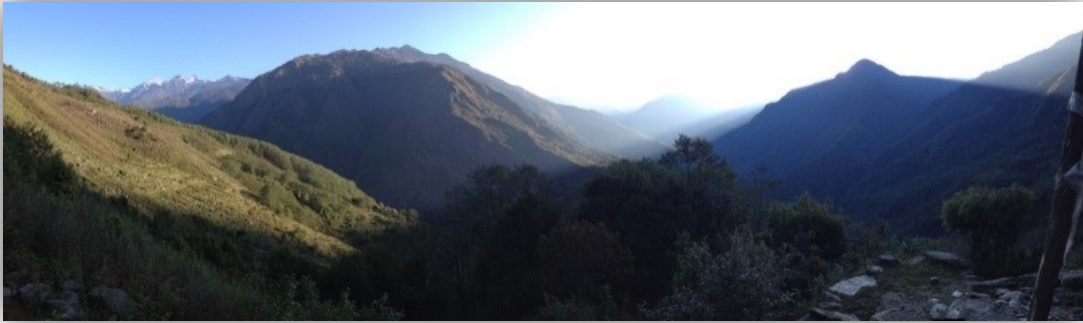# Teaching 'in our remoteness':

A constructivist grounded theory of primary school teaching in a remote

area of Nepal

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Abstract

Despite extensive research on education in Nepal, little has been published on the nature of remote education in Nepal nor of the teacher's experience of teaching in such locations. This qualitative study contributes to this knowledge gap by drawing on the experiences of a cohort of 18 public primary school teachers who were employed as full-time teachers in a select Resource Centre (educational school cluster) in remote North Eastern Nepal in 2016. The constructivist approach to grounded theory has been utilised to consider the phenomenon of remote education and the challenges of teaching in such a location.

This research generated a substantive theory, *teaching 'in our remoteness'*, that provides a deep explanatory theory of the context of remote teaching and the challenges teachers face being a teacher and teaching in such an environment. This context is found to have compounding and detrimental effects on teaching and learning outcomes.

The research is significant as it begins a discussion on remote education in Nepal that is not present in the literature. It has implications for the improvement of government supply of education and support of teachers working in such areas. The generated theory offers insight into the process of policy and practice; and the power of context over such processes.

Acknowledgements

I would like to firstly acknowledge my family. They have been long suffering with my absences while gathering data and writing this thesis and more so my mental business.

Thanks to the teachers who so willingly shared their experiences and trusted me, an expat stranger who appeared on their doorsteps, with these experiences and their desire to see them heard.

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Editing Statement

Professional editor, Ingrid Kennedy, provided copyediting and proofreading services, according to the guidelines laid out in the university-endorsed national guidelines, "The editing of research theses by professional editors".

Declaration of Authorship and Originality

I, the undersigned author, declare that all of the research and discussion presented in this thesis is original work performed by the author. No content of this thesis has been submitted or considered either in whole or in part, at any tertiary institute or university for a degree or any other category of award. I also declare that any material presented in this thesis performed by another person or institute has been referenced and listed in the reference section.

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List of Acronyms

ADB	Asia Development Bank
ARIA	Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia
CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
DEO	District Education Office
DEOer	District Education Officer
DOE	Department of Education
EC	Early Childhood
EU	European Union
EFA	Education for All
ERO	Education Review Office
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
MCT	Multi-Class Teaching
MGT	Multi-grade Teaching
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTE	Mother Tongue Education
NASA	National Assessment for Student Achievement
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NLSS	National Living Standard Survey
OCE	Office of Control of Examinations
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPT	Optional
RC	Resource Centre
RHD	Research Higher Degree
RP	Resource Person
SIP	School Improvement Pla
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee

SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
SSRP	School Sector Reform Plan
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
USAID	United States Aid for International Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United National International Children's Fund
VDC	Village Development Committee (Municipality)

Presentation Arising from This Thesis

Paper presentation

Mitchell, D., Hillman, W., Harreveld, B. & Zipf, R. (2016). *Stemming the Educational Landslide: Supporting Teacher Professional Development in Remote Nepal*. Paper presentation at the International Conference on Transformative Education Research and Sustainable Development, October 21–23, 2016, Dhulikhel, Nepal.

1.   **Introduction**

High up in the remote mountains of Nepal, a private primary school has opened. It is a

picturesque location for a school, with verdant forest as far as the eye can see, a river cutting

deeply down between the mountains and, looking skyward, views of Tibet's Himalayas.

After a flight from Kathmandu, a jarring jeep ride and four days of hiking across landslides

and dangerous narrow trails that continually ascend and descend, I found myself in front of

this unimpressive school. It appears to be little more than two temporary-looking long

rectangular bamboo and tin sheds in a wheat field. The surrounding part of the field has been

beaten down by little footsteps to form a dusty playground. In the grand scheme of things,

the school and its locality are unnoticed on national or even international radars; however, in

this specific area, the school's presence has been felt.

Parents from the local villages are jostling to enrol their children in the private school. One

family has decided to send their eight-year old daughter to the school. The father is a local

prominent public school Principal and the mother, who runs a lodge, explains that they

genuinely want their daughter to attend the school. However, as the private school is too far

away for their daughter to walk to, they have sent her to board with relatives during the

school week. Another Principal from the nearby village exclaims that the students of his

entire Grade 1 class have up and left for the private school; and because of this new school

opening, still another small school is oscillating on the edge of closure.

To be sure I had not come to see this school, my research centres on remote primary

government schools and their teachers; not private schools. But as I stopped to consider this

small private school, questions on the nature of remote education were underscored.

A rigorous review of the literature prior to data collection had indicated a noticeable enrolment shift from remote public schools to urban private schools. Not only in the narrative above but across Nepal, parents are, in growing numbers, withdrawing their children from the public provision of education in their villages in favour of sending them away to urban private schools. Considering this shift, I was curious to investigate remote education and proposed that Teacher Professional Development (TPD) help address this shift or at least in some way stem it. However, once entering the field I found that while this 'shift' was a part of the challenges of remote education, it was not the whole phenomenon. The challenges teachers and their students were facing were not entirely encapsulated in my initial research questions and the research problem was in fact broader in scope than I had initially thought. Through the iterative processes of grounded theory, I expanded my research problem to consider the question:

> What are the challenges of remote education and being a teacher in a specific remote location in Nepal?

To co-construct an explanatory theory to this problem, I drew on the lives and experiences of 18 public primary school teachers from a select area in mountainous North East Nepal. Thus, while I contemplated the local private school, my thoughts were deeply considering the phenomenon of a public school in this remote context.

1.1.   Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to contribute to the knowledge of remote education in Nepal through the exploration of the experiences and perceptions of primary school teachers living and working in a specific remote location in Nepal. Thus, my objectives are to:

- investigate and develop an understanding of the phenomenon of remote education through the experiences of a cohort of primary school teachers working in a specific remote location in Nepal; and subsequently,

- generate a theory that describes and explains the nature of remote schooling and teaching held by this cohort of teachers.

1.2.   Significance of Research

There is a recognised lack of literature describing remote education in Nepal, the teacher experience and the influence of context on learning. Published research on teaching in Nepal is not concerned with the teacher per se but rather considers teachers and their teaching as part of a larger study such as the implementation of multi-grade teaching as outlined by the Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID, 2003b) the effectiveness of training strategy (Suzuki, 2009) or the use of the Internet in rural schools (Sæbø, Sein & Thapa, 2014). While it is possible to gain some understanding of teaching in Nepal by examining multiple studies in the literature, such an understanding is inadequate as the literature is not concerned with teachers primarily, nor the remote context. Large scale studies and reviews of the national education policy such as the National Assessment for Student Achievement (NASA) published by the Education Review Office (ERO, 2013), arguably the most informative government assessment of student learning, highlight the disparity between locations, socio-economic status, ethnicity, caste and language. While such studies indicate poor student achievement levels and wide variation in results they have done little to explain the causes of this poor achievement and variation. They thus recommend small-scale quantitative and qualitative research to identify the causes and specific issues at

district, resource centre, school and community levels (ERO, 2013). This research, in its small-scale focus on 18 public primary school teachers' experience of working in Resource Centres (RC), fits neatly within these recommendations.

1.3.   Research Design

The desire to contribute to the knowledge of remote education in Nepal through the exploration of the teachers' perspective has been achieved through the use of constructivist grounded theory advocated by Charmaz (2006). This methodology provides "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Importantly, in the case of this research, it is not about testing hypotheses about reality, but rather, about generating statements about how the primary school teachers interpret reality.

In the constructivist approach, the researcher is not the "objective analyst of subjects' experiences" but rather a partner and co-constructor of meaning (Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006, p. 12; Charmaz, 2006). They contend that:

> Ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist, constructivist grounded theory overtly reshapes the interactive relationship between researcher and participants in the research process and in doing so brings the centrality of the researcher as author to the methodological forefront (p. 9).

Thus, while seeking to ground my theory, the creation of a sense of reciprocity between participants and the researcher in the co-construction of meaning and, ultimately, a theory that is grounded in the participants' and researcher's experiences, is essential.

It is the processes of negotiating and understanding meaning during interviews and the reflective process of memo writing that inevitably writes the researcher themselves into the research, and thus any generated theory is representative of both the participants and the researcher's experiences (Mills et al., 2006; Mishler, 1991). This is not to say that bias is allowed to reign freely and forsake the rigour of grounded theory, but rather to foreground that the research is authored. By using the first person within this thesis I have written myself into the research and acknowledge my own authoring of this research (Mills et al., 2006).

I am a teacher by profession and have taught in Australia, Finland and Nepal. Over a decade ago, I led international trekking teams into rural and remote areas of Nepal that were well off the tourist routes. I stayed with families in tiny remote villages, visited schools and saw their dilapidated condition and heard the experiences of teachers and students in such locations. I saw the effects of the Maoist revolution[1] in such communities and on the schools and I wondered about how schools in such locations could be better supported.

It must also be noted that this research is ultimately written by myself, an urbanite and, even more distant, an expatriate urbanite and is also informed by literature from other urbanites. Although having lived and worked in Nepal for many years and being relatively fluent in Nepali I am inevitably an outsider looking in[2]. From the outset of this research I have been troubled by this and by what I perceive as the lack of teachers' voice in policy and discussion

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[1] The Maoist armed conflict against Nepal's monarchy was fought 1996-2006 by the Communist Party of Nepal. See Upreti (2009) for a discussion of this revolution.

[2] There is much written on outsider and insider research, with perceived advantages and disadvantages in either position. The dichotomy, however, is simplistic especially when considering the constructivist epistemology and methodology that understands that knowledge and research is constructed not 'on' participants but 'with' or between the participants and the researcher (Breen, 2007; Charmaz, 2006; Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006).

on remote education. Thus, my rationale for conducting this research is buried in the notion of developing an insider understanding of teaching in the remote Nepal. This consequently informs my aims and objectives, and also my choice of research methodology.

Through these experiences I recognise that I have a bias towards the people living in such locations and wish to champion their voices within this research over those who live in central urban areas who make decisions on behalf of the rural and remote population. I have struggled against this bias in my analysis and sought to address this while remaining neutral. Firstly, I acknowledge that I am biased and raised my awareness of my bias throughout the stages of the research. Secondly, and importantly, I questioned and limited my own interpretations and bias through my adherence to a grounded theory methodology and use of constant comparison approach.

1.4.   Chapter Structure and Content

There are six chapters within this thesis. The first three seek to provide a context for the study, the following two present findings and the final chapter discusses and theorises the significance of these findings and presents the study's contribution to knowledge.

This **introductory chapter** describes the motivation and rationale for the choice of this topic and its aims. The resulting selection and use of constructivist grounded theory is explained and an overview of the thesis chapters is provided.

Chapter Two uses a two-fold examination of firstly, education in Nepal in general and secondly, education as it occurs in remote areas in Nepal, to contextualise this study. While the chapter draws broadly from international literature, it focuses narrowly on Nepal.
I outline Nepal's education system, the historical and political use of education and the

lingering challenges the state faces in its provision of education. I then narrow the focus still further to consider the remote context. I define remote and draw on data from Nepal's most recent survey conducted in 2010 and reported by the Nepal's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in the *National Living Standard Survey* (CBS, 2011) to characterise remote education. To do so I selected a number of major themes; access, literacy and education, poverty and culture, and language. These themes introduce and illustrate the complexities and struggles that the state faces as it seeks to supply quality education to all its citizens.

Chapter Three presents the research design. A detailed discussion of the choice and use of constructivist grounded theory methodology is provided. The chapter presents and discusses constructivist grounded theory and its use in generating data, its subsequent analysis and later my approach to theorising. The participants and the research location are introduced and the limitations and ethical considerations presented.

Chapters Four and Five present research findings in relation to two major theoretical concepts. Chapter Four presents findings related to *being remote*, laying out the dynamic context of the specific research location and its compounding influence on schooling. Chapter Five continues the presentation of findings related to the concept of *teaching remotely*, discussing schools, teachers and their teaching and working conditions and their motivation and access to support and training.

Chapter Six summarises findings and presents the theory of *teaching 'in our remoteness'* and considers this research's contribution to knowledge, its limitations and areas for future research.

The opening reflection on the local private school clearly raised questions about some of the perceptions of schooling. However, it did little to provide any theory as to why parents were abandoning the local government school in favour of a private school, however, the theory generated from this research is explanatory. This research and the emergent theory draws intimately from this perspective and the teacher experience of teaching in this context. It is concerned with remote schooling as such; not just with its geography, but also its people. Ethical considerations limited my ability to identify the people as a community and as teachers them directly; however, while they are called participants, they have names, and while their faces are distance and unseen in these words, every attempt has been made to ensure that their voices ring clear from their 'remote place'.

Figure 1.1 Village in the research location.

Source: Author.

2.   **Literature Background**

2.1.   Introduction

As this research is concerned with education in Nepal, I provide an introduction to the education system, its structure and the way teachers are selected and employed in Nepal. The historical and political use of schooling and its lingering effects on society and schooling are also introduced. Then, I draw attention to some of the challenges the Nepali government faces as it seeks to provide quality education for all its citizens.

From this background I narrow the chapter's focus to grapple with the concept of remote education in Nepal. As mentioned in the Introduction, there is no published work in the literature in relation to remote education in Nepal, nor teaching practice in such locations. Published research is not concerned with the remoteness nor the teacher, per se, but rather considers education and teachers and their pedagogy as part of a larger study such as the implementation of multi-grade teaching (CERID, 2003b). Thus, I have sought to provide an in-depth understanding by examining multiple studies in the literature. I define the central term remote and characterise such areas in Nepal by drawing particularly on statistics from the most recent government census, the comprehensive National Living Standard Survey (CBS, 2011), and use both national and international literature to broaden this characterisation.

This review of literature provides a strong background for the research and the central issues of remote education in Nepal.

2.2.   Education in Nepal: A Background

Policy and school structure. The research is concurrent with three major education policies the Education for All (EFA, the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) and the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP). The scope of these policies are listed following.

2004–2009   EFA (Ministry of Education and Sports (MOEAS, 2003)

2009–2015   SSRP (Ministry of Education (MOE, 2009)

2016–2023   SSDP (MOE, 2016)

At the time of data collection EFA policy was officially not a directive; however, much of its policy is found in the SSRP and the structure of schooling advocated by this policy was still commonly used. The SSRP, that was concurrent with this research, consolidated the EFA structure into Basic and Secondary Education and introduced mandatory preschool or Early Childhood (EC) classes. This new structure, however, was not a directive and the School Management Committees (SMCs) were given the authority to implement it voluntarily (MOE, 2009). The SSDP was still in the process of being written at the time of data collection. When adopted, the SSDP made transitioning the SSRP school structure compulsory. Table 2.1 provides an indication of the structure of schooling and recommended student age for each level.

Table 2.1

Structure of schooling in Nepal

School Structure	EFA policy	SSRP/SSDP	Student age
		Preschool (ECD)	3–4
Primary	1–5	Basic Education	5–9
Lower Secondary	6–8	Grades 1–8	10–12
Secondary	9–10	Secondary	13–14
Higher Secondary	11–12	Grades 9-12	15–16

Source: MOE, 2009.

Due to the intricacies of the education system, I provide the background of the administrative levels here. In brevity, at the central level the MOE and the Department of Education (DOE) provide direction, planning, funding, monitoring and evaluation. Both of these education bodies are located centrally in the Kathmandu valley. At the regional level, Five Regional Education Directorates provide uniformity and oversight to the districts within their regions. There are 75 districts in Nepal, each governed by their own market, service and administrative centres, called the *District Headquarters*. District level implementation and administration of education policy is provided by 75 District Education Offices (DEO) that are located in each of the district headquarters. The schools within the district are in turn divided into school clusters and supported and administered by a committee called a Resource Centre (RC). Each school is managed by a SMC made up of representatives from the local community. The SMC has the authority to manage the school which includes its staff, the school calendar, recruitment of temporary teachers and curriculum choices (MOEAS, 2008; NLC, 2002).

Broadly speaking there are three different schooling sectors present in Nepal. In 2011, 72% of schools in Nepal were government public schools (otherwise known as community schools) (CBS, 2011). These schools are either fully or partially funded by the government. There are also private schools that are funded through parents and trustees and commonly also known as boarding schools (though usually not residential as the name might suggest). Thirdly, there are a small minority of traditional or religious schools, such as Gombas and Ashrams[3], which have access to government funding pending approval of their curriculum (MOE, 2009). As I indicate in Table 2.2, urban schools are predominately private, while schools in rural and mountainous areas are predominately public (CBS, 2011).[4]

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[3] A Gomba is a Buddhist residential monastery or nunnery and similarly an Ashram is a Hindu monastery. In Nepal such monasteries may have children in residence.

[4] See section 2.3 for a discussion of remote and the use of the term mountain as remote.

Table 2.3

Percentage of attendance by living area and schooling type

	Public school	Private school	Other school
Urban	42,9	56,1	1,0
Urban—Kathmandu Valley	28,1	71	0,9
Rural	79,1	19,6	1,3
Mountain	90,5	9,3	0,1

Source: NLSS (CBS, 2011, p. 99).

Teacher qualifications and selection. According to the SSRP, public school teachers need to firstly meet the prescribed pre-service qualifications and then carry out teacher selection examinations (MOE, 2009). The preservice qualifications for providing a teacher's licence are first, "a higher secondary education or equivalent with relevant teacher preparation course for basic education", and secondly, "M.Ed. or equivalent with relevant teacher preparation course for secondary level" (MOE, 2009, p. 39). For practicing teachers to be considered trained and consequently certified they must have either the above qualifications or have completed a ten-month in-service certification program[5]. The SSRP continued an EFA initiative to see Nepal's practicing public school teachers certified via this ten-month certification program. It is understood that due to this program all Nepal's practicing public school teachers are either accredited or in the process of being so (Government of Nepal, 2012).

There are a number of employment categories for teachers in the Nepali education system. Permanent teachers are those who have been given a permanent position and are recruited,

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[5] This 10-month in-service training is discussed in Section 5.6.

transferred and remunerated at the district level. Such teachers "enjoy full government

salaries, annual increments, provident funds and pensions" and access to promotions and

unpaid leave (Khanal, 2011, p. 775). Temporary teachers are employed on a contractual basis

to positions deemed temporary and, while selected by the same process, receive only a salary

(Khanal, 2011). Temporary teachers are recruited by the school, but remunerated by the

DEO. There are also other categories of teachers such as Rahat (those employed not on a

temporary basis, but into temporary positions) and local teachers (those hired by local means

to supplement teaching staff). These last two categories do not need to pass a selection

process. Teachers in private schools are not governed by the same selection process or

remuneration laws and, as a consequence, private schools often have untrained and underpaid

teachers (Bhatta & Pherail, 2017). Although brief, this is a useful summary of how the

education system operates and provides a basis for a review the use of education in Nepal.

Historical political review of education in Nepal. With an education system that is younger

than 70 years old, Nepal has made impressive gains towards an accountable, child-friendly,

quality and inclusive education. The policy of the last decade has been especially concerned

with ensuring "equitable access to quality education through a rights-based approach and

promotion of a child-friendly environment in schools" (MOE, 2009, p. 13). This has not

always been the case, and in terms of recent Nepali history, it is in fact a relatively new

concept. A historical exploration of developments in educational policy will help illustrate

some of the continuing issues that Nepal is facing in relation to schooling its children.

Education as political, elite and exclusive, 1846–1990. For a century the Hindu Rana regime

(1846–1950) governed Nepal (Sharma, 1990). The regime isolated Nepal from external

interests of foreign powers and restricted education to the elite, so that they could remain elite

and the common people would not "be awakened and conscious to their rights" (Shakya, 1977 cited in Caddell, 2007a, p. 4). Such was the political agenda of the Rana regime that by 1951 there were only 11 secondary schools and 250 university graduates (World Bank, 2001, p. ii).

This autocratic and isolationist rule eventually weakened and was replaced by a three-party democracy in 1951, which comprised of the formally exiled Nepali congress, the Rana faction, and the King (Thapa, 2014). The fledgling democracy sought to use education as a symbol of 'development' and schools were deemed the tool to "reconstruct the 'idea of Nepal'" (Caddell, 2007b, p. 8). The United States became the aid provider and policy informer (Bhatta, 2011; MOE, 1956) and a host of reforms came into place. The MOE was established and writes of the period:

> We have become part of the world, whether we like it or not. We can no longer remain isolated; the world has come to us. How can we meet this world without education? Must we—who once were the crossroads of civilisation—bow our heads in shame to our worldly visitors? How can we evaluate the 'gifts' that are offered us —ideologies, new customs, inventions and the ways of a new strange world? How can we protect ourselves against slogans and ideologies detrimental to the interests of our country? We can do none of these without education to give us understanding and strength to lead us. (MOE, 1956, p. 2)

Inevitably, however, little was accomplished, as Nepal's first experience of democracy (1951–1960) proved to be one of turmoil and governmental infighting. So much so that King

Mahendra dismissed parliament and took autocratic power in 1961 (Caddell, 2007b; Thapa, 2014).

King Mahendra implemented a partyless democracy (*Panchayat*) which operated for almost three decades. Mass education was introduced and by 1970, 32% of Nepali children were enrolled in primary school (MOE, 1971)[6]. The governing policy of one language, one costume, one religion and one culture carried out severe linguistic suppression (Tumbahang, 2009; Gellner & Sharkey, 1996). Through schools, the Hindu religion and other symbols of the 'nation' were spread throughout the country to create a unified identity (Weinberg, 2013; MOE, 1971). The national curriculum, textbooks and state-sponsored national history were written and illustrated to present this new vision (Bennike, 2015; Skinner & Holland, 2009). Schools were the agents and vehicles of the government; and these agents spoke Nepali (Caddell, 2007a) with 40% of primary school class time dedicated to learning Nepali.

This effort to change not only their relationship to the state, but the way Nepali people viewed their own 'culture', was met with obvious friction by those marginalised by it. Ironically, the political tools of the government, became increasingly places of protest and counter politics. Political parties with their own student and teacher unions began to establish themselves in schools and universities seeking to produce their own political cadres (Dhungana, 2012). Finally, in 1990 the People's movement succeeded in overthrowing the Panchayat regime (Bennike, 2015).

The last two and a half decades. Since the 1990s the country has moved in a very different direction to the previous decades. The *Panchayat* system was replaced with a multiparty

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[6] Although, it is understood that this growth was a result of community effort, not large-scale investment by the government (Bhatta, 2008, p. 1).

democracy and finally the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nature of the country was recognised. The new constitution reflected this in providing the basic right to preserve and promote one's language, script and culture and operate primary schooling in one's mother tongue (Government of Nepal, 1990).

Despite the continued exclusivity experienced by the most privileged social groups, the education system, particularly at the primary level, began to open up to a large section of the population. Increasingly, schooling became decentralised and educational policy addressed the traditionally disadvantaged and marginalised—the rural, minority ethnic communities, the Dalits[7] and the poor (World Bank, 2001). Through committed school building campaigns, new curricula, teacher training and the provision of free schooling and textbooks, the literacy and school enrolment rates improved[8]. By 2006 the primary student net enrolment was at 87% (Ministry of Health and Population, 2007).

This new era was signalled by the increasing involvement of aid agencies in developing and expanding Nepal's education system (Bhatta, 2011). A practice that continues with the SSRP receiving 17% of its working budget from its development partners (MOE, 2009, p. 99). The external influences of international development partners has been so dynamic that Bhatta (2011) argues that the ownership of education has "shifted from 'ownership over content' to 'ownership over process' ", primarily because the content has been pre-determined by global education bodies such as the UN (Bhatta, 2011, p. 23). Thus, the MOE,

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[7] A Dalit, in the tradition of the Hindu caste system is a member of the lowest caste

[8] By the 2001 census 44% of those above 15 years of age were literate (MOEAS, 2003, p. B), 3.4 million children were enrolled in about "23,000 primary schools, 360,000 students in about 3,300 secondary schools and over 80,000 students enrolled at the tertiary level" (World Bank, 2001, p. ii).

in its provision of education, must balance not only national and local demand but also international intentions.

Issues remaining. Although authorised 14 years ago, the Nation Action Plan succinctly sums up the continuing challenges that the Nepali government faces as it seeks to school its citizens:

> Rugged mountainous topography, lack of economic means and resources, diverse social contexts including ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversities are rather difficult to contend with. Added to these challenges is the continued inertia of feudal social dynamics that used the system of caste hierarchy, ethnicity and language as a means of political and social domination by the elite over the poor and the disadvantaged. It is often critically pointed out that the educational development so far has been addressing the needs of the people who have stakes in the existing social circumstances. A question is raised as to whether this is contributing to the perpetuation of the obscurantist social and economic situation. (MOEAS, 2003, p. 3)

Educational progress has been made, but it is being contained by prevailing societal issues. The World Bank's (2015b) review of EFA policy's ambitious supply-sided goals related to access to schooling, were deemed substantially effective. Classrooms and toilets were renovated and built, scholarships provided to the marginalised, and women's literacy and skills training classes were expanded. However, in catering for demand, little was achieved concerning the quality and relevance of schooling. Despite these efforts children were not staying longer in school and achievement results had not significantly improved (World Bank, 2015b). The SSRP recognised that efficiency and effectiveness were being challenged

by the continued prevalence of social exclusion, inequity, "low levels of learning achievements and persistently high drop-out and repetition rates" (Bennett, 2005; Bennett, Dahal & Govindasamy, 2008; MOE, 2009, p.10). As the education environment and access to social opportunity has been historically skewed in favour of the elite (World Bank, 2001), there continues to be a feeling among the social and indigenous minorities, that the system is weighted against their interests (Tumbahang, 2009; MOEAS, 2003).

Schools continue to be places of politics. The government has used education for four decades to deliberately restrict large segments of the population from power and to perpetuate the status quo. The student movements of the 1980s, and later during the Maoist revolution, positioned schools as political battlefields (Dharel, Dangol, Rai, & Maharjan, 2013). The mid-term review of SSRP (MOE, 2012) and particularly the European Union's final evaluation of the same policy (Poyck, Koirala, Aryal, & Sharma, 2016) reports that the politicisation of public school teachers has inhibited the state and local government's ability to manage its teachers and rendered many of its policy intentions unsuccessful. The SMCs school, set up to decentralise decision making and create ownership, have themselves become so highly politicised, that the schools are now centres for politics, and the political parties put forward their own candidates as local teachers (Government of Nepal, 2012).

It also remains difficult to see how Nepal can practically embrace the schooling of its multi-ethnic multi-lingual students. Despite being enshrined in the constitution there is a long way to go to seeing these cultures enshrined in the curriculum and management of schools. Providing mother tongue education (MTE) is not a simple task in a country with over 120 different languages and 14 different scripts (CBS, 2011, p. 4). The increasing importance of the English language (MOE, 2009) and a government that recognises that is does not have the

resources to provide MTE (Curriculum Development Centre, 2007) compounds these matters.

Issues of ethnicity and caste, religion, gender, location and poverty continue to see many marginalised by the very schooling the government is seeking to provide. Although dynamically improving, especially in primary schools, female teachers and students continue to be under-represented in schooling per se (CEDAW, 2011; UNESCO, 2006b; World Bank, 2016)[9]. Further, despite the recent popular uprisings and efforts to ensure the inclusion of the marginalised in governance there is still considerable high caste Hindu dominance of all major offices and structures (Pherali, Smith & Vaux, 2011; SFCG, 2015). Those that have not traditionally been owners of power, continue to be unrepresented in policy making and curriculum design and frequently see schooling as alien to their own context (Acharya, 2007; Pherali, Smith & Vaux, 2011).

There is a growing and palpable dissatisfaction with public schooling. This has resulted in a rising growth of private schooling, which in itself is threatening the policy aims to provide quality education for all (Joshi, 2014). Public schools are increasingly becoming places for the poor and disadvantaged; while the children of the elite are found in urban, well-resourced private schools, taught not in Nepali but in English (Chen, 2012; Mathema, 2013). These elite also further their children's education and economic interests by sending them abroad for university studies and work (CBS, 2011)[10]. Those who perform well on the Year 10 School Leaving Certificate (SLC) are typically students of private urban schools. These

[9] There were in total 12 female teachers in 1975 by 2003 24.06% of teachers were female with most female teachers employed on contract not a permanent basis (UNESCO, 2006b). However, by 2016, 42% of teachers were female (World Bank, 2016).

[10] The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS, 2011) reveals that 40% of the absentee population in the Kathmandu valley are absent for study purposes.

students also see the teaching profession as a last choice career, if one at all (UNESCO, 2009). The majority of teachers and applications for teacher training come from those with third division pass rates in SLCs and Bachelor degrees (UNESCO, 2009, p. 24)[11]. These disparities and lingering issues not only undermine the provision of education for all and but also establish its opposite—unequal education for all. It is this issue of equity that is central to a discussion on remote education.

The lack of published literature on remote education may appear to be simply a matter of a literature gap, a short coming, however, it is a lingering multidimensional issue. The recent political history raises questions as to why populations in remote areas have been historically unstudied. I wonder if it is the lack of access to isolated areas or their periphery that has restricted study of remoteness or more so a centre based and racial or caste based disinterest in the indigenous, and mainly Tibetan background ethnicities, that have contributed to the lack of literature on remote education.   Such indigenous ethnicities have long been marginalised, disempowered and unheard in policy and national development. Without focused study, informed strategy and committed practice, the national mainstream education policy will do little to address the marginalised in remote areas. The development of equitable inclusion of those in the remote begins with building both physical and social roadways and bridges to such contexts.

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[11] In 2009 there were no applications from those who passed in their Bachelor degree in the first division (UNESCO, 2009, p. 24).

2.3.   Remote Schooling in Nepal

Until now I have used this review of the literature to consider how the education system works in Nepal, how it has been supplied, and in light of that some of the issues that continue to have a strong influence on schooling. Within this context it is appropriate that I now open a discussion on remote education. To do so, I firstly define the key term of remoteness and then characterise it in relation to remote schooling in Nepal.

Defining remoteness. The concept of remoteness and its use within this thesis needs to be defined before proceeding. It would be appropriate to use an official Nepali government definition of the term; however, although the term *remote* is used in policy documents I was unable to locate any published literature in Nepal that defines remote. Instead the geographic terms mountain and the mountain district[12] are used. Mountainous districts have widely differing geographical and infrastructure conditions ranging from southern hilly areas connected by roads and airports, to sparsely populated alpine regions accessible only by walking trails. Thus, statistics for mountain districts are not indicative of remote areas as such. Further, if sample locations from these mountainous areas are taken for reporting, in most cases they are not actually representative of mountainous areas but rather the southern more accessible rural areas of the district. I have found no agreement between the terms remote and mountainous; and therefore, the term mountainous or mountain district, do not satisfactorily describe remote. Consequently, I used a number of non-governmental sources to define it.

Typically, remoteness is defined in relation to a population's physical ability to access to centres of services and markets and thus, ultimately, as opposite and deficit to such centres.

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[12] Mountain districts are the most northerly districts of Nepal and consequently are the most mountainous.

The Australian government uses the Accessibility Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA) to define remote as "restricted accessibility of goods, services and opportunities for social interaction" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001, p. 19). To do so the ARIA scales the population of communities and the distance and time it takes them to access urban service centres. Within this scale there are five categories, major cities, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2014). This is a common way of understanding remoteness and is also used in Canada (Alasia, Bédard, Bélanger, Guimond & Penney, 2017) and by the European Union (OECD, 2011). Unusually, in India it is the population of municipalities, not their geographic location to service centres, that is used define urban or rural (Census of India, 2011).

When considering Nepal, in Dempsey's (2016) work with United States Aid for International Development (USAID) the definition of remoteness as difficulty of access to goods, services and transportation is used and Dempsey determined a quantifiable scale that specifically focused on measuring "distance from roads, airports, and district headquarters; slope and elevation; land cover; and presence of rivers" (2016, n.p.). This visual scale is presented in Figure 2.1 and clearly shows the mountainous north of Nepal as highly remote. This scale is especially useful as distance is measured not in kilometres, but time taken to reach service centres. The scale incorporates geographical features, such as mountain slopes, rivers and vegetation (time taken going up and down mountains or to find a bridge to cross a river), in its calculations of remoteness. It must be noted that, due to accessibility to airports and established road networks, parts of the northern mountainous districts are more accessible and are thus not considered highly remote (indicated in yellow or even green).
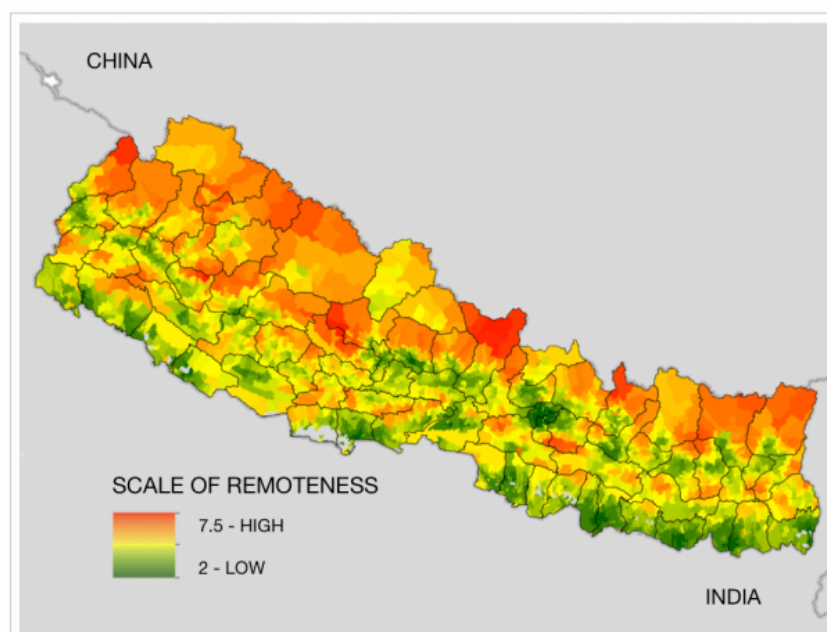
Figure 2.1 Dempsey's scale of remoteness in Nepal.

