा गर्छ । हामीले विद्यार्थीको स्तर हेरी ३००-४०० को विचमा सबैलाई दिन्छौं । ९ र १० कक्षाको दलितलाई रु. ५००|- छात्रवृत्ती छ सबै दिन्छौं । ९ र १० लाई अलि अलि शुल्क पनि लगाएका छौं । अति गरिव छ भने शुल्क मिनाहा पनि गरि दिएका छौं । परिक्षा शुल्क मात्रै लिएर पनि चलाइदिएका छौं । कतिपय संघ संस्थाहरुले सहयोग गरेका थिए एक वर्ष । हामीले तिनीहरुलाई परिक्षा शुल्क मात्र लिएर अरु शुल्क मिनाहा गरिदिएका थियौं १० सम्मै ।

म: पढ्दा पढ्दै छोड्नेको बारेमा बताइदिनु हुन्छ ?

गोपाल: ड्रप आउट विशेष गरेर लोवर सेकेन्डरी लेवेल र सेकेन्डरी लेवेलमा बढी देखिन्छ । अलि मेच्योर्ड हुन्छन, कतिपय विदेशतिर जाने, इन्डीयातिर जाने, कतिपय काममा जाने, केटीहरु विवाह गर्ने ।

म: कति वर्षमा विवाह गर्छन ?

गोपाल: त्यही १४ वर्षमै हिंडेका हुन्छन । केटीहरुको भन्दा केटाहरुको ड्रप आउट वढि हुन्छ । ड्रप आउट भर्ना भएकाबाट अन्तीम परिक्षामा संलग्न भएका घटाए पछि निक्लन्छ । कतिपय रिपिटर्सहरु पनि छन त्यो घटाउनु पर्छ ।

म: छुवाछुतको अवस्था बारे बताइदिनुस न ?

गोपाल: दिन दिनै घट्दो खालको छ जातीय विभेद । विद्यार्थीमा त्यस्तो खासै देखिदैन, शिक्षकमा पनि नयाँ पुस्तामा त्यस्तो छैन । यो विद्यालयमा विद्यालय भित्र त्यसखालको व्यवहार गर्ने, पन्छीन खोज्ने विपना मेडम बाहेक अरु कोही छैन । तर चाहिं पानी लिन पठाउँदा त्यसरी पठाउने गर्दैनौं । अरु अरु बच्चालाई पठाउने गर्छौं । त्यति टड्कारो रुपमा छैन तर, शुशुप्त अवस्थामा देखिन्छ । मेटी सकिएको छैन, कुनै बेलामा टाउको उठाउन खोज्छ ।

Appendix 11: Example of Codes and Themes Development (data from the children)

Code name: School name is coded as A, B, C and interviewees name is coded as 1, 2, 3, …20.

Themes	Codes	Data bits used to develop codes and themes
Pedagogical environment	Crowd in the classroom	"Ninety students sit together in a class; it's difficult to adjust and the room is less spacious. We have to adjust 6-7 students in a bench which is a lack of space to sit in" **(A2)**. "In a small room there were 90 students, so it was very difficult to adjust. There were lots of students that were admitted in a class which made us unable to write because it's too crowded" **(C14)**. "We, 78 pupils sit together in the same classroom, which leads us feeling hot and uncomfortable" **(A4)**. "It becomes hot while sitting with 7 students in a bench and we cannot write because of the crowd" **(A2)**.
	Low quality teaching	"It is difficult to learn when it is taught by some teachers such as Pitamber sir and Srikrishna sir (pseudo names)" **(A5)**. "Some teachers are not trained and not qualified" **(C14)**. Some teachers do not answer the questions that are being asked by the students. They say I will give the answer tomorrow but they don't. I don't like this" **(C20)**.
	Discipline problem	"Some students make noise, which has created obstacle in the study" **(A5)**. "A large number of students cheat in the exams. Students don't realise that cheating is a bad habit" **(A4)**. "Some students don't have any prestige because they don't study. A few students don't even stay in the classroom when the teachers are teaching" **(C14)**.
	Punishment	"If a student could not answer the questions that were asked by their teachers, they beat the students" **(C15)**. "If we don't answer the questions then obviously we get beaten by the teachers. Sometimes as a punishment, they tell us to make our body into a shape of poultry (*murga*), sometimes they hit us on our palms using a stick and madam slaps us across our faces sometimes" **(B10)**.
	Physical facilities	"Though they have collected Rs. 80 from each student, there is no fan in the lower level classes" **(C19)**. "There are no adequate desks or benches and there is no proper management of educational materials. For example, in the English listening class, there is no tape recorder or other equipment to listen" **(C14)**. "I do not like two things in school: dirty toilet and lack of enough drinking water" **(C14)**. "There are only two computers in the school. The school does not provide computer learning opportunities" **(A5)**. "Till now, I have never touched a computer but after three days, I am going to touch it for the first time in my life" **(C15)**.
Language Problems	Consequences of language difficulties	"I ask more questions in Population, Education and Social Science subjects because I feel bored when it comes to these subjects. I have less motivation in these subjects because there are long answer questions. It's a bit difficult for me because it has to be written more in Nepali" **(C14)**. "At home, we talk in Awadhi because Nepali is a bit difficult. I have some problems with Nepali. I have not asked any question till now (Grade 8 student) because I am not good at speaking in Nepali. I feel ashamed while asking questions so I don't ask any questions. I have a fear of failing in Nepali" **(C16)**. "It is not that difficult to understand Nepali but it's a bit difficult to speak in Nepali" **(C20)**. "I find speaking Nepali a bit difficult, but not that difficult for understanding but some words in Nepali are difficult. Sometimes, it is difficult for me to understand but I can understand most of these words" **(C15)**.
Teachers attitudes / behaviours	Unfair attitude / behaviour	"While the teachers are teaching, they always focus on the high achieving students (*tatha bidhyarthi*) and pay more attention towards them. They ignore low achieving students (*kamjor bidhyarthy*) and pay less attention towards them or show indifferent behaviour. I did not like this type of teachers' behaviour at all. For example, the teachers respond immediately and happily while the question is asked by high achieving students but they used to show either indifferent behaviour (*nasunejhai garchhan*) or dominating behaviour while asking questions by low achieving students" **(A6)**. "Some teachers used to respond to students' questions rapidly and happily if asked by a good performing student and show indifferent behaviour