Source: Dempsey, 2016, n.p.

However, if the definition of remoteness is inclusive of the notion of inaccessibility to services, then socio-cultural issues must also be considered. It is not only geography or road networks that distance people from access. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) stated that, "social exclusion is entrenched in the political, economic, and social fabric of Nepal and has been a defining feature of its historical development" (ADB, 2010, p. 1). This is so much the case that those who are female, not Hindu, not first language speakers of Nepali, Dalit and/or Janajati have been, and in many ways still are, distanced from power, ownership and access to services[13] (ADB, 2010; Gurung, 2009; Acharya, 2007; UNDP, 2009). As with geographic exclusion, social exclusion can affect education, wealth, and income. In many (if not most) countries, socially excluded groups display lower educational attainment, less wealth, and lower incomes (Sparkes, 1999; Gurung & Tamang, 2014; DFID, 2005;

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[13] The term Janajati refers to indigenous ethnicities.

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World Bank, 2006a, 2006b; Sen, 2000; Loury, 1999; Barron, 2008). This nature of social exclusion is broader than locality and would perceivably see parts of urban areas defined as remote in relation to social exclusion (Bakrania, 2015).

Unfortunately, there is no clear scale to map social remoteness as in Dempsey's figure (2016). Despite considerable census data and access to tools, such as the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)[14], little has been done to map social exclusion in Nepal. It is also well beyond the scope of this research to develop such a geo-social scale. I will consequently settle with my own composite definition of remote taken from the ARIA and the Dempsey scales.

Remote areas are sparsely populated locations that have very restricted accessibility to goods, services and socio-political engagement. In Nepal, restricted access is characterised by physical distances measured in time needed to travel to the District Headquarters or other major urban service centres and by social exclusion which also distances people from access.

This is the definition I use throughout this dissertation for considering education in such an environment of geographically and socially restricted access.

However, while I use this concept of remoteness it is important to acknowledge that it is socially constructed. The term remote conjures up more than concepts of proximity and isolation but also perceptions of what those who live in remote areas are like, how they live, and what they do. In Nepal such perceptions are historically discriminatory and fuelled not only by modernist ideology and development theory but concepts by racial and religious superiority (Pigg, 1992, 1993).

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[14] In 2018 the Government of Nepal (2018) published a comprehensive MPI report, however, it has not been used to map remote areas but provinces.

The term remote is interchangeable and synonymous with marginality and periphery and typically defined in opposition to central urban areas (Nielsen & Cummings, 2013; Vodden, Baldacchino, & Gibson, 2015). By doing so, remote areas are relegated to the perception as inferior and deficit or, in simplicity, they and their communities are defined by their lack. It is cities that "are seen as the norm of progressive education and modern(ist) reform" (Roberts & Green, 2013, p.168). The review of the literature provided in section 2.3 adopts such comparisons; comparing urban areas with the periphery of rural and remote and highlighting the 'negative' characteristics of remote areas. This is largely in part due of the lack of literature but also because the literature frames the remote with such comparisons[15]. In fact, in the case of Nepal, the anthropological work of Pigg (1992, 1993) found that the negative perception of periphery or 'village' was so pervasive that it was also held by those living in the villages.

There is danger in defining something by what is not, for in doing so it is possible to miss what it might actually be. Discussion and debate is needed to understand the imaginative geography of the remote; to understand its positioning both historically and currently (Said, 1978; Roberts, 2013). The experiences and the perceptions of 18 teachers voiced in this study do, begin knowledge and contribute to this discussion on the insider perspective of teaching in our remoteness.

Education in Nepal's remoteness. Using the dominate paradigm on contrasts between urban and rural population this section presents the disparity between living standards and

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[15] The lack of literature of remote education in Nepal arguably indicates its position as periphery and lack of importance in educational research and policy in Nepal. This lack of understanding of the remote however causes problems between central provision of education and local contextual needs. The typical version of remote

education of urban and rural populations. I use the comprehensive Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) (CBS, 2011) to vividly highlight some of the disparity between urban, rural and mountain areas; differences particularly in relation to access to services and facilities and to literacy and education. Combined with the NLSS I also use other literature to examine remote education in relation to a selection of dominant features applicable to this research which are restricted to accessibility, literacy, education, poverty and ethnicity.

Restricted accessibility. Nepal's population lives within a mix of different typographic conditions from flat lands in the south, lower and middle hills in the centre and mountains in the north (Tumbahang, 2009). Census data shows that those who dwell in the hills and mountains, often have less access to basic facilities. On average, it takes two and half hours for people from these areas to reach a hospital, bank or an Internet access point. In mountain areas (see Table 2.3) this average extends, with over 50% of households taking three hours or more to reach the same facilities. Consequently, a day of return travel or more is often needed to access these facilities.

Table 2.4

Time taken to reach nearest facilities in mountain areas

	0–30 minutes	30 minutes–1 hour	1–2 hours	2–3 hours	3 hours and more
Primary school	92,73	7,27	0	0	0
Secondary school	49,1	29	16,2	5,7	0
Hospital	12,8	4,6	18,7	13,1	50,8
Market	25,2	10,3	21	14,5	28,9
Bank	13,9	3,4	15,7	11,1	55,9
Internet	16,4	5,4	18,5	9,3	50,5
Police station	24	18,5	31,9	19,5	6,2

Source: NLSS (CBS, 2011, p. 77).

The census data (CBS, 2011) vividly shows the impact geographic isolation can have on access to markets, services and schooling. Within 30 minutes the vast majority of those who live in urban areas can have access to almost all services (secondary schooling, roads, transport, markets, banks, phones, clinics and hospitals). Children who live in Nepal's urban areas need only travel six minutes to reach the closest primary school and 10 minutes for a secondary school. However, when it comes to secondary schooling in rural areas children must spend four times the amount of time travelling to school or more. In the remote location this research is concerned with, there are two secondary schools for 18 villages. Attending these schools may require hours, if not days, of hiking to access. This realistically means that many children have either no access to or must live away from their homes in order to access secondary schooling. While the lack of transport restricts access to the remote areas it also limits access to services, markets and technology.

The effects of restricted access to technology can easily be overlooked in policy and student outcomes. The examples of electricity and animal husbandry demonstrate the dynamic influences technology can have on labour demands and ultimately on students. The access to electricity has been linked directly to chances of enrolment (Kulkarni & Barnes, 2017, p. 13), student attendance and broader effects on health, productivity and telecommunications (Gaye, 2007). In remote Nepal a lack of electricity means that 94% of mountain households use wood for heating and cooking (CBS, 2011). The need of firewood creates an incessant labour demand to which children must contribute. Isolation from markets and roads means that cattle are kept for ploughing and dairy products. However, feeding cattle creates more incessant labour demands which also is predominately the work of children[16]. In both of these examples the lack of access creates considerable labour demands which urban children never face as they flick a switch for light and buy food from a nearby shop. Child labour challenges children's time, affecting school preparation adversely and causing tardiness in school attendance.

Limited access to services also effects remote area teachers. They are cut off from options of professional development and further education. If they are from outside the community, they may also face issues of isolation from the communities due to the very different cultures and languages in their work locations. Being isolated also restricts accountability as urban based government officials are reluctant to hike to these locations to inspect schools (Mathema, 2007)[17]. These examples I have given illustrate the impact restricted access can have on schooling and student outcomes.

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[16] 74% of rural household are engaging in foraging for fodder for their cattle (CBS, 2011).

[17] While remoteness limits access, Singh finds that even in Kathmandu public schools are infrequently visited and supervised by supervisors, RPs and training staff (Singh, 2016)

Literacy. Those who live in rural areas struggle with literacy in both the national language and their own mother tongues (Dundar, Béteille, Riboud & Deolalikar, 2015; World Bank, 2015b; Friedman, Schwantner, Spink, Tabata & Waters, 2016). For example, in Pakistan in 2015 rural literacy rates were staggeringly poor. Illiteracy in rural areas was as high as 81% among women, while in urban Punjab these figures were reversed (Ministry of Education, Trainings and Standards in Higher Education Academy of Educational Planning and Management, 2014, pp. 25–26). Nepal's NLSS indicates that there are vast differences in literacy levels in urban, rural, and mountain areas. As indicated in Figure 2.2 in mountainous areas of Nepal two thirds of men and only a third of women were considered literate. However, in Kathmandu almost all men and three quarters of women are literate. In fact, in rural areas, only one out of two people over the age of 15 were literate in 2010 (CBS, 2011).
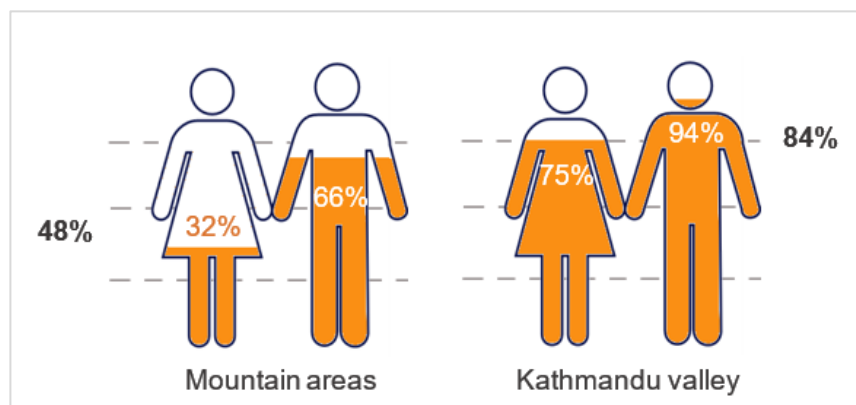
Figure 2.2 School net attendance by location and gender.

Source: CBS, 2011.

Parental literacy is dynamically important in supporting children's learning (UNESCO, 2006a; Dickson, Gregg & Robinson, 2013; Banerji, R., Berry, J. & Shortland, 2014; Drajea & O'Sullivan, 2014; Lamb, Jackson, Walstab & Huo, 2015). The NASA for Year 8 Maths, Science and the Nepali language indicated that children of illiterate parents and especially

fathers "achieved lowest and the achievement of students increases as the fathers' education increases up to Bachelor degree" (ERO, 2013, p. 106). Further, the lack of schooling in their mother tongue contributes to the literacy problems (MacKenzie, 2009; Bühmann, & Trudell, 2008; Skutnabb-Kangas & Mohanty, 2009; Benson, 2004). If this is the case then rural children, whose parents are less literate, less educated and non-Nepali speaking, are clearly at a disadvantage when compared to urban children.

Education. Nepal continues to experience a steady increase in school attendance and school completion rates, but there is continuing disparity in rural and remote locations, especially in relation to gender. The NLSS statistics indicated that over 84% of rural women aged over 30 have never attended school. Men of the same age, however, were less likely to have never attended school (39%). Those living in urban areas fared better; with a mean of 65% of women and men having attended school. Improvements in the provision of education have increased schooling attendance, for example, as Figure 2.3 indicates, among youth aged 6–29, at least nine out of ten urban youth, and eight out of ten rural youth have attended school.
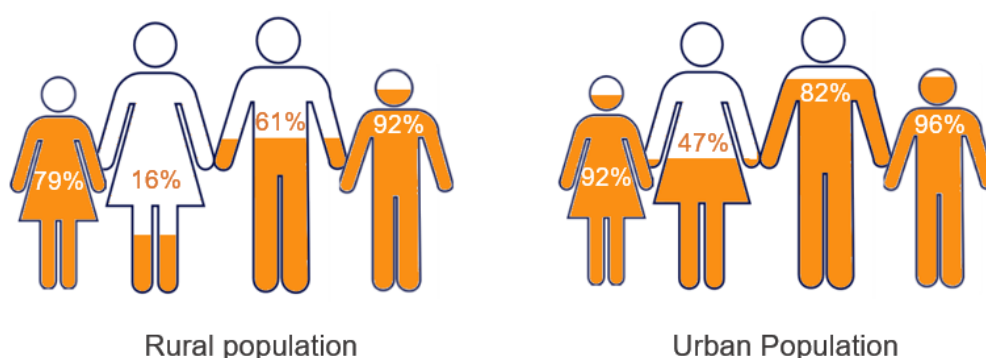
Figure 2.3 Attendance by male and females aged 6–29 and 30–59.

Source: CBS, 2011, p. 94.

It is important to keep in mind that these statistics were in relation to actual attendance and not for how long they had spent in school. When this is considered the disparity is even more apparent. Kathmandu Valley's youth on average spent three more years in school than those in the mountains. They completed Year 10 and their SLCs while those living in rural areas dropped out of school between Years 7 and 8 (CBS, 2011).

The graph in Figure 2.4, on the net rate of attendance in schooling, shows that across Nepal, regardless of location, there are relatively similar completion levels of primary schooling. The figure shows a generally larger population of female attendance in primary and secondary schooling. However, in mountain areas there are alarming drop-off rates in net attendance post-primary schooling and 85% of the mountain population began school but only 15% finished Year 10. Undoubtedly that lack of immediate access to secondary schooling contributes to such outcomes.
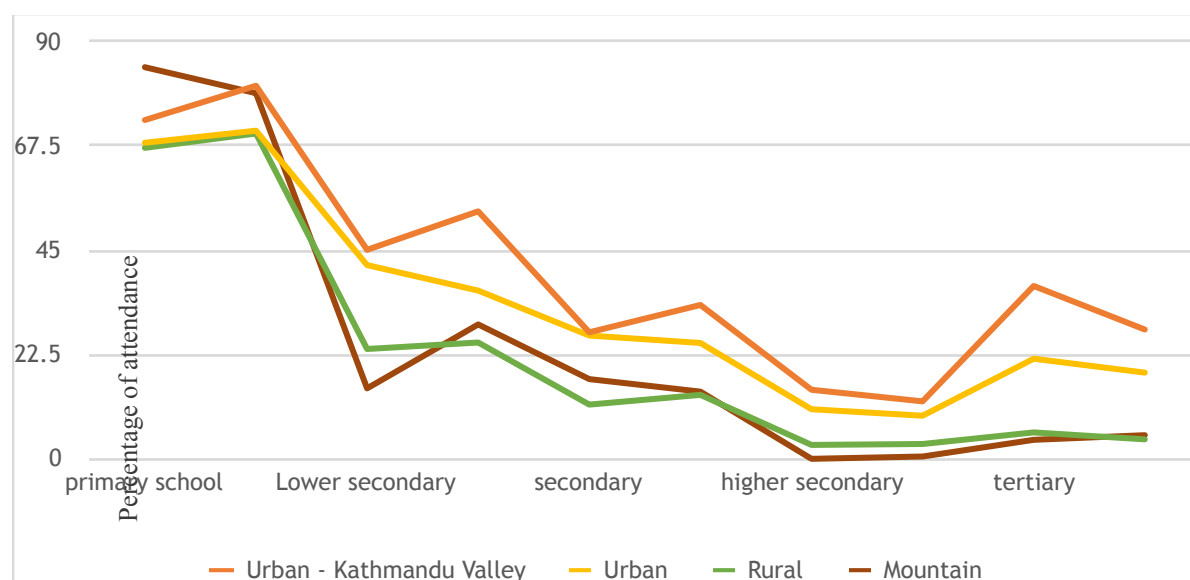
Figure 2.4 Net attendance by level and gender.

Source: CBS, 2011, p. 97.

Significantly high out-of-school populations (school age child not enrolled in school), poor schooling completion rates and below standard learning outcomes are all too common in remote areas. In South Asia, a UNICEF study (2015b) found that in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh the majority of out-of-school children and those not completing formal schooling lived in rural and remote areas. When public schools from rural areas in South Asia were compared to urban areas statistics indicated they were more likely to have a larger number of children out of school (Dundar et al., 2014), performing at a poorer level (UNICEF, 2015a) and boys (UNICEF, 2015b). Looking more broadly, in Australia the rural/urban disparity is so great that "rural students are up to one and a half years behind their metropolitan peers in the National Assessment Program" (Roberts, 2017, n.p.) and only one in two actually complete Year 12 (Lamb et al., 2015, p. vi). The European Union (EU) reports that many of the regions that have the highest level of early leavers from school are remote (Eurostat, 2018). In every Nepali government standardised assessment of student learning, rural and remote children are stated as performing more poorly across all subjects (ERO, 2013 & 2015) than urban children. This is in part because rural learning environments are vastly different from urban ones.

Remote schools are usually smaller than urban schools. Because they are smaller they face restrictions in curriculum or program options, resources, and access to specialised staff, support for children with special learning needs and teachers have limited access to professional development (Lamb, Glover, & Walstab 2014; World Bank, 2010a; Ledger, Vidovich & O'Donoghue, 2014). Small schools find it difficult to attract good and suitable teachers because they struggle with the work load of teaching in small schools, i.e., multi-

grade teaching, minimum staffing, administration tasks, the lack of learning resources and the poor physical environment of schools (NCEE, 2014; Lamb et al., 2014; Taole, 2014).

In Nepal inclusive education policy states that communities will have "access to quality education in remote and scarcely populated areas" (MOE, 2016, p. 128) through the means of Multi-Grade Teaching (MGT). This solution appears to be driven by economic rationalism rather than pedagogical preference, as the Nepali government balances access with the expense of providing education to small student populations. Despite literature that shows the benefit of multi-grade schooling (UNESCO, 2015; Little, 2006 & 2007) there is little literature to suggest that Nepal has ensured that its teachers and schools are equipped to provide such a pedagogical solution. The lack of sustained coherent commitment from policy makers towards teacher training, provision of learning materials and parental education limits the intention of policy and potential of MGT (CERID, 2003b & 2004a).

The learning environments of remote schools are vastly different from urban areas. A government study of student achievement states that rural and remote schools have poorer quality of instruction and facilities and that educational materials are "either difficult to find or virtually unavailable" (ERO, 2013, p. 4). Given that the national education policy links the quality of school learning environments to good quality learning (MOE, 2009 & 2016), rural and remote children are clearly disadvantaged.

In their UNSECO paper Sabates, Akyeampong, Westbrook and Hunt (2010) provide a useful summary of supply and demand causes which contribute to children leaving school early. In relation to supply of education, common causes include distance to school, quality of schooling and the learning environment, "inappropriate language of instruction, teacher

absenteeism and, in the case of girls, school safety" (Sabates et al., 2010, p. 21). In relation to demand, issues include poverty, disability, lack of parental education, marginalisation, ethnicity, cultural understanding of gender, life changes and value perceptions about the purpose and benefit of education.

In remote areas families face the need to send their children away to the urban areas for further education (secondary and tertiary and oftentimes even primary). Migration based census data indicates that education is one of the major reasons for migration from rural areas to urban areas (CBS, 2011). A targeted study of two ethnicities living in remote mountainous of Nepal found that education was the leading reason for outmigration with 71–75% of youth aged 10–19 studying in predominately urban settings (Childs, Craig, Beall & Basnyat, 2014, p. 88). The reality deepens when it is understood that most youth who leave remote areas never return to them (Childs et al., 2014; Shrestha & Shrestha, 2014). In this study, access to education, and perceptions about quality were the major driving force for relocation.

Parental perceptions about quality are especially predominant in decisions about which school their child attends. Private schools are perceived as higher quality and public schools as inferior. This is mostly due to the relative SLC pass rates. Figure 2.5, depicts a comparison of public and private school SLC pass rates in remote mountain districts and Kathmandu. It indicates that only between two to four students in remote public schools pass their SLC while in the city at least six out of ten pass (OCE, 2015). Completion of SLC is required for further education. The fact that public schools are unable to graduate the majority of their students is troubling indeed and more so since the majority of public schools are located in rural areas.
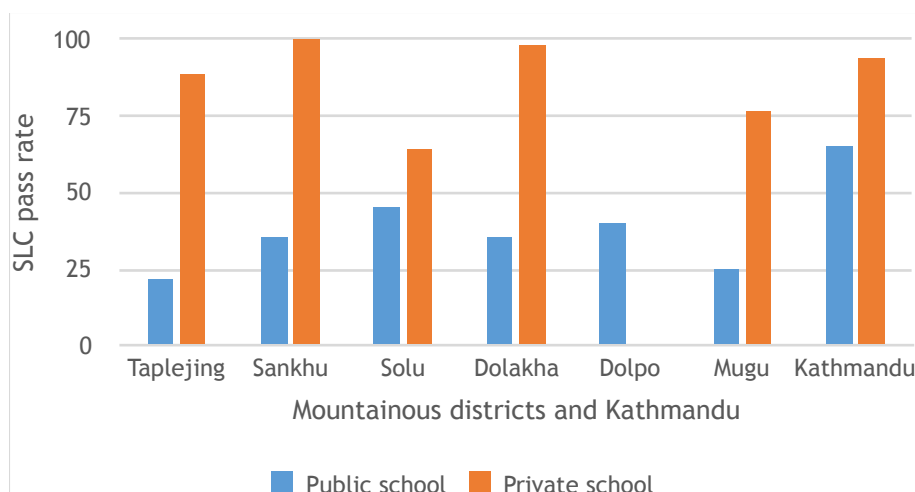
Figure 2.5 SLC pass rate (select mountain districts vs Kathmandu).

Source: OCE, 2015, p. 3–7.

Poverty. Poverty, although not only a remote phenomenon, is common in remote areas. In fact, there is substantial literature to suggest that due to restricted access to service goods and markets remote areas are typically poorer than urban areas and due to this economic condition, rural and remote students have poorer achievement outcomes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017; Bird, McKay & Shinyekwa, 2010; World Bank, 2010a). In South Asia there is a strong prevalence of household poverty in rural and remote areas. In Bangladesh 70% of those in poverty live in rural areas (World Bank, 2014). Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform's Multidimensional Poverty Index (2016) states that just over half of those who live in rural areas are considered poor, with education deprivation itself being found to be the greatest contributor to poverty in such areas (Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, Pakistan, 2016). In Nepal, 81% of those who are considered poor live in rural areas (ADB, 2017, p. 10). These poor[18] attend the least amount of schooling in

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[18] The NLSS divides income into five quintiles (poorest, second, third, fourth, richest). In the absence of a definition of poor in the document, I have used the first three quintiles as an indication of poor.

the country (approximately six and a half years), they rarely pass their SLC exams (9%) and almost never complete tertiary studies (CBS, 2011, p. 97).

Ethnicity (culture and language). The majority of the population in Nepal does not speak Nepali as their first language. In about 5–10% of schools, children have little to no understanding of Nepali prior to attending school (ERO, 2013). Remote areas in Nepal are predominately populated by minority ethnicities. Figure 2.6 provides a visual representation of the ethnical make up of Nepal and clearly indicates that the remote North is populated almost exclusively by Bhotia (small Tibetan ethnicities) and Sherpa ethnicities.
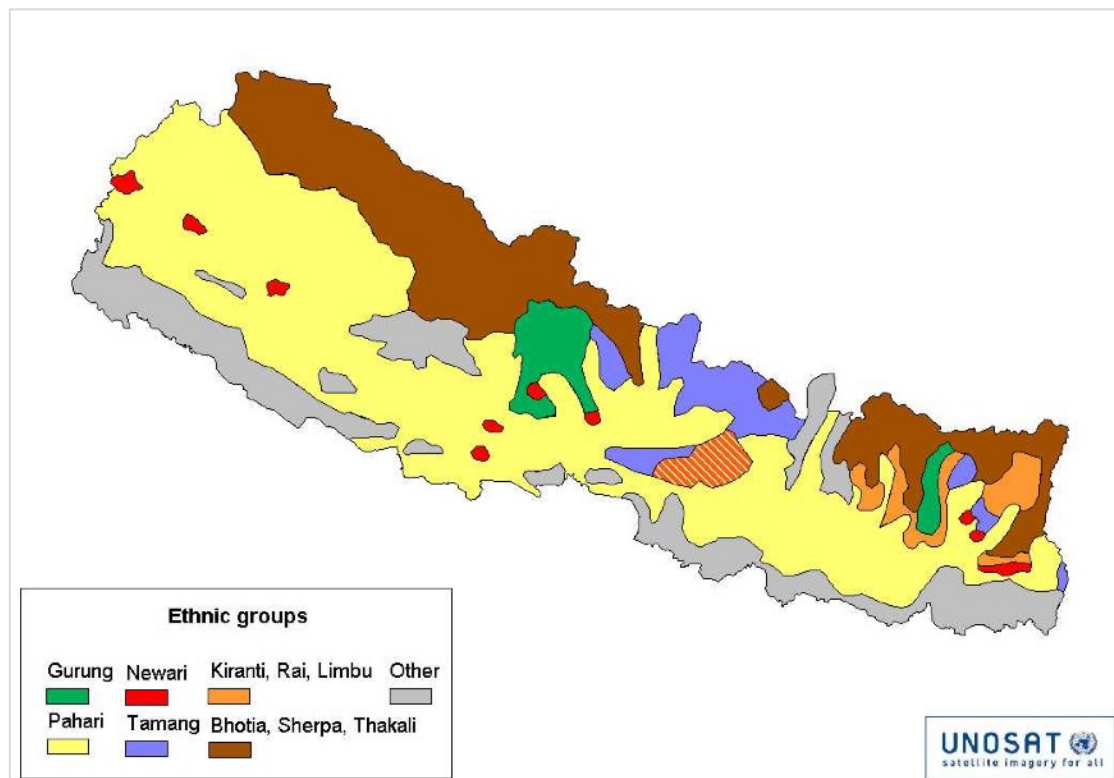
Figure 2.6 Generalised depiction of the languages of Nepal.

Source: UNOSAT, 2003, n.p.

In terms of education this is important to consider because matters of ethnicity, culture and language have dynamic influences on student learning. The NASA in Years 3, 5 and 8 all

show that children from non-Nepali speaking minority ethnicities all perform at a lower level on national testing than their Nepali speaking urban peers (ERO, 2013 & 2015). Other than those discussed so far, there are two prominent reasons for such outcomes which are related to two areas, i.e., culture and language.

Schools are often abstracted from the local context. In recent history the government has used schools to promote mainstream Nepali culture and, despite changes in policy, some aspects of schooling mean that for Janajati students putting on school uniforms and entering school is in many ways comparable to entering a different world dominated by a different language (Singh, 2011). A UNICEF study by Acharya (2007) found that the lack of a link between home and school culture alienates non-Nepali children from school (Acharya, 2007). Rural and remote economic activity does not fit well within urban school-based structures. Families, inclusive of children, who are traditionally involved in transhumance lifestyles (pastoral semi-nomadic migration), and even at times those engaged in subsistence agricultural activity, face hard decisions when considering their children's schooling and their workforce needs (Basnet & Banskota, 2010).

To be clear, policy and the national curriculum framework make efforts to ensure the relevance of schooling. These policies support the employment of local teachers, make provisions for the design and use of a localised curriculum (MOE, 2009), financial incentives for the marginalised to attend school, and allow schools the authority to decide on performance targets, their school calendar, classroom organisation, and instructional methods, and at primary level, even the medium of instruction (MOE, 2009, p. 19). However, little seems to be working. With the exception of Pradha's study of Tharu culture, (2017) there is almost no published record of the implementation of this curriculum, but rather the

implementation of an optional English subject in its place (ERO, 2013). SMCs are inadequately equipped to create their own curriculum and teachers, regardless of their cultural background are not able to incorporate Janajati cultures—identity, culture, history, language and religion—into the learning and teaching. Therefore, and by default, this approach promotes the dominant culture (Acharya, 2007, ERO, 2013).

Language is a formidable barrier to learning. Those who speak Nepali as a first language "speak first, fast and sit in the front" (Acharya, 2007, p. 45). Those who do not, and I have argued that they live in predominately rural and remote areas, face a considerable disadvantage. The right to mother tongue education is seen by all policy designers, both national and global, as central in creating and promoting ownership, inclusion, greater attendance and improving quality education (Government of Nepal, 2007; MOE, 2009).

Still, it is proving difficult in practice to provide MTE. Despite governmental commitment, there is a general lethargy from policy directors down to classroom teachers towards implementation. The joint review of the SSRP indicates that this is part do to the the lack of awareness and advocacy programs and also the lack of evidence from pilot programs that MTE is improving student leaning (GFA, 2016). There is also virtually no framework, access to resources and training or teacher preparedness which, combined with the sheer variety of languages in Nepal, form almost insurmountable obstacles (Yadava, 2007; Save the Children, 2007; Taylor, 2010; UNESCO, 2011; Santwona Memorial Academy, 2012b; ERO, 2013)[19]. At the local level, there is also a lack of written and oral language resources (inclusive of textbooks and other learning materials), proficient language instructors and a lack of funding to develop and provide these (Phyak, 2007, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006). The onus for

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[19] Lack of resources,

funding is consequently left in the hand of ethnic communities and NGO/INGOs. As such,

a government study found that only 25 to 30 schools had implemented any form of

multilingual education (MOE, 2014). Further, despite ineffective policy making and poor

efforts to implement them, a Finnish study, conducted by the Finnish Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, found that, "teachers are hardly trained to manage non-Nepali classrooms, very few

teachers are available who can teach in children's mother tongue or deliver bilingual

education, and that teachers and parents are unaware of language related

discourses" (Acharya, 2007, p. 45).

At the local community level there appears to be mixed appreciation of the MTE policy.

Phyak (2011) in his study of a pilot MTE program found that parents recognise the worth of

MTE as it helped engage students in learning. Further it also made schools more accessible

to parents, who had been excluded due to their poor Nepali language skills, felt more capable

in accessing the school and supporting their children's education and helped address and

encourage the "cultural, ethnic and historical identities and epistemology of the indigenous

people" (p. 141). However, the same study found that parents lacked of awareness of MTE,

felt held their children back from learning Nepali and English, the languages of economic and

social mobility. Pherali, et al. (2011) found the leaders of indigenous ethnic groups, similarly,

both favoured the development of MTE but also feared that in may isolate them from wider

society[20]. This later concern has merit as language has historically been used to do exactly

this. Further, the identity politics of the last decades continue to see MTE as not simply a

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[20] Yadava (2007) reports that of 58 indigenous ethnic group organisations 97 percent had
positive attitudes towards MTE particularly as it elevated and added value to the importance
of their own language.

pedagogical choice for better learning but a way to ensure the cultural integrity and strength (Phyak, 2011).

Despite this, while MTE is acknowledged as a key component of quality and inclusive education and cultural identity, it is English that is the true language of power, economic opportunity and the vehicle of mobility. Its national and global significance has meant that Nepal's private schools use English as their medium of instruction and increasingly public schools are moving in this direction ("Govt. plans teacher training", 2015; MOE, 2016). And as mentioned, for such reasons parents are rushing to enrol their children in private schools. It is vividly clear that value is given to the first world language of English, even above Nepali. It is not so apparent that there is a similar value given to MTE at either Central, District, or Community levels.

2.4. Conclusion

Through the use of literature this chapter has provided both an overview of education in Nepal and characterisation of education in its remote areas and thus, to background the research question:

> What are the challenges of remote education and being a teacher in a specific remote location in Nepal?

An understanding of Nepal's education system and the way education has been used by the state is necessary for this research. This is particularly important as many of the salient issues that affect the education system relate to the political use of schooling and to marginalisation. Despite considerable political unrest, Nepal has made substantial improvements in providing access to schooling and in recent years embraced inclusivity in

both policy and increasingly in action. However, enduring issues of politics, ethnicity, caste, religion, gender, location and poverty continue to see many Nepalis marginalised by the very education the government is seeking to provide. It also remains difficult to see how Nepal will practically embrace the schooling of its multi-ethnic, multi-lingual students and address the growing and palpable dissatisfaction with public schooling.

A review of literature on remote education in Nepal found that, in comparison to most other areas of Nepal, students from remote areas are considerably disadvantaged. Remote areas face challenges from having restricted access to road networks and service centres. Schools are small and isolated from curriculum choices, resources, support, training and accountability, and the teacher is also isolated from training, support and accountability structures. Remote schools operate through multi-grade teaching which, more often than not, is less dynamic than policy intends. Remote areas are typified by poorer education levels and a greater presence of poverty. A number of supply and demand related issues result in remote children attending school less frequently, performing more poorly, feeling alienated, and being enrolled in private schools.

The literature I have reviewed here is not exhaustive but rather focused. It both introduces and explores the phenomenon of remote education and thus, provides a strong basis for a presentation and discussion of the participant lived experiences of teaching in remoteness. Thus, my examination of the literature backgrounds the research question.

It must be acknowledged that this review of literature is founded on a broad drawing together of topical writing. As mentioned, there is a no published literature in relation to remote education and teaching in Nepal. Thus, in the drawing together of literature this

review importantly adds to the knowledge education, teaching practice and equity policy of remote education in Nepal.

However, there are short comings in this review. While it has been possible to gain an understanding of education in Nepal by examining multiple studies in the literature, such an understanding is ultimately inadequate as the literature is not concerned with teachers primarily, nor the remote context. Critical review of remote education in Nepal has not been been possible to the extent I would have desired. I have instead termed this chapter literature background and in doing so sought to provide an introduction to the literature and the literature gap. In foregrounding this lack of literature, I ultimately justify the importance of this study and its contribution to the literature.

Before considering the findings, the design of the research, its methodology, its participants and remote location need to be outlined. In the following chapter I provide the reader with this understanding.

Figure 2.7 Photo of School 4.

Source: Author.

3.   Research Design

3.1.   Introduction

In this chapter I detail the design used within this research. The design is informed and guided by the constructivist approach to grounded theory advocated by Charmaz (2006). Charmaz stated that grounded theory consists of "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). This process is qualitative, deriving theory from field data, not one of hypothetical theory substantiated by data (Backman & Kyngäs, 1999). The participants' statements and actions are studied and through analytic processes, made sense of (Charmaz, 2006). These analytic processes involve a multistage process of collecting data, coding, comparing and categorising, theoretical sampling and saturating, sorting and generating theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006).

This methodology has been chosen specifically for its approach to ground the theory in the lived experiences of the participants. Thus, the use of grounded theory is perfectly situated for such a study, and, as I have stated, it is not about testing hypotheses. Rather, it is about generating statements about primary school teachers, teaching in a specific remote place, interpret reality. After all, sociological concepts are organic, integral parts of "social life rather than something artificially attached by remote experts" (Clair, Wasserman & Wilson, 2009, p. 358).

This chapter introduces the research, the participants and the location where they live and work. I explain my approach to data collection, analysis and theorising. The research

limitations and the specific ethical considerations, are presented before the summary of the research design concludes the chapter.

3.2. Research Question

This research question has been already stated in the introduction:

> What are the challenges of remote education and being a teacher in a specific remote location in Nepal?

It was also stated that this was not my initial question but rather a question that developed during initial data gathering. Initial questions were concerned with exploring the educational shift from remote public schools to urban private schools and considering if investment in TPD would help address this perceived shift. While interviewing, I became aware that the challenges of context were a more immediate concern than training; and thus the question was adjusted.

This development in questions occurs in grounded theory for two reasons. Firstly, grounded theory adopts an iterative process. Watling and Lingard (2102) explain:

> In contrast to most experimental, hypothesis-driven quantitative research, in which data collection is carefully controlled and deliberately not influenced by emerging results, grounded theory research involves performing data collection and data analysis simultaneously, with each informing the other … Findings that were unanticipated or that may represent a compelling area for further exploration are followed up in subsequent interviews with directed probes. In turn, the additional

information gained by directing the inquiry toward emerging areas shapes the ongoing analysis. (p. 6)

Charmaz (2006) explains that this simultaneous data collection and initial analysis "can help you go further and deeper into the research problem" (p. 48). Glaser agrees with this notion and argues that iterative processes are needed as the essential matters of the research problem are not able to be known beforehand (1978) and a certain amount of development is needed as the research phenomenon being studied is identified (1992). This stated, I now present the research participants and location.

3.3.   Research Participants and Location

The participants in this research are public primary school teachers who were in full-time employment in the public primary schools in the specific research location at the time of data collection. The rationale for these choices is:

- firstly, that the research location is characteristic of remote areas in Nepal as per the definition provided in Chapter 2.3; and

- secondly, that in the area there is a lack of secondary and private schools and thus such teachers to draw upon.

Remote areas are typically areas were the government is the major provider of education and were secondary schools are not readily accessible.

Eighteen participants chose to participate in this research. These participants have been teaching for approximately 4–30 years prior to the data gathering period and were employed on a permanent or temporary basis within their respective schools. Five of these teachers are

'Head Teachers' or 'Teaching Principals' who were involved in both teaching and school administration. The participants were not preselected or known to me prior to interviewing, but rather elected to be part of the research when I met them in the research location and presented them with information about the research[21]. In this thesis I use participant codes, rather than names, to de-identify participating teachers. These codes are a combination of 'T' for Teacher and a number for the individual teacher (T1–T18). Appendix A provides an outline of participant data such as aspects as age, work history, education levels and location of employment.

Research location. The research location is situated in remote North East Nepal. Due to ethical considerations, outlined later, the exact location and its corresponding district have not been identified in the research. As a result, to avoid identification of the specific location, a larger area, referred to as North East Nepal, forms the basis of the research.

Of the 75 administrative districts of Nepal, the North East Nepal area is made up of three districts: Solukhumbu, Sankhuwasabha and Taplejung. These, highlighted in Figure 3.1, are predominately rural and in the mountainous north which is considerably remote, as I defined in Chapter Two.

Within the North Eastern area of Nepal, a cluster of schools managed by a common education committee called a Resource Centre (RC) was chosen as the research location. This RC is made up of 18 public primary schools. The teachers that choose to participate in this research are employed in nine of these schools.

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[21] An information sheet about the research was provided in English and Nepali to all participants (English version provided as Appendix D and Nepali as Appendix E.

This location was selected due to its remoteness, as defined and characterised in Section 2.3. Access to the location is very restricted. The research location, referred to as *District Headquarters* for obscurity, can be reached by a 20 hour bus ride from Kathmandu or by a one and half hour aeroplane flight. A four-hour jeep ride on very rough terrain is the only form of transport north from the District Headquarters to *Road's End*, also name as such for obscurity. From here the closest villages in the research RC are a one and a half to two days walk north and the most remote areas in this RC are a further three to five days walk. While distances in kilometres are relatively short the mountainous terrain makes travel slower. References to distance in this thesis, unless otherwise stated, are generic of local inhabitants' travel times not my own, which regrettably are considerably slower. The geographic area and trails are discussed further in Chapter Four.

The specific research location is similar to other mountainous remote areas in Nepal as it almost exclusively populated by one distinct ethnicity or people group, referred to in the thesis as the 'local ethnicity'. These people, characteristic of the remote north of Nepal, have Tibetan ancestry; however, they have their own culture seen in their language, religion, economy, tradition and dress. The southern areas of the RC are also populated by a minority of other ethnicities.
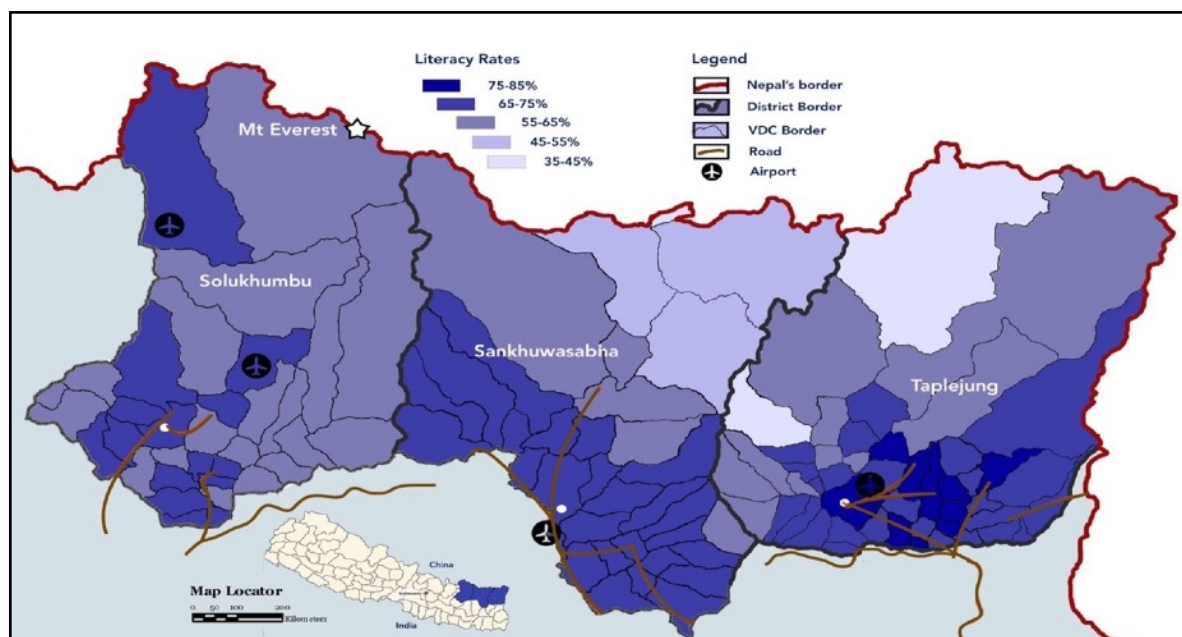
Figure 3.1 Literacy levels in North East Nepal.

Data source: CBSa, 2014, pp. 47–51, CBSb, 2014, pp. 43–47; and CBSc, 2014, pp. 54–61.

Map source: UN Nepal, 2009).

This location is further representative of remote areas in terms of educational standards. Those who live in remote North Eastern Nepal have below average levels of education and therefore, low literacy skills as well. As Figure 3.1 illustrates, across the north of the three districts the literacy rate was recorded in 2011 as between 35–65% with the exception of one VDC which is home to airfields and considerable commerce generated from Everest area tourism. In the hilly area in the south, where road networks make villages more accessible, literacy rates rise to 85%. At the time of the NLSS census (CBS, 2011), only 53% of the 10,000 residents of mountainous North Eastern Nepal had completed primary schooling and 11.6% completed their Class 10 SLC. As few as 80 people had graduate degrees; this is a figure of less than 2%. Of these 80, there were only 13 women in the entire North Eastern Nepal with graduate degrees (CBS, 2014).

3.4. Data Generation

The data was generated through in-depth interviews, field notes and observations. Interviews were one-on-one; however, in two cases group interviews were held. In the latter, the teachers spontaneously requested to be interviewed in a group. Efforts were made to store the data that was recorded securely to ensure its integrity. Due to the remoteness and the potential for loss or recording device failure from natural damage or power outage, voice data gathered from interviews was recorded on two separate recording devices. Once I returned to Kathmandu, interview audio data was then downloaded and stored securely on a computer and an Internet server as per CQUniversity's ethics guidelines.

Due to the remoteness of the research location, access to the participants was limited to only period of three week of data collection. This limitation compelled me to ensure a broader and more saturated data collection, and hence the design of the question schedule, while as open as possible, leaned towards a more semi-structured format than I initially desired. Interviews were carried out in 2016 while I was in the research location.

Interviews were conducted in Nepali as I am fluent in Nepali having lived and worked there for five years. As a consequence, translation was not used but rather, transcribed directly into English. While Nepali is a second language for all but three of the participants, they were comfortable to share their experiences via this language. These transcripts have been triple checked to ensure their integrity and I personally have transcribed the interviews twice. Audio data was also further transcribed by an independent translation service. I then crosschecked these transcribed translations against my own and assessed and edited them as necessary. This process, although time consuming and expensive, has ensured that the voice

of the teachers is authentically represented in the English transcripts. It also proved a valuable way to familiarise myself with the voices of the teachers.

Interviews alone provided insufficient data to describe the remote context, so field notes were also taken. Field notes "situate qualitative studies within a larger societal and temporal context" (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2017, p. 381) and were gathered with the understanding that "we can only understand events when they are situated in the wider social and historical context" (Bryman, 1988, p. 64; Byrant, 2015). These notes are used to describe the research context, and not the participants. Efforts were made to gather observational data on the geographic setting (such as terrain, climate and the trails and their conditions), the economic activity of the area, schools and their physical condition and the cost of living in the research location. Visual data was also recorded in the form of photographs of the terrain, trails and paths, and schools. In an effort to avoid possible third party identification of the research area and the participants, no visual data was recorded of the participants[22].

Having set out how and what types of data I have used, I now outline how this data has been analysed.

3.5.   Data Analysis

Interview and observational data was analysed through the grounded theory methodology of *initial* and *focused coding*. These processes are advocated by Charmaz in her constructivist approach to grounded theory (2006). Cho and Lee (2014) rather succinctly summarised the approach as "In Charmaz's (2006) coding process, initial coding is similar to open coding, during which the researcher develops categories of information. Focused coding is a process

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[22] It is possible to recognise the local ethnicity from clothing choices and artefacts and building architecture thus visual data does not include such aspects of the local culture.

designed to narrow initial codes down to frequent and important codes" (p. 8). Memo writing

is used throughout this process, to define codes but increasingly to define categories, the

conceptual elements of theory (Charmaz, 2006).

One might visually describe this process as the one displayed in Figure 3.2. Starting from a

desire to understand a research problem, the constructivist grounded theory process clearly

moves to the generation of theory through coding and conceptualisation aided by the use of

theoretical sampling and sorting.

It must be noted that a continuous process of constant comparison was used in data analysis.

Constant comparison is "a method of analysis that generates successively more abstract

concepts and theories through inductive processes of comparing data with data, data with

category, category with category, and category with concept" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187). Thus,

constant comparison is not something that is done at any particular stage in the data analysis

but throughout the whole process. It is both a way of assisting conceptualisation and a

method used to check and limit conceptual conclusions made by researcher bias (Charmaz,

2006).

Stages of constructivist grounded theory methodology

Data

Initial coding

Focused coding

Research problem and opening question

Theoretical Sampling

Sorting

Theory

Constant comparison between data, coding and categories

Core of memo writing driving conceptualisation and theory
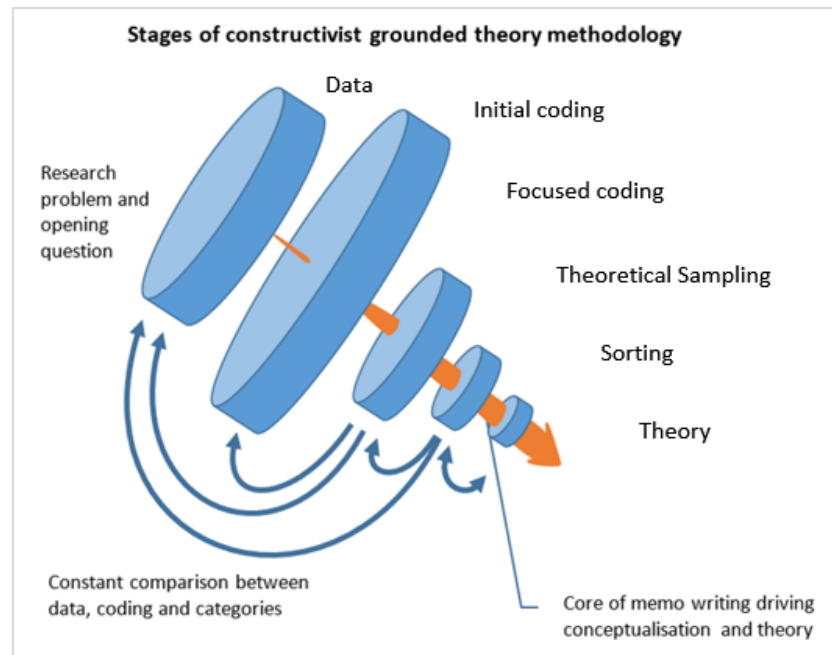
Figure 3.2 Visual representation of grounded theory analysis.

Initial coding refers to the process of breaking down or fracturing the collected data and describing or labelling it typically, line-by-line, observational incident with observational incident (Glaser, 1978) in an effort to name or conceptualise ideas, actions and processes arising from the data (Charmaz, 2006). This coding is not simply part of data analysis or transcribing; it is the "fundamental analytic process used by the researcher" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12). Line-by-line coding involves the process of labelling or naming each line of transcript; not necessarily each sentence. The process helps to abstract and truncate the data and consequently break down the influence of preconceived logical deduction in coding (Glaser, 2004; Charmaz, 2012). According to Glaser (2004) categories built on these first steps of line-by-line coding "minimizes missing an important category" and ensures the grounding of categories in the data that go "beyond impressionism" (n.p.). The use of incident-by-incident coding takes a step back to analyse larger segments of the data, such as a paragraph or a section of a paragraph. This process not only tests the adequacy of linebyline

coding but helps to discern patterns and contrasts within the data (Charmaz & Henwood, 2017). Field notes have been subjected to the same data analysis process as other data. As field notes are in the first person and not the participant's opinion, they were not subjected to line-by-line coding, but rather, incident-by-incident (Charmaz, 2006).

Both Glaser (2004) and Charmaz (2006) advocate the use of gerunds and *in vivo* codes to label the data. Gerunds, technically, verbs made into nouns, are used to label and identify the processes at play in the data and help prompt thinking about the actions (Charmaz, 2006). 'In vivo' codes are labels created from participants' widely used and shared terms, and involve the use of their own wording in the labelling.

I continued my data analysis by using 'focused coding', to look at larger chunks of data and determine the adequacy of the initial codes. The process was more directed, selective, and conceptual than initial coding and Charmaz further explained that, "Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data" (2006, p. 57). During this stage I returned to my initial coding, compared these codes with the data which they labelled and then with other codes. I analysed the similarities and differences between the sections of information from the data to develop codes that made the most analytical sense (Charmaz, 2006) and, through this process of comparing data to other data and codes to codes, I developed focused codes.

At this stage my use of 'memo writing' came to the foreground in data analysis. It seemed to be an organic process to flow from data to considering meaning. In fact, I had already begun to write in relation to the coding of some of the focused codes. Memo writing provided not only the means by which to write down my thoughts in relation to the emerging codes, but

also to question them and the codes themselves (Glaser, 2004; Charmaz, 2006). Until now my coding questioned what the data indicated and was consequently descriptive in its labelling process. Now, the process became increasingly conceptual and through the use of memo writing, I questioned the codes to determine the category they represent (Charmaz, 2006; Harry, Sturges & Klingner, 2005). I treated the focused codes as categories (conceptual groupings), scrutinising and evaluating each one and by doing so worked "with ideas instead of just raw data" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I questioned the data contained within my focused codes, identified possible variations contained within the data in the codes and with other codes and sought to find possible gaps in the data (Charmaz, 2008). The difficulty with interpreting or conceptualising is that the process is open to personal bias; however, the use of constant comparison, questioning and defining that takes place in memo writing slowed me down and, more valuably, prevented me from jumping to conclusions (Muller & Kogan, 2012).

Charmaz (2006) explains that these emerging categories may be weak and hazy and require new data to be gathered to 'fill out' the categories and learn more about how a basic process develops and changes. This process is called 'theoretical sampling'. It must be noted that such sampling is not to establish that concepts or processes are repetitive in data or between participants or to gather more information, but rather, so that the categories or emerging theoretical concepts become saturated (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Charmaz explains that a category becomes saturated "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories" (2006, p. 113).

Theoretical sampling is, however, not simply returning to the field to conduct more interviews with research participants. Charmaz states that, "theoretical sampling can entail

studying documents, conducting observations or participating in new social worlds as well as interviewing or re-interviewing with a focus on your theoretical categories" (2006, p. 107). Charmaz (2006) also concludes that depending on the scope of research and the processes being studied it may be that theoretical sampling may not be needed to saturate, define and delimit categories.

My study of Nepal's education policy documents, particularly the SSRP (MOE, 2009) formed an integral part of my theoretical sampling. This study allowed me to understand the processes at play in national approaches to education in remote areas, and thus, supported the definition of categories related to teaching such as the 'the problem of language', 'being a teacher', and to a greater degree *teaching remotely*. The 'a ha' moment for my categorising came as I reflected and wrote memos on ideas and intent in policy and by examining the data. Conceptualisation of processes related to training was assisted by returning to Nepal to conduct interviews with trainers from two separate NGOs involved in rural and remote TPD training[23]. New information could have been gathered and greater repetition found by returning to the research area and re-interviewing the participants, but in terms of 'insights' and 'properties' of categories I determined it was not needed.

This process of initial, focused coding, memo writing, theoretical sampling and saturating categories was followed by the sorting and integrating of the theoretical categories that had been developed. By visually sorting, connections among categories were seen and theoretical links created and refined (Charmaz, 2006). Stern explains, "Sorting helps the analyst integrate the theory; in the physical display of their thought processes, the appearance of the

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[23] These interviews are not part of initial data collection and were held in October, 2016 and conducted in English as the participants were both Nepali and expatriate. The interviews were transcribed and coded incident-by-incident.

theory begins to take shape" (2007, p. 120). My own sorting was prompted by visual clues found in my sizeable diagramming, conceptual mapping and early focused code cluster diagrams. This process helped me to 'see' my analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Clarke, 2005) and ultimately move towards initial drafting of research findings (Charmaz, 2006).

3.6.   A Note on Theory

It is important to state the constructivist approach to theory and implications for theorising in this research. Firstly, let me consider the objectivist grounded theory advocated by Glaser, Corbin and Strauss. According to this understanding "meaning inheres in the data and the grounded theorist discovers it" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). Strauss and Corbin (1990), objectivist theorists, state that theory is "discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon" (p. 23). The grounded theorist, in this case, is neutral, distant and separated enough from the research participants, and as a result through analysis methods avoids bias (Glaser, 2002). In such an approach the emphasis is on finding one overarching core category or basic process.

The constructivist's understanding of theory is different. I quote Charmaz (2006) to explain:

> The constructivist view assumes an obdurate, yet ever-changing world but recognises diverse local worlds and multiple realities, and addresses how people's actions affect their local and larger worlds. Thus, those who take a constructivist approach aim to show the complexities of particular worlds, views, and actions. (p. 132)

In such complexity the clarity of one core category or process may not be achieved. While recognising these complexities the constructivist grounded theorist also recognises that

meaning is not ascribed or discovered but co-constructed between the participants and the theorist (Mills, Bonne & Francis, 2006). Mishlar illustrates this when discussing the interview process stating that the simple act of asking:

> Should be perceived as part of a circular process whereby its meaning and that of its answer are created in the discourse between interviewer and respondent as they try to make continuing sense of what they are saying to each other. (p. 58)

Thus as Mills, Bonne and Francis (2006) stated "the approach taken, then, is one of data generation as opposed to data collection" (p. 10). This is more than semiotics and suggests that there is no passive collection or picking up of data, but rather through interaction and interpretation data theory is generated. In Chapter Six, I detail the theory generated from this research.

3.7. Literature Review

General approaches to grounded theory suggest that a review of literature should not be done prior to initial interviews in an effort to insure that the theory is grounded in the data not in the bias of prior knowledge (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1994;). However, as Bryant and Charmaz (2007) argue, it is impossible to undertake qualitative research without some form of prior knowledge. Other grounded theorists such as Hutchinson (1993), Backman and Kyngäs (1999) also suggests that a preliminary literature review be done prior to collection of data as it can help discern knowledge gaps and understand the discourse surrounding the topic. In the case of this research, a preliminary literature review was conducted prior to data collection in lines with Hutchinson's perspective, but also because of Master's Confirmation of Candidature requirements. This unavoidable necessity was helpful

in gaining a wider understanding of the education climate and knowledge gaps in Nepali education. However, while it informed my grand tour research questions, it narrowed and directed them in such a way that they were later meaningfully modified.

In keeping with grounded theory methodology, a further review of literature, which I present in Chapter Two, was conducted only after data analysis and initial theorising was well underway (Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Charmaz, 2006).

3.8.   Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The research has the following limitations:

> The data collection period is limited to interviews conducted during the period of 2016–2017.

Participants, as mentioned, were limited to government employed primary school teachers who were working in the research location at the time of data collection. Their beliefs, experiences and perceptions, while possibly indicative of other teachers in remote areas in Nepal, are limited to the participant's context and cannot be generalised to the wider primary school teaching experience in greater Nepal.

The research has been conducted in compliance with the Australia's Central Queensland University's Human Research Ethics Review Committee (see Appendix C) and with approval of the Nepali MOE and specific research location school Principals[24].

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[24] I carried Nepal MOE ministerial permission and CQ University ethics approval (see Appendix C) to conduct interviews in the area to assure participants of the authentic nature of the research. The MOE ministerial permission is not included as an appendix. Due to ethical considerations it would have needed to been redacted so greatly that its inclusion would be rendered ineffectual. However, it has been sighted by the CQUniversity ethnic committee and in its consideration the research was granted ethics approval.

In consideration of the participants, I have made stringent efforts to ensure that the data is deidentified and that they experience little risk from participating in the research. This is found in the omission of all village, school, landmark, municipality and even district names. Further, other identifying features such as names of participants and the ethnicity of the sample, photos and maps have also been either omitted, replaced, modified, or thoroughly screened to ensure de-identification of the participants. At times these ethical considerations have meant that the descriptive richness provided in visual referencing such as typographic mapping has been limited to ensure that no harm comes to the teachers and communities whose experiences are shared within the research. Such limiting however, does not affect the processes and actions being studied in this research.

3.9.   Summary

Within the chapter I have discussed the design of this research. This has been done to not simply provide an understanding of my approach to the investigation of the research problem but to also to support my approach. The desire to explain the lived experience of remote education and of the participants and ultimately, ensure the theory that has been generated in these experiences, forms the rationale for my use of constructivist grounded theory. I have adhered to Charmaz's (2006) clear, but not necessarily sequential, approach to grounded theory throughout this process in an effort to seek explanatory answers to the question:

> What are the challenges of remote education and being a teacher in a specific remote location in Nepal?

To this end I have selected an RC, school cluster, in a remote area in North East Nepal. The rationale for this choice is found in its remoteness as characterised in Chapter Two.

Due to the lack of secondary and private schools and I have limited the participants to government employed primary school teachers. Eighteen participants from nine primary schools in a specific RC elected to be partner in this research. The findings that have resulted from the use of this research design are now presented in the next two chapters, Chapters Four and Five.

4. **Being Remote**

4.1.   Introduction

In this chapter I present research findings in relation to the category of *being remote*. The terms *being remote* and *being a remote area* are *in vivo* codes from the Nepali—*durgam chhetra bhaeko kaaraNle* – and are used by participants in relation to not just living in a remote area, but to define its circumstance and to explain the challenges of teaching. *Being remote* implies an existing state that is present and continuous, one that requires exploration to understand the nature of teaching remotely. To this end, I present findings on the nature of living in this circumstance of a specific research location and participants' perspectives and observational data to illustrate that environment and culture strongly influence schooling outcomes. Schools sit within the context of the people who use them; and in this case the remote schools are situated in and influenced by the specific environment and culture they are found within and by the surrounding broader Nepali culture. It is therefore, important to take the time to consider this context in some detail, especially in regard to policy evaluations that point to it being considered minimally (ERO, 2013).

Findings are presented and discussed here in relation to categories of environment and culture. These categories were constructed from the process of coding and analysis of participants' narratives and field observation data. The environment of the area is presented in relation the geography, isolation, climate and the economy of the research location. The ethnicity of the area is then discussed in relation to its socio-cultural aspects of the local ethnicity and the influence and demands that this community, as the users of the education system, place on the school operation are presented. The influence of language, cultural

decisions on who and for how long one attends school, and the demands community place on teachers are also set out. Finally, findings on teacher and community perspectives on quality of schooling and, in relation to this, the way in which people in the specific remote location choose a school for their children are stated.

Before going further, it would be helpful to define the terms 'culture' and 'ethnicity' so as to prevent any misunderstanding about my use of them in this thesis.

The term culture can be confusing. Thus, I limit the term to the perspective of Spencer-Oatey (2008) a thinker on inter-cultural pragmatism. In her position culture is:

> ... a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member's behaviour and his/her interpretations of the 'meaning' of other people's behaviour. (Spencer-Oatley, 2008, p. 3)

In this definition culture can be related to a specific ethnicity or group of people, or even an organisational culture such as a school. It is dynamically influenced, not only by social interactions within the culture, but by the environment in which the people of that culture live and the culture's exposure to the other external cultures. This is the concept of culture I have used throughout this thesis.

The term ethnicity also needs to be defined. The term is used to describe racial or genetic origins. For instance, in such a definition one might be ethnically Somali but culturally Finnish. However, ethnicity might also be defined as a shared culture with its one ethnolinguistic features, historical origins, religion or self-identity (Spencer-Oatley, 2008). In this thesis I use the latter definition.

In Nepal, ethnicity is officially defined based on ethno-linguistic features and selfidentification on census data (CBS, 2011). Traditionally however, the northern ethnicities of Nepal, with Tibetan ancestry, were grouped into one ethnicity—*Bhote* (meaning Tibetan). While some Nepali people have embraced the term as their ethnicity, today this term is viewed as derogatory, and people self-identify themselves using the latter definition of ethnicity. Based on this, the mountainous area of North Eastern Nepal is home to nine distinct ethnicities with their own languages customs and cultural practices (SIL, 2016)[25]. However, the research location is almost exclusively populated by one ethnicity, referred to throughout this thesis as the 'local ethnicity'.

4.2. Geography and Isolation

The research location is isolated and unique. North East Nepal is home to the large alpine national parks of Sagarmatha (Everest), the Makalu Barun and also the Kanchanjunga Conservation Area. Five of the ten highest mountains in the world reside within this area[26]. These mountains create incredibly diverse ecosystems from subtropical forests to snow-capped mountains.

As a consequence of the terrain, North Eastern Nepal has a very limited road network. While roads reach the District Headquarters of the three districts in the area, they are quite scarce in the northern areas. Solukhumbu is an exception, with its tourist airports allowing access deep into the mountains. An interest in hydroelectricity has also seen the recent development of a road into central Sankhuwasabha and potentially to the Tibet Border. Taplejung's sparse

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[25] SIL in its extensive studies of the ethnicity and languages of Nepal has identified these nine ethnicities as; Khulung, Lhomi, Limbu, Sherpa, Naaba, Thudam, Thulung, Yamphu and Walungge (SIL, 2016).

[26] In North Eastern Nepal the peaks of Everest, Lhotse, Cho You, Makalu and Kanchanjunga are all over 8000m.

northern population has however, experienced almost no investment in infrastructural development. Figure 3.1 (see Section 3.3) provides a visual reference for transport networks in North Eastern Nepal.

The villages within the specific research location are situated on the sides of a dominant mountain range with a height of 4100 m. Their schools are found between 1700 m to 2700 m. In these areas the subtropical forest has been cleared to accommodate terrace farming and grazing and, increasingly, spice cash crops. The most remote and isolated village in the research location is found at 3600 m. The population from this area live almost exclusively on transmigratory yak husbandry, producing cheese for sale into Tibet.

The participants defined the physical nature of *being remote* in terms of three major aspects: terrain, transport and climate. The matters of terrain and transport will be discussed here and the climatic influences later in Section 4.3. These matters of remoteness and isolation are dominant not just in logistical matters or development of the area, but in the minds of the participants and their narratives.

The mountainous terrain is dangerous and infertile. It is reachable only by narrow trails that regularly deteriorate as a result of deforestation, poor weather conditions and more recently, the use of mule trains. Together with the effects of landslides, flooding and earthquakes, the trails' conditions are unpredictable and at times either deadly or dangerous. T10 explains that "we risk our lives" with the logistics of having to cross rivers and streams by building temporary bridges. The terrain itself is demanding in terms of the length of time needed to traverse it and is dangerous to those living with its specific geographical hazards. Further,

the participants describe the soil as infertile, limited in crop versatility and requiring considerable labour and extensive fertilising to yield good results.

The lack of transport limited physical access to the area, ensuring its remoteness and lack of development.

As T14 states:

If there would be transportation then other development would automatically come.

T3 shares a common perception that their area is backward and poor and:

harik kuraamaa pechaDi ekar hunalai (in everything fallen behind).

The mountainous terrain has limited road structure, which in turn has resulted in the area's continued remoteness. All goods, until recently, have been exclusively carried on the backs of porters or by the owners of the goods. Such a process involves considerable time and adds expense to goods.

T3 continues:

In order to bring salt they have to go by foot on these sorts of trails for 5 days to [name of District Headquarters] and then back.

Over the last few years mule trains have been used to transport heavier items such as schoolbooks, and to save time from Roads End. But distance and time still dominate remote life. For some, even the act of attending a parent teacher meeting can mean a four-hour return walk (in the case of School 9).

This lack of access and the consequential remoteness limits access to almost all crucial services. In fact, the area is found so far in the north of Nepal that the closest markets are found not in Nepal but in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (China). There is little access to health care services, and the facilities in the area are under resourced and poorly managed.

T1, speaking about the only hospital in the area, says:

> The only thing it could offer was shade.

There are no banking or financial services and other than the walking trails maintained by the municipalities, and the few bridges in the areas there is no physical infrastructure.

T12 shares the following in relation to public property:

> ... here it is only limited to a *chautara* [shady resting spot], a tap and a school.

There are only two secondary schools and no institutions of tertiary education. The isolation consequently limits visits and oversight by central or regional officials[27]. Such lack of physical infrastructure and services guarantee that remote populations remain "vulnerable to poverty in a socio-economic context of limited opportunity" (Shakya, 2011, p. 40).

Geographical isolation affects the professional development of teachers. Due to the area's remoteness, city dwelling trainers need to trek many days to reach the RC. This discourages training frequency and trainers rushing through training to return back to their homes and work in the city.

As T16 expresses:

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[27] see Chapter 5.5 for a discussion of official visitations.

To be honest actually the training must be around 5 days but the RP [resource person] will only do for 3 days, telling their trainees that if anyone asks tell them you did the full training.

Trainers also negotiate the dangerous and demanding trails and sometimes suffer sickness and harm due to the nature of the trail, the environment and the village conditions[28]. Chapter Five I further the discussion on teacher training (see Section 5.6).

The physical isolation is also reflected by psychological isolation. There is a tangible feeling of being forgotten and being left to oneself from those in the government and urban areas. Due to the limited teacher supervision, accountability and support, participants reveal that they feel neglected and not listened to and are left to their own resources. Teachers from School 2 recount that they had not had an official visit from the DEO in over 25 years. As I talked with the locals I realised that this feeling was not simply limited to the teachers, but also held by the community. Coupled with this, the communities themselves lack vision for the education teachers are providing (see Section 4.7); adding further to the lack of motivation and ownership of the education that teachers are entrusted with. The mindset of isolation itself effects participants' intrinsic motivation and creates a perception of being neglected—an 'us and them' mentality—with peers working in the District Headquarters and officials working as support staff.

This mindset is more than feeling or being isolated. It is the lens through which participants view life, themselves, their area, their teaching and all that is outside of these entities.

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[28] Just after data collection an INGO sought to provide training to preschool teachers. However, the lead trainer slipped on the trail at the beginning of the journey, broke her wrist and was airlifted back to Kathmandu. This incident reduced the staff to one and negatively affected the training outcomes.

Participants refer to themselves not as individuals but as the local area teachers; an inclusive group that share the same experience.

T13 expresses it in this way:

> Our buildings aren't good, our resources aren't good, we don't know anything about new ideas or technology. In these things we are an archetype: The [local area] teachers.

Here T13 is speaking in relation to teaching; however, the mindset is broader and repeatedly stated in the interview data. It is expressed in terms of binaries of; "up here" and "down there", "in the city" and "in our remoteness" and constructed negatively, with terms such as "scarcity", "backward", "uneducated", "illiterate" and "poor". So strong is this negative conception that there is no positive description of their own area in the data. Cities and the District Headquarters are viewed as this 'better', or "where the 'grass is greener' ". This mindset permeates participant perceptions of teaching and explanations of poor schooling outcomes.

According to Pigg (1992, 1993) such negative perceptions of 'remote' are a consequence of development policy in Nepal. Her research (1992, 1993) recognised that modernist development policy implicitly scales society in terms of social progress; developed and undeveloped, backward and progressing, modern and traditional. Such notions, as Pigg states, are compelling as they are echoed in Hindu caste based society which has fostered racial and social superiority. In the case of Nepal, it is the urban based, high caste Hindus and Newars perceptions of the typical village life that have become the norm. Expatriate policy and development advisors are also limited as they too are shaped by such versions of

the local realities. Such perceptions create disconnections between the central provision of education and the local contextual needs.

Such representations of those living in the periphery of the developed, the centre, have social consequences. Those in the village and the remote perceive themselves in relation to development and thus are

"embarrassed or self-conscious about doing, living and thinking in village ways. They see themselves, at times, through the eyes of a more cosmopolitan observer, and this indicates a fundamental transformation in people's conception of local identity" (1993, p. 54).