		when asked by the low performing students. So teachers cannot show equal behaviour towards all of the students" **(C14)**. "Teachers teach well and answer happily when the question has been asked by talented students. However, (*je hos*) when we low performing students asked questions, teachers used to neglect us and oppress our voices (*hepchhan*)" **(A1)**. "Both the teachers and students used to give attention to the talented students and teach them. For the rest of the students, teachers as well as talented students used to give no attention" **(A6)**. "Teachers behaved unequally for example Purna sir (name changed) gives more attention to the first, second and third ranking students but for others, he used to say you don't listen carefully and gives less attention while teaching" **(A1)**. "Raju Sir (name changed) loves me the most because he advises me about my studies and about my future and gives me homework" **(A7)**.
	Teachers' discipline	"Sometimes teachers come late in class and I don't like this. For example, Kamal Sir (name changed) often comes late in class. He does not come immediately after the bell rings" **(B10)**. "A few of the teachers (*kohi kohi sir haru*) sometimes come late in my class" **(C15)**.
Student Dropout	Poverty	"I left the school, while I was at grade seven. I have a large family size of 8 members. I made the decision to terminate my education on my own. We have no land for farming. My father is a carpenter. Earning by one person in the family is not enough to feed all. I could not see the hard work done by my father, so, I left the school. Now, I earn NRS 500 per day. I give my earnings to my parents" **(C18)**.
	Forced/early marriage	"I was married when I was in grade 7. At that time, instead of taking the final exam, I was compelled to leave school without completion of that exam" **(A6)**. "Due to the culture of early marriage, our castes do not allow us to carry on with further level of education" **(C15)**. "My In-laws and my husband beat me very badly while I was requesting them to allow me to go to school and attend my final examination" **(C15)**. **"**I am interested to study but now I've been married and have a daughter" **(C18)**. "I was compelled to get married because my mother forced me" **(A6).**
	Personal unwillingness	"In fact I dropped out from school because of my own reasons; therefore I don't have any wish to go back to school again, even with whatever support I would get" **(A3)**.
	Grade fail	"When I paid the exam fee, the teacher said that you've failed. Then, I did not go to school. This was a shame for me. They did not call my name during attendance, so, I asked Aaitabari sir, no one asked me to come to the school, so I left" **(C19)**.
	Homework	"In school, Sir /Madam used to really like me and care about me when I used to do my homework, if not they used to beat me" **(A3)**. "I left the school without any reason, without any reason (*tyasai*). I have no interest about my studies" **(A3)**.
Caste, tradition and culture	Caste based discrimination	"Still, one or two teachers discriminate. For example, if any Dalit student brought the water, they don't drink. I've experienced this myself and that has not affected my study but sometimes it makes me unhappy" **(A4)**. "Some teachers used to go away while eating food because of the fear of touching me which I think is a bad treatment to the Dalits. But, I have no particular experience within the school premises in this regard" **(A6)**. "There is no caste-based discrimination among the students, sirs, and new generation miss but one or two old madams have such feelings. For example, in a farewell party of grade ten students, one or two madams went home without eating because of the fear of the food touched by we Dalits" **(A4)** .
	Traditional beliefs/ culture	"Most people in Deshi community (*madhesi people*) think that when a girl has grown up, it would be difficult for her to get married because people suspect that there is something wrong with that girl and they still believe that educated people are bad in their characters" **(C15)**. "There is a conception in our Madhesi society that if the husband's level of study is lower than the wife's, there is a chance of female domination" **(C15)**. "There was orthodoxy that if girls go to school, village people demoralize them by saying that they will go to or go with the boys. So if they stay at home, they will have fear