It is clear that schooling in the research location is influenced by its remoteness. The lack of transport has a multidimensional effect. Its absence affects not only development, but access to markets, crucial services and teacher resourcing. It effects working conditions, increases the cost of living, and, as officials facing the reality of the area's remoteness choose to not visit the schools or communities, it ultimately leads to poor teacher accountability, management and support. As will be presented in the following section, the area's climate further compounds these issues.

4.3. Climate

While I am discussing research findings in clear sections and subsections it is important to note that these themes and concepts are interlinked. Matters of terrain influence what type of economic opportunities are available to those living within this terrain or wishing to exploit it. The terrain influences climate and the climate influences terrain. Both of these aspects

limit the economic or, in this case, agricultural choices available to people who seek to utilise the land they own. This economic activity impacts on choosing the best school and attendance at schools.

This interconnectedness is seen in the people who lived in the research location. The terrain is mountainous and, as a result, agriculture is limited to small-scale terrace farming. The land is infertile, limiting what crops can be planted and consequently, influencing the local diet and increasing the need for purchasing manure, which in turn increases the living expenses. T3 explains:

> There is no fertiliser and if we need to borrow fertiliser, even if we don't get a full
>
> load then we need to pay a full price for it, 2,000 rupees. Even if it is a small amount!

Data from field observations indicates that the lack of transport limits access to other economic and educational opportunities. As noted in Chapter Two, limited technology and no electricity results in a reliance on firewood for cooking; thus, creating an incessant work force demand to gather, split and dry wood; and in turn, as I observed it, increases issues of deforestation (Baland, Bardhan, Das & Mookherjee, 2009). Land needs to be ploughed and protein sourced, so livestock are kept but, with no fields for grazing nearby, herds must be taken some distance to mountain slopes and feed must be gathered from the forest for stalled animals (Baland et al., 2009). Climate is therefore a vast issue and its affect is both obvious and subtle.

Climate also impacts on schools, work or study places. The standardisation of school construction, means that, other than building materials and land availability, little consideration is given to the environment and where the schools are constructed, giving rise

to a negative impact on schooling. In winter for example, the temperature in the research location drops to below zero and in the northern and elevated villages snow falls, making uninsulated schools inhospitable. Summer rains also make mountain trails difficult to traverse and some participants explained that water runs into the classrooms and the lessons are drowned out, as T13 shares, by the:

> Din of rain on a tin roof.

T7, T8 and T9 explain that leeches, snakes and insects at times also find their way through the glassless windows, thereby disrupting learning. T11 states that in relation to these insects:

> After two o'clock in the school small bugs bite—a small fly. The smallest fly that stings [a black fly]. And the children don't come to school well dressed. And in school they either study or itch. This is a problem. We burn cow dung in the middle of the classroom. And that smoke chases the insects away.

Thus, while an insect may seem a small problem, in the classroom during the wet season (May–September) it has a dramatic impact on children's learning.

There are also subtler climatic influences on schooling, such as in use of *chang*. *Chang* is a millet or wheat-based alcohol drunk by most of the population in the research location, inclusive of children to stave off the cold in the winter months. While in the field area, I conversed with a German nurse doing research about infant and child nutrition. The initial findings of her painstaking house-to-house data collection found that, especially in the colder months, children and infants as young as three months are given *chang*. While debating the issues of the effects of *chang,* the researcher added that *chang* had nutritional value that was

important to the malnourished families in the area. There is however very clear research to show the negative effects of alcohol on childhood development, on liver function, cognitive ability, and increasing the chance of alcoholism (Newbury-Birch et al., 2009; McLean & McDougall, 2014).

The widespread use of *chang* also effects teacher conduct. In the society change has many other uses. I also observed its use as a welcome drink and an intoxicant. It was described as an energy drink to assist with farming and hard work. C*hang* is also used for cultural purposes in all ceremonies and official occasions. I also noted while in the field location that some of the participant teachers were intoxicated while at work. T14, speaking about the positive impact the community could have on encouraging teachers not to be drunk, discloses that:

> If there were educated people then they could teach about abstaining from drinking
>
> wine and alcohol and being on time to teach. But the society is just the opposite,
>
> therefore it isn't possible to field a quality teacher.

T14 describes this acceptance of alcohol misuse as a cultural or 'social factor' impinging on teacher conduct.

Clearly, climate has effects on schooling. It impacts on teacher and student work conditions, and student attendance; and consequently, on work ethic and motivation. The issues of alcohol misuse and staving off the cold through the use of *chang*, also impacts on child development and teacher conduct. The climate has other dramatic impacts on schooling which are discussed in the following section on economic activity.

4.4. The Economic Reality

The culture in the participant area has a distinct economy restricted to seasonal migratory trade and subsistence farming. In this economy the whole community is busy, inclusive of children and local teachers and, as participants explain, seasonal peaks such as planting and harvesting require a considerable workforce that affects student and teacher attendance and preparation.

In a subsistence economy where time equates to food on the table, schooling is evaluated against economic need. T3, talking about local villagers, states that:

> The people in this area aren't at ease. In order to eat a single daily meal they must work all day long. If they rest for even an hour they begin to get anxious.

As a result, T15 explains that students:

> [... in their spare time] in the morning and evening, have to work.

T17 confirms this, saying:

> The village experience is a little like this—there they have to work more than schooling.

T18 complains that at certain times and in some villages parents:

> Only send their children ... two or three times in a week.

Student availability to assist with labour is also limited by the fact that in Nepal, schools operate six out of seven days, Sunday to Friday, leaving only a one-day weekend.

Teachers are also affected by the economic activity. The participants complain that their salaries are insufficient and need to work two jobs to provide for their families—teaching and farming - thus, they have less time for class preparation.

T6, while stating that student learning and school attendance are affected by labour demands, explains that teachers are also affected by their own subsistence farming:

> … as the month of Ashar [mid-June-July–summer in Nepal] arrives then the parents themselves ask for permission to let their children not attend because they have to help in farming, shepherding, and helping in household work. Even the teacher they themselves have to do their own farming, so during those seasons the school is closed …

During peak agricultural seasons teachers feel the pressure to not attend school for fear of failed crops. This pressure of student and teacher attendance is compounded by the need for other economic activities, i.e., farming.

The local ethnicity has developed a culture of migrating south to lower regions and warmer climates during winter. This migration, called *kabela,* is partly triggered by the cold, but it is also an economic activity. Participants explain that long winter months mean crops are unable to be planted from November to March therefore, participants must either purchase or store food or find other means to exist in winter. During the warmer months the 'local ethnicity' grows, gathers or prepares *chirpi*[29], medicinal herbs, spices and incense to trade in the south. Traditionally, as winter arrives, whole households board up their homes and migrate south, only to return just before spring.

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[29] Chirpi is sundried yak cheese.

T6 explains that:

> … before, about 90% would migrate during the months of January and February.

Today, however, the area is economically better off, thanks in part to the cash crop of cardamom and migratory work, and now only approximately 50–60%[30] of the community makes the traditional journey south. For students who go on *kabela* there is no provision of mobile or second site schooling and, as a result, the loss of half the student population during the winter months, places pressure on schooling outcomes.

Consequently, until recently it was common practice in the area to hold longer holidays. The SMC, while responsible for the school calendar, must annually ensure that a minimum of 1,000 teaching hours is provided to Years 4–5 and 800 hours for Years 1–3 (MOE, 2009).

T6 explains:

> Due to all these things, we have a winter vacation for two to three months. This is our obligation.

While in spring a longer holiday of three weeks was also given so that children and teachers can assist in field preparation and planting. Thus, as much as five months to six months of the school calendar was holidays.

T6 communicates:

> The schools have to be open for 10 months. But in our area the schools are only able to be open for five months.

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[30] The figure of 50–60% seasonal migration is gathered from discussions with community members and teachers while in the area and T6's interview data.

This holiday anomaly recently became known to the DEO. Participants related that the District Education Officer (DEOer) investigated the situation by talking with the local Principals and the co-owner of the recently opened private school, participant T6. It was noted that the private school had shorter winter holidays (45 days) and 100% student attendance in winter. The DEOer concluded, in T7's words:

> If that many of students come to your school, then why don't the government school student come?

He decided, correspondingly, that government schools would follow this practice and as T6 states:

> … minimise the winter vacation to one and half months.

Consequently, the DEOer ordered the school to open, as T4 states:

> … [w]hether the students come or not.

This decision making process is important to discuss as it illustrates administrative processes involved in the provision of education. The DEOer's decision may ensure that schools stay open, it does little to address the reasons of school closure and the inadequate teacher and student attendance. The DEOer's failed to address or include the causal factors of the cold season and *kabela* in his decision making. Thus, while potentially schools will be open longer, approximately only half of the students would benefit (40–50%), generating considerable challenges for teachers about what to teach while half their class is absent. Furthermore, no action was taken to improve the learning environment to make them more suitable for winter. T4 explains that classrooms in School 2 are so cold that teachers erect

tents in the playground so they can stay warm[31]. Consequently, the decision to improve schooling by ensuring teacher attendance and schools open is rendered ineffectual by the causal attitude towards the factors influencing of the context.

It is clear from the data that the interconnected influences of the climate and the economic activities in the research location combine to create a unique context that substantially influences schooling attendance and outcomes. It is evident that schools, in their standardisation, are not built for the environment in which they are located; be it in summer, with its rains; or winter, with its cold. With no electricity for heating or lighting, windows and doors must still be open all year round. However, even though these matters may seem simply physical, they also create serious motivational issues for both the students and the teachers. If in winter, as T11 states, the students "run-away" when they see the school, and the teachers are camping out in tents, then logically there are problems. However, the findings suggest that little has been done by the SMC or the government to address these issues.

Culture has a direct influence on schooling. It must be noted that *kabela* or even the use of *chang* are not simply decisions made by people, but are embedded in cultural behaviour, historical practice and sustained adaption to the local environment. Changing such culture is seldom achieved by external directives. While it may create teacher compliance, as in the example of winter holidays, it will do little to change the culture of the schools' users. The DEOer's conclusion that if private schools can do it, then public schools should as well, may also seem plausible. However, such an understanding does not consider the clientele of

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[31] This is presumably because the stone walled classrooms are cold and a tent in the playground provides shelter from the wind but also offers warmth from the sunshine.

private schools who are statistically socio-economically 'better off' (ERO, 2008, 2013, & 2015; MOE, 2014)[32] and, as a consequence not as dependant on migratory trade, or contained by hand-to-mouth subsistence farming. This dynamic culture is not considered in policy and directive, and results in less than expected outcomes.

4.5.   Socio-cultural Context

From the research participants' perspective, the most dynamic influence on schooling, beside matters of financing and resourcing, are the socio-cultural aspects of language and cultural practice. Participants refer to the linguistic challenges they experience as 'the problem of language' and highlight how it drastically affects students' literacy, curriculum outcomes and post-primary education. They also indicate that while the culture of the local ethnicity places extra-curricular demands on local teachers, it in turn impinges on teacher time and school attendance. I will discuss these matters in the order that I have stated them here.

bhaashako samasya—'The problem of language'. For those in the research area, language is a defining feature of their identity. It defines them as 'other' by those that do not speak it, and conversely as 'us' for those that share the language. With the exception of the two most southerly villages (which have ethnically mixed populations) the local language is spoken by all but a few of the inhabitants of the research location. Nepali is seen as the language for official communication, and communication with outsiders, and is not fluently spoken. Only three of the participant teachers spoke Nepali as a first language while the rest spoke the local language. Before going to school for the first time, children in the area have little to no

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[32] The NASA report indicated parents have on average more than twice the income of those who send their children to government schools (ERO, 2013, p. vi).

knowledge of the Nepali language and consequently they find schooling in the Nepali medium quite a challenge. T6 explains:

> If you go to the even more remote places from here like [names of most remote villages closest the border] the parents even don't know how to speak Nepali, so how can the children learn it.

The challenges of working in complex lingual contexts make it one of the topics that was discussed most extensively by the participants. The local language is an oral tradition which, while translated almost a decade ago, is mostly unused in written form. At the time of data collection there were only a handful of texts translated into the local language, such as a monthly newspaper, while there were no local language resources in schools. The matter is not simply limited to wrestling between the two languages of Nepali and the local language, but that English is a compulsory subject in primary school and is increasingly becoming the language of demand. This trilingual nature of schooling, the *bhaashako samasya,* is referred to by multiple teachers as a the 'problem of language', and as T14 states it is the "main difficulty here". This *bhaashako samasya* is discussed in detail in relation to multi-lingual schooling (see Section 5.3.2).

Community cultural demands. Another element of the phenomenon of the remote area is the complex structure of clan (ancestral family groups) and village level commitments that place burdens on local teachers to attend or provide labour for events.

T3 comments in relation to this:

> … we have the tradition of helping when building houses, for wedding, funerals, etc. And with all the helping some students sometimes miss class, teachers sometimes miss class. That's how it happens here.

My own observational data indicates that in this culture, refusing to participate in these activities, places social harm on the households unwilling or unable to contribute. These weddings, funerals, births, initiations, and other functions and ceremonies which may occur over a period of three or more days require clan relatives to be present to help and to participate. The building of houses, for example, is communal and close family members are required to contribute labour towards construction. Traditional forms of reciprocal labour, are also used and in such cases, labour is exchanged between clan members and friends and is required to be given when needed. Village level developments, such as trail repair or the building of village infrastructure, in a similar way require all households to contribute obligatory labour, regardless of other commitments. It is a tradition that it not easily put aside. Local teachers must attend these occasions or face the expense of contributing financially to hire labourers to work in their place. These labour arrangements and clan practices occur across Nepal and is documented by Paudyal (2008) and Bhattarai (2006).

Teachers, local or not, due to their education, also play important roles in the community, which adversely affect schooling. In the research location there are few educated people to assist in village matters. Teachers who, in the case of the research location, have been teaching for a considerable time (an average of 18 years), have, during their service, educated many of the locals and as a result play an influential role in community. Together with this, and their education and literacy, they are valued members of society and are called on to help with auspicious and non-auspicious occasions.

T4 shares:

> If there is a wedding, in that auspicious occasion they have to attend. If there are
>
> disputes in the area, the teachers have to go to fix the disputes. If there are any
>
> meetings, the teachers must also attend.

Teacher absence from schools on these occasions creates problems with instruction in classes

because of the limited school staff. It also creates tension in the community as guardians

complain about the absences. Thus, teachers are placed in a difficult position in attending or

not attending these occasions.

T4, speaking as a community member defending teacher absences on such occasion, sets out

the conflict:

> Why do you ask them to attend and blame them as well. Why? They are asked to
>
> come for our sakes. They've done our work, haven't they? If they had stayed for
>
> their own work or were just getting drunk, then complaining would be acceptable.
>
> But they are doing the people's work. Don't complain.

Suffice to say, these considerable cultural and communal obligations, add to the dynamics of

teaching in the remote area and impinge on teacher attendance and preparedness and

subsequently, on schooling outcomes. Teachers working in this remote area must negotiate

urban concepts of time within the rhythms and seasons of agricultural life.

Gender and schooling. Matters of culture, economics and location also decide who goes to

school and how well they are schooled. Although not well saturated in the data, there is

evidence of gender discrimination in the research location. T12 discusses the topic at length highlighting the community perspective on the economics of schooling girls:

> Even today there is discrimination between sons and daughters.

> They say, "Why should we teach our daughters? … Whatever property the family have, and the right of ownership is not given to the daughters."

> I say, "Please sell that and give her an education, it then becomes her property".

According to this perspective, girls are not given an education as culturally it is expected that they will leave home when they marry; and consequently, the financial investment in their schooling goes with them. Boys, however, remain in the household and add value through their education to the household (Acharya, 2007).

In Nepal, current statistics indicate that "gender parity has been achieved in all grades at the basic level" (DOE, 2015, p. 15). However, at secondary and tertiary levels there is a considerable drop in female attendance (DOE, 2016). The research of Acharya (2007), Chitrakar, R. (2009) and Basnet (2013) expands on the factors that exclude girls from economics to gender and caste taboos, religious factors, and even personal security as girls are not able to walk long distances or rent a room to attend school (as a solo individual) and are kept at home instead. Maslak (2003), in his detailed study of Nepal's Tharu ethnicity, also reported that children are not sent to school for fear that schooling might weakening their cultural identity and language. Further, Acharya's study (2007) shows that girls in Nepal start school later, are more frequently absent and drop out quicker. Looking at the research area in the most recent data, concerning education levels in North East Nepal, as seen in the following Table 4.1, it is evident that in the municipalities (VDCs) in mountainous North East

Nepal females are twice as likely not to complete SLC and Intermediate studies than others in their districts and they seldom ever go on to complete graduate studies.

Table 4.1

Education levels in mountainous North East Nepal (2010)

Districts	Primary		SLC		Intermediate (Years 11 & 12)		Graduate	
	male	female	male	female	male	female	male	female
North VDCs in Solukhumbu (3923 people)	27.1	23.3	4.5	2.2	3.4 132 males	1.4 53 females	0.8 32 males	.26 6 females
North VDCs in Sankhuwasabha (4420 people)	33.5	27.2	3.6	1.5	1.6 69 males	0.4 19 females	0.5 23 males	0.1 5 females
North VDCs in Taplejung (1382 people)	25.5	22.6	4.7	2.0	1.7 24 males	1.5 21 females	0.9 12 males	0.1 2 females
Northern VDC Total (9725 people)	27,7	24.4	5.2	1.9	2.2	1.1	0.7	0.1
Total Population of all 3 Districts (249,453 people)	24.3	22.0	4.8	3.9	2.1	1.4	0.8	0.25

Source: CBSa, 2014, pp. 47–51, CBSb, 2014, pp. 43–47; and CBSc, 2014, pp. 54–61.

One of the major reasons for female school drop-out rates is marriage. Nearly 40% of women aged 20–24, in a 2014 UNICEF study, indicated that marriage was the reason they discontinued their studies (Sekine & Hodgkin, 2017). In Nepal, the majority of females marry at the age of 15–19 (approx. 58%); and while child marriage is outlawed in Nepal it is still prevalent, with the same statistics indicating that 15% of women aged 10 years and older married between the ages of 10–14 (CBS, 2011). Another UNICEF study of approximately 14,000 Nepali women found that 11% of those included in the study dropped out of school after primary school to get married (Sekine & Hodgkin, 2017, p. 6). Early marriage is a significant factor in the drop-off rates in female schooling.

These issues of gender and schooling are not simply isolated to Nepal. International organisations such as UNICEF, the World Bank and Oxfam indicate a common set of factors that restrict the schooling of daughters; these include endemic poverty, unaffordable schooling, the burden of domestic labour, and a lack of school facilities (Sekine & Hodgkin, 2017; World Bank, 2015c; Global Campaign for Education, 2005). In rural areas especially, school environments may be negative and dangerous for girls, cultural and social practices may be discriminative, sons often are preferred and early marriage and restrictions on female mobility limit girls' opportunity to attend school (Global Campaign for Education, 2005, p. 37; World Bank, 2015c). Further, in such rural areas there are very limited or restricted employment opportunities for women and the need for an education is consequently devalued by parents considering only their own context.

But the matters of who and how well one is schooled are not limited to gender. Issues related to the household wealth, economic activity and residence are also deciding factors (ERO,

2013 & 2014). Participants indicate that those who are poor are more reluctant to send their children to school.

T3 explains:

> In such an environment the parents can't easily send their kids to school. If they don't work, they don't get food.

T14 expands on this adding:

> ... [that illiterate and uneducated parents] send the children to herd cattle ... [and] are happier when they carry a load of firewood than when they are learning the alphabet.

T13 sums up this behaviour as a "superstitious habit" and the area's "culture". With only two secondary schools in the area the reality is that almost all families are faced with the choice of sending their children away for post-primary schooling. It is a tough decision for many. The desire to keep family close and the help a child brings to the home is pitted against the further education of children.

The NASA report (ERO, 2013) on Student Achievement in Year 8 supports this data. The report dramatically indicates that children who work before and after school, have low socioeconomic status, speak Nepali as a second language, and have illiterate fathers or whose parents who are agriculturalists, perform poorly in school testing (10–20% less than average)[33]. All of these factors are at play here in the research area.

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[33] The report takes a 5% population sample from 25 of the 75 districts in Nepal and looks at socio-economic data in relation to performance against standardised testing in Year 8 (2011) in the subjects of Maths, Social Studies and Nepali (ERO, 2013).

While there is significant poverty in the research location not all those who reside there are poor. Those with suitable land grow lucrative black cardamom cash crops. Others participate in trade, own small stores, lodges or mules, some work as trekking guides or still others have their available finances supplemented by income generated by family members working in urban areas or internationally. All the participants work at least two jobs: teaching and farming. There are those who also are also involved in other activities to create income. Although it was not a focus of the research, Table 4.2 provides a summary of my own observations of participant teachers' assets. These observations are partial, having only been observed in relation to five teachers. It is clear from these observations that some teachers in are not only not dependant on their teacher wage but engaged in considerable business that potentially affects their teaching responsibilities.

Table 4.2

Observations of participant asset ownership

	Personal assets of the participants
T4	Own home and farm land, small tea shop and home in the district headquarters
T6	Own home and farm land, shop and half ownership of local private school
T9	Own home and farm land, shop, 10 bed lodge, snooker house and bar, mules
T10	Own home and farm land, small tea shop and home in the district headquarters
T13	Own home, substantial farm land ownership and cash crops, motorbike

There are a number of other factors that influence who goes to school. Findings show that an apparent lack of ownership of the curriculum and its relevance to village life makes parents reluctant to send their children to school (see Section 5.3.3). Interestingly, participants

highlighted that parents' perception of schooling in relation to its purpose and to their livelihood was also a factor in who attends school. I will discuss these in Section 4.6.

To summarise this section concerning socio-cultural context, it is clear that the culture of the parents and their perceptions about schooling dramatically influence who goes to school. There is evidence to suggest that education of girls is not simply based on gender roles but rather on a form of economic rationalism because boys stay at home while girls, after marrying, leave and take with them any investment in schooling. Issues of socio-economic status, parental education, and subsistence farming, also affect student attendance; and matters of school's relevance to the research area context further degrade the importance of education. Education's importance is creating friction in the remote communities as the inhabitants come to terms with what education they desire for their children, perceptions about government schooling and the choice of buying a 'better' education. I will present findings in relation to this in the following section.

4.6. The Shift from Public to Private, Remote to Urban

Two years prior to my data collection, a privately funded primary school was established in the small village at the crossroads of Villages 3, 4 and 5. I provided a vignette of this in the introductory chapter. Its establishment precipitated a landslide of students exiting the local public schools and enrolling in the private school. The Principal of School 5, T10, comments on the dramatic influence it has had on his school:

> Because of the boarding school [private school] our children are being taken by the villagers to study there. Now there are less in our school. Before there was 100–150 now 60–70 children only. Now all the Class 1 students are all in the boarding school.

The Principal of School 4, T7, admits his student population has shrunk so much that the DEO has threatened to close his school. He admits to lying about student numbers to keep his school open:

> I said, "We have 23". Unwillingly I had to say 23 … But he [the DEO] complained, "If the number of students that you said are in the school and the reality don't match up then this will become an issue". That's what I had to say to the officer. I had to say there are enough students.

The drastic shift in school populations from Schools 4 and 5 to the local private school is troubling for public schooling and requires further discussion to understand the parental reasoning behind the choice of private over public schooling.

Parental preferences. Data suggests that research location parents, if able, choose private above public schooling for their children. According to participants T3 and T6 the wealth of parents is the deciding factor for this choice. T6 explains:

> In the urban area we see that the children of labour workers and poor families are seen going to government schools but those who are well off and are economically in a good condition those kids are sent to private or boarding schools.

Here T6 is speaking of urban children, but the same appears true in the research location, especially in relation to post-primary education. Those that do not live close enough to the secondary schools to allow daily attendance from home are faced with sending their children away for further education. The parents of Village 2 are in such a position and T3, a resident and teacher in this village, notes:

Those who don't have much go to [the High school, VDC2]. If they are able they go

to [the District Headquarters]. If they have money problems they go there to [the

High school, VDC2]. There are money problems here.

Here those that *are able* refers to parents who have the financial means to send their children

away to study. T7 expands the definition of those who *are able* to not only those who have

the financial means, but those that are willing to sell their possessions and obtain loans:

And to teach students down there you need to spend a lot. If you want to send a few

students to [name of the District Headquarters] the parents have to take a loan, and

they might have to sell their land and home.

Clearly, the willingness to sell one's own home and land to fund private schooling is a strong

expression of its importance and parental commitment to their children's schooling.

Data on participant choices for schooling indicate preference for private schooling. Without

exception, participants with secondary aged children (T3, T4, T6, T7, T8, T12 and T18) have

enrolled their children in private schools in the District Headquarters or in Kathmandu.

T6 explains:

Most of us are government workers and those who can afford a little have kept their

children in [the District Headquarters]. Some have relatives and have sent them to

Kathmandu, some have kept them in a hostel where there is scholarship.

While an indication of economic means of teachers, the participant's decisions to send their

children away for education are also telling of the value of public schooling. This is a finding

that is not limited to the research area as literature supports the conclusion that those who are

able, invest in private urban schooling before public remote schooling (Childs et al., 2014; Bhatta & Pherail, 2017).

Why private schooling: parental assumptions. At this point it would be useful to consider the reasoning behind this preference for private schooling. Firstly, I consider my observational data as related to the local private school and then participant assumptions of private schooling. Participant data does not indicate if the local private school is experiencing high enrolment because it is perceived as better than urban private schools, or more so because of its location and consequently its level of fees. However, the fact that parents are un-enrolling children from the nearby public schools in such large numbers and paying for them to attend the private schools is an indication of the perception that 'private is better'.

This perception is supported by a few important inducements. The private school is owned by the Principal of the nearby public school, T6. T6 is the renowned for his administration and teaching and his public school is the best performing in the RC. Although he does not teach in the private school he is very actively involved. The private school has also secured the help of a volunteer English speaking expatriate teacher who works full-time in the school. This teacher provides a substantial attraction because of her English skills; however, she also provides pedagogical and resourcing support and access to education networks in Kathmandu. These two individuals arguably add to the appeal of the private school.

Participant perceptions of why private schools are better are related to a number of assumptions. As already discussed above, in relation to purpose and quality, the first and most common assumption is that 'private schools are better'.

T3 presents this commonly held participant opinion:

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… extremely good types of school, like down there, like boarding school, we are not able to meet that standard!

Private schools, it seems, are understood to be better. Secondly, 'students in private schools learn English'. As will be stated in the following chapter, English is in many ways the gate keeper for further education. Given that private schools are run in the English medium and despite the tears and pain it caused his family, T6 explains that:

[The] problem of English in Government schools was what I felt was the reason we must anyhow send our children to a private school.

Thirdly, it is felt that 'private school teachers are better'. T5 feels that despite being untrained and paid less, private school teachers are more dutiful and teach better. He believes this is due to a fourth idea that 'private schools are managed better'.

T5 agrees with him, stating:

It's strict there. Their salary and job are linked to their performance.

T4 also sees these two beliefs as the reasons for the shift from public to private schooling:

In government schools there isn't proper management of teachers and because there are no teachers who can teach well. The private schools close-by the cities are overcrowded with students from remote areas and also accessible areas because of these reasons.

And finally, a fifth assumption, shared by participant T18, is that 'paying parents care more about their children's education'. He explains:

In boarding schools there is much care given [by parents] to the students and also the provision of tuition. The students are sent to school regularly, all the textbooks, notebook and pens are made ready. But in the remote area in the government school there's free admission and free textbooks so there is not much care from the guardians.

These five assumptions, though briefly stated, are important participant opinions. Their importance lies in the fact that they are held not just by parents or community members, but by public school teachers. If the public school teachers do not enrol their children in the schools they teach in, what does this communicates to others in the community about public schooling? It is an important question one that undoubtedly adds to the preference of private schooling.

The parental preferences and assumptions presented here are echoed in the literature. The first assumption that private schools are better is well documented. The rigorous literature review of private education in developing countries conducted by the British Department for International Development (Day et al., 2014) provides strong evidence that parents view private schools and their teachers as better. This is also supported by other studies in Pakistan (Ashraf, 2012; Aslam, 2009; Rehman, Khan, Tariq & Tasleem, 2010) and in India (Narayanan, 2013; Tooley & Dixon, 2007). Studies specific to the Nepali context find evidence of all of these parental assumptions in part (Bhatta, 2014; Joshi, 2014, 2014b; Caddell, 2007b; Koirala, 2015; Ghimire & Samuels, 2014;) and in full (Bhatta & Budathoki, 2013). Thus, these clear parental preferences for private schooling are not limited to the area itself but broadly echoed in the experiences of many across Nepal and throughout South Asia and underpin a deeper question on the value or rather purpose of schooling.

4.7.   Purpose—'What will Come if You are Educated?'

Why do we send our children to school? What are we hoping that an education will provide

for them? But more importantly, why would parents in a remote village in Nepal want to

invest in an education? I have presented findings that indicate that remote students, for a

variety of reasons, not only perform more poorly on testing than their urban peers but are also

locked out of progressing in their education due to language difficulties and SLC results.

Findings also show that perceptions about quality teaching and education are leading to a

disinvestment in public schooling, as some parents either do not send their children to public

schools or prefer to invest in private schooling.

Participant and parental perceptions of the purpose of education has a dynamic influence on

student attendance and parental support for students. Among the participants, there are clear

views that education's purpose is preparing children for living. The opinions of T18 and T5

provide a useful starting point as they question the purpose of schooling, explaining that it

has to be more than preparing students for exams:

> In the certificate they obtain good grades, but in reality, they haven't learnt anything.
>
> It has to be practical as well. So, what if they get first or fourth division [on SLC
>
> exams], it means nothing! The main point is they need quality[34].

The same concern is echoed by T5:

---

[34] First and fourth division refers to grading on the SLC exam. Fourth division being just passing and first, top
percentile.

One must be actually good socially not just in education, it must actually produce good citizens, but it doesn't happen. Right now, there is a grading system, the concept of it may be good but it makes students fail and pass.

Together with this perspective there is also a perception that education is about more than only preparing children for future employment. It is about awakening students' minds.

T12 states:

Learning is not for a job. It's the parents' birth right. They have a responsibility to provide food. But the greatest responsibility is opening the inner eye. Giving an education is a great thing.

Similarly, T7 sees school's purpose as:

… illuminating students' minds so they are "skilled, competent and able … [so] they won't be in darkness.

Besides these views there is strong feeling that education must be practical and, therefore, the curriculum needs to be about preparing students for life.

T13 comments:

Education should give a basis for living … We tell Raju and Ram stories but what comes? What is this for? Why do we teach this? We don't see any development or change … They [the students] need to have practical skills. They need to change in their behaviour though quality education.

T10 shares that:

In our remote area we have a desire [for an education that's purpose is about educating people for living in the village] teaching in our own language, or like agriculture.

T1 echoes these thoughts, desiring an education that could teach children to cook and to learn and employ better farming practices. The participant perspective defines educations' purpose in terms of practical outcomes more than exams.

Universally, however, participants impart that the community has one perspective on education's purpose—work. On the one hand, parents value education for its ability to provide a job, and conversely devalue the importance of schooling for the same reason. T6 has sent both of his children away for private schooling and describes the conversation he had with his daughter as he reasoned with her to get her to stay and study in Kathmandu:

I tried to convince [her] saying, "You must study hard and become a Miss [female teacher] and look after us".

In T6's parental perception a good education leads to a job. Other participants also share similar parental perceptions. The particular opinions of four participants from two schools are helpful examples. T11 (School 6) and T14 (School 7) both share that through their teaching parents have seen that education leads to employment.

T14 comments:

After I was appointed, and the other villagers saw how I had been appointed, they began to think we should educate our children too. They could see right in front of their eyes how education worked.

And T11 also explains the parental value for schooling:

> The parents say, "Oh ho. We should teach our kids. After education they get
>
> employment. Money comes".

> For these reasons they are sending their kids to the school. They thought for this
>
> reason we must teach our children. Everyone comes.

In these cases, it was not just that two individuals gained employment, but the fact that the

participants were local that illustrates that good local employment can come from schooling.

As a result, both of these teachers assert that 100% of the students in their villages are now

coming to school. The connection between school and future employment is the driving

force for school attendance. In rural and remote areas teacher's jobs are especially favoured

as teachers not only receive regular and dependable pay but also have an influential standing

in the village due to their education. In fact, the connection between schooling and jobs is so

pronounced that 2015 tertiary enrolment statistics in rural Nepal indicate that as much as 51%

of the total university enrolment was in education degrees[35] (MOE, 2015, p. 24). Arguably,

the absence of examples of other professions in village areas may also be a contributing

factor for such large-scale enrolment in education.

Realistically, however, besides teaching jobs there are not many other jobs available in the

remote agrarian society of the research location. T12 (School 6) and T13 (School 7) argue

that as a result, parents devalue schools and chose not to send their children to school.

T12 conveys the parental voice:

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[35] National enrolment indicates that 34.4% of those enrolled at university in 2015 were studying education
degrees, second only to management at 36.8% (MOE, 2015, p. 24).

The parents say: *Padai pachi jaagir chaiyo. Jaagir paudaina bane, kina padne?*

Padai pachi jaagir kaana paryo ne? (After studying they need to get a job. If a job

isn't available, why study? After studying you should get a job, no?)

That's the thinking.

T13 has a similar perspective of the parental thinking:

They say: "What will they get from education? They won't get a job. We have to

send the children to work".

They don't teach the children. This has become the culture. The teachers need to

fight against this culture. For that reason, the teachers are limited. Education is not

simply a job. They don't have the concept of that. To make them understand that it is

very difficult. They ask: What will come if you are educated?

In these perspectives, clearly the parental view of school's purpose is understood to be to

educate for 'a job'. If this is not possible, then the reason for school becomes defunct. And

unlike T11, T12 who is also from the same school, explains that as a result parents under

capitalise in schooling, "In every house in the village those that are supposed to go to school

stay at home". The opinions of these four teachers are divergent. While two of the teachers

claim 100% attendance and parental vision for schooling, the other two claim that parents

question the purpose of schooling and do not send their children. Though divergent their

views of schooling are unified in terms of the purpose of schooling being its ability to

provide a job.

While there is some correlation with the participant perspective, government reasoning on the purpose of education is much broader. The SSRP states that the specific goal of basic education (Years 1–8) is "to ensure equitable access to quality education through a rightsbased approach and promotion of a child-friendly environment in schools" (MOE, 2009, p. 31). This goal does not state what is meant by education nor is it stated explicitly within the policy. However, there are implicit understandings. The SSRP recognises that despite improvements in access and enrolment over the last decade many people leave school

> without developing their potential, and without acquiring the basic skills deemed necessary for raising their standards of living and the knowledge needed to effectively function in society. Functional literacy and numeracy are essential for our economy; but approximately half of the population lack these basic skills (MOE, 2009, p. 1).

Within this statement the purposes of education are alluded to as 'developing potential', 'acquiring basic skills', and knowledge for 'effective functioning in society' and engagement in the national economy. In such a way the SSRP (2009) policy document also points to other purposes of education including developing life skills and facilitating continuous learning (life-long learning) (p. 28) and in relation to secondary education, "producing competent and skilled human resources" (p. 22). The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) however, sets out the purpose succinctly:

> To make a provision of education that can generate productive, creative, qualitative, nationalistic, employment-orientated and globally competitive citizens. The effective implementation of this framework will help establish cultured, prosperous, competitive and equitable society (CDC, 2007, pp. 7–8).

Among these implicit and explicit definitions of purpose there are some correlations with participants' perceptions in relation to life skills, and life-long learning and education being employment oriented. However, participant and parental perceptions are limited in scope and interpreted through the lens of their own context. Consequently, they do not conceive of the agendas of national and global competitive citizenship nor some of the qualities the government is aspiring to produce in its citizens.

This question of purpose is pivotally important for if 'education' is doing little to ensure decent work or improve the quality of life for the people living in this context, then why would they invest in it? The new education plan (MOE, 2016) acknowledges that remote areas have not improved in line with national outcomes and are "therefore increasing the disparity between these groups and the rest of the school-aged population" (MOE, 2016, p. 8). It is consequently understandable that parents chose not to invest in it. But it must be clarified, that evidence from the research indicates that it is not that parents are choosing not to invest in schooling as such, but rather in public schooling. For, if parents have the finances to do so they are willing to split up their families, work multiple jobs or take loans to send their children away for 'better' private schooling.

T6 explains about his own son:

> I felt that it is not good to send him to a government school and ruin his future.

4.8. Summary of Findings

The phenomenon of *being remote* is a major category of the theory of 'teaching in our remoteness'. This finding provides a detailed exploration of many aspects of the participant experience and the state of the specific research location, especially in terms of isolation,

the environment, the influences of local culture on schools and teachers and decisions about purpose about who goes to school, how long for and where.

Factors of access to roads, facilities, markets and government services define the specific area as remote. The isolation that results from this remoteness negatively impacts on the quality of schooling. It places acute demands on teacher time, forcing teachers to walk days to collect their pay, to attend training and purchase teaching resources. The remoteness discourages TPD provision and attendance, almost extinguishes visitation and supervision from the DEO and other educational support staff and makes living expensive which consequently, devalues teacher salary.

Typography and climate combine to create a dynamic context which also makes its presence felt on schools. The terrain makes the area not only isolated but at times dangerous to traverse and schools difficult to access. Further, climate makes school buildings inhospitable especially in the winter months. Solutions to the geography, holidays, *chang*, subsistence farming or *kabela*, all affect child learning and curriculum outcomes, the school calendar, attendance and the professional conduct of teachers. Quality learning in such an environment is not supported by remote schools.

The dynamics of the local ethnicity further adds to the contextual anomalies. The problem of language complicates teacher work, stifles student outcomes and isolates the community from active engagement in the broader Nepali context. While societal, economic and cultural assumptions impact on attendance, the work-loads and roles of both students and teachers they also ultimately shape decisions about who attends school and for how long. Community

and participant perceptions of the purpose of schooling are also found to impact on these decisions.

This overview of the phenomenon of *being remote*, clearly illustrates that due to it *being remote* there are a number of compounding factors that, although possibly similar to other areas in Nepal, are particular to the specific remote locations. These factors have strong ascendancy on the remote government primary schools and their students and teachers. The influence is so great that schools struggle to provide a learning environment and outcomes that lead to a 'better life', a 'good education' or 'a job'. In the area of language this is especially seen with students being locked out of further education due to their lack of Nepali and English skills. Resultantly, parents, with the means to do so, are without exception choosing to disinvest in such schooling and instead invest in 'better' private schooling.

With this context of *being remote* in mind the thesis now presents findings on the nature of teaching in this remoteness.

5. **Teaching Remotely**

5.1.   Introduction

At the heart of this research is the matter of correlating the lives of the participants to learn what is happening in the research area. The previous chapter discussed this context, presenting and discussing findings related to *being remote*; such aspects such as geography, economy and culture and perceptions of place and schooling and its purpose were examined. From this basis Chapter Five now presents findings gathered in relation to the major conceptual element of *teaching remotely*.

The chapter is extensive and begins with an exploration of findings related to school physical and learning environments, what is being taught and how it is being taught. These aspects of schooling are especially important as the policy solutions for access to quality education in remote areas specifically consider matters of minimum enabling conditions for schooling and curriculum and pedagogy. From this presentation, the chapter then considers the unique working conditions that teachers experience in this context; salary, employment conditions and schools as workplaces. Findings on participant views of their teaching and motivation towards the job of teaching remotely follow this and finally, the ways in which teachers are supported and equipped through the government provided support and TPD are presented.

Before a discussion of the specific remote location schools can take place a preliminary discussion on quality is necessary. Quality is unfortunately a very difficult thing to define and defining it could potentially be a lengthy and possibly fruitless task. Consequently, I limit the concept to its use in the SSRP. This document sets out national standards and measures to achieve quality education in relation to two specific functions: quality

improvements and quality assurance or controls (MOE, 2009). From this basis I consider

observational data and participant perspectives of quality schooling. The SSRP states that

key aspects of improving quality are "enabling conditions, curriculum and textbooks,

instructional process" and in relation to assuring quality, "teacher management and

development, head teacher management and development, certification and examinations,

and other provisions" (MOE, 2009, p. 79).

I have summarised the SSRP list of elements essential for achieving quality improvements

have been summarised in Table 5.1 and I use the sequential structure provided in Table 5.1 to

present the findings in the first two sections of the chapter about school environments and

how students are taught.

Table 5.1

SSRP standards for quality education

Components	Sub component	Primary school standards (Years 1–5)
Physical Environment	School environment	Child-friendly, built to national
	Facilities and amenities	prototype, School Improvement Plan
	Classroom provision and	(SIP)
	size	Male/female toilets with water
	Furniture and other	1m² per child, 150 ≥ students
	classroom materials	Desks, benches, cupboard, bookshelf,
		whiteboard
Learning Environment	Teacher student ratio	1:40
	Min. no. of teachers per	6 teachers (150 ≥ students)
	school	1000 books
	Libraries in all schools	Weekly activities and indoor and outdoor
	Extra-curricular activities	resources
Instructional Provisions	Medium of instruction	SMC's choice, English taught (1–5)
	MTE	MTE (1–3), transitional (4–5), Nepali
	MTE teacher preparation	(6–8)
	Child-friendly	Provided by SMC via DEO or own
	Multi-grade education	means.
		No corporal punishment
		Learning/training for identified schools
Curriculum & Textbooks	Textbooks	Central design, national & outsourced
	Education materials	delivery
	Local curriculum	Compulsory age specific reading
		materials
		Optional in strong coordination with
		DEO/DEC and NCF

Source: Annex 3–2: Quality Education, MOE, 2009, pp. 79–82.

5.2.   School Environments

To consider the school environment, I first discuss the physical nature of the school

environment, its buildings, furniture and resourcing. I then consider their learning

environment; how policy intends schools to be staffed and resourced and how this works out

in in practice in the remote location.

Physical environment. A strong national policy on standardised design of schools (MOE,

2009) means that schools, despite their geographic location or climate, are for the most part

identically built. Variables such as buildings materials and the availability of extra non-

governmental funding may also effect school construction. In the research location the use of

concrete is limited due to remoteness, so buildings are rudimentarily built with un-mortared

stone and roofed in tin. The primary schools, as per regulatory guidelines, are built with a

minimum standard of one room per year level, a staffroom, a playground and separate girls'

and boy's toilets. The floors of the schools are mostly made of mud and the condition of the

buildings is variable (see Figures 5.2 and 5.3). Schools in the research location were all built

prior to the SSRP standards and are consequently are not built to accommodate pre-primary

classrooms, which were introduced as part of the SSRP policy. See Figure 5.1 for a visual

representation of school design. As schools in this research location are built on

mountainsides it is not always possible for schools to secure adequate room for playgrounds.

T11 shares:

> In the case of our school … we don't have a playground for the children. It's an
>
> extremely narrow place and the playground that is there is not very good.

Playgrounds varied from areas big enough for a volleyball court to areas large enough for a soccer field.

Figure 5.1 School design in the specific research location.

Source: Field notes and observations.

Schools were found in various conditions. For the most part they were clean and in basic rudimentary condition. However, earthquakes and landslides had damaged four of the schools. Schools 1, 5 and 8 were damaged in the major earthquakes of 2015 rendering some classrooms dangerous and, in the case of School 1, resulting in schooling being conducted outside. In School 8, a teacher, T16, explains that "our wall has been broken down and water drips in" resulting in crowding students from two classrooms into one. School 5 has been repaired and renovated by an International Non-Government Organisation (INGO). School 2 was not damaged by the earthquakes. However, it sits in the path of a potential landslide that some years ago already destroyed the original primary school and still covers a third of the playground. Another INGO, has built male and female toilets with running water in all the participants' schools.

Figure 5.2 Parent awareness meeting near School 1.

Source: Anonymous.

Learning environment. Schools are funded and staffed based on student numbers and minimum requirements for school operation. In most cases tiny remote villages do not have sufficient student numbers to secure the minimum standard of six teachers for 150 students set out by the SSRP (see Table 5.1). Schools within the research location have student populations of between approximately 20 to 150 and combination of between three and four permanent or temporary government funded teachers. Table 5.2 provides an overview of student populations and teacher numbers. While this meets acceptable teacher student ratios of 1:40 it places particular demands on teachers as they are forced to teach multiple classes simultaneously[36]. Clearly there is a disconnection between national provision of education and local contextual need.

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[36] Staffing is mentioned further in the multigrade teaching (Section 5.3.1) and working conditions (Section 5.4.4).

Table 5.2

Teacher allocation and category in sample schools

	Students	Classes	Government quota teachers		Privately funded local teachers			Total
			Permanent	Temporary	VDC	NGO	INGO	
School 1		EC-5		4				4
School 2	224	EC-8	2	3	1	1	1	8
School 3		EC-5	4		1			5
School 4	23	EC-5	3					3
School 5	(150) 60-70	EC-5	3	2				5
School 6	35	EC-5		3				3
School 7	97	EC-5	1	4				5
School 8	103	EC-7		3	1	1		5
School 9	65	EC-5	2	2				4
Total	549		15	21	3	2	1	42

Source: Participant interviews and field notes.

Participants express that they do not have sufficient funding to provide for school development, resources and extra staffing that is needed. Principal T13 shares:

> Only a little funding is given to the school, and it doesn't arrive on time and is usually less than promised … In my experience there are many government rules that just don't work or fit. They give a standard rate for the textbooks but don't give money for their transport.

The expense of schooling in remote areas is seemingly not factored into school budgets. Again using the example of textbooks, Principal T10 explains:

The funds for the school are limited. With the set amount of money and as it is so expensive and with all the contingencies we have to pay transportation of the books. The government pays 7,731 rupees for the books. Here to buy the books it costs 8,264 rupees. So who bears this expense? Firstly, we inform DEO and wait to see if they give the money or not. In case they don't pay, then we need to ask for donations from the villagers to pay for this.

Applying for additional funding from the DEO is not a simple process as access to the DEO is by a four to eight day return walk depending on school location, which in turn creates considerable expense.

Funding also limits furnishings. Despite SSRPs minimum furniture requirements classrooms were only equipped with benches and a writing board (no cupboards, shelves or teacher desks, as stipulated in the policy). In fact, there was not enough room for much more than seating in most classrooms due to their small size, being on average about four metres by four metres in length. This minimum size meets SSRP classroom size requirements of at least one square metre per student (see Table 5.1).

Learning resources and furniture.

Figure 5.3 Interior of Year 4 classroom (School 4).

Source: Author.

There is evidence to suggest that lack of sufficient funding may not be only isolated to the research location. In 2016 it was reported that 87% of the total education budget was spent on teacher salaries and pensions ("Stakeholders decry budget decrease", 2016). Meaning that after salaries, schools run on approximately 10% of the provided budget. One of Nepal's best performing public schools serves as a useful example. The school has impressive student results—in 2013 its students had achieved a 100% SLC completion rate for 18 years straight and only a 1% drop-out rate. To achieve this result, the school more than doubled its operational budget, through donation schemes to provide more teachers and improved facilities (Shams, Thapa & Parajuli, 2013, pp. 75–76)[37]. Data does not allow for an extended discussion of school operational expenses; however, it is clear that in terms of funding and resources T13 words sum up participant opinion:

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[37] The government provided operational budget was 11,000,000 NPR [approx. AU$140,000] however through donations it supplemented this by 17,500,000 rupees [approx. AU$220,000]. Parents also gave to the school (Shams, Thapa & Parajuli, 2013, pp. 75–76).

In my experience there are many government rules that just don't work or fit.

Use of resources. There is a severe lack of resources and despite the SSRP's standards for 1,000 book libraries, the research location schools had no libraries (see Table 5.1). There was also little or no evidence of teaching aids in schools or the presence of learning materials or any craft activities made by the teachers or students[38]. Further, participants explain that even the textbooks are delivered belatedly every year and are also delayed by the need to transport them from the District Headquarters.

Participants suggest that this lack of resources to support student learning and management is having a strong impact on student learning. T11 states that if resources and examples are not available then education is reduced to just "theory". T3 echoes this stating that teaching is "really hard" without appropriate resources, and believes that:

> While relying and teaching from the textbooks the students understand the examples
>
> as if they were stories. It would be better if it could be shown—it's like this, like that.
>
> For example, in Kathmandu they can show microscopes but here, there aren't any.

T12 feels:

> Handicapped because those educational materials used in training are not available.

Another participant, T13, shares that the lack of teaching resources is also limiting both their pedagogy and professionalism. In terms of pedagogy he concludes:

---

[38] The topic of resourcing is mentioned further in this chapter in relation to supporting student learning.

We shouldn't be limited the same old methods and courses. There are no new resources to give the students. We are limited by this old methodology. Even if we wanted to we can't find anything in this area!

Here the old methodology he is referring to is the memorising of book knowledge and the sole use of oral teaching. He perceives that teacher professionalism is central to student learning but explains that:

In order to be professional … [teachers] ... should have the necessary teaching materials … We have little information. Only the radio works well, we don't get any information from the television. We are stuck living with this limitation. If we don't have new information we are stuck teaching the same old material again and again.

The lack of resourcing in this case limits the teachers' own knowledge and therefore their ability to teach.

Resourcing is one of most saturated participant perceptions of the challenges of remote teaching and its lack extends across all aspects of the school. Data, both participant and observational, indicates that there are limited resources to support the curriculum content such as science equipment, maps, computers, audio-visuals resources and equipment. Two participants convey that part of this reason is because, in T12's opinion:

The budget is provided all at once but it is not enough.

… and in T13's opinion:

[It] doesn't arrive on time and is usually less than promised.

Another reason is availability. Resources need to be purchased and transported from the

District Headquarters.

T14 provides a good example of the problems this involves:

> We need to show maps but while bringing maps from there they get soaked and worn
>
> and torn. They don't remain whole. It's difficult to bring them. We can't manage to
>
> fully take advantage of the resources while teaching. As much as we would like to we
>
> can't effectively use them.

Resources made locally by the teachers themselves are viewed as inferior and insufficient.

T6 explains that such resources are really just "wood and sticks" and in reality as T18 shares

"there's no time" to create them due to teacher work-loads inside and outside of school.

This lack of resources is further compounded when considering that students do not even

have the basic rudiments for writing.

T6 states that:

> More than half of the students don't have such notebooks, and pens.

T3 believes the fault for this is the student's or parent's neglect and living in poverty.

T6 agrees with this. He sees the fault as governmental irresponsibility for not investing in the

provision of basic requirements for schooling. One teacher, T3, laughed in frustration at the

problems of not even having basic materials:

> The younger classes they only bring books. And what to do? They come with only
>
> that. If we say, "Write", how can they write?

Participant frustration with their inability to support learning with resources is highlighted in other ways, such as in the pedagogical problems and solutions discussed in the following section.

5.3.   Teachers and Their Teaching

In this section I present findings organised around the quality of instructional provisions indicated in the SSRP (see the later part of Table 5.1). Firstly, I consider multi-grade education; secondly 'the problem of language' and MTE, and finally the use of a localised curriculum. Due to the fact that these aspects are a key focus of the government's agenda to provide quality education to those in remote areas, it is quite important to consider them here.

Multi-grade teaching: the solution for remote education? Nepal is substantially committed to the provision of equitable access to quality education. In the census of 2011 the government was able to show that 94.7% of its citizens needed to travel less than 30 minutes to attend primary schooling (CBS, 2011). This is a striking result considering the typography of Nepal and the logistics and expense of building, equipping and staffing schools.

This commitment to equitable access has been partly made possible by the use of multi-grade schooling (MOE, 2009). Economic rationalism appears to be at heart of the solution, as the Nepali government balances access with the expense of providing education to small student populations. As a result, remote areas with their small village populations are places were multi-grade teaching (MGT) is employed. Policy states that to insure the success of MGT "specialised teaching cadres for MGT" will be selected and developed (NCED, 2010, p. 6) and that a "specially designed learning package/facility will be provided for identified multigrade schools" (MOE, 2009, p. 82). The new SSDP continues this commitment and

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states that multi-grade and multi-lingual schools will ensure "access to quality education in remote and scarcely populated areas" (MOE, 2016, p. 128). Despite this there is little to suggest, based on participant perspective, that Nepal has ensured that its teachers and schools are equipped to provide such a pedagogical solution. Let me expand on this by firstly considering definitions of multi-grade teaching and then participants' reported experiences of MGT.

There are three types of instructional arrangement found in Nepal 'monograde', 'multiclass' and 'multi-grade' teaching. 'Monograde' teaching refers to the arrangement where one teacher is responsible for only one class at the same time. This arrangement is by large the standard perception of teaching and the Nepal's public education system seeks to provide it to users in the ideal ratio of six teachers to one school (MOE, 2009). However, in the remote context, schools with small student populations and, consequently, small teacher quotas (three to four teachers) have the choice of MGT imposed on them. However, with not enough teachers for each class, one solution is to employ 'multiclass' teaching, where a single teacher teaches multiple separate grades at the same time, but that are in their own separate classrooms (NCED, 2003). In this case teachers move from one classroom to the next to give and monitor lessons. 'Multi-grade' (MGT) occurs in this same situation; however, in this case students at multiple levels/grades are intermingled into the same learning space and taught by one teacher (UNESCO, 2015; CERID, 2003). In such a situation two or even three year levels might be grouped together in the same classroom and taught either the same material at different levels or work in a groups with their own year level or even more independently with their own individual learning plans (Little, 2006). Apart from the

expansion of access, MGT has other positive impacts. Studies of MGT in OECD countries[39] found that generally speaking there was no evidence that learning was inferior to 'monograde' classes but that in fact, there were positive effects on students cognitively, personally and socially (Little, 2006 & 2007).

MGT in practice. In the remote location monograde teaching is viewed by all participants as the preferred method of teaching. However, given the small number of students, schools lack enough teachers to provide such an arrangement. Consequently, teachers and SMCs seek to solve this problem by drawing upon local means to hire supplementary teachers.

Participants lamented that they did not have enough teachers in their schools for 'monograde' teaching. Participants viewed this lack as governmental irresponsibility.

T17 explains:

> They have no care about how many teachers are needed for the schools.

This perception of government neglect negatively impacts on teacher motivation and compounds the already substantial challenges participants are facing.

T8 comments on the shortfall:

> If we go [teach] from Class 1, 2 and 3 then for Class 4 and 5 there is a gap … If the government could give us a quota of 5 teachers that would be good … But the government hasn't provided any yet. Due to that the challenges are even bigger.

T5 complains:

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[39] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has 35 member states from mostly the world's most advanced countries (OECD, 2016).

It is our country's practice—two teachers provided for five classes. How can we

teach? How can quality teaching be provided here?

T9 despairs of the impossibility of having to teach "in this condition!" T7 concludes that the

provision of quality is complete impossible:

Naam che guNastar ho tara shiksha jastai chhaina. Taman dola jastai holaa.

(The name is 'quality' but the education is not like that. It's a complete mess).

Schools and their teachers see the lack of teachers as negatively affecting quality provision of

education and the result is that they seek to supplement the teacher quota by hiring local

community members.

However, for two major reasons participants see that, despite wanting more teachers, hiring

supplementary teachers is in itself not an ideal solution. The first reason is that hiring

teachers in a remote area is a relatively expensive activity. As mentioned earlier in relation

living costs highlighted in Chapter Four, remote areas are expensive places to live in.

T5 explains:

You can find someone to volunteer for 5-6,000 [in the District Headquarters], which

pays for food, but in our area this doesn't work. It's very far away. It's remote.

Food and accommodation is expensive.

And as teachers unanimously view their own government salaries (see Section 5.4.3) as

insufficient, it raises questions about how remote communities could invest in sufficient

salaries.

But it is not simply a matter of funding; the second major reason why hiring supplementary teachers is problematic is related to hiring qualified staff. There are few established criteria for hiring supplementary staff[40] but as discussed in Section 4.5.2, less than a quarter of the mountainous North East's population have completed primary schooling, less than 5% have their SLCs (CBS, 2014) and consequently, even with such criteria it is doubtful that there would many who might meet them.

T17 shares:

> We even don't find any qualified teachers in the village and because it is so remote the salary for qualified teachers from outside the area isn't reasonable and they do not desire to come here.

Thus, while it might be an option, depending on resources available to SMCs, to hire supplementary teachers to bolster numbers, it might not necessarily lead to better outcomes due to the educational and experience levels of the hired teachers.

When this first solution of monograde teaching is not possible participants try to emulate it by employing not multi-grade but multiclass teaching. Although participants use this as a pedagogical solution they do not perceive it as a particularly good one.

Principal T6, whose school has hired supplementary teachers, shares:

> [That if a] teacher tries to handle two different classes, we are not able to give a good education to them [the students].

---

[40] The Education Act provides the SMC with no criteria for such supplementary teacher allocation. It details the criteria for permanent teachers but remote communities would be challenged to recruit teacher on such with criteria. Nepal Law Commission (30 May 2002).

Another participant, T7, comments:

I think that if there were six teachers then it would be easy and the quality of the

education would improve"[41].

T8 alludes to the challenges of classroom management in such an arrangement:

In every lesson period there is a gap in each class … When there is a gap they [the

students] go outside and start jumping around. And the others say, "You guys are

outside playing! Hey, we want to go too?" Their mind goes towards playing.

These participants share a common view that monograde teaching is quality and multiclass

teaching a compulsory, but inferior arrangement. Complaints are common and bitter in

relation to the perceived unfairness of having to employ MGT.

As mentioned T5 questions if the solution is even plausible.

It is our country's practice … But how can we teach? How can quality teaching be

provided here?

T12 has a similar view and points out that with teacher absences teaching becomes even more

difficult:

It is impossible to complete this in an educational year. For example, only 2 teachers

can continuously work. Sometimes one might have problems and may need to take

leave ... The Principal is very busy with all the other school work.

T11 expands on this, sharing the challenges of making schooling work with less teachers:

_____

[41] In T7's equation, six teachers are made up of one early childhood teacher and five classroom teachers.

The time needs to be managed, schedules need to be made, rosters need to be made, the routines need to be adjusted … We need to meet the specific aims of the curriculum, but it is hard to meet those aims. So in 45 minutes' time it is only possible to teach up to 30 minutes … We can't manage it, us three!

These perspectives reinforce the common feeling of it being impossible to provide quality to their students. But teacher frustration with the multiclass teaching solution is not isolated to the research location.

The only substantial national reviews of Nepal's multi-grade and multiclass teaching are from over a decade ago (CERID, 2003a, 2004b) and since then little research has been conducted on the topic; however, it would seem that little has changed in terms of teacher perspective. The reviews found that teachers viewed MGT as an "unwanted reality" and "temporary solutions" (CERIDa, 2003, p. xiii). The 2003 review found that teachers were "unable to differentiate between MGT and MCT [multiclass teaching]" and preferred "teaching two grades in different rooms under the name of multi-grade teaching" (p. xi). The second national review from 2004 listed the problems teachers face from feeling overloaded and stressed with having to plan and give lessons for double the number of classes. It highlighted that teachers lacked the management skills for such teaching arrangements, that they did not distribute their time fairly between classes and that their classroom absences (as they managed classes in two different classes) meant that a large amount of lesson time was reduced to controlling students' behaviour (CERID, 2004b, pp. 11–12).

Studies in other countries with comparable arrangements also show that teachers experience similar issues. Bhutan uses MGT in its mountainous small population areas. However, while

there were positive teacher perceptions of MGT as a way to provide access to education, a national review found teachers practised multiclass rather than multi-grade teaching, that the national curriculum was aimed at monograde teaching, and government financing of education was insufficient (Kivunja & Kuyini-Abubakar, 2015). A policy brief on MGT in Indonesia suggests teachers lack the necessary skills and training for MGT teaching and require better management, support, curricula, resources and community understanding in order to effectively see MGT as a viable pedagogical option (World Bank, 2010b). An MGT guide designed in Bangkok admits that "diverse family backgrounds, ethnic/linguistic traditions, and socio-economic circumstances" make teaching difficult enough but the need to combine "more than one grade in a multi-grade context is even more of a challenge" (UNESCO, 2015, pp. 2–3). Certainly there are issues with MGT that not constrained to the research location.

A common misunderstanding found in the participants' perspectives, the national reviews (CERID, 2003a & 2004b) and the research on multi-grade teaching in Bhutan, is the claim that teachers were "unable to differentiate between MGT and MCT teaching" (CERID, 2003a, p. xi). As I have already discussed, teachers are frustrated with having to employ multiclass teaching; however, it must be noted that in reality they are not required to teach multiclass but rather MGT. It could be argued then that part of the problem with the success of multi-grade solution is fact that it is not being utilised. However, my own observational evidence of school design also suggests that there are other less obvious issues at play.

Decisions made at a central level regarding official school design are ultimately monograde centric and feed the notion of multiclass rather than MGT. As stated already, schools are built with the intention of monograde teaching, with one classroom for each year level. Clearly

five small classrooms in a row is not the same as a dynamic purpose built space for MGT. Furniture and flooring also ensure that multi-grade methodologies of individual and grouped learning are not used. The furniture in the research location is typically rudimentary consisting of benches and narrow work tables, placed in rows facing forward and are consequently not made for flexible seating arrangements. In the research location and much of Nepal, the floors of rooms are seen as acceptable places to sit, eat, work and even sleep, and therefore acceptable optional learning places in schools. However, this option is not available in the research location as government school floors are mud, often wet and impossibly cold in winter.

Policy states that MGT is the solution for access to schooling in remote areas (MOE, 2009 & 2016). However, the findings suggest that it is not implemented. Monograde teaching is viewed as quality instructional provision and multiclass teaching is used to emulate this arrangement. Findings suggest that participants do not perceive a difference between the multi-grade and multiclass teaching and that they view such teaching arrangements as negative, inferior, demanding in terms of planning and organising and detrimental to the delivery of quality education. The issues of MGT are further compounded when one considers the multi-lingual nature of teachers' work and policy intentions.

Multi-lingual and mother tongue education. Another of the key pedagogical policy solutions for remote education is multi-lingual schooling. The multilingual nature of Nepal has been accepted in different ways. Prior to 1990 "the use of indigenous languages was actively discouraged under the policy of 'one nation, one language" (Toba, Toba & Rai, 2005, p. 20). However, since democracy, the nation has embraced its multi-lingual reality, enshrining it in its constitutions and encouraged the establishment of MTE (Government of Nepal, 1990,

2007 & 2015). The SSRP sees MTE not only as a basic right but a key method to make

schools child-friendly and ensure quality and relevance (MOE, 2009). It states:

> Children's right to basic education through mother tongues will be guaranteed in at
>
> least the first three grades. The choice of medium of instruction in school will be
>
> determined by the SMC in consultation with the local government (p. 81).

Policy encourages MTE as the medium of instruction in Years 1–3 and after that transitional

in Years 4–5 and replaced by the sole use of the Nepali language following Year 6 (CDC,

2009). Thus, in intention it seems apparent that MTE is a central aspect of primary

schooling, in reality however, English is given greater place in policy. It is a compulsory

language from Year 1 onwards, can be taught as an optional subject and while there are few

resources available in their mother tongue, there is not a curriculum for English, no

supporting textbooks. However, teaching resources are readably available, begging the

question of government commitment to the policy.

In the research location the current approach to this problem uses Nepali as the medium of

instruction which is supplemented in the earlier grades with translation, assistance and

instruction in the local language. This takes up approximately 50% of class time.

T11 explains:

> If Nepali is not understood, we translate into [the local language].

But as T14 states:

> [As the mother tongue is not fully understood by the students] it is even more difficult
>
> to teach in second language.

Further to T6's opinion:

> The kids grow up learning [name of local language] very fast but all the curriculum is
> in Nepali so they struggle a lot here.

As a result, teachers use a technique which T3 refers to as 'mixing'.

> By mixing our language a little, mixing Nepali, like this we teach, but it is difficult for
> a little understanding. It is very difficult. There are lots of problems.

Learning Nepali is difficult, and as students have little exposure to Nepali prior to schooling

they have an immature understanding of the local language to build upon; thus, participants

explain that students only gain a functional understanding of Nepali.

T3 shares:

> … only when they get towards Class 4 or 5 or 3.

Local teachers are not fluent in Nepali either, having only resided in the local area, and feel

unable to teach it well.

As T10 explains:

> [They] don't understand the meaning of the words well.

Recruiting mother tongue Nepali speaking teachers is not possible and as T5, T17 and T18

state, they are unable to recruit or retain them. Outside teachers who are placed or transferred

to the area also struggle as they cannot understand the students well nor use the local

language to assist student understanding. As a result, a 2010 USAID study of Nepal's

National Early Grade Reading Program found that 52% of non-native Nepali speaking students in the Class 3 could not read (EQUIP 2, 2010)[42].

The study of English further complicates these matter. English is viewed as a difficult and taught as an optional subject. However, without good Nepali or mother tongue skills, English lessons are taught in three languages.

T9 mentions:

> We try to teach by mixing three languages … first in Nepali and then we have to say in [name of the local language] and the whole of the English lesson goes into explaining only one or two English words.

One might conclude that education in the mother tongue of the area as the medium for primary schooling or part of a local curriculum and so might solve some of this problem; however, there are obstacles to this. The Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2006), Skutnabb-Kangas and Mohanty (2009) and Nurmela, Awasthi and Skutnabb-Kangas (2012), in their reviews of Nepal's policy and strategy, recognised that MTE is the strongest form of minority education, but note that, despite policy, that there is little evidence that MTE education was being implemented. Participants, such as T10, see that a local curriculum would ensure that "the important things and aspects of our culture don't become extinct"; here T10 is referring to language and religion. Yet, while teachers are orally fluent, they are not so in the written language. As mentioned in Section 4.5.1 the local language has been translated; however, this translation is not fully accepted by the local ethnicity and the

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[42] The study of 480 students from the remote districts of Kanchanpur and Kailali found that 36% of native Nepali-speaking Class 3 students also couldn't read (EQUIP 2, 2010).

majority of the population require literacy programs to learn to read it. There is also neither a written curriculum nor resources to teach the local language in schools.

T3 laments this, stating:

> I would love to [teach through my own language] but there are no lesson plans or books in our language.

T10 feels that he would need the resource of an expert such as a local Lama (Tibetan Buddhist priest) to teach the language. These obstacles to MTE are also compounded by the lack of teacher ability.

Participants feel incapable of writing and designing a MTE curriculum, which must reach the national equivalent standards stipulated by the NCF. While the participants admit that they have received basic training in local curriculum design, they feel it was so ineffectual that they were not able to apply it. T8 and T9 comment together on this:

> T8: They say it is in the training.

> T9: They say you can teach in any language, in your own language but it wasn't [in training]. So we are mostly teaching OPT [optional] English.

Policy expects the school community to design and implement MTE but participants' responses indicate that they do not understand this.

T3 comments:

> The government hasn't begun to produce it—a curriculum and textbook in our language hasn't been produced.

Further, even if they did understand and had the ability, participants are unable to secure the finances needed for curriculum and resource development and employment of local language experts. Such participant perceptions are backed by policy reviews. The UNESCO (2011) and Phyak (2007) studies of MTE both indicate that in Nepal, despite positive impact in schools where MTE has been introduced[43], numerous issues make it almost impossible to sustain; such as, funding, training, teaching resources, community perceptions, and preferential demand for English education and education in English.

The language problem and both the practiced and proposed pedagogical solutions to it fail to see students fluent in any of the three languages or with a strong understanding of the curriculum. Students must settle for functional knowledge of Nepali and, functional is not fluent. If language "plays a critical role in the acquisition and transmission of socio-cultural knowledge and in the development of higher cognitive functions" (Pérez-Arce, 1994, p. 586), then a functional language ability has huge implications for how much children can learn from the curriculum they are being taught.

Language fluency has consequences for further education.

T6 explains that:

> Students hardly clear the primary level and as they reach secondary level they get discouraged due to weakness in study, the language problem. They can't express themselves and it is difficult for them.

This language problem is also related to English ability.

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[43] See the Section 5.3.4 on localised curriculum for an example of successful use of MTE.

T6 continues:

> As the student's progress, higher until university they face problems with English and are failed on account of a particular English subject.

Three of the participants (T12, T15 and T6) shared that they were not able to complete their own intermediate studies in Years 11 and 12, or their Bachelor degrees due to their poor English results. Higher education's iron gate is the SLC and both English and Nepali are two of the six compulsory subjects on this exam.