		from their parents and they won't behave badly (*bigradainan*)" (**C14**). "Our community believes that educated girls are bad in their behaviour, they will be worse in their character. In the school, both boys and girls study together, talk with each other; in that situation there is no chance to keep the prestige safe" (**C15**). "My husband says that you dominate me if you get the job. My husband has said that do not come to my house if you continue your study" (**C15**). "When I finish year 10, I will then get married. My sisters got married at a very early age therefore they could not get educated at all because they had to go to their husbands' home" (**C20**).
Family environment	Educational expectations	"I hope no one can take me and sell me into other places. If I study, nobody can cheat me in my daily life" (**A1**). "If I study, I can get facilities from the quotas reserved for the Dalit (for example there is a policy of one Dalit teacher in one school)" (**B13**). "I am interested having a job in government office because there is a prestige in government job (**C16**). The main purpose of my study is to get employment" (**A5**). "I have an interest to be a teacher" (**B9**). "If an uneducated person goes to the market, he/she cannot find the place/location and need to ask other people but educated people can use their own mind" (**A8**). "My parents still haven't told me to stop my studying (she is in grade six)" (**B12**).
	Causes of absenteeism	"I go to school in each alternative day. My parent told me to go to school in each alternative day because I have to take care of my brother and sister (they are 3-4 years old) ; one day my sister takes care of them and the other day I do." (**B12**). "My father has a meat shop at Baidauli and my mother produces alcohol at home. There are two pigs to take care of" (**B12**). "I don't go to school when I become sick and need to do the work at home otherwise I go to school" (**A1**). "Because of the weak economic condition of the family, sometimes, I was not allowed to go to school instead I was compelled to go to work for earning" (**A6**). "I don't go to school if my mother or I become sick" (**B13**). "The local cultures affect my study because I cannot attend in school during marriage ceremonies, fairs, feast and festivals and so on" (**C17**). "Once, when I was at grade 5, I could not go to the school for 15 days because of the sudden death of my relatives. At that time, I could not get even third position in the class (but ranked the first position in previous year)" (**A8**).
	High demand of work	"At home, I had to spend most of the time in earning rather than in studying and as a result, my educational performance became low. For example I had to engage in earning activities in weekends and holidays to maintain our family life. I used to work often with my mother together in the bank of the Badhganga River" (**A6**). "Now, if my father were with me, I couldn't have been compelled to do labour work for livelihood and would be able to focus on my study" (**B9**). "I have to do a lot of work at home; therefore I have no time to study" (**A7**). "I cook food such as rice, vegetables; cut grasses for livestock; graze livestock and also help in farming" (**A7**). "I do labouring work at the place of building construction. Nowadays, I do labouring work along with my father at Bodgaun" (**C19**). "Because of my SLC exam this year, I don't do anything else except take care of oxen, bringing grass to them, feeding them and go to harvest paddy on holidays" (**C14**). "I cook food for the family members, clean the pots and wash clothes of my parents and sisters" (**C20**).
	Family breakdown	"My father lives with my step-mother. He married a woman that had three children of her own. He has a shop in Silang (India) and lives with my step-mother" (**A5**). "Father passed away, mother has got married with another man and went away from home" (**A2**). "When I see my friends walking together with their parents, it makes me think how good would it be if I could have been together with my parents. Sometimes, I feel very unhappy not being together with my parents" (**A3**). "Father married again with someone and went away and mother also married again with someone and went away as well. I am living with my grandparents" (**A3**).
	A large no. of children	"My parent has the responsibility to teach all six sisters. They want me to continue my education up to grade 10" (**C15**). "I go to school in each

		alternative day. My parent told me to go to school in each alternative day because I have to take care of my brother and sister (they are 3-4 years old) ; one day my sister takes care of them and the other day I do." **(B12)**. "Because I was taking care of my brother and sister, I failed in one of the subjects at grade four" **(B12)**.
	Lack of family support	"My parents say that they cannot continue with my education **(A4)**. "Though I am interested in my studies, I have less interest now because my father does not earn money. These days, he has stopped going to the Rice Mill and instead he is continuously drinking alcohol every day. When he drinks alcohol, he goes away from home at any time even at night too. Sometimes he sleeps in the jungle, he talks with him-self, does not come back home and day before yesterday, he fell down into a pit of a Crasher Mill" **(A7)**. "My grandfather earns a lot of money but he finishes most of it by drinking alcohol" **(A3)**.
	Financial problem	"Now, I cannot pay monthly fees, grandparents have become old, maternal uncle and aunt send money just for food/survival" **(A2)**. "My family's financial situation is not strong, have only 8 kattha's of land and we are three brothers and two sisters" **(A4)**. "We have to pay different types of fees such as registration fee, exam fee, red cross fee, maintenance fee such as fan maintenance, furniture, for developing school gates and so on" **(A1)** . "I have been paying tuition fees from grade six (now she is in grade nine)" **(A2)**. "I only got scholarship at grade 3. After that, I haven't got any scholarship (now in grade 9)" **(B9)**. "I haven't got scholarship from grade 7 to 10" **(B11)**. "My father is a local level contractor of building construction and is a Masson. He's in loss in his contract works" **(C15)**. "My father passed away and my two sisters got married. During school holidays, I screen sands, beat boulders to prepare gravels in the bank of the rivers and install hand pipes to earn money. I help my mother to operate daily life" **(B9)**. "My grandmother knows how much I earn from my work because she takes my wages; I graze 3 buffaloes of someone else's. I take care of three buffaloes every day" **(A3).**

Note: In this example, six themes emerged from the list of 22 codes.