Government figures in relation to SLC pass rates and language grades echo T6's concerns vividly (OCE, 2015). As Figure 5.4 illustrates, in North East Nepal students perform considerably worse than their Kathmandu and private school peers. As a result, the majority of those studying in the North Eastern mountains find the gate to higher education firmly closed to them.
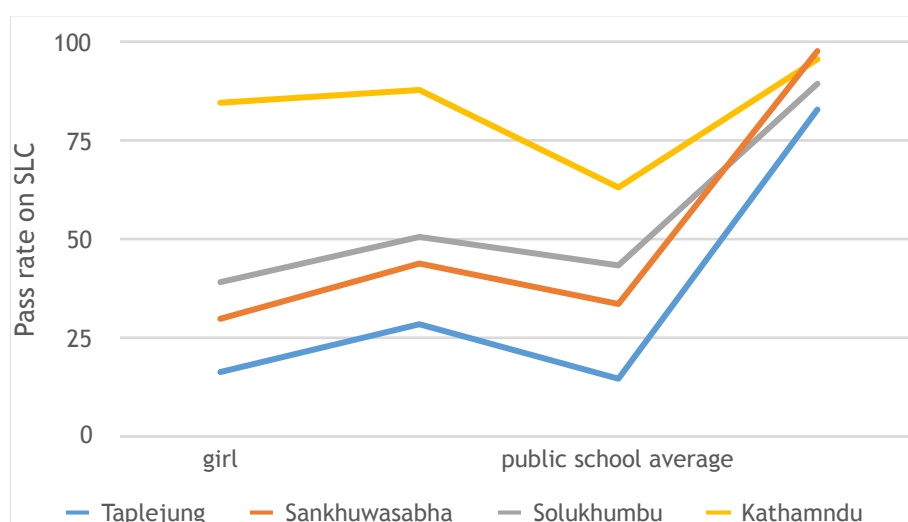
Figure 5.4 SLC Pass rates by gender and type of schooling.

Source: OCE, 2015, n.p.

The outcome is worse in the specific research location. Official SLC grades of students are

not easily accessible, but by taking available figures (OCE, 2006; MOE, 2015) of a sample

secondary school from each of the three districts in the research location it is clear students

are floundering in English and Nepali. Table 5.3 indicates that students are only obtaining

12–25 marks out of 100 on English exams compared with their peers in central Nepal who

achieve double to triple these results (MOE, 2015). While their results in the Nepali

language are better they do not suggest fluency or acceptable pass rates in SLC exams.

Without language competency access to tertiary studies is not possible, especially considering

many tertiary institutes and university courses operate in the English.

Table 5.3

Student SLC Achievement in Mountainous North East Nepal

	2006			2015		
	English	Nepali	SLC Pass %	English	Nepali	SLC Pass %
Taplejung	15.3	29.7	5.13	12.8	25.9	4.08
Sankhuwasabha	26.1	33.9	19.57	-	-	-
Solukhumbu	11.8	35.4	9.09	24.8	49.3	13.63
Eastern Nepal Average				29.13	41.17	
Central Nepal Average				48.74	57.89	
National Average				33.1	45.2	

Sources: OCE, 2006, n.p. & MOE, 2015a, n.p.

While there is intention in policy to resolve this 'problem of language' (MOE, 2009), in practice participants feel there is limited investment in training and resourcing remote schools to teach any language effectively, be in their mother tongue, Nepali or English. Further, the lack of policy and action related to language in education "in the early grades, has resulted in neglect of Nepali and mother tongues and an unhealthy focus on English" (MOE, 2014, p. 9).

Localised curriculum. As part of the Nepal's strategy to decentralise schooling and increase relevance and community ownership, the SSRP permits primary schools to create and teach a local curriculum. Practically speaking this means different things depending on the year level of students. As indicated in Table 5.4, in Years 1–3 this equates to the option to teach both a mother tongue and another locally relevant subject. It also allows for Social Studies,

Creative Arts and Physical Education curricula to be infused with local content, taking up to 20% of class time. In Years 4–5, while MTE should be given first priority and if this is not possible a local curriculum can be taught that includes aspects such as local culture & history and even vocational and agricultural content (CDC, 2009). In secondary schooling there is no provision for MTE or a local language subject (Years 610). However, 10–15% of regular curriculum content should be driven by local needs based education (CDC, 2007, p. 23).

Table 5.4

Primary school subject and weighting

Years 1–3 Subject & weightage		Years 4—5 Subject & weightage	
Nepali	8	Nepali	8
English	5	English	5
Mathematics	5	Mathematics	6
Social studies and creative arts	5	Social Studies	5
Mother Tongues, Science, Health & Physical Education	5	Creative Arts	3
Local subject	4	Science & Environment	4
		Health & Physical education	4
		Local subject / Mother Tongue	4

20% of the curricula of Social Studies, Creative Arts, and Physical Education may be localised

Source: CDC, 2009, pp. 5–6.

It is important to consider the rationale for the inclusion of this locally driven curriculum content. The Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), the authoring body for Nepal's national curriculum, acknowledges that despite its best efforts, the national curriculum might not be adequate and relevant to the local context and, therefore, allows schools to partially

elaborate on and contextualise aspects of the national curriculum (CDC, 2006, p. 24).

The SSRP (MOE, 2009) and the NCF documents (2007) state that localising curriculum

content makes it more relevant and the new SSDP expands on this theme of relevant access

stating that, "An equitable education system is flexible and context-specific, responding to

these varying needs and opportunities, and ensures not only equity in access but also equity

in relevance for children living in all parts of the country" (MOE, 2016, p. 153).

As such, in Nepal local curriculum is identified as one of 25 enabling conditions needed for

quality education (Poyck et al., 2016, p. 35). Policy hints that localisation happens by

involving locals through committees of community representatives comprising of

"educationists, historians, teachers, guardians, people with disability, representatives of the

people of different ethnic groups and communities" (CDC, 2007, p. 35).

It is important to unpack 'relevance' and why being relevant might potentially benefit

students. Stabback, in a 2016 UNESCO document on quality curriculum, stated that

relevance is a vital component in any curriculum and students learn best "when new material

is at least in some way relevant to their prior knowledge and experience, or to their

goals" (p. 30) and in such a way relevance motivates. Studies also show that through

contextualising not only curriculum content but ways of learning found from within the local

culture, a local curriculum can foster better student understanding and performance, build and

protect cultural identity, and as a resultant, empower communities and ethnicities (Kopong,

1995; Pradan, 2017). The inherent collaborative process of involving the whole community

in the curriculum design also creates not only community ownership (Kajornsin, Potisook,

Ekwarangkoon & Lapanachokdee, 2004; Thomas, 2012) but also community itself, and in

such a way the benefits move beyond the students (Pryor, 2005). Localised curriculum that

uses the local mother tongue allows "parents to participate in school activities and decision making so that schools respond more to community needs and values" (Phyak, 2007, p. 11).

Pradhan's (2017) study of the Tharu approach to localised and MTE provides ample evidence of these benefits. The Tharu, who live in Nepal's southern Terai, are one of the largest ethnicities. Since 2005, efforts by the Nepali government, NGOs and Tharu communities have been especially helpful to encourage not only MTE but also the localising of curriculum content and textbooks. When the curriculum was being designed choices were made not to simply translate government textbooks but to rewrite them. Kathmandu festivals and religious places were replaced with local ones. Photos and pictures, which were typically representative of Nepal's central hills and people in official national dress, were replaced with images of the Terai and Tharu dress. Local narratives were chosen and the names of characters in textbook dialogues were replaced with localised ones, e.g., *Ram* became *Himmat or Ramu*. This embedding of local context in the learning was not done at the expense of outward 'external' knowledge nor nationalism and patriotism (Pradhan, 2017, p. 389). As a result, students were able to engage more in content, as they knew its context. They exclaimed, "I've been to this place" and while looking a school photo, "This school is very close-by ..." and "Sometimes we go there with our friends" (p. 388). This process also had other unintended outcomes as textbooks were found to legitimise the local language and MTE and even transformed the language into new forms (Pradhan, 2017, p. 385).

Local curriculum in practice. Despite the expressed desire for local curriculum in the specific research location there are no schools providing this to their students. There is recognition of its importance, but the participants recognise that curriculum content that had no connection to the locale is abstract and difficult to teach. T5 shares his frustration with the

decontextualised national curriculum stating that the "central department in Kathmandu created the curriculum but to teach according to it is so difficult".

T5 provides an example in relation to traffic rules:

> I have to teach here about zebra crossings. I have to teach about traffic rules. How can these be taught? What are these things? The students here haven't even seen a car, or a road let alone a zebra crossing! How can I teach these things and make the classroom students understand these things? After Class 9 or 10 this would be okay. Class 9 and 10 student understand a little, but in Class 1 and 2 primary school students have never seen a road, a zebra crossing or a car.

T9 complains that he has to teach about apples:

> Where can we find an apple to demonstrate? Here it is not available at all.

The participants' listing of the problems of decontextualised curriculum spread to matters of teaching about electricity, city management, public property, computers and livelihood. Speaking on teaching about computers T11 shares:

> Down there in the cities and [the district] the children learn about computers while they play, "The computer is this, and this and this". But here it's just theory. We say, "Here. It is like this, here it is like that".

And, as discussed in Chapter Four, teachers and community members also complain that the curriculum does not prepare children for local life, work or life-long learning.

For a number of reasons, a localised curriculum is not being taught in the research location. Participants feel that firstly, there is no curriculum or textbooks or other resources to support teaching it. Secondly, teachers are not capable of teaching it because of the way in which it has been structured. Thirdly, the pedagogy is heavily reliant on textbook delivery, and fourthly, the teachers and the school's community are incapable of designing, writing and publishing such a curriculum and its supporting resources. Surprisingly, the CDC that wrote the curriculum framework agrees with participant opinions. After stating what locally designed curriculum should be, the curriculum framework then concludes that a number of challenges make it is almost impossible to implement it; such as a lack of human resources to develop it, a lack of trained teachers to implement it and a lack of a conducive environment at local and institutional level (technical assistance and guidance) to develop and implement it (CDC, 2007, pp. 23–24). The afore mentioned Tharu curriculum succeeded thanks to substantial assistance of financial, technical and logistical support of a number of INGOs[44].

There was a common perception among participants that without being given a local curriculum and supporting resources they are not able to implement it. This is seen in the statements of participants like T3, who shares:

> The government hasn't begun to produce it—a curriculum and textbook.

... and of T6 who hears the government talk of local curriculum as simply that, just talk:

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[44] Some of the INGO/NGOs that have worked with the Tharu include UMN (Pradhan, 2017) and later World Education who both trained teachers and developed curriculum, Rato Bangla Foundation which developed reading materials, UNICEF which expanded and provided supplementary training (World Education, 2015); clearly, without the support of such organisations.

They give us the same suggestions but we say that at first we need to make a curriculum and then a textbook. The government here just talks and talk but there is no application.

This opinion is problematic as there is clearly a significant misunderstanding between the teachers and the government. On one hand teachers are waiting to be provided with the means to teach the local curriculum, while on the other the government is waiting for teachers and local communities to do the same. The rhetoric of government education bodies situates their own role as providing freedom and guidelines and basic enabling assistance, training and monitoring through the DEO and consequently, releasing the responsibility to the community. Yet the remote communities do not have the capacity to take up this responsibility. Community members, although owners of local and informal knowledge, are not capable of turning it into a formal school-based curriculum due to their inexperience and lack of education. Further, schools already struggle to get funds to develop their schools let alone pay for the production of a curriculum.

As T6 questions:

And who is going to invest in it? There is no one to invest in it.

My discussions with community members and leaders concluded that in the case of their language, although translated into slightly modified *Devanagari*[45] script it is by and large oral and consequently not written or read by community members. Thus, writing and publishing textbooks and resources is a very difficult process.

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[45] Devanagari is the official script for Nepali (Constitution of Nepal, 2015) and of many other languages in India and Nepal.

Teachers themselves are the communities' educated and ultimately the ones needed for writing a school curriculum; however, they express that they are unable to write it.

T12, speaking about curriculum design, says:

> For this we have practised a lot but it was very difficult.

Unfamiliar with the curriculum document itself or the process of scaffolding learning, teachers teach by the textbook.

T13 explains:

> Whatever is in the textbook we teach that directly. If it says k, gh we teach k, ghnothing more.

T5 admits to the dependency on textbooks for teaching, stating:

> When the textbooks and resources don't arrive, what can we teach? What can the students learn? All the teacher and students are forced to kill time and then go home to eat".

An NGO with 10 years' experience in conducting teacher trainer in rural and urban Nepal has found that 95% of teachers do not actually know the curriculum and as a result teach the textbook (Bohora, Brown & Chhetri, 2016: October 20). Teachers, who teach by the textbook and for exams based on textbooks, hardly even know the curriculum source documents well enough to consider writing a local curriculum that would comply with NCF standards (Bajracharya & Brouwer, 1997; Bohora, Brown & Chhetri, 2016).

Further, as mentioned in section 4.2, the pervasive modernist ideology and development

policy have had such profounds effects on social identity that the ways the Nepalis "know, recognize and think about local knowledge and practices" are devalued and perceived as deficit (Pigg, 1993, p.56). Hence, though T1 and T10 desire a localised agricultural curriculum it is not local knowledge but better 'modern techniques' and agricultural practices that are their focus.

Thus, the unintentional misunderstanding about who is to write and implement the local curriculum coupled with limited local capacity and the devaluation of local knowledge effectively ensures that there is no uptake of the provision of local curriculum.

5.4. Working Conditions and Job Satisfaction

I present here findings in relation to both the working conditions of teaching remotely and the motivation and satisfaction levels of the participants. Participants were not asked to share on either of these aspects but rather these findings were generated in relation to the question of what the challenges are of teaching in a remote area. These two aspects are interconnected and compounding. I discuss the working condition sequentially in relation to prevalence in the data namely, salary, the requirement of 'going and coming', the working environment of schools and lastly staffing.

Salary. In Nepal as mentioned in Chapter Two that permanent teachers are paid salaries equivalent to those earned by civil servants, relatively good pensions and those working in remote areas are also given a remote area allowance to supplement their incomes and to attract external teachers. In fact, so much effort has gone into the monetary provision for teachers that it is frequently noted that salary consumes the majority of the education

budget[46]. Despite this, the participants unanimously feel that their salary is not sufficient considering their conditions of work and as a result they all work at least two jobs—teaching and farming.

The example of an EC teacher's situation proves a useful introduction to the issue.

T5 shares:

> Their salary is extremely small! Only 6,000–5,000 a month. Even though they teach the very first level of schooling they are only given 6,000 rupees. What's the good of 6,000 rupees in the remote area? These days rice is 200 rupees rupees a kilo. They need to teach, but how can they when they can't even make enough to eat?

T5's statement is made stronger when one considers that a normal household eats at least a kilogram of rice a day, meaning the EC wage is enough for only about 25 days of rice.

The teacher continues:

> Towards this area [the district headquarters] you can find someone to volunteer for 56,000 rupees, which pays for food, but in our area this doesn't work. It's very far away. It's remote. Food and accommodation are expensive.

In the District Headquarters rice can be bought for less than half the price stated earlier, 80 NPR, meaning the same wage can buy 60–70 days of rice[47]. The remote EC teacher's wage is in this way not equivalent to the urban teacher's, and functions as little more than a supplementary income for the household and also technically breaches the laws of the Labour

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[46] In Nepal, approximately 65% of the education budget is spent on salaries (GFA Consulting Group, 2016).

[47] Rice in the District Headquarters costs 80–90 rupees. Other commodities face similar price rises due to transportation. For example: flour that costs 50 rupees a kilo in the city costs 170 rupees in the remote area.

Act which states that the minimum full-time wage should be 9,700 rupees[48]. Clearly, in this case, wage and living costs are not being met.

It appears that this is also the case for the participants. Despite receiving considerably larger salaries, they complain that, as T4 shares:

> The job isn't enough to fill our own stomachs.

And in T3's opinion:

> If we depend only on this small amount of salary then we even cannot provide for all our needs, like food and our children's education.

At the time of interviewing participants reported that their salary ranged between 20,000 and 28,000 rupees[49] inclusive of remote area allowance.

Despite this, T6 states that:

> The wages which they receive are just enough to sustain one's life, not enough to provide good homes, and quality education for the children. Therefore, the teachers are obligated to do other work too, besides teaching.

Consequently, T6 continues to say that:

> The teachers, in entirety, have to farm in order to run the family.

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[48] As stated in the Labour Acts' Gazette Notice, Part 5, Volume 63, Number 43, dated February 01, 2016 (NLC, 2016).

[49] T10's salary 27,000 rupees, T7 gave his salary to be between 20-25,000 rupees. Officially as of 2017 primary school teachers will receive between 20-30,500 NPR depending on pay grade, tenure, allowances, and education (GoN, 2016). In the literature, it is difficult to ascertain the amount of remote area allowance one is entitled to; however, T18 states that the remote area allowance is a sum of 4,500 rupees. T18 states that secondary teachers, with allowances, get as much as 30,000 rupees.

This economic solution affects schooling negatively. The flow-on effects of insufficient salary and working two jobs needs to be discussed further in relation to its impact on 'schooling'.

T4 shares frankly:

> Our first priority is school related work and our second priority is our other related work. However, we are not able to give much time to our first priority.

This inability to 'give much time' or as T5 puts it, "give their best to the students" is particularly expressed in relation to subtracting time and mental and physical energy away from 'teacher's work'.

There is a perception among participants that they cannot prepare well for classes nor concentrate because of their domestic work.

T3 explains:

> There shouldn't be the burden of having to do outside work after the school. We teachers cannot prepare what to teach for tomorrow classes due to the work. All these problems are due to an inadequate salary.

Further, T4 notes that for teachers:

> There is no time for making education resources ... With a small salary we can't give 24 hours. In addition to this we have to give time to our house related work.

The Principal of School 9, T18, expands:

> There is no time for the teachers [to create local resources] because they have to stay from 10 am to 4 pm at school. But at other times, from six in the morning to six in the evening, the rest of the time they have do their household work. When can they make these resources? There's no time for it.

For whatever reason, if a teacher is too busy to prepare lessons and resources and evaluate student learning then logically, student learning suffers. The requirement of 'going and coming' as described in Section 5.4.2 also makes earning a salary insufficient.

The requirement of 'going and coming'. Part of the teacher workload involves travelling to the DEO for official work and to collect pay. Surprisingly, this simple act places huge financial and time related burden on teachers. Teachers must travel three to four times a year to the District Headquarters to draw their pay and do official work. This process of *jaane ra aune*—'going and coming'—can take anywhere from four days to 10 days walking depending on the physical ability of the teachers and their location. Thus, teachers annually spend anywhere from two weeks to over a month travelling. This creates a considerable expense in terms of lodging along the trail and in the District Headquarters and in terms of time away from home, school and even agricultural responsibilities.

The expense of this 'going and coming' is met almost entirely by teachers. Irrespective of their location, teacher's annual travel allowance is 2,400 rupees which equates to 200 rupees a day. T13 explains:

> For [name of village near Tibetan border, VDC2] it's 200 rupees, the allowance, and for those in [name of village where the road ends], it's 200 rupees also. If we have to

go from here it costs 4 to 5,000 rupees for the return journey! ... The pay in the remote area is a little small.

By accounting in this way, T13's spends annually approximately from 15,000 to 20,000 rupees going and coming. However, T13 lives only 2 days walk from the District Headquarters. Those who need to travel longer are annually spending double this—over a month's salary collecting their pay and attending official business; a burden that their urban colleagues never face. T13 concludes:

> On official government work we have to go up and down 3–4 times a year. Half of our salary goes. It's like that when we go to the District Headquarters. Down there we have to stay 3–4 days, pay for transport, and other contingencies and for that reason we face financial problems[50].

While the exact expense is difficult to define, it is clear that remote area teachers are facing considerable financial and time related challenges when doing their work and being paid for it and in their own view their salary is insufficient. This, in turn, impacts negatively on their job satisfaction. T13 believes it effects a teachers' work ethic and commitment:

> Some say that the primary school salary is less. So they don't give so much importance to the field and knowingly or unknowingly it doesn't become what it should be.

As a result of this perception, T12 also shares:

> I suggested to others that it is not to worth working in the primary sector.

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[50] The return journey from the Tibetan border to the District headquarters can take 8—10 days. Alternatively, in the case of Road's End, an 8 hour return journey by jeep.

And T6 admits teaching is not as valued as other jobs:

> In Nepal's context the teaching job is not prestigious, because one cannot make a
>
> good income.

This data supports the conclusions that teacher's salaries are insufficient due to the price of

food and the financial and time related commitment to 'going and coming'.

Working environment. Participants relate that their work environment is inadequate. Eight

teachers, including four Principals, commented on the school buildings and their workspace.

These responses on the schools' physical environments ranged from "needs improvement" to,

in T11's words:

> Not in good condition at all.

Particularly due to the weather, teachers find teaching in their schools challenging and this

has been illustrated already in Chapter Four. In winter, classrooms are too cold to teach in.

In summer the sound of rain on the tin roof together with pesky black flies make teaching and

learning very difficult. In some places, as T7 explains:

> Students have to be on wet floors. And in the rainy season it rains and the water leaks
>
> in and the classrooms get really wet. If the government constructed according to the
>
> need then it would reduce the problem and become easier for the students.

T7's opinion is important to consider further.

Schools in the area are built regardless of the environment or climate. While provisions have

been made to ensure that staffrooms are equipped with chairs, shelves or cabinets, the

classrooms I saw had little more than basic seating and a whiteboard or blackboard.

The buildings are constructed with stone walls, held together with mud or concrete if

available, with tin roofing and packed earth floors. Built in this way they are not earthquake

safe (evidenced in Section 5.2.1). No provision had been made for heating and even if

provided the school walls did not reach the roof and the windows are glassless. Further,

a few schools have such crowded classrooms that T3 mentions:

> The students are forced to sit on the window sills and in the doorways. Some bring
> stones to sit on.

While the condition of the classroom or school is important to the student, it is also important

to the teacher. The rain dripping from the roof that falls on the students also falls on the

teacher. The cold, the pests, and the lack of physical and learning resources, and the

inappropriateness of classroom design for MGT all affect teacher motivation.

Staffing. There are two major aspects mentioned in the data regarding staffing. The first

relates to perceptions of the insufficiency of staffing quotas and the employment conditions

of temporary teachers; and the second, the ability of the teachers and their pre-service

qualifications and knowledge of curriculum. I present these in this order.

Staffing quotas and employment conditions. Participants share that the way in which the

government staffs their schools is insufficient and affects their job satisfaction. As mentioned

in relation to MGT, teachers view the governmental allocation of teachers with negativity and

frustration. They perceive this deficiency as affecting the quality of the education being

provided, undermining positive perceptions of the education policy, and adding work and

stress to the considerable challenges participants already face. Further, efforts by

communities to provide supplementary teachers are limited by the availability of qualified candidates and the lack of suitable remuneration for such work as mentioned in Section 5.3.2.

Findings suggest that teachers employed on temporary contracts are paid less, have little job security and are consequently less motivated to work professionally. The majority of the participants are employed on a temporary basis[51] and as defined in Chapter Two their remuneration is significantly different.

T5, a temporary teacher himself, explains that:

> If there isn't a guaranteed salary and job then people don't teach well ... They don't prepare, create lesson plans, they don't do anything. They go and work.

T15, also a temporary teacher, echoes his words, stating that security and continuity are needed for job satisfaction:

> The main thing to be a quality teacher is that your own job should be established or settled and the teachers should be able to teach continuously. If it is not done in this manner, then one cannot be a good teacher. The teacher will pass the whole day with the students engaging them with something but resulting in no outcome.

T1 and T2 both shared a deep fear of being transferred away from their homes, fields and families. In these perspectives, temporary teachers are dissatisfied, unmotivated and in fact neglectful because of their employment conditions.

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[51] As per Table 5.2 approximately two thirds of the participants are employed on a temporary basis.

Perceptions of ability. Participants share that despite their best efforts, they feel unable to teach to the level they aspire. The reasons given for such inability to do their job effectively relate to perceptions about their own ability and their satisfaction with their job.

Participants over the age of 40 feel that their age and consequently, the years since their preservice training, are negative factors and impact on their ability to teach. There are seven participants in this cohort; six have completed only SLC and one their intermediate level, i.e., Years 11 and 12. These teachers completed their pre-service training between the late 1980s and early 1990s and express experiencing vastly different education to their younger colleagues.

T7, who is 48 years old and has taught for 24 years, explained:

> We did our SLC around 2044, 2045 [1988, 1989][52] and education is continuously changing ... I passed SLC so long ago and I'm confused.

T11, who is 36 years old and has taught for 13 years, shared:

> How many years ago did we do the SLC? How much have we revived and in all this we get older every year and are qualifications are not very high. We are in confusion. We are not able.

... and continues to share that teachers older than him:

> ... have less than SLC and some only have SLC ... They can't teach our students because their knowledge is little."

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[52] The Nepali national calendar, the Patro, is based on the Vedic Vikram Sambat calendar and is approximately 56 and a half years ahead of the Gregorian calendar.

These teachers are unable to teach well due to curriculum changes. Despite most participants completing the 10 month in-service and the 30 day TPD training (discussed in Section 5.6), there is still a feeling that they are not up-to-date with educational changes. Whole new subjects and content have been created since they completed their pre-service training.

T6 shares:

> Here we have a computer subject till higher secondary level but the teachers are from the older generation and do not have any idea or knowledge about it.

In fact, this view on insufficient content knowledge occurs among all the participants. They particularly feel unskilled to teach in the subject areas of English, Computing, Local Curriculum, Science, Maths and Nepali. There was a resulting feeling that if younger teachers were employed education would improve.

T10, a 53 year old Principal with 31 years' experience, shared:

> The subjects that we have been teaching we can make understood very well. But because of our age, it doesn't meet the requirements. So the fresh minds should hold the positions.

T4, who is 48 years old and has taught for 28 years, said that:

> [Well managed modern teachers will] not only benefit remote areas but also the whole of Nepal and the quality of education will rise.

The rationale behind such an opinion, as stated in the data, is both related to training and the ability of ageing teachers who are, in T4's opinion:

... less educated ... [and] ... even tremble when writing 'Ka' [beginning letter of the Nepali alphabet].

The perception is clear; that despite training, teachers who have been teaching for a long time feel that they are unable to fully provide the education they wish too.

Teacher job satisfaction. The conditions of *being remote* and teaching remotely affect participants' motivation and job satisfaction. In the data there is a mixed perspective on these matters. At best, a third of the participants are happy because they feel that they are succeeding in their teaching, have the respect of the community and are motivated by a concern for society and the future of their students. In one case, T6, new teacher, found spiritual beliefs provided the intrinsic motivation to turn his teaching practice around from drunken misconduct to state awarded exemplary professionalism.

However, at worst, poor satisfaction and motivation is contributing to apathy and unprofessionalism. There is a perception among participants that some teachers are not motivated to work conscientiously. T12 freely shares of his negative perception of this work. He describes his job as exhausting, horrible, difficult and overwhelming:

What to do? (laughing) *Jhyaau chhahi(n) jhyaaunai malaai laagchha*—(I'm not enjoying it that much), being a primary teacher. But I have to.

T13, T3 and T7's opinions are useful in understanding this. Despite T13's positive attitude to his work, he states:

Until now, in the case of [name of local area], us teachers we haven't been very studious.

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T3's opinion is similar:

> ... the teachers here, are not conscientious. Extremely good, extremely good types of school, like down there, like boarding schools, we are not able to meet that standard.

While the Principal of School 4, T7, speaking in his colleagues' presence, complains that the situation is worse than poor conduct:

> The teachers don't work hard. They don't care about the continuation of the school. No one cares about the good of the institution.

The reasons given for this poor attitude to teaching are related to motivational issues of employment conditions and lack of teacher accountability.

Among the attributing factors participants highlight that poor teacher management contributes to their poor motivation levels. T14 complains about the lack of accountability, stating that teachers are neither rewarded or reprimanded for their conduct:

> ... those that do good are not rewarded and those that don't are not punished. This is painful. Those that perform well should be praised or rewarded. However, usually in the [name of area] whatever school it is, it is only the Principal's name that is mentioned.

T6 agrees with T14. He shares that:

> Some teachers are very hardworking and there is no reward system for them. Due to all this the teachers are not fully committed to their profession.

T6 goes on to explain that the problem of accountability is further compounded by political party influence.

> And let's suppose I have done many wrong things and I must deserve punishment but since I am also the member of some political group, even the District Education Officers are threatened by those political groups if any action is taken against me. This is the system here, and because of the support of political powers there is a lot of teacher negligence.

Poor management at a district level and local level by the SMC and political interference conspire against the motivational influence accountability and good management can provide.

5.5. Support Structures for Teachers

Other than the Head Teacher's (Principal) role, teachers are supported by three structures the SMC, RP and the DEO. All of these have important roles in supporting, resourcing, training and managerial oversight and will be discussed in Sections 5.5.1, 5.5.2 and 5.5.3. It must be noted that the Principal's role in supporting teachers would be important to discuss here; however, good quality data were not readily available to present findings in relation to it.

School Management Committee. At the village level, the SMC plays an essential role in the decentralisation of schooling and promoting of community ownership and in the support of teachers and TPD. Findings are presented in relation to participant answers to structured questions concerning support for their profession from the SMC. The findings are presented here in relation to the role of the SMC is in policy and then in practice.

In Nepal, each school is managed by its own SMC. It is a committee of community members and a school staff tasked by the DEO as the local decentralised body for running the school. Its members were not included in the data collection (other than the 5 interviewed Principals whose role it is to act as SMC secretaries) and discussion regarding it is gathered from the participant teacher's perspective, literature and policy.

The SMC sets the school calendar, recruits teachers, and together with the parents, teachers, students and local stakeholders, sets and monitors the five year SIP. This plan is inclusive of all stakeholders with a view to improving the school, teaching, learning and the school's links to the community (MOE, 2013). The SIP has an emphasis on "local ideas, strategies, interventions and resources for the progress of the school" (CERID, 2003b, p. 5). The committee's role relates to the management and supervision of the SIP, the school, the school calendar, finances and human resources. Its roles directly pertain to teachers and is involved in the "management of teachers, training, and tasks of protecting and promoting the service of teachers" (NLC, 2002, p. 25).

School Management Committee in practice. There are only a few participants that feel positively towards the SMC.

In T13's opinion:

> The SMC provides good help. They don't deny us when we ask for help for problems. The SMC administration is very positive. It makes it easy to work. It's a small place.

T14, from the same school, shares:

> Until now it's going well. When required they give suggestions. They have been giving good help. They give suggestions that you should do it this way or that way. Until now there's no weaknesses.

In the neighbouring School 8 opinions were similar, T16 shares:

> The committee is active and suggests the teachers to do the work of teaching as they have been appointed for it and if there is any facilities and services that are needed then the management committee is responsible of it.

T17 concludes:

> If the School Management Committee doesn't help us, then it is difficult to run the schools.

However, the majority of participants viewed the SMC negatively. It was felt that they offered no help at all for the school or for support of the teachers.

T8 threw his hand down and exclaimed:

> What help comes from them?

His Principal, T7, added:

> They ask for help [demanding an allowance and snacks].

This attitude compounds at worst into SMC disinterest and apathy.

T10, Principal of School 5 comments that if the chairmen are not able then their jobs turn into just managing teacher attendance:

> He [the SMC chairman] only forcefully asks:

> Today, why didn't the teacher attend?

Another participant, T18, feels that the SMC does not help with the role of raising funds for the school:

> No, they don't, no one wants to put money in from their own pockets because the government doesn't help.

Due to the SMC's lack of education and knowledge their roles are reduced to formality.

T6, from School 3, explains:

> Their work is just to sign whatever has been discussed in the meeting and agree with whatever the Principal says. They cannot give any new ideas about how the school must move forward because they are illiterate. They cannot see a vision for the school. They don't have that potential to comment for the betterment of school. They cannot play the good role of facilitator. But instead they have a great respect towards the teachers and cannot disagree with the perception of teachers.

T5, from School 2, echoes this opinion:

> It is a really pity that School Management Committee doesn't know its role and responsibilities, its authority. They are just there for the formality. Their work is just

to sign whatever has been discussed in the meeting and agree with whatever the Principal says.

Certainly the challenge of managing a school in such a situation makes the role of the Principal and the chairperson much more challenging and is clearing much less than the dynamic, decentralised and empowered committee that policy envisions.

Many of the issues mentioned here are not particular to the sample area. A DOE study of teacher management across Nepal (Santwona Memorial Academy, 2012a) found, similarly, that SMCs were represented by poorly qualified and incompetent members, who, in most of the cases, did not understand their roles, the regulations or have the needed managerial capacity. Thus, while SMCs are in place to manage teachers, teachers are in fact found managing SMCs.

Admittedly, these findings are only from the participants' perspectives; however, as teachers are the main actors in schools it would seem worthy to heed their perspective. According to the participants, when SMCs are working well, they help in managing the physical needs of the school and help support teachers so they can teach. When they are not working well they lack vision and motivation for improving their schools because they are too unskilled, uneducated and unaware to carry out the responsibilities placed upon them by the government. The majority of teachers find no support from the SMC and view the SMC administration of teachers negatively. Still, the SMC is only one of the support structures in place. Another is the RP, which will be considered in the next section.

The Resource Person. The RP works within their designated cluster of schools and plays a dynamic and multifaceted role in supporting schools and their teachers. These clusters of

schools are called Resource Centres (RCs). RCs are conceptually aligned to the local

community; however, in practice, and increasingly in function, it is a hierarchical unit

between the DEO and the schools (DEO → RC → School) (Santwona Memorial Academy,

2011). The RC's roles are detailed here in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5

Responsibility of the RP by locality

Location	Responsibilities	
District level	Participation and reporting on district level meetings	
RC level	Conducting meetings with teachers and with Principals.	Model lesson presentation.
		Educational data collection.
	Conducting and following up training, workshops and seminars.	Information dissemination.
	Classroom observation and discussion with teachers.	Organisation of extra-curricular activities.
	Instructional material preparation and management.	Community mobilisation.
		Management of RC Level examinations.
	Data collection and record management.	Curriculum implementation.
		General inspection of schools.
Non-locational	Selection of model school.	Innovative works.
	Management of RC including preparations of annual and monthly plans of the RC.	RC profile preparation.
		Report preparation.

Source: Santwona Memorial Academy, 2011; Nepali Law Commission, 2002.

Resource Person's role in practice. The schools in this research are all located within one RC

and hence they all have the same RP. This RC is very remote and one of the three most

remote in Eastern Nepal and made up of 18 schools. The Santwona study (2011) found an

average of 56 schools per RC in their study of rural and urban RC, which in itself, considering the roles of monitoring, supporting, training and data collection all by a single RC/RP, is simple put impossible (p. 49). The RC involved in this research is smaller; however, it is only accessible by foot and requires a preliminary 2–3 day journey from the District Headquarters to reach the nearest school. There is no provision of an RC building or room in the cluster of schools. The RP resides in Kathmandu and conducts meetings or training in the Secondary school in VDC1 or VDC2 (see Appendix B. for a visual representation of school location).

RP visitation. As Table 5.5 indicates, much of the work, and consequently, the success of the role of the RP, is related to school and community visitation. Participants have different accounts of the frequency of RP visitation.