Appendix 12: Information Sheet

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INFORMATION SHEET FOR POLICY MAKERS

A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children

</div>

Researcher's name: Damodar Khanal

Contact details: damodar.khanal@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Aim: This research is trying to explore the factors that are limiting the schooling of Dalit children in Nepal.

Why is this research important?

- This will help better understanding of how Dalit children are affected from the access, participation and achievements of their education.
- It will contribute to deeper understanding of the existing caste based practices.
- The findings may help inform planners, policy makers and implementers with valuable insights for understanding, improving and managing Dalits education that may have impact on transforming the educational exclusion into inclusive education.
- This may help Dalit and non-Dalit, school and surrounding communities to bring changes in their attitude/behaviours to make our education and society more inclusive.

How will you participate?

If you agree to participate in this research, the informed consent will be gained in writing. You will participate in an interview programme. The interview with you will last for one hour, which will be on a one to one basis. During the interview, the conversation will be focused on the education of Dalits' children and its associated issues. It is expected that you will bring the wider issues regarding the education of Dalit communities in Nepal.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all stages of the research through coding your name and safeguarding the data collected from you.

What do you need to do?

Your participation is voluntary and even after you have signed the consent form you are allowed to withdraw your participation.

You will not be expected to discuss topics unless you are happy to do so.

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded.

I would appreciate your participation in making this research a success. Please feel free to contact me if you have further enquiries regarding this research.

To indicate your consent for your participation to this research, please complete the attached form and return it to me in the envelope provided.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS

A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children

Researcher's name: Damodar Khanal

Contact details: damodar.khanal@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Aim: This research is trying to explore the factors that are limiting the schooling of Dalit children in Nepal.

Why is this research important?

- This will help better understanding of how Dalit children are affected from the educational access, participation and achievements.
- It will contribute to deeper understanding of the existing caste based practices.
- The findings may help inform planners, policy makers and implementers with valuable insights for understanding, improving and managing Dalits education that may have impact on transforming the educational exclusion into inclusive education.
- This may help Dalits and non-Dalits, school and surrounding communities to bring changes in their attitude/behaviours to make our education and society more inclusive.

How will you participate?

If you agree to participate in this research, the informed consent will be gained in writing. You will participate in an interview programme. Interviews with you will last for one hour, which will be on a one to one basis. During the interview, the conversation will be focused on the education of your children and its associated issues. It is expected that you will share your experiences regarding your children's education frankly and openly.

Those parents who will be the participants in focus group discussion will not take part in individual interview. The focus group discussion also last for one hour. In the focus group, you will talk, exchange your opinion and experiences about the factors associated with educational exclusion of Dalit communities in the research area. Who will take part in the interview or focus group will be decided and clarified before the distribution of this information sheet.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all stages of the research through coding the name of the individuals and safeguarding the collected data.

What do you need to do?

Your participation is voluntary and even after you have signed the consent form you are allowed to withdraw your participation.

You will not be expected to discuss topics unless you are happy to do so.

With your permission, interviews / focus group discussions will be audio-recorded.

I would appreciate your participation in making this research a success. Please feel free to contact me if you have further enquiries regarding this research.

To indicate your consent for your participation to this research, please complete the attached form and return it to me in the envelope provided.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children

Researcher's name: Damodar Khanal

Contact details: damodar.khanal@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Aim: This research is trying to explore the factors that are limiting the schooling of Dalit children in Nepal.

Why is this research important?

- This will help better understanding of how Dalit children are affected from the educational access, participation and achievements.
- It will contribute to deeper understanding of the existing caste based practices.
- The findings may help inform planners, policy makers and implementers with valuable insights for understanding, improving and managing Dalits education that may have impact on transforming the educational exclusion into inclusive education.
- This may help both Dalit and non-Dalit, school and surrounding communities to bring changes in their attitude/behaviours to make our education and society more inclusive.

How will you participate?

If you agree to participate in this study, the informed consent will be gained in writing. You will participate as an interviewee. The interview with you will last for one hour, which will be conducted on a one to one basis. During the interview, the conversation will be focused on the education of Dalits' children and its associated issues.

There will be a focus group discussion with a group of teachers. Those teachers who participate in the focus group discussion will not take part in an individual interview. The focus group discussion will last for one hour. In the focus group, you will talk and exchange your opinion and experiences about the factors associated with educational exclusion of Dalit communities in the research area. Whether you take part in the interview or focus group will be decided and clarified to you.

Regarding the classroom observation, head teacher and concerned teacher will be consulted and their consent will be obtained. The research has been designed with the aim of minimum disruption to normal routines of participants and their schools. No special arrangement will be made for school and classroom observation i.e. the normal routine classes will be observed by the researcher as observer sitting at the back of the classroom.

Confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained at all stages of the research through coding the names and safeguarding the data.

What do you need to do?

Your participation is voluntary and even after you have signed the consent form you are allowed to withdraw your participation.

You will not be expected to discuss topics unless you are happy to do so.

With your permission, interviews / focus group discussions will be audio-recorded.

I would appreciate your participation in making this research a success. Please feel free to contact me if you have further enquiries regarding this research.

To indicate your consent for your participation to this research, please complete the attached form and return it to me in the envelope provided.

Appendix 13: Consent Form

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CONSENT FORM FOR POLICY MAKERS

A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children

</div>

Name of researcher: Damodar Khanal

Manchester Institute of Education, School of Environment, Education and Development, University of Manchester

Participant: **Policy makers**

(Please read this and if you are happy to proceed, sign below)

The researcher has given me my own copy of the information sheet which I have read and understood. The information sheet explains the nature of the research and what I would be asked to do as a participant. I understand that the research is for a student project and that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded unless subject to any legal requirements. He has discussed the content of the information sheet with me and given me the opportunity to ask questions about it. I understand that participation is voluntary. I agree for my interview to be electronically recorded.

I agree to take part as a participant in this research and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without reason and without detriment to myself.

I have hereby given permission for:

My interview to be audio recorded ☐

Anonymous quotation from my interview to be used in publications ☐

Signature:………………………..
Date:…………………….
Full name in BLOCK LETTERs:………………………………………….
Contact address/email/telephone:…………………………………………………..

Researcher

I, the researcher, confirm that I have discussed with the participant the contents of the information sheet.

Signature: ……………………………………..   Date:……………………………

<p style="text-align:center">CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS</p>

<p style="text-align:center">A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children</p>

Name of researcher: Damodar Khanal

Manchester Institute of Education, School of Environment, Education and Development, University of Manchester

Participant: **Parent**

(Please read this and if you are happy to proceed, sign below)

The researcher has given me my own copy of the information sheet which I have read and understood. The information sheet explains the nature of the research and what I would be asked to do as a participant. I understand that the research is for a student project and that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded unless subject to any legal requirements. He has discussed the content of the information sheet with me and given me the opportunity to ask questions about it. I understand that participation is voluntary. I agree for my interview/focus group discussion to be electronically recorded.

I agree to take part as a participant in this research and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without reason and without detriment to myself.

I have hereby given permission for:

My interview/focus group discussion to be audio recorded ☐

Anonymous quotation from my interview to be used in publications ☐

Signature:………………………..

Date:…………………….

Full name in BLOCK LETTERs:……………………………………….

Contact address/email/telephone:………………………………………………………..

<u>**Researcher**</u>

I, the researcher, confirm that I have discussed with the participant the contents of the information sheet.

Signature: ………………………………..   Date:…………………………

<p align="center">**CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS**</p>

<p align="center">A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children</p>

Name of researcher: Damodar Khanal

Manchester Institute of Education, School of Environment, Education and Development, University of Manchester

Participant: Teachers

 (Please read this and if you are happy to proceed, sign below)

The researcher has given me my own copy of the information sheet which I have read and understood. The information sheet explains the nature of the research and what I would be asked to do as a participant. I understand that the research is for a student project and that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded unless subject to any legal requirements. He has discussed the content of the information sheet with me and given me the opportunity to ask questions about it. I understand that participation is voluntary. I agree for my interview/focus group discussion to be electronically recorded.