T17 reports that:

> ... the RP comes from time to time.

And T11 states that:

> They visit here three to four times a year.

T6 shares that the weak point is that he does not attend all the schools. Another participant, T3, when asked if the RP comes to give support explains:

> No. There is no RP here. No. They never come from the district. Well, they come sometimes. They just collect the school data, how many students in the class, and ask questions ...

T3 lives away from the main trail and thus is less likely to get visits from the RP. Those schools on the main trail (see Appendix B for a visual reference) experience more visitations. There is recognition that the RP does not conduct the required monthly visits and thus the RP role is less effective.

T14 states:

> Once a month they are supposed to visit but this hasn't happened. There are weaknesses. They have little presence.

T6 also explains:

> The weak point is he doesn't attend all the schools.

If the RP was inclined to complete their role in relation to monthly visitations of all the schools in the sample RC, the journey from the District Headquarters would take 18–20 days of hard walking and possibly even the need to camp at some stage in a cave on the way to visit the most remote school in the area. The expense of such a visitation would be in the area of 12,000 rupees per month. Further, this time frame does not include the time it might take to spend with the communities, schools and teachers, or incidentals due to trail or weather conditions.

Access to the area by the RP is further compounded by the climate. Weather and resulting trail conditions limit the ideal times to visit the area, and especially in terms of safety, to only six months each year in Spring and in Autumn. Thus, visitation of the RC is a challenging task for the specific research location's RP.

Support of teachers. Participants had mixed responses in regards to the support from the RP.

In most cases there was a positive opinion of this support.

T11 comments:

> There is help from the RP. When the RP comes they collect reliable data about the
>
> students. And the things we don't understand they clarify. And they inform us about
>
> the things from the district. They really help with different types of data, like
>
> statistics and the progress reports of the students that need to be sent.

His experience is shared by the majority of the participants that live and work on the main

trail (T10, T11, T13, T14, T16, T17). One of these participants, T13, shares:

> The RP is alright. When the RP comes here they share the new things from the DEO.
>
> And the things from here that we don't understand we share with him. He works as a
>
> middleman. He is okay.

It appears that RP visitation and the perceived support from the RP are interlinked.

T6 highlights the important role RPs can have in improving the school by managing teachers;

however, as he explains such as role is not enforced.

> Actually he has to attend in each school to check whether the teachers are dutiful or
>
> not and if the teachers are not regular then to find out the reason behind the
>
> negligence, he doesn't report such thing because he is afraid of the teachers.

> The RP doesn't follow the system. He is there just to fulfil his work. Since he is
>
> taking his observation very lightly, there are no any changes in the school. There is
>
> no other system here.

The role of the RP has been mentioned often here. It needs to be unpacked further in order to understand its significance.

Roles played by RP in the local school. The RP can play a dynamic and important role in support of teachers. In the research location participants feel supported when the RP is able to help them understand and solve problems related to the curriculum or schooling and if necessary, raise them with the DEO.

T14 shares that:

> [They inform] us about the new things, the latest things happening around the world, and we could ask the things that we don't know from them.

In this way the RP worked as a tangible representative of the DEO. Yet this help was limited by infrequent visitation.

T14 felt the support was good but only superficial:

> They just touch the subject. At that time, it would be good to focus on our concerns, but they don't stay long in the school.

The demand for data collection limits the time the RPs have to support teachers.

RP is also tasked with the responsibility to not only, report teachers' perceived training needs, but also to provide the training. This role is a contentious one due to the qualifications, ability and the commitment of the RP.

T14 laughs at the ability of the RP to assist in training:

RPs don't have an idea about what are the problems and how to solve them. [Teacher speaks in laughter] Through looking at the content, it is understandable. Others are simple cases and some are not solved and remain uncompleted. Even the RPs can't even solve these ones. They can't judge properly. If there is some place where we can put forward these issues it would be better.

T13 explains:

What's the point in trainers or facilitators that know just the same as us? He has to be more of an expert than us. When the facilitator says something it should speak directly to our hearts.

There are also concerns that the RP is not even committed to the training. In multiple cases participants reported that training scheduled for 10 days lasted for five and five day training lasted only three days.

T16 shares:

Actually the training must be around five days but RP will only do it for three days ... they have another business to do.

These issues are not new in the literature. A 2003 study on school effectiveness in Nepal found that RPs were overburdened with the volume of tasks that they needed to manage and that the RCs were so large that it was practically impossible for monthly visitations (CERID, 2003b).

The District Education Office. The DEO is the district level implementing arm of the MOE policy and directives. The Education Act defines the DEO's functions as the provider of

teacher salaries, organiser of teacher training, school inspections and audits, central and village level reporting, placement and monitoring of teachers and their performance and even meeting with local school stakeholders and the SMCs and Parent Teacher Associations (Nepal Law Commission, 2002, pp. 20–23). District RPs are part of the staff of the DEO. To prevent confusion, it must be noted that the participants use the one term 'DEO' to refer to both the physical office and to the person of the District Education Officer (DEOer). In the majority of uses the participants refer to the person and only to the office in relation to location.

Anecdotal and observational data provides evidence of high turnover rate in the role of the DEOer and poor visitation to the schools in the research location. During the course of seeking permission to conduct interviews within the schools of the specific research location (2015–2016), I coordinated with three different District Education Officers over a period of less than one year. Such high turnover rates in such a key managerial role makes for instability and ineffectiveness. The issue is not isolated to the research location. In west Nepal in the Dang district there have been 35 different District Education Officers over 25 years, "even though the law requires them to remain at a post for a minimum of two years" (Asia Foundation, 2012, p. 22). Further, participants and locals from Village 2 explained that a DEOer had not visited their RC in over 35 years. Admittedly, it is not the requirement of the DEOer to visit the school personally but, as it will be noted in subsequent discussions, the lack of visitation negatively influenced perception of the role of the DEO in supporting teachers. Further, the Education Act requires the DEOer, or someone they elect, to visit schools monthly; however, as has been discussed, neither they nor the RP do so.

Despite evidence of the DEOer's decision making in the area, for the most part, participants did not perceive that the DEO had any role in supporting them. As already discussed, his decision making processes have been seen as one of enforcing greater teacher attendance (Section 4.4) and of threatening to close School 4 (Section 4.7). However, when participants were asked about the support they received from the DEO, the responses were generally negative.

T6 expresses his frustration with the DEO:

> We don't get help [from the DEO]. Our Nepal system is so degraded. Even if the villagers complain about the misconduct in schools, they [the DEOers] don't care. Even if I do not work diligently I don't get any punishment.

There is, however, recognition of the DEO's role in school building, resourcing and training.

T10 comments:

> The DEO? Their only concern is only constructing buildings. Otherwise nothing else. Providing access to drinking water, building toilets, renovations, building schools. Otherwise really not much else.

T13 also sees the role of the DEO in relation to the school only:

> For the school there is a lot of help. For me personally, what help? For this school yes. ... The TPD training was from the DEO but for my profession, other than employment, no.

Interestingly, while T13 recognises the role of the DEO in providing training, he does not equate this to support for his profession.

While T11 explains:

> There is not much help, ... we can't say there is assistance from the DEO. In fact, the teaching materials don't even arrive here. The inspection team comes sometimes. Maybe one or two times a year.

In T6's response there is evidence of political party interference at the DEO level in teacher accountability and management:

> Even the District Education Officers are threatened by those political groups if any action is taken against me. This is the system here, and because of the support of political powers there is a lot of teacher negligence.

Teacher management and support is vitally important to teacher motivation. Of the three support structures (SMC, RP and DEO) only the support role of the RP was significantly valued; however, the RP's incapability, lack of visitation, professionalism and not demanding to gather reporting data are seen as weakening his role in directly supporting teachers. While in two of the schools, SMCs were appreciated, their own capacity and disinterest limited their effectiveness, and the DEO's lack of presence in the area limited both the understanding and function of its role in supporting teachers. Clearly there is a divide between policy and practice and it is affecting teacher professionalism. Bennell and Akyeampong (2007) in their sizeable study of teacher motivation in Sub Saharan Africa and South Asia conclude, "If systems and structures set up to manage and support teachers are dysfunctional, teachers are likely to lose their sense of professional responsibility and

commitment" (p. x). The study further finds that low motivation leads to absenteeism, professional misconduct, poor preparation and reliance on traditional known models of teaching.

5.6.   Teacher Professional Development

At the heart of the notion of TPD is the assumption that better supported or trained teachers lead to better student learning and the provision of TPD supports teachers. Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss and Shapley, (2007, p. 4) simplified TPD and its assumption to the following process:
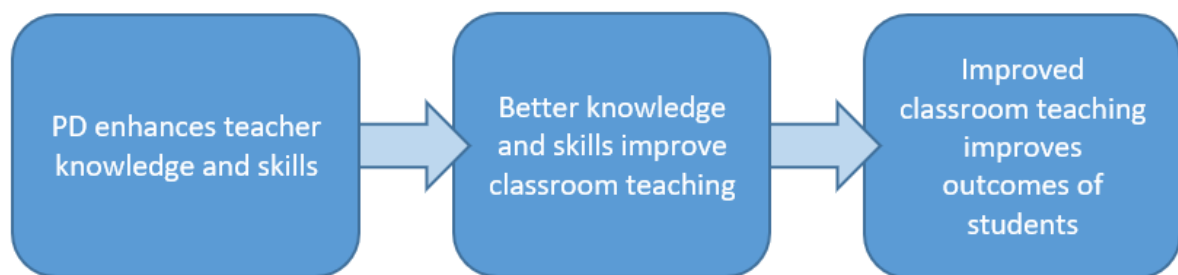

Figure 5.5 TPD process.
Source: Author.

The Incheon Declaration of Education (World Bank, 2015a) states that TPD is implicitly connected to successful education systems and, consequently, the absence or the inadequacy of TPD and teacher support is a key contributing factor to low quality learning outcomes (p. 22). Villegas-Reimers' UNESCO sponsored study of TPD literature (2003), found strong evidence to suggest that the development of teachers professionally changes the teacher's beliefs and behaviour and consequently is associated with improved student learning and performance. While meta-analysis of TPD studies reveals that training that is primarily

curriculum and specific subject content focused, and pedagogical knowledge on how children learn and should be taught and will have strong positive effects on student outcomes (Wilson & Berne, 1999; Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung; 2007; Scher & O'Reilly, 2009).

Trainers or teacher educators can do more than just teach teachers how to teach or assist them with their job; they can also offer teachers guidance, encouragement and counselling (OECD, 2009). The investment in teacher career development, provision of on-demand training, and teacher collaboration creates new alliances, relationships and camaraderie, encourages and motivates teachers, and therefore positive teacher motivation has a significant effect on schooling outcomes (Gaible & Burns, 2005).

TPD approaches in policy and delivery. Participants had experienced two forms of government provided professional development—the 10-month training certificate and one month compulsory in-service every five years (MOE, 2009).

The 10-month certification is reportedly widely successful. It began in the previous EFA plan (2004–2009) and has continued into the SSRP. Despite the incredible logistic and financial challenges, statistics report that almost total completion of the upgrading of primary teacher certification within the five year SSRP has been achieved[53] (Poyck et al., 2016; CERID, 2016).

The SSRP also states that "in order to keep abreast of new developments in teaching and learning practices, teachers must acquire one month in-service training at least once in every

_____

[53] The percentage of teachers with the required qualification and training has increased from 71% in 2009 (SSRP, 2009) to 98.4 in 2012 and 89.3 in 2014/2015 (Poyck et al., 2016) and was also reported as 95% in 2014/2015 (CERID, 2016).

five years" (MOE, 2009, p. 39). Its completion is linked with fulfilling teacher licence

renewal requirements and career development.

The training is provided through a cascade training model (Hayes, 2000; Suzuki, 2009).

The model is attractive as it provides a cost effective way to provide large scale training with

minimal periods out of service for training while utilising the skills of already existing

trainers (Gilpin, 1997)[54]. Suzuki (2009) provides an example of the model's use in Nepal in

relation to multi-grade teacher training. In this model, training cascades through three levels:

> master trainer > 1 representative RP from each district > other district RPs > district teachers

The cascade model has inherent weaknesses. There is evidence to show that from the master

trainer to the final district teachers the flow of information often stems to a trickle (Hayes,

2000; Bett, 2016). These layers of transfer can filter the training content and as seen in its

use in teacher training in Kenya, can be adulterated so much that, according to Gathumbi,

Mungai, and Hintze (2013), it led to the entire program's ineffectiveness. In Suzuki's study

(2009), of the 18 components taught only three concepts survived to the classroom. The

MOE itself states that only about 50% of training content is employed in classroom teaching

(Shams, Thapa & Parajuli, 2013). Rather than the quality of the trainers, advocates for the

cascade model attribute the reported ineffectiveness to its management or the way the model

is being employed (Hayes, 2000; Suzuki, 2009).

Participant perspectives on TPD training. This brief policy and methodology overview sets

the stage for an exploration of participant data in relation to TPD. Participants were asked

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[54] In 1998, the MOE stated that by using the cascade training method it was able to train 91,878 teachers in just
six months with only six master trainers (MOE, 2000).

semi-structured and open ended questions in relation to training taken, perceived benefits and training desires. These findings are presented in relation to firstly, the 10-month in-service certification training and then more recent TPD training. Participants had not experienced any other form of TPD training.

10-month training. The data from the specific research area indicates a mixed result from 15 out of the 18 participants have completed this training[55]. However, in terms of views on content and the perceived benefits that the data suggests, participants relate that it resulted in little impact on teacher conduct and classroom teaching.

Despite this opinion of outcomes, there is a positive perception of the training and its benefit. Approximately a third of the participants feel that the 10-month training was 'good'. In this perception the training opens their eyes to what teaching is.

T6 shares:

> I had come to know that I knew nothing about teaching.

T14 feels that after taking this training:

> It became even more easy and comfortable to teach. Before it was a bit difficult.

And in another case, as T11 shares, it affected pedagogical change from stand and deliver to child-friendly/child centred approaches.

> The students were not allowed to play, nor to write, nor to read, only the teacher kept
>
> on talking. Like giving a sermon. After the training I realised that this shouldn't be
>
> the case.

---

[55] Thus, participants in this research are less certified than government averages 95–98.5%.

One participant related a benefit, in that the certification added to promotion opportunities. Interestingly though, among this third that viewed the training positively, the majority felt that despite the training being 'good' they were not able to apply it, rendering its benefit to, in T17's words:

> Different in just a few things.

The Principal, T18, states:

> We have done TPD and 10 month training, but we have not achieved the result from it.

T3 also concludes:

> From the 10 months training ... no I didn't benefit. I did the training, I got the certificate and that's it.

While the Principal of School 4, T7, explains:

> *No kati bharsha talim lyiera das-bara bharsha bhaesakeko hunchha yo talimko mahatwa kataa. Kahaa jaanchha? Jaanchha.* (Somewhere in 10–12 years' time there is training, but its importance evaporates. Where does it go? It disappears.)

In fact, the data from participant responses suggests that approximately 90% of the participants received no substantial benefit from the training. This is a staggering negative perception of usefulness of such a significant investment in training. Participant explanations of the reasons for such an outcome are summed up as follows:

- factors of elapsed time since training completion;

- lack of refreshment training and support;

- lack of teaching materials and finances to purchase them; and

- the compounding challenges of teaching remotely.

These reasons were also expressed in relation to the TPD training and as a result will be discussed together in Section 5.6.4.

Thirty day TPD training. Besides the 10-month training, participants had the opportunity to participate in 30 days of TPD training. Their perceptions of this training are now discussed following using the frame of design and content, provision and delivery, attendance and outcomes.

The 30-day TPD is aimed at a central level and divided into three, 10-day packages. The 10day packages are further divided up into a 5-day face-to-face training workshop, three days of self-study and two days of school-based instructional counselling (NCED, 2010, p. 27). This process provides an opportunity for input, application and follow up. The TPD training packages are also informed by "demands and professionals needs of the teachers reported by the teachers themselves" (NCED, 2010, p. 25). The RP gathers these from the RC teachers and uses them to inform future training. However, participants from schools off the main northern trail explain that they contributed to a lesser degree in this process.

T3 shares:

> Yeah, they once asked us about our problems here.

And T9 was sceptical about the benefit of this process. He jokes in laughter:

Well, they solve the problems on the paper.

There are various participant opinions on this content. Some, like T17, relate:

[... that the content of all three TPD packages was essentially similar.] it was all the same ... The first one was about this. The second one the same and the third one the same. There is no change from this.

The Principal of School 7, T13, speaks very strongly in this regard:

What is being taught is all the same repeated again and again. It's like dogs barking, 'Hou hou', and 'bou wou'. It's all the same, hey? They say, "You are all 101% teachers. Do like this. Do like this." And then the training finishes in a flurry of gestures and fun.

Principals T18 and T6 and teachers T12 and T17 shared that the content, in regard to developing local resources, was impractical as there was not enough time to make the resources. Other participants mentioned that there was so much content that it was difficult to apply.

T3 comments:

In the training there is a big book and we don't understand everything. So how can we teach the students. We impart how much we have the potential for.

As mentioned, teachers from School 4 all shared that while the topic of local curriculum was stated as being in the training, in actual fact it was not covered at all. The group problem

solving sessions and discussions together with action research were the only positive aspects of the content.

Within the specific research location the SSRP stipulated TPD training has been provided to almost all participants[56]. VDC high schools were used as training centres for the TPD training. Teachers, depending on their location, travelled between 30 minutes to a day and a half to attend the training.

Participants noted the provision and delivery of TPD as being the major issues impinging on its quality and outcomes. The training happens over multiple days and as such requires a residential element for those that travel longer distances to attend. However, it was noted by multiple participants that TPD length, when actually provided, was reduced.

T3 shares the participants' perspective:

> Ten days finishes within five days and the training of five days would be finished by two or even one day and they leave. That's not profitable.

Added to the accountable delivery participants feel that the TPD is not frequent enough and consequently, limits the outcomes of the training.

T7 explains:

> That training that we go to lasts for a few days and then there is a big gap, it kills our enthusiasm.

Even T11, who reiterates glowingly about the benefits of training, feels that the sporadic training limits outcomes:

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[56] 89% (16/18) full completion of TPD—see Appendix B. Participant Teacher Data.

That training was many years ago. After that it becomes very difficult without training. One can forget all the things. One can forget from here the topic. Therefore, it's difficult.

Suggestions were made that annual and even biannual training would have more benefit in encouraging and motivating teachers while also allowing for follow-up and evaluation.

TPD training attendance. Due to its compulsory nature, the majority of participants have attended the TPD training. Those that have not are reluctant to attend for a number of reasons.

T17 comments:

In our northern area what happens is that some friends have already taken the training and when there is only one or two left. And if there is no one to travel with to the training, it's difficult. You have to travel a long distance. So they decide not to go. And no one goes. These problems happen.

T12 also explains that:

Not all teachers from 19 schools participate in the training, the reasons behind this may be due to their lesser desire to learn or may be due to being busy.

Unfortunately, data collection does not cover all the schools in the RC. It would be valuable to supplement these data with training attendance and completion rates of all those working in the RC.

T6 explains a further reason for non-attendance; the personal expense that occurs in attending training.

> ... the lodging, travelling, meals those have to be met by personal means. Due to that, teachers here don't give their time or participate in the training.

It is important to consider this further.

The government provides a training allowance to assist with the expense of attending training; however, this allowance is viewed as an insult. Standardised government training allowance provides approximately 150 rupees (175 rupees minus Value Added Tax).

However as one participant, T8, expresses:

> A single meal costs 250. [T8 laughs] What can you do with that?

As T6 explains:

> The lodging, travelling, meals, those have to be met by personal expense.

Participants that need to reside at the venue during training are spending approximately 500 NPR a day[57]. The allowance is exasperating as it covers little more than a meal and a snack and thus discourages attendance.

Despite this, as T3 shares, teachers are forced to attend:

> We cannot ignore the training by complaining about the allowance being too small and are compelled to attend.

---

[57] For five days of training the residential expense for a teacher travelling a day to attend, inclusive of food and lodging, is approximately 2200 rupees. (Lodging at 500 rupees a night (500x5) + 400 rupees for travel and meals minus the 750 rupees government provided travel allowance.)

The training providers. In most cases training was provided by the RP and a selection of other trainers chosen by RC. There were different viewpoints on the ability of the trainers. Only two participants spoke highly of the trainers' capability while the remainder felt that they were either okay or less than capable.

The training delivery is perceived as a major reason for it being ineffective. Trainers are described as relying on verbal delivery, providing too much content that is often impractical and given in conjunction with non-replicable resources which as a result, ends in the training being forgotten.

Participants made suggestions on how training could be better provided. T7 recommends a handbook of the TPD content be given as a reference text for later recall. Some suggest that classroom observation (not used at present) would be better than content lectures. However, as already mentioned, the RP does not stay long enough in the village to do this. Others suggest that resources could be made during training, thereby modelling resources making and in turn providing resources that could be used directly afterwards in the classroom. Some, like T17, suggest that the whole approach was useless without some form of follow-up or long term mentoring or on the job training.

> One reason is teachers themselves don't apply it and another is that the trainers don't follow up the trainees at regular intervals. There is no evaluation whether the training has become effective or not.

It must be again noted that trainers also have to travel considerable distances to reach their RC and provide the training. Such distances create expense in terms of transporting resources, time and travel costs, and, as mentioned in Chapter Four, may even lead to

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physical harm due to sickness and injury. The RP from the specific research location is noted as being torn between his remote RC and urban responsibilities, and as a result rushing through training and visitation to return to his urban work and home. While, literature does note the stifling pull of District Headquarter work-loads[58] there is also a knowledge gap in literature concerning the challenges RPs face in training teachers in rural and remote areas.

Summary of TPD. Based on the presentation of participant data above, it is apparent that there are issues with the provision and outcome of training. For clarity, a summary of the issues discussed above are presented in note form in Table 5.6.

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[58] Two decades ago the UNESCO study (Khaniya, 1997) and a 1995 government study (Santwona Memorial Academy, 2011) found that RPs were so busy with urban and DEO responsibilities that they have no time to provide supportive supervision to the schools. While similarly, a more recent study notes that RPs cannot directly influence the education quality in their RC due to their DEO reporting roles (Santwona Memorial Academy, 2011).

Table 5.6

Participant concerns with training provision and delivery

Training provision and delivery	
• Truncated training length	• Inadequate training allowance
• Training location and length makes attendance expensive	• Lack of knowledge retention due to infrequent training
• Trainers not capable, their methods ineffective, and personally face considerable challenges delivering training	• RP business truncates training length
	• A lack of post-training support
	• Content impractical

While most feel the training length is appropriate, participants report that it is not adhered to and, as a consequence, this results in rushed training. The length further makes training personally expensive for those who need to travel long distances to attend. Despite TPD attendance being compulsory, the training allowance only covers approximately a third of the cost. Thus teachers, who may have to leave their families and school for upwards of a week to attend arguably poor quality training at their own expense, are less than positive about attending. The opportunity to catch up with teachers and discuss school related issues is seen as the only communally reported highlight.

Further, the infrequency of training is perceived as impeding knowledge retention and application. The approach to training in terms of methodology, capacity of trainers and neglect of follow-up also impinges on its quality. So much so that 90% of the teachers express that they receive no substantial benefit or support from the training. Thus Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss and Shapley's (2007) simple equation mentioned at the beginning of

this section is truncated; for in the case of this location, TPD does not enhance teacher knowledge and skills and therefore cannot go on to improve classroom outcomes.

5.7.   Summary

This chapter has presented findings in relation to the major concept of *teaching remotely*. It has explored and stated findings on a host of aspects related to teaching in the research location's remote context. These findings clearly show the dynamic and complex influences on teaching in this specific context. Chapter Six provides a broader summary of findings from this chapter. Thus, here I briefly state the key findings of Chapter Five.

The physical and learning environments of the remote schools are rudimentary and insufficient for both teachers and students, while the key pedagogical solutions for remote areas are not implemented. In narrating it may appear that the research area's schools meet government standards for quality, but the building design and construction do not consider the physical context and, as a result, learning is dynamically affected, especially by the weather. Schools are poorly furnished, with some buildings in dangerous disrepair and teachers have little access to resources to support curriculum content and student learning. Multi-grade teaching is not valued nor implemented. The problems related to language create significant challenges for participants and students alike and the use of MTE is not implemented. While other ways of supporting learning through the use of localised curriculum also prove ineffectual.

Due to a number of factors, teachers feel unable to teach and experience limited support from educational structures and training. The challenging work conditions inclusive of salary, staffing, the need of 'going and coming', workplace environments, poor teacher management

affect just how well teachers can teach; but also contribute to their dissatisfaction and poor motivation and the perception that they are not able to do their job. Participants find almost no support from the structures of SMC, RP and DEO. While the role of the RP is seen in a positive light, the RP's own ability, work-loads and lack of visitation limit the role. The unaccountable and infrequent provision of TPD combined with the lack of follow-up and evaluation, its impracticable delivery and the personal expenses incurred in attending TPD make it again ineffectual.

Clearly teaching remotely, and with it the notion of providing quality education, is severely influenced by the context, unimplemented policy, and the lack of support and management of schools and their teachers. It is clear that there is a disconnection between national provision and local contextual need. This disconnection is so vast that almost all central and policy efforts to provided equitable education in the remote area have had no outcome. The teachers, though acting as the middlemen between the local needs and education are unable to bridge the divide. With these findings in mind, this dissertation now moves to its conclusion.

Figure 5.6 Bridge that the teachers need to cross.

Source: Author.

6.   Conclusion

6.1.   Introduction

This study of primary school teaching in a remote area of Nepal began with a simple investigative question about the phenomenon of remote education:

What are the challenges of remote education and being a teacher in a specific remote location in Nepal?

In my exploration of this question I have employed the approach found in constructivist grounded theory to both ensure findings and theory are grounded in the experiences of remote area teachers and to provide rich explanatory theory. Throughout this process and this dissertation, while I have sought to move participants' voices and experiences to a higher conceptual plane, I have tried to keep a close connection with the data, the people and the phenomenon, from which the concepts were derived (Mills et al., 2006; Charmaz, 2006). I have organised this study within six chapters. I began by contextualising the study in the first three chapters by introducing the thesis, reviewing the literature and presenting the research methodology. I then presented findings in Chapter Four and Five in relation to *being remote* and 'teaching remotely', two key theoretical concepts that contribute to the theory of 'teaching in our remoteness'. And here in the conclusion, I summarise these findings, clarify and present the theory and finally discuss the contribution to knowledge and research limitations and provide suggestions for further research.

6.2.   Summary of Findings

Being remote. Findings in Chapter Four conclude that the context of the specific research location negatively impacts upon schooling in its current provision. A complex series of interconnected factors are directly influencing student and teacher attendance, motivation and preparedness for school and thus schooling outcomes. Figure 6.1 illustrates these interconnected and compounding factors of the context on schooling. I sum up these findings here in terms of two sections: environment (inclusive of geography and economic adaption to it) and culture.
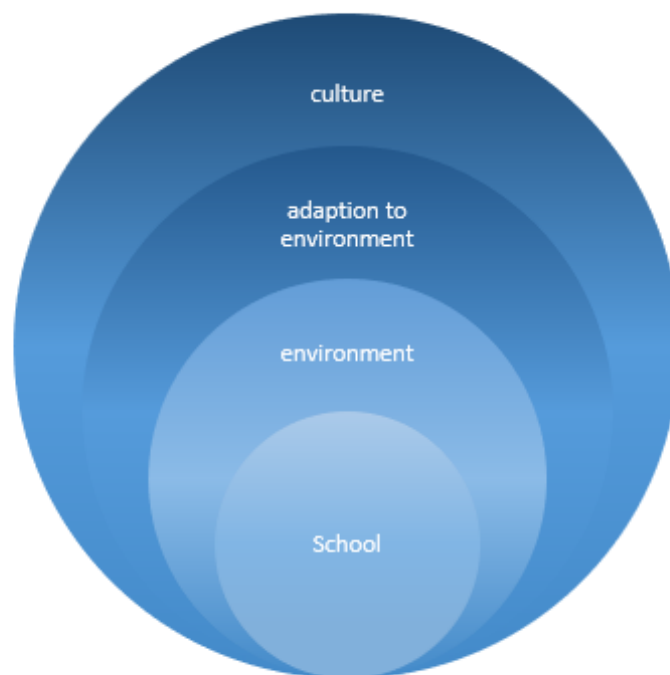
Figure 6.1 Interrelated influences of remote context on schooling.

6.2.1.   The multifaceted influence of the remote environment on schooling.

Geography isolates remote communities, schools and their teachers. The geographic remoteness affects not only development, but access to markets, crucial services, teachers and

learning resourcing. It affects working conditions, increases the cost of living, and, as

officials facing the reality of the area's remoteness choose to not visit the schools or

communities, it ultimately leads to poor teacher accountability, management and support.

The terrain itself is demanding in terms of the length of time needed to traverse it, and is

dangerous to those living with its specific geographical hazards. The lack of access to

secondary schooling means that in most cases parents need to make decisions about sending

their children away to pursue schooling, which in turn creates stress on the family and their

finances. The mindset of isolation itself effects participants' intrinsic motivation and creates

a perception of being neglected, and also an 'us and them' mentality with peers working in

the District Headquarters and officials working as support staff.

Climate makes school learning and working environments challenging. The effects of

being geographically isolated are further compounded by the research location's climate.

Schools are not built to suit the climatic conditions, making them in the worst case hostile

environments that dramatically impact on student and teacher motivation, attendance and

work ethic. Findings also suggest that there is a strong prevalence of alcohol use, even

among children, which creates problems with teacher misconduct and student development.

The unique economy has direct influences on student and teacher attendance and

preparedness. The local ethnicity of this specific research location has developed an

economy based on subsistence farming and seasonal migratory trade, *kabela*, which

significantly impacts student attendance. In this economy whole families, inclusive of

children, are involved in work and student attendance is weighed against economic need.

Due to *kabela* as much as half of the student population are absent during winter and during

peak agricultural seasons both children and at times teachers are absent from class.

Further, children and teachers often work before and after school which raises questions about preparedness for learning and teaching.

Remote area government solutions to the geographic and economic context are ineffectual. Schools' efforts to address the cold of winter, *kabela* and child labour demands means that longer holidays are held, which in turn results in less time attending school. Less time in schools means teachers struggle to cover the required curriculum content and student learning is directly affected. DEOer's efforts to correct this and ensure students have more class time are ineffectual because they do not consider the context of the matter. The equation of quantity equalling quality is unsubstantiated in the data. The participant explanation of winter sees students running away from the school because schools are frigidly cold and teachers light fires in the playgrounds and they camp out in tents to stay warm. Without considerable improvements in the condition of schools, schools will not and cannot provide a learning environment suitable for quality learning. Further, holding shorter holidays does little to address *kabela* absentee student populations. The modelling of such decisions on private school attendance rates again ignores contextual issues, for the clientele of private schools are statistically socio-economically 'better off' (ERO, 2013); and, as a consequence not as dependent on migratory trade, or contained by hand-to-mouth subsistence farming.

6.2.2. The multifaceted influence of culture on schooling.

Language is a defining feature of the local ethnicity almost completely ignored by schooling. The Nepali language is not spoken by most students prior to attending school. Parents may not speak it or be able to read it and the majority of participants (15/18) do not

speak it as a first language. Though translated, the local language is almost entirely unused in written form. It is not taught in schools but instead used as a transitional language to help understand curriculum content. This *bhaashako samasya*[59] makes schools places of foreign language and impacts on student learning and motivation.

Teachers have considerable cultural and communal obligations that place demands on their time, attendance and preparedness. Due to their status as educationalists, teachers, especially those native to the local community, face significant demands on their time by the poorly educated and highly illiterate communities. Teachers officiate functions, settle disputes and, due to their clan and family social dynamics, face community pressure to assist and participate in events such as marriages, births, deaths, house building, and community development projects. On such occasions teachers are absent from class. Further, in the case of communal development projects, local teachers must contribute labour or, if they are not able to, pay others to labour in their place. In choosing to teach during such events, teachers incur expenses. Thus, the participants' are faced with challenges as they negotiate the urban concepts of time (9am to 4pm), and of achieving the quota of official hours of teaching within the rhythms and seasons of agricultural life.

Cultural perceptions and economic factors decided who goes to school, for how long and where. There is evidence of gender discrimination. Girls are twice less likely than boys to complete SLC and Intermediate studies and as they leave home after marriage, an education investment in them is considered wasteful. Families in poverty or dependent solely on subsistence farming rely more acutely on their children's labour, which again effects student attendance. Regardless of financial status, every parent who does not live within walking

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[59] bhaashako samasya—The problem of language.

distance of a secondary school faces the decision of sending their child away for further education. Further, schooling is about choosing a suitable institution and about leaving home to attend school in an urban area. Without exception, those with the financial ability to do so enrol their children in private schools in the District Headquarters or more distant urban areas such as Kathmandu. Those without the financial means send their children to board with local relatives or rent rooms in the village of a public secondary school, or simply do not send their children to study at all. In either case further schooling means leaving home and creates a social divide with the poor attending remote area public school and the rich urban private schools.

Parental perceptions of purpose are deciding factors on schooling. Parents' decisions to send their children to work rather than to school are not simply about the necessity for labour in a subsistence economy or access, they are also profoundly about the perception of the purpose of schooling. The concern in the literature on education in Nepal and national reporting is based on 'out-of-school' and 'drop-out' populations and, as a consequence, efforts are made get more students to go to school and stay in school longer (MOE, 2009, 2015b). However, other than the political intentions behind localising curriculum and fostering MTE, there seems to be little effort being made to tackle the notion of purpose and consequentially, matters of curriculum in these agendas.

Public school provision is not meeting demand. Findings show that 'education' is disconnected from society by language, curriculum, structure and doing little to provide opportunities for adequate work or improve the quality of life for the people living in this context. This is leading to an underinvestment in schooling. The hope, or perhaps faith in the statistical reality of national and global education, is that education leads to a better life

for those particularly on the margins of society (Guenther & Bat, 2013). However, it appears that the findings presented here indicate exactly the opposite: remote public education is in fact leading to marginalisation. This assumption is justifiable as findings and the literature show that remote area students are absent regularly, underperforming, and linguistically unprepared. The new education plan, the SSDP, acknowledges that remote areas have not improved in line with national outcomes and are "therefore increasing the disparity between these groups and the rest of the school-aged population" (MOE, 2016, p. 8).

Private schools are meeting demand. Clearly, parents are choosing not to invest in schooling altogether, but rather not in government schooling. Findings indicate that parents assume that private schools are better and as a result, that parents who send their children to private schools care more for their children. In fact, their level of commitment sees parents willing to split up their families, work multiple jobs or take loans to send their children away for 'better' schooling.

Children who attend urban private schools lose an education. The decision to send children away to private schools is very important, for while children are gaining an education they are also losing one. I have shown that urban private schools do better on all SLC and NASA testing and thus by sending children to such schools parents would arguably be securing a better education for their children. However, children who leave for such an education lose an education in relation to learning their mother tongue and culture as well. They learn 'being urban' not *being remote* and as a result do not discover or even forget how to live and work in their home villages. Consequently, those that leave for school effectively close the door to their own remote community as urban living estranges them from their remote context and their language. They lose the ability to live remotely which makes

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returning to live and work in their remote community extremely challenging. While they graduate and find work it is ultimately urban work and literature suggests that those who leave seldom return (Childs et al., 2014).

Teaching remotely. Continuing the summary of findings, I now present those in relation to the core concept of teaching remotely. I do this by examining and organising the findings in relation to four areas: How schools operate, what teachers teach, working conditions and how teachers are supported.

How schools operate. Though schools meet SSRP requirements in terms of building construction, classroom size, teacher allocation and student teacher ratios, it would appear that school learning and working environments are inadequately built, maintained and resourced. The buildings are constructed without considering the climate and are in various states of disrepair, making schooling difficult and even hostile for students and teachers. A third of the schools have been considerably damaged by natural disasters and are thus potentially hazardous. Schools are also not resourced as per policy guidelines and participants express that the lack of funding makes even getting textbooks delivered a challenge, thus, as working places for teaching, they are considerably demanding.

Schools are ineffectually managed by their SMCs. At best SMCs assist teachers in maintaining the physical environment of schools. At worst, due to high illiteracy, poor education and a lack of awareness of the SMC members, their roles are reduced to the task of formality.

What teachers teach. There are three major pedagogical policy solutions to the providing access to quality education in sparsely populated remote areas; MGT, MTE and localised

curriculum. These ways of teaching allow for relevant provision; however, as summarised below none of these provisions are being implemented which is having a significant impact on schooling.

MGT, despite being the pedagogical solution for remote schools, is not implemented. The SSDP (MOE, 2016), solidifies the use of MTE in its effort to provide quality access to remote areas with their small populations. The literature also illustrates the benefits of MGT for students (Little, 2006). However, findings indicate that none of the research location schools apply it.

There are a number of causal factors for the lack of implementation of MGT. If able, instead of implementing MGT, schools seek to provide monograde teaching by hiring supplementary staff, which comes with its own problems of who to hire and how to remunerate those they wish to hire. If this first solution is not possible, teachers emulate it through multiclass teaching. In doing so teachers translate and transform policy intentions into something other than what they were intended to be, but something that for them is more appropriate. Participants believe these solutions are more appropriate because of four findings:

- Learning spaces and resources are inappropriate for MGT and foster monograde and multiclass teaching.

- Teachers lack awareness and training of MGT pedagogy, evidenced by the fact that teachers do not actually perceive a difference between the multi-grade and multiclass teaching.

- MGT imposition creates serious job dissatisfaction issues, as teachers envy monograde schools and struggle with their multiclass solution and the considerable workload issues that result from having to plan schedules, lessons and develop resources for multiple classes.

- These difficulties are exacerbated by teacher absences which further reduces the numbers of teaching staff.

Despite being a key pedagogical policy solution, MTE is not in use in the research location. There are three languages used in the schools. Nepali and English are taught and the local language is used as a translational language to assist understanding and to teach Nepali and English. In Classes 1 to 3 this means the local language is used during approximately 50% of lesson times.

Causal reasons for not implementing MTE are many. Though teachers are orally fluent in the local language, they are not so in the written language thus making it difficult to teach. Though translated, the local language translation is not readily accepted by all the community, so there is no written curriculum nor are there resources or textbooks to assist instruction. Participants feel untrained and incapable of writing and designing a mother tongue curriculum. Further, there is an on-going misunderstanding between the government and the community as to who is supposed to design and develop MTE curriculum, leaving each side waiting on the other.

The lack of an adequate solution to the problem of language has serious implications on student learning. Both policy and practice fail to see students fluent in any of the three languages used in schools. As a result, students only acquire functional Nepali language

ability by Class 3 and thus, compared to first language speakers of Nepali, are severely

disadvantaged. The lack of fluency especially in Nepali means that students do not

understand instruction or their textbooks well and thus do not gain a strong understanding of

the curriculum. Further, other than textbooks (if they have them) and their teachers (who

speak Nepali as a second language), there are no resources to support Nepali language

acquisition.

The problem of language locks students out of further education. The door to higher

education is via SLC examinations and increasingly the medium of higher education is

English. However, due to the phenomenon of *being remote* and the pedagogical approaches

to teaching language, students perform considerably poorly in SLC exams and in results on

English exams, with SLC pass rates as low as 4% in 2015. Policy intentions are stated, but in

practice 'the problem of language' in the remote location is contributing to marginalisation

and inequality of access to further education.

Other methods of supporting student learning also prove ineffectual. This study

explored the complexities of employing a localised curriculum in schools to help make

schooling more relevant. It found that although there is a desire for it, it is not being used.

The major reasons for this are two-fold. The community members and teachers feel

incapable of creating a local curriculum and there is misunderstanding between the

government and the teachers as to who is supposed to create and produce one.

6.3.   Working Conditions

Working conditions have a negative impact on job satisfaction and motivation. Due to

intrinsic factors of personal beliefs and achievements there are a minority of teachers who are

satisfied with being a teacher. However, the research finds that because of an inadequate salary, temporary teachers' working conditions, school working environments, the process of 'going and coming' and managerial unaccountability, the majority of the remote location teachers are unmotivated or dissatisfied with being a teacher.

An extreme lack of resources is having detrimental effects on student learning. Without practical examples and opportunities to explore curriculum content with learning materials, remote students struggle to understand curriculum content. Furthermore, in many cases schools do not even possess rudimentary supplies such as pencils or notebooks. Thus, schools are challenging places for teaching and learning.

For a number of reasons participants believe that despite their best efforts they are unable to be the teachers they want to be or to teach to the level to which they aspire. The reasons for these dilemmas include feelings of being too old and outdated because of insufficient qualifications, being unaware of changes to curriculum and policy and too unable to teach subject content.

How teachers are supported. Teachers in the research location are supported at the local, RC and district level by the SMCs, RP and the District Education Office. They have also had access to substantial in-service in the form of the 10-month certification training and the 30 days of TPD. However, participants' find little support or professional developments from these.

The three support structures available to teachers, the RP, SMC and the DEO, are not supportive. The DEO and SMC roles were found to be ineffectual in supporting teachers. The DEO was not perceived as a support structure and had little presence in monitoring,

accountability and providing support. When operating well (in two cases) SMCs were found

to be very helpful in assisting teachers by making sure the school buildings were cared for.

However, in the majority of cases SMC members were viewed as unable, unwilling, or too

uneducated to manage the schools, the teachers and implement the SIP; so consequently,

they were viewed with disdain and frustration. The RP was the only role that was appreciated

by participants. However, the RP's ability to carry out their functions was found to be

curtailed by the lack of visitation, the time and timing needed to access the remote location

and all its cluster schools, their reporting and administrative roles and their inability to train

teachers well. Thus, teachers feel little support from these three structures.

There is a strong value and desire for TPD; however, there is little outcome from it. At

the heart of the notion of TPD is the assumption that better supported or trained teachers lead

to better student learning. Participants believe that training can support them, help them to

become better teachers, and thus improve the quality of learning in their schools. However,

approximately 90% of the participants perceive that they received no substantial benefit from

any of the training. This is a staggering perception of lack of usefulness of such a significant

investment.

TPD outcomes are limited by a number of factors. The large time periods between

training sessions affected knowledge retention and motivation to apply training. The lack of

suitable resources in the remote location (as used in training) and finances to purchase them

made training made unreproducible. Its infrequency, unaccountably truncated lengths

combined with the approach to training (strategy, capacity of trainers and neglect of

followup) all impinge on its quality. Further, training allowances are insufficient and as a

result teachers need to personally bear the majority of the financial expense of attending,

which for those who need to reside away from home during training periods is at a considerable expense, creating less than positive attitude towards attending compulsory training. The only highlight was the opportunity to catch up with other teachers and discuss and solve school related issues among themselves. These findings are based on a strong sample of the select remote area and, in this perspective, that the approach and delivery of training is not effective.

This summary of the research highlights the important findings in relation to being remote and teaching remotely. The lived experience of participants strongly presents the struggle teachers face as they negotiate and translate political and educational intention into the reality of their remote condition. These processes of supply and demand, policy and practice are found to be filtered, interrupted and even stemmed by the interconnecting, compounding and multifaceted nature of the remote context. This context is inclusive not just of environmental, economic, and cultural factors but also of how education is provided, how teachers teach and find themselves in their school and in that context as both teachers and community members.

6.4.   Theoretical Conclusions

A constant comparative analysis of the data has generated a constructivist grounded theory that offers an explanation for the phenomenon of teaching in this remote context. This coconstructed theory of 'teaching in our remoteness' is understood in relation to two core concepts: being remote and teaching remotely (see Figure 6.2). This theory of 'teaching in our remoteness' while conceptual is explanatory of the research question.
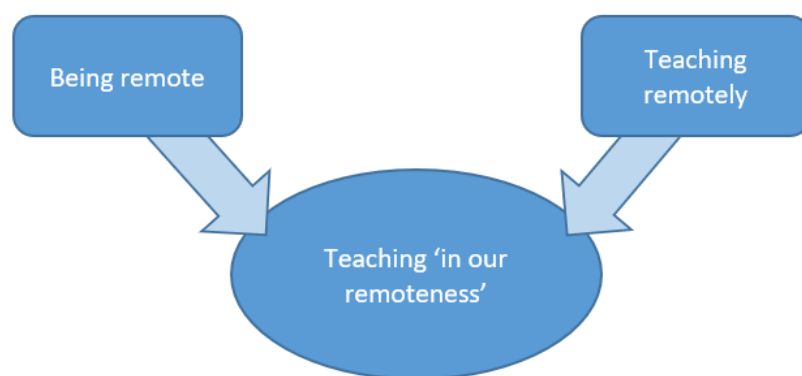
Figure 6.2 Theory of teaching 'in our remoteness'.

The term *in our remoteness* or *hamro durgammaa* in Nepali is an *in vivo* code and used by research participants to not just define or explain how they perceive 'remote', but to define their state of being. Remote, for the participants is not something distant and far away. It is not a definition, but a static place; not vaguely over there or unknown and unexperienced but here, intimate and owned. The actions and processes of the phenomenon under investigation, viz., teaching, are theorised through the conceptualisations of being in a state of remoteness and working in this state as a teacher. These two central concepts of *being remote* and *teaching remotely* thus contribute to and define participants' experience of *teaching* '*in our remoteness*'.

Being remote is a finding that explains the aspects of the phenomena of the remote; the existent state of the 'remote' defined by its geography, economy and culture. It is a **state** that is shaped and defined by the rhythm of life regarding subsistence livelihoods, the *going and coming*, the concepts of future, of child and the role of schooling and consequent processes in choosing a school. While it is a geographic it is also a mental state of mind; one sees local identity shaped not only by perceptions of place, their ethnicity but also by broader pervasive concepts of modernity and development that characterise them by their lack.

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Being remote is also a **process** defined by a compounding series of deficiencies that both contribute to and explain the poor educational outcomes of students.

Being remote is also a **strategy** used to defend such outcomes. In such an understanding teachers, despite their efforts are unable, unequipped, under resourced and too deprived of necessary support to surmount the state of 'it being remote' and then in turn, provide the education they wish to their community and to their students. Thus, being remote is a contextual and mental state, a process and a strategy.

Teaching remotely explains the peculiarities of not just living in the state of being remote but working there as a teacher. Working remotely has its own unique processes of being a teacher and becoming a teacher as well as actions of doing teaching (way of teachings) within the particular employment conditions for public school teachers in these environments and specific intentions of national education agendas.

At the heart of the theory of *teaching in our remoteness* is a key process. In their efforts to ensure quality education to those in the remote communities the actors, the government and its development partners (nations and cluster state organisations such as the UN and EU) and, to a lesser degree, the remote community engage in a process of provision. Policies and strategies such as national building prototypes, quality improvements, MGT, MTE and efforts to make learning relevant are employed to provide this education. This process, however, is interrupted, filtered, transformed or even stemmed by the complex interconnected and compounding context of the remote state, leading to the inevitable results in poor student outcomes. The process is complex in its practical outworking, as evidenced in the findings of this study.

While this complexity is in part due to the remote context, it is also related to the ways that those involved in the process attempt to understand each other and the purpose of the education being provided. Thus, understanding of how central government sees the remote minority users of its provision of education and how these minorities see the central government provision is needed to decrease the obstructive role it *being remote* is currently having on schooling outcomes in the remote location.

Central to this process is the local teacher. As evidenced in this study, the local teacher stands in the middle of the process, being both an employee and a provider of education, but also a parent, a member and representative of the remote community. Unsupported by their SMCs and isolated from administrative support and oversight, it is the local teacher that ultimately makes choices over how any policy will be implemented. A greater inclusion of their 'voice' and experiences and awareness of the definitive role they play in this process is essential to the provision of equitable education in remote areas.

6.5. Contribution to Knowledge

This study's contribution to knowledge will be useful to inform policy making. The study finds that current major policies in regard to quality access to remote education, namely multi-grade and multi-lingual teaching and the allowances for curriculum relevance are ineffectual and in the case of MGT seen as detrimental to the schooling outcomes in the specific remote location. NASA's recommendations of small-scale RC and school level study to inform knowledge for these causal reasons to address disparity in remote locations are clearly met by this study (ERO, 2014). The understanding gained from this research as to why this is so, the causal effects, may assist policy makers in developing strategies to

improve the supply of education in remote areas, the ability to understand the demand for education and ultimately, and improve student outcomes.

This study contributes to the knowledge of remote education in Nepal. At the time of this research there was no published literature dedicated to the phenomenon of remoteness, schooling or the teacher's experience in such contexts. Through the examination of the multiple studies in the literature this study provides an essential introduction to the issues of remote education in Nepal which is missing in the literature. Future findings and theory that have emerged from this study in relation to remote teaching provide deep explanatory knowledge on the compounding challenges teachers face as they negotiate the remote context and the practice of teaching.

The knowledge in this study is unique in the literature and I hope it provides an impetuous for further study by researchers and TPD providers. Further, due its breadth, this study contributes to the knowledge of many aspects of the broader context of education in Nepal such as training, teacher management, the efficacy of support structures, the role of policy and broader themes of gender, culture, child labour and seasonal migratory trade. These subjects contribute to the knowledge and education debate and may be potentially useful to other areas of study.

This study contributes to the knowledge about teaching practice. The research presented here provides findings about the nature of being a teacher and the challenges and struggles teachers face in providing the education intrusted to them in remote Nepal. It provides an examination of how teachers are selected, trained and supported, and further, how teachers understand and implement policy. This contribution is significant as it is not only lacking in

the extant literature but provides vivid knowledge of the influence context can have on policy and provision of education and the roles teachers play in the provision, negotiation and execution of policy.

6.6.   Limitations

There are a number of perceivable limitations to this study. Firstly, the research is limited to a very specific remote location in Nepal. This location has similarities with other remote areas in Nepal, as defined in Chapter Three. However, the location is unique, evidenced by a unique ethnicity and the road networks, location to markets and services in China, and the particular use of *kabela*. Thus, while findings could be generalised to illustrate aspects of remote education in Nepal the findings are tied specifically to this context. Variation in findings may occur in other mountainous remote areas.

Secondly, the findings are limited to a specific time period. Data were generated and gathered in 2016, and since then it is perceivable that developments in infrastructure, education policy, federalism or teacher training may have altered the state of remoteness or the conditions of teachers.

And thirdly, the findings are limited to public primary school teachers working in schools in the specific research location when data was generated and gathered. These teachers are almost in entirely local teachers—native to the specific villages in which they are teaching.

6.7.   Directions for Future Research

This research, though narrow in its research location and choice of participants, is broad in its findings on the conditions of remote education and of the remote context. Thus, there is scope within the research to explore many of the different aspects of its findings.

Further investigation is needed to determine if these findings could be confirmed in other remote areas in Nepal. The confirmation of such or of dissimilarities, will broaden knowledge of remote areas and approaches to education in such contexts.

The research highlights the roles of the educational structures of the DEO and RP and the SMC in equipping schools and supporting and training its teachers. Further qualitative study of the experience of those working in these structures would be invaluable in the understanding of how schools could be better managed and supported.

While this research has alluded to a shift of remote public students to urban private schools and to a resulting depopulation of the Himalayas, further study is warranted to determine how great the shift is. Current knowledge is limited, with only the exception of Childs et al. (2014). Qualitative and quantitative study of this shift will provide understanding of the scale of depopulation occurring because of education choices, the effects this is having on remote communities, staffing and access to schooling and also assist national planning.

Nepal finds itself for the first time with a federal government. Under such a structure the governance will shifted from Kathmandu to province centres. Much is presently in debate as to what such a shift would look like and what its implications maybe on curriculum reforms, educational policy, language of instruction, staffing and financing. Although such changes are only beginning to be implemented, the effect such restructuring would have on

remoteness and schooling in such contexts, is clearly and important direction for future study.

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Appendix A. Participant teacher data

Teacher Code	School Code	Principal	Tenure		Age	Gender	Level of Education					In-service training		Local teacher	Years spent teaching	Age began
			Perm	Temp.			1-5	SLC	+2	Grad.	Post Grad.	TPD 3/3	10 month			
T1	1	✓		✓	34	male		✓				✓	✓	✓	12	22
T2	1			✓	33	male	✓					✓	✓	✓	12	21
T3	2		✓		42	male		✓				✓	✓	✓	24	18
T4	2		✓		48	male		✓				✓	✓	✓	26	22
T5	2			✓	38	male		✓	✓	✓	∞	✓	✓	✓	19	19
T6	3	✓	✓		48	male		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	28	20
T7	4		✓		48	male		✓				✓	-	✓	25	23
T8	4		✓		42	male		✓				✓	✓	✓	18	24
T9	4		✓		41	male		✓				✓	✓	✓	24	17
T10	5	✓	✓		54	male		✓				✓	✓	✓	31	23
T11	6			✓	36	male		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	13	23
T12	6			✓	38	male		✓	✓	∞		✓	✓	✓	13	25
T13	7	✓	✓		36	male		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	10	26
T14	7			✓	30	male		✓	✓			2/3	✓	✓	13	17
T15	7			✓	28	male		✓	✓	∞		-	-	✓	4	24
T16	8			✓	36	male		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	13	23
T17	8			✓	34	male		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	12	22
T18	9	✓	✓		53	male		✓	✓			✓	✓	-	30	23
mean	-				38 yrs	100 %	100 %	94 %	56 %	5,6 %	-	89 %	89 %	94 %	18 yrs	21 yrs 9 mths

Key:
- perm. = permanent government teacher, temp. = temporary government teacher,
- +2 = Intermediate (years 11 & 12), ✓ = yes / completed, ∞ = incomplete/on going
- TPD 3/3 = 3 government provided Teacher Professional Development packages
- 10 month = 10 month in-service designed to upgrade teacher qualifications and skills

Appendix B. De-identified map of specific research location villages and schools
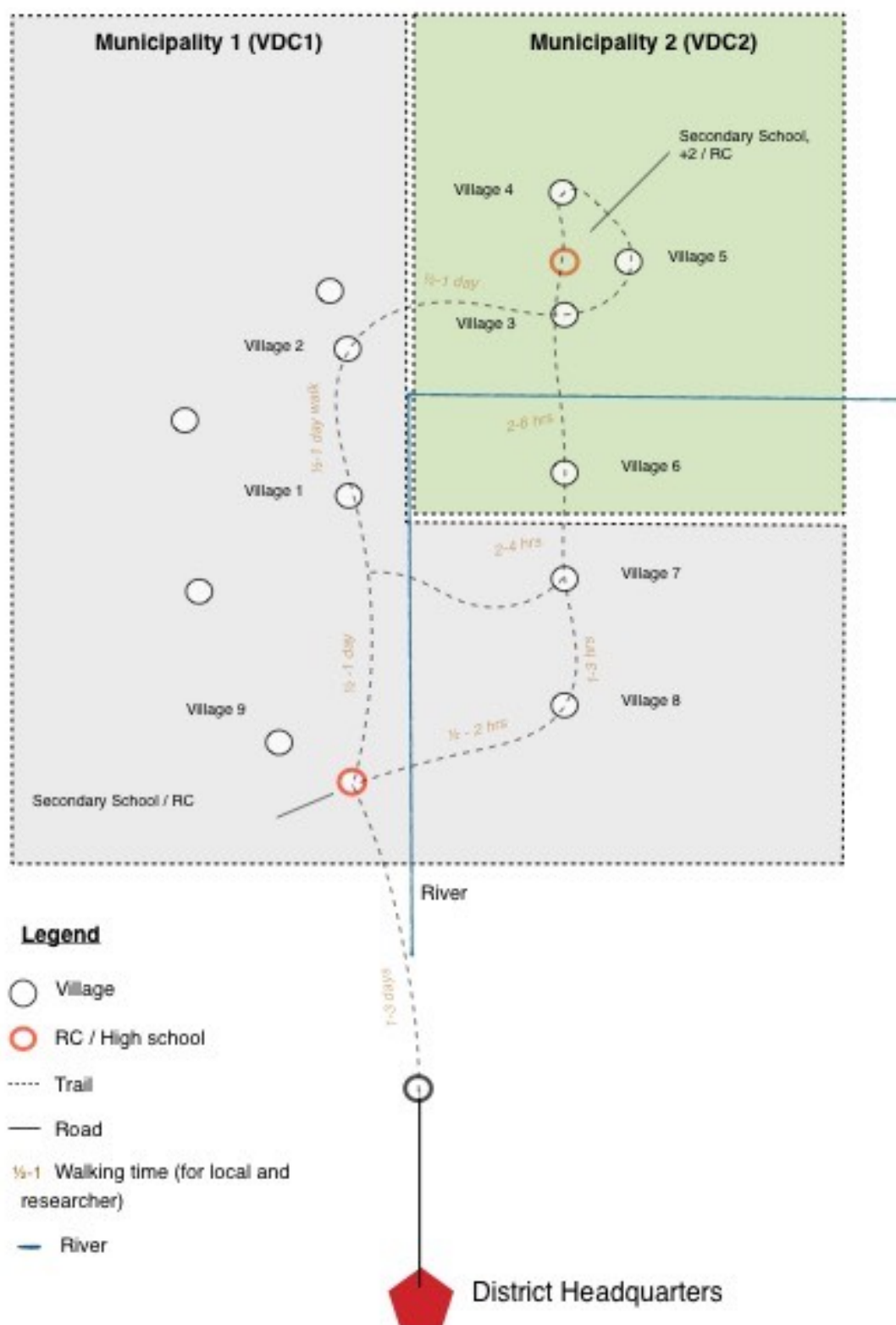
Appendix C. CQU Ethical Approval

Secretary, Human Research Ethics Committee
Ph: 07 4923 2603
Fax: 07 4923 2600
Email: ethics@cqu.edu.au

Dr Wendy Hillman and
Mr Derek Mitchell
School of Education and the Arts

9 May 2016

Dear Dr Hillman and Mr Mitchell

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE ETHICAL APPROVAL PROJECT: H16/03-039
STEMMING THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSLIDE: SUPPORTING TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN REMOTE NEPAL

The Human Research Ethics Committee is an approved institutional ethics committee constituted in accord with guidelines formulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and governed by policies and procedures consistent with principles as contained in publications such as the joint Universities Australia and NHMRC *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.* This is available at http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/_files/r39.pdf.

On 26 March 2016, the Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee considered your application under the Low Risk Review Process, and granted conditional approval, pending confirmation of the risk approval process. Subsequent advice has now been received that the risk assessment has been approved, and this letter confirms that your project has been granted approval under this process,

The period of ethics approval will be from 26 March 2016 to 30 March 2018. The approval number is H16/03-039; please quote this number in all dealings with the Committee. HREC wishes you well with the undertaking of the project and looks forward to receiving the final report.

The standard conditions of approval for this research project are that:

(a) you conduct the research project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments required to be made to the proposal by the Human Research Ethics Committee;

(b) you advise the Human Research Ethics Committee (email ethics@cqu.edu.au) immediately if any complaints are made, or expressions of concern are raised, or any other issue in relation to the project which may warrant review of ethics approval of the project. *(A written report detailing the adverse occurrence or unforeseen event must be submitted to the Committee Chair within one working day after the event.)*

(c) you make submission to the Human Research Ethics Committee for approval of any proposed variations or modifications to the approved project before making any such changes;

(d) you provide the Human Research Ethics Committee with a written "Annual Report" on each anniversary date of approval (for projects of greater than 12 months) and "Final Report" by no later than one (1) month after the approval expiry date; *(Forms may be downloaded from the Office of Research Moodle site -*
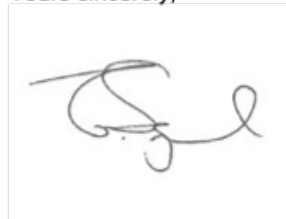
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(e) you accept that the Human Research Ethics Committee reserves the right to conduct scheduled or random inspections to confirm that the project is being conducted in accordance to its approval. Inspections may include asking questions of the research team, inspecting all consent documents and records and being guided through any physical experiments associated with the project

(f) if the research project is discontinued, you advise the Committee in writing within five (5) working days of the discontinuation;

(g) A copy of the Statement of Findings is provided to the Human Research Ethics Committee when it is forwarded to participants.

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You are required to advise the Secretary in writing within five (5) working days if this project does not proceed for any reason. In the event that you require an extension of ethics approval for this project, please make written application in advance of the end-date of this approval. The research cannot continue beyond the end date of approval unless the Committee has granted an extension of ethics approval. Extensions of approval cannot be granted retrospectively. Should you need an extension but not apply for this before the end-date of the approval then a full new application for approval must be submitted to the Secretary for the Committee to consider.

The Human Research Ethics Committee wishes to support researchers in achieving positive research outcomes. If you have issues where the Human Research Ethics Committee may be of assistance or have any queries in relation to this approval please do not hesitate to contact the Secretary, Sue Evans or myself.

Yours sincerely,

A/Prof Tania Signal
Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee

Cc: *A/prof Bobby Harreveld, Dr Reyna Zipf (Co-supervisors) Project file*

Approved

Appendix D. Letter of Introduction and Information (English)

Hello,

I would like to introduce myself and ask for your help.

My name is Derek Mitchell I am a teacher and am currently studying my Masters degree in Education through Central Queensland University in Australia.

I am conducting research in remote education and Teacher Professional Development. My Research is titled: *Stemming the education landslide: Supporting teachers in remote Nepal*. The aim of the research is to gain and understanding of the challenges teachers working in remote places experience and to improve the provision of training for teachers in these places.

I am interested in hearing your experiences as a primary school teacher and your thoughts on your training and teaching. I will be interviewing teachers from the Chepuwa, Keemath- ████████████ V.D.Cs.

I would like to ask you to participate in my research. If you choose to participate, I would like to interview you one to 3 times over the next 2 years. The interviews will take approximately between 30 minutes to one hour. ████████████████████████ I speak English and Nepali.

Your opinions are very important to me and so is your privacy. I will make sure that anything you share with me is kept securely and confidentially. I will not be sharing the information with any government office nor your principal.

I will be in ████████████████ this year and would really like to meet with you and possibly interview you.

If you would like to participate in the research you can contact me by telephone or email.

Derek Mitchell
Phone - ████████████
Email- derek.mitchell@cqumail.com

For your information,

While it is not expected that participating in this research will cause you discomfort, sometimes during research, there are times when discussing personal information can be upsetting or confronting. You can contact the following organisations if you experience distress and/or discomfort.

Nepal National Teachers' Assoc.	**Social Welfare Assoc. of Nepal**	**Tukee Nepal Society**
Office of the central Committee	GPO Box: 19420,	Z Street Thamel, Kathmandu
Purnachandi, Kumaripati,	Maharajgunj-3, Parmeshwor	Phone / Fax: +977-1-4701304
P.O. BOX : 107, Lalitpur	Marg, Kathmandu	Email: info@tukeenepal.org
Phone: +977-1-5527481	Phone +977 1 4720 776	
Email : nnta@hons.com.np	Email: swan@mail.com.np	

Every attempt will be made to ensure your privacy. Your name and any identifying information will not appear on any of the transcripts, thesis or other publications. The information I gather from you will be stored for 5 years in a secure and locked location, in accordance with my University's guidelines (CQUniversity's Code of Conduct for Research policy).

The research findings will be included in my Master's thesis dissertation (January 2019) and may also be included in journal articles, conferences and any other publications that may result from the research. If you would like to receive a summary of the findings of this research, please let me know at the time of interview, and I will ensure you receive a copy.

You can freely withdraw from helping with this research without explanation at any time you wish.

Feel free to discuss with me any concerns you may have on how the study will be conducted. I can be contacted on _____ (derek.mitchell@cqumail.com) and Dr Wendy Hillman my primary supervisor can be contacted in Australia on +61 7 49232125 (w.hillman@cqu.edu.au).

Please contact _____ or _____
_____ should you have any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Derek Mitchell
Researcher,
Central Queensland University

Appendix E. Letter of Introduction and Information (Nepali)

नमस्कार (टासीदिले),

सर्वप्रथम तपाइलाई मेरो परिचय दिन चाहन्छु । साथै तपाइबाट मैले सहयोगको अपेक्षा गरेको छु ।

मेरो नाम डेरेक मिचेल हो । म एक विवाहित पुरुष हुँ । मेरो तिन जना नानीहरु छन् । म अस्ट्रेलियाबाट आएको हुँ । म एक शिक्षक हुँ । हाल म अस्ट्रेलियाको केन्द्रिय रानीवारी विश्वविद्यालय (Central Queensland University) मा शिक्षा शास्त्रमा स्नातकोत्तर अध्ययन गरिरहेको छु ।

मेरो अनुसन्धानको विषय "दुर्गम क्षेत्रको शिक्षा र शिक्षकको व्यवसायिक दक्षताको विकास" हो ।

मेरो अनुसन्धानको शिर्षक : "शिक्षामा भुक्षय" यसबाट नेपालका दुर्गम क्षेत्रका शिक्षकहरुलाई सहायता गर्नु हो । प्राथमिक विद्यालयका शिक्षक साथीहरुको शिक्षण अनुभव तालिम तथा विचारहरु सुन्न म अति नै इच्छुक छु । तपाई ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮ गा.वि.स. का शिक्षक साथीहरुसगँ म अन्तर्वार्ता लिन चाहन्छु । तपाईहरु मेरो अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी भै दिनुहुन मेरो विन्रम अनुरोध छ । तपाई मेरो अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी भएमा अगामी दुई वर्ष भित्र तपाईसगँ दुई, तिन पटक अन्तरवार्ता लिन चाहन्छु । अन्तरवार्ताको समय करिब आधा घण्टा देखि एक घण्टा सम्मको हुनेछ । म तपाईहरुसगँ भेटेर कुरा गर्न तपाईहरुको गाउँमा आउनेछु । तपाईहरुले बताउनु भएको सबै कुराहरु सुरक्षित र गोप्य म राख्नेछु । तपाईले दिनुभएका सुचनाहरु तपाईका प्र.अ. साथै अन्य कुनै सरकारी निकायमा म पटकै बताउने छैन । यो वर्ष (दशै भन्दा अगाडि) म ▮▮▮▮▮ आउने छु र तपाईहरुसगँ भेटेर सम्भव भए सम्म अन्तरवार्ता लिने मेरो इच्छा छ ।

यदि तपाई मेरो अनुसन्धानमा सहभागी हुनचाहनु हुन्छ भने मलाई यहाँ सम्पर्क राख्न सक्नुहुन्छ ।

DEREK MITCHELL
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तपाईंको लागि केहि जानकारीहरु :-

　　यो अनुसन्धानको कममा सहभागी हुँदा तपाईंलाई कुनै अलमल र असजिलो भएको हामी चाहन्दैनौं । कहिले कहीं अनुसन्धानको सिलसिलामा तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत गोप्य कुराहरु बाड्दा असजिलोपनको महसुस हुनसक्छ । यदि तपाईंलाई त्यस्तो लागेमा तलका संघ-संस्थाहरुमा सम्पर्क राख्न सक्नु हुनेछ ।

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तपाईंको व्यक्तिगत कुराको गोपनीयता सुनिश्चित हुनेछ । तपाईंको नाम र तपाईंले दिनु भएको कुनै परिचय सम्बन्धीका जानकारीहरु कुनै लेख, शोधपत्र, प्रकाशनहरुमा लेखिने वा छापिने छैन । तपाईंबाट लिएका जानकारीहरु ५ वर्ष सम्म सुरक्षित रुपमा संकलन गरी राखिनेछन् । यो हाम्रो विश्व विद्यालयको अनुसन्धान कार्यको मूल्य मान्यता निति हो । (CQUniversity's code of conduct for research policy)

यो अनुसन्धानले पत्ता लगाएका तथ्य कुराहरु मेरो स्नातकोत्तर अनुसन्धान शोध पत्र (जुलाई २०१८), पत्रिका, सम्मेलन तथा अन्य प्रकाशनहरुमा छापीन सक्छ । मेरो स्नातकोत्तरको यो शोधपत्र तयार भैसकेपछि एक प्रति तपाईंले चाहेमा म उपलब्ध गराउने छु । तपाईंले स्वतन्त्ररुपमा यो अनुसन्धानलाई व्याख्या नगरीकन तपाईंलाई इच्छ्या लागेको समयमा प्रयोग गर्न सक्नु हुन्छ । यो अध्ययनलाई उपयोगी बनाउन कुनै पनि सरोकारका विषयहरुमा तपाई मसगँ खुल्ला रुपमा स्वतन्त्र पुर्वक छलफल गर्न सक्नु हुनेछ । मलाई यहाँ सम्पर्क राख्न सक्नुहुनेछ : ▇▇▇▇ र डा.बिन्डी हिलमान ,अस्ट्रेलिया +६१७४९२३२१२५ (उहाँ मेरो प्राथमिक सुपरवेक्षक हुनुहुन्छ) ।

तपाईंको महत्वपूर्ण समय र सहभागिताको लागि मुरीमुरी धन्यवाद !

DEREK MITCHELL