I agree to take part as a participant in this research and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without reason and without detriment to myself.

I have hereby given permission for:

My interview/focus group discussion to be audio recorded ☐

Anonymous quotation from my interview to be used in publications ☐

Signature:………………………..

Date:…………………….

Full name in BLOCK LETTERs:…………………………………………

Contact address/email/telephone:………………………………………………………..

<u>Researcher</u>

I, the researcher, confirm that I have discussed with the participant the contents of the information sheet.

Signature: ………………………………………..   Date:…………………………

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS (for the child's participation)

A Study of Factors Limiting the Schooling of Dalit Children

Name of researcher: Damodar Khanal

Manchester Institute of Education, School of Environment, Education and Development, University of Manchester

Participant: **Students**

(Please read this and if you are happy to proceed, sign below.)

The researcher has given me my own copy of information sheet which I have read/heard and understood. The information sheet explains the nature of the research and what my child would be asked to do as a participant. I understand that the research is for a student project and that the confidentiality of the information my child provide will be safeguarded unless subject to any legal requirements. He has discussed the contents of the information sheet with me and given me the opportunity to ask questions about it. I understand that my child's participation is voluntary. I agree for my child's participation in this research and interview taken with my child to be electronically recorded.

I give permission to my child...(child's name) to take part in this research and I understand that I or my child will free to withdraw at any time without reason.

I have hereby given permission for:

My child's interview to be audio recorded ☐

Anonymous quotation from my child's interview to be used in publications ☐

Signature:....................................
Date:....................................
Full name in BLOCK LETTER:...
Contact address/email/phone number:……………………………………………………………..

Researcher,
I, the researcher, confirm that I have discussed with the parent of the student participant the content of the letter and information sheet.
Signature:...Date:...................................

Manchester Institute of Education, School of Environment, Education and Development, Faculty of Humanities
(Parents' letter and consent form)

Dear parents,

I would like to request your permission in allowing your child's participation in a research project exploring the factors limiting the schooling of Dalit children in Nepal. This investigation is my Doctoral study in The University of Manchester, UK.

If you consent to the participation of your child in this investigation, they will be asked to share their feelings, views and their educational experiences at school and classroom. The interview with your child will take approximately 20- 30 minutes, which will take place with you at a convenient time and place for you.

If I have to interview your child a second time, there will be a gap of a few months. I will inform you whether I have to interview your child a second time or not. The second time, your child will spend 20-30 minutes if I have to repeat an interview with your child.

Your child's participation is completely voluntary and can be withdrawn either by you or by your child at any time without any reason. All the data will be processed anonymously. Some extracts from the research may be used in reports of this investigation, but the anonymity of the students will be respected. I hope that this research effort will meet with your support. Your child's participation is of great scientific value, because it will help to produce more valid research findings.

Should you require additional information about this research you can contact me through the following e-mail addresses: damodar.khanal@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk. Alternatively, you can provide your contact information to the document attached so that I will communicate with you.

 To indicate your consent for your child participation to the research, please complete the attached form and return it to me in the envelope provided.

Sincerely yours,

....
Damodar Khanal

Appendix 14: Irrigation Canal, Where I Fell Down with My Bicycle

Appendix 15: The Cover Page of My Published Article
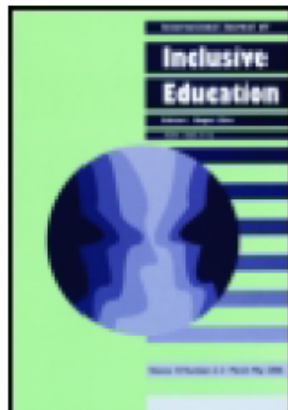
Children from the Dalit community in rural Nepal: a challenge to inclusive education

Damodar Khanal[a]

